

Weekend Post

# home & garden

JUNE 2010



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# EVOLVING PLOT OF A GARDEN GURU

STORY BY JULIANNA KERR PHOTOGRAPHY BY VERONICA SAGREDO

They reckon tradies never do work on their own properties, but this professional gardener has a tropical showpiece

**A**ndrew Prowse was lured from Sydney 20 years ago by the idea of life in the tropics, which he finds "quite lovely". At his home in Holloways Beach, he has created a beautiful and peaceful garden.

In addition to his landscape architecture business, Andrew also does a lot of work overseas with his other business, Garden City Design Co. He's currently involved in an ongoing botanical park project in Cairns' sister city in China and is also working on maintenance and planting schemes for Australian war cemeteries.

While his home main garden makes up his backyard, Andrew has all sorts of great accents like potted plants of varying size, colour and species dotted throughout. He's currently juggling things around and says he's gone for a simple, graphic shape in the backyard.

"Even if the garden is windblown or wet, it still looks presentable," he says.

"It still gives you a good image. Most of my living is done in the living room which overlooks the back garden.

"The garden is viewed as a graphic piece from the lounge → like a stage almost. One of the other things I have used around my garden is a gravel courtyard all around the house.

"It's good security because you can hear people coming and I like the way it's used in classical gardens and Asian gardens. It has a nice neat appearance."

Andrew's a busy man, so he tends to choose hearty plants that can survive if he isn't home for a week or two.

In his garden, you can find such favourites as bromeliad (which can handle weather in the tropics and which he favours for its flowers), travellers palms, anthurium, Cleopatra's earrings, the occasional cactus, aloe (salvaged from a project), croton, spider lilies (a very tough plant that can be dry for ages), giant native palms and elephant ears.

He even salvages the occasional poisonous plant through his work, such as the potato plant he adopted.

His garden features an assortment of beautiful trees, most of which he planted himself. There were paperbarks in the

yard when he arrived, but he has since added acacia cedar (a native species), Hong Kong Orchid Tree and a sausage tree, which comes from Africa and has interesting orchid-like brown flowers that are followed by seed pods that look like sausages.

"My favourite is the brugmansia suaveolens or angel's trumpet," he says. "It flowers at night with a beautiful scent that goes through the whole house."

Because of the plants Andrew has selected for his garden, he says he only needs to water about once a week in the dry season.

He's also a big fan of planting along the perimeter of a property for privacy. He suggests that "perimeter screening" is a great place to start for anyone who is just setting out to design their garden.

Even planting just at the back of the block will create an interesting look as well as privacy, which can be hard to come by in populated areas.

Andrew chose pink phyllanthus to create his hedge. He intends to add more in the near future to make the hedge thicker and is increasing the density of the groundcover with more croton.

Andrew says there are always challenges as a garden matures, including finding the right plants that can take the shade and dryness underneath the trees.

"Gardens evolve a lot so you're always having to tweak them," he says. "Some things might not grow as well as expected but you can experiment with some plants and see how they go."



A quiet spot: Andrew is pleased with his home garden collection and this ideal vantage point.



