# FRONTLINE

## A beachside position can have positive and negative elements not least for the garden, but this Sydney property revels in its exposure to sea and salt spray.

Photographs **JASON BUSCH** Words **GEORGINA REID**

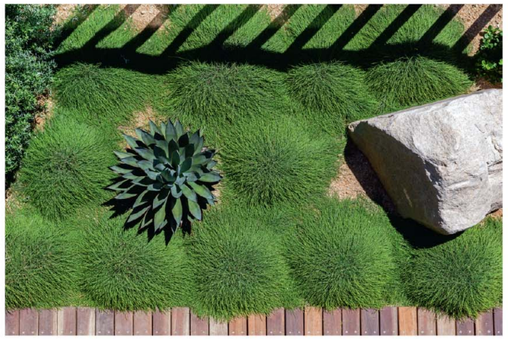
This page, from top The strong lines of this coastal garden are softened by loose, textural planting. Prostrate she-oak *(Casuarina 'Cousin It')* is a salt-tolerant native species, perfect for exposed coastal gardens. Sharp design details such as this custom barbecue feature in the scheme. Opposite page The striking garden by Landart Landscapes looks over Freshwater Beach in Sydney's northern suburbs.

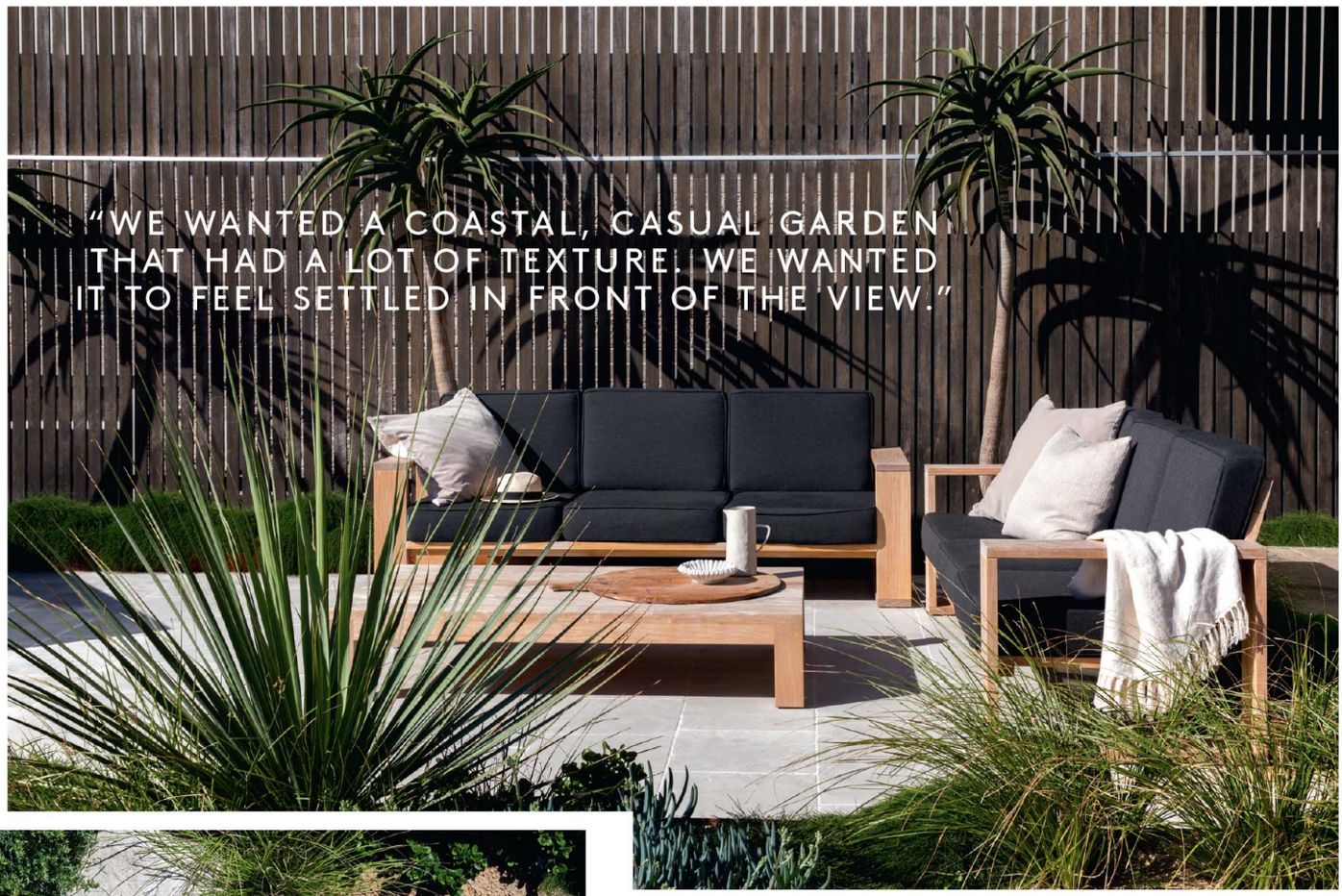
Designing a garden for an award-winning home looking out over one of Sydney's most beautiful beaches was a dream gig for designers Matt Leacy and Tom Wright of Landart Landscapes. But dream sites come with big responsibilities. With a backdrop on one side of a stunning Chenchow Little building and, on the other, uninterrupted ocean views, the garden design needed to be just right – sympathetic to the architecture, responsive to the client's desires, and to frame rather than obstruct views. Matt and his team have nailed it, creating a striking, restrained and beautifully detailed space.

