

Secret garden

A corner terraced house reflects the environmentally conscious lifestyle of its owners

Lynn Tan

Its proximity to Windsor Nature Park was one of the main reasons that drew the nature-loving couple to this estate off Venus Drive.

After returning from a four-year work stint overseas, they felt it was the perfect location to build their home – one that was “modern and understated, and which blended in with the natural surroundings”.

The site conditions, however, were far from ideal. An existing drain cut through the rear of the property and there was a steep slope at the back of the house. The neighbour’s boundary wall also encroached on the plot.

But Mr Edmund Ng of home-grown architecture firm Edmund Ng Architects was able to overcome the technical challenges.

With the original house demolished, the drainage diverted, the boundary issue resolved and the slope backfilled, construction proceeded without a hitch and the new house – a corner terrace with a built-up area of 6,000 sq ft – was completed in 10 months.

The owners – the husband is in his early 50s and works in information technology, and his wife is in

her late 40s and works in the legal field – their two teenage children and a labradoodle moved in in September 2017. They declined to reveal the cost of the project.

While many would lament the narrow frontage of the triangular plot surrounded by neighbouring houses, this suits the owners well.

“We value privacy and the configuration allows the creation of hidden family spaces within a home nestled among the neighbouring houses instead of towering over them.”

A void along the party wall with the adjacent house creates a separation for more privacy. Mr Ng says: “It also makes the corner terrace appear like a detached house.”

As the triangular-shaped land opens up towards the rear of the property, moving through the various spaces surrounded by greenery



is like discovering a secret garden.

There are more than 50 varieties of tropical plants such as thunbergia, thalias, salas and cymbidiums. Planted along the boundary walls, the different heights, shapes, sizes and textures create a layered composition that softens the wall and enhances the sense of privacy.

As nature lovers with an environmentally conscious lifestyle, the owners embrace tropical living, so almost all the fenestrations extend from the floor to the ceiling,



With the full-height glass doors around the living and dining areas open, the spaces feel like they are part of the surrounding garden. PHOTOS: SPH MAGAZINES; ART DIRECTION: NONIE CHEN & KRISTY QUAH

blurring the boundary between the interior and the outdoors.

With the full-height glass doors open, the spaces feel like they are part of the surrounding garden.

The bedrooms, family lounge and study all open out to balconies – maintaining the connection with nature and the outdoors.

The generous external openings also help facilitate natural cross-ventilation throughout the home and adjustable vertical louvres on the east-facing facade minimise glare and heat from the sun, as well as keep away curious eyes.

Inside, there are no dead ends. Every room is linked via two or more interconnecting doors. “We wanted every space to be well-connected and well-utilised. There should be no isolated spaces,” the owners say.

Creating a series of smaller, interconnected layouts also makes them easier to cool and enhances energy efficiency throughout. Solar panels on the pitched roof power the home and provide additional insulation.

The design of the home – an expression of wabi-sabi, the Japanese philosophy of finding and accepting beauty in imperfection and impermanence – is also a celebration of the organic beauty of natural materials.

For instance, there is a rawness in the off-form concrete walls and the Corten steel roof, as well as a facade that will rust over time.

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