

06 Mid-Century Modern

Design Handbook 2026

Mid-Century Modern is maturing, evolving from its practical, timeless roots into a more layered and comforting direction. The look is refreshed with high-performance design and joyful maximalism, featuring bright colours, tactile finishes and expressive geometry.



Meet your team of experts

Guided by leading experts in architecture, design, lifestyle and global trend forecasting, this handbook draws on deep experience and distinct perspectives in creating homes that are thoughtful, relevant and future-focused.



Neale Whitaker
Interior Design Expert

Neale is a renowned Australian design expert recognised for his thoughtful approach to residential architecture and interior home design.



Justin Logan
Architect/Founder, OBI Office

Justin's residential architecture is recognised for creating connection, wellbeing and a strong relationship between interior and exterior spaces.



Rebecca Caratti
Editor-in-Chief, VOGUE Living

Rebecca leads Vogue Living, recognised globally for its design authority, creative and cultural reach and rigorous curation.



Jenny Li
Trend Specialist, WGSN

Jenny analyses global data and trends shaping design, lifestyle and consumer behaviour and contributes as a researcher and writer for WGSN content.



Matt Leacy
Creative Director, Landart

Through Landart, Matt designs landscapes connecting nature and architecture, creating outdoor spaces that restore and inspire.

Cover

This Mid-Century Modern features a bold angular roofline with Stria™ Cladding Smooth 325mm on the fascia, a distinct round porthole window and a welcoming entry with bright front door and coloured glass feature that pops against crisp white Axon™ Cladding 133mm Smooth.

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Lifestyle themes

Guided by optimism, expressive geometry and layered comfort, the Mid-Century Modern home responds to evolving lifestyles, encouraging creativity, connection and everyday ease through adaptable design, warmth and enduring performance.

01—Evolved Living

With modular layouts and durable materials, Mid-Century Modern helps deliver high-performance living. It is a smart, design-led response to rising costs and changing lifestyle needs, offering homes that are not only efficient and resilient but also deeply attuned to the rhythms of contemporary life. From passive design to flexible zoning and indoor-outdoor flow, this style supports wellbeing and adaptability.



02—Creative Living

Mid-Century Modern embraces retro-inspired creativity through expressive geometry and vibrant colour-blocking, turning nostalgia into a dynamic design language that sparks joy and individuality.



Milan Design Week Photography by Paul Barbera.

03—Multigenerational living

Mid-Century Modern supports multigenerational living through flexible zoning, open-plan flow and adaptable nooks, balancing shared connection with personal retreat while maintaining warmth, practicality and enduring spatial efficiency across changing family needs.



04—Autonomous Living

Mid-Century Modern approaches Autonomous Living through durable materials, passive design and adaptable layouts, enabling low-maintenance comfort, energy efficiency and long-term resilience while maintaining warmth, character and everyday ease.



Playful, layered & comforting



Clean lines and smart layouts are softened with warmer tones, textured surfaces and striking colour accents, creating homes that feel both timeless and full of personality.

Mid-Century Modern is a nostalgic classic, playfully reimagined for today's evolving lifestyles. The clarity of its architecture is enriched by layered finishes and lively colour accents, creating homes that feel both enduring and full of personality. This design invites imagination and adaptability through flexible spaces, engaging colours and expressive materials—giving residents room to play, experiment and shape their home in ways that feel personally authentic and emotionally empowering.

- 1 This Mid-Century Modern features a bold angular roofline with Stria™ Cladding Smooth 325mm on the fascia, a distinct round porthole window and a welcoming entry with bright front door and coloured glass feature that pops against crisp white Axon™ Cladding 133mm Smooth.
- 2 At the rear, the L-shaped layout frames views to the pool and outdoor living areas, with abundant glazing maintaining a strong connection between interior and exterior.

This look is defined by flexible rooflines and visible structures, with a mix of materials paying homage to the original homes of the era.

Large floor-to-ceiling windows flood rooms with light and link the indoors with the outdoors, while interiors feature textured glass, breeze block and natural stone in a monochromatic scheme, accented by pops of colour. Modular layouts and multifunctional nooks support changing lifestyles and spatial efficiency, while durable materials help homes stand the test of time.

