

# Funky Urban Hideaway

When I arrived here a little over a decade ago, there was a bombsite duplex, 9 Cuban palms, 6 Carpentaria palms, one cycad, a happy plant and a couple of other low plants, and a backyard of concrete. The entire fence line was one metre high and all surrounding units and houses looked directly into all rooms. It was akin to living in a goldfish bowl bin.

As the years went by I demolished bits painted a bit, dug holes here and there, lifted giant rocks, cut things down and did little bit by little bit renovations, using recycled stuff, donated stuff, and added a heap of time until I added door or saved and put in one kitchen component, and then waited until I had the energy and budget to do the next project. Some design ideas I thought of 8 to ten years before actually getting them done. It is still a work in progress.

About 7 years ago, the entire front yard was pretty much flat earth with the Cuban, the big palmy thing and a few cordylines and crotons left. The back was concrete with a big hole I smashed. The side was a super dodgy concrete spoon drain and path.

The plan was to create a hideaway screen around the perimeter and make the view from the inside look out on some garden whichever way you looked. Where inside and outside really blend into one space, outdoor rooms as such. Apart from one or two more exotic plants, the look is created from whatever you can pick up at the market or private garden cuttings or backyard sales and of course, regular visits to the Big Green Shed. The flowering Michaleas Alba at the rear was at the suggestion of the late ABC Gardener Kerry Byrnes, who had acquired the pot from someone leaving town – he said at full height it would screen out the back apartments and create a beautiful scent in the house when in full flower. He was right and I think of him often as I look out the back and miss his grumpy brilliant insights into all and sundry. My idea was to plant things which I could cut back not nurse to stay alive and there have been plenty of failed experiments (some still on show today). I do chat to the plants to give them ample warning that if they don't make an effort I will quite happily dig them up and move on to something which does. Cruel but fair. I now have a garden which speaks back to me daily possibly out of pure fear.

The garden has provided solace in bad times, peace in good times, frustrations when it won't comply to my will, leadership when I just let it do its thing and try to follow its ideas, and endless memories of my late grandad and mum who were both outstanding home gardeners. Somehow in my thirties I caught the bug. I love it and I don't care a jot if you don't. Please enjoy.