



HENDRIK VAN LEEUWEN
 Managing Director,
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 Horticultural Services

VISION REALISED

With nary a leaf out of place, this lush inner-Melbourne garden more than fulfils the intent of the original landscape design

Garden maintenance is about so much more than mow and blow. It's about planning to have a dynamic landscape and honouring the original design intent. The lush outdoor spaces that embrace this inner-Melbourne home are a testament to the vision of the original designer and the expertise of the skilled maintenance team.

Van Leeuwen Green Horticultural Services, guided by managing director Hendrik van Leeuwen, has been maintaining the gardens for close to two years and have done such a stellar job they easily won the Landscape Management and Maintenance Residential category in the 2023 Victorian Landscape Awards.

"We received a thorough handover from the landscape designer Robert Boyle, which has been followed by many consultations between us and Robert's team," explains Hendrik. "Our focus is always on establishing and maintaining a garden according to the vision of the landscape designer, which involves considering both the aesthetic and functional aspects."

"From a functional perspective, certain plants and trees needed to be encouraged to fill out and thicken into privacy screens, and border plants needed to be trimmed off walkways and paths. Aesthetically, the desired form and proportion of plants relative to each other, and to the design of the house, had to be considered."

Other priorities included keeping the plants healthy, pruning and fertilising to encourage maximum flowering, setting irrigation so plants have enough water and root establishment is promoted, and the weeding and mulching of garden beds.

The team has faced some challenges, however. One was a summer heatwave during which many plants were damaged and a few died. "We overcame this by increasing the frequency of the watering regime, removing and replacing dead plants, and pruning other plants so they would regenerate. We also had an irrigation specialist improve the coverage as certain sprayers were being blocked as plants grew," says Hendrik.





The other was hungry possums. After extensive research into deterrents, the team decided the most effective solution was to gradually replace affected plants with other species that complemented the design but possums didn't want to eat.

With its dense planting and horticultural variety, which ensures there is something in flower at different times of the year, this picture-perfect project exemplifies Van Leeuwen's considered approach. Not very surprisingly, the awards' judges were fulsome in their praise, saying: "This is an outstanding landscape, brilliantly designed in the first instance by Robert Boyle, constructed to an exacting quality and now maintained exceptionally well by a professional team of horticulturists displaying technical skills of the highest order. Very high standards of maintenance are evident — not a leaf is out of place, it is perfectly presented, plant health is excellent, and there are no weeds or pests. Little chemical intervention is needed with such healthy plants, with nutrition and irrigation blended beautifully to achieve this level of vigour. Illustrating a high level of understanding of the purpose of the landscape, and additionally what the vision for the landscape is, there is excellent client communication and it is clear great pride is taken by the Van Leeuwen team."



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RETURN TO GLORY

A well-groomed landscape of grand scale and historical significance

One of Melbourne's finest period homes, Invergowrie, a stunning example of Gothic Revival architecture, was built in 1851 and sits within an established parkland-style, meticulously-maintained garden. The residence, which claims a high point in Hawthorn, has long been a local landmark, admired for its architectural grandeur. Today, it is equally admired for the landscaped grounds that envelop it.

As with any garden of such great age, it has constantly evolved over the years with each new owner and landscaper shaping its progress and adding their own touch. For the past seven years, Hendrik van Leeuwen, managing director of Van Leeuwen Green Horticultural Services, has been at the helm, overseeing the weekly maintenance program and working closely with his team of experienced consultants, landscape

architects and heritage advisors to plan for the heritage garden's on-going success.

"This is a garden layered with history and character," says Hendrik, "and we wanted to both respect and build on that. The owner's brief was to bring the garden back to its glory days and, in the long-term, achieve recognition as one of Melbourne's great historical gardens. In the past, the garden had been, on occasion, open to the public and the owner hoped to be able to do that again at some point in the future."

"When we took on the garden, it clearly required expert horticultural knowledge and attention with many areas in need of rejuvenation or restoration. So we are not just maintaining it — we are progressively improving the garden and have carefully developed, in consultation with the owner, a long-term vision for the implementation of an evolving masterplan."



Invergowrie's garden is expansive and when the team first stepped in, it was very overgrown and neglected, so the initial challenge was prioritising what to do first.

"Much of the regular weekly maintenance has concentrated on the areas around the living spaces, buildings and entrances. Also managing trees, keeping hedges trimmed, ensuring irrigation systems are operating, and general presentation," says Hendrik.

"So that we can achieve more than 'keep tidy maintenance' and really restore and improve the garden, we have started a long-term masterplan and redesign process. Part of this is tree restoration, tree surveying and mapping out important shrub species to be retained and rejuvenated for long-term health, shape and form."

In the 2022 Victorian landscape Awards, the Van Leeuwen Green team took top honours in the Landscape Management and Maintenance (Residential) category for their sterling work at Invergowrie.

In bestowing the award, the judges said: "Hendrik and his team at Van Leeuwen Green have demonstrated professional maintenance skills throughout this garden with their very high standard of work which is reflected in the impressive views and layers in the garden. The overall impression is simply breathtaking."



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