



# future classic

Mirroring its home, this compact Joburg garden is serenely classical at heart

TEXT TESS PATERSON PHOTOGRAPHS CHRISTOPH HOFFMANN



In the front garden of Neil Cloud's Hyde Park home, formal *Buxus* hedging surrounds a pair of *Dais cotinifolia* trees. OPPOSITE Hydrangeas in shades of pink and purple flourish in the summer months.



The raised natural pool runs parallel to the main lawn. OPPOSITE Landscape architect Patrick Watson created a walkway of silver birch trees against the western boundary wall.



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## HERE'S SOMETHING INORDINATELY TRANQUIL ABOUT GREEN AND WHITE GARDENS.

Tucked away in one of Joburg's loveliest streets, businessman Neil Cloud's Hyde Park, Johannesburg, sanctuary is no exception. Just four years old, it's already imbued with an air of established calm, an orderly mix of groomed lawn and summer blooms that feels far roomier than its actual size.

Formerly part of a five-acre property, the surrounding area was subdivided into a series of spacious sites. Neil's triple-volume home took up the lion's share of his stand, leaving around 700m<sup>2</sup> for the garden and pool. 'The house came first,' he explains, 'but we definitely wanted a sense of cohesion between the indoor

and outdoor spaces. It was a privilege to be able to plan the two in tandem, and I think it contributes enormously to the feeling of harmony.'

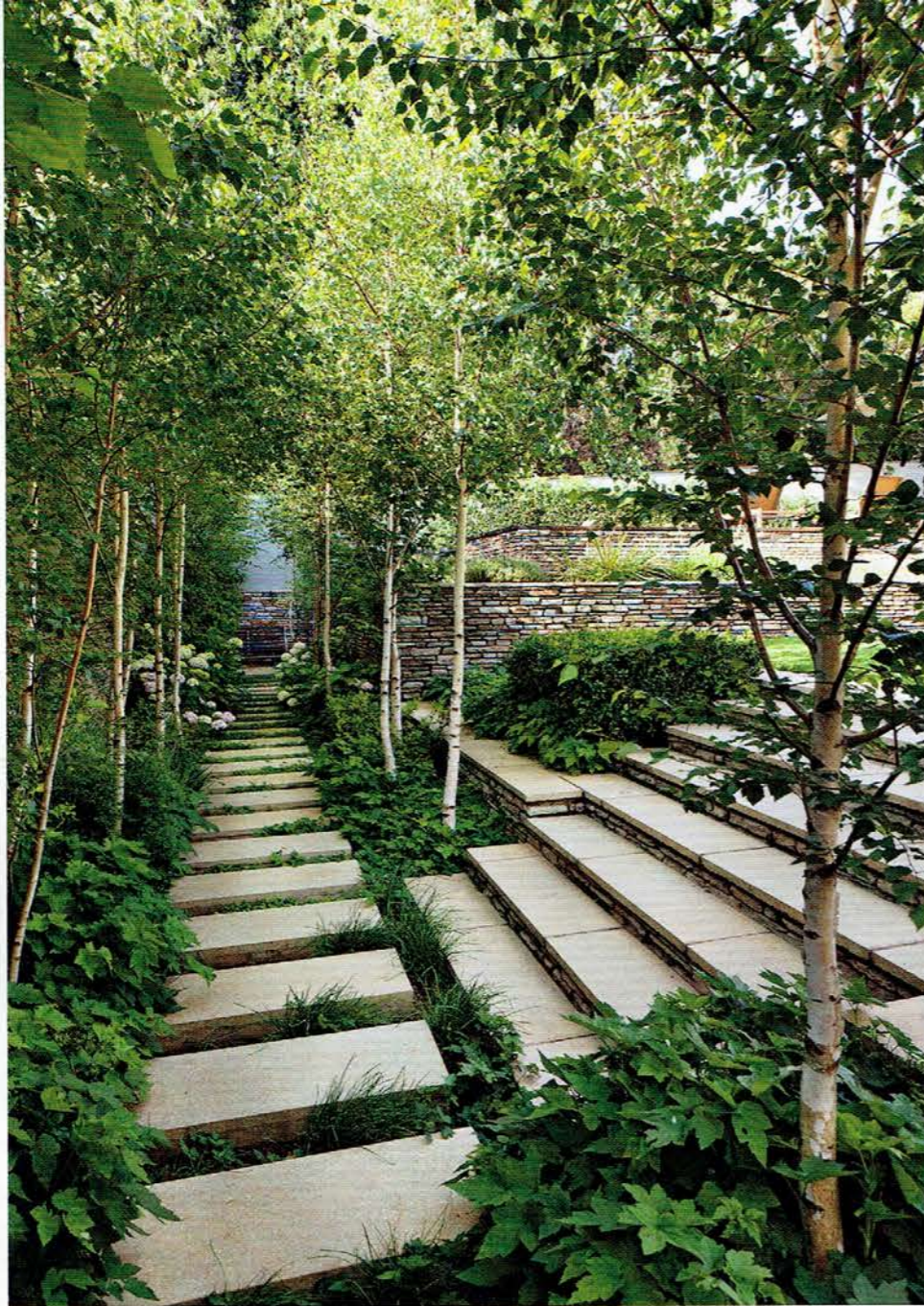
Neil approached architect Keith Mason who's renowned as much for his diverse and elegant designs as he is for his abundant drawings. 'We detail everything, in hundreds of drawings,' he says. 'Ultimately we wanted something authentically classical, rather than overly grand.' With its shingled cedar roof, meticulous finishes and pleasing Lutyens-like proportions this building would be equally at home in New England or the English countryside. What it needed was a garden befitting

