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AUSTRALIAN

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Handyman

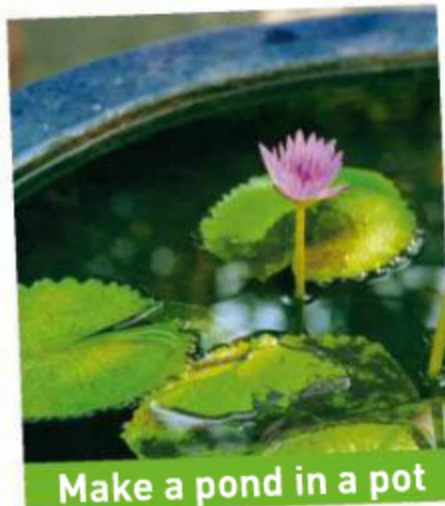
**12
GARDEN
PROJECTS**



Build a timber arbour



Plant chillies now



Make a pond in a pot

DIY BATHROOM *makeovers* **SMALL SPACE DESIGN TRICKS**

- Install a shower screen
- Refresh dated tiles
- Hang a new mirror

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page 120



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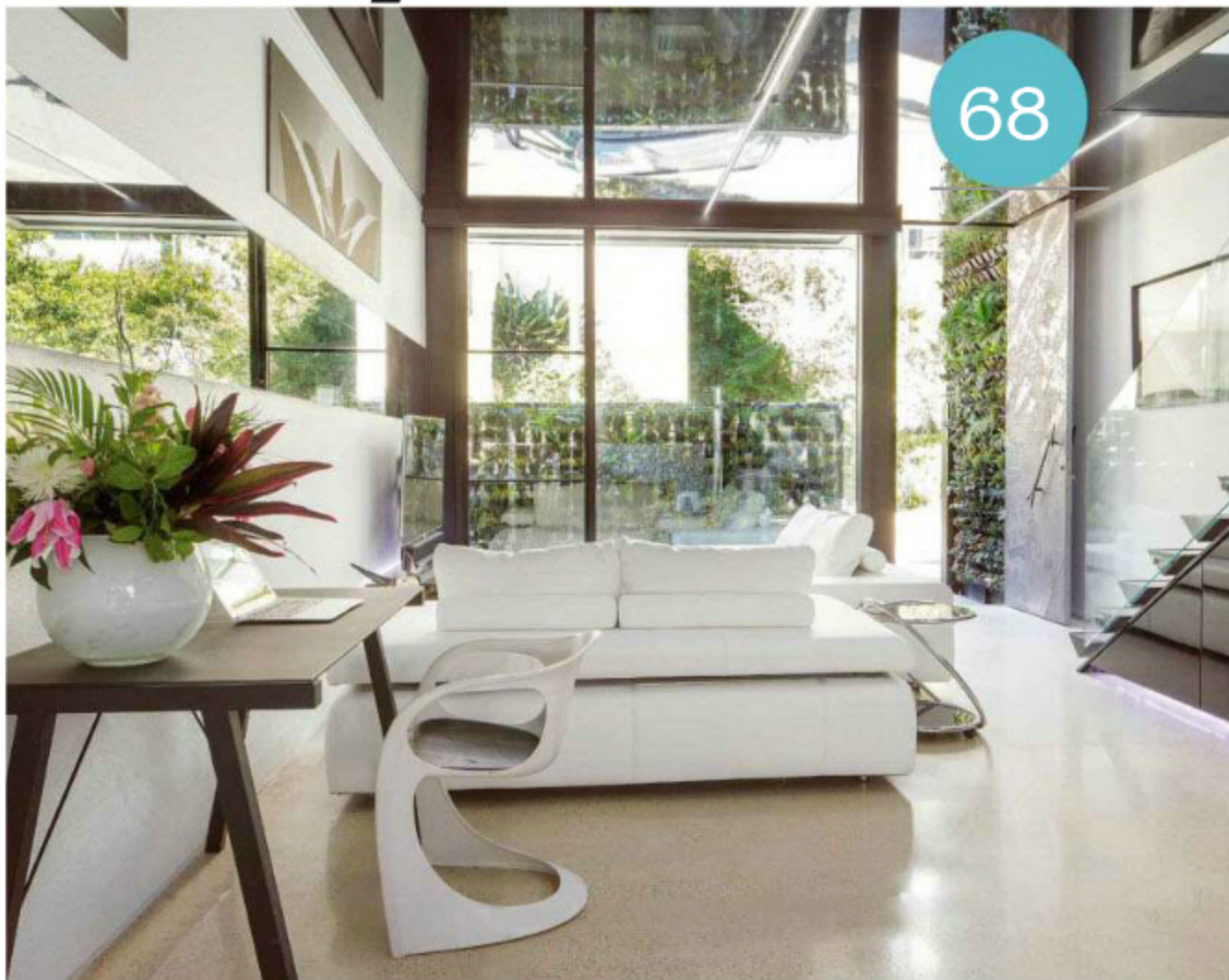
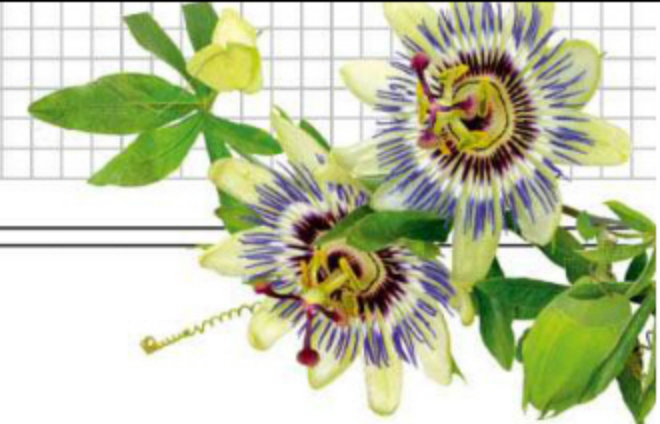
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September *issue*



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Moving house

We've all done it at least once and are always surprised at how much stuff we have accumulated.

And sometimes, it can be more cost-effective to hire professional movers than tackle it all yourself.

We untangle the mystery of how to go about hiring a pro, who to look out for and who to avoid, on [page 82](#).

Plus, we have expert tips on moving heavy, awkward pieces of furniture around without hurting the floor, the woodwork or your back, on [page 87](#).

Spring has sprung

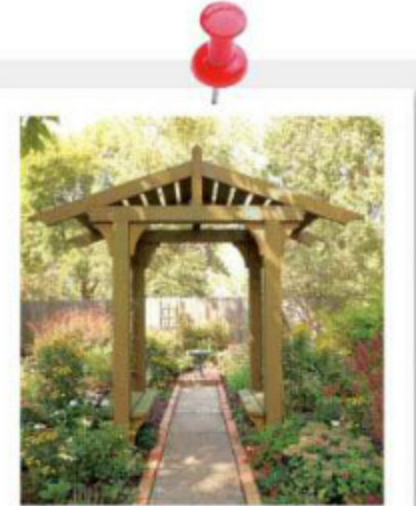
After a few chilly months, it's that time of year when we can start to really enjoy the outdoors again.

We have some great projects in this issue to add a feature to your backyard, and a pond in a pot you can make in just a few hours, on [page 130](#).

For landscape makeovers, we show you how to pick the healthiest plants at the nursery and what you should plant right now. We also share fun gardening projects the kids will love, on [page 160](#). So let's get into it!

Enjoy the issue,

MANAGING EDITOR
LEE DASHIELL



Add character to your backyard with a timber arbour.

More inspiration

Are you planning on revamping your garden and need some more inspiration?

Pinterest lets you create and organise boards of your favourite pictures. It's a great way to find and share ideas for your next DIY project.

Check out *Handyman* at pinterest.com/diyhandyman or scan this code with your phone.



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ART DIRECTOR **KATE TIMMS**
CHIEF SUBEDITOR **AMANDA SHAW**
TECHNICAL EDITOR **FRANK GARDNER**
TECHNICAL SUBEDITOR **GUN ARVIDSSEN**
SENIOR WRITER **DANIEL BUTKOVICH**
GRAPHIC DESIGNER **DANIA WARMERDAM**
EDITORIAL COORDINATOR **ASHLEIGH PERRIOTT**
DIAGRAMS **STEPHEN POLLITT**

ADVERTISING

GROUP ADVERTISING DIRECTOR **SHERON WHITE** T: 61 2 9018 6280
ADVERTISING SALES MANAGER **KRISTINA FROHLICH** T: 61 3 8844 5542
SENIOR ACCOUNT MANAGER **SCOTT HUNT** T: 61 2 9018 6281
ACCOUNT MANAGER QLD & DIRECTORY **CRISTIAN ARRATIA** T: 61 2 9018 6253
NEW ZEALAND HAWKHURST MEDIA SERVICES **KERRY MCKENZIE**
T: 64 9 589 1054 E: kerry@hawkhurst.co.nz

MARKETING

MAGAZINE MARKETING MANAGER **GALA MECHKAUSKAYTE**
WEBSITE MANAGER **BRONWYN POVOLNY**

PRODUCTION

PRODUCTION MANAGER **BALAJI PARTHSARATHY** T: 61 2 9018 6115

PUBLISHING

DIRECTORS **WALTER BEYLEVELDT, LANCE CHRISTIE**
PUBLISHER, MANAGING DIRECTOR **WALTER BEYLEVELDT**
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AUSTRALIAN HANDYMAN MAGAZINE

GPO BOX 4353, SYDNEY NSW 2001
E: handyman@readersdigest.com
www.handyman.net.au

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND ENQUIRIES

T: 1300 138 900
E: customerservice.au@readersdigest.com

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HANDYSTUFF

Make life worry-free with these DIY solutions for staying safe and sound around the home and garden

WORDS ASHLEIGH PERRIOTT



Take it easy when working in the garden with tools designed for your comfort.

AGED CARE

*Garden
safety*

Kneel easy

Give your knees a break with the Standard Ezykneel, \$19. The soft padded kneeling platform cushions your knees during extended periods of gardening.

The lightweight device is easy to move, while moulded grips and a steel frame make getting up again painless.

homeleisure.com.au



Spout it out

Get better control of water flow in the garden with the Holman High Impact Eight Pattern Watering Gun, \$15.

Use the flow-control knob to reach the back of the garden or select from eight spray patterns for delicate plants.

The ergonomic handle features a long trigger with a self-closing action that stops the flow of water when it is released.

It also includes a non-slip rubber grip for ease of use.

holmanindustries.com.au



Watch your step

Skip a trip down the stairs by using Dy-Mark Tread Rite Slip Resistant Coating, \$10 for 350g.

Available in yellow, black and clear, it creates a durable non-slip surface inside and out. It's resistant to cracking, peeling and chemical exposure.

dymark.com.au



Ramp it up

Add wheelchair or walker access to your home with the Raven Threshold Ramp, \$40.

Crafted from slip-resistant recycled rubber, the ramp is available in a height of 25 or 50mm.

It can be used as a temporary solution or secured permanently with construction adhesive. ➤

raven.com.au

PICTURE (MAIN) THINKSTOCK

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THIS ISSUE

AGED CARE

Home
safety

Step up the security at your place with a few quick upgrades.



Secure remotely

Keep an eye on your home even when travelling with the Swann Eye HD Pan & Tilt Wi-Fi Network Camera, \$130. It features a smart phone app that provides instant updates.

The security camera comes with a built-in two-way microphone and can pan up to 350° and tilt up to 100° vertically. It can also save videos and images to your computer.

swann.com.au



Lock it down

Protect your valuables with the 56.6L capacity Sentry Safe Electronic Fire Safe, \$629.

Fireproof for two hours and water-resistant, it can withstand a drop of nine metres. At 603mm high, the safe includes seven live-locking bolts, an electronic code pad and tubular key lock. ➤

sentrysafe.com.au

Light the way

Stop the midnight stumble to the bathroom with the Magic Living LED Push Light, \$9 for two.

Keep it by your bed or install it in a walk-in wardrobe, cupboard, bathroom cabinet or a corridor with Velcro strips. The 100mm-diameter light is push-activated, has three LEDs and runs on AA batteries.

bunnings.com.au

Sound the alarm

You'll sleep easy knowing your Quell Worry-Free Bedroom Smoke Alarm, \$52, will wake you if there is a fire.

The photoelectric sensor responds quicker than other types while the talking voice alert improves waking.

