

# FRESH CONNECTION

BY CLEVERLY ADAPTING TO THIS SITE, A EUROPEAN-STYLE GARDEN MOULDS TO THE LAND, WORKING IN SYNERGY WITH THE LANDSCAPE THAT ENVELOPES IT

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Leading from the staircase, the sheltered European-style entrance garden features *Diospyros whyteana*, *Rumohra adiantiformis* and *Betula alba* 'Silver Birch', underplanted with rare ferns OPPOSITE PAGE An *Acacia sieberiana* punctuates the granite-clad boundary wall

In the formal French-inspired parterre garden, neatly clipped *Rhus crenata* hedges frame an ensemble of lavender and blood-red roses, while *Plumeria rubra* and *P. alba* frangipanis are underplanted with mounds of *Rhaphiolepis alba* 'Indian Hawthorn'. Star jasmine and Parthenocissus clad the balustrades leading from the pool terrace to the courtyard



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ere metres away from Llandudno beach on the fringes of a Cape Nature fynbos reserve, lies a garden

that redefines the concept of coastal gardening. A fusion of classic landscaping and rugged coastal interface, it is as unexpected as it is beguiling.

While planning their garden, the European owners envisioned a design with universal appeal. 'We wanted a blend of European design, Cape flora and succulents,' say the owners.

The couple approached landscape architect Patrick Watson to design their garden, while Arlo Mitchell of Greencube Landscapes and Gardens brought the concept to life. Patrick also worked closely with the architect, Keith Mason, who designed the French châteaux-style home. 'As an artist you can put ideas together, but ultimately the client needs to buy into and extend on your vision,' says Patrick.

Like the waves pounding at the boulders on its doorstep, the ebb and flow of the property's coastal context guided the design and plant choices. 'A garden is perceptive of change and requires discipline, both in terms of design and location,' Patrick explains.

The challenge was choosing plants that would withstand tempestuous winds and salty spray from the Atlantic. 'The climate ranges from desert to rainforest; it's hot and dry in summer, with the strong north-western ripping through the garden in winter. Many plants just won't grow in such a taxing environment,' explains Patrick.

There's no denying the fickle Cape weather is a hard taskmaster. As was the location. The owners admit that it was ▶



## COASTAL GARDENING

Arlo Mitchell of Greencube Landscapes and Gardens, who installed the garden, shares some key pointers on gearing a garden for rugged coastal conditions

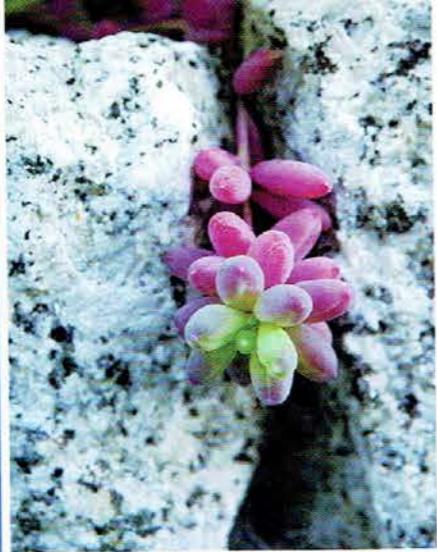
### Look to nature for answers.

Explore the endemic plants found in the vicinity of your garden and incorporate these. For the plant-

clad boundary walls, we drew inspiration from many plant species clinging to crevices in granite boulders, such as *Glauca*, *Eriocephalus*, *Tarchonanthus*

*camphoratus*, *Sideroxylon inerme*, *Stapelia* spp., *Delosperma* spp. **Expect some imperfections** caused by prevailing winds and salt burn.

Let nature sculpt things a bit. **Provide protection:** group plants tightly, so that they can provide shelter for each other as they mature.



CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT *Cotyledon orbiculata*; *Senecio* spp.; *Crassula tetragona*; *Crassula* spp.; *Senecio* spp.; *Crassula* spp.; *Eriocephalus africanus*  
OPPOSITE PAGE To the north of the garden, overlooking the Twelve Apostles mountain range and the Atlantic Ocean, the retaining boundary wall is planted up with hardy indigenous succulents



a behemoth undertaking to carve out the property's blueprint.

The granite salvaged during the excavation of the site was used to clad the boundary walls. To soften the strong architectural lines, Patrick grew some 3 000 succulents at Kirstenbosch National Botanical Garden that were plugged into irrigated pockets in the wall.

The imposing hardscaping is fleshed out with a unique combination of indigenous and exotic flora, some of which are trailblazing additions to a coastal garden. Some of the owners' favourite additions are *Acacia karroo* and rare blood-red frangipanis, which serve as a fond reminder of their visits to French Polynesia. As are the fruit-bearing trees – the gnarled twisted limbs of the fig trees have formed a beautiful natural arch, while the leafy canopy provides respite against the summer sun.

'Design wise, the garden is laid out on four levels, each with its own distinct personality,' explains Patrick. To the south, the front entrance garden has a refined Occidental underpinning. As it is sheltered from the salt-laden winter winds, rare ferns flourish. This shaded enclave features a woodland ensemble of red camellias and *Rapanea melanophloeos* 'Cape Beech', while a copse of silver birch trees are a nod to the owners' Russian heritage.

To the north, the rooftop garden overlooks an expansive vista of ocean and mountains. As it is exposed to the elements, hardy, wind-resistant plants were chosen.

Below, the main front lawn garden is a crisp, simple composition, which places the unobstructed view of the Atlantic in sharp focus. A neatly clipped *Rhus crenata* 'Dune Crow Berry' hedge frames the view, while hardy, imported *Paspalum vaginatum* lawn edges the grotto swimming pool.

At the lowest level lies a formal, French-inspired parterre garden that complements the architecture of the home. Thanks to protective walls, this treasure trove at the heart of the property is thriving.

Against all odds, the garden has managed to flourish. Thanks to design rigour and horticultural knowledge, it is a unique alchemy of Northern Hemisphere aesthetic and endemic Cape flora. ■ Patrick Watson ☎ 082 600 6836  
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## GREENING BOUNDARY WALLS

Softened with pockets of succulents, the granite-clad boundary walls are the garden's pièce de résistance. We shed light on the design process

**Plants** Hardy, drought-tolerant succulents were chosen to green the walls. These

include *Senecio* spp., *Delosperma* spp., *Crassula* spp., *Haworthia* spp., *Stapelia* spp.,

*Eriocephalus*, *Aloe commixta* and *Oscularia* spp.  
**Irrigation** A complex system of drip- and pop-up sprayers irrigates these living walls. A pioneering design by Patrick Watson, pipes were inserted into the concrete pour of the walls during

construction. These crevices were earmarked as planting pockets.  
**Cladding** Granite was clad against the concrete walls and the openings to the planting pockets were exposed as random natural spaces.  
**Planting** The pockets

were filled with a suitable planting medium and succulents were carefully inserted into each planting hole.  
**Maintenance** The pockets of succulents require meticulous care and attention to keep them looking pristine.