its classical credentials so, while still in the construction phase, Keith brought in landscape architect Patrick Watson.

'The thing about Patrick is that he always embraces the house and its location,' adds Keith. 'He sees the architecture and the garden as a single entity, and that makes for very impactful spaces.'

Connecting the house to the pool deck opposite is a simple stretch of lawn, bordered by crisp concrete edging and low stone-clad walls. 'There was a natural drop of three metres between the eastern and western boundaries,' says Patrick. 'Keith adjusted the levels to create a seamless connection between the lawn and the house, adding a shallow staircase at one end, which descends into a separate garden room.' Now lined with silver birches, Patrick transformed this sunken area into a beautifully dappled walkway, effectively screening off the neighbours and creating respite from the sun. ▷





Mirroring the house's natural, weathered tones, Patrick introduced mostly white plantings with occasional glimpses of the palest pink. 'It's roughly half indigenous, half exotic,' he says. 'We used plants such as watsunia, gaura, agapanthus and wild iris to soften the axial hard-landscaping. It's a relaxed, almost country-style planting used in a balanced way, which is what British garden designer Gertrude Jekyll always got so right. If we'd introduced graphic shapes like cordylines, for instance, it would have looked completely at odds with the setting.'

Not content with flowering plants alone, Patrick intentionally chose the silver birches for their pale trunks and transplanted four stinkwoods from the existing site. Placed symmetrically amid the groomed lawn they promise a dramatic, shady sprawl with time.

At the front entrance, two pairs of *Dais cotinifolia* – the indigenous pompom trees with blooms the color of candyfloss – create a wonderful sense of arrival. 'When the garden was first planted I honestly wondered if we needed more plants,' laughs Neil. 'I learned to be patient though, and it's been such a pleasure to see Patrick's concept evolve.'

Relative to its overall site, this garden is a compact space. 'The lack of visual clutter certainly makes it appear larger,' says Patrick, 'and a pale palette adds to the sense of space.'

'I think classicism provides an order that people can relate to,' adds Keith. 'and that's particularly effective for smaller gardens.'

From Neil's perspective, this garden is an integral part of his home. 'I'm a family man,' he says, 'and we love to entertain and share our home with friends. It's a tranquil extension of our living space, and that's something that I really appreciate.' □ Patrick Watson, 011-646-8970; PWM Architects, [pwmarch.co.za](http://pwmarch.co.za)

LEFT TOP Architect Keith Mason designed the symmetrical staircase that connects the main garden to the lower walkway. LEFT White gaura softens the stonework alongside the pool. OPPOSITE The axial lines of the garden and pool reflect the home's classical character.

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