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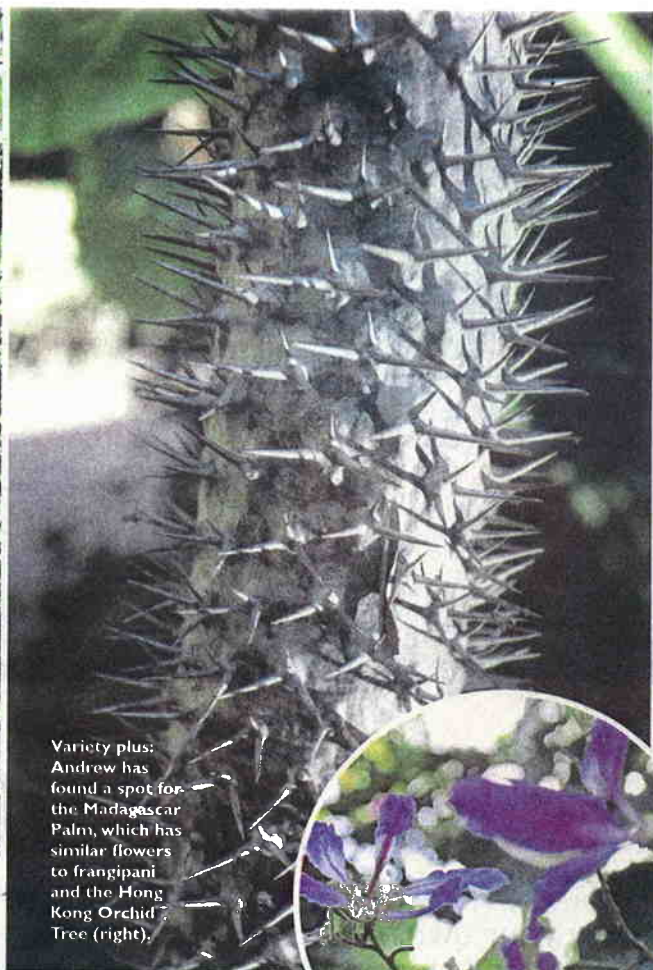
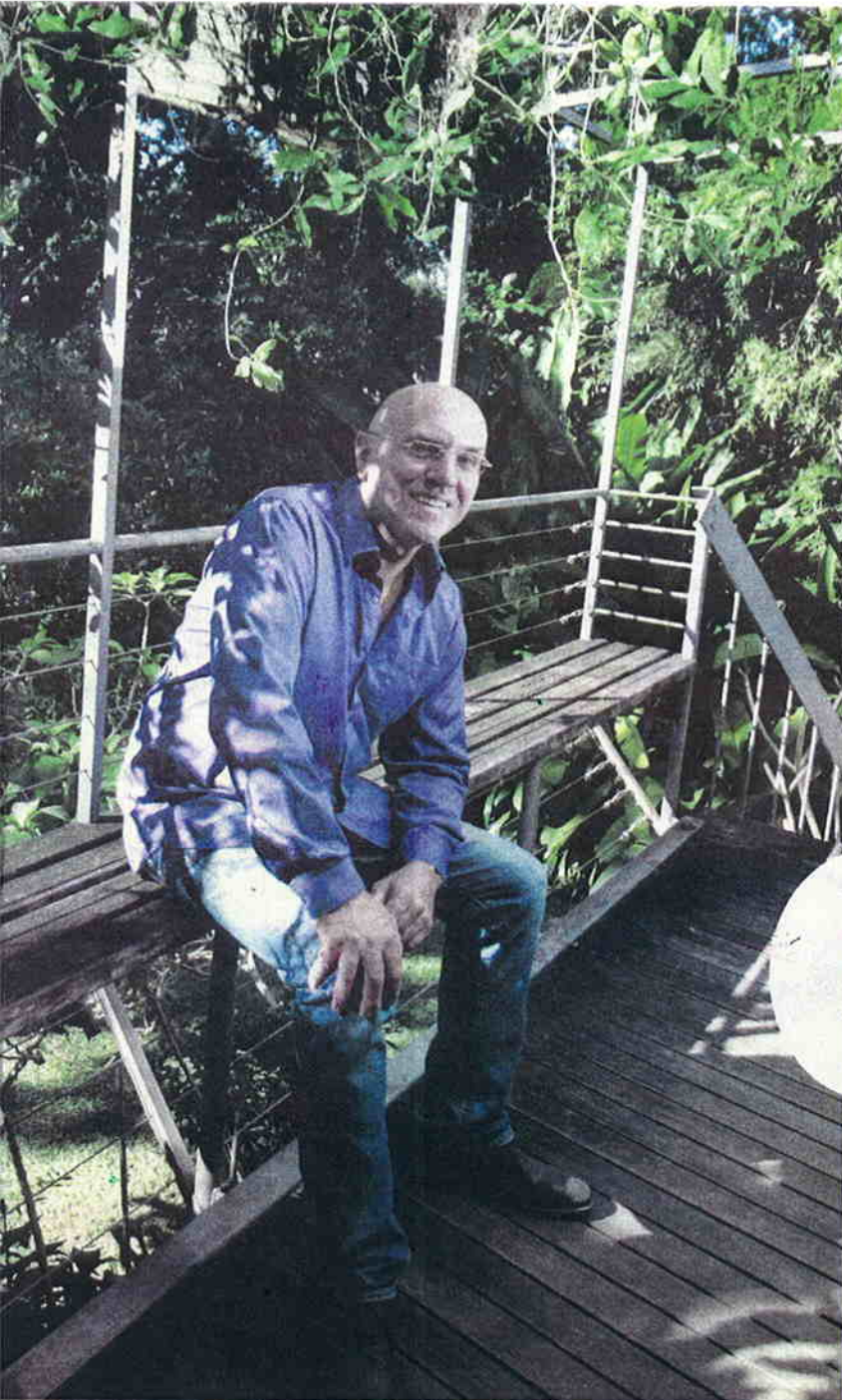
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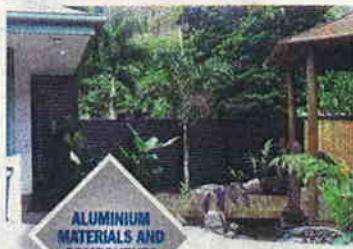


Variety plus:  
Andrew has found a spot for the Madagascar Palm, which has similar flowers to frangipani and the Hong Kong Orchid Tree (right).



## GARDEN OWNER...

Andrew Prowse is a landscape architect and director at JNP Pawsey & Prowse Landscape Architecture in Cairns. Originally from Sydney, Andrew has been in this area for 20 years and now lives at Holloways Beach. He also is a director of Garden City Design Co, working with home & garden columnist Kim Morris on several international projects. Andrew's garden is always evolving and he favours a tropical, minimalist concept. At school he was always interested in architecture and design. Coming from a farming family, he had a large country garden and that generated an early interest in gardens and landscapes.



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