



smartyplants

Clever plantings, grey water and thoughtful design keep this productive garden lush all year round.

Words Peter Barrett
Photography Sharyn Cairns

After working all day in other people's gardens, landscape designer Hendrick van Leeuwen, 36, enjoys pottering around with his chooks at his home in Melbourne's inner south-east.

Van Leeuwen started three years ago with a blank canvas of suburban lawn. His idea was to have an edible, productive garden that is decorative and drought tolerant. Behind a shed covered in grapevines is a 9000-litre rainwater tank and a chook-pen, which generates a rich compost mulch to protect soil from evaporation.

The garden is divided into three watering zones. The first zone, including vegetables and annual crops, is watered mostly with rainwater and, occasionally, mains water; the second zone is made up of fruit trees, herbs and perennials such as red- and blackcurrants, grapevines, kiwi and passionfruit vines, watered with rainwater and grey water; the third zone is reserved for drought-tolerant plants and trees such as lilly-pilly, native shrubs and grasses, which are now hardly watered at all, just very well mulched.

ourtip

Layer your mulch in summer. First put down a mix of manure and home-made compost or Surecrop (available in 40-litre bags for \$13.95 from Fitzroy Nursery), then add coarser tree clipping mulch on top as protection against dry winds.



Stockists

Abundant Layers
3 Mulhalls Road, Macclesfield (Emerald). Phone 5968 6765
Bulleen Art & Garden
6 Manningham Road West, Bulleen. Phone 9850 5155
Fitzroy Nursery 390 Brunswick Street, Fitzroy. Phone 9417 3272
Sunshower Irrigation 515 Glenhantly Road, Elsternwick. Phone 9523 6671
Yarrabee & Castlemaine 1696 Dandenong Road, Oakleigh East. Phone 95351 500

create the garden

- Underneath the hardy kikuyu lawn (*Pennisetum clandestinum*) is a coil of agricultural pipe wrapped in a cloth sock to stop it blocking up with soil. Over that is a layer of screenings (fine crushed rock), then soil. An EcoCare grey-water diverter (\$845.50 from Sunshower Irrigation) sends bath and shower water to this every day.
- Screening the work shed is a five-metre hedge of lilly-pilly (*Syzygium australe*), made up of seven plants. It needs a clip about every two months and, once established, requires little water. Lilly-pilly *Syzygium smithii* come in 30-centimetre pots from \$85 at Fitzroy Nursery.
- The fire pit is lined with bluestone and otherwise made of Castlemaine slate built on a crushed rock base. Castlemaine Standard Random Paving costs \$79.50 per square metre from Yarrabee & Castlemaine Stone Solutions.
- The chooks come from Abundant Layers in Macclesfield, where you'll find 60 breeds and variations starting at \$12 for day-old pure breeds. For a low-hassle egg-layer try Australorps or Isa Browns, available at 17 or 18 weeks old for \$20.
- English lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) and rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) make an ideal natural border (three or four plants per metre) between the gravel path and the herb garden. Lavender and rosemary come in 20-centimetre pots for \$24.95 from Fitzroy Nursery.
- Its lush, rainforest-like broad leaves make the tamarillo or tree tomato (*Cyphomandra betacea*) stand out. It grows up to four metres and from mid-summer offers red edible fruit that are high in vitamin C. Available in 15-centimetre pots from \$9.95 from Bulleen Art & Garden.
- The weathered seat makes a perfect place to ponder the garden or keep an eye on the fire pit. For similar recycled red-gum seats, try Ben Gilbert's handmade range, from \$750 at Fitzroy Nursery.
- Vegetables can be both productive and decorative. In this jumble of colour, parsley and lettuce have been allowed to flower, ensuring the next crop will self-seed. Lettuce, parsley and oregano all come in 10-centimetre pots or punnets for \$4.95 from Fitzroy Nursery.