

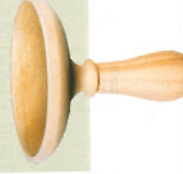
create the garden

- 1 Lighting is crucial to avoid billabong mishaps. These Kiera pole lights are unobtrusive, can easily be redirected and are impervious to the elements. Available for about \$160 from Gardens at Night, in Malvern.
- 2 The hairy, grey-silver foliage of this common everlasting (*Chrysosplenium aciculatum*) is best-kept so perfect, for full-sun positions next to granite rocks, which tend to heat up during the day. The perennial groundcover comes out in vibrant yellow flowers from August to January. Available in \$3.50 tubes from Victorian Indigenous Nurseries Co-operative (VINIC), in Fairfield.
- 3 Each bronze granite rock was chosen individually, which is crucial to a job like this, where everything must fit (the large slab in the middle alone weighs more than four tonnes). Granite boulders cost about \$100 per tonne (excluding freight and GST) at Hanson Lysterfield Quarry.
- 4 Purple and whites Hardenbergia make reasonable climbers and better groundcover. This one, purple coral pea (*Hardenbergia violacea*), flowers in winter and spring. Available in \$3.50 tubes from VINIC, in Fairfield.
- 5 These native raspberries (*Rubus parvifolius*) are edible but their fruit is tiny. Also known as small-leaf bramble, the scrambling shrub has fine prickles and seems to cope well here, trailing down these south-east-facing rocks. Available in \$3.50 tubes from VINIC, in Fairfield.
- 6 These river red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) were planted as tube stock three-and-a-half years ago. The iconic tree is common along watercourses in mainland Australia and here screens out the neighbours. Available in \$3.50 tubes from VINIC in Fairfield, (although not recommended for suburban backyards – they grow up to 40 or 50 metres).
- 7 Water plants keep this billabong oxygenated and minimise algae. Here you'll find river buttercup (*Ranunculus lunulatus*), water ribbon (*Tigridochloa procerum*, which frogs lay their eggs on), upright water milfoil (*Myriophyllum crispatum*) and common spike-leaf (*Eleocharis acicularis*). Available in \$3.50 tubes from VINIC, in Fairfield.

our tip

You don't need an elaborate billabong to attract native birds to your garden – a birdbath will do. Make sure

it is no more than three centimetres deep and opt for non-slippery surfaces such as concrete or terracotta that the birds can get a grip on.



Soon it will be mating season for the frogs in Peter Williams' front garden and the sound will be deafening. But that's OK by the retired dentist and his wife, Felicity. They love the frogs (and birds and lizards) that inhabit their man-billabong, which overlooks the Yarra River in Kew, just five kilometres from the city.

"Basically, I'm lazy and this garden looks after itself," says Williams, who built the house three-and-a-half years ago on the site of a former sewage pumping station. "There are no lawns to mow, there are very few weeds ... and it's just so pleasant to look at."

The garden was designed by Philip Johnson, a sustainable native garden specialist and winner of Best in Show at this year's Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show. Johnson used about 2000 plants and tonnes of natural boulders to create the two-pond sanctuary that's watered by 'cool run-off'. "Phil comes and has a poke around probably once a year," says Williams, "but we don't do anything. I haven't watered it for three years."

Stockists
Hanson Lysterfield Quarry
 phone 133 088
 Gardens at Night
 1316 Malvern Road, Malvern
 phone 9824 4937
 www.gan.com.au
 Victorian Indigenous Nurseries
 Co-operative (VINIC)
 1/2a Bend Road, Fairfield
 phone 9492 1710
 www.vinic.net.au

rocklegend

Boulders and billabongs attract wildlife and make maintenance a cinch in this Kew front yard.

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