

04 Japandi

Design Handbook 2025

With Steph & Gian,
Japandi Estate



Meet your guides

Steph & Gian

Japandi experts Steph and Gian of Japandi Estate will guide you through their extensive knowledge including practical insights, aesthetic inspiration and cost-conscious advice to help you create harmonious, sustainable and functional spaces that embody the timeless beauty of Japandi design.



From Steph & Gian:

‘Japandi is a blend of Japanese and Scandinavian architectural designs... This style really does fit nicely within Australia. Prioritising craftsmanship, sustainability and minimalism, Japandi blends wabi-sabi’s imperfect beauty with hygge’s cozy functionality, creating tranquil, nature connected spaces that inspire mindful living and harmony.’

Cover

This Japandi facade uses dark vertical Axon™ Cladding contrasted with timber screens for shade and privacy, and a natural stone element to anchor the asymmetrical sloped roofline.

This handbook will show you how to achieve the Japandi minimalist look and feel inside and out and kickstart your journey to creating a Japandi home. Steph and Gian’s mastery of Japandi make them the perfect collaborators to guide you through the principles and applications of Japandi design. From the roof, to the windows, to floorplans and handcrafted details, this guide is designed to help you create spaces that embody the simplicity, warmth and elegance of Japandi.



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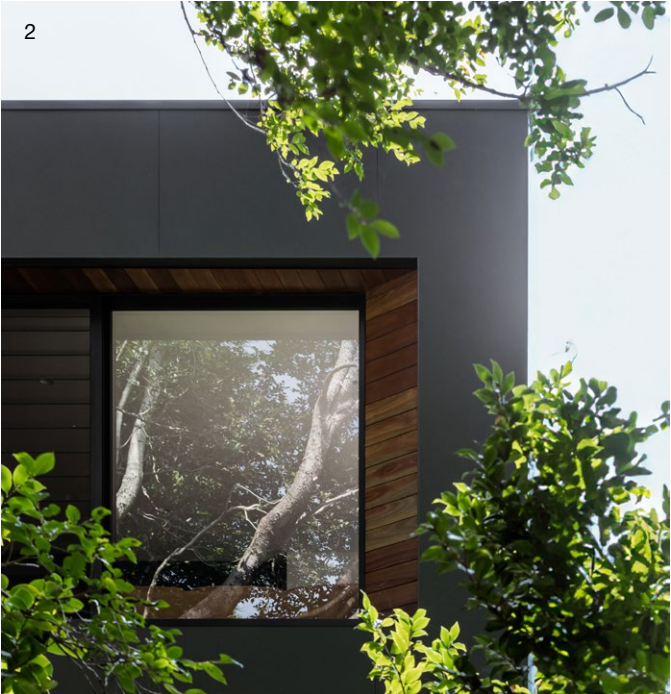
Lifestyle themes

The Modern Homes Forecast 2025 identifies four lifestyle themes changing the way we design and build our homes today. Global and local changes are reshaping how we live, and here we show how Japandi homes are evolving to reflect these shifts.

01 Building Efficiencies

Japandi houses incorporate passive design principles to ensure energy efficiency. Insulation maintains consistent temperatures and eliminates drafts, while cross-flow ventilation, achieved through courtyards and strategically placed windows, ensures constant air circulation. Solar heat gain is managed with operable screens, highlight windows and roof overhangs, optimising thermal performance. Minimalist architecture features sleek lines, protective overhangs and low-maintenance, durable materials that harmonise with the environment.

‘Minimalism isn’t just about aesthetics—it’s about creating spaces that function efficiently and reduce excess,’ says Steph.



02 Wellbeing

Japandi design fosters wellbeing through its deep connection to nature. Visual and physical access to greenery promotes mental wellness, with features like green walls and cascading plants enhancing air quality and adding calming, natural elements. Water features introduce a tranquil, stress-relieving ambiance to the home. Large, expansive windows with low sills flood interiors with natural light, improving mood and strengthening the connection between indoor and outdoor spaces, further supporting a sense of balance and harmony.

‘Japandi brings nature in: water features, landscaping, tranquil spaces...they all help evoke calm and mental wellbeing.’