The palette reinterprets Mid-Century optimism with pops of yellow, statement pink and bright emerald to add energy, while grounding neutral colours provide balance. Colour-blocking, patterned tiling and lacquered finishes energise spaces, while textured materials add depth and a sense of story. The result is a comforting home that inspires creativity in the everyday, with a sense of optimism woven into every detail.



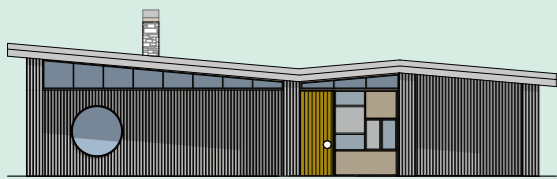
Floorplan

This home celebrates playful geometry, optimism and family-friendly ease. It blends angular rooflines, expressive contrasts and sunny, single-storey living, creating a light-filled layout that feels open and social.



From Justin:

‘Mid-Century Modern invites joy and optimism—playful geometry, sunlight, colour and the kind of expressive detailing that makes a home feel alive.’



The brief

Site & location context

West Pennant Hills, NSW. A well-established, leafy suburb close enough to the city for commuting. Temperate, leafy, humid climate.

Homeowner profile

Working professionals with kids in school, wanting playful, expressive architecture.

Intended use

A functional family home suitable for gathering and entertaining family and friends.

The layout

3–4 bed | 3 bath | 2 car

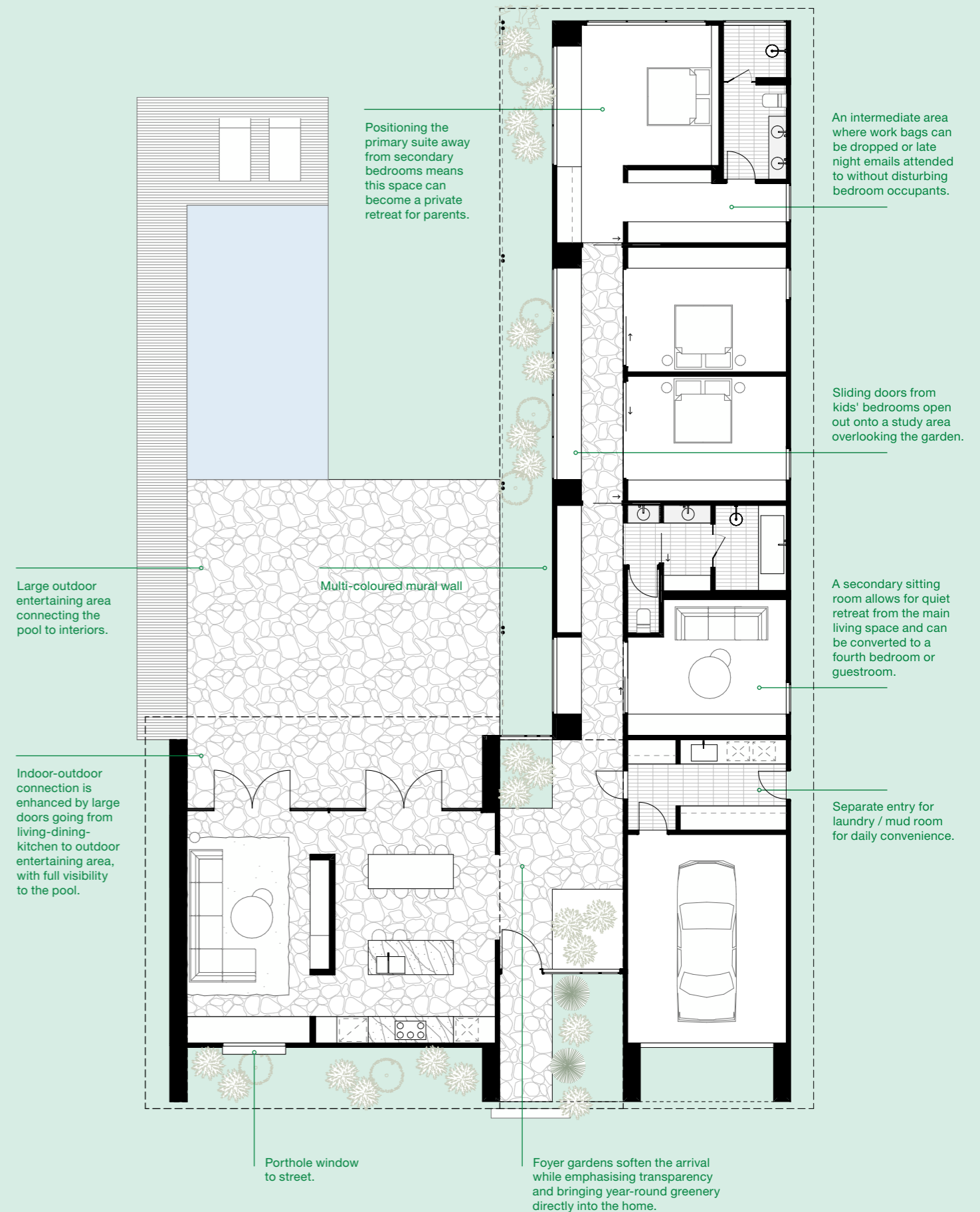
This single-storey home uses an L-shaped plan to wrap around a central pool, making it the focal point of the design. Entry divides the home into public and private wings with large openings and sliding doors letting living areas and bedrooms expand to the outdoors or into reading or study spaces. A circular porthole window adds playful sightlines from the facade while hard and soft landscaping blend with the architecture. A multicolour mural at the rear signals the entertainment zone reinforcing the home’s social character.

