

Hilltop hideaway

Boasting commanding views, this stunning new landscape is a natural wonder



designer landscapes

The sheer size of this hilltop property demanded a design that made a definitive statement. Yet it needed to merge with the surrounding landscape, enhancing the setting rather than dominating it.

The main living area of the house commands a stunning view of rolling hills, with the lights of Melbourne visible in the distance, so it was imperative the landscape design not detract from the breathtaking vista.

To achieve a true sense of place, the design and construction team from Stanbrook Outdoor Creations drew upon a palette of earthy colours and natural materials and a design in which every element is expertly integrated. Note how the mounded shapes of the low-growing plants and the curved outline of the merbau timber deck mirror the gentle undulations of the hills without ever detracting from the view.

The triumph of the design is the unique, custom-made water feature. Explains Stanbrook’s Warrick Brooks: “The water feature was built in a triangular shape as we felt this would create interest while not being ‘in your face’ as a column or square might be.”

The water feature is clad in Belgian black limestone. Cutting the cladding to suit was a painstaking process, but it was time well spent.

“We essentially created three water features in one by incorporating two pumps into the design,” Warrick continues. “The first operates two blades of water that recirculate into a pond hidden by pebbles on a suspended mesh cage. The other pump feeds a reserve pond on top of the water feature that fills up and gently cascades down all three sides. This gives the owners the option of either pump running or both at the same time.”

For ease of operation, the pumps can be controlled from the main deck, as can the exterior lights.

The paving that hugs the perimeter of the house and pool is of Gosford sandstone laid in a random pattern. For contrast, black limestone steps lead past the water feature and through the pebble-mulched planting beds. To supply the paving and stone cladding, Stanbrook looked to Select Brick and Paving.



To contend with the open hilltop aspect and the extremes of weather, the planting needed to be drought-tolerant yet not phased by periods of cold. And achieving just the right contrast between colour, leaf variation and texture was integral to the success of the design.

After careful consideration, Stanbrook Outdoor Creations came up with a hardy and handsome

selection of plants, all of which were supplied by Urban Environments Wholesale Nursery. The final mix included *Acacia cognata* ‘Limelight’ (a miniature wattle with weeping foliage), *Scleranthus biflorus* (a bright-green cushion-like plant), *Phormium* ‘Bronze Baby’ (a dwarf flax), *Leucophyta brownii* (commonly known as cushion bush), *Dianella* ‘Little Rev’ (a miniature native lily), *Ophiopogon planiscapus* ‘Nigrescens’ (black mondo grass), *Agave attenuata*, *Echeveria* and *Xanthorrhoea* (grass trees) for interest.

The overall result is a landscape that sits comfortably in its natural surroundings and provides the owners with a picture-perfect setting in which to entertain or relax.

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