

Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show 2014

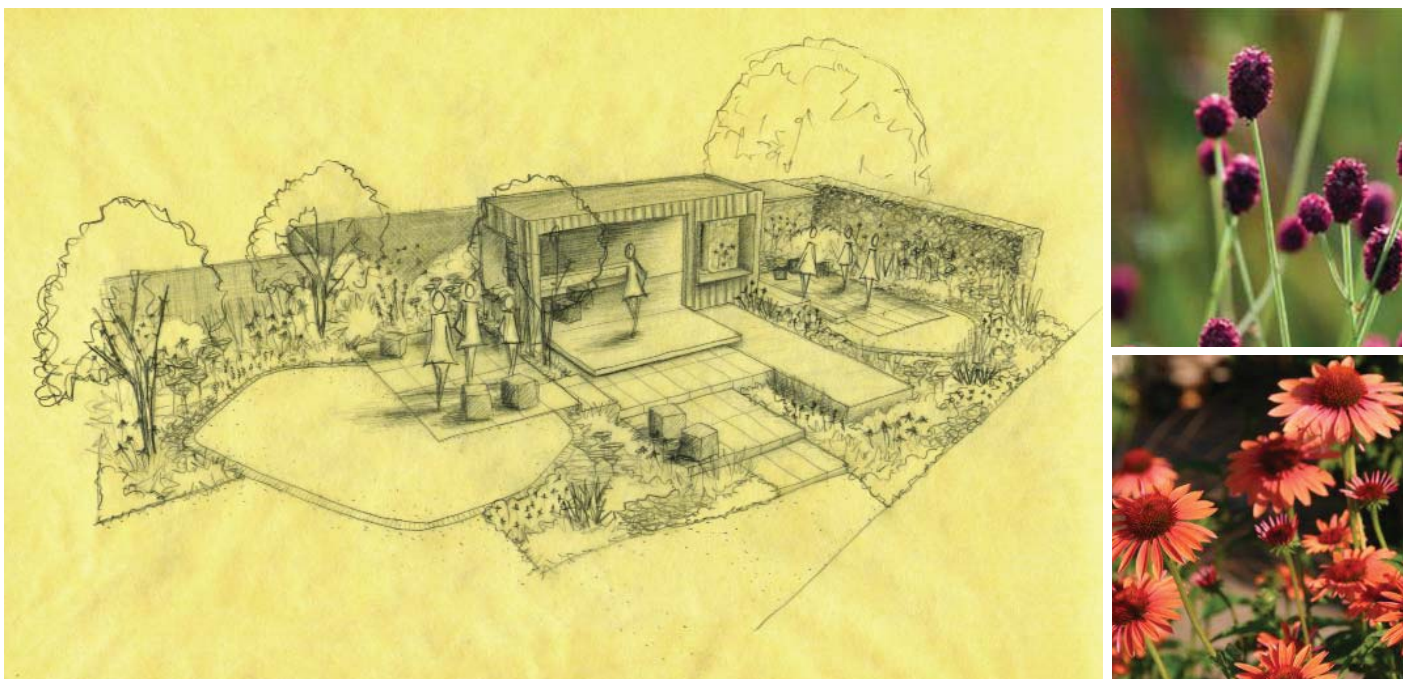
Population growth in urban Melbourne is predicted to increase at a substantial rate and we need to compensate for this rapid growth in urbanization to ensure that our city is a healthy, sustainable and liveable one. This presents a fundamental challenge in urban landscape design to ensure that our city is able to adapt and cater for the ever changing requirements of the city and its people.

For our show garden entry at the 2014 Melbourne International Flower & Garden Show, we have designed a garden that explores the potential of 'left over' spaces in our city. Our design hopes to demonstrate how such a space can be transformed into an attractive and functional green pocket that will contribute to the health of our city, its residents and visitors.



