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AUTUMN go gardening

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2020

MITRE 10

**MITRE 10
MEGA**



Sense of place

ON A STEEP SLOPE OVERLOOKING BEAUTIFUL LYTTELTON HARBOUR,
JO GILMORE'S DREAM GARDEN IS TAKING SHAPE.

Jo has loved her seaside haven for as long as she can remember. The beach across the road at the bottom of her garden was a favourite childhood playground. "I have vivid memories of looking for little crabs under rocks and finding special seashells. We would swim in the warm sea, build huts in the gully and take boat rides over to Quail Island in Grandad's boat."

It was Jo's great-grandfather who picked the idyllic spot above Charteris Bay, sheltered from the southerly winds under the lofty peaks of Banks Peninsula. In 1945 he built the house that's now home to Jo, her husband Craig, ten-year-old Lea, nine-year-old Curtis and their dog Elsa.

Jo and Craig began their dream project when they bought the property from Jo's grandfather eight years ago. They have since transformed the once family bach into a modern spacious home with wrap-around harbour views. Across the expanse of calm water are the iconic Port Hills with Lyttelton nestled at their base.

Stepping out onto the deck another stunning view reveals itself: Jo's extraordinary landscaped garden flows down to the sea in a series of level

terraces built by her great-grandfather. "Grandad remembers helping his father and their family friends build the terraces when he was eight years old," Jo says. "They carted all the stones up the hill from the roadside."

Before Jo could start planting, she and Craig faced the arduous task of clearing the terraces of overgrown scrub and weeds. Apart from two large red flowering gum trees and the remaining feijoa trees, she began with a blank canvas.

Jo's extraordinary landscaped garden flows down to the sea in a series of level terraces built by her great-grandfather.



With its broad terraces, clipped hedges, lush green grapevines and soft grey accents, Jo's hillside garden is reminiscent of the Mediterranean. And the microclimate here is distinctly Mediterranean - winters are mild, summers hot and dry. This might be Christchurch, but frost on this north-west facing slope is minimal. Jo laments that it's not cold enough to grow peonies, but she delights in her grape vines and many fruit trees.

On the first terrace below the house a silver *Teucrium* hedge bisects a native garden on one side with colour coordinated perennials and grasses on the other. "I love plants that add texture and light and the swishy sounds of my grasses in the wind," says Jo. In her native area, she has focused on drought tolerant plants with contrasting foliage colours using clever juxtaposition of shrubs,

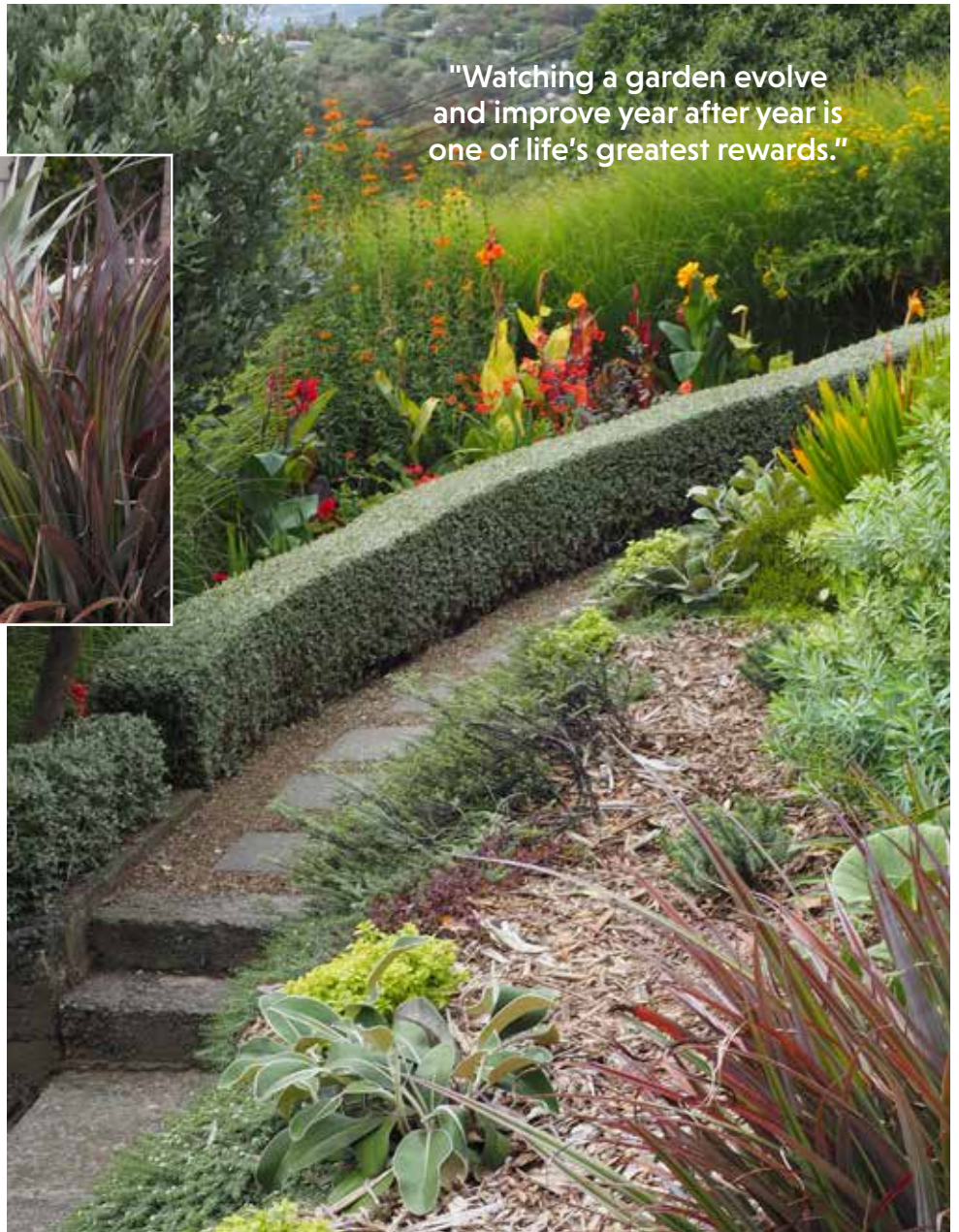
ground covers, flaxes and astelias. The Marlborough rock daisies (*Pachystegia insignia*) are striking even when not in bloom, with each bold oval leaf outlined in crisp white. Low carpeting New Zealand daphne (*Pimelea prostrata*) adds contrasting texture with its fine blue-grey foliage and starry white flowers cascading over a low retaining wall.

