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Go on, it's the weekend, so get your hands dirty

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An artist and garden designer create a green oasis with hardy, waterwise plants

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Teach your dog (or cat) some basic tricks

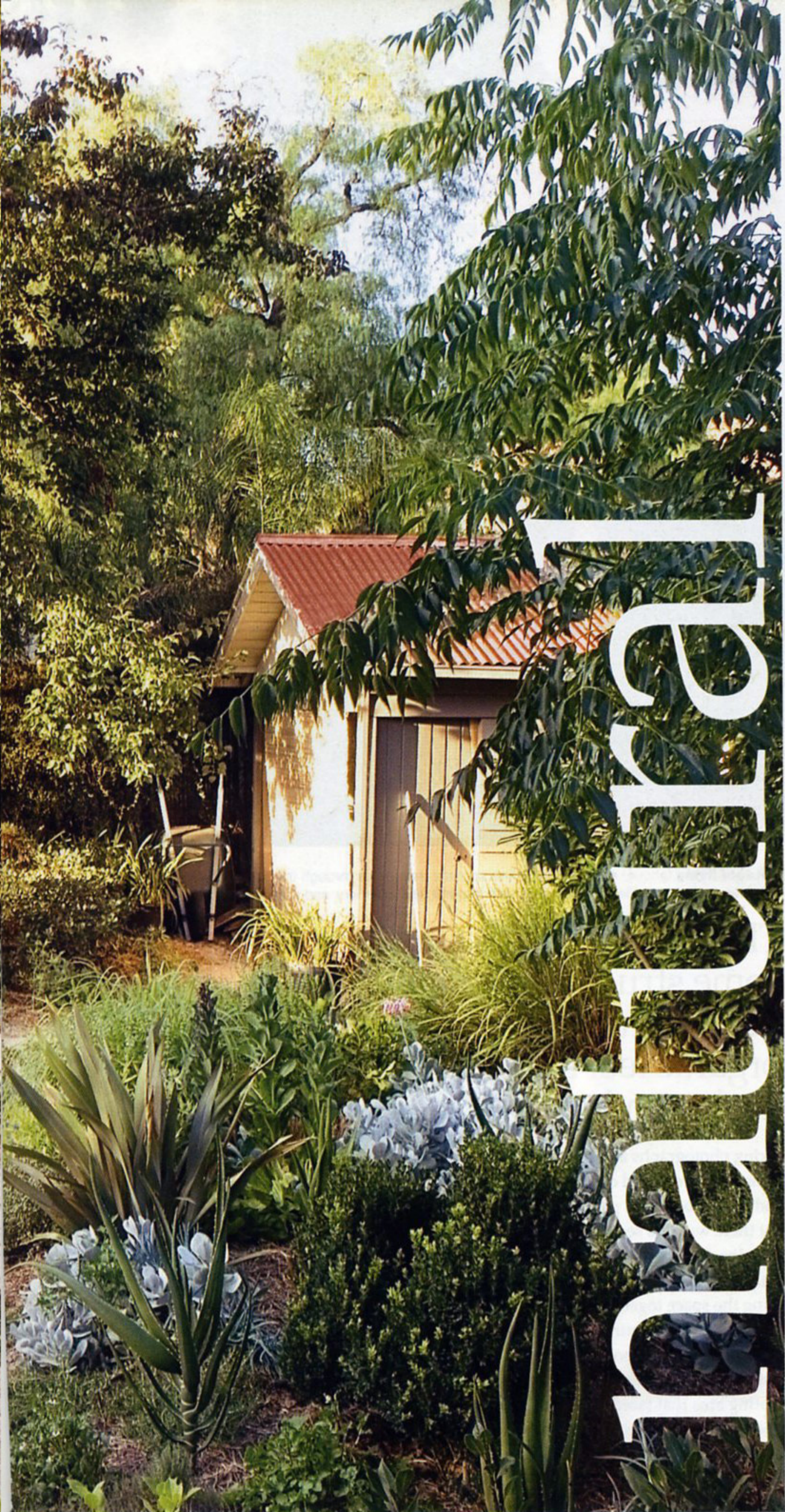
Welcome home

A bluestone path meanders down the side of Bernadette Bridge's house, past a shady verandah and huge hedge of common hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*). Turn the page to see more. →



warm, inviting garden nook

Bench marks To make these L-shaped concrete benches, contractor Patrick Hennessy built a frame onsite, filled it with concrete and left it overnight to set, then removed the frame the next day. A large, well-established flowering pear tree (*Pyrus* sp) frames the garden and offers shade. Kate introduced a row of willow hakea (*Hakea salicifolia*) trees, which in time will grow to form hedging on the left of the garden. In the foreground an assortment of natives, herbs and succulents are thriving in their new home. Table and stools from Forme.



