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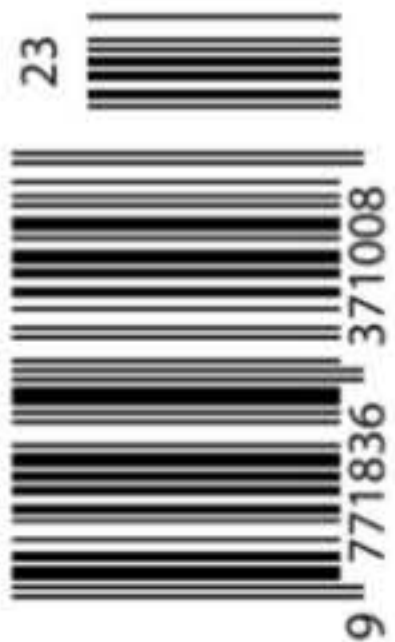
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SOPHISTICATED STYLING

The transformation of a Sydney courtyard into an inviting alfresco room proves that limited space need not limit the imagination

Words Danielle Townsend
Photography Thomas Girschner



The wall, finished in a textured Ayers Rock colour, provides a warm, rich feature.



Small Sydney properties are all about utilising what space there is in a clever fashion, a mantra that, sadly, this property hadn't followed. Here, the existing courtyard was cramped with loads of wasted space, a very small area for outdoor dining and a fish pond that ate into the amount of usable space. Existing silver birch trees and steps further restricted the use of the courtyard. These trees had caused damage to the tiles and boundary walls and the planted areas were also in poor condition. But all of this was to change.

Wanting to take advantage of all that outdoor entertaining in Sydney has to offer, the homeowner requested a complete outdoor makeover, incorporating a new feature wall, new pond, enlarged marble-tiled alfresco area, outdoor kitchen and new plantings. Essentially, this was to be a new alfresco outdoor room with kitchen, which would maximise the use of the rear courtyard space in the best possible way.

What was there did have potential, however, and provided hints of inspiration for registered landscape architect Julian Brady, who designed the space. "I was inspired by the afternoon sunlight pouring into the courtyard through the existing silver birch trees and the colours often seen at sunset," says Julian. "This provided a warm and inviting ambience to the outdoor room and inspired the design to include elements that capture the essence of sophistication, comfort, function, form, sound and texture."

The contemporary garden, constructed by Julian's company, SiteDesign + Studios, now exudes sophisticated styling, with a feature wall and waterspout that pours into a semi-circle fishpond. The wall is finished in a textured Ayers Rock colour, which, at sunset and when lit up at night, provides a warm, rich feature. The sound of running water makes the outdoor dining experience even more enjoyable.

“Although the space is small, it comes packed with features and function” – Julian Brady