Why it works

This plan balances light, openness and functional zoning, making living and entertaining effortless. The L-shaped layout frames the pool and outdoor areas, connecting indoors and out, while a secondary entrance keeps service circulation—such as laundry, storage and garage access—separate from the main living spaces. Sliding doors and flexible room arrangements allow spaces to adapt as needs change. Clear sightlines and the blending of landscape and architecture create a home that feels intuitive, social and deeply livable.

Adaptations

The modular geometry allows effortless reconfiguration as needs shift. Bedrooms can become studies, guest rooms or teen retreats and additional wings can be added without disrupting the core plan. The layout adapts easily to different block shapes, allowing zones to be reordered while retaining the iconic roofline. On smaller sites, the garage can convert to living space to maximise lifestyle and flexibility.



Design features

1—Expressive roofline

Flat, skillion or butterfly roofs are concealed behind parapet walls and feature wide, overhanging eaves. These pronounced rooflines define the home's silhouette and add playful character.

2—Structural Expression

Exposed beams and columns showcase the building's framework with detailed connectors adding visual interest. This structural clarity reinforces the style's geometric confidence and Mid-Century craftsmanship.

3—Light-filled openings

Large windows flood interiors with natural light and connect indoor and outdoor zones, reinforcing the style's open, optimistic character.

4—Layered materiality

Tactile warmth is created through a mix of materials from different textures and groove lines of cladding to touches of timber, stone, terrazzo and glass. This reflects the expressive layering of the style.



5—Interiors

Interiors feature breeze blocks, textured glass and natural stone in monochromatic tones, accented by bold colour-blocking, patterned tiling and retro-inspired palettes. Playful layouts and multifunctional nooks invite creativity and comfort.



Cladding solutions

Mid-Century Modern cladding pairs smooth panels and pronounced grooves with tactile materials, creating layered facades that celebrate structure, colour and craftsmanship while supporting durability, flexibility and enduring performance.

Axon™ Cladding 133mm Smooth

The vertical grooves of Axon™ Cladding 133mm Smooth evoke classic timber panelling, adding architectural clarity and visual height to Mid-Century facades. It can be painted any colour, so is ideal for expressive, layered designs.



Stria™ Cladding Smooth 325mm

Stria™ Cladding Smooth 325mm delivers crisp, lines that echo classic Mid-Century Modern geometry in either horizontal or vertical applications. Its distinctive square-shaped groove adds subtle shadowing to facades, complementing the layered materiality with a refined, modern edge.



