

Every garden tells a story. That's the impression you get from Bev Reaston and Deanne Drummond, two family lawyers going into business together (Reaston Drummond Law), both with a passion for gardening.

Walking into Bev Reaston's garden is like walking into The Secret Garden as a magical world unfolds.

Her beach-styled quarter-acre with paths, boardwalks, and gateways to chicken coups at Holloways Beach is at once a passion and a retreat from her hectic career as a family lawyer that has spanned some 36 years.

When she started as a lawyer, Bev went straight from Grade 12 to becoming an article clerk under a master for five years in Townsville, and she had only just been admitted when she opened her own law practise with her husband Jim in Cairns.

"We first set up in Rusty's and would see people out the back," Bev says, pondering the path she has taken that has led to her launching a practice once again with her husband, and her friend Deanne Drummond, just this week.

Bev was the first female lawyer in Cairns with a baby when childcare was a distant dream and she had to bring her firstborn Kelly into work in a basket, an arrangement that worked well, apart from the odd embarrassment.

"I was feeding her and settling her and then at 2.15pm went to court, and when I was finished I was told I had baby puke down my back," Bev says.

Life as a family lawyer and independent children's lawyer is enjoyable but challenging, in the best of times seeing families separate with dignity and individuals becoming so much stronger from the first emotional meeting, and in the worst, ending in disaster and death.

It's not a career for the faint-hearted and Bev says you must have a passion and a life outside of work to survive.

That passion for Bev is her beach-themed garden that not only holds a variety of plants and flowers, trees, a pool and glorious fountain, but various "knick-knacks", testament to her family life.

Little paths were created when her children were very young so they could explore their surroundings. Two statues of a boy and girl playing the flute remind Bev of her children's forays into playing a variety of musical instruments.

Shells on the paths were collected on trips to Magnetic Island.

The shade house has now evolved into a cubby house and dinosaur cave for her one-year-old grandson, Joe, while the putting green out the front is a gift and demonstrates her husband's passion for golf.

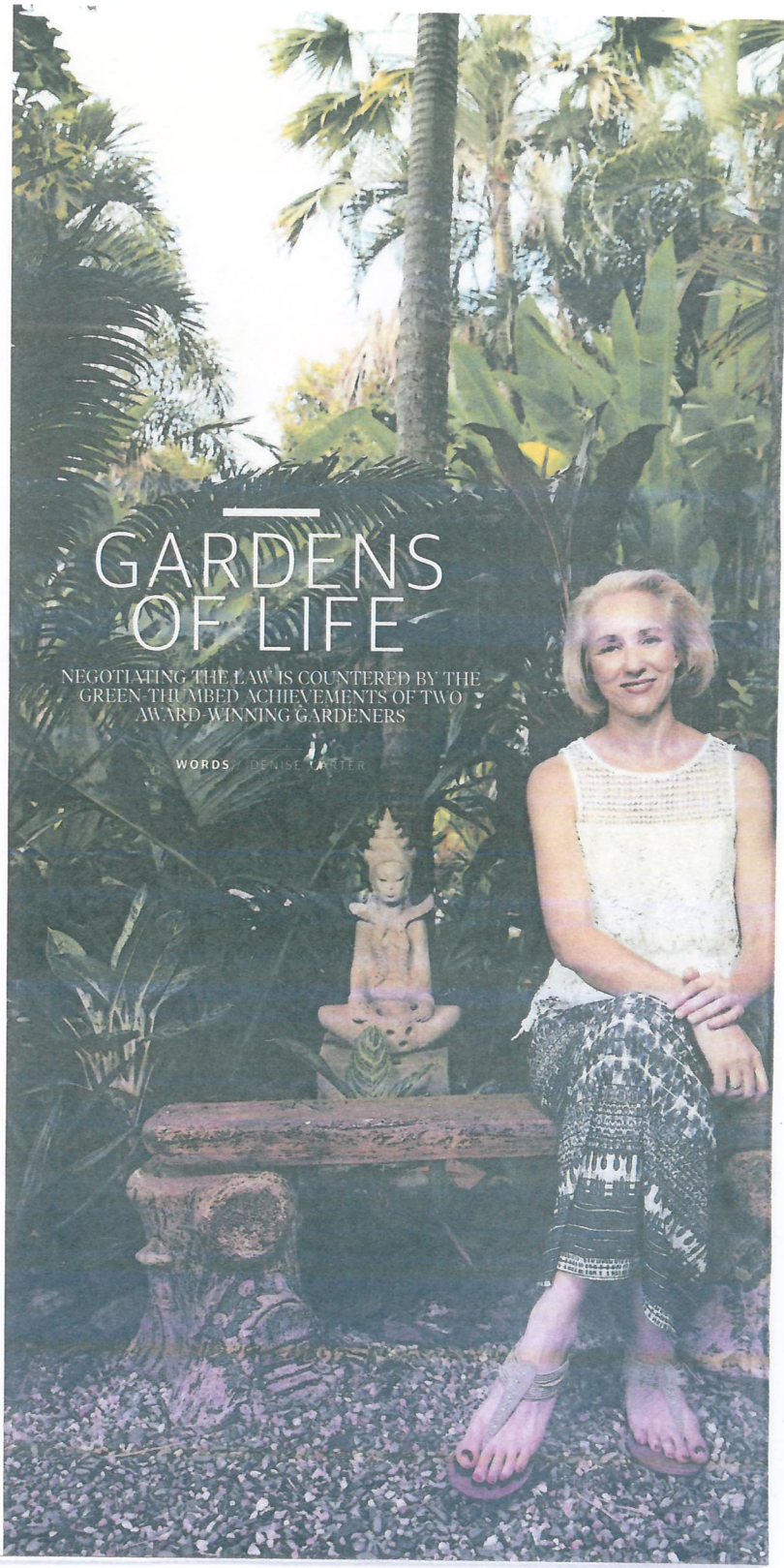
"You change as you go along, plan, and focus on the future," Bev says.

