

*garden profile*



## SENSE OF

# *sanctuary*

It's easy to lose yourself in this Asian-inspired garden, with its mesmerising appeal and mystique surroundings

Story & Photos: Jules Moore

Nestled on the southern side of the Waitakere Hills, a five-minute drive from Titirangi, a forgotten 1970s-designed property was in desperate need of a makeover.

Titirangi is well known for its high levels of rainfall, short-lived sunlight, poor soils and sticky clay. The area has sloping grounds and its own unique rain forest features many mature native trees and birds. It's here you would find oversized pigeons swooping in and around groves of Nikau palms and clumps of wild ginger.

You could almost be forgiven for asking why people would live in such damp, shady surroundings. However, the geography of the land is such that it invites you in, entices you and, as a result, makes you not want to leave.

There's a special kind of mystique that surrounds Titirangi and that's why the owners of this property, Jono Sagar and Neil Sparkman, wanted their home to merge and connect with the land. They also wanted to replicate the feeling they experienced when they escaped to resorts overseas.

Jono and Neil called on the Plantet Earth team to makeover their garden. Jules Moore was the designer on the project. Once inside the home's boundaries, it was clear to Jules and the Plantet Earth team that the design not only needed to blend into the idyllic features of the land, but the magical pull of Asian-inspired holidays needed to be present in the garden in a big way.



The homeowners saw Asia as their escape from the demands of their often stressful designing business in the city. As such, they wanted to recreate that sense of sanctuary associated with resorts in Asia in their own backyard so they could come home to it every day.

The garden's sloping section dominated the landscape. Obtaining a flat area of land with a cut and fill approach was the only option for the coveted entertaining space needed for the homeowners' many functions.

Earth-moving machines made way for solid-block retaining walls. The rest of the garden was too steep for more structured retaining so Plantet Earth optimised the natural terrain by using steps and paths to create more of a rambling Balinese feel. Project manager Tim Bradbury paved and built the steps leading to the entertaining area.

Looking from the top of the garden to the lower realms, the design of the landscape takes you on a journey of many levels through

to the bush. Moss rock worked in well with the homeowner's collection of statues, with the garden evolving into more of a carefree collection of bromeliads and foliage plants.

The upper levels of the garden had a different feel altogether. Here, the aim was to create a more contemporary style, yet once the concrete block walls that were necessary for retaining and maximising the flat area were in place, it left an overwhelming closed-in feeling. There were also remnants of the previous owner's love of trellis, old-fashioned plants and paving steps that were discoloured and passed their use-by date. This was the most challenging part of the design.

We needed to be minimal yet practical, while also incorporating long lines of block walls and moving from one level to the next with ease. We wanted to include the use of water as the homeowners were told that their number seven house, in numerology terms, needed a body of water of some sort around it. A rill

