

Purity of design

An oasis of calm, this authentic Japanese garden emanates an aura of tranquillity

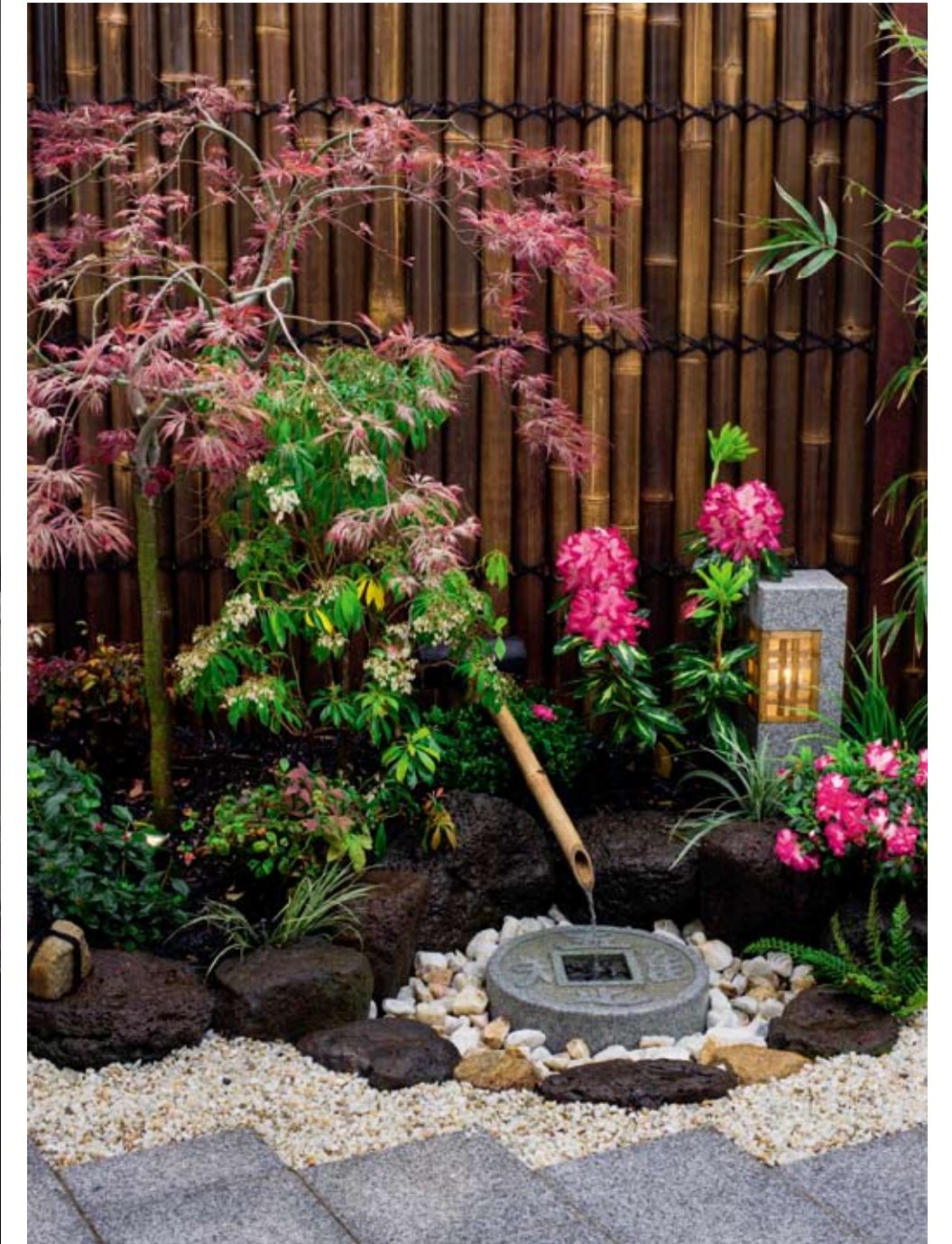
FORGING A CLOSE CONNECTION WITH NATURE, an authentic, award-winning Japanese garden sits tucked behind the custom-designed gates of this home in Brighton, a popular Melbourne suburb.

The challenge for Motoyoshi (Moto) Kihara of Kihara Landscapes was to design and build a garden that would be perceived as truly Japanese, yet still complement the look of a contemporary Australian home. The garden was to consist of three clearly defined areas — front, side and rear gardens — and while it was important all three

areas be able to stand alone, they needed to be tied together, as if one large space.

Entry to the garden is via specially commissioned Japanese-style sliding timber gates. Handcrafted from Victorian ash timber by Zen Hisao, the owner and master craftsman of Zen's Studio, the gates feature a carved symbol of a bamboo shoot and are stained light brown to reference the colour of bamboo culms.

Looking through the main entry gate, a Japanese rock garden, featuring carefully hand-selected rocks,





is visible, as is a granite pagoda. Beyond this lies a “yotsume” bamboo fence, which was handcrafted by Moto in the traditional way using Japanese twine and special knots.