Matrix™ Cladding

Matrix™ Cladding introduces striking, geometric express-joint patterns for feature walls and modular volumes. Its panelised look and precise joints reinforce the style's structural clarity and playful layouts, while offering a durable, low-maintenance surface for creative colour-blocking.

James Hardie has provided Australian-made building products for over 100 years, with a wide range of our fibre cement products being GreenRate™ Level A certified including Hardie™ Oblique™ Cladding, Linea™ Weatherboard and Stria™ Cladding Fine Texture. All Hardie™ residential exterior cladding has a standard 25-year warranty period.



Colour palettes

Mid-Century Modern colour palettes reinterpret Mid-Century optimism through warm neutrals, earthy greens and soft blues, balanced with playful accents. Layered tones energise interiors while highlighting texture, geometry and architectural clarity.



From Jenny:
 'Mid-Century palettes balance earthy restraint with optimistic colour pops, creating interiors that feel grounded, expressive and effortlessly contemporary.'



	Scheme 1	Scheme 2	Scheme 3
Roof	Colorbond® steel Dover White™	Colorbond® steel Dover White™	Colorbond® steel Monument®
Main Walls	<p>Dulux® Colorbond® Dover White™ Wattyl Solagard® Colorbond® steel Dover White™ Taubmans® Colorbond® Dover White™</p> <p>Dulux® Shallow Sea Wattyl® Teal grey Taubmans® Surfside Green</p> <p>Dulux® Pink Clay Quarter Wattyl® Snow Rose Taubmans® Perfume Spritz</p> <p>Dulux® Open Sesame Wattyl® Galilean moon Taubmans® Cornmeal</p> <p>Dulux® Chlorite Wattyl® Pine Ash Taubmans® Fenwick Garden</p>	<p>Dulux® Colorbond® Dover White™ Wattyl Solagard® Colorbond® steel Dover White™ Taubmans® Colorbond® Dover White™</p>	<p>Dulux® Rodham Wattyl® Dingle Taubmans® Sweet Grass</p>
Trim	Dulux® Colorbond® Dover White™ Wattyl Solagard® Colorbond® steel Dover White™ Taubmans® Colorbond® Dover White™		Dulux® Colorbond® Monument® Wattyl Solagard® Colorbond® steel Monument® Taubmans® Colorbond® Monument®
Front Door	Dulux® Open Sesame Wattyl® Galilean moon Taubmans® Cornmeal	Dulux® Tsunami Wattyl® Pyrenees Olive Taubmans® Green Fiddler	Natural Timber



Style variations

Mid-Century Modern style variations adapt to climate, site and lifestyle, balancing expressive rooflines, layered materials and flexible layouts to create homes that remain timeless, resilient and responsive to change.



Eco Mid-Century Modern

An earthy palette drawn from the surrounding landscape, with natural materials and tactile accents in timber, ceramic tiles and natural stone. Passive cooling is achieved through orientation and openings designed to maximise cross-breezes.

Featuring Axon™ Cladding 133mm Smooth and Hardie™ Brushed Concrete Cladding.

Palm Springs Mid-Century Modern

Ideal for hot climates, with light-toned cladding to reflect heat, drought-tolerant succulent planting, and seamless connections to outdoor pools and shaded alfresco living areas.

Featuring Axon™ Cladding 133mm Smooth and Stria™ Cladding Fine Texture.



Japandi Mid-Century Modern

Accented by Japandi-inspired furniture and lighting, with generous overhanging eaves and pergola-style structures featuring exposed beams that add warmth, rhythm and architectural depth.

Featuring Hardie™ Oblique™ Cladding in 200mm and Stria™ Cladding Smooth 405mm staggered vertical.



Beach House Minimal Mid-Century Modern

A simple rectangular footprint with a low, flat roofline, offering an economical, streamlined form well suited to prefabricated construction and relaxed coastal living.

Featuring Hardie™ Oblique™ Cladding in alternating 200mm and 300mm widths.