With a lithium battery that lasts for 10 years, they're available for hallways and living spaces, and the kitchen model detects carbon monoxide.

quell.com.au

PICTURE (MAIN) THINKSTOCK

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Take a seat

Showering won't be a strain when you use an Award Eziliving Folding Bath & Shower Seat, about \$94.

Supporting up to 100kg, it has non-slip rubber feet on collapse-resistant aluminium legs. With adjustable height settings from 400-450mm, it can be folded away when you're finished.

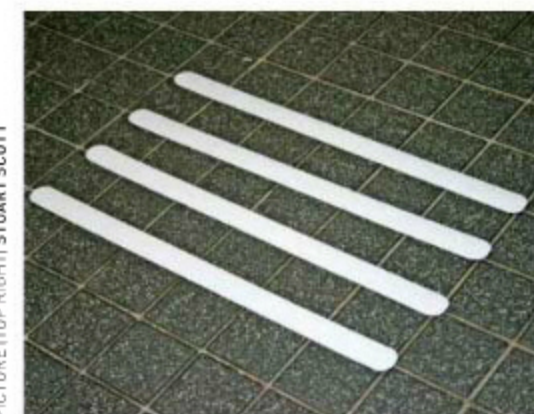
awardbrands.com.au

Stand steady

Wet tiles can be an everyday injury hazard, which can be avoided by adding Croc Grip Anti-slip Bathroom Strips, \$10 for nine.

They measure 300 x 18mm and are easy to secure with their self-adhesive backing. Simply press the moisture-resistant strips onto the floor in parallel lines. They suit bathrooms and other damp areas around the home.

permaproducts.com



PICTURE (TOP RIGHT) STUART SCOTT



Pamper your feet

Give your feet a treat after a shower with the Flexispray Memory Foam Bath Mat, \$14.

Available in blue or beige, the highly absorbent mat features a soft memory foam filling that cushions your feet. It's also machine washable and includes a slip-resistant backing.

flexispray.com.au



Hold on tight

Does it get a bit slippery in your tub or shower? Give yourself a helping hand and prevent injury with the Safe-er Grip Balance Assist Handle, \$30.

With suction cups and flip-up release tabs, the sturdy handle is easy to attach, remove and reposition, making it convenient for use in the home or when on holiday.

bunnings.com.au

ryobi.com.au

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BUYER'S GUIDE

PAINTBRUSHES

WORDS GUN ARVIDSSEN PICTURE STUART SCOTT

Clean sweep

Speed up the least popular part of painting with the RotaCota 50mm Easy Clean Brush, \$10, engineered to help rinse paint out quickly once the job is done.

One-hit wonder

Despite being intended for single use only, the Uni-Pro 100mm Poly Fibre Brush, \$10, is excellent quality for a disposable product, and great for applying acrylic.

Get bent

With an angled neck that makes it easier to reach around obstacles, the ABC 25mm Radiator Brush, \$5, will make short work of painting pipes.

Easy fix

The ABC 30mm Synthetic Bevel Lining Fitch, \$4, has a diagonal profile for getting into awkward spaces and offers smooth paint release, perfect for touch-up jobs.

Eco option

Paint your home green with the Shur-Line 38mm Eco Trim Brush, \$9. The handle is made from renewable bamboo and it has a recycled aluminium ferrule.

Broad strokes

The synthetic bristles of the Monarch 120mm Effects Brush, \$7, have an excellent holding capacity, ideal for applying textured and special-effects paints.

Smooth moves

Featuring tapered round synthetic bristles, the Uni-Pro 75mm Sash Cutter, \$10, will ensure a silky finish on both interior and exterior surfaces.

Case in point

With a distinctive tapered profile, the Monarch 50mm Cornice & Ceiling Brush, about \$13, is designed for painting cornices and detail work on plaster ceilings.

Space-saving luxury

Turn a small, cramped bathroom into a streamlined sanctuary with a few simple design techniques

WORDS ARTEMIS GOUROS

Bathrooms are often the smallest and yet the busiest room in the home, making a good layout both essential and a challenge.

Maximising a compact floorplan means using modern fixtures to open up the room and streamline the space without sacrificing form for function.

The first rule of small-bathroom design is to forget the tub and go for a frameless glass shower screen.

Focus on creating the illusion of more space with lighting, mirrors and windows. Glossy surfaces reflect light and add a luxury feel, while colour is used to highlight not dominate.



Add a modern touch to any style of bathroom with a sleek chrome showerhead and sink mixer.

PICTURES ALAMY

Adding colour

To bring a small bathroom to life, add enough colour to brighten the space without overpowering it.

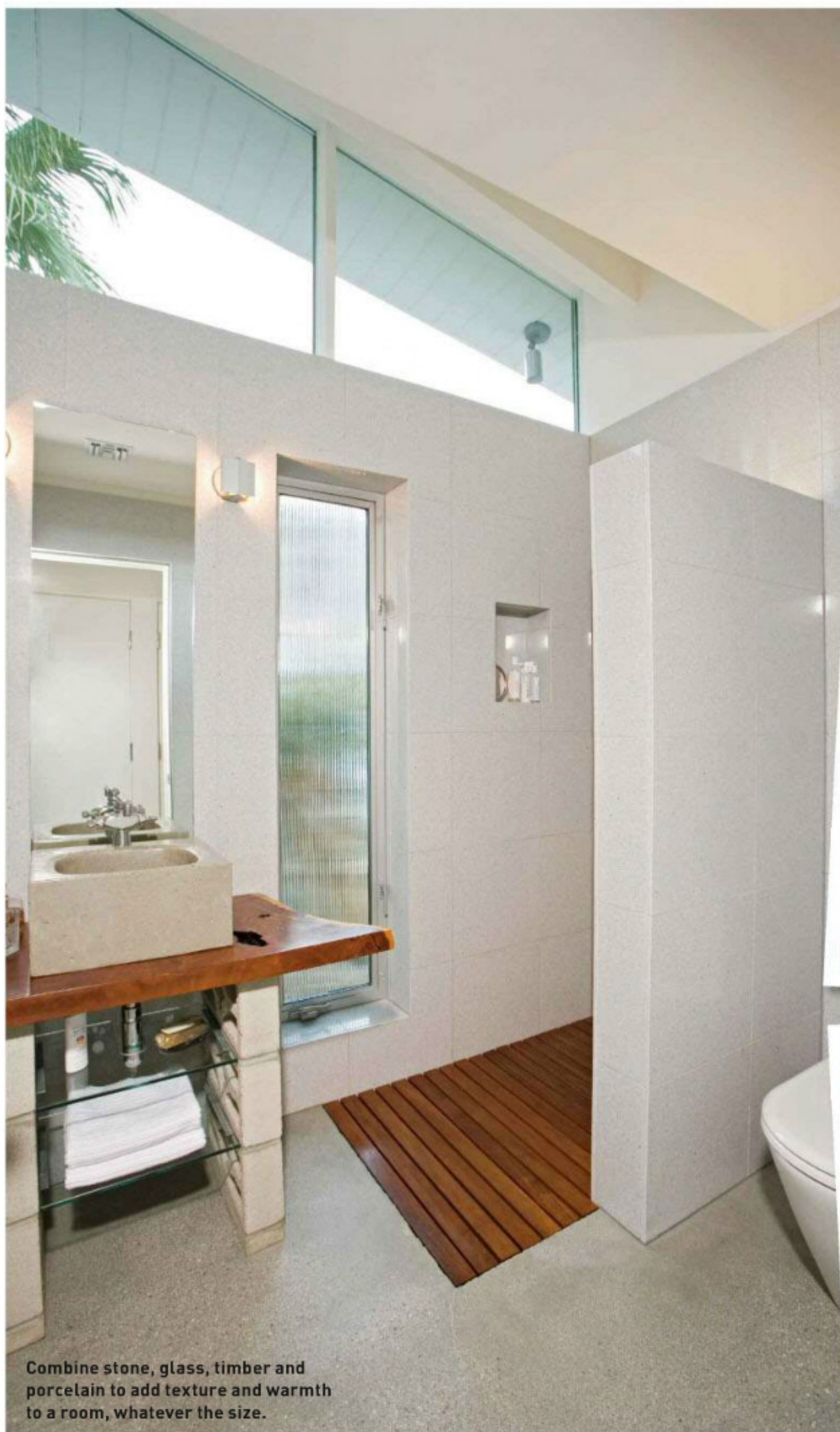
Stick to fresh yellows, blues or greens, and take the colour from floor to ceiling, keeping the fittings and other surfaces white.

Accessories are another way to inject colour in a white space or use the floor, choosing dark grey or brown to anchor the room. ➤

PICTURE ALAMY



A glossy yellow wall provides a bright backdrop to the side-by-side shower, toilet and basin in this tiny bathroom.



Combine stone, glass, timber and porcelain to add texture and warmth to a room, whatever the size.

Bring in light

Skylights and clerestory windows are a great way to flood a bathroom with natural light, and they're even more useful if wall space is at a premium.

Take advantage of high ceilings to include as many windows as possible, using opaque glass for privacy.

Mirrored cabinet doors trick the eye into seeing a bigger room, while downlights are a good unobtrusive choice for low ceilings.

Wall recesses provide storage for toiletries without taking up valuable floorspace, and keep the vanity clear and clutter to a minimum.

A part-wall or single glass panel can be used to screen the shower and avoid closing off a corner of a small room.



Keep it white

Older houses typically have lots of features that seem to go against the modern design ethos of sleek shapes and shiny surfaces. But with minimal work, you can turn old-fashioned features into small-space assets.

Choose white and another neutral or light colour for the walls, finishing panelling and plasterboard with paint designed for wet areas.

Use the same colour for all trim, including mirrors, dado or picture rails, skirting and window frames.

Keep all fixtures white and strip back any lino or other flooring to reveal original floorboards.

Don't cram in furniture and accept that the bathroom doesn't have storage space for supplies of toilet paper or stacks of towels. ➤



Old-fashioned pedestal sinks look streamlined, so simply top with a mirror, not a cabinet.

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The ceiling-mounted showerhead and single glass panel keep the mosaic tiles the main feature of this space.

Tile it bright

In a small bathroom, fittings should be kept simple to prevent clutter, with colour being introduced through tiles, such as an eye-catching feature wall or a mosaic floor or wall strip.

Mosaic tiling is an easy way to add glamour, and iridescent tiles help reflect light. The tiles come in sheets, which cuts down on installation time.

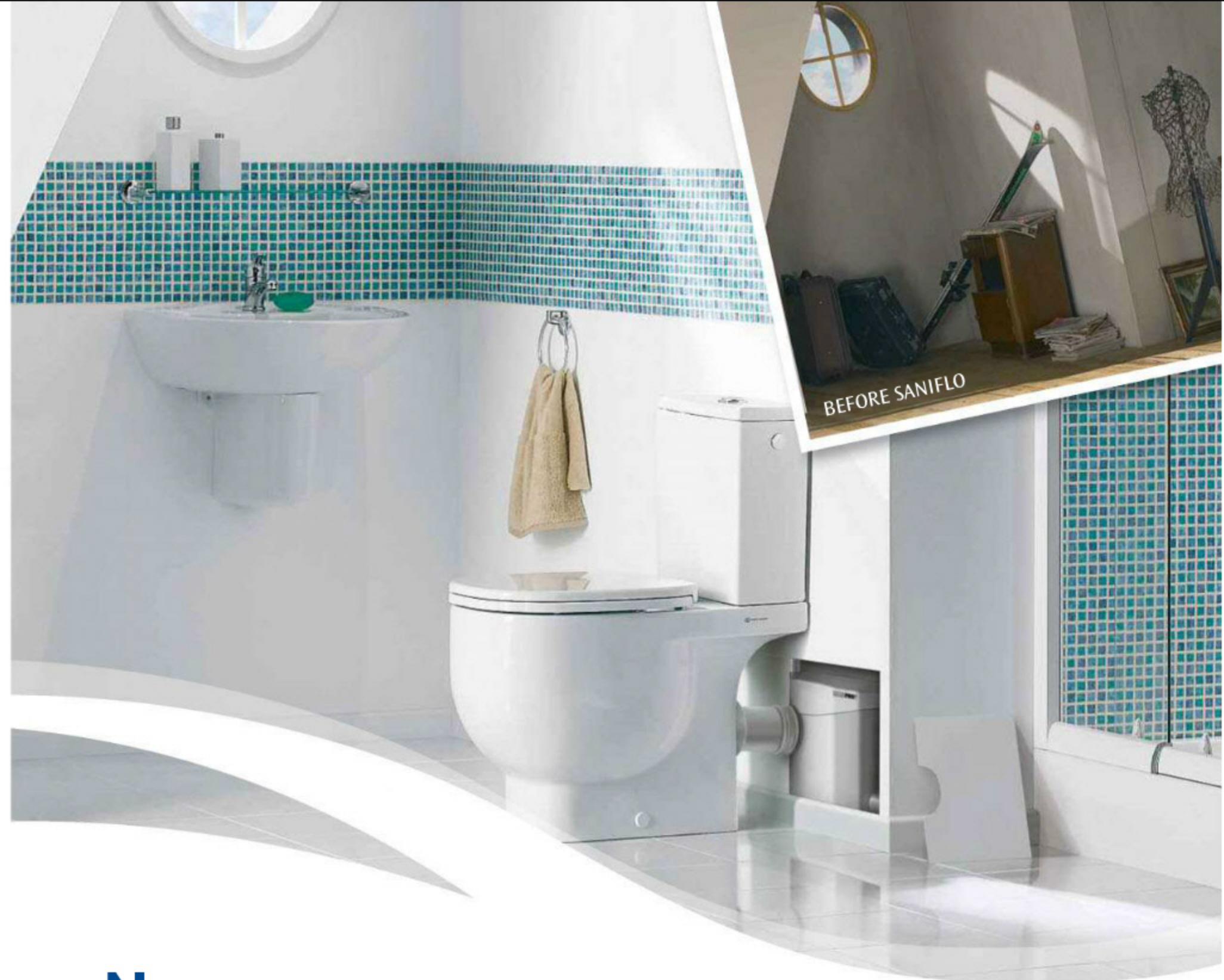
Team coloured wall tiles with white flooring, or add visual depth by taking the tiles up the walls.

