

Designing a coastal haven

Creating a coastal garden has been a constantly evolving project for award-winning landscaper Peter Shaw. He takes GT's Yasmin Paton on a tour



MOSQUITO orchids, secret sculptures and a pistachio tree are some of the treasures tucked into Peter Shaw's Anglesea garden.

The father-of-four runs Ocean Road Landscaping and the front and back yards of his Harvey St home are testament to his talent.

Tall and twining stringybarks frame the sand dune inspired winding driveway.

"Our home wouldn't be the same without the stringybarks – they're why we bought the block," Peter says.

"They form a beautiful upper story of shade and shelter, they give us wind protection and the kids climb in them."

The lengthy front garden has lawn space as well as a special area of native plants which Peter and his wife Simone refer to as the "sacred ground".

"Those types of plants covered the whole block when we bought it," Peter says. "We have trigger plants, spear grass, nodding greenhoods and pink fingers."

Mosquito orchids, spider orchids and leopard orchids also rear their beautiful heads and are tended to by Simone.

Where the driveway ends, dry stone walling starts and then winds its way around the home – Peter likes the mystery of curved tracks.

"We've used shell grit on the path around the house which is a local, natural material and the walls are filled with Bright River pebbles," Peter says.

"They've got a natural Australian look." A bright green pistachio tree takes pride of place in the front courtyard.

"It's deciduous so it allows winter sunlight and creates shade in the summer," Peter says.

"It has solar benefits for the house and courtyard."

Under the tree are rows of lomandras. "They're hardy and drought tolerant," Peter says. "They're always green, fairly compact and easy to grow."

The courtyard sits adjacent to an outdoor play area for the Shaw's children Jarred, 11, Matthew, 9, Gabby, 7, Rosie, 5 – double doors connect the inside to the outside.

Peter has designated the side of the house to succulents and also has a few potted cactus plants but it's the rear garden which is his favourite.

"This is our Moonah forest," he says. "It's the trunks that I love."

Hidden among the local Moonahs is a stone stack sculpture, carefully constructed by Peter's creative hands.

"It's meant to be a bit hidden and secretive,

you find it unexpectedly," he says.

Peter has other stone stacks placed around the garden as well as Balinese stone statues and a wrought iron piece by local artist Cinnamon Stephens.

A stick teepee creates another great play area for the kids.

The Anglesea garden is also filled with twisted juncus, New Zealand carex, black rose and correas which are grown on the town's cliffs.

"We create simple blocks of colour with silvery white emu bush and clumps of lomandra – some is lime green and some is blue," Peter says.

"I try to keep most of the plantings simple." A veggie garden boasting broccoli, pumpkin, strawberries, snowpeas and silverbeet add to the garden's practicality as do the 20,000l water tanks, which are filled from the roof.

Olive trees line the second storey deck providing shelter and privacy.

Peter has spent nine years working on his landscaped garden and will continue tending for years to come.

"I'm always digging stuff up and moving it, that's what a good garden is," he says. "You've got to constantly nurture."



PETER'S TIPS

Getting ready to landscape

- Have a think about what you want, you can do this by visiting open gardens. We recommend people visit the Australian Garden in Cranbourne.
- Seek out the right contractor because landscaping isn't a regulated industry. Ask for referrals from family and friends and then ask the landscaper to show you a garden they have designed.
- Put pen to paper and create a design. It's important to do that even if it's a hand drawn sketch.
- Get the balance right between hard landscaping (paving, walls and fixed items) and soft landscaping (garden beds, turf, plantings).
- Put in 80 per cent bullet proof plants and 10 to 20 per cent delicate or colourful plants.

Small budget landscaping ideas

- Create focal points with simple steel or stone sculptures. You can buy a \$100 urn and plant lomandra tanika grass around it – it will transform your garden.
- Mass plantings are a good idea if you haven't got a huge budget.
- Small water features cost about \$300 to \$400 and create ambience in a courtyard without spending a fortune.
- Make some cube seats out of decking but don't fix them to the ground. In summer you can place them under a shady tree or move them onto the deck so you can read a book and have a cup of tea.

Bigger budget landscaping ideas

- Create a gathering area with a big external fire pit with paved area and stone seats.
- Place substantial sculptures around the garden to create focal points.
- Natural water features can look great in a big garden. They can double as storm water collection which runs back into the garden.

AWARD WINNER

Peter Shaw recently won a Landscape Victoria Award for the garden he created at 4-6 Gardiner Ave, Anglesea.

Ocean Road Landscaping, with the help of Geelong's Urban Landcraft, took out the Hard Surfaces In Landscape gong and was commended in the Sustainable Landscape category as well as the Residential Landscape category \$150,000 to \$300,000.

"The garden is low maintenance with lots of native plants in rows and in groups – it's reasonably organised," he says. "We connected the landscape to the building."

The lawn is synthetic, the plants are drought tolerant and a 150,000l rainwater tank sits secretly under the tennis court.

Peter says the biggest challenge was the paving. "We had multiple levels to work with as well as multiple access points – a tennis court, pool, carport, two front doors and lots of steps," he says. "In some areas the client wanted no steps so we had to do a fair bit of levelling."



The stunning surrounds at this Anglesea property scored Ocean Road Landscaping a Landscape Victoria Award last week.

Landscaper Peter Shaw in his Anglesea garden... "Our home wouldn't be the same without the stringybarks – they're why we bought the block." Photographs: Mike Dugdale