—Gian, Japandi Estate

03 Flexibility

Japandi design emphasises flexibility, offering adaptable spaces that meet the changing needs of modern family life. Interchangeable rooms feature sliding doors that open to nature, creating zones that seamlessly transition between living and working. Breakout spaces provide versatile areas for relaxation or productivity. Unique design elements, such as movable shoji screens, fusuma doors and engawa corridors, enable dynamic reconfiguration of spaces. Courtyards further enhance this adaptability, integrating functionality with serene, nature-inspired design.

‘Spaces are interchangeable—a home office or gym one day, a media room or guest area the next’ says Gian.



04 Resilience

Cross-flow ventilation, achieved through courtyards and a mix of large and slim windows, promotes constant air circulation, improving indoor air quality and comfort. Solar heat gain is managed effectively with operable screens, highlight windows and roof overhangs, optimising thermal performance throughout the year. Additionally, low-maintenance materials are selected for their ability to withstand environmental challenges, ensuring durability and long-term performance.

- 1 Axon™ Cladding mixed with natural timber decking brings a sense of calm to this courtyard.
- 2 Dark Hardie™ Brushed Concrete Cladding provides a contrast against greenery in this home designed by Alex Urena Design Studio. Photo by Shaw Photography.
- 3 The geometric lines of Stria™ Cladding 405mm create a harmonious contrast to the organic textures of the native landscape.

Serene, easygoing & minimalist

Japandi is a hybrid architectural style combining Scandinavian functionality and Japanese rustic minimalism to deliver comfort and a connection to nature.

Theme insight

Resilience

Japandi’s focus on efficiency, sustainability and thoughtful simplicity creates spaces that are not only beautiful and functional but also environmentally conscious and resource-efficient, aligning with modern priorities in sustainable architecture and design.



Japandi continues to grow in popularity in Australia, delivering flexibility through clever zoning and a sense of wellbeing with its dedication to bringing the outside-in.

Both Japanese and Scandinavian design styles are characteristically minimalist in their approach whilst also prioritising comfort, making them an ideal pairing.

Similarities extend to how both styles draw inspiration from local pioneering principles – Wabi Sabi in Japan and Hygge in Scandinavia. The Wabi-Sabi worldview appreciates the imperfect, impermanent, and incomplete beauty of the natural world. Hygge (pronounced hoo-ga) is an obsession in Scandinavia encompassing a feeling of cozy contentment and well-being through enjoying the simple things in life.

Ultimately, the shared aesthetics create a style that is both easy-going and sophisticated. Natural-look materials take pride of place, promoting a simple home environment filled with quality items. Where the two approaches diverge, their differences complement each other. Where Japanese interiors are sleek, Nordic ones are rustic. The richer colours of Japanese design help to keep the stark, crisp palettes of Scandinavian homes from feeling clinical or cold. Japandi homes are built for wellbeing, with neutral colours, simple layouts and indoor-outdoor connection, providing a sense of tranquility.

Theme insight

Wellbeing

Japandi-style homes are designed to be sanctuaries, fostering tranquility, balance, and connection to nature. Gian notes that people are increasingly treating their homes as places of refuge, where open-plan living and seamless indoor-outdoor connections allow for both moments of quiet retreat and spaces for gathering.

By integrating natural materials, expansive windows, and thoughtfully designed landscapes, Japandi homes embrace the biophilic benefits of feeling closer to nature, enhancing our wellbeing in everyday life.



Theme insight

Building Efficiencies

Japandi design emphasises efficient building techniques by incorporating streamlined energy systems, simplified construction methods, water-efficient features and durable, sustainable materials. These choices minimise waste while maximising functionality, ensuring an environmentally harmonious and highly efficient living space.

‘Japandi homes prioritize passive design —cross-flow ventilation with big sliders reduces the need for air conditioning’ says Gian.

- 1 A closer look at this Japandi facade highlights the combination of complimentary materials—dark Axon™ Cladding used against timber and natural stone accents to create visual texture and depth.
- 2 The use of Axon™ Cladding continues through to the rear of the home, with addition of Hardie™ Fine Texture Cladding and Hardie™ Axent™ Trim applied in board and batten design.



Design features

‘Japandi encourages a different type of luxury. Its style is timeless and, at its essence, Japandi is not an over ornamented, glamourised style. It’s pared back. It’s beautiful.’

—Steph, Japandi Estate

1 Minimalist architecture

Simple structures with clean, sleek lines. Roofs can be flat, gabled, hipped or square pyramidal with deep overhangs to protect windows from rain.

2 Natural-look exterior

Natural-look materials are typically used on the facade. Japanese influences leans towards darker tones and Scandi towards lighter tones.

