

# Fragrant fusion

A formal design is the foundation of this romantic potager in Kenilworth, Cape Town

When the Ovenstones moved into the old family home in Kenilworth in 1987, this small enclosed area, originally called 'the herb garden', was the first part of the garden that Sandy Ovenstone updated. It's tucked away in a secluded, upper corner of the property which, on reflection, Sandy says wasn't the best spot for a herb garden.

"I felt I couldn't garden in front of the house as we believed we needed to

respect the house and its simplicity," she explains. She also knew that she wanted a white garden adjacent to the house so the potager had to be positioned near the boundary walls.

Sandy recalls a visit to Barnsley House in Gloucestershire in the UK, where garden designer Rosemary Verey stressed that a herb or vegetable garden shouldn't be placed too far from the house or under the drip line of trees. "I did both," says Sandy, "despite it being inconvenient



## Who lives here

Andrew and Sandy Ovenstone.

## The garden

A small, formal, self-contained potager, within the gardens of Stellenberg, planted in the form of a diagonal cross.

to run back and forth to pick a sprig of mint or lemon balm for afternoon tea." They have, she concedes, eventually planted herbs, like parsley, mint and basil which are more frequently used, in large pots near the kitchen and in their newer 'medieval vegetable garden'.

The design of the potager, which is enclosed by dense, neatly clipped eugenia (Australian cherry) hedges, is in the form of the diagonal cross of St Andrew, a reference to Andrew's Scottish ancestry.

**THIS SPREAD, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** ● A climbing rose (thought to be 'Blossom Magic') on the arbour frames a view of the garden gate. Designed by David Hicks and inspired by one in his own garden, it's painted a light sage green. ● The triangular beds are planted mainly with lavender, thyme, oregano, *Tulbaghia violacea* and lemon balm. ● On the narrow upper terrace neat, well-clipped rows of rosemary and santolina mirror the triangular design. ● Pots are planted up with strongly aromatic, indigenous wild garlic, *Tulbaghia violacea*. Black-eyed Susan (*Thunbergia 'African Sunset'*) is grown from seed every year.



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The four triangles are defined with box hedges and filled with a variety of herbs. These used to be planted more loosely but the herbs are now placed in an ordered and geometric manner to emphasise the design.

Over the years, a variety of climbers, including honeysuckle, granadillas and roses were planted over the metal arbour which forms the focal point of the potager. Another noteworthy feature is the hedge of eugenia that has a recess for

a bench. It was positioned some distance away from the well-treed boundary where it would get more sunlight. It also screens the pathway to the garden shed.

Many indigenous herbs were added including wild sage, coryledons, *Artemisia afra* (wilde als), and wild garlic. There's also an entire bed of comfrey, which is layered into the nearby compost heap, while the beds are filled with traditional herbs like lavender, rosemary, thyme and lemon balm.

There are also unusual varieties such as *Teucrium chamaedrys* (wall germander), the evergreen green santolina and exotic lemon grass.

Although edible herbs have been planted nearer to the kitchen, the family still use many from this garden. However, as its whole raison d'être has changed, it's now regarded as an aromatic garden, and as it's hidden away, a place of peace and seclusion. **GH**