

Back to the future as conifers reappear

DEB TAPP

A good garden is one that has been planned.

That's the word from Aspen Landscapes owner Stuart Baines, who says homeowners need to be mindful of space and seasons.

"A well-planned garden that is functional will also provide that visual effect through summer, autumn, winter and spring," he says.

The Wellington-based landscaper and his team of 34 tackle projects in the greater Wellington region that range from simply weeding an elderly woman's garden through to full-scale residential makeovers that involve retaining walls, fences, pergolas, decking, outdoor fireplaces, instant lawn and all planting.

In the past he's worked on creating many low maintenance gardens that feature predominantly natives.

"People like to use natives because they can plant them and forget them, they don't require a huge amount of effort."

More recently though, Stuart has found homeowners are leaning towards semi-formal gardens.

"We're seeing this really nice mix of plants where people are opting for cone-shaped hedging in the form of the likes of natives like Corokia, or the ever-popular English Buxus.

Corokias feature dense easily trimmed foliage, tolerate coastal, exposed situations and are evergreen. In early summer it is adorned with star-shaped yellow flowers followed by orange berries in late summer.

They are ideal for low hedges or as a background shrub and look good in either native gardens or in formal gardens trained into hedges.

Buxus, meanwhile, tolerates a range of conditions, features glossy green leaves, and works well in classic gardens or more contemporary and native gardens.

Believe it or not, conifers are also making a comeback, says Stuart.

"It's just a trend we are seeing – you might go to someone's house and something catches your eye and you think you wouldn't mind doing it at your place, it's how these things evolve and grow."

"This is not like the 1960s conifer garden though, I'm talking one or two plants, maybe in a pot as an entrance piece or as a feature in the garden."

Conifers combine well with other foliage plants, he says, including ferns and ornamental grasses.

They are also perfect for minimalist designs, and mixed with ornamental stones, says Stuart.

The new varieties on the market have attracted homeowners too, as they offer



colour to a garden in blues, greens, golds, greys and bronzes, that brighten up the winter months.

The other beauty about conifers, says Stu, is that they come in numerous textures, shapes and sizes which offer height and form to a garden.

"They are low maintenance and easy to care for as well, so they really are a good choice."

"You can use them as a backdrop, a standalone feature if you want to shape them like a snowball, or you can use them in a border with other plants."

Gardeners can also take inspiration from Japan, where they are frequently used to create a garden of quiet contemplation.

In total, there are more than 630 different species of conifers available. Of those varieties, Stuart's top five would be:

- The pillar-forming Cupressus sempervirens 'gracilis' or 'totem'
- Thuja occidentalis 'smaragd'
- The Dr-Seuss-like Juniperus chinensis 'kaizuka'
- Hollywoood Juniper
- The dwarf conifers Chamaecyperus lawsoniana 'ellwoodii' or 'ellwood's gold'.

Another favourite is the native totara variety 'matapouri blue', which looks stunning as a clipped feature plant.

"We're finding a lot of people might have low maintenance gardens, but they're also got key pieces like the native totara or conifer that add interest."

"They often have that focal point close to the house, near the entrance, so that it provides that statement piece."

Vital to the success of any plant is to ensure they can especially withstand Wellington conditions, says Stuart.



Conifers are making a comeback in Kiwi gardens, blending in with minimalist designs. Examples such as the Dr-Seuss-like Juniperus chinensis 'kaizuka' (above), Hollywoood Juniper (below right) and dwarf conifer Chamaecyperus lawsoniana 'ellwoodii' (left) are popular.

"Choose plants that are low maintenance, that will hold their shape, that look great but also can handle our salt-laden winds."

"If in doubt, do your research and talk to the experts."

Then there are those pockets of garden that are sheltered where homeowners can get away with something a little more exotic or special, says Stuart.

Succulents are making a comeback too, and there are many that will do well in Wellington, provided they have good drainage.

Rhododendrons mix well with native plants, providing stunning floral displays in winter, and tree ferns and palms can make a dramatic impact in the right spot.

To complement those feature plants, there's always room for ground cover-type natives such as Hebes, flax,



Coprosmas, Muehlenbeckia, or the creeping New Zealand Daphne, Pimelia prostrata.

"At the end of the day, it's all about putting the right plants in the right places."

"These are all plants that will keep a garden looking fresh, beautiful and green year-round," says Stuart.

"They may take a little maintenance, all plants do, but a little care and love will see your garden flourish."



Buxus (above and left) tolerates a range of conditions, features glossy green leaves, and works well in classic or more contemporary gardens.



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Wellington

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Highbury		\$926,000	\$1,018,500	
Kaiwharawhara		\$1,125,000	\$1,392,500	
Karori	\$645,000	\$804,000	\$1,032,000	\$1,344,000
Kelburn	\$650,000	\$1,093,000	\$1,395,500	\$1,760,000
Northland	\$703,000	\$868,000	\$1,058,000	\$1,253,000
Pipitea	\$539,000	\$709,000		
Thorndon	\$675,000	\$935,500	\$1,346,500	\$2,076,000
Wadestown	\$661,000	\$947,000	\$1,210,000	\$1,504,500
Wilton	\$548,500	\$792,000	\$916,000	

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Hutt Valley and River views appeal

SOLD

A HIGHLY specified Riverstone Terraces home with views of the Hutt Valley and Hutt River has been sold for \$111,000 above its rateable value.

The property, at 2 Lila Gillies Lane, had a rateable value of \$860,000 and sold for \$971,000.

"The successful purchasers were set on getting the new year started right," says Spencer Petherick, of Bayleys, who marketed it with Hadleigh Petherick.

"It was viewed in the first week of January and sold not long after."

The 210-square metre house was built in 2015 on a



2 Lila Gillies Lane sold for \$971,000.

flat 1045sqm section and had four bedrooms, two bathrooms and an internal-access double-garage.

A NINE-BEDROOM investment property in a quiet Mount Cook cul-de-sac has been auctioned for \$20,000 above its rateable value.

The property, at 27 Arlington St, had a rateable value of \$960,000 and sold for \$980,000.

"It had an excellent rental history and was seldom vacant," says Lisa Durrant, of Harcourts, who marketed the two flats with Jim Stuck.

They had a combined floor area of 220sqm on a 357sqm section with a single garage, sleep-out and parking.

"Although this property was in good condition, it



27 Arlington St sold for \$980,000.

required some Wellington City Council compliance standards to be met for rental as two flats," Durrant says.

A REFURBISHED family home in a top Papakowhai location has been auctioned for \$175,000 above its rateable value.

The property, at 7 Beaulieu Gr, had a rateable value of \$530,000 and sold for \$705,000.

"It was in a quiet cul-de-sac super-close to Papakowhai School and kindergarten," Gavin Faulke, of Harcourts, says.

The freshly painted 130sqm house was built in the 1970s, had three bedrooms, two bathrooms and new carpet, and faced north on a flat 577sqm section with pleasant rural views.



7 Beaulieu Gr sold for \$705,000.