

Growing a social heart: landscape design at Gulf Rise



Landscape architects Boffa Miskell have designed many of the outdoor spaces at Metlifecare villages, including Gulf Rise. Their aim? Creating beautiful, practical spaces for residents to own and enjoy.

Creating a community is about building connections. Along with residential facilities and a network of streets, paths and lanes, thoughtful planting and considered outdoor amenities create a chain of inviting spaces with a social heart.

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In addition to colourful flower beds and shaded outdoor seating areas, spaces for entertaining, sports and hands-on gardening are all an integral part of a vibrant retirement village.

“Gardens and outdoor spaces are very important,” says Jarrod Shearer, village manager at Gulf Rise. “How the village looks is important to residents, because this is their new home, and everyone wants to feel proud of their home. And opportunities for activity, and socialising, and just the overall sense of wellbeing that being outdoors provides makes a real difference in residents’ day-to-day lives.”

At Gulf Rise, the landscape design provides for numerous connected outdoor spaces including a social garden, butterfly walk, production gardens, glass house and pavilions and outdoor dining areas. Active recreation includes a petanque court; there are also sensory gardens, and private garden spaces attached to residences.

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“There’s a huge variety of plant species used throughout any community,” he continues. “At Gulf Rise, for example, there are more than ten distinct planting schemes – because what’s appropriate for a shady, low-maintenance terrace garden isn’t what you’d want in the cut flower garden, or to attract bees and butterflies in the water garden and spring walk features.”

Thanks to an appropriate mix of native trees and flowering plants, bees and butterflies abound at Gulf Rise, both along the internal walkways and on a perimeter slope. Jarrod would now like to investigate whether beehives could be installed under the trees. “Wouldn’t it be fantastic if we could make our own organic honey for use in the kitchen, and for residents?”

With an eye toward sustainability and organic produce, vegetable gardens are a popular feature, as they enable residents to continue their passion for hands-on gardening.

At Gulf Rise, raised garden beds are centred around a glass house and outdoor dining pavilion. Jarrod says the area around the pavilion has the most social activity these days. “We hold many of our community events there, and it’s a popular spot with visitors, too.”



Resident Allen Phillips has always enjoyed hours in his vegetable garden and left the garden he had spent years tending to with a heavy heart. But since moving into Gulf Rise his green thumb has hit the ground running,

“I have loved having the opportunity to feed into plans and then playing a keep role in planting the shared planter boxes. It has been great getting back into the garden and has been even better meeting others in the Gulf Rise community who share my passion for gardening” says Allen.

Peter Whiting says incorporating ways to get outdoors and enjoy nature, especially with young visitors, is one of the main considerations in putting together the overall landscape design for a new community. Pre-schoolers love butterfly walks and fishponds; while the multipurpose green areas can be used and enjoyed by multiple generations.

“Retirement villages are so rewarding to design, because we’re creating spaces for people to enjoy, and take ownership of,” says Peter. “We’re continually learning from the feedback we get from residents and staff; and it’s an ongoing evolution.”

Jarrold Shearer agrees. “I’ve managed a few retirement villages, and this one actually lives up to the brochure... in fact, I think it’s even better. It’s obvious that there’s been a great deal of thought behind the design, and care taken to accommodate and anticipate what residents want. It looks beautiful; but living in it is just fantastic.”

Resident Denice Symons says, *“while searching for a suitable retirement option I was delighted to find this creative approach to senior living.*

The community gardens are an asset to health and wellbeing.

I now reside opposite the glass houses with a wonderful view of the expertly designed gardens and vege boxes.

A joyful retirement has begun”.

