



*notes*  
*from a small*  
*landscape*

A HERNE BAY GARDEN IS OVERHAULED TO COMBINE TRADITIONAL AND MODERN ELEMENTS.  
STORY BY ROSE THODEY / PHOTOGRAPHS BY EMILY ANDREWS



LEFT: A single, dramatic blade of water falls onto smooth Kaiarau river stones that line the base of this modern waterfall.



WHEN A DEVELOPER TRANSFORMS a tired old villa into a comfortable 21st century home, the garden can sometimes seem like an afterthought. Not so in the leafy suburb of Herne Bay, Auckland, where Damian Wendelborn has wrought his Midas Touch.

Wendelborn, of Urbanite Landscape Design, has successfully woven traditional garden design with elements of modern landscaping to create an exterior living space in keeping with both the old and new stylistic touches that are evident in this renovated villa.

In the front garden he has acknowledged the leafy established suburban setting, allowing the exterior to “talk to the street” by blending traditional planting in a conventional format.

A graceful group of silver birches, *Betula jacquemontii*, establishes a sense of elegant simplicity. This welcoming calm is reinforced with soothing combinations of plantings in silver, white and green. These take the form of iris-like *Dietes iridioides*, *Euonymus Emerald Gem*, *Eugenia ventenatii* and *Teucrium fruticans*.

On one side of the property, a pleasing and failsafe border of *Griselinia littoralis* creates separation from the neighbours, replacing an original wire fence. Further back this gives way to a horizontal slat fence of dressed pine, which the designer has put in place to hide an amalgam of fence types and produce a unified look.

“Once the back of the house was pushed out there wasn’t much room, so I chose horizontal lines for an illusion of space,” says Wendelborn.

A long stretch of green lawn maintains the traditional vein and a couple of Chinese windmill palms (*Trachycarpus fortunei*) reflect the tropical touch of a cotton palm (*Washingtonia filifera*) next door.

At the opposite end, Wendelborn has inserted a series of slender concrete strips into the lawn.

“This allowed us to keep the permeability up while still making the area useable for outdoor living – you can put loungers on it, for example,” Wendelborn explains.

Having decided with the owner that a swimming pool was not the right way to bring the soothing effect of water into this tight space, Wendelborn placed a stream along the entire length of the back boundary. Backed by a wall of half-height honed concrete blocks, this further accentuates the horizontal line. A single blade of water falls onto Kaiarau river stones at the base.

Originally a raised lawn, the area was lowered to connect it to the house so that three floating steps provide an easy transition from paving to lawn, doubling as seating. Neighbouring trees provide a soft green background, with a liquidambar promising a burst of autumn colour.

Below the lawn, three large containers are filled with the slow-growing Mexican grass tree, *Dasyliion longissimum*. This is contrasted by a row of Mexican alders, which are eventually to be pleached formally into a high hedge that will pay homage to the formal character of the original home.