rambling

beauty

Mix a green-fingered artist with a like-minded garden designer and this is the kind of rambling oasis you'll get

BERNADETTE BRIDGE'S Melbourne house doesn't have a traditional picket fence, like all the other houses in her street, but a tall corrugated-iron affair, covered in ivy, which hides her leafy oasis from view. Stepping into the shady front garden for the first time is an unexpected visual treat – swathes of lush, mature shrubs and trees line the bluestone pathway, which weaves its way past the rambling weatherboard house and into the sun-filled backyard. It's hard to believe that only a matter of months ago the back garden was looking tired and dishevelled.

Bernadette, an artist and busy mother of four, has always been passionate about plants, but her garden had become overgrown, with a big vegie patch dominating the back area. After deciding it was time to rethink the layout of the garden, she enlisted the help of local garden designer Kate Seddon.

Finding they had very similar "loose, organic" gardening styles, they hit it off immediately and worked together closely. Kate initially spent a whole day just sitting in Bernadette's back garden watching how the light fell at certain times, sketching, →



Outdoor living (above) A black alder (*Alnus cordata*) tree grows through the deck to form a canopy of leaves, while the wide border is filled with fragrant bay, rosemary, and various succulents.

The garden has some structure but retains a loose, organic feel that will evolve and grow

taking photographs and coming up with ideas to create a fluid design. "Bernadette had a lot of beautiful plants dotted around but there wasn't a sense of cohesion," Kate explains. "My plan was to repeat certain plant groups throughout the garden, to bring the space together."

There was a stunning view of a silvery gum tree in a neighbouring property, so Kate and Bernadette decided to create a seating area that faced towards this view. It was after much deliberation that they

decided on sculptural L-shaped cement benches, which would connect with the garden while providing an enclosure and strong focal point. "We wanted to create a versatile entertaining area for the whole family to spend time relaxing in," Kate says.

Next, Kate and Bernadette drew up a plant list, which included hardy natives, exotics and succulents, then took a trip to the nursery to select their favourites. They chose porous Dromana topping for all the pathways and open spaces in the back garden, "because it's environmentally sound and complements the silvery grey tones of the foliage", Kate explains. Having hardy →

Fruit garden (right) Lemon trees offer a never-ending supply of fruit. Two striking grass plants, zebra grass (*Miscanthus sinensis* "Zebrinus") and lemongrass (*Cymbopogon*), add lots of movement and texture to the border, while a bluebeard shrub (*Caryopteris* "Worcester Gold") offers a burst of lime green with pretty blue flowers.

writer & styling clair wayman, photography tim james garden design kate seddon landscape



rambling, lush, low-maintenance



Cool and tranquil.



Cordyline fruticosa plants, underplanted with *Euphorbia characias* and small succulents line the random bluestone path.



If Bernadette's beautiful garden has inspired you to get busy in yours, head to reallivingmag.com.au for a guide on how to achieve a lush, rambling garden at your place.

Undercover agents
The deck offers a huge area for all the family to come together and relax. When garden designer Kate first visited the house the deck felt bare and isolated from the garden, but with some careful placing of pots the two now seem much more cohesive. The prolific, meandering pumpkin also helps integrate the two.

fragrant & pretty = garden magic

Reading nook (above) A tranquil spot to sit with a friend or read a book. The garden is a hive of activity, with birds and bees busily foraging. A fig tree stands tall in the background.

"I find this sort of garden engaging. I love the connection to nature"

