



# BETWEEN THE lines

Rebuilding the boundary walls sparked the transformation of this Jo'burg garden into a tranquil, oriental retreat

TEXT: NATALIE BORUVKA  
PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRISTOPH HOFFMANN



## Who lives here

Adrian and Debbie Sing, who both work in the IT industry, and their five cats: Jessica, Oliver, Lynx, Bella and Max.

## The garden

An oriental-style garden in Morningside Manor, Jo'burg, on two levels with a number of water features.

What the owners of this property wanted was an attractive, low-maintenance garden that they could appreciate from the terrace they planned to build in front of the house. As the perimeter walls had recently been rebuilt, the garden was rather bare.

There was a slope sparsely planted with hen-and-chickens and agapanthus and a large area of concrete paving blocks used as additional parking which took up much of the lower level.

"My clients liked the idea of a meadow and were also keen on gravel rather than lawn. We then knew we were going the oriental route," explains landscaper Neville Ormond. The process began by building a retaining wall to support the terrace. 'Iceberg' roses at the top were removed and freylinias were



planted in front of the wall. The remainder of the slope was terraced using rocks excavated on site.

"To achieve the meadow look we planted colourful grasses like *Acorus* 'Gold', *Carex* 'Frosted Curls' and *Festuca* 'Green,'" >

OPPOSITE PAGE: *Acer palmatum*, *A. buergerianum*, *Heteropyxis natalensis* and olive trees add height to the garden. Gravel pathways lined by indigenous grasses were used in place of lawn.

THIS PAGE, LEFT TO RIGHT: ● *Gaura lindheimeri* and *Coleonema alba* lend colour and texture variation to the beds bordering the gravel path and steps. ● 'Islands' planted with a selection of low-maintenance ornamental grasses were built with rocks excavated on site in what was originally a parking area.



## NEVILLE'S TIPS ON WATER FEATURES

can be found on our website at [gardenandhome.co.za](http://gardenandhome.co.za)

**"WE LOVE THAT IT'S SUCH A DIVERSE, EVER-CHANGING SPACE"**

introduced medium-height plants like *Chondropetalum tectorum* and *Gomphostigma virgatum*.

Gravel was laid at the bottom of the slope, and within this, islands of raised beds were built using more of the natural rock. "We wanted the paths and the garden to meld," say the homeowners. "Neville's idea of using gravel offered the perfect solution especially as it's low maintenance."

Two water features function as focal points in this area. The first merges with its gravel surrounds by means of a pebble inlay which adds yet another texture. Bridged by sleepers that formed part of the original garden steps, it was designed as a dry riverbed so that when it rains the overflow of water fills up a sandstone birdbath. "The other feature is quite different in that it is circular which establishes a strong geometrical contrast to the softness of the rest of the garden," says Neville.

He carefully selected plants that reflect the change of seasons. In winter the grasses keep their colour. A severe cut back in spring sees them sprout again that season. The trees include a variety of deciduous, semi-deciduous and evergreen varieties. The olives, indigenous lavender trees and maples were chosen to enhance the garden's oriental feel. "The semi-deciduous lavender trees carry their lovely autumn colouring into winter and the maples have beautiful winter silhouettes," says Neville.

In the summer months, the natural shades of the grasses, rocks and gravel are offset by a variety of flowering plants. Billows of pink are provided by butterfly bush and tulbaghia and sea lavender introduces purple to the mix. In other areas, orange daylilies were mass planted for maximum impact. "We love that it's such a diverse, ever-changing space," say the homeowners. "It has enhanced our enjoyment of the terrace immensely." **GH**

### THIS SPREAD, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT:

- The hardscaping and pebble border around the swimming pool are softened by angled beds filled with plantings of mondo grass.
- A view of the top garden over the koi pond and swimming pool.
- In keeping with the circular theme, a pathway of stepping stones leads to the back of the house.
- Indigenous grasses planted in sumptuous drifts envelop the water feature.
- Feathery grasses complement the textured pebble inlay and wooden sleeper bridge over the natural water feature.



VIEW A PLAN OF THIS GARDEN  
on our website at [gardenandhome.co.za](http://gardenandhome.co.za)

