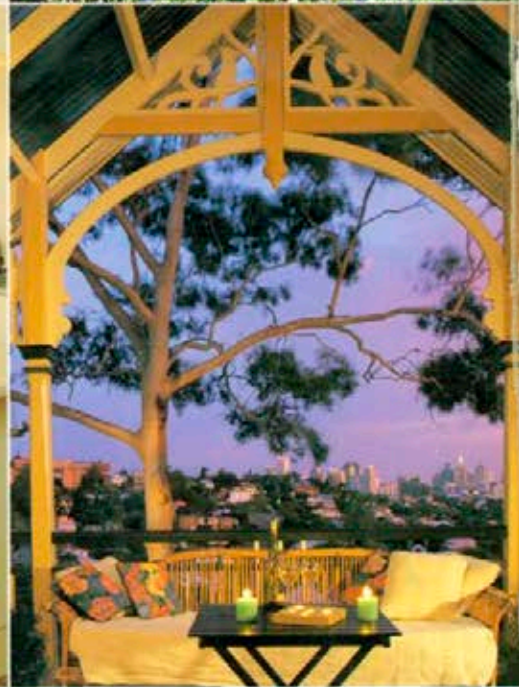


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renovationspecial

inspiration & great ideas + tropical gardens
+ Brisbane's trendiest district + new colour directions

on another level

RENOVATION special

Photography John Downs
Story Margaret McGuire

From this boring garden
a tropical paradise emerged



to this!







Inside, Richard has aimed for a low maintenance industrial look

*I*t is quite common these days to see older homes in the inner suburbs being 'jacked up' to create enough headroom underneath for living space, or to catch the view and cooling breezes - but in this renovation, the owners have, for very specific reasons, elected to do exactly the opposite and lower their home to ground level.

"It seems paradoxical" says Richard, an environmental building designer and one of the owners of the home, "but our feeling was that on a smallish triangular corner block, it was very important to integrate the house and the garden as closely as possible, creating a cohesive whole and maximising the use we gained from the garden. We designed this house with a specific final owner in mind - a couple with no children who wanted the convenience of an apartment with the bonus of a low maintenance garden and pool."

Richard's partner Kevin is a landscape gardener - and if you look at the before shots of this home, you will agree, I'm sure, that never was professional help more needed than in this back yard. Where once shrubs interrupted a basic lawn, a pool, surrounded by tropical plantings and strategically placed boulders, is fed by a waterfall which flows down a pebbled creek - it's so inviting as to be almost irresistible. And in the normal course of events, it need not be resisted because it is so accessible from the house that no effort at all is involved in sliding into the water for a quick dip. Separated from the house by a timber deck, swimming at



any time of the day is perfectly convenient - if the phone rings, you can hear it, and if you want a drink or a snack, the kitchen is just nearby.

The deck at the edge of the pool is furnished with a six seat dining table, and it is here that the couple generally relax, dine and entertain their friends. Richard designed the deck with a detached skillion roof above the roof line of the house which encourages airflow around the area, and a ceiling fan maximises the natural breezes. When the garden is illuminated at night, and with candles glimmering on the deck, the effect is positively 'tropical hideaway'!



Very important to integrate the house and the garden as closely as possible

Inside, Richard has aimed for a low maintenance industrial look – the ceiling is colorbond mini-orb, insulated of course, against the heat and, as an unexpected bonus, sound. The house, which was built in the early fifties, was gutted internally, and the existing VJ walls were removed and replaced with new pine linings. “Sometimes it is quicker and more cost effective to start again, rather than repair and straighten old walls” says Richard. “In this case, we re-configured the interior of the house, so replacing the old VJ walls was a more efficient option.”

Floors throughout the home were sheeted to provide a base for the magnificent Himalyan quartz tiles which lighten the home, in shades from cream to caramel and tan. “The quartz is very low maintenance, we sealed it when we put it down, and now it just needs sweeping and washing - it resists stains and always looks great. We are really pleased with our choice”.

On the back wall of the sitting room is a magnificent chest which was carved by Richard’s grandmother in 1902 - it is a focal point in a room where furnishings have been deliberately kept to a minimum in sympathy with the rationale of this renovation – a modern, uncluttered feel to complement the use of industrial style materials.

The kitchen was designed by Richard to continue the sleek lines of the rest of the interior, and features a light coloured veneer on the doors with a granite look laminate on benchtops. “It was quite inexpensive” says Richard, “but the trick is not to skimp on

things like handles - they get so much use, they need to be a top quality item.” Original casement windows have been retained throughout the house, and here they open onto the deck, providing easy access when dinner is served. Painted black, they look very smart and team beautifully with the benchtops.

This really is a renovation with a difference. The pool, which was designed and constructed by Majestic Pools, and the garden are so well integrated into the living areas of the home that they seem part of a seamless whole – and at the end of a long hard day, what could be more refreshing to both body and mind than to sit, drink in hand gazing at the trickling water tumbling into the pool, the scene illuminated softly to show off the lush tropical planting. ♦



from this. to this!