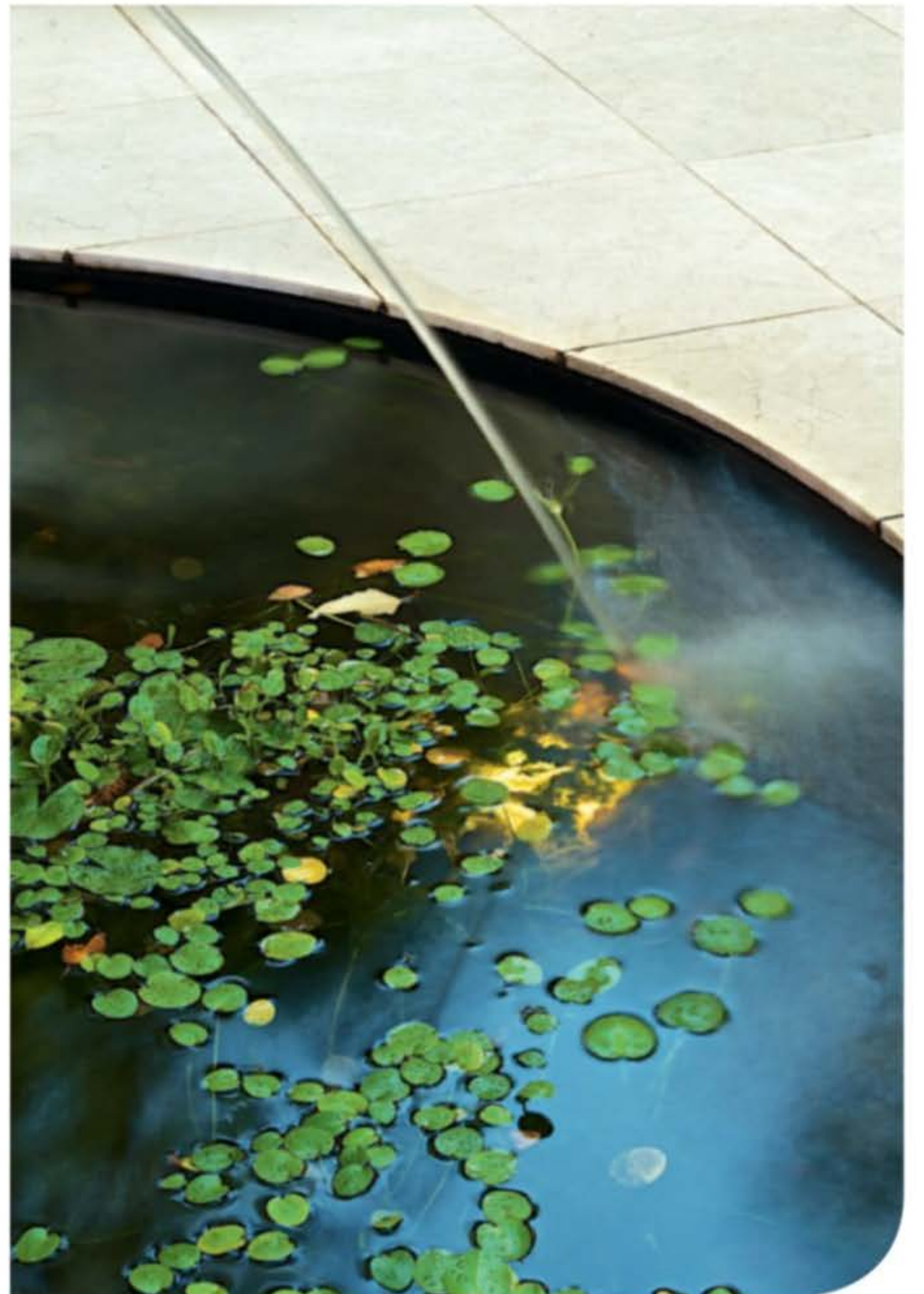
ABOVE The fully equipped outdoor kitchen, by Castle Kitchens, makes outdoor dining a delight.
OPPOSITE TOP The red-ochre tones of the wall contrast well with the foliage of trees. Dining outside has become most enjoyable in this courtyard.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM Two feature pots were planted with lace-leaf Japanese maple, a small yet beautiful ornamental tree. These feature pots help frame the water feature wall.

"The water feature wall with Ayers Rock red tones and fish pond below is my favourite part of the garden," says Julian. "The colour is rich, vibrant and a wonderful backdrop when dining outdoors and when viewed from indoors. The red-ochre tones work really well with the sunset and contrast well with the foliage of trees either side and behind the wall. The movement and sound of water falling from the bronze waterspout into the pond is tranquil and adds to the ambience of the space."

Two feature pots were planted with *Acer palmatum* var. *dissectum* 'Seiryu', or lace-leaf Japanese maple, a small yet beautiful ornamental tree with soft lace leaves and a dome-shaped form. These feature pots help frame the water feature wall and allow the afternoon sun to shine through the trees.

The existing silver birch trees planted many years ago were too close to the existing brick walls and, as a result, had caused some damage over the years. Therefore, the problematic trees were removed (with council permission) and the damaged brick





walls rebuilt to allow for more usable space. As these walls were on the boundary line to neighbours, careful attention was made to not disturb the neighbour's existing garden when rebuilding.

Side boundary fences — 1800mm brick walls — are covered by star jasmine climbers. The rear courtyard fence is made up of two gates made from aluminium slats with a timber-look finish, which makes the gates light to open and requires no ongoing maintenance, as hardwood timber typically would.

Jelly bean succulents hang from balcony planter boxes, mondo grass is used as a filler groundcover and slender weaver bamboo is an accent for courtyard corners.

The kitchen, by Castle Kitchens, provides all the luxuries and essentials of a full-working kitchen and cooking experience. The alfresco and outdoor kitchen floor is tiled using 450x450x12mm Crema Marsil marble tiles to match the kitchen floor and benchtops inside the house. The outdoor kitchen benchtop also incorporates the same marble.

The inspiring completed project shows just what wonders can be achieved with a small space. "Being such a small outdoor space made this a fun and rewarding challenge," says Julian. "Although the space is small, it comes packed with features and function — a beautiful full outdoor kitchen, bar, alfresco area, feature wall, water feature, feature pots, herb garden, storage areas and plenty of space for cooking, dining and entertaining with family and friends." 🏡

Landscape design and construction
SiteDesign + Studios
Website sdstudios.com.au

“I was inspired by the
afternoon sunlight
pouring into the courtyard through
the existing silver birch trees and the
colours often seen at sunset”
— Julian Brady

ABOVE The movement and peaceful sound of water falling from the bronze waterspout into the pond

adds to the ambience and peaceful atmosphere of this now-inviting space.