"When we first saw the property, the garden was just grass," says Matt. "Our client really wanted to create a relaxed, flowing space where they could drift in and out of the house. They're very family oriented and also wanted to be able to entertain outside as well. They wanted a space they could connect with visually from the inside of the house, and also a space to entice them to go out into."

Because of its frontline coastal location, the property is exposed to extreme weather at different times of the day and year. Tailoring a garden space that allows the clients to be outside as much as possible was important to Matt. "There's an area where you can have evening drinks when the wind dies down and then drift around the corner, where it's a little more protected."

The property takes indoor/outdoor living to a whole new level, with doors that slide back entirely, revealing grand beach views framed by the vertical timber balustrade and textural, low plantings in the garden. The view of the garden is even more impressive from above, according to Matt. "One of the best visuals of the garden is





from the first floor, looking down. The front of the property is on quite an angle, and we've repeated this within the garden design, softening the strong lines with relaxed, sculptural planting."

Not only did Matt and the Landart team have the frontline salt exposure to consider when selecting plants, they also had the challenge of the owner's young dog, who had a penchant for running up and down the balustrade. "It was really tricky trying to work out what would grow there and be suitable with both the salt and the dog. We needed to use plants that were hardy enough for the dog to step on, until he got used to walking on the deck!" Matt says. They planted hard-wearing species such as *Casuarina 'Cousin It'*, *Agave 'Sharkskin'* and *Senecio serpens*, as well as native grasses like *Lomandra 'Tanika'*. "We added tree aloes *(Aloidendron barberae)* to break up the timber screens and create some shadow play against them. We wanted a coastal, casual garden that had a lot of texture. We wanted it to feel settled in front of the view."

One of the hallmarks of Landart's work is attention to detail. This garden is no exception. A sustainably harvested spotted gum deck floats over limestone paving, and garden beds are edged with Corten steel. A custom-built polished concrete barbecue, designed by Matt and the Landart team, cantilevers over the deck. Level changes are subtle and resolved. It's a striking and elegant space that complements both the architecture and the site. Most importantly, though, the owners love it. "The owners are thrilled," says Matt. "They're really passionate about caring for the garden on an ongoing basis. They keep it looking really good."

Creating a space that people want to be in and to care for is the hallmark of a successful design. Again, Matt Leacy has nailed it.

*landart.com.au; Georgina Reid's website is theplanthunter.com.au.*

**This page, from top** An outdoor lounge setting framed by tree aloes provides the perfect spot for weekend relaxation. The sustainably harvested spotted gum deck will turn silver over time, softening into the coastal landscape. This home and garden take indoor/outdoor living to new heights.