

Wise Reflection

THE LATEST ADDITION TO INA PAARMAN'S
EVER-EVOLVING GARDEN ARE FOUR SERENITY
PONDS THAT REFLECT HER LOVE OF TREES

TEXT MICHAEL SEAN WALTERS PRODUCTION HEIDI BERTISH PHOTOGRAPHS ELSA YOUNG

With *Gaura* and *Agapanthus* in the foreground, four still pools mirror the surrounding cork oak trees. Off to the right, a brick pergola and stairs create a formal entrance to the garden



Drifts of agapanthus and *Pennisetum massaicum* in the foreground add colour and movement to the garden design

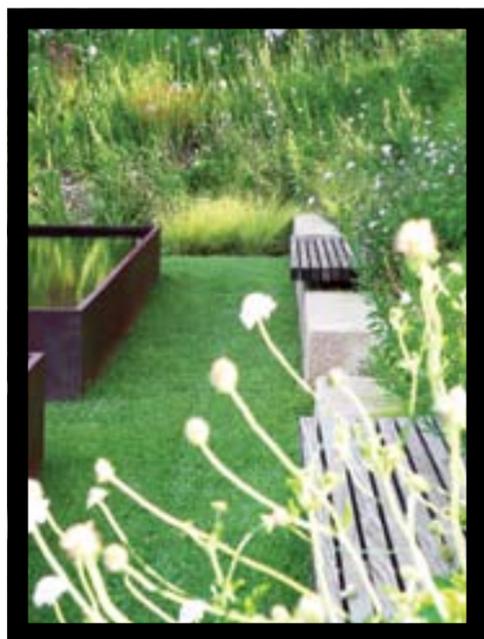
OPPOSITE PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The mass planting of *Plectanthus ciliaris* overlooking the serenity pools was done to echo the rusty colour of the Corten-steel ponds; a path meanders through the upper terrace; benches built into the retaining wall offer a chance to relax while admiring the ponds, with *Scabiosa africana* in the foreground; agapanthus offer an indigenous splash of colour

M

y son and I are tree fanatics,' explains local food doyenne Ina Paarman. 'They're symbols of life and wisdom as well as being a haven for birds, people and plants. So when we saw this property more than a decade ago – complete with so many mature corks, camphors and Turkish oaks – my son, Graham, said, "We have a responsibility to buy this place and save these trees from any overzealous developers."'

In fact, the trees on Ina's six-acre Constantia property are so impressive, that Brian Bredenkamp, a professor from Stellenbosch University, nominated one of the cork oaks to be declared a National Champion Tree in the next official listing.

'My garden is ever evolving,' says Ina. 'It's a constant work-in-progress, which keeps it engaging for me and my gardeners.' Among its many features are a duck pond, a waterfall and a herb garden from which Ina regularly forages for leaves to use in her on-site development kitchen, where she works on her product line. 'We want to add a chicken coop to extend that farmyard feeling,' she says. 'It's nice to be self-sufficient – to be able to eat your own veggies and eggs.' ▶



Spread over three tiers, the garden includes a succulent section built on top of the office roof (the office skylight is just visible to the bottom left) featuring *Elegia tectorum*, *Aloe sp.*, *Agave attenuata* and *Cotyledon orbiculata*

OPPOSITE PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Mixing texture with form is *Stipa tenuissima* among grassy *Gaura lindheimeri*; *Digiplexis* in season; the sandstone entrance steps are interplanted with *Sisyrinchium graminoides*, *Parahebe perfoliate* and mazus, flanked with linear hedges of *Rhus crenata*, with bronze day lilly, *Sedum spectabile*, and a mix of grasses in between



This past year saw the addition of four serenity ponds devised by garden designer Mary Maurel, who worked with landscaper Heimo Schulzer.

'The scale of Ina's garden is huge,' says Mary. 'It needed an anchor to pull the property together, so we decided on four ponds that would act as mirrors, reflecting the cork oaks standing tall above them, the blue sky and, of course, the stars at night. The view is ever-changing, depending on where you're standing.'

In a similar system used to create the reflective pools at the 911 Memorial Museum at the World Trade Center Site in New York, rim flows that are positioned asymmetrically among the ponds have the dual benefit of keeping the surface calm, while creating a hum of running water.

'The soothing sound adds another dimension to the garden,' explains Mary. 'We were able to achieve the noise without disrupting the surface — not even a ripple. To do that we had to ensure that the water flowed inwards evenly on all sides — that it was perfectly level. There was no room for error.'

These still waters run 1.2 metres deep. To maintain an air of mystery around the ponds' mechanics, the rim flows were made deep enough to ensure that you can't see their base when standing at the sides of the ponds. Additionally, Corten steel was chosen to house the pools because of the rusty patina it develops over time.

To contrast with the garden's somewhat formal elements — defined at the entrance by a brick pergola and stairs designed by MalanVorster Architecture and Interior Design — more informal touches have been added. For instance, grasses were planted around the four pools to offset the rows of vines that can be seen in the neighbouring vineyard.

'I favour a garden that is not too formal and full of indigenous plants,' says Ina. 'It reflects one of the best lessons about gardening — a garden is not a zoo where you plant one of this or one of that. You need to plant things en masse in order to achieve a natural look. After all, you can't improve on nature, only sculpt it.'

■ **Malan Vorster Architecture Interior Design** 📍 malanvorster.co.za;
Mary Maurel ☎ 084 600 2636
📍 marymaurelgardens.co.za; **Heimo Schulzer Gardens** 📍 hsgardens.co.za

