



Having featured gardens in *InsideOut* for many years, we have come across some very beautiful examples in Dubai. While each has had different beguiling characteristics, there was often a common theme. Many of the homeowners would mention the name Elton, and how wonderful a garden designer he was. Keen to find out more about this creative garden genius, we managed to track him down through Better Gardens, the company he works for.

An Australian with an amazing flair for turning a sandy backyard into a horticultural masterpiece, Elton Cummins is the general manager and lead designer at Better Gardens. So where did it all begin? "I joined Better Gardens in 2006 when Khalid Kaluti (the owner of Better Gardens) approached me to help him establish a landscaping/swimming pool firm in Dubai," says Cummins. "The opportunity excited me, as it was an interesting region to explore. I have always had a passion for landscaping. In Australia, when I was younger, ▶



Gardens

Aussie Legend

With his fantastic eye for detail,
Elton Cummins is a landscaping genius.

Text: Helga Jensen-Forde, Freelance Writer; Photos: Silvia Baron, Senior Photographer



Cummins believes if you want your garden to look professional, you need to employ a professional garden designer

I wanted to focus on my belief in enjoying a natural life whilst keeping up with progress, and I found that landscape design and integration was the perfect answer. I have been in the landscape/pool industry now for over 15 years."

One of the gardens that he recently completed is in the Arabian Ranches. "The clients were interested in a swimming pool as well as some practical entertaining spaces for their family and friends," he says. "It is a relatively small backyard so, in the end, there are a lot of water elements such as a pool, jacuzzi and counter current [ideal for aquatic exercise]. But I think it has blended well with some nice casual areas and great imposing royal palms that manage to overshadow the whole area and keep it real."

While Cummins has been designing a plethora of gardens around the UAE, he says that he has a few favourite projects he has worked on, including that of his boss's own garden. "The ones I particularly love are when the client has been deeply involved in the design process, and used every aspect of the space after completion. Khalid Kaluti's villa would be one of the best. We worked together on it for a long time. It is such a difficult plot of land, but everything came together in the end and the outdoor space is now made full use of. That's the most important thing. It should look good but, more importantly, it should be practical too."

On a practical note we also ask what every homeowner wants to know, which is how we could transform our gardens to make them look fabulous. "Obviously, the biggest transformation for any garden would be a swimming pool," says Cummins. "It is a great financial investment for any home, and an even better investment for family and friends. If created properly, it will provide years of enjoyment, exercise and entertainment for all. Pools also add a great visual element."

A final piece of advice from Cummins is that, if you want a professional garden, ultimately you should use a professional to design it, but he adds "there is no better way than to tend to your garden yourself. It is rewarding and therapeutic." If we take his advice on board, who knows, we may just end up with a garden that emulates one of Cummins' creations! ♦





This garden in Arabian Ranches is a haven of peace with its beautiful pool ■