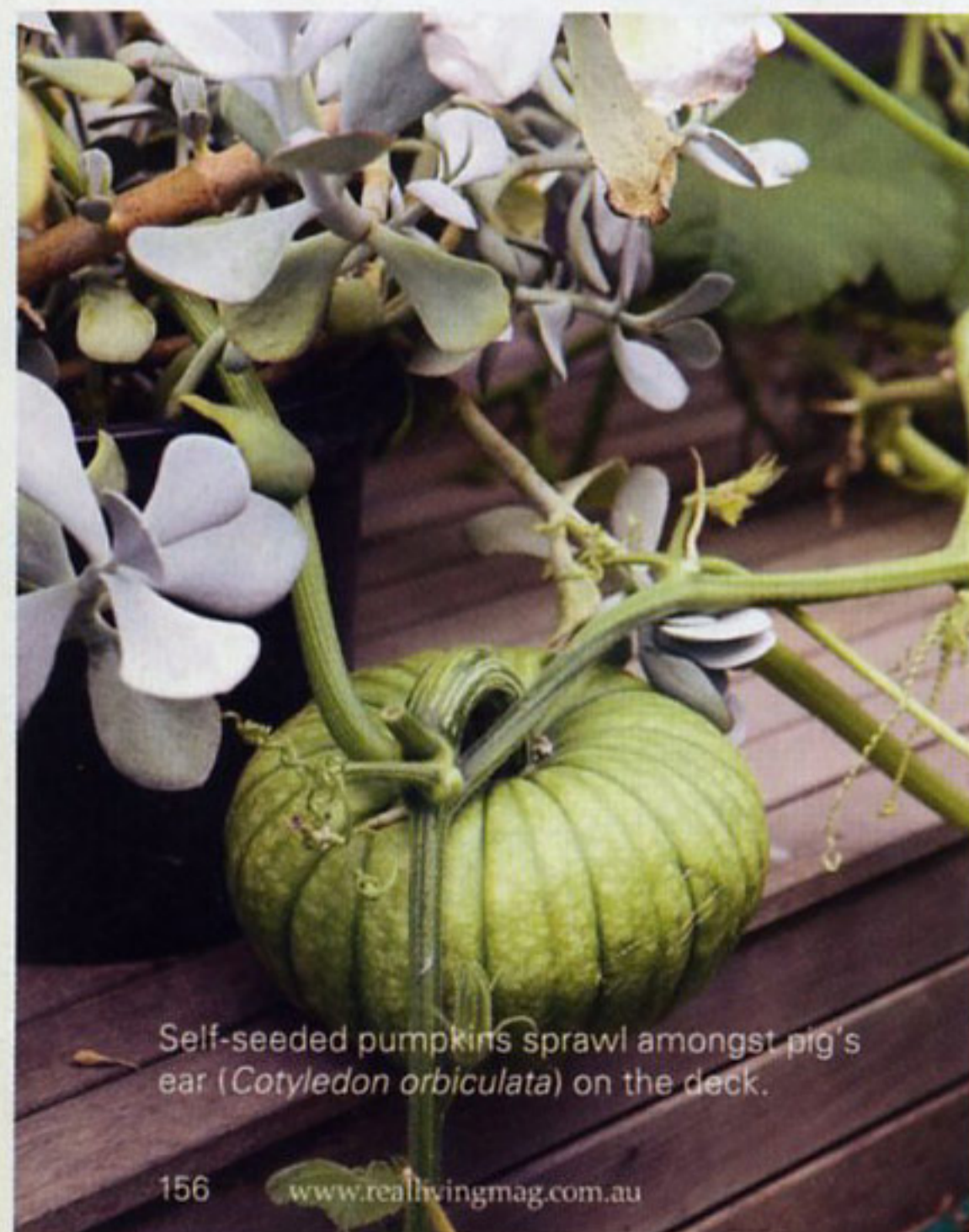
plants was a must for Bernadette, who rarely waters her garden. "I also spend lots of weekends and holidays away in the country so I needed a garden that's fuss free and drought tolerant," she says. Before planting, an enriching fertiliser called Crop Sure was dug into the soil. The soil around the plants was then covered with a thick layer of pea straw to retain moisture. The combination of these two elements really helps to sustain the plants in this changing Melbourne climate.

As well as introducing new plants, Kate rearranged a lot of the mature trees and shrubs in both the front and back gardens, and broke up clumps of plants to create a more fluid feel. A pond in the front garden was overgrown and choked with reeds; Kate removed them and introduced water-

loving plants such as Egyptian paper plant (*Cyperus papyrus*).

Being a painter, Bernadette loves playing with colour, shape and texture. With Kate's help, she's mixed a whole array of silvery grey, lime and olive green plants to create subtle, complementary compositions. Feathery grasses sit comfortably next to delicate herbs, spiky succulents and slender natives. Bernadette also loves being able to wander through the garden and help herself to herbs and vegies, so she's incorporated all manner of edible delights in amongst the plantings.

It's not only humans that are enjoying this new tranquil oasis. "Since the redesign we've started to get a lot more Australian native birds, butterflies and bees coming to the garden," says Bernadette happily. 🍷



Self-seeded pumpkins sprawl amongst pig's ear (*Cotyledon orbiculata*) on the deck.