

Top tips from super Ozzie Gardener

Get it right first time!

By Brent Reid



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Home- Melbourne, Australia
Job- Landscape gardener extraordinaire
Claims to fame- Designed gardens for the Australian TV Show “ Backyard Blitz”, design consultant “Burkes Backyard”, multi- award winner Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show 2004, 2005, 2006 Garden Design
Right now- Landscape Designer, Hydrolite Leisure, Sharjah
Favourite garden- I did some re- vegetation work, whilst working as a landscape gardener in Melbourne. The garden is in a strange little corner of North Melbourne. It is surrounded by peppercorn trees and is barely visible from the main roads. The garden is the ‘Women’s Peace Garden’ and was designed and built by women as a protest against war. A beautiful garden, with an amazing calming aura.

Choosing the perfect house/ garden combination?

Unfortunately there is no simple formula for looking for the right house and garden in the UAE! Due to the weather, there is a great portion of the year when it is too hot to use your garden, unless you have a chilled swimming pool and you are prepared to make the dash each way.

South facing gardens are great for the winter months as they catch

extra sun during the day. During the summer months plants can struggle somewhat without shade. The sun sits very high in the sky here during summer and a lot of plants can become stressed in south or north facing gardens.

The best advice would be pick a house and plot that you feel comfortable with. A quality landscape designer should be able to work with any space. Even quirky corner blocks create some great shapes, areas and angles to work with as a landscape designer.





Sandpit for a garden?

What are you going to do now?

So you have a sand pit as a back garden...! First step is to find a landscape designer or a landscaping company that offers a garden design service. Check with friends, neighbours, work colleagues or even ask people in your area with existing gardens that you like for any references.

When speaking to designers ask for a portfolio of their work. A lot of companies may show you photos of gardens they have delivered in other countries. These are great as an example of style and quality but may not reflect the kind of garden it is possible to create here. This climate is very tough on gardens, not only the plants but the hard landscape elements also. So make sure you see some photos of gardens they have completed in the region. Also ensure that you background check the company & designer to make sure that the gardens they are showcasing are gardens they have actually created & not a design they have taken from another designer or company.

My advice is to pick a designer or company that you feel comfortable with. These people are going to spend a lot of time with you in the planning & design phase as well as in your back- yard creating your garden- so make sure you are comfortable having them in your space.

Write a wish list of what you want to achieve out of your garden...

Do you have a theme for your garden, pool & spa?

Do you enjoy entertaining?

Is privacy important to you?

Do you want a water feature, play area for children, does it need to withstand pets?

The more thought you put into the use of your garden & your personal preferences, the more the design team will be able to tailor a garden around your lifestyle. Remember this garden is going to be your space. You can create any garden you desire but directing the design team will help to ensure you are happy with the end result.

Last but not least- set yourself a budget. No matter how long your wish list is. Set your budget. It is then the designer's job to create the best garden for you based on your objectives & your budget.

As a Landscape Designer the best piece of advice I have ever received is "When in doubt, leave it out".



BRENT RECOMMENDS...

3 OF THE BEST OUTDOOR PLANTS FOR THE UAE

1. Agave attenuata – Fleshy succulent with blue/green colour and strong architectural structure. Great feature plant
2. Adenium obesum – (Desert Rose) Beautiful long lasting flower with twisting, gnarling branches. Great feature plant.
3. Setcreasea pallida – (Purple Heart) Fleshy strong purple coloured ground cover. Excellent contrasting coloured ground cover.

CARE TIPS

- WATER! WATER! WATER!
- Fertiliser/compost regularly – being a sand soil profile and given the amount of water we use to keep the plants alive, nutrients are washed out of the plants root zone quickly so it is important to continually top up the nutrients going into the soil to maximize plant growth and performance.
- Regular and correct pruning - not all plants need pruning, the key is to know what to prune and when and when to prune it.

PEST CONTROL

There are a number of pests and disease here that affect plants so it is quite essential to keep on top of this!