

DESIGN SOLUTIONS



Wide steppers, whether of paving or timber, seem to stretch a space.



Introduce different levels. Design by Good Manors Pools + Gardens.

Straight and narrow

Great ideas for turning a narrow outdoor space into an inspired and functional landscape

Idea 1: Banish clutter

Don't clutter the foreground! If foreground features are constantly catching your eye, the space feels even smaller because you're not taking in the view of the spaces beyond. Decorative features and sculptures *can* be used to great effect – just strategically position them further into the landscape to draw the eye. Keep the space around eye level free of walls and bushy plants so you don't feel "closed in". Plant in layers, placing the larger plants in the background and grading down to the smallest plants in front.

Idea 2: Horizontal lines

A simple trick to use when designing narrow spaces is to use horizontal lines across the narrow dimension. A horizontal, timber, slat-screen fence across a narrow yard, not along

Think ahead

What do you want to use the space for? How much space do you need for each purpose? Where do the various elements need to be located? Having answered these questions, a few different layouts may be possible. One suggestion might be to introduce defined garden rooms, each one partly obscured from the other by plants or decorative screens.

the length, or paving or decking laid across the short axis, seems to stretch the space. Running lines along the long axis, on the other hand, will be reminiscent of a bowling alley. It's the same



Make the most of the walls. Shown, the VertiScape modular planter.

visual concept that makes people look slimmer in clothes with vertical stripes.

Idea 3: Use air space

Improve the scale of a narrow landscape by using the vertical or air space. Frame the vista with taller trees, creating a "ceiling" with their branches arching over the yard. Pergolas can also frame a space; however, design carefully to avoid making the space appear dark and feel claustrophobic. Going from air space to ground space: level changes, in the form of steps or terraces, and raised or sunken decks and patios create added dimension.

Idea 4: Forget symmetry

Asymmetry is effective in narrow spaces. Multiple, subdued asymmetrical focal points will draw the eye around the space comfortably, while formal lines with a strong focal point, as might be seen in a grandiose French estate, only look "right" from either end or from a distance. Aim to have the space look attractive from as many vantage points as possible, enticing you to venture further.

Idea 6: Green walls

Very confined outdoor spaces, such as breezeways, side passages and tiny courtyards, can be used as green space with a minimal footprint. Think green walls, trellises with climbing plants and espaliered trees. Green walls are available in readymade modules – just add plants. Or there are plenty of DIY methods using recycled or reclaimed materials. Climbing plants on a trellis make a simple and cheap option. Be aware of pruning and maintenance needs as well as sun and water requirements when selecting plants for a trellis or to espalier. ■

Prepared by Jacki Brown of ecodesign on behalf of the Australian Institute of Landscape Designers & Managers (AILDM): www.aildm.com.au