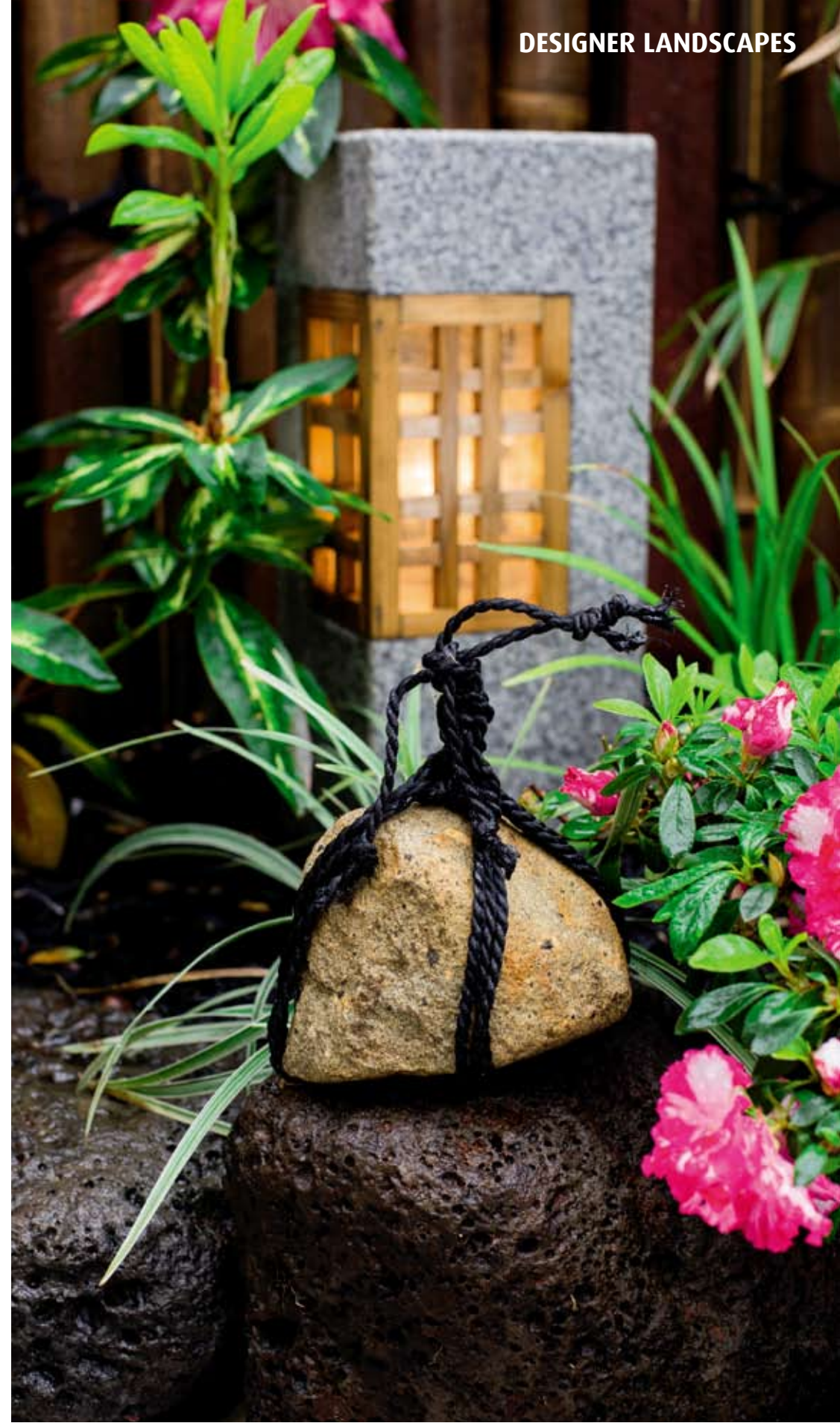
Throughout the various garden areas there’s a plethora of features, including antique doors, a granite water bath, lanterns, and an outdoor Japanese hot bath, all of which are special in their own right. In keeping with Japanese tradition, however, they work together as a seamless whole, with no one feature dominating another.

Similar care was devoted to the plant selection. Moto has included plants traditionally featured in Japanese gardens, such as the weeping maple (included for its autumnal colours) and the weeping cherry (prized for its spring blossoms). For year-round greenery, there are flourishing stands of bamboo, supplied by Red Cloud Bamboo, and for splashes of bright seasonal colour, azaleas.

In the rear garden, the existing spa pool was transformed into a “rotenburo” (Japanese hot spring/outdoor bath). The old tiles and capping were removed and replaced with multi-coloured slate, as was the interior surface of the pool to give it the appearance of a natural spring. This shallow body of water is now a perfect spot in which to relax and view the garden.

This garden did not only impress the owners. In Landscaping Victoria’s 2012 Victorian Landscape Awards, Kihara Landscapes won the award for Best Residential Landscape Construction \$75,000-\$150,000, with the judges saying, “This project has been completed to the exacting standards expected of a Japanese garden. Moto has considered all aspects of this garden and constructed it in a very considered and thoughtful way, right down to the detail on the gates, the bamboo fencing and the lighting.”

Although highly experienced in the design and construction of Japanese gardens, Moto is equally skilled in the creation of many different garden styles, all executed with the same level of craftsmanship.



Project details

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