Keep the look seamless with a trayless shower and freestanding towel rail, so the walls are clear and the tiling is still visible.

Add a wall-hung toilet and sink to bring the room bang up to date. ➤



PICTURES: ALAMY, THINKSTOCK



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A shower stall and powder room take up one side of this narrow space with cabinets tucked into a corner under a window.

Trim it right

Sometimes, it's the layout rather than the square metres that make a bathroom feel small. Part-walls or internal powder rooms can make design difficult.

The most budget-friendly solution to overcome floorplan obstacles is to work with, not against, an architectural style, and avoid moving plumbing or knocking out and building walls.

For a traditional home, cornices, skirting, doorframes and window shutters are best left in a bathroom, as removing them may make the space feel clinical, not contemporary.

Glass shower screens are essential to keep the room open, but vanities can be older-style with a solid benchtop and doors with a decorative profile.

White ceilings are a must to keep the room fresh and light, but they can be panelled. Walls should simply be painted or tiled in one colour.

TIP An awkwardly shaped space may present an opportunity to put in a tub.



Panelscape 2.4m PVC Ceiling Panels, \$58 for four, Cornice, \$8. handihome.com.au



PICTURES: ALAMY, THINKSTOCK

New Bathroom

Our complete guide to renovating your bathroom



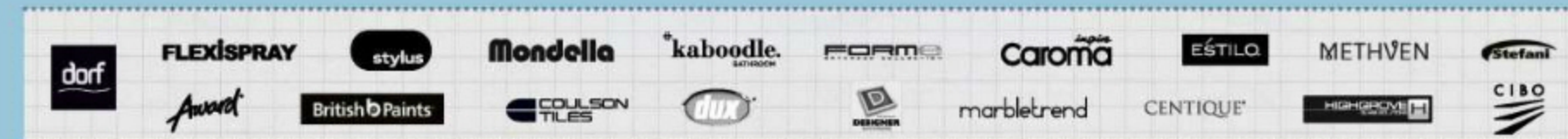
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Whether you are aiming to create a functional family bathroom, a relaxing retreat, or a bit of both, the good news is, it's more achievable than ever.



Design a small bathroom

Make a big impact in a compact space with the clever use of fixtures and accessories

WORDS DANIEL BUTKOVICH MAIN PICTURES CHRIS L JONES STYLING GEMA BENEITEZ

A bathroom that is practical and aesthetically pleasing can be a challenge to design, especially when working with a small space.

Measuring only 2.4 x 1.9m, the bathroom in this first-floor extension needed every trick in the book to make it look and feel bigger than it is.

When the extension was added, the bathroom was built as an empty shell with only plumbing and wiring installed by the tradies.

The layout was kept simple, with plumbing for just a shower, toilet and vanity, as a bathtub in a room this size would occupy too much space.

For the waterproofing and tiling, a professional tiler was called in. Large-format tiles were selected to increase the sense of space.

The chocolate colour on the floor was continued up the wall opposite the door to add visual depth, while glossy white tiles were used for the other walls to brighten the space.

Boost the light levels

With a small, west-facing window, the room was designed to make the most of the limited natural light. A mirror was mounted on the wall above the vanity so there was no medicine cabinet creating an obstruction at eye level.

The vanity was positioned adjacent to the window so the mirror could bounce light into the room. The white wall tiles and glass shower panels also function as reflective surfaces.

Despite the small space, the bathroom door has just enough clearance to open inwards, without hitting the vanity.

Frameless glass was chosen for the shower screen to open up the space and make the room look bigger than it is.

The toilet was tucked into the corner next to the shower to keep it out of the line of sight from the doorway.

To complete the contemporary look, chrome taps and shower fittings were installed, and complemented by chrome towel racks, as well as a handy shower caddy to keep the space tidy.

TIP Brighten up a modern bathroom by adding splashes of colour using towels or accessories. ➤



After

Sleek fittings and a frameless glass shower screen open up the compact bathroom, giving the illusion of space.

Install the shower screen



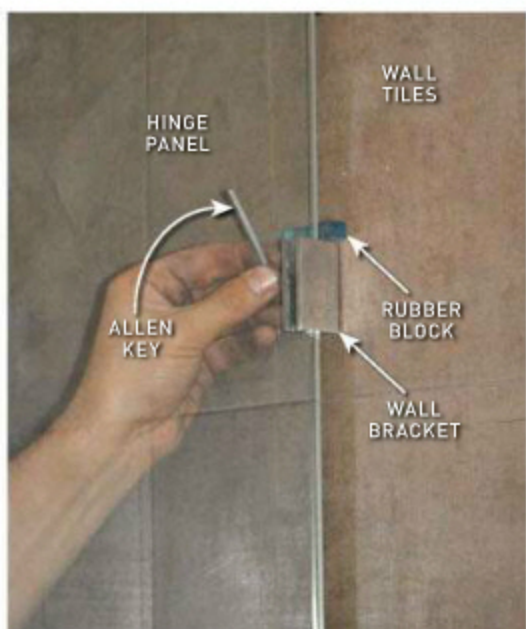
1 Set out the bracket locations
Mark the centreline of each panel on the floor and use a spirit level to mark vertical centrelines up the walls to 2000mm high. Mark the screw holes for the mounting brackets along the panel centrelines on the floor and walls at the spacings recommended by the manufacturer.



2 Attach the brackets
Use a 6mm ceramic drill bit to drill the marked holes to a depth of 30mm, applying even pressure at low speed. Insert the supplied plastic plugs into each hole and trim the excess using a utility knife. Position the brackets and attach using the supplied screws, then loosen the grub screws.



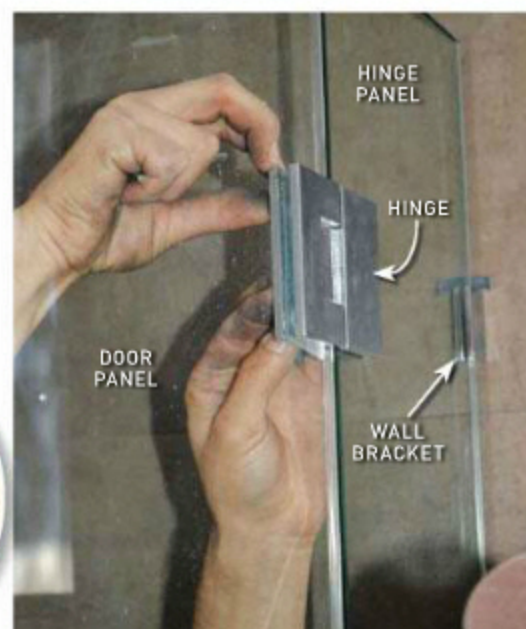
3 Secure the fixed panel
Cut the supplied rubber blocks to 6mm and position them in front of each bracket to support the glass. Lift the panel into the floor brackets, slide it into the wall brackets and hand-tighten the grub screws using an Allen key.
TIP Use glass-lifting gloves and have a helper assist when lifting the panels.



4 Secure the hinge panel
Repeat the process with the hinge panel, checking that the door opening is 6mm wider than the door panel and that the gaps between the walls and the panels do not exceed 12mm, then tighten the screws using the Allen key.
TIP Temporarily position rubber blocks above the brackets for an even gap.



5 Seal the gaps
Apply bathroom silicone liberally along the gaps between the panels and the wall. Use a silicone spatula to push the silicone into the gaps and scrape away the excess, smoothing the surface with the rounded corners.
TIP Seal the gap between the floor and the panels after the door is installed.



6 Attach the door panel
Secure the hinges to the recesses in the hinge panel. Position rubber blocks in the door opening, lift the door onto the blocks and attach the hinges to the door panel. Check all gaps are even, tighten the screws and remove the rubber blocks. Cut away excess rubber from beneath the other panels.

Get the look

Create a contemporary, streamlined space with modern chrome fittings, a compact vanity and a touch of colour.



Marbletrend 750 x 455mm Flinders Vanity Unit, \$406.
marbletrend.com.au



Evoque Chrome Three Tier Towel Stand, \$40.
zonehardware.com.au



Everloc Solutions Chrome Plated Steel Shower Caddy, \$29.
everloc.com.au



Lorraine Lea Bath Towel, 70 x 150cm, \$32.
linenparties.com

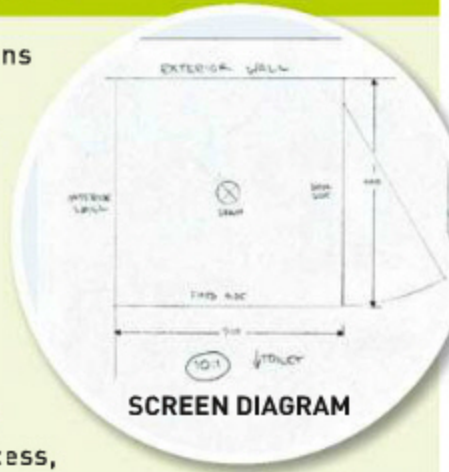
Design the shower

Frameless shower screens are ideal for small bathrooms, as they make the space seem bigger and evoke a sense of being in a luxury hotel.

The shower screen for this bathroom is from Highgrove Glass and was custom made to suit the 900 x 900mm recess, which is slightly larger than their standard size (highgroveglass.com.au).

To keep the look streamlined in the small bathroom, the shower was designed without a tray. The shower door opens both inwards and outwards, which is a useful feature in such a compact space.

Aluminium angle was installed before tiling to form the shower recess and a mortar bed was laid to create a slope. The tiles were laid, then the glass panels installed above the angle to conceal it. ➤



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UNSUITABLE SURFACE

Mount a mirror

With an emphasis on saving space, the bathroom needed a vanity with lots of storage, as there would be no medicine cabinet, but also a small footprint to allow clearance for the door.

The vanity is 750mm wide and includes two drawers and a single-door cabinet with no handles to make it more streamlined. The shallow basin allows maximum storage underneath.

Frameless mirrors suit almost any style of bathroom but work especially well in contemporary homes. This mirror is the same width as the vanity, measuring 900 x 750mm, and is mounted flush to the wall.

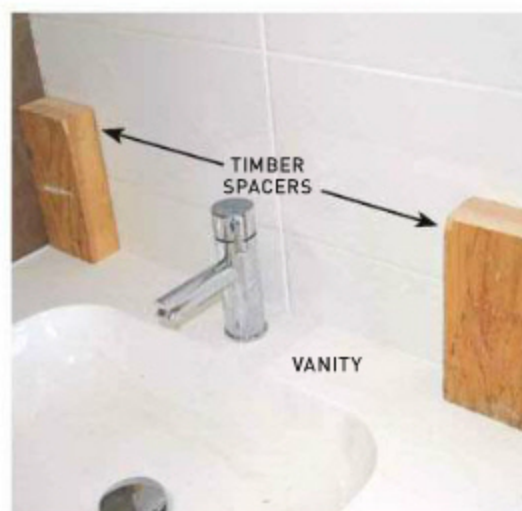
TIP Mount the mirror at an appropriate height to suit all bathroom users.



