



SEDUM

LANDSCAPING FOR BUSHFIRE: CASE STUDY

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Year-round colour and textural interest in the garden do not compromise the bushfire safety features of the house

For more information about the design principles used in Landscaping for Bushfire or to use CFA's online Plant Selection Key, visit cfa.vic.gov.au/plants or call the VicEmergency Hotline on **1800 226 226**

The Owner's Story

The owners have lived in the district for many years and had some knowledge of bushfire risk.

Awareness of this risk increased significantly during and after the Black Saturday fires in 2009.

When the opportunity came to build a new house on the site, the owners decided that bushfire risk should be a core element of both house and garden design.

The Risk Environment

The Victorian Goldfields location in which the owners live has a high bushfire risk. The main risk comes from areas of native forest on public land to the north of the site. Typical of former gold mining settings, these forested areas comprise a mix of remnant eucalypts with a dense cover of weeds including gorse, blackberry and broom.

In this fire scenario, there is potential for a fire in the native forest to spread south under northerly winds down a steep gully and then laterally uphill into Sedum and adjoining properties



Indian sandstone paving separates the house from the flammable elements in the garden beds



Low plantings allow views through the garden to the surrounding landscape

Bushfire management design principles

- Create defensible space
- Remove flammable objects from around the house
- Break up fuel continuity
- Carefully select, locate and maintain trees.

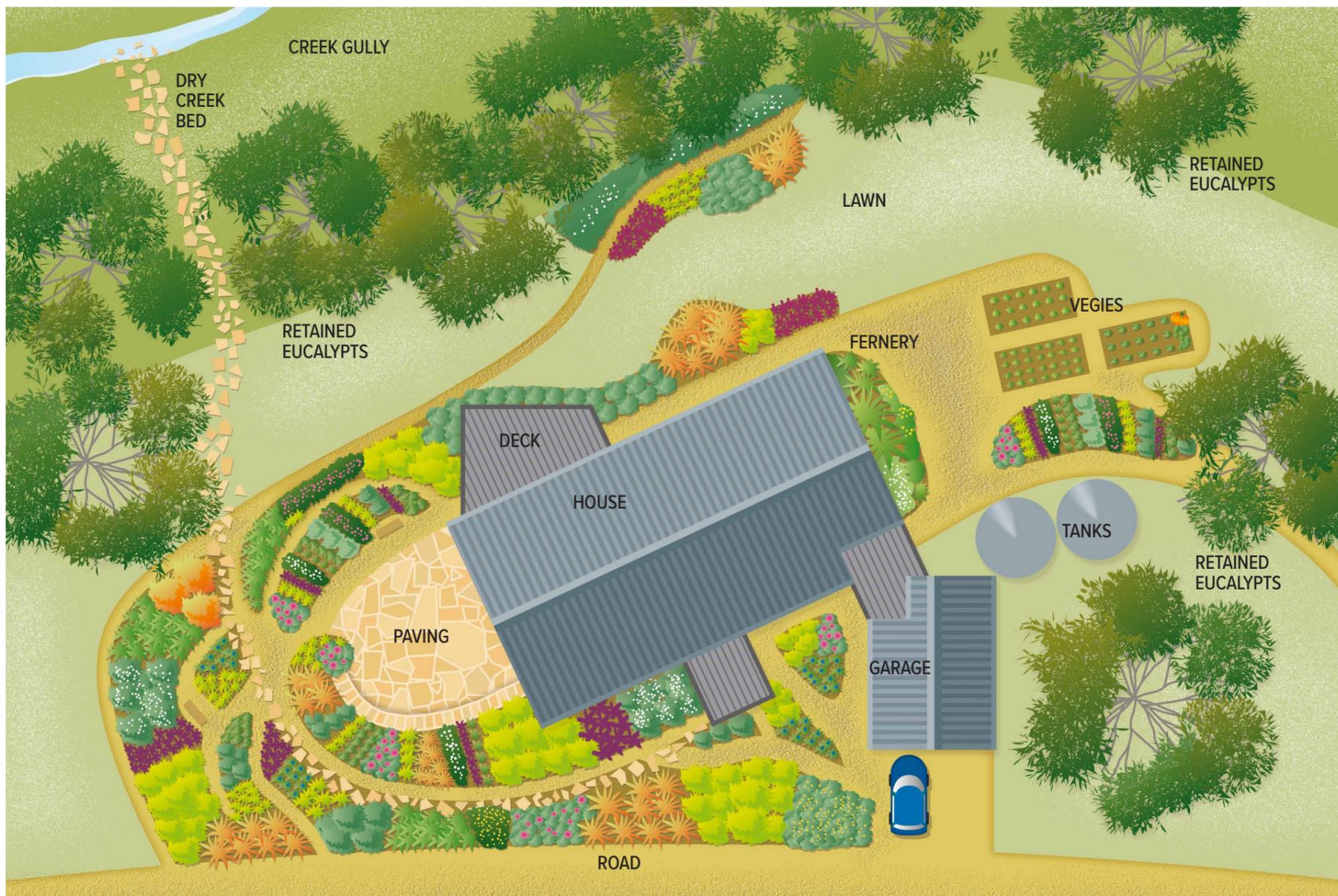


Landscaping Goals

The owners prepared a list of landscaping goals based on family needs, research and garden visits.

The garden needed to:

- be beautiful, tranquil and nurturing
- merge into the surrounding landscape
- be full of colour all year
- provide a sense of flow
- look beautiful viewed from above
- cope with extremes of weather
- not require extra watering
- be affordable
- provide places to sit and relax
- let light fill the house
- not compromise the bushfire safety of the house.



The low garden and slashed grass perimeter provide excellent separation between the house and the bushfire hazard



Dense planting of succulents



Gravel paths and clever use of local stone

The landscaping itself

Prior to moving in, the owners cut, raked and grubbed weeds from the block and from the neighbouring gully with help from the public land manager.

While excavating for the house site, all the large rocks were piled up in one accessible place. Smaller rocks were collected to create retaining walls and garden bed edges. These rocks were also used to construct a dry creek bed to carry rainwater under the deck and through the garden. The creek bed doubles as a path in some places.

River pebbles and a gravel base with tuscan toppings were used for the paths.

Gypsum and large amounts of mushroom compost were incorporated into the heavy clay.

Planting was done in stages from west to east as resources became available. Dense planting was employed to minimise the need for organic mulch and weeding. This layout also helped reduce garden flammability.

Indian sandstone paving was laid and finished with mosaics. A reef was uncovered south-east of the house and subsequently incorporated into new plantings.

What works well

From a bushfire safety perspective many strong design features stand out.

Flammable elements are separated from each other and the house using gravel paths, local stone and paving.

The plant selection is dominated by succulents, herbs and bulbs which have low flammability.

Thoughtful selection avoids plants that become drought stressed and increase flammability. This also minimises the need for watering.

Remnant native trees such as Manna Gum and Yellow Box have been retained for their beauty and habitat values. These are located well away from the house and the bark and leaf litter are managed.

Many of the owner's goals for their garden also lent themselves to a bushfire-smart design.

For instance, local stone provides a strong structural element that links all aspects of the garden visually – and provides non-flammable edging for garden beds.

Keeping the garden low to let light in and to accentuate views reduces bushfire risk by keeping elevated fuel low. It also avoids the risk of vegetation overhanging the house.

The slashed garden perimeter suppresses weeds and provides views to the surrounding landscape. It also provides an additional layer of separation between the house and the bushfire hazard.