3 Earthy colour palette

Colours are typically neutral and within the same tonal scheme to add warmth to the simple building form.

4 Indoor-outdoor connection

Design features such as shoji (moveable screens), fusuma (sliding doors) a tokonoma (recess or alcove), genken (entryway), engawa (covered outdoor corridor) and courtyards blur inside and outside.

5 Interiors

Interior style is minimal without being cold, utilising natural materials, neutral colours and simple layouts with an emphasis on indoor-outdoor connectivity.



- 1 A light, minimal facade featuring Hardie™ Fine Texture Cladding and Hardie™ Axent™ Trim applied in board and batten style, can create impactful visual and textural contrast to timber accents and surrounding greenery.
- 2 Large trees around a sloping site presented a unique opportunity to design a granny flat and rumpus room in the Japandi style, featuring Hardie™ Brushed Concrete Cladding. Designed by Alex Urena Design Studio. Photo by Shaw Photography.
- 3 The serene Japandi interior of Blewitt Springs by Das Studio, blends Hardie™ Fine Texture Cladding with earthy tones and textures as an example of using functional and natural materials to create a harmonious retreat from busy life. Photo by Anthony Basheer



Theme insight

Flexibility

Japandi design encourages flexibility in floor plans and multi-use spaces through open layouts, movable partitions like shoji screens and adaptable zones that seamlessly transition between living, working and relaxation areas.

‘We’re seeing people treat their homes as sanctuaries ... open-plan living and outdoor connections support large gatherings and evolving needs.’

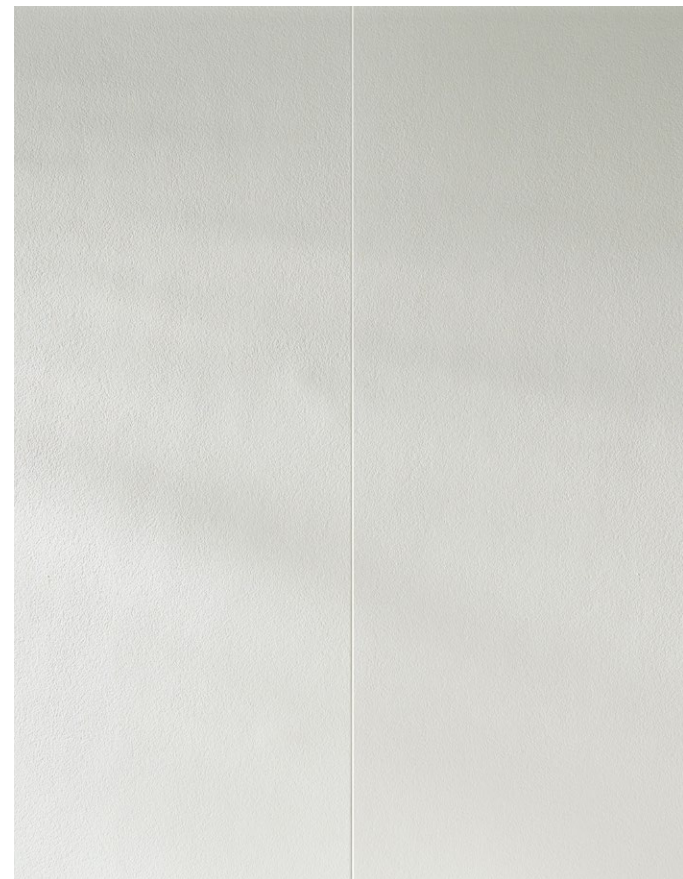
—Gian, Japandi Estate

Cladding solutions

Hardie™ exterior cladding is perfectly suited to the modern architectural lines of the Japandi home. The distinct minimalist and natural-look exterior can be achieved using a range of Hardie™ solutions, including Hardie™ Brushed Concrete Cladding for a textured, contemporary feel, Hardie™ Fine Texture Cladding for a smooth, seamless finish, Axon™ Cladding for vertical detail that adds depth and Hardie™ Axent™ Trim to create clean, defined edges.

