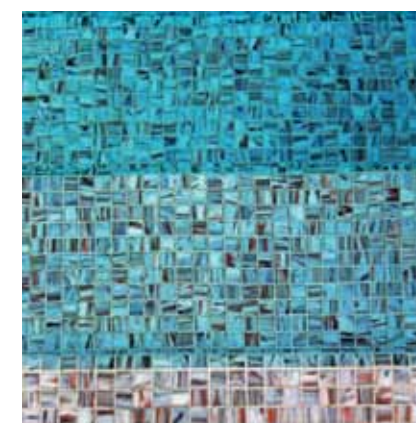
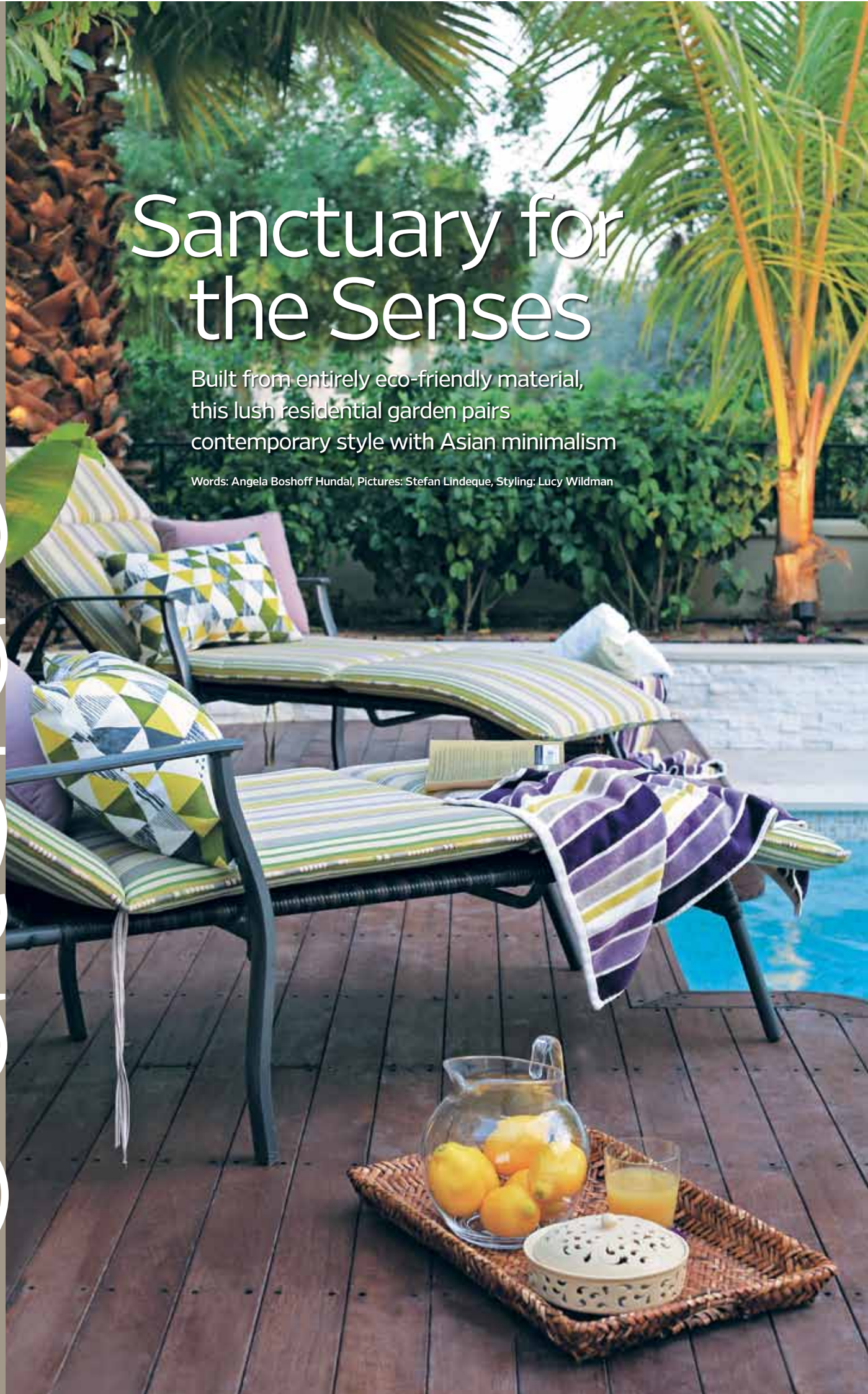


