

that rocks!



Hands up those for whom xeriscaping is a new term. Developed in Colorado, it's a landscaping approach centred around water-conscious garden design.

Water, in Vermont, Melbourne, is a precious resource. And that's not conducive to gardens designed along traditional European lines and featuring flowerbeds full of bright – and thirsty – exotics.

At the same time, the answer doesn't have to be a sterile, plant-free backyard. This is what homeowner Geoff Iles was thinking when he decided to take a local approach

to transforming his tennis court into a more aesthetically pleasing outdoor space.

"Current water restrictions here are very rigid, so I needed to let go of water-thirsty mainstream garden concepts. However, I didn't see it as a question of giving anything up; it was more about acknowledging and embracing our beautiful Australian landscape, which is enriched by



magnificent drought-tolerant flora”, says Geoff. “This garden is my daily relaxation, but it also reminds me to appreciate the fragile nature of our environment. To me, it represents reconciliation with the world around us.”

The make-over features the seven basic principles of xeriscaping. These include sensible planning and design, careful soil analysis, practical green areas where required, appropriate plant selection, efficient or no irrigation, use of mulches, and an appropriate level of maintenance.

In a sense the resulting landscape is hereditary – it is a snapshot of the Australian bush, complete with a dry creekbed, designed to look as though a rushing watercourse has deposited the stones and settled them in. Planting features a large range of tough, drought tolerant Australian native plants, such as silver banksia (*Banksia marginate*), silky purple-flag (*Patersonia sericea*), tassell-rush, small crowea, tropical rhododendron, ‘*Dampiera rosmarinifolia*’, kidney weed, magnolia *Heptapeta*, whiteroot, native fuchsia, Australian grass tree, and many more. Any non-native plants chosen require less maintenance, water and fertiliser than many of the known exotic species.

“I see it as promoting the often undervalued beauty and practicality of Australian flora,” says Geoff. “In addition, it

attracts native wildlife, utilises mulching and composting, and eliminates most weeds.”

The overall design uses large quantities of Australian local pebbles from DécoR Pebble, which are quarried under licence for sustainability. Goulburn Gold 7mm are used on the garden paths, Aussie Black 50mm+ on the riverbed, and Delatite 30-50mm and 50-200mm around the two golf greens, as well as Riveria 20mm, Ettamogah Red 20-40mm, 50-200mm and Aussie Sandstone 40-100mm. Together, they work as lawn replacement, mulching and ornamental decoration.

So, given his demanding and hectic lifestyle, Geoff’s little corner of seclusion works well for him. It doesn’t require a lot of maintenance, its natural forms set it well away from the concrete jungle... and its two golf greens mean he can practice his swing whenever the mood takes him. What’s more, the artificial grass of those greens is all that remains of the old tennis court.

“I practice my drive from the upstairs balcony,” he says. “I use solid foam balls, which can easily make the distance... if hit correctly!” **H**