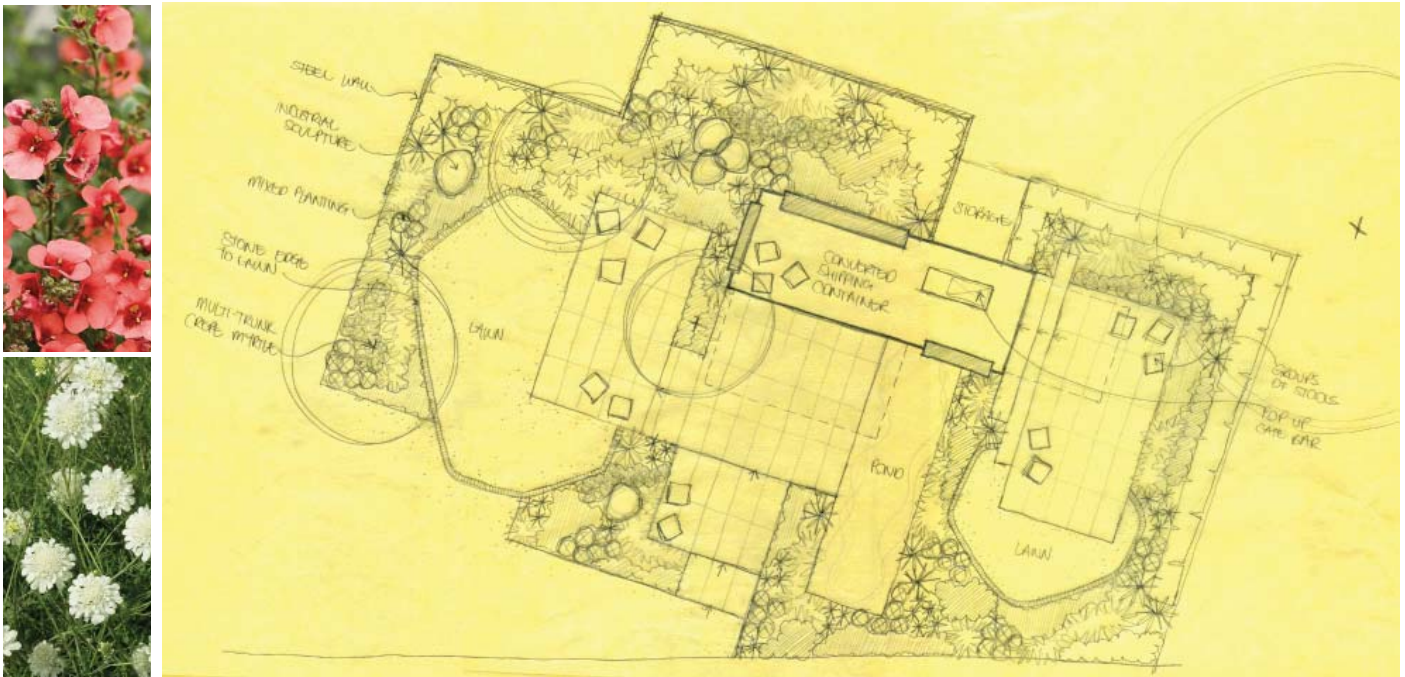
The garden will feature a converted shipping container that functions as a pop up cafe, which in a real world setting could work as both a temporary or permanent installation. The container-cafe will open out onto paved areas, small groups of seating and lawn, all surrounded by plants to create an inviting place for people to meet and socialise.

Continuing on from the planting palette in our 2013 show garden entry 'The New Wave', we will again feature a naturalistic perennial planting scheme, which aims to show new ways of using plants in an urban context. It is our belief that this style of planting is not only aesthetically pleasing, but sustainable. The mixture of plants designed in a naturalistic fashion will assist people to make an emotional connection to nature, gain an ecological awareness and feel in touch with the environment. We want the garden to feel like an urban oasis where people can soak in nature despite being in the midst of bustling and fast paced city.



Without plenty of green space and a variety of plant life in our cities, we risk a severe decline in biodiversity. Biological diversity is essential in our cities to preserve species richness, attract insects, provide places for wildlife to inhabit and keep our natural ecosystems functioning. We strongly believe in creating thriving areas of flora and fauna that integrate with and enhance the built environment. The more we are able to strike a balance between city and nature, the more resilient and ecologically stable our city will become.

It is commonly accepted that the greener a city is, the healthier it is. When effective recreational and meeting spaces are provided by a city, people are encouraged to form and maintain relationships, leading to improvements in social connectedness, mental health and wellbeing. This in turn, can lead to a decrease in crime rates and fear levels in the community. Open space also encourages higher levels of physical activity, improving physical health and wellbeing, which in both the long and short term will take pressure of our health care system.



The realities of urban living coupled with the fact that there are many disused, sometimes derelict 'left over' spaces or 'urban voids' in our cities, means that there is ample opportunity to convert these spaces into green pockets and places of escape, which are catered to the needs of the local community.

A great example of an urban open space is the conversion of the High line in New York from an abandoned railway line above the city into a now thriving aerial greenway. The high line features naturalistic plantings inspired by the self seeding perennials and grasses that had grown in the disused space before it was redesigned. People are drawn to it for its peaceful feeling and for the opportunity to connect with nature in a sanctuary that feels far removed from what is one of the busiest cities in the world.



The inclusion of a pop up cafe in our design takes advantage of the recent fascination in pop up culture and how the excitement and sense of urgency evoked by the temporary can draw people to a place. People want to have experiences and they want to feel like they are a part of something. The transient nature of all things 'pop up' drives people to experience a place or event before it is gone.

By using a converted shipping container as the shell for the cafe, we also aim to demonstrate how found objects already present on a site can be recycled and integrated into the design of a new space. Creating a new green pocket doesn't necessarily have to be about completely transforming a space, but working with what is already there, reintroducing what existed in the past and combining this with new and pioneering design elements.

We see the implementation of more green spaces in our city as baby steps which will lead to eventual but significant positive change. By showcasing our design at MIFGS 2014 we hope to influence the future of urban landscape planning in Melbourne with the ultimate goal of creating a healthier and more sustainable city. In turn, it is our desire to see Melbourne set an example for other cities around the world to do the same.