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TRANSFORMING AN UNRULY GARDEN WAS TOP PRIORITY FOR WINEMAKER ED SWIFT AND HIS WIFE, EMILY, AT THEIR PROPERTY IN ORANGE, NSW.

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ORANGE NSW GARDEN

Sculptural dahlias are an annual favourite. **FACING PAGE** Ed and Emily enjoy time outdoors with their daughters Penny, 14, and Annabel, 12.



IN A TYPICAL RENOVATION timeline, gardens are tended to after the main building is refreshed. However, the reinvention of the Swift family's half-hectare plot in Orange, in the Central Tablelands of NSW, followed its own path. Emily Swift and her husband, Ed, purchased the property in 2013, and although their 100-year-old weatherboard house was uninsulated and falling apart, the couple directed their attention to the landscaping first.

"Everyone asked us why we were spending time on the garden, but I knew how long things could take to establish," explains Emily, 45. "It was always our priority to start with the garden and then work backwards to the house. We knew this would be our forever home, so we wanted to do it right."

Emily and Ed were drawn to the established trees and the fact that there was space for their daughters, Penny and Annabel, who were five and three at the time, to play, roam and grow. They also appreciated the property's proximity to Printhie Wines, the winery that Ed's parents established in 1996, where Ed, 46, manages the day-to-day operations alongside his brother Dave, and Emily oversees the marketing.

Back on the Swifts' block in 2013, the task at hand was considerable. Wayward elm suckers restricted access to one side of the house, and the sloping grounds were pockmarked with duck ponds and a shamble of bird coops. "It was really overgrown - we couldn't get a sense of what the boundaries and elevations looked like," Emily recalls.

It took them months to strip everything back, followed by extensive earthworks, trucking in 1000 tonnes of fill to turn the sloping site into a series of terraces and outdoor rooms. "A lot of work went into establishing the garden's infrastructure," Emily explains. "We had to get the terracing and irrigation set up, and we put in a bore. We weren't ready to start planting until 2015."

The classical ideals of order and beauty effortlessly combine in the garden, bringing a European aesthetic to this patch of high-altitude land. "We are so lucky here in Orange because the cooler climate allows us to grow many European varieties of plants," she adds. "We're also very conscious of water usage, so we've interplanted with natives. I have a whole new appreciation for natives - there are many beautiful and incredibly resistant varieties." >



CLOCKWISE, FROM LEFT
Layers of greenery; many plants were grown from tube stock. "We were mindful of the budget for a garden this size," Emily says; welcome home; boots for yard work; dreamy Bonica roses; tea time; the hydrangeas came from Emily's grandmother. "She passed away a year ago... I love sitting here and having that connection with her," she says; garden pots; "We have a lot of privacy here," says Emily.

GARDEN ORANGE NSW

Emily and Ed's travels through Europe inspired the garden structure and plant selection. Emily lists the cultivated grounds of the Palace of Castel Gandolfo and the stunning island oases on Lake Maggiore, both in Italy, as a source of creative direction. "We thought, 'Why don't we give this a go at home?'" she says. "Our next project is a fire pit and a pizza oven. And I want a potting shed with French doors."

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CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP
LEFT *Hydrangea arborescens* 'Annabelle'; Emily's favourite flowers brighten outdoor living spaces; a quiet spot with enchanting views; delicate foxglove; the light, bright verandah is ideal for a relaxing morning coffee or entertaining; the home's exterior is painted in Lexicon Quarter Strength by Dulux, and the doors are painted in Dulux Night Sky; potted herbs and petals; the family's cute cavoodle, Hattie, enjoys games in the garden.

Correa and grevillea brush up against camellias, rhododendrons and thriving hydrangeas that originated in Emily's grandmother's garden. The vegetable beds, constructed by Emily's father, are slowly but surely producing more florals and fewer edibles as time passes. "The vegie patch is turning into a cut flower garden. I can't help myself!" Emily says, chuckling.

The passionate gardener's carefully planned rotation of growth ensures beautiful vignettes regardless of the season. "I've tried to design the garden so that we can appreciate it any time of year," she says, adding that she thinks the best views are enjoyed from the verandah.

The homestead, renovated over six months beginning in November 2017, now sits proudly on the top of the hill, presiding over grassy terraces defined by Buxus hedge, blonde gravel, and impeccably groomed beds. "We wanted spaces that we could entertain in, and I love to think my daughters would want to get married here one day. The marquee lawn is ready for them!" Emily says with a laugh.

The showcase landscaping radiates a comfortable formality. It's manicured but relaxed and inviting, and remains a source of calm. "I need to do something in the garden every day; it's the way I decompress," Emily says. "It's nonstop working in a family business, so I find gardening is my break from that."

Printhie Wines is stronger for having weathered the COVID storm and the years of drought and bushfire prior. They are putting the finishing touches on a new cellar door and restaurant as they continue adapting and innovating processes, and gaining international recognition. "Every day at Printhie Wines we are so focused on what the land is producing for us," says Emily. "We focus on the vineyard's health and sustainability, and get the best quality product from our vines. It all comes back to the soil."

Was this perhaps the mindset that guided the family's priority of establishing their garden haven at home? "I think Ed and I have a very strong, innate connection to the land," Emily says. "Having both grown up in the country, we respect the natural environment. It's very grounding for us to keep that connection going when we come home. It's our sense of place." *CS*

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