

AFRICA PRO LANDSCAPER

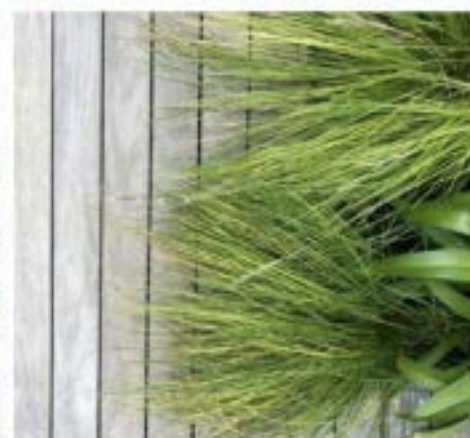
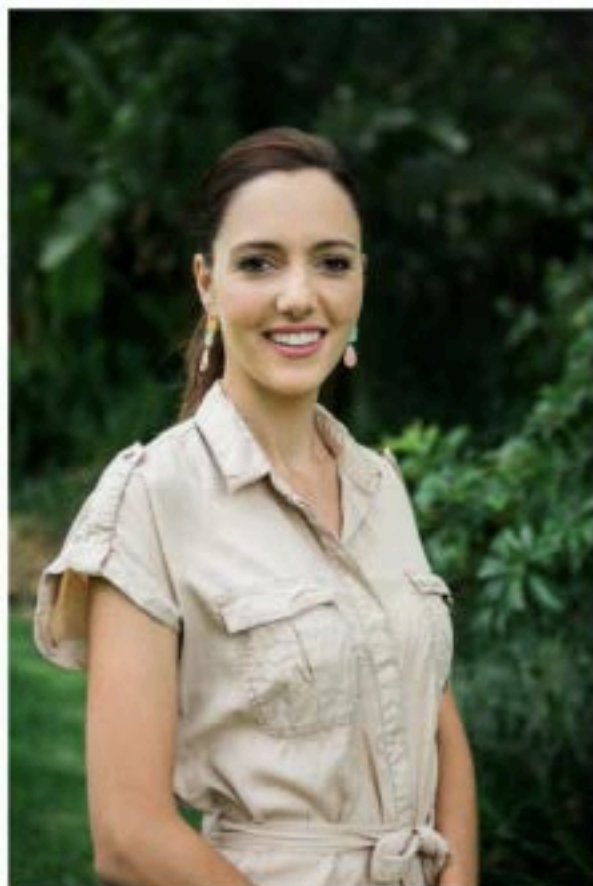
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THE ART OF GARDEN DESIGN FOR RESIDENTIAL ESTATES

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Over the past 20 years, there has been a trend toward estate living in South Africa. Whether it is golf courses being developed as mixed-use lifestyle estates by incorporating residential homes or large suburban properties being subdivided to accommodate smaller but more homes, there is no doubt that estate living is on the rise and no wonder that South Africa has become a global pioneer in this field. This has been proven by a recent report published by *New World Wealth* in which it is estimated that over 40% of South Africa's high net worth individuals now live or have homes on residential estates.

Residential estate gardens typically have a common set rules, regulations and challenges. Despite this, any garden can be transformed into a paradise of serenity and protection.

Designing for privacy

Privacy is an issue that frequently arises in residential estates due to large double volume homes being built in relatively close proximity to one another. With careful planning and plant selections, privacy can be achieved without compromising on pleasing aesthetics.

The key to visual privacy is to create depth and layers. Avoid boxing gardens in with tall, straight hedges. Pleached trees are the perfect method to

extend the height of a boundary while simultaneously creating the illusion of depth – these are essentially hedges on stilts which add the advantage of providing space for another layer of planting. The more layers of planting, the larger the space will appear.

The line of sight from a neighbouring balcony or window can be cut off by planting trees if the space allows it. Where space is limited, pergolas with creepers can provide decent shade as well as screening.

Visual privacy is important, but if you can hear your neighbours the effect is often lost. Water features are the perfect way to create 'white noise' to drown out unwanted sound from traffic or chatter from neighbours in close proximity. It will also make your conversations more private.

Make the most of your view, or lack thereof

Making the most of the property's orientation and the relation to its surroundings is key. The most memorable views are constructed to have impact in both directions: outward and away from the house as well as back toward the house from a distance. This applies to properties of all sizes.