Highgrove 900 x 750 x 5mm Flat Edged Mirror, \$37. highgroveglass.com.au



The slimline mirror and compact vanity are ideal for a small bathroom.



1 Make the spacers
Have a helper hold the mirror up against the wall and mark the base edge. Measure the distance between the mark and the vanity and cut two lengths of timber to size for spacers. Position the spacers on the vanity at either end and use them to support the mirror when mounting it on the wall.



2 Apply the tape
Secure strips of double-sided tape to the back of the mirror at the top, base and sides, leaving the backing on one side. Apply mirror adhesive to the vinyl cutouts on the back of the mirror.
TIP Ensure both the wall and the back of the mirror are clean and dry before applying the tape and adhesive.

3 Hang the mirror
Peel one corner from the backing of each piece of tape so it extends beyond the mirror's edge. Stand the mirror on the spacers, then firmly press the mirror against the wall and check it is level. Remove the rest of the backing from the tape by pulling the corners hanging out from the back.

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The benefits of a Highgrove Frameless Shower Screen are obvious. A cleaner look, easier to clean but what isn't immediately obvious is just how easy they are to install.

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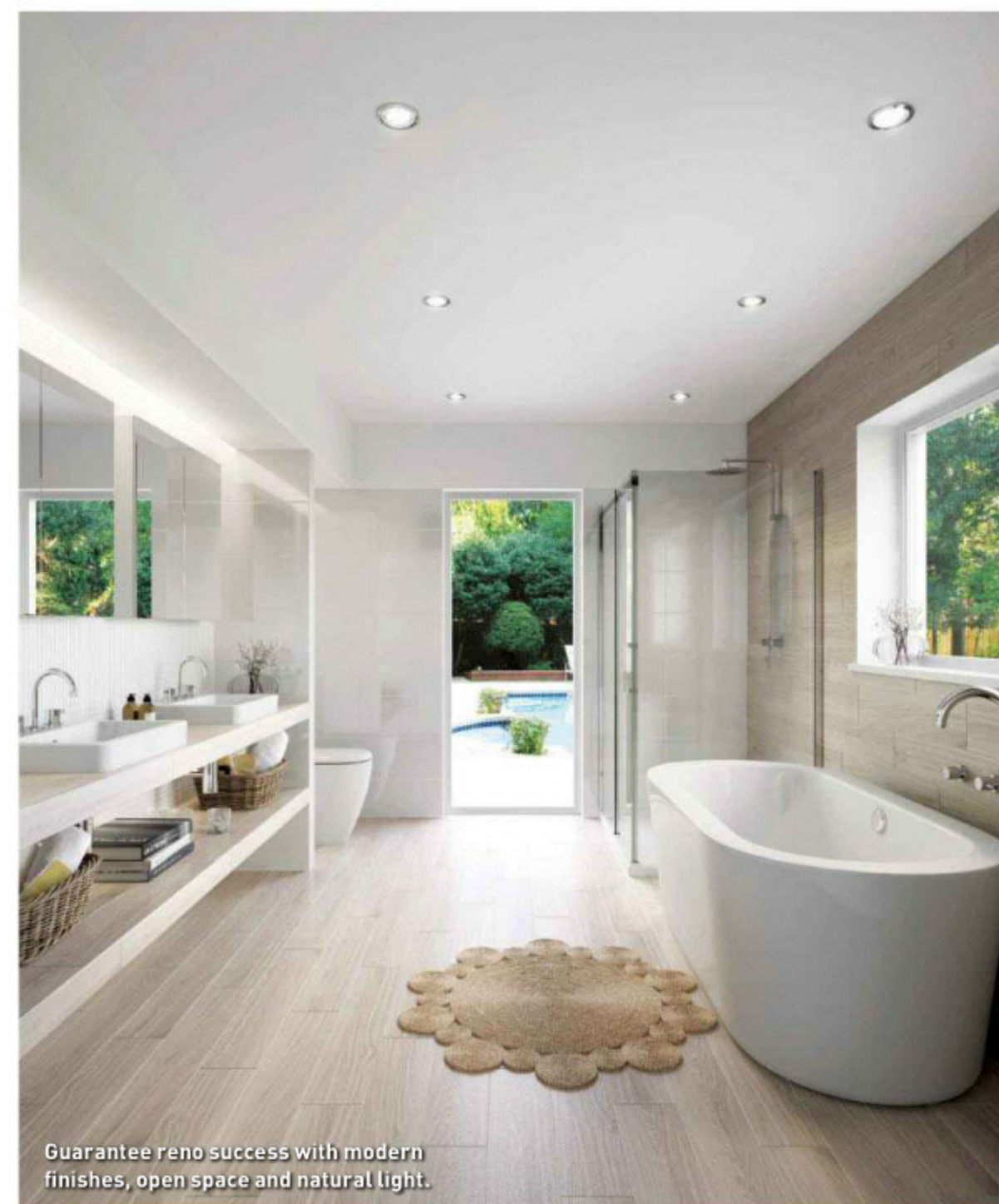
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Plan your reno

Get the bathroom you've always wanted by choosing fixtures and a layout to suit your budget



Guarantee reno success with modern finishes, open space and natural light.

Bathroom renovations can make a home much more liveable and add thousands of dollars in value. Installing it DIY makes your money go further and means you get your dream bathroom sooner.

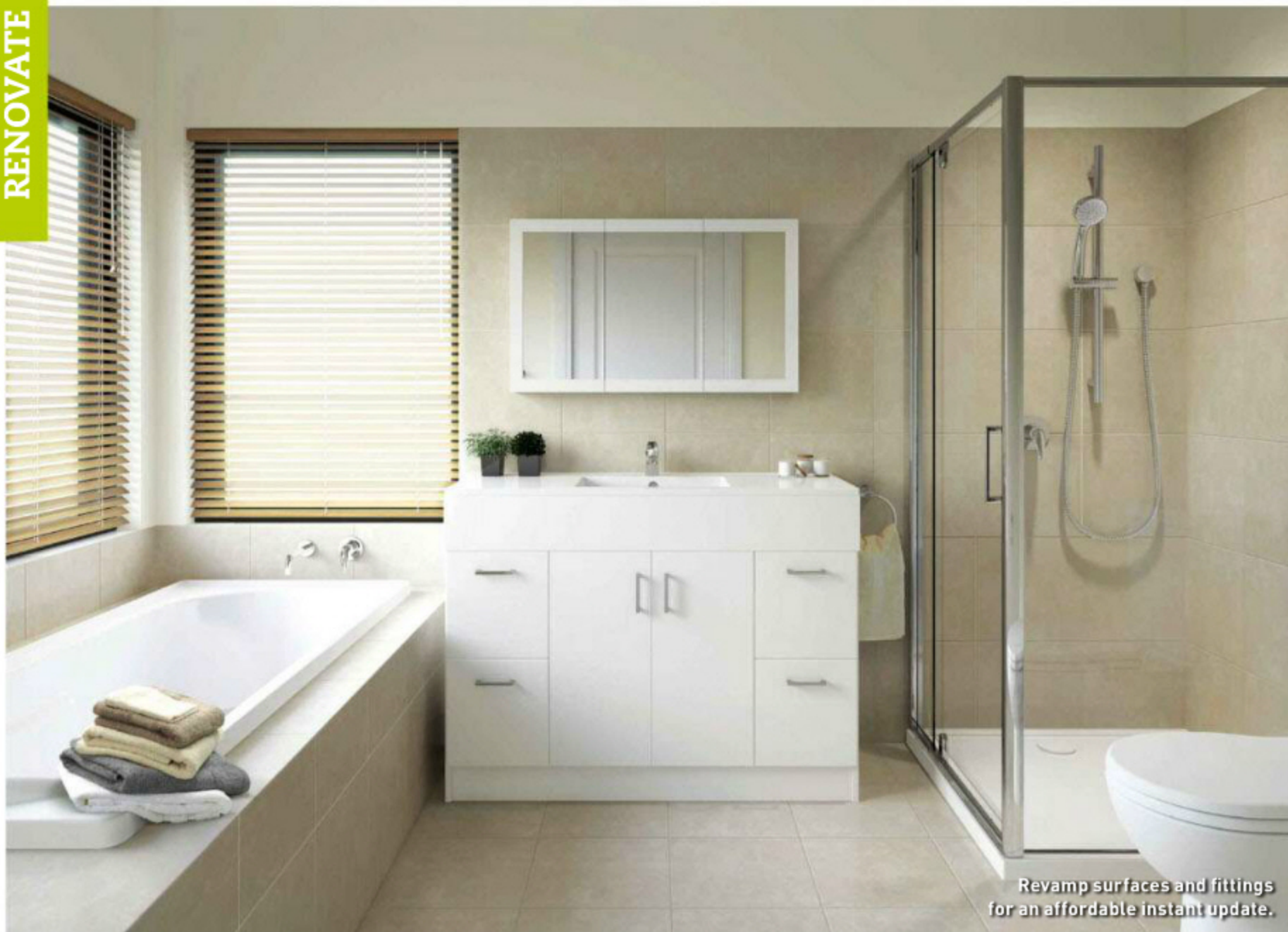
Take time to plan your renovation to avoid having to remodel again a few years down the track. Work out exactly what you need and think about any possible lifestyle changes in the future.

Design the layout

Measure the space and experiment with layouts on paper, keeping in mind that using existing plumbing will reduce overall costs.

If space is an issue, prioritise the changes that make the biggest impact, both practically and visually. Think about storage and available light, and decide whether a bath is necessary. ➤





Revamp surfaces and fittings for an affordable instant update.

Set your budget

Once you have a plan on paper, determine whether your budget can stretch to a full renovation or whether a cosmetic update is a better option.

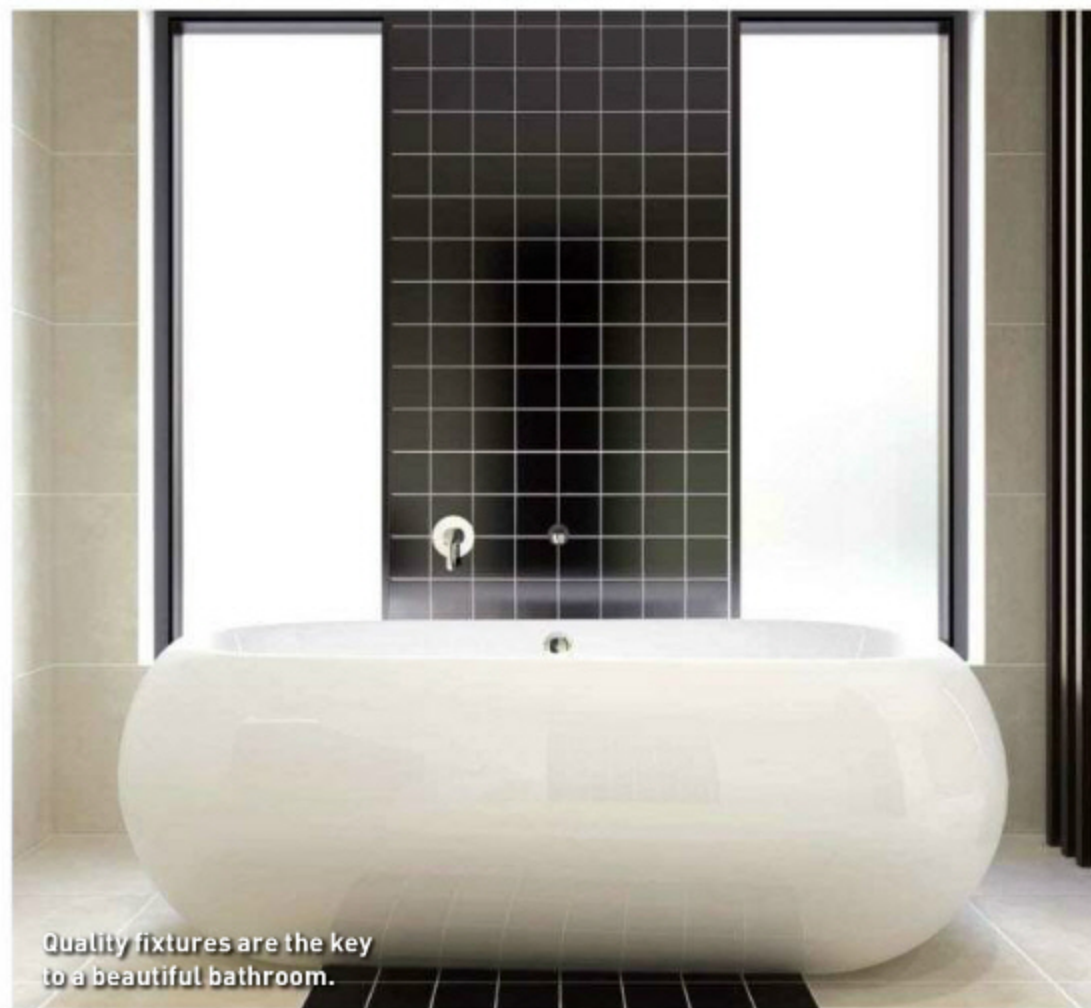
If your bathroom has good bones, replacing the vanity or adding new fittings can make an instant impact.

