



# Best laid plans

Having a clear objective in mind for both the house and garden has resulted in an ideal marriage between the built and natural environments

**The allure of a rural lifestyle** is something many of us can attest to. Wide open spaces and fresh air in abundance – the idea of heaven for many a city dweller.

When landscape designer Michael Mansvelt and his wife were looking for somewhere to build a country home, the type of property was as important as the house to be built on it.

“As a landscape designer,

I’m very conscious of the link between house and garden.

“This perfectly flat, one-acre section was ideal for the plans I had in mind.”

Mansvelt says his idea for the house was influenced by the designs of US architect Hugh Newell Jacobsen.

“Jacobsen is well known for his Nantucket homes, which are a kind of modern-day Salt-box design,” says Mansvelt.



**Above:** This rural property is an integrated concept by landscape designer and homeowner Michael Mansvelt. The house and garden were designed to work in context with each other, rather than to be two separate elements that have been combined.

**Left:** The one-acre section offered a perfectly flat canvas on which to create the house and garden.



**Above:** The simple, clean lines of the home were inspired by the contemporary Saltbox houses of US architect Hugh Newell Jacobsen.

**Facing page:** Mansvelt and his interior-designer wife wanted to create an eclectic interior scheme that was rich in texture and tone. Imported English fabrics and antique pieces owned by the couple create a classic foundation that is augmented by Chinoiserie and rustic pieces.

"He achieves a look that is traditional, yet there's also something very contemporary about it too.

"That style was very much what I envisaged for this property, which would set off the formal garden I had planned as well," Mansvelt says.

Two simple pavilion-style structures make up the home and have been sited on the southern boundary in order to

maximise the use of land.

"I was very conscious of not using a lot of land for the house. I knew I wanted every room in the house to face north and the long box-like design of the two structures achieves that. I also wanted a significant lawn in front of the house, so the position was crucial," says the designer.

The first of the pavilions was originally planned to be

the garage, with a covered walkway linking it to the actual house. By the end of the project, the garage had been converted into a studio and office area.

"There is a fluidity to the design that allows it to be utilised in different ways. While there is a specific look I set out to achieve, the simplicity of the design also allows for ongoing adaptation."





**Above:** The Moroccan pendant, Chinese console, English wall coverings, timber panelling and travertine tile in the entry attest to the eclectic nature of the interior design.

**Right:** The cathedral ceilings in the home allowed for plenty of room to hang light fittings as jewellery. Particular attention was paid to the lighting that went in the home, from traditional chandeliers to the deer antler in the formal lounge.



Mansvelt says there is room within the plan for an extra pavilion, should the need for more living space arise.

As for the garden, Mansvelt always envisaged a traditional style for the property.

"Formal style gardens look at home in a rural setting – there's a real sense of abundance. Herbs, vegetables and flowers give it a generous feel," he says.

"Also, I designed the house and garden as a whole – the house wouldn't have made sense without the garden.

"As a landscape designer, I'm really keen for entrances to have a sense of arrival. So the garden has been designed to direct people to it – including the family. I believe, when you've made a feature of the entrance, then it should be used every day."

**Top:** Solid oak cabinetry is a feature of the kitchen, chosen for its prominent grain, which lends further visual texture to the interior design.

**Above:** Mansvelt was determined that the main entrance be used on a daily basis, so a small service entrance was created so the family could take groceries straight through to the kitchen without going via the living room.



*Above:* The master ensuite vanity is an antique piece that was repurposed. A mirror was then added to finish the look.

*Right:* The master bedroom has a more classic look with a traditional botanical print wallpaper as an accent – a reference to the formal garden. A base palette of greens and browns has been used throughout the house.



The clean lines and classic formality of the exterior and garden make way for a more eclectic feel within the interior.

"My wife – who is an interior designer – and I really wanted the interior to be a surprise, to offer a more opulent feel. So the design became about marrying the formal with a more layered, textured aesthetic," says Mansvelt.

Classic furniture sits side

by side with Chinoiserie and rustic pieces, offset by English wall coverings.

"We wanted it to look detailed, to offer multiple points of interest, so we have played on visual texture here. Botanical prints bring the garden in, while natural materials – like the oak cabinetry in the kitchen – offer texture. What all the elements offer is a sense of proportion."

*Above:* The guest suite, which includes a sitting area, bedroom and ensuite bathroom, is the only second floor accommodation, providing a high level of privacy for visitors. As with the rest of the house, natural materials feature extensively throughout the suite.



*Above and right:* The main entrance to the house was designed to make a dramatic statement. A covered walkway runs from the first pavilion, leading visitors to the entrance. The landscaping continues the formality of the other garden areas, while flowers make way for a kitchen garden of vegetables and herbs.



"Although it is a unique design, I believe everyone can appreciate this type of home. That outcome comes down to getting the relationship between each area just right – regardless of its function. House, garden, interior – every element works with the other," says the designer.

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**Architectural designer:** Michael Mansvelt, in conjunction with 4Site Design and BG&B Team Architecture  
**Interior designer:** Alisha Mansvelt, Plantation  
**Builder:** Neil Barnes Builders  
**Kitchen designer:** Leon House  
**Kitchen manufacturer:** Heritage House Cabinetmakers  
**Landscape designer:** Michael Mansvelt, Plantation (New Plymouth)  
**Cladding:** Rough sawn weatherboard from Clelands  
**Tiling:** Travertine tile from Adriatic

**Roofing:** Colorsteel from Millwards Roofing  
**Flooring:** Carpet by Cavalier Bremworth  
**Wallcoverings:** Imported wallpapers by Shand Kydd, Jaima Brown and Raymond Waites from Guthrie Bowron  
**Paints and varnishes:** Resene  
**Lighting:** Locally sourced imported Moroccan, Balinese, Mexican and Italian fittings  
**Heating:** Underfloor by Paul Garner Plumbing  
**Window and door hardware:** Bloore  
**Kitchen cabinetry:** Solid oak

**Benchtops:** Travertine  
**Splashback:** Glass mosaic tile  
**Kitchen sink:** Custom stainless steel  
**Range:** DeLonghi  
**Refrigeration and dishwasher:** Fisher & Paykel  
**Vanity, shower fittings and toilet:** Mico  
**Bath:** Englefield by Kohler  
**Basin:** Duravit  
**Lighting:** Lighting Direct  
  
**Story by** Justin Foote  
**Photography by** Jamie Cobeldick