



**ABOVE** Creating a better connection between indoor and outdoor areas was one of the designer's main aims.

## Indoor-outdoor

*This award-winning garden hits the spot from a number of different angles*

**WORDS:** Alex Haskey  
**PHOTOS:** Jamie Hardingham

As it stood, the rear garden was virtually unusable due, in no small part, to the large change in levels. There was a *Viburnum odoratissimum* hedge that had grown out of control, taking over the entire lower garden area, and the patio doors out to the garden were overlooked by a neighbouring block of units, creating a feeling of tension the moment you stepped outside.

The brief from the owners of this home in Sydney's inner-west was to create a better connection between the indoor and outdoor areas and to include space for an existing day bed, a more formal seating area and a shed. The upper balcony was simply never used so the brief there was pretty straightforward: to create an area the owners would use, something that would function as an extension to the house.

To make the garden more functional we decided to build a deck over the void created



**TOP** Hardy succulents in the planters and in shallow bowls add a contemporary touch to the balcony.  
**ABOVE** Making best use of a small space, a sunken table was created for outdoor dining and entertaining.

### Winning ways

In 2011, this garden won for its designer, Alex Haskey, the Best Garden under \$50,000 award and the prestigious Allan Correy Award for design excellence in the national Landscape Design Awards conducted by the Australian Institute of Landscape Designers & Managers (AILDM). To see more award-winning gardens, visit [www.aildm.com.au](http://www.aildm.com.au)

by the change in level and over the existing tiling. By building a deck to the height of the underside of the doors, more useable space was created. To ensure privacy, we retained – but cut back – the viburnum hedge.

To make the best use of the limited space and to provide a stunning focal point, a sunken table was designed and built. This helps with the problem of being overlooked as once you are seated you are, quite literally, at ground level.

Custom-made planter troughs were installed around the perimeter of the



garden to provide a backrest to the sunken table and screening, as needed, between the neighbouring block of units and the garden. For a touch of drama and a contemporary accent, some of the troughs are orange.

The limited planting palette was chosen with care, from the *Bambusa textilis* 'Gracilis', selected for its screening qualities, to the hardy bird of paradise that will form a beautiful blue-green layer between the troughs and the viburnum hedge above. The flowers of the bird of paradise will also complement the orange troughs.

The crowning glory is the custom designed and built shed. This provides a suitable focal element where a lesser shed would have detracted from the overall design of the garden. Storage has been installed in the floor of the shed to help with the inevitable overflow from

the house, and the side facing the garden acts as a backrest for that part of the sunken table.

The balcony garden is very simple but has succeeded in drawing the owners out to use it. The undulating day bed is the focal feature and once the olives and crassulas have grown a little, this will be a private space. To match the rear garden, lightweight hardwood decking was laid over the tired-looking tiling and feature pots were used to complete the look.

The owners are absolutely delighted with the results and the garden areas are now the most used rooms in the house. It just goes to show how much can be achieved, even with a limited budget and limited outdoor space. ■

*Alex Haskey is a landscape designer and director of Valley Garden Landscapes, which is based in southern Sydney.*



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**TOP LEFT** The construction of a deck has made the garden more functional and resolved the changes in levels.  
**LEFT** Clean-lined custom-made planter troughs were installed around the perimeter of the decked area.  
**TOP** The custom-designed shed includes handy in-floor storage space to eliminate outdoor clutter.  
**ABOVE** The gently undulating timber day bed is the focal feature of the recently revamped balcony garden.