"First we had sand, then turf, then paths, and we had birthday parties, in which we would hide Little Golden Books among the plants for the children to find," Bev says, of the garden that caught the attention of and was featured in *Better Homes and Gardens* last year.

There's an Amalfi Coast Wall (built after a trip to the Amalfi Coast), a beach-themed walk, and a sign in chalk out front that Bev changes about once a month. Today it reads: "This day will never happen again, make the most of it."

Some of Bev's favourites are her brilliant bromeliads, colourful bougainvilleas, the bright crotons, large-leaved monstera, purple vincas, pink ginger, and the extra special Pandanus (variegated) that hovers umbrella-like over the swimming pool.

"It has grown up – it was the 'scary tree' to the children when it used to dip into the water,"



GARDENS OF LIFE

NEGOTIATING THE LAW IS COUNTERED BY THE GREEN THUMBED ACHIEVEMENTS OF TWO AWARD-WINNING GARDENERS

WORDS / DENISE CARTER



oasis of calm has evolved over time, from when she didn't have children, to now, when she has a special seated spot to entertain while keeping a watchful eye on little ones in the pool.

"Now it's all about them being able to run around and have fun, so there are not a lot of hard surfaces," Deanne says.

"We did have grass but it was too muddy."

"Now we have gravel paths, a tree house and slide for the children, and they bring all their little friends over and do their dancing on the deck or play hide and seek in the garden."

The paths are also created to give easy access for Deanne to trim plants and trees, there are beams where Deanne's daughter practises her cartwheels, and like Bev's garden, Deanne's too strikes chords of memory – a major one is the Balinese-style hut beside the pool completed around the time of Steve Irwin's death in 2006.

Deanne enjoys nothing more than a walk around her garden first thing in the morning

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before work, which she finds very relaxing, while Saturdays are for pottering around, digging, and redesigning.

At the same time, Bev and Deanne redesign and landscape their professional world.

Inch by inch, row by row, these lawyers make their gardens grow.

Read more about Bev and Jim Reaston and Deanne Drummond's new practise at Cairns Family & Commercial Lawyers (Reaston Drummond Law) at cairns-family-commercial-lawyers.com.au.

Bev (above) says. Like many a gardener, she has tried some things and failed but says you learn what might not work in one area of the garden might work in another.

With her miner's light, she delves into her garden both in the early morning and at night, and weekends are full on gardening indulgences.

Bev's friend in gardening as well as in business is Deanne Drummond (left), an award-winning gardener, who she met while working at Farrellys Lawyers in Cairns before she moved to O'Reilly Stevens.

Deanne, a family lawyer for some 20 years, visits other gardens with Bev, shares tips and cuttings, and says she always had an inkling they would set up in business one day.

"I have a degree in commerce, so I like the complexity of the property settlements and I like helping people," Deanne says.

Like Bev, Deanne says family law is stressful, with people often crying, or angry, and in general at a very emotional place in their lives.

"Gardening is a good way to de-stress," Deanne says.

Deanne's biggest passion lay in dance when she lived in Townsville and it was only since she moved to Cairns in 1997, that she set her sights on not only building a house with her husband, but a very beautiful garden.

Looking at Deanne's land in Earlvile now, it's hard to envision a vacant plot.

Her garden is in the tropical Balinese-style and a paradise of cool shaded areas, with a delightful pool, and a very relaxing atmosphere.

"Starting out, we were just out of uni and had no money, so we used cuttings from friends and from the creek at the back," Deanne says.

She loves the creative side of gardening, "the colours, shapes, designs".

Cordylines, heliconias, ginger, crotons, palms and bromeliads, with philodendrons, mondo grass and dieffenbachias decorate her world.

"I love tropical things," Deanne says.

"I want to feel like I'm on holidays after a stressful day."

"You have got to be able to relax and entertain."

Deanne won best entertainment garden on *House & Garden* and also best pool, and her escape is often on garden tour itineraries.

"I have two little girls, (aged six and eight) so nothing is too precious – it doesn't have to be particularly trimmed and shaped, but I like lots of colour," Deanne says.

Like Bev's garden, Deanne's



PICTURES: MARC MCCORMACK AND ANNA ROGERS