

# soulscap

connecting gardens to landscape

by Peter Shaw

*Soulscap: Connecting Gardens to Landscape* takes readers on a journey through ten gardens located along the world-famous Great Ocean Road. It illustrates the challenges and outcomes of creating a garden by the sea or in the wilderness, and how each garden fits within its natural environment.

Peter Shaw shares 'how to' information, coming from his own experience of over 25 years in designing, building and maintaining coastal gardens, and his commitment to incorporating native and indigenous plants to enhance the wider landscape that they inhabit.

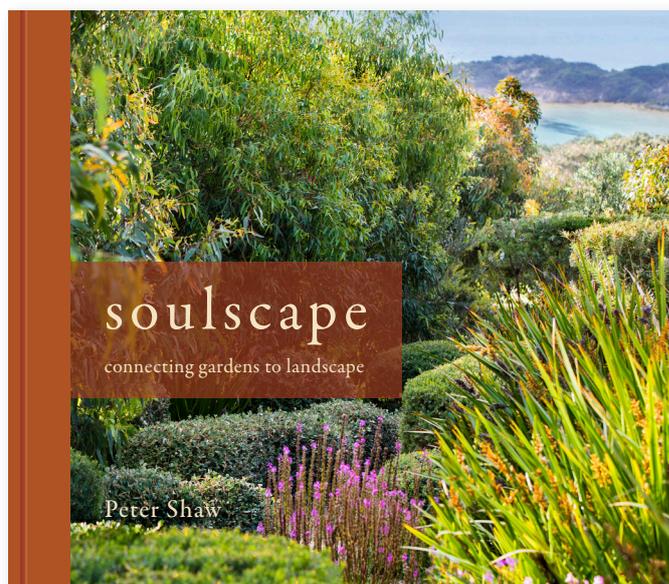
Collectively, the gardens in this book serve as a primer for homeowners, gardening enthusiasts, or anyone with a deep love for nature.

It is also a book about landscape values. It is the story of Peter and Simone Shaw and the gardens they create in their business, Ocean Road Landscaping, their home garden, Sunnymeade and how you can take inspiration to work with the landscape in creating your garden.

The book includes a detailed, visual glossary of plants and trees.

*If I were to describe our work, I would say 'it belongs': our gardens meld into the broader landscape. Over time we have developed a style characterised by how it integrates with what organically exists. The body and arrangement of our gardens are individually unique, yet they share a common theme. They are put together using sympathetic, local, natural materials, and there is structure and simplicity in the way they are laid out. They don't mimic nature, but sit comfortably within their surroundings.*

— From the author's Introduction



*I'm totally entranced by Peter Shaw's work. Not only is it hugely creative, it is fabulously responsive to its surroundings, and exhales a rare and charming humility...I think that his gardens, along with his practices and thoughts, should be much more widely known.*

— Michael McCoy B.Sc (Botany)  
Host – ABC TV Dream Gardens

*At the heart of this book is a story that would resonate with any who love Australia's natural coastal landscape. It is written by someone with the love of the natural landscapes at the core of their being.*

— Trisha Dixon, author of *Spirit of the Garden*

## The Author

Peter Shaw is the creative director of Ocean Road Landscaping, an award-winning business specialising in the design, building and care of gardens based in Anglesea. Peter founded the business in 1995 with his wife, Simone Shaw. Their practice has a considered approach to constructing gardens that complement their local environment along the Great Ocean Road, Geelong and the Surf Coast of Victoria. From living, walking and working on coastal environments, he developed a love of plants and gardening by the sea. Shaw shares his unique knowledge of coastal gardening through running workshops on developing gardens, and giving public lectures on landscaping in bushfire areas, landscape design and garden building. He lives in Anglesea with Simone and their four children, Jarred, Matthew, Gabrielle and Rosie.

Anglesea's Bald Hills is a lovely place to walk and explore, opening up a more expansive perspective of the town, the ocean and the dark green hills of the Otway Ranges. This landscape has a unique combination of shallow soils and windswept hills, resulting in the low growing grey-green heathland. There are open meadow sections littered with Grass Trees (*Xanthorrhoea*) closely followed by lupulazard stands of black She-Oaks (*Allocasuarina*) and twisted Gums kept low and sometimes beautifully distorted by the microclimate. Dropping down to the gully, the trees start to return to their normal forms and colours. As you get deeper in, you find contrasting landforms where sodgy wetlands meet the freshwater marshes. The distinct line of change from the balding hills to open forest and then suddenly, to almost prehistoric wetlands, is a beautiful aspect of the Anglesea heath that needs to be experienced to be fully appreciated.

"What would you do?" A garden designer loves to hear these magic words, although they are often unspoken. Perhaps some clients are afraid to ask the question as it may imply that the designer can unleash all their ideas and imagination. This shouldn't be the case though, as good design is as much about what you leave out, as what you put in. Good design will always revolve around working with requirements, a budget and most importantly, a unique site. It can be easy to get caught up in the existing, or preconceived ideas of how things in the garden should be. But when a client gives away some of that responsibility and allows the designer freedom to explore, the site really can be seen with fresh eyes. This is when new and exciting opportunities bubble up to the surface. Don't be afraid to say these words because they can have the power to liberate you and empower the designer. In this particular garden, our clients were open to new ideas and willing to explore, so the question — "what would you do?" — came out when we first visited the space.



58 Bald Hills View

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One of the most admirable aspects of our client's relationship with the local landscape is how they value what's beyond their windows. It's not uncommon for them to go for a walk over the site, only to have the conversation paused by the view, stopping to take another photo of the same scene they have been enjoying for a long time. It still takes their breath away. On some days, if you look closely

enough, a sprinkling of tiny wetsuit clad surfers will be hugging a line of breaking waves in the distance. One takes off cutting down the clean water face of the wave leaving behind a trail of whiteshred and spray. You can imagine the rest of them gathered there, watching on with awe as one of their surfing cohorts is embraced by this one perfect wave.



94 Southern Oceans

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178 sunnymeade

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sample spreads from *Soulscape*

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