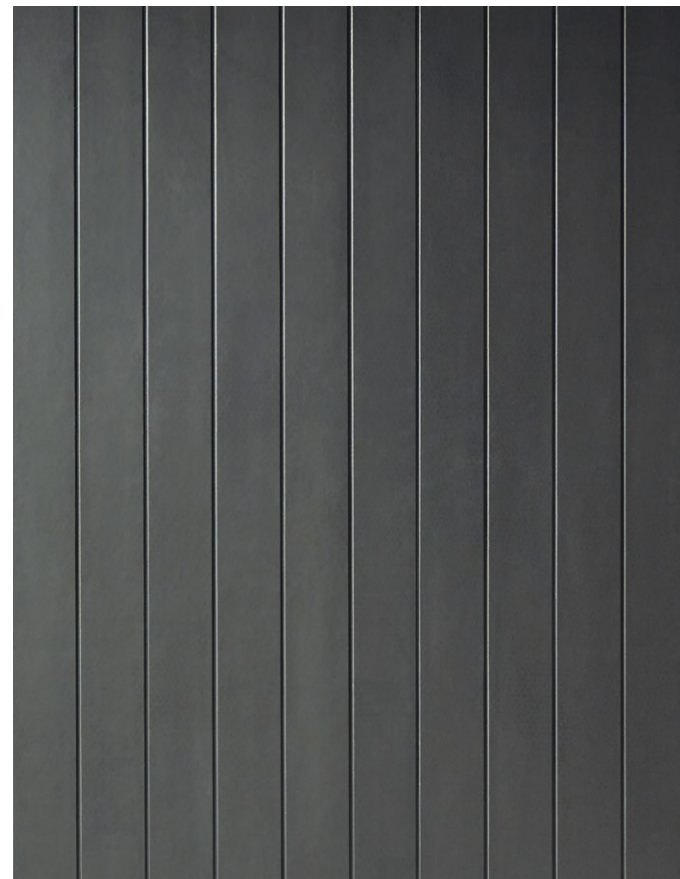
Hardie™ Fine Texture Cladding

The subtle texture adds a touch of elegance without overwhelming the simplicity that is central to Japandi style. It is also perfect for creating a Japandi twist on the board and batten look, the embedded sand-like texture provides a fine matte finish against smooth Hardie™ Axent Trim battens. The 1200mm panel length makes it easy to adopt consistent yet unique spacings to apply the battens, typically at 300mm or 400mm.



Axon™ Cladding

The clean vertical lines evoke the fine detail of vertical joint timber, fostering a sense of harmony with nature that is essential to this style.



Theme insight

Resilience

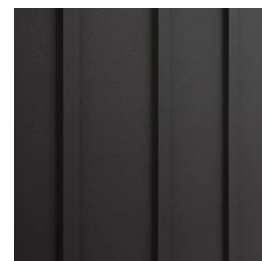
Hardie™ exterior cladding is designed to withstand Australia’s harsh climate, offering non-combustible fire resistance for bushfire-prone areas, as well as weatherproof durability against UV exposure, heavy rain, and humidity. Gian highlights that overhanging eaves and screens play a crucial role in providing shading, helping to regulate indoor temperatures and reduce reliance on heating and cooling. Resistant to warping, swelling and fire, Hardie™ cladding improves the home’s longevity and aligns beautifully with Japandi design principles of simplicity, harmony, and craftsmanship, ensuring both aesthetic beauty and long-term resilience.



‘To minimise waste and clad most efficiently, our approach is to start with the cladding in mind.’

—Steph, Japandi Estate

Complimentary Products



Hardie™ Axent™ Trim



Hardie™ Brushed Concrete Cladding

Materials & textures

Materials and textures in a Japandi home emphasise natural simplicity, combining warm woods, smooth stone, soft linens and brushed finishes to create a sense of harmony.



Theme insight
Wellbeing

Earthy materials such as stone, limestone, cedar, oak and mahogany, combined with neutral tones or contrasting light and dark woods, inspire creativity in the Japandi home by blending natural beauty with functional design and evoking a sense of calm and balance.

- 1 The combination of earthy and tactile elements contribute to a sensory experience within Japandi homes.
- 2 The dark tones of the exterior Hardie™ Fine Texture Cladding provide a striking contrast to natural surroundings, allowing greenery, stone and wood accents to stand out while maintaining a sense of harmony.
- 3 Natural stone works as a great accent on walls, fireplaces, exterior facades and garden features.
- 4 The soft, rounded shapes and muted tones of river pebbles blend seamlessly with greenery and water features in Japandi gardens.
- 5 The earthy tones of bluestone, ranging from deep gray to soft blue, align with the neutral color palette that defines Japandi design.
- 6 The interplay of brick and wood finishes highlight the beauty of texture and materiality in the serene, tactile Japandi interior.
- 7 The love of pure, light-filled interiors is reflected in the choice of pale woods, which create open, peaceful environments filled with warmth and tranquility.