Sanctuary for the Senses

Built from entirely eco-friendly material, this lush residential garden pairs contemporary style with Asian minimalism

Words: Angela Boshoff Hundal, Pictures: Stefan Lindeque, Styling: Lucy Wildman



Built alongside a wild desert park in Arabian Ranches, this tranquil landscape mixes clean architectural lines, gently curved edges and chalky, jewel hues to create an almost ethereal, Asian-minimalist space. Designed by Better Gardens, with input from homeowner Elan Fabbri, it exudes a surprisingly cosy but decadent warmth that's quite rare in Dubai gardens.

"I think its 6,600-square-foot size, which is small by Dubai standards, helped us define its homely character," says Elan, who had the landscape designed and finished first, before embarking on the design of her home's interiors. "The planting along the back wall blends in beautifully with the communal gardens outside, creating a really cocoon-like, homely feeling. I grew up with a visceral love of nature and the outdoors and I think Dubai's weather is spectacular – I practically live outside for nine or ten months of the year – so it made sense to design the garden first."

Elan, who bought the property in 2009, admits that she was after a very specific look and feel and wanted to

use only eco-friendly, natural materials in the garden's construction. "It took ten months to finish the space and Better Gardens had to rip out tons of concrete decking, patios and poor-quality finishing on previous work. Trying to strip the tiles off the swimming pool was painful as they don't use toxic solvents. It took a lot more time and effort, but I absolutely believe it was worth it."

The garden's swimming pool, a majestic design with subtle nods at Arabesque influences, is one of the area's strongest visual elements and adds to the soothing Turkish-Delight-meets-coastal-colours palette. "I didn't want another ubiquitous blue pool," Elan explains. "I wanted something that was a very pale green. After exhausting tile options, Elton Cummins from Better Gardens suggested glass bronze mosaics. I was sceptical, but now I absolutely love them. I converted the pool to salt water so it's much softer on the skin and hair. If I had the time I'd laze in it all the time."

Elan adds that relaxation was one of the key factors when it came to planning the functional aspects of the space. "I work as a senior adviser and my job is really

The pool is salt water, which the homeowner says is much kinder to her skin and hair. She was unsure at first about the bronze glass mosaic tiles, but loves them now





stressful, so I desperately need a sanctuary away from the chaos of my life. When I'm on my own you'll find me either on an Adirondack chair on the patio – the view across the pool and desert park is so grounding – or eating breakfast and reading the paper at the outdoor dining table at weekends. Having said that, I entertain quite often and I wanted to make this a place where friends and family could come and kick off their shoes, enjoy a delicious meal and relax in the greenery with me." And green the landscape certainly is. "Some of the trees and plants were already in the garden when I

bought the house, but I added travellers' palm (*Ravenala Madagascariensis*) and Carpentaria palms (*Carpentaria acuminata*) to create a more exotic feeling," Elan says. "Other plants include Washingtonia palm (*Washingtonia robusta*) and royal coconut palms (*Cocos nucifera*) and crape jasmine (*Tabernaemontana divaricata*). We selected gardenias and frangipani (*Plumeria*) for scent and beauty, and hibiscus and bird of paradise flowers (*Strelitzia*) on sheer looks alone," Elan says. "I recently planted herbs and I'll add some cherry tomatoes in autumn. Other than that, the garden is perfect. I wouldn't change a thing." ■



The garden has a warm, welcoming feel with varied entertainment areas – from dining to lounging – giving the homeowner the relaxing sanctuary she craved