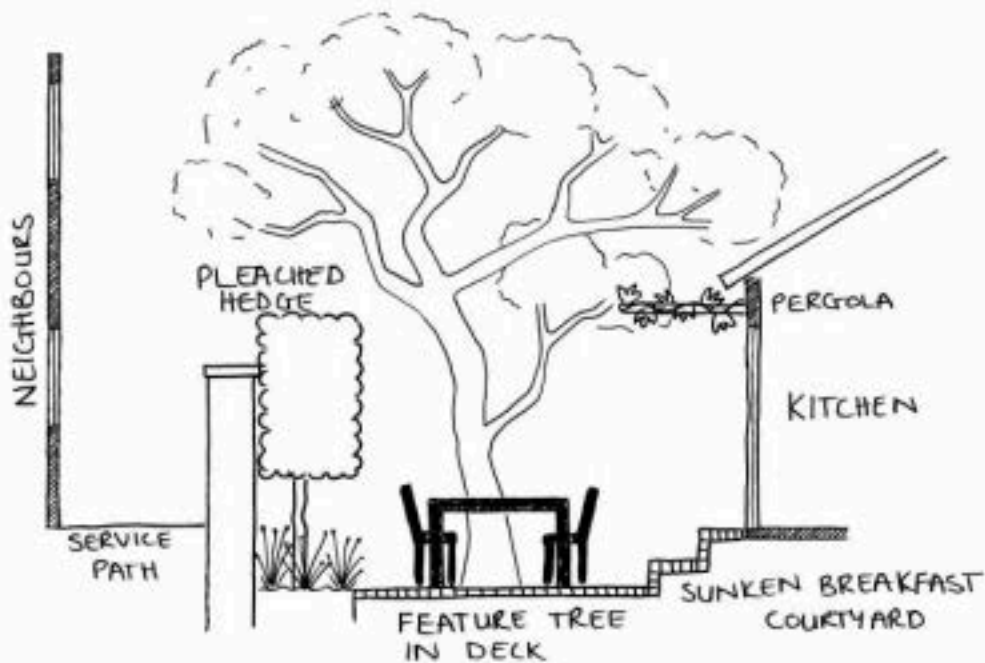
With the correct design treatment of the garden, the estate's grounds can be used to great advan-

tage. If a view over the golf course, green zone or equestrian field exists, apply the theory of visual appropriation. Put as few obstacles as possible between the home and the view to preserve its innate drama. You will make the most of your view if your lawn can roll so that it foreshortens against the view and the surrounding landscape.

However, not every property can have a spectacular view overlooking the fairway. Where possible, instead of following the impulse of enclosing the garden with screen planting, partly look out onto the neighbouring property's garden. Someone else is maintaining it, you are enjoying it. Use windows and doors as framing devices to create visual links between rooms and the garden. Water features, pots and sculptures can be used to create features that draw the eye into the garden and away from neighbouring roofs.

Soften the hardness

Hard surfaces are a required necessity for any building's exterior. Developed estates have no shortage of driveways, paved entrances, courtyards, and patios that require practical flooring. Almost any hard, uncompromising lines can be softened by planting and enables one to reduce the heat-glare effect in otherwise hot and unattractive garden areas.



Leave a narrow space where paving and walls meet to allow for greenery. Use creepers or climbers on steel cables or trellises to green and soften walls. Various leaf-textured creepers can be layered and combined with a garden mirror to create depth in small or narrow spaces. Trees provide shade, seasonal interest and leaf-textured shadows for larger paved areas. Ensure to choose plants with non-invasive root systems to avoid paving and boundary walls being lifted over time.

Blend the indoors and out

Today's gardens must be designed to be lived in. It has to be visually pleasing while, at the same time, suiting our lifestyles. As densification increases, our gardens are becoming extensions of our homes. Inviting the garden into the home with large patio doors and windows enable indoor living to seamlessly spill outside.

A patio provides a transitional stage between the house and garden as well as adding an outdoor room. Uniform flooring that spills from the living room to outdoor hard surfaces creates a seamless transition. Carefully selected pots of varying sizes on a patio immediately connects one to the garden and integrates the transition between indoors and out. Where space is limited, the whole area may be taken up with a garden patio.

Don't be afraid to plant right up the house or patio. Break out of the conventional and predictable style of garden layouts of edged lawns, garden beds around the perimeter and paved or gravel paths in narrow areas. Instead, use natural stone products to create interesting pathways that can be interplanted with greenery.

Plant for biodiversity and resilience

Replace thirsty lawns with interesting textured plants that reflect the richness and diversity of the indigenous surroundings in a densely built estate environment. This will create an interface between natural and urban landscapes. Plan the planting around pollen, nectar and berries in order to invite birds, insects, and wildlife into the garden.

Water remains a precious resource and needs to be managed carefully in any garden. Synthetic lawns are not the solution – the heat-glare effect that it creates reduces one's ability to spend time on them, alongside sustainability concerns. Instead, use plants that are suited to the area. Where restrictions are placed on boreholes, rainwater catchment tanks can be installed. Underground tanks can be very useful as they are not visible over walls and save garden space. Irrigate before and after sunrise for longer periods to encourage deep root growth. Once plants are established, slowly decrease the amount of water they receive to harden and toughen them.

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