‘The tactile surfaces of natural materials are an essential part of the Japandi sensory experience, inside and out. It’s about creating Japandi moments throughout the house.’

—Steph, Japandi Estate



Colour palette

A dark colour palette in the Japandi home features deep, rich tones that evoke warmth, sophistication, and coziness. Balanced with contrasting light interiors, it seamlessly connects indoor and outdoor spaces, fostering intimacy and elegance while maintaining the refined simplicity of Japandi design.

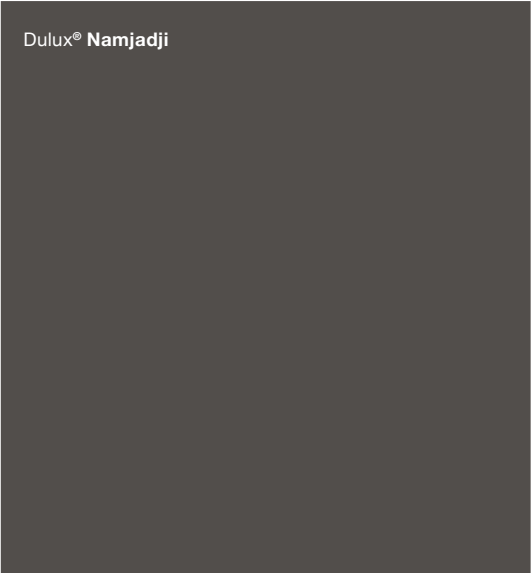
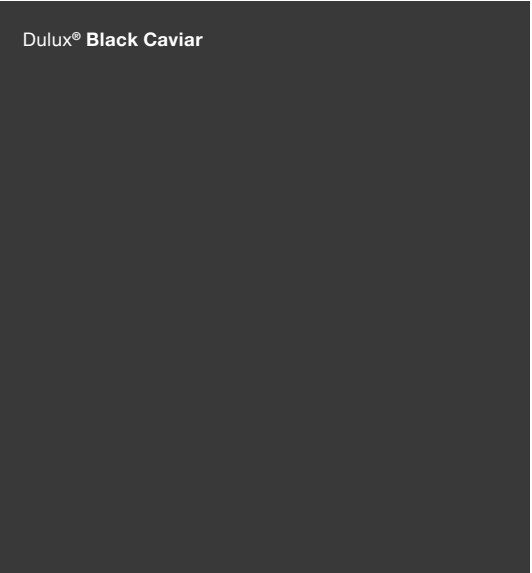


‘It’s essential that the palette has depth through three main considerations—texture, tone and contrast, ensuring a harmonious balance between natural, earthy hues and subtle, muted shades to create a tranquil yet dynamic space.’
—Steph, Japandi Estate

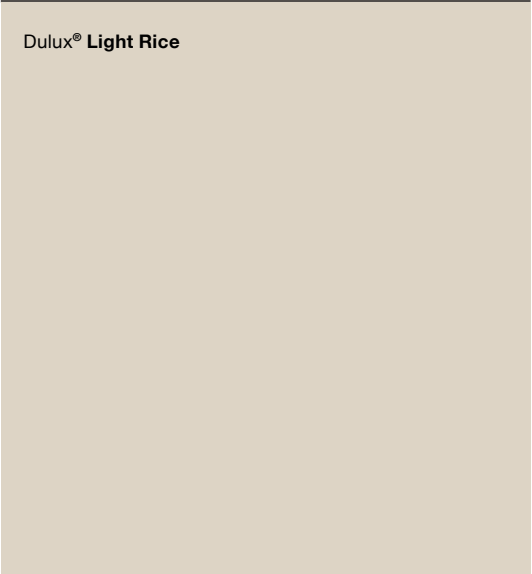
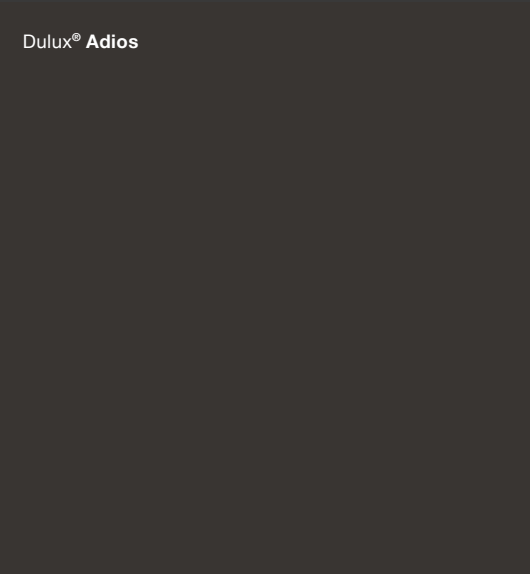
Scheme One