Materials & textures

A layered material palette combines warm timbers, natural stone and dimensional tiles with smooth render and matte finishes, balancing nostalgic character with contemporary performance and expressive, liveable texture.



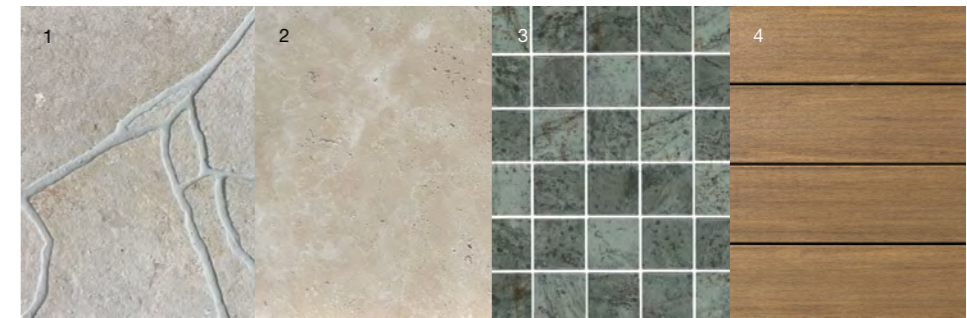
From Rebecca:

‘Mid-Century Modern materials are defined by warmth and restraint—natural timbers, stone and matte finishes that create depth and a calm, timeless atmosphere.’



Exterior

- 1 [Haven Crazy Paving, Limestone, RMS Traders](#)
- 2 [Tuscan Paver, Travertine, RMS Traders](#)
- 3 [Ubud Green Wavy Mosaic Tile, The Pool Tile Company](#)
- 4 [PVC Decking, Vintage Collection®, Weathered Teak, TimberTech®](#)



Flooring

- 5 [Haven Crazy Paving, Limestone, RMS Traders](#)
- 6 [Harvest, Walnut Cork, The Flooring Co](#)
- 7 [Le Corbusier Molitor Gris Clair 31 Tile, Artedomus](#)



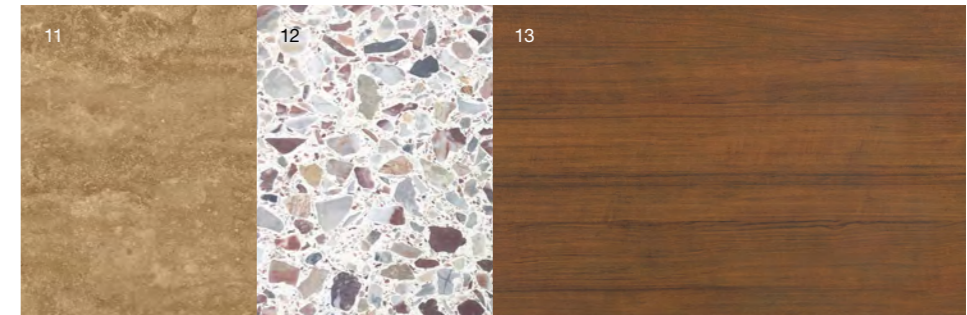
Windows & Walls

- 8 [Narrow Reeded Decorative Glass, Veridian Glass](#)
- 9 [Narrow Reeded Decorative Glass, Veridian Glass](#)
- 10 [Dulux Ecu Quarter Interior Paint, Dulux](#)



Cabinetry

- 11 [Travertine Noce Benchtop, CDK Stone](#)
- 12 [American Walnut Costato Veneer, Havwoods](#)
- 13 [Laminex Natural Teak, Laminex](#)



