



Simone and Luke's native home

Building a stunning home within an expansive native garden is giving a young family the chance to create memories that will last a lifetime.

By Marina Williams - Photographer Leon Schoots

After years living in Melbourne, Simone and Luke were craving space. They knew moving to Bendigo would give them a home and garden that would not only suit their busy lifestyle but also cope with the day-to-day antics of their three young children.

"We wanted the garden to be low maintenance but also have a lot of lawn space for the kids to play and, when they are older, to kick a football or play cricket out on the lawn," says Simone.

"Our number one priority was for it to be the focal point, and not the house. We really wanted a mostly native garden and to work within the existing landscape."

The couple had ambitious plans. Their garden would be developed parallel to the build of their new home on a 3.5-acre site in a semi-rural setting in Junortoun, and would span two acres.

But they knew what they wanted and the

design process was quick. They gave Fiona Brockhoff Design a detailed brief and then approached Simon Rosa Landscaping to implement the plan. With some tweaking, the landscape slowly evolved as the overall house-and-garden project progressed across 12 months.

"One major addition we made to the original plan was Simon designed a natural kids' space, with swings, a sandpit and stepping logs for them to play on. This has been a huge hit. Incorporating a sizeable vegetable garden was also important to Luke."

Plants were selectively chosen, with low-maintenance natives and hardy drought-tolerant lawn areas acknowledging Bendigo's hot summers and cool winters. A number of eucalypts line the driveway and complement a large gum tree that was already growing on the property. Mulch is a mix of organic

material and river-bed washed pebbles, with stepping stones of slate on some paths. Offering a splendour of colour are woody Japanese maples and oak trees with their distinctive-shaped leaves. Together with native grasses, kangaroo paws and Xanthorrhoea grass trees, they make striking features in the deep garden beds that envelope the home.

"They will work well all year round," says landscaper Simon. "The age and architecture of the grass trees and the tall flower has really hit the mark in the native garden. These are highlighted by the feature garden lighting, natural stone walls and gravel areas, in particular."

Strategically placed stacked stone walls are something the couple "absolutely love", as are the sweeping lawns and the walkway of aged railway sleepers that leads to the home's front door.





The house equally considers the landscape. Metcalfe local Jerry Wolveridge from Wolveridge Architects led the design phase, with Dan Bahen and his team from BLR Provincial Construction taking on the build. "While we started with a blank canvas on a large, flat site, it did have terrific views out to the west. So the plan was to create a home with outlooks but still have some privacy. It also had to cope with local environmental and weather conditions that can be extreme, while ensuring the family could still make the most of being indoors and outside," says Jerry.

The house features a series of "wings" that define areas for the kids, parents, garage and guests, with each connecting to the central living area. Large, black steel-framed windows capture views of the garden; the central family room leads to a large paved courtyard; and a towering brick chimney vents a wood-fired pizza oven. "We wanted it to look like an old homestead chimney," Simone says.

Vertically hung timber is used extensively on the home's exterior, as well as for fencing and the pool decking. It was chosen because it will naturally weather and silver off over time. "As the landscape grows and develops, the home will merge into it," Jerry says.

Seeing their family grow and enjoy their newly completed and spacious home and garden is something Simone and Luke are looking forward to.

"We absolutely love the garden and can't wait to see it evolve over time. In years to come, we want it to be like an oasis, providing cool shelter during summer and attracting birdlife, which it has already started to do," Simone says. "Moving from Melbourne, the kids are absolutely loving the extra space and their dedicated play space. Luke and I love being able to relax in our lounge and look out any window and see nature – it's a nice change from city living."