Scheme Two

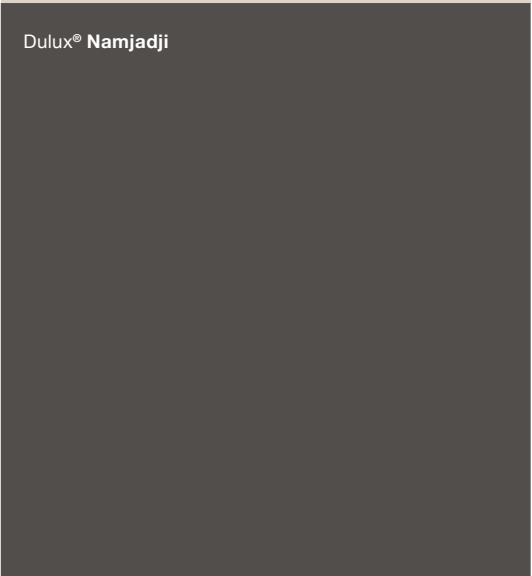
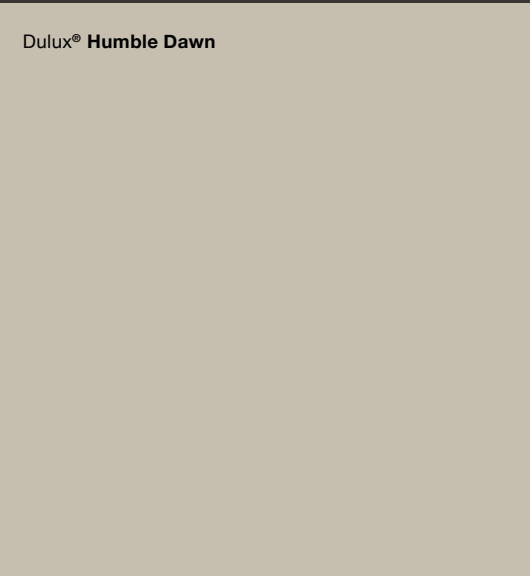
Fascia



