

# SMALL SPACES, BEAUTIFUL OPPORTUNITIES

While a sprawling backyard to explore was once the norm, high density living has meant that many of us now have smaller spaces in which to enjoy the outdoors. But small doesn't mean uninspiring! Don't say goodbye to the green leafy oasis of your dreams. Instead, look at a small space such as a courtyard, patio or balcony as an opportunity to get creative and make it all the more inviting. Here are some of Alastair's top tips:

- 01 I like to use lively, organic materials that age gracefully in the outdoors. Things like natural stone, recycled timber, gravels and corten planters. Ensure that their beauty is enduring, by taking time to protect them with appropriate treatments. Organic materials don't require constant cleaning to make them look their best. This frees up your time to enjoy the space.
- 02 Big planter boxes with reasonably slim edges are super for adding some medium trees as statement pieces. These can be further softened with an under-planting of some small species, and my favourites are Mondo grass or small Lomandra grass varieties.
- 03 Lightweight steel shade structures are relatively easy to construct and can help to delineate a large space. For shade, I aim for around a 50% permeability with some timber battens (ie across the surface area of the roof space you have a batten then the same size open space followed by another batten, and so on)
- 04 I always incorporate plenty of different seating options. Sometimes I want to sit formally and other times I want to lay back and read a magazine or perch on the edge of the retaining wall chatting to a friend. It's a freedom I like to be mindful of when designing outdoor living spaces.
- 05 Separating areas of grass, garden beds and aggregate strips by using metal edge barriers that sit just above the surface, allows clear definition and easier maintenance.
- 06 I'm a fan of a simple planting palette. An abundance of varieties isn't needed – just enough foliar interest at various levels softens the feel of the space.
- 07 One more tip is to darken up the fence lines. This helps enhance the effects of foliage and confuses the eye as to where the true boundary lies.



Alastair MacGregor - Urban Journey

I aim to create well crafted spaces that are inspired, relaxed and that generate feelings of happiness and pure contentment - these spaces allow you to dream big and believe that anything is possible.



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