Work out how much you can save by doing it yourself and decide what you will need a tradie for. Remember, all plumbing and electrical work must be done by a qualified professional.

Focus on quality

The finishing touches can make all the difference in a bathroom revamp. Choose the best quality products you can afford to keep that wow factor for years to come.

Throughout the reno, take a step back and look at the project as a whole to make sure you're happy. Changes made early on will cost much less than once the renovation is complete.



Quality fixtures are the key to a beautiful bathroom.

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PAINT OVER OLD TILES

Give your bathroom a brand-new look in just a couple of days by resurfacing rather than retiling

PROJECT AND PICTURES LEE DASHIELL

Replacing bathroom tiles is a big job, involving chipping out the existing tiles and restoring the wall to a smooth finish. Wet areas then need waterproofing before the tiling can begin.

The amount of labour combined with the cost of the new tiles makes this an expensive renovation.

For an easy and high-impact makeover, you can paint directly over the tiles, and the paint can be tinted to suit your colour scheme.

The finish is gloss, so proper preparation is the key to a professional

result. Scrub any soap scum, mould or dirt from the areas to be painted, then use a tile cleaning product.

Apply a primer and two coats of tile paint, sanding between coats, taking care not to overload the brush or roller.

To calculate how much paint you need, measure the length and height of the area to be painted to give the number of square metres. Divide this by 12 to get the total litres required.

This ensuite had been renovated a few years ago, but the original wall tiles were retained. The faux-marble design was outdated and the shower

had discoloured grout as a result of being plumbed to a rainwater tank.

After two days of DIY, the tiles and grout now repel water and the bathroom looks clean and modern. ➤

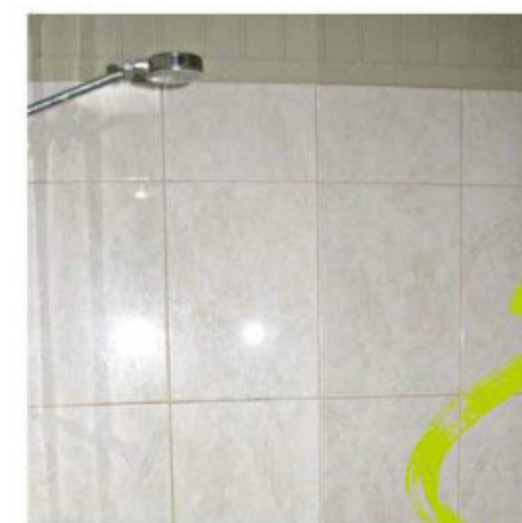


White Knight Tile & Laminate Primer, \$45 for 1L, Tile Paint, \$47 for 1L. whiteknightpaints.com.au

Taping a clean edge

When using painter's tape, press it down on the edge of the area to be painted. If loosely applied, paint will bleed underneath the tape, resulting in an uneven edge.

It's best to remove tape before the paint has dried. But if two or three coats are needed, the base coats will be dry. To break the seal between the paint and tape, score the edge with a utility knife, then pull it away at a 45° angle.



Tank water had discoloured the tile grout in the shower recess.



Tile paint covers the grout and provides a non-absorbent surface treatment.



Before

The original wall tiles make this bathroom look out of date.

After

A few coats of paint transform the tiles for a fraction of the cost of replacing them.

Paint the tiles



1 Clean the tiles

Scrub the tiles and grout with a solution of one part bleach to 10 parts water to remove mould, then leave to dry. Spray with tile cleaner, leave for 30 seconds, then wipe off with a wet sponge to remove soap scum and oil.

TIP We used White Knight Tile & Laminate Cleaner, \$15 for 500ml.



2 Mask the edges

Use painter's tape to mask off the walls at the floor and ceiling and any other edges. Press firmly on the edge of the tape along the area to be painted to give a clean finish. Fill any cracks with grout or gap filler and leave to dry. Position drop cloths on the floor.



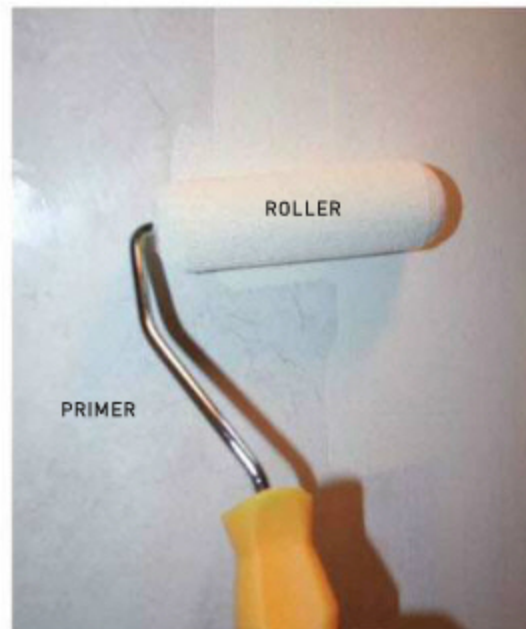
3 Sand the tiles

Give the tiles a light sand all over with a sheet of 240 grit wet/dry abrasive paper and a sanding block to create a rough matt surface. This will help the paint adhere better to the tiles. Wash and rinse off the tiles using a wet sponge and clean water, then leave to dry completely.



4 Apply the primer

Stir the primer well, then pour into a roller tray. Paint a small area of the tiles at a time using a microfibre mini roller and a brush to cut in the edges or around tricky areas such as taps. Roll on the primer in a zigzag pattern, then smooth out, working from the top to the base. Leave to dry.



5 Paint the first coat

Lightly sand the tiles with 240 grit paper and wipe down. Apply the first coat with the roller, using a brush to cut in. Paint a small area at a time in a zigzag pattern, then roll smooth. When the paint is spread and only a little is left on the roller, go over the area in one direction from top to base.



6 Finish the painting

Store the brush and roller in water until the first coat of paint is dry, then squeeze out the water. Lightly sand the tiles with 600 grit paper. Wipe off the dust, then apply the top coat using the same technique as for the first coat. Allow to dry for a day, then wait a week until fully cured.

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before

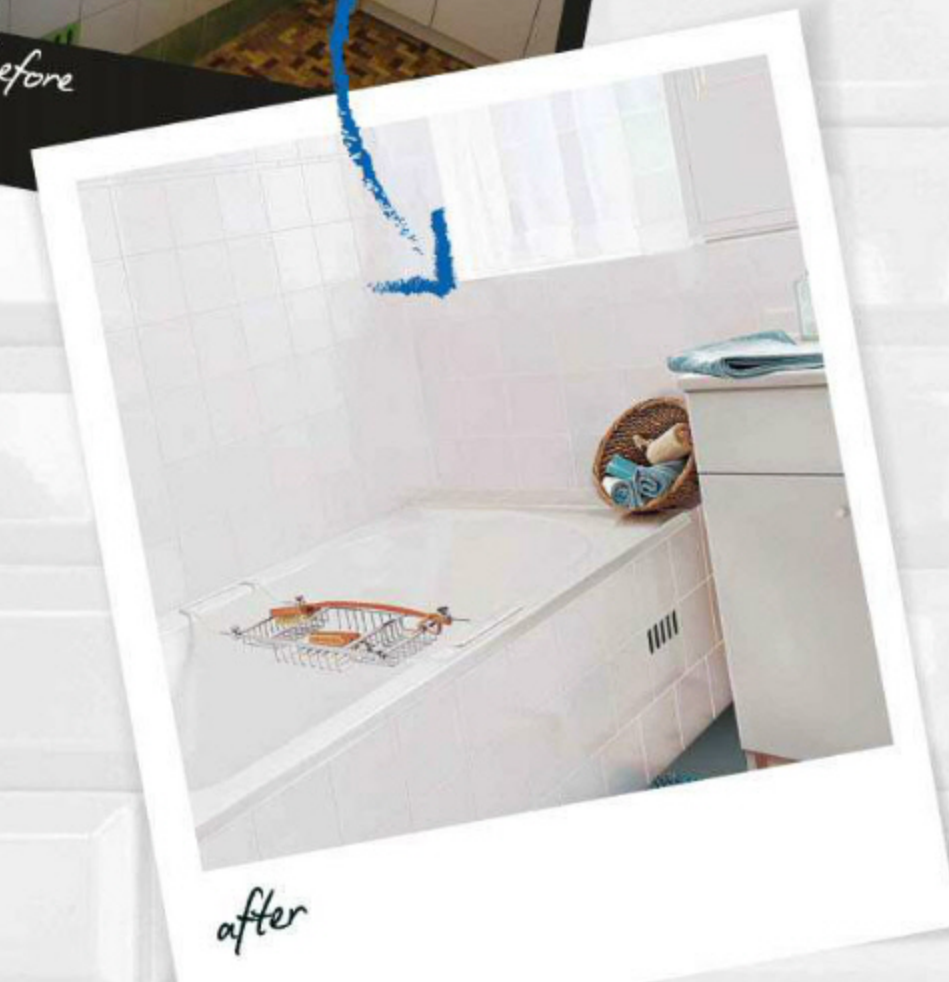


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before



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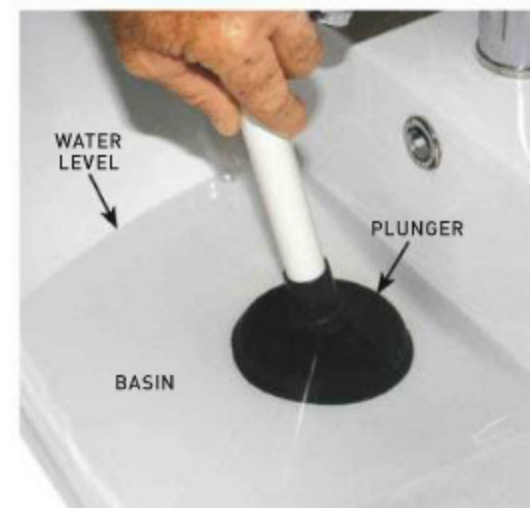
Fast DIY bathroom fixes

Save on tradie costs by tackling small jobs to keep on top of repairs and maintenance

Tidy, well maintained bathrooms minimise morning chaos and are a pleasure to be in.

While many bigger bathroom jobs require a qualified plumber both by law and to avoid costly disasters, minor repairs like fixing leaking taps and regrouting tiles can be completed by anyone with DIY experience.

Regular maintenance keeps the bathroom looking great, avoiding water damage and expensive repairs.



1 Use a plunger

If water is backed up into the basin, bail it out until there's just enough to cover the plunger cup. Position the plunger cup over the drain and pump vigorously, straight up and down, for at least a minute to dislodge small blockages from the U-bend.

Unblock U-bends

Slow water drainage can be caused by a build-up of grease, hair or soap in the U-bend under the sink.

Traps or U-bends contain water that blocks sewer gas from entering the building. Their shape can also trap solid matter, causing blockages.

If the pipe isn't totally blocked, try a homemade drain cleaner of half a cup of bicarb soda, a cup of white vinegar and four litres of boiling water.



