

contemporary design



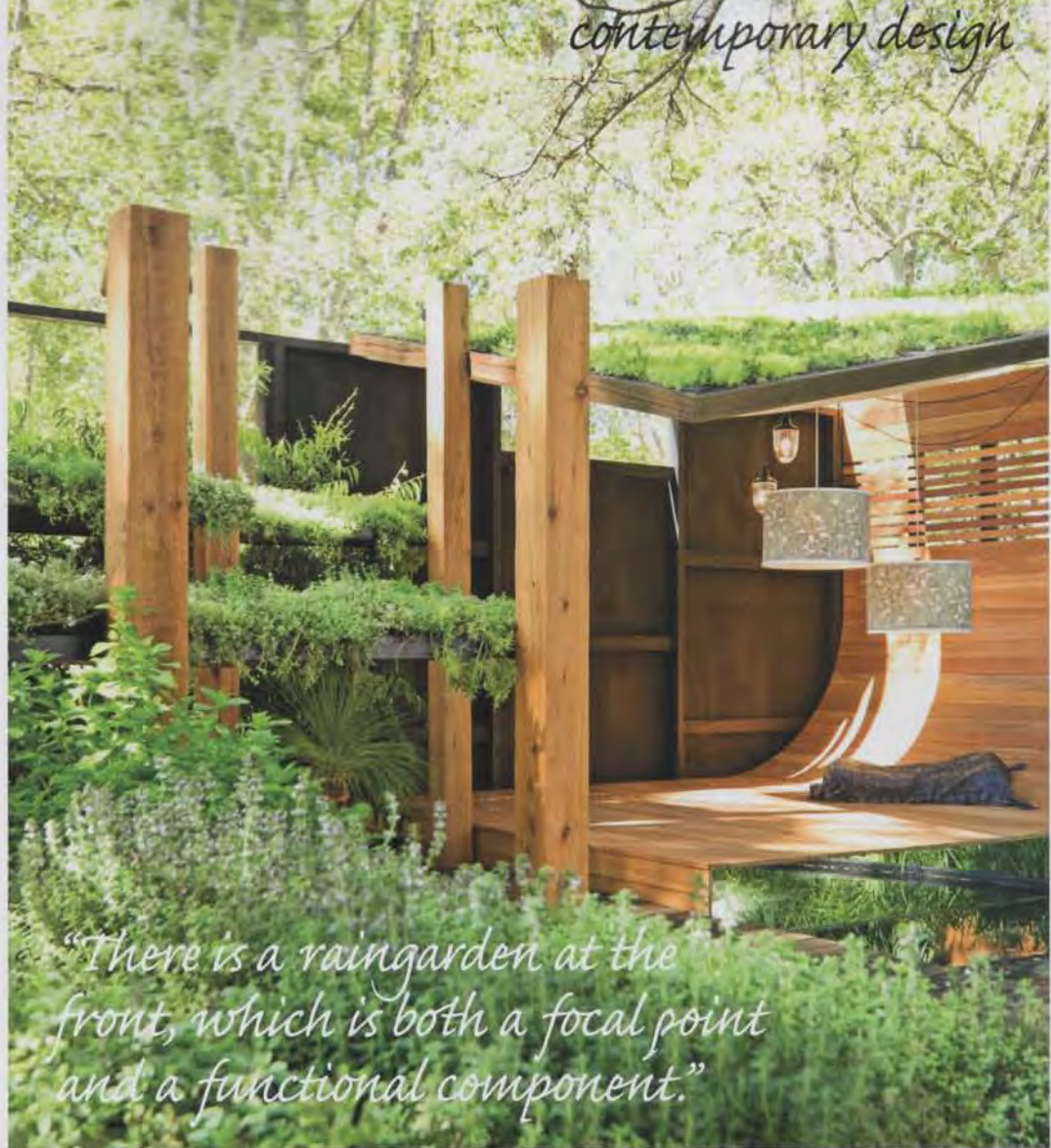
IT'S ALL RELATIVE

A sustainable, space-maximising garden that challenges conventional planting notions

Words: Karen Booth

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Much has been written about the benefits of greening our cities. The virtues of vertical gardens have been extolled and the creation of green roofs urged. But the truth is that many of the green walls and roofs you will find around Australia are attached to large commercial buildings, such as office blocks, hotels and high-rise apartments.

While green roofs and walls are beginning to find their way into private homes and smaller-scale developments, it can be hard for the average family to envisage how such concepts relate to them. This garden, dubbed *Relativity* and created by James Dawson Landscape Design for the 2009 Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show, goes a long way towards showing how green roofs and walls can be creatively integrated into a small home garden.

"The initial intent of this design was to demonstrate the use of green roofs and vertical gardens within a domestic outdoor space — something that has real relevance with the density of suburban housing on the increase," explains designer James Dawson.

"The spatial component of the garden was inspired by Dutch artist MC Escher's work, *Relativity*, where the image depicts a paradoxical world in which the normal laws of gravity do not apply. In a traditional landscape, plant material

would be presented on a horizontal plane firmly anchored to the ground. With vertical and roof gardens, these planting constraints disappear and we are allowed to explore other planes in three-dimensional space."

This is a garden that also draws on the principles of permaculture and pays more than lip service to water conservation. There is a raingarden at the front, which is both a focal point and a functional component of the design. Rainwater is collected here and then fed into the fish-filled ponds. The fish then deposit nutrients into the pond water which, in turn, is used to irrigate the edible garden.

For the green feature wall, James planted *Liriope muscari* 'Evergreen Giant' (giant liriopie). The plants on the lower roof terrace are a mix of perennial herbs; on the upper terrace, a mix of sedum.

Agonis flexuosa 'Nana' (dwarf willow myrtle) forms the planting layer under the terrace while the foreground planting (in the raingarden) is *Isolepis nodosa* (knobby club-rush). For screening to the rear, James used *Waterhousia floribunda* (weeping lilly pillly).

"This garden represents a multitude of ideas. I like to think it has a very hedonistic feel to it yet in real terms is sustainable and positive to the environment in today's world," says James. ■