

SENSE SENSATIONS

Bring your garden to life with plants, objects and materials that will stimulate the senses and fire every faculty

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The idea of the garden as a sensory sanctuary is not new – there are numerous studies outlining the healing benefits of such spaces, and the concept of the sensory garden is used worldwide as a therapeutic tool in rehabilitation centres, hospitals, schools and retirement homes. The same principles can be applied to any home garden to create a sanctuary of calm that stimulates the senses.

While the visual spectacular of bright blooms and sculptural trees tends to get the most press, the best gardens cater to all of the senses. Try this exercise: close your eyes and imagine a pathway lined with lavender that releases its fragrance as you brush past, or the heady scent of Chinese star jasmine, which evokes memories of summer evenings past. Listen for the soft and tranquil sound of bubbling water or imagine biting into sweet, juicy fruit from your very own fig tree. After five minutes in a space like this, the stresses and strains of everyday life will disappear in a haze of sensory bliss.

Soft, inviting lamb's ear forms gorgeous ground cover and is easy to grow almost anywhere.



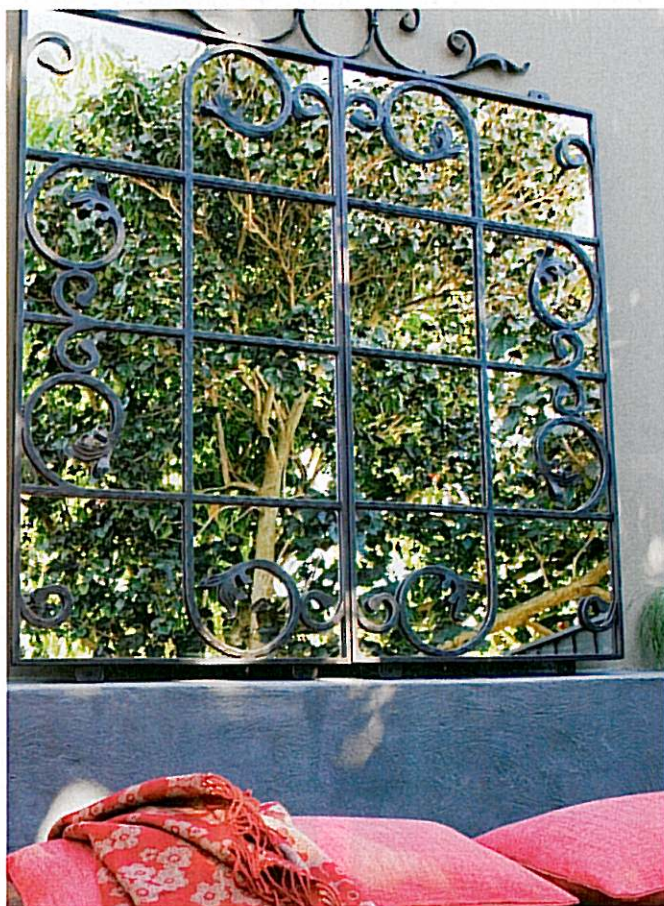
Sight

Who doesn't respond to beauty? Whether it's an artwork, object, landscape or plant, beauty is good for the soul. Surround yourself with things that you, and not others, think are beautiful. Choose focal points within the garden to set up the most aesthetically pleasing plants or objects.

What's the first thing you see when you open the door to your back garden? If it's an ugly fence or wall, think about painting or cladding it, encouraging a verdant vine to ramble over it, or place a feature plant or sculpture before it to make you happy every time you venture outdoors.

Plant fabulous flora within the garden. We love sirius aloe (*Aloe 'Sirius'*), sago palm (*Cycas revoluta*) and desert rose (*Adenium obesum*). The bold dark leaves of black leaf elephant ear (*Colocasia esculenta* 'Black Magic') make it a great accent plant in a pond or moist part of the garden. >

Watch this space With its spiky leaflets and vibrant green hue, a sago palm (above) works as a sculptural piece in an outdoor area. A decorative mirror (bottom right) works as a strong focal point in its own right; here, a stunning camellia is reflected by the glass.



TOP 3 GOOD LOOKERS

1. **Sirius aloe:** Add drama and visual appeal with these upright orange flower spikes, which suit contemporary landscapes.
2. **Desert rose:** This tough little succulent pairs striking good looks with abundant flowers in a lush pink colour.
3. **Bromeliads:** A big, bold show-stopper with superb form and lovely foliage.