In the perennial garden, hot reds and golds graduate to cool pinks and blues, with tall *Miscanthus gracilimix* grass forming a stunning backdrop to Jo's lilies, cannas, dahlias, and echinaceas. Other favourite grasses are *Miscanthus sinensis* 'Zebrinus', *Carex testacea* and *Chionochloa*.

Marking the stairway down to the second terrace is a sculptural pair of old feijoa trees expertly pruned by Jo.

"I give the feijoa trees a good cutting back once a year after fruiting. Then I prune lightly throughout the year to keep a nice shape, being careful not to prune off any developing fruit," says Jo. "All my other hedges I trim as needed, most often in spring and once a month in summer and autumn." Her favourite gardening accessory is her battery powered hedge trimmer.

On the second terrace is a lawn space for the children to play on and the spot for Jo's planned vegetable plot which will bathe in all day sun.



"Watching a garden evolve and improve year after year is one of life's greatest rewards."



RIGHT: **ASTELIA RED DEVIL** AND **ASTELIA CHATHAMICA**

BELOW: **GAILLARDIA 'ARIZONA SUN'**



On the third level a new deck is under construction. "We want a large deck for entertaining with a pergola for grapes to grow over and give us some shade," explains Jo. The deck will also extend around a rectangular swimming pool sitting on the fourth terrace. Along the boundary of this last terrace Jo has planted a thick hedge of *Cornus sibirica alba* whose bare upright stems turn bright scarlet in winter.

On the slope below here Jo has planted her fruit trees; plums, apricots, pears and apples under thick pea straw mulch. "As an alternative to weed killer, I like to use plenty of pea straw around my property to suppress the weeds and help retain moisture. If I have any cardboard boxes I will use these underneath the pea straw too, as this really helps".

Gardening on a slope can be challenging. "It can be very annoying when your fruit falls from the tree and rolls down the hill!" laughs Jo. But she's found the perfect solution



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to this problem. The special mesh bags she uses to keep birds and other pests from spoiling her fruit also hold the fruit on its tree. Over the past year these nifty little bags have morphed into a fully fledged business for Jo. 'Protect Your Crop' bags are now being used by gardeners throughout the country (protectyourcrop.com).

With such a large garden and two school-age children, it's surprising she has time to run a full time business as

well. But Jo says her garden gives her energy. "Creating a garden can be truly transformational! I believe it's the key to adding the most value to your home, while also improving your health and lifestyle."

When choosing plants and flowers she favours anything that is a good food source for birds and bees. "I plant a lot of natives to help stabilise the hillside and attract native birds. Watching all the beautiful native birds swooping

about inspires me to plant more".

Keeping up with summer watering is the greatest challenge on a large hillside property and she is grateful for the two rainwater tanks which provide irrigation during the hot and dry months. Even so, Jo chooses her plants based on their ability to tolerate drought conditions once they get their roots established. *Protea* and *Leucospermum* are among her favourite shrubs for this reason.

"Creating a garden can be truly transformational! I believe it's the key to adding the most value to your home, while also improving your health and lifestyle."



She has some advice for beginners: "Before you invest in plants, do your own research and seek help in the garden centre to ensure you're selecting the right plants for the right locations."

Jo says that her biggest source of inspiration is her own property. "The surrounding landscape and environment shape a lot of the design decisions I make. I've learnt everything I know from working on our own garden. Watching a garden evolve and improve year after year is one of life's greatest rewards." 🌱



AUTUMN PLANTING

Artichoke	Coriander	Parsley
Beetroot	Fennel	Peas
Broccoli	Fruit trees	Radish
Broad beans	Garlic	Rocket
Brussels sprouts	Kale	Silverbeet
Cabbage	Kohlrabi	Sage
Carrots	Lettuce	Sorrel
Calendula	Leeks	Spinach
Cauliflower	Marjoram	Swede
Chicory	Mizuna	Thyme
Chives	Onions	Turnip

NOTE: Plant early in autumn for best success. Check in cooler climates where these crops may be best planted in spring. In warm frost-free climates some crops can be planted at any time of year.



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