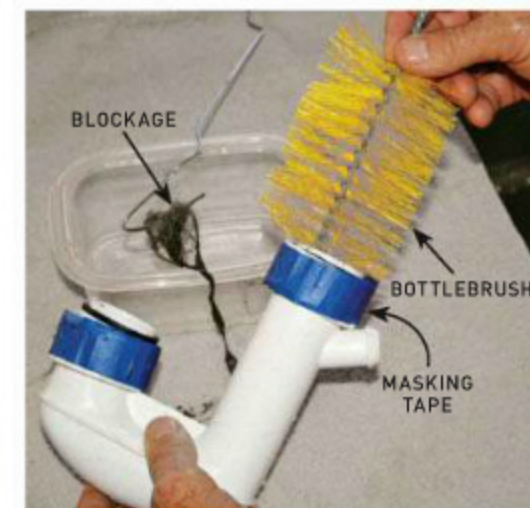
2 Dismantle the U-bend

If the basin remains blocked, position a container under the U-bend. Wrap masking tape around the nuts on both sides of the U-bend and loosen with a pair of large multigrips. Remove the U-bend and pour excess water into the container.

Pour down the drain and repeat, if necessary. This should break apart any greasy build-up, but solid blockages need to be cleared by dismantling the U-bend, clearing the blockage and cleaning it out with a bottlebrush. ➤



Oates Large Soft Grip Bottle and Glass Brush, about \$5. oates.com.au



3 Reassemble the U-bend

Use a coathanger to remove the blockage and scrape gunk from the U-bend. Clean thoroughly with detergent and a bottlebrush. Smear petroleum jelly around the screw threads before replacing to make removal easier next time.



Keep the bathroom looking immaculate and functioning well with a bit of regular DIY.



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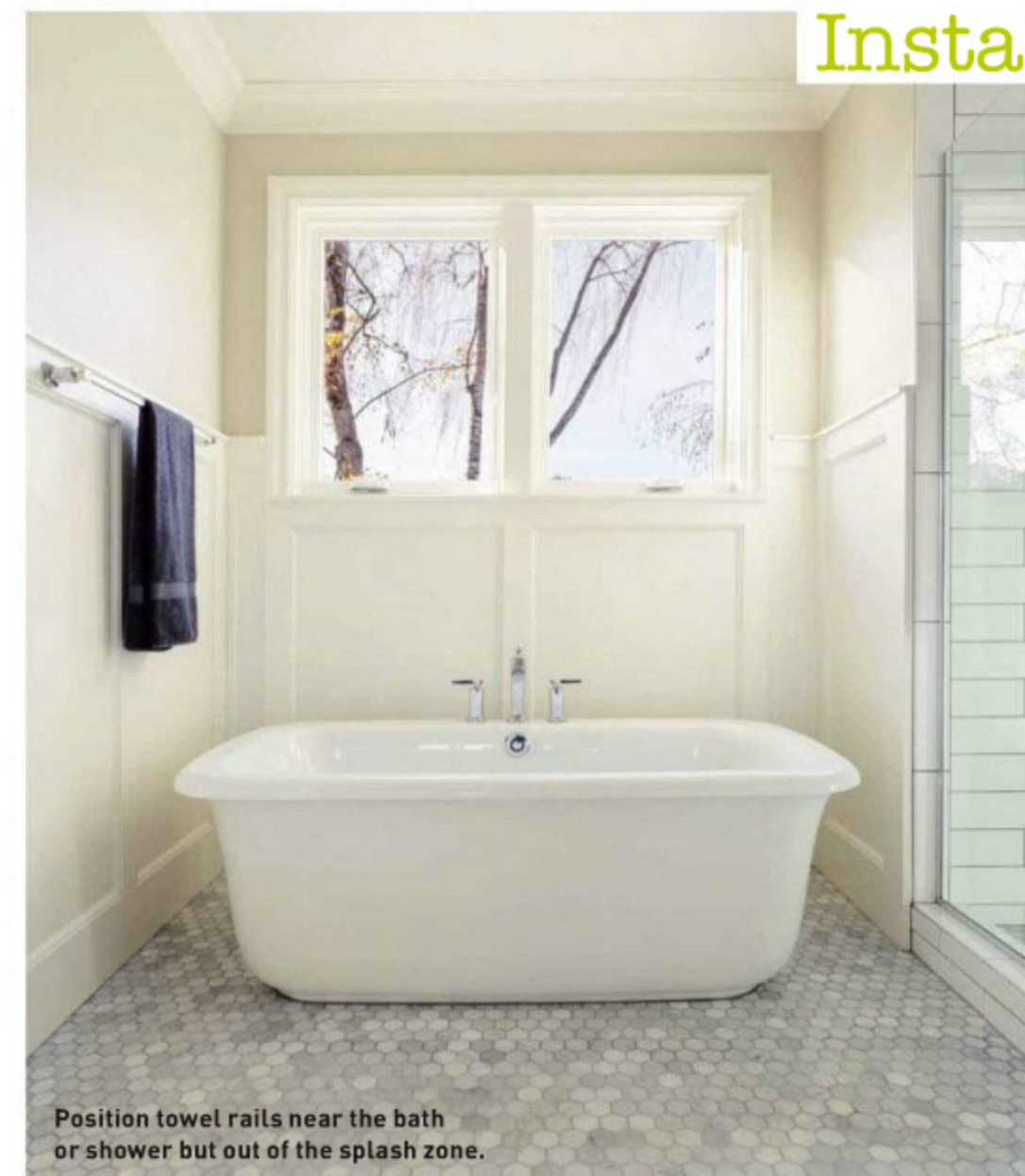
Polyfilla's premium formulations:

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Install a towel rail



Position towel rails near the bath or shower but out of the splash zone.

Bathrooms typically have towel rails already fitted, but when retiling, changing the layout or installing a new bathroom, a new towel rail will need to be mounted.

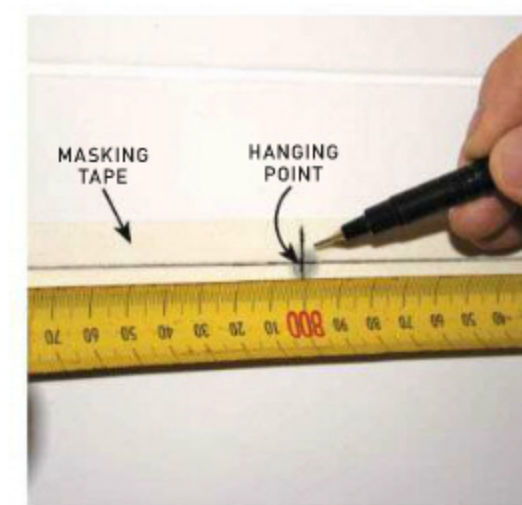
Towel rails should be positioned for easy access from the shower, bathtub or vanity, but not where they can get wet from splashing. The ideal height is 1200-1700mm, depending on the ceiling and any obstructions.

Select a towel rail that matches the style of shower and tap fittings. Double rails are available to store multiple towels, while a second rail may be necessary to hang a bath mat.

TIP Choose a rail that allows towels to hang freely without touching the wall, as this can cause mould. ➤

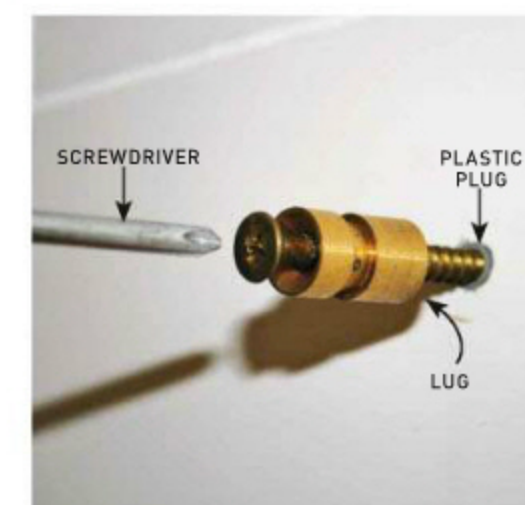


P&N 6mm Diamond Core Drill Bit, \$13. sutton.com.au



1 Mark the hanging points

Assemble the towel rail and measure between hanging points. Apply 20mm wide masking tape along the tiles and use a spirit level to draw a straight horizontal line on the tape. Measure and mark the spacing of the lugs on the line using a pencil.



2 Attach the lugs

Select a diamond core drill bit that matches the size of the supplied plastic plugs. With the hammer function switched off, apply pressure to slowly drill through the tiles. Tap the plastic plugs into position and attach the lugs using supplied screws.



3 Attach the rail

Slide the rail sleeves over either end of the rail and over the lugs. Tighten the grub screws at each end with the supplied Allen key. **TIP** The small hex socket grub screws are hidden from view on the underside of the rail sleeves.

PICTURE (TOP) THINKSTOCK

RegROUT the tiles

Bumps and knocks to tiled surfaces loosen grout over time, allowing water to seep in. This can cause mould behind tiles and eventually compromise waterproofing.

Regrouting is simpler and less expensive than replacing tiles, and it gives old tiles a clean finish.

All old grout needs removing before new grout is applied, and new grout should be sealed to ensure longevity.

Coloured grout can be used to give a bathroom a new look. Matching the grout and tile colours makes the edges of the tile less obvious, while contrasting colours draw attention to the pattern of the tile layout.

TIP Avoid using acidic bathroom cleaners, as they can damage grout. ➤



Dunlop Flexible Coloured Grout, about \$9 for 1.5kg. dunlopdry.com.au



Contrasting grout can make a tiled feature wall stand out.



1 Remove the old grout

Use a carbide grit grout saw to remove loose grout. The angled offset handle lets you apply heavy pressure as the blade is scraped over the gaps. Vacuum out the dust, then wash the surface with a solution of water and white vinegar.



2 RegROUT the tiles

Mix the new grout to the consistency of toothpaste. Move a rubber float or squeegee diagonally across the tiles to push grout into the gaps. Leave it to set for 30 minutes, then use a damp sponge and clean water to wipe away the excess.



3 Seal the grout

Leave the grout to cure for two days. Apply grout sealer with a small paintbrush, using a cloth to wipe the edges of the tiles clean as you go.

TIP The sealer protects the grout and prevents water, dirt and mould from penetrating and leaving stains.

PICTURE (TOP) ALAMY

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Lifting the lid on choosing a toilet

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Seal the gaps

Silicone plays a key part in keeping a bathroom waterproof. It prevents water from getting into gaps between tiles and baths, vanities and fittings, where it can cause damage and mould if left unchecked.

Silicone should be used to seal all new fixtures when renovating or installing a new bathroom.

Over time, it can become worn and mouldy, which makes the bathroom look shabby. It also reduces its waterproofing ability and this can lead to water damage.

Carefully cut away old silicone using a utility knife, then rub off residue using methylated spirits and paper towel. Leave to dry completely before applying new silicone. ➤



Selleys Wet Area Speed Seal Silicone Sealant, \$10 for 300g. selleys.com.au



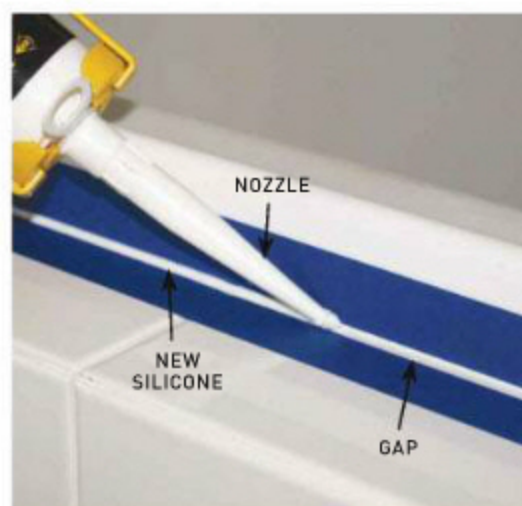
Silicone around vanities and fixtures prevents water damage and mould.



1 Protect the surfaces

Apply strips of masking tape to either side of the gap, about 4mm apart. Cut the nozzle from the silicone at 45°, keeping the hole smaller than the gap for greater control.

TIP Cut the nozzle neatly, as jagged edges create furrows in the bead.



2 Lay an even bead

Start at one end and continue to the other. Pull the trigger slowly and steadily, pushing the caulk gun away from you and adjusting the rate to match variations in flow speed.

TIP Lift the gun and release the trigger once you reach the end of the gap.



3 Smooth the bead

Run along the bead with a finger dipped in soapy water, continuously from one end to the other, applying enough pressure to create a smooth, even surface. Remove the masking tape and excess silicone immediately, then allow to dry for 24 hours.

PICTURE (TOP) THINKSTOCK

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Double Corner Basket - 67022



Dental Station - 67017



Twin Towel Rail - 67005



Large Bathroom Shelf - 67009



Double Hook - 67249

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For more information please visit our website EVERLOC.COM.AU

* The maximum weight bearing ability of EVERLOC will vary from surface to surface. The Large Everloc suction cups can hold up to 15kgs and the Small suction cups can hold up to 8kgs. Product availability and ranging will vary from store to store.

