Matthew's HOME PITCH

Former cricketer Matthew Hayden's garden is an oasis for his family of food lovers. LINDA ROSS takes the grand tour

Seeing Matthew Hayden carefully potting up newly germinated tomato plants is just weird. I'm far more used to watching him slog sixes in the baggy green. But a wander through his permaculture paradise and it's hard to imagine him any other way.

"After years of cricket, I've decided to focus on my passions and dedicate time and energy to my own little corner of the world," he explains. "The farmer in me wants to reconnect to the land, the cook wants to grow his own vegies and the dad wants his kids to know where their food comes from."

While what I see now is a beautifully functioning feast of veggies and animals, it wasn't long ago that a newly built house stuck out of a clay pan and wind whipped through, scorching the earth and leaving dust in its wake.

But after help from garden designer Nicole Moon during the filming of the TV series Matthew Hayden's Home Ground on The Lifestyle Channel, it's a much different scene. Kidney-shaped garden beds raise the vegetables and herbs off the ground, chooks, ducks and

LITTLE SPROUTS

Matthew's passion goes beyond his own backyard. He's led Moreton Bay Boys College students in planting a vegie patch, a project inspired by chef Stephanie Alexander's school work. After their first harvest, he taught the kids his special tomato sauce recipe and they set up a stall to sell the produce to their parents.
geese run freely and the orchard is marvellous living fruit bowl.
Nicole’s permaculture-based design works with, rather than against, nature
a harmonious integration of landscape
people providing food, energy and shelter in a sustainable way.
It’s a culinary haven for Matthew, his wife
ellsy and their children Josh, Grace, 6, and
omas, 4, who all help Dad in the garden.
“Thomas enjoys pottering and planting
especially anything he can eat straight
the bush,” Matthew says.

“Grace likes the animal husbandry side
of things, Josh is more concerned with the
science of how worms work and why the
compost breaks down.”

And those tomatoes? They’re to become
a big batch of homemade sauce. “I’ll fry off
onions, garlic, oregano and rosemary, then
in go the chopped tomatoes and olive oil.
It makes a thick, tasty tomato sauce, perfect
for meatballs.” My mouth is watering!

“The Matthew Hayden Cookbook 2” is published