Main Walls



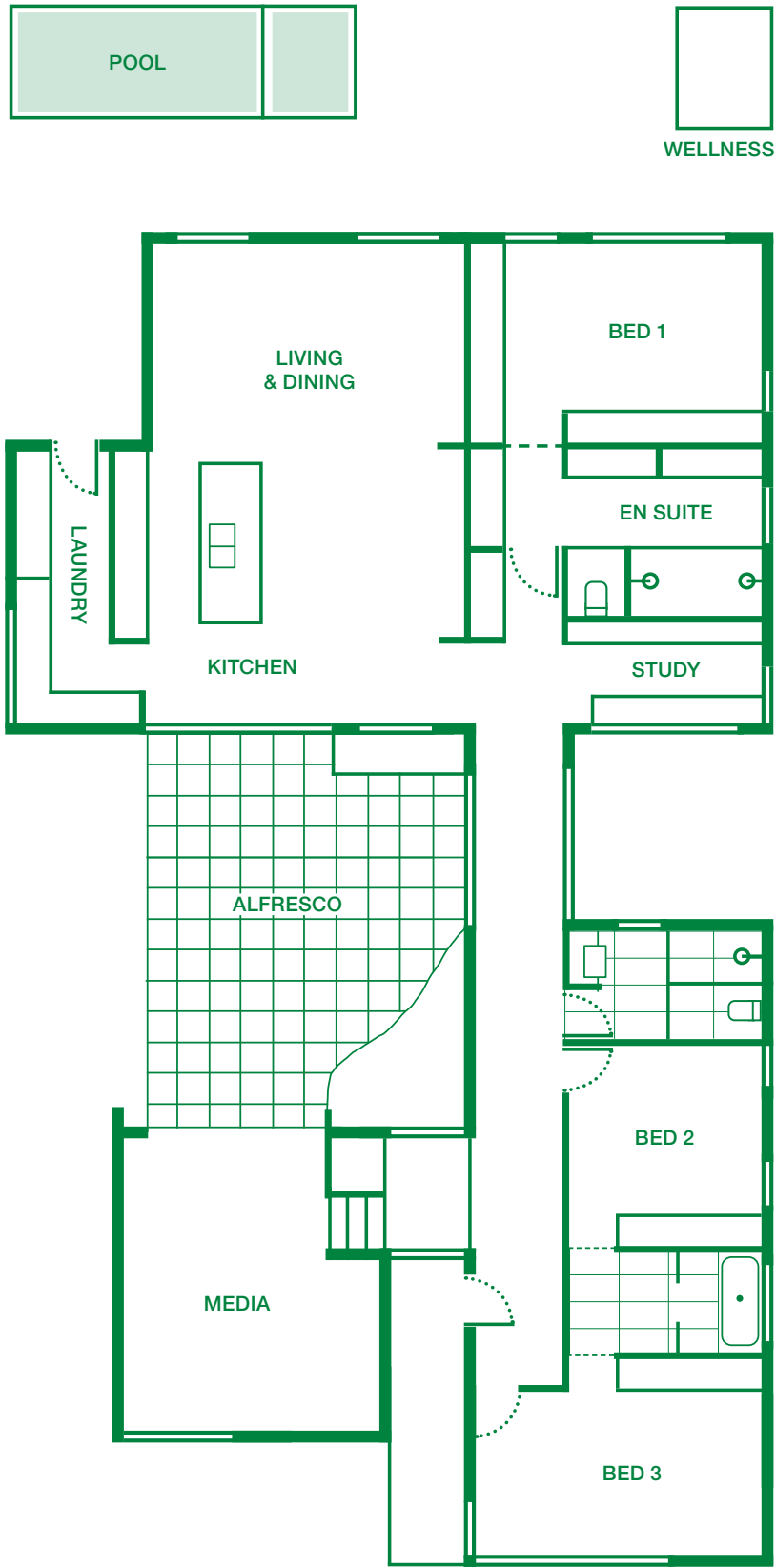
Details



Floorplan

Designed for a 16m frontage on a 500–550m² block, this Japandi home seamlessly blends Japanese and Scandinavian design principles, creating a calm, nature-connected retreat. Multiple viewpoints to the central courtyard enhance the indoor-outdoor connection, inviting natural light and seasonal changes into everyday living. A flexible four-bedroom layout ensures adaptability, with the fourth bedroom serving as a TV room, guest suite, or multi-generational space, supporting a home that is flexible, functional and serene.

Designed by Steph & Gian, Japandi Estate.



Steph & Gian’s top tips

1 Design smarter, not bigger

Japandi homes prove that thoughtful design can replace unnecessary square meterage. Steph and Gian emphasise that a well-planned, flexible layout eliminates the need for excessive space while ensuring every room serves multiple purposes. Sliding doors, built-in storage, and adaptable living zones allow spaces to evolve over time—reducing the need for costly extensions or future renovations.

2 Use cladding to modernise without demolition

Sometimes it is possible rather than demolishing and rebuilding, to apply James Hardie cladding over an existing brick facade offers a cost-effective way to transform a home’s exterior. Gian highlights that this approach eliminates the expense of demolition and structural work while delivering a fresh, modern aesthetic. It’s a smart way to elevate street appeal and extend a home’s lifespan without a full rebuild. While this Japandi home is a new build, the pair have great experience with transforming facades adding value to your home through elevated street appeal.

3 Invest in passive design for long-term savings

The biggest cost savings can come not just in the build, but in how a home performs over time. Steph stresses that passive design principles, like cross-ventilation, large eaves, and strategic window placement, significantly reduce reliance on air conditioning and heating.

04 Get the brief right

When collaborating with your architect, consider briefing in zoned living to create a balance between public and private spaces, using a central courtyard as a natural divider. Incorporating deciduous plants provide shade in summer while welcoming light in winter. Steph loves a thoughtful material palette—combining Hardie exterior cladding products with timber and stone—adding depth and warmth, for a refined yet minimal aesthetic. Prioritising these elements will help you design a harmonious, functional, and visually cohesive home.

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