Cut squares in tiles

Tiling a bathroom is relatively simple until it comes to tricky techniques like cutting squares in tiles for powerpoints and light switches.

Instead of calling in a tradie, cut them DIY to get the professional look on a budget. The best way to cut tiles is with a wet diamond-bladed saw, but if you don't have access to one, you can use an angle grinder instead.

Attach a continuous rim diamond blade to an angle grinder and make the cuts. Score the front of the tile first then plunge-cut from the back.

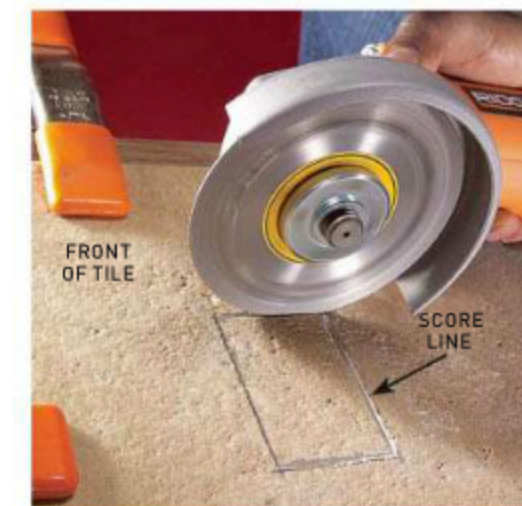
The key to cutting tidy rectangles and squares in tiles is to avoid cutting beyond the corners. Practice first on spare tiles or broken pieces to avoid wasting expensive tiles. ➤



Flexovit 125 x 22mm Tile Cutter Diamond Blade, \$24. flexovit.com

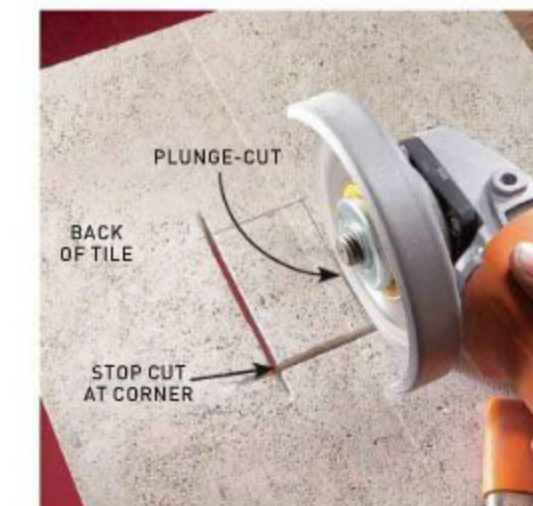


Lights and switches often require cutout tiles so they fit in the wall.



1 Score the shape

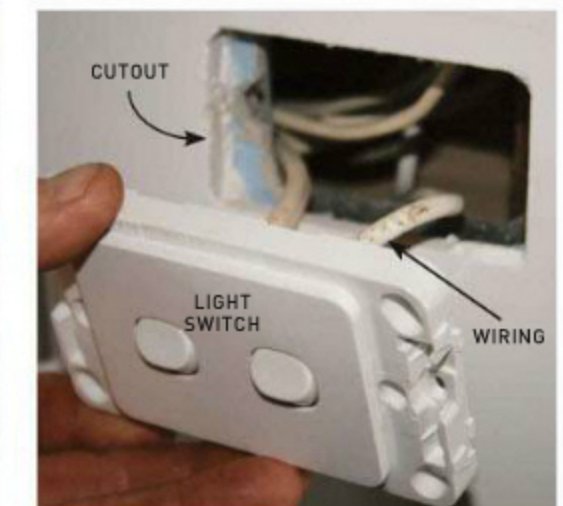
Mark the cutout on the front and back of the tile. Score the front of the tile about 1.5mm deep along the line with an angle grinder, stopping the cut right on the corner of the cutout. Avoid applying too much pressure, as this can crack the tile.



2 Finish the cut

Turn the tile over and plunge-cut from the back, checking frequently. Stop when the cut lines up with the marked corners, then plunge-cut the remaining three sides.

TIP If the cuts on the front are too shallow, cut deeper from the back.



3 Install the switches

Have a qualified electrician wire the bathroom before tiling. Lay the tiles, lining up those that have cutouts with the location of switches and fittings. When the tiling is done, have the electrician connect all powerpoints, light switches and fans.

Cut circles in tiles

Most bathrooms require at least one round hole in tiles for a floor or shower waste outlet. Holes may also be needed in wall tiles to accommodate plumbing and lighting, while curved cuts are often required for toilet flanges.

Much like cutting square holes, cutting circles is possible with an angle grinder, which can save you money hiring a tradie or getting a tile shop to do the job.

When laying shower tiles DIY, position the circle at the intersection of two or four tiles rather than cutting into a single tile, to ensure the correct slope for efficient water runoff.

TIP Use bar clamps to secure the tile to a workbench while cutting so the area to be cut hangs over the edge.



Ryobi 950W 125mm Corded Angle Grinder, \$79. ryobi.com.au



To install plumbing and drainage fittings, cut circles in the tiles.



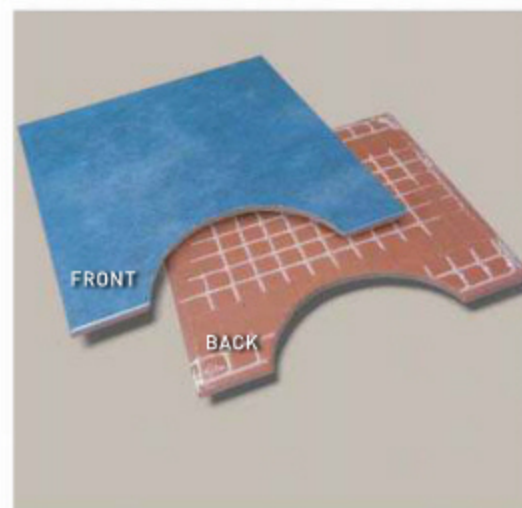
1 Score the circle outline

Mark the circle on the tiles, then score the profile with an angle grinder. Make short cuts on each side of the semicircle, then connect the cuts by making a series of progressively deeper shallow cuts to remove the waste piece.



2 Make short radial cuts

Complete the semicircle by making several spoke-like radial cuts into the remaining waste areas every 5mm, taking care not to cut beyond the scored semicircle line. Clean up rough edges with a diamond blade or remove tabs with a tile nipper.



3 Smooth the edges

Once most of the waste has been removed, attach a masonry grinding wheel to the angle grinder and grind the edges smooth, working slowly around each curve. Check that the curve matches the fittings, then lay the tiles using adhesive and grout.

PICTURE (TOP) ALAMY



The IXL Eco Tastic® & IXL Eco Vent, clearly the best choice for bathroom heating and ventilation.



ECO VENTFLO



ECO SENSATION



ECO TRIUMPH

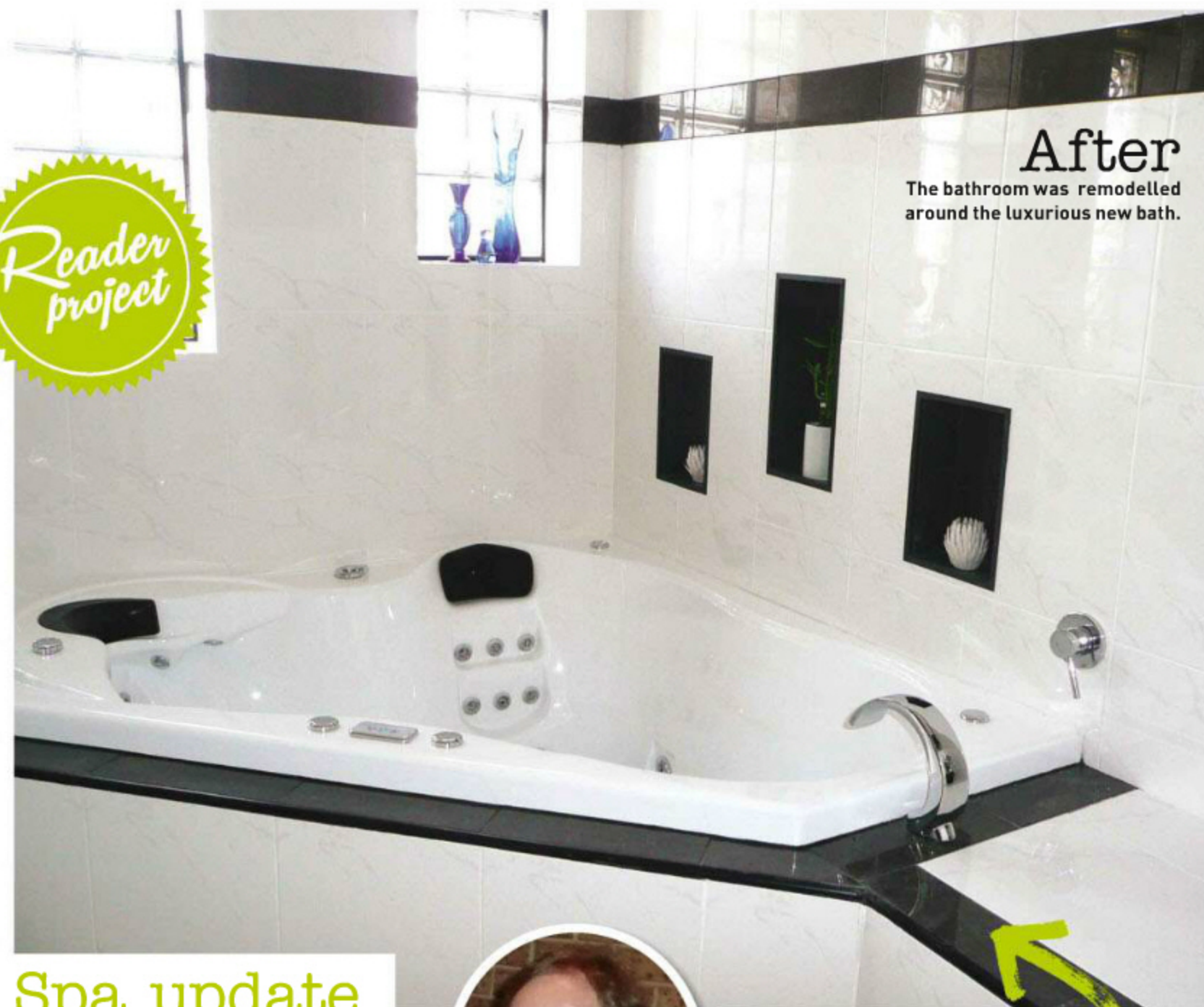
The new IXL Eco Ventflo is available in two sizes and is the must have ventilation unit for your bathroom. With powerful extraction, self-sealing draught stoppers and suitable for installation directly above a shower, keeping your bathroom free from unwanted moisture build up and cold draughts has never been easier.

The Eco Tastic products look sleek, stylish and unobtrusive, but still have all the energy-saving features that you have come to expect from the genuine IXL Tastic. Featuring genuine IXL heat lamps and unique back-draught flaps that seal the unit when it's off, Eco Tastics help new homes meet 5 Star energy guidelines. And of course, there's a 5 year in-home guarantee.

Practical, green and elegant? Absolutely.



Call 1300 727 421 or visit www.ixlappliances.com.au



After

The bathroom was remodelled around the luxurious new bath.

Spa update

Handyman reader Alan Redcliffe's bathroom was a relic from decades past, with retro fixtures and a large but dated spa bath. The toilet was also located in a separate room.

Alan completely overhauled the space, upgrading everything but keeping the floorplan similar.

A toilet was installed opposite the shower, tucked behind the vanity, and the tub was replaced with a newer model with massage jets. Alan also added a flatscreen TV facing the bath.

The window was replaced with three vertical windows to allow in more light and recessed wall shelves were added. Large white tiles with a black feature strip complete the look.



ALAN

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Before



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Phone 1300 883 766

Fix a leaking tap

The most common cause of leaking taps is a worn or faulty jumper valve. The rubber on the base of the jumper valve can wear away over time and this will cause your tap to leak.