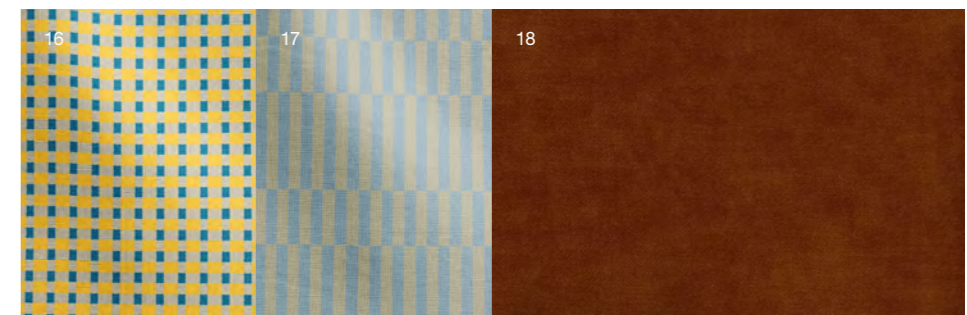
Tiles

- 14 [Haddon Pink Matte Medium Square Tile, Tilecloud](#)
- 15 [Noosa Gloss Zellige White Square Tile, Tilecloud](#)



Textiles

- 16 [Billie Linen, Yellow, Annie Coop](#)
- 17 [Pacifico Linen, Bastion, Annie Coop](#)
- 18 [Halston Velvet, Rust, Warwick](#)



Landscaping

Landscaping for Mid-Century Modern homes celebrates structure and flow, pairing sculptural planting with layered grasses, native textures and climate-responsive species to create relaxed outdoor rooms that connect architecture, lifestyle and landscape.

A pebble and concrete-slab path lined with a range of low growing, sculptural succulent species is the perfect precursor to the playful entry of the Mid-Century Modern home.



From Matt:

'Landscaping for Mid-Century Modern should feel sculptural yet relaxed, using native planting, layered textures and climate-responsive forms to frame architecture and extend everyday living outdoors.'

Warm Climates

- 1 Agave—a bold architectural succulent used as a sculptural focal point in garden beds or courtyards, suited to dry, well-drained settings.
- 5 Grass Tree—a slow-growing Australian native with a textured trunk and radiating, strap-like foliage that creates strong vertical emphasis.
- 3 Kangaroo Paw—a hardy Australian native perennial with strappy foliage and upright flowering stems that attract birds and add vertical contrast.
- 4 Chalk Sticks—a low-growing succulent used as a groundcover or edging plant, with slender blue-grey cylindrical leaves that provide soft contrast against stone, concrete and darker foliage.



Cool Climates

- 6 Lemon Scented Gum—a tall eucalyptus with smooth pale bark and a citrus-like aroma.
- 7 Tussock Grass—a clump-forming ornamental grass used for texture and movement with fine arching foliage that softens hard edges.
- 8 Coastal Rosemary—a hardy, fast-growing Australian native shrub with a dense, compact habit and soft, grey-green foliage, great for low-maintenance landscaping.



Styling

Mid-Century Modern styling embraces playful geometry and optimistic colour, pairing retro silhouettes with textural fabrics and sculptural accents. Clean lines are softened with warm textures, expressive objects and personality-driven details that celebrate individuality, creativity and everyday comfort.



Outdoor

- 1 Pink Glass Jug, Hay
- 2 Plungie Original Plunge Pool, Plungie
- 3 Rolly Bowl Planter Set, Temple & Webster
- 4 Scalloped Market Umbrella, Temple & Webster
- 5 Bath Towel, Terracotta, Hommey
- 6 Byrne Stackable Outdoor Lounge Chairs, Temple & Webster
- 7 Neill Ceramic Jug, Temple & Webster
- 8 Newport White Wall Light, Dawn



Interior

- 1 Olympus Floor Lamp, Temple & Webster
- 2 Ridstig Rug, Ikea
- 3 Ziggy Stump, Fenton & Fenton
- 4 Linen Bedding, Hommey
- 5 Forte Wall Light with Yosh Opal Glass & Cover, About Space
- 6 Newgate Mr Clarke Wall Clock, Temple & Webster
- 7 Lola Coffee Table, Temple & Webster
- 8 Albers No.2 Cushion Cover, Citta
- 9 Sydney Basin Spout & Benchtop Progressive Mixer, Stainless Steel, Yabby





Explore the Hardie™ AI Visualiser

Visualise, customise and communicate your design vision with Hardie™ products and the latest modern home styles from the James Hardie Modern Homes Forecast 2026.

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