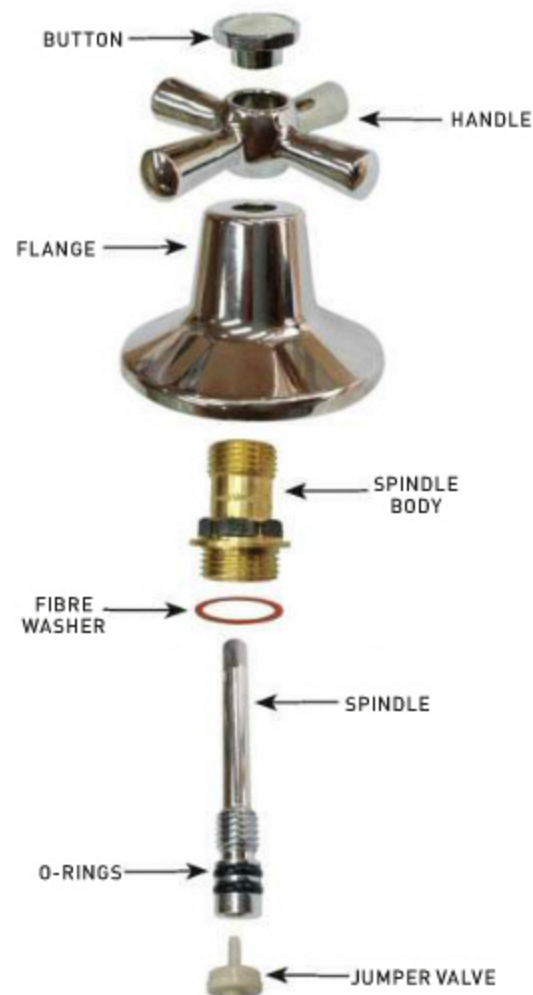
To fix a leaking tap, change the jumper valve, O-rings and fibre washer.

When changing the O-ring, apply a small amount of tap lubricant. Some modern tap sets come with ceramic disc spindles. These can be easier to use and a better seal can be achieved, but they still can leak over time.

Lever-handled mixer taps use ceramic disc cartridges, and the most common sizes are 35mm or 40mm.



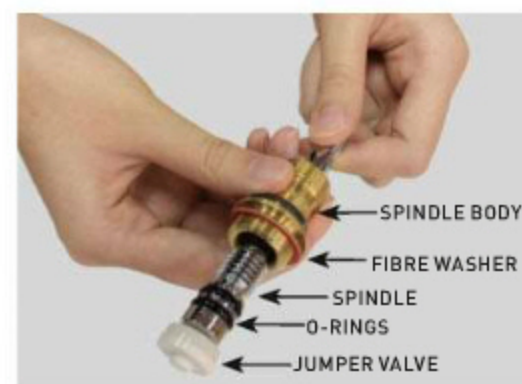
» Tap parts



1 REMOVE THE BUTTON AND HANDLE by using a removal tool or a spanner. Pull the handle off the spindle once the button has been removed.
TIP Turn off the water supply and turn the tap on fully before beginning.



2 UNSCREW THE FLANGE to expose the spindle, then remove the spindle body from the wall or basin.
TIP Brace the flange with your hand or use a pipe wrench wrapped in cloth to avoid damaging the connection.



3 REPLACE THE JUMPER VALVE, fibre washer and O-rings. Add a little tap lubricant to the O-rings, then reinstall the parts in reverse order. Turn the water back on and if leaks persist, the valve seat may need to be resurfaced.

D.I.Y. Workshops

»Brush up your knowledge and gain new skills with workshops for everyone, including the kids

Our workshops are held every weekend at 11am, 12.30pm and 2pm. For specific topics, ask instore or go to bunnings.com.au. If you live in South Australia, speak to a team member or visit bunnings.com.au for details about our great one-on-one D.I.Y. workshops. These workshops run from 10am to 4pm each Saturday and Sunday.

SATURDAY 30 AUGUST
QUICK REFRESH, REPAIR & MAINTENANCE
KIDS' WORKSHOP MAKE A GIFT FOR DAD

SUNDAY 14 SEPTEMBER
PAINTING & PLASTERING
SPRING D.I.Y. PROJECTS (QLD/NT)
KIDS' WORKSHOP SPRING

SUNDAY 31 AUGUST
QUICK REFRESH, REPAIR & MAINTENANCE
KIDS' WORKSHOP MAKE A GIFT FOR DAD

SATURDAY 20 SEPTEMBER
OUTDOOR ENTERTAINING
GROW YOUR OWN (QLD/NT)
KIDS' WORKSHOP FOOTY FEVER

SATURDAY 6 SEPTEMBER
KITCHEN, BATHROOM & LAUNDRY
KIDS' WORKSHOP GARDEN CREATURES

SUNDAY 21 SEPTEMBER
OUTDOOR ENTERTAINING
GROW YOUR OWN (QLD/NT)
KIDS' WORKSHOP FOOTY FEVER

SUNDAY 7 SEPTEMBER
KITCHEN, BATHROOM & LAUNDRY
KIDS' WORKSHOP WOODWORK

SATURDAY 27 SEPTEMBER
GROW YOUR OWN
OUTDOOR ENTERTAINING (QLD/NT)
KIDS' WORKSHOP GROW YOUR OWN

SATURDAY 13 SEPTEMBER
PAINTING & PLASTERING
SPRING D.I.Y. PROJECTS (QLD/NT)
KIDS' WORKSHOP SPRING

SUNDAY 28 SEPTEMBER
GROW YOUR OWN
OUTDOOR ENTERTAINING (QLD/NT)
KIDS' WORKSHOP GROW YOUR OWN

From hovel to haven

A complete remodel breathes new life into this crumbling bathroom

WORDS AND PICTURES CHERIE BARBER

This room looks like a bomb's hit it! It was probably quite the glamourpuss in its day, but *Handyman* reader Howard Andrew's bathroom is a crumbling wreck now.

Built prior to the 1960s, it's safe to assume the plumbing is ancient and there's probably asbestos lining both the walls and floor.

So we'll be stripping it back to turn it into a contemporary diva.

The reno floorplan

With high ceilings and nearly 15sqm, it's a good size to work with. Part of one wall steps out, so we'll square off the room to get a neat rectangle.

The before image doesn't show a toilet just inside the door, right

in front of the vanity. It's the first thing you see from the entry, which is a big no-no. The old water heater and radiator will need to go as well.

On the plus side, all the plumbing is located along one wall, so we'll stick with that layout to save money but move the toilet to the far corner, so it's neatly tucked away behind the bath.

Then we'll let tiles, fixtures and fittings work their magic.

I'd estimate a makeover like this would cost from \$8000 to \$12,000, depending on the plumbing and how much you shop around for fixtures.

As a rule of thumb, I would recommend not spending more than 1.5-2% of the total property value on a bathroom renovation. ➤

Get a free makeover ▼

Cherie Barber is the owner of Renovating For Profit, a company dedicated to teaching people how to add value to their property through renovation.

She is also a public speaker and TV renovator on Network Ten's *The Living Room*.

Cherie is offering a free virtual makeover to *Handyman* readers in need of renovation inspiration.

Send us a photo and a description of an area in your home that needs work for the chance to get a makeover.

To upload your photos, go to handyman.net.au/virtual-makeover.



After

A clean slate allows for fresh fittings, surfaces and amenities.

Before

The only option for this dilapidated bathroom is a complete overhaul.

PICTURE (BACKGROUND) THINKSTOCK

The six secrets of success

1 GUT THE BATHROOM

This room needs to be stripped back to a bare shell. A licensed asbestos removalist is required to dismantle and dispose of any asbestos wall or floor linings.

We'll use compressed fibre cement sheets over the timber floor joists as an underlay for the tiles, then waterproof the room.



BGC 2400 x 1200 x 15mm Compressed Fibre Cement Sheet, \$159. bgc.com.au

2 CHANGE THE LAYOUT

Assuming all the old plumbing needs replacing, we'll take the opportunity to shuffle things around, but still confine all the pipework to one wall.

We'll remove the water heater and install a decorative feature wall in its place, which will separate the vanity from the bath and hold all the new plumbing for a shower.



Wall Art Copper Glaze Wet Area Wall Panel, \$195. gunnersens.com.au

3 MOVE THE LOO

We'll move the toilet from the doorway to the far end, so it's no longer the first thing you see, and install a new wall-faced toilet to give a seamless, streamlined look.

Accessing floor plumbing is easier through a fibre cement floor base than a concrete floor, which makes the move less costly.



Caroma Sahara Wall Faced Toilet Suite, \$451. caroma.com.au

4 ADD A VANITY

We have a generous 4.8m long wall to work with, which leaves room for a 1500mm his-and-hers vanity with a mirrored cabinet above.

For any contemporary bathroom with the space, twin sinks are a must-have and are time savers at peak hour. Dual cabinets below provide ample storage.



Marbletrend 410mm Boston Vessel Basin, \$93. marbletrend.com.au

5 REPLACE THE BATH

Tubs are fairly affordable these days, especially acrylic ones, so we'll install a recessed bath with a shower base to save space and make the room more versatile.

We'll hire a carpenter to construct the timber surround for the tub and add a frameless glass screen to suit the modern space.

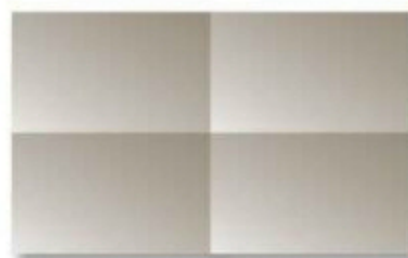


Stylus 1700mm Darling Harbour Shower Bath, \$712. stylus.com.au

6 LAY THE TILES

Modern tiles will tie everything together. We'll choose large format 600 x 300mm tiles in a neutral tone for the walls and a non-slip chocolate colour for the floor.

We'll run the wall tiles floor to ceiling, making sure all the tiles are end-matched so the whole bathroom has a contemporary feel.



Johnson 600 x 300mm Oxley Latte Tile, \$56 for eight. johnsontiles.com.au

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Untreated Glass

Treated Glass

REDUCES
CLEANING
TIME BY UP
TO 90%

Add \$1000s of value to your home

Maximise the return on your biggest investment with these smart strategies

WORDS JOSH MASTERS

Anyone who's done a renovation knows well that a one-month project can quickly turn into a year-long affair, with budget blowouts and strained relationships.

With many years of experience as a buyer's agent, Josh Masters has seen countless couples put time and money into upgrades that don't give them the return on their investment they were banking on.

So, if you're looking for quick and inexpensive ways to improve or add to the value to your home, here are seven tips to give you bang for your buck.

1 Hit the floor

For dollar for dollar return, you can't beat a fresh coat of paint and simple recarpeting or retiling.

Whether you rent or own a property, paint and flooring account for the majority of a home's surface area. So when you walk into a room, the impact is instant.

Never underestimate the difference a coat of paint and new flooring make. With the right colour and texture choices, you can turn a dark space into a bright, airy room or make a dated living area modern and fresh.

2 Go glass

Whether they are bifolds, French doors or sliders, glass doors will open up the rear of the home, creating a connection between the interior and the backyard.

This adds light and space to the living areas and has the double benefit of being both aesthetic and functional.

The buyer appeal for this extra is huge, especially for families, as parents can keep an eye on the kids outside.

3 Get decked out

Already got the sliding glass doors at the rear of the house? Create another entertaining space by adding a deck.

While also connecting the rear living areas to the great outdoors, installing a deck is a very affordable option, and the majority of the manual labour can be done by a handyman.

Whether you use it for summer barbecues or family dinners, a deck is a great project that can usually be completed over a weekend or two. ➤



4 Think top level

Space is at a premium, especially in houses near the city or lifestyle amenities.

So if your roof space is used for storage, it's time to claim your golden goose.

As long as your roof has a steep enough pitch and an access point that doesn't compromise the downstairs layout, you can convert it into a bedroom.

Simply install stairs, pop in an extra window or two, line the space and paint, then you're good to go.



5 Show 'em the door

This is often the last thing homeowners think of when considering improvements, but it's the first thing a prospective buyer sees.

First impressions are everything, and you can't underestimate street appeal. Installing a new garage door, or repainting or replacing your front door can make a world of difference.

A current trend is to make your door a feature by painting it glossy fire-engine red, or black. It's a quick, budget-friendly way to tap into positive feng shui.



6 Spice it up

The kitchen is often considered the deal-breaker for buyers in the market.

It can either push them into making an offer or send them packing.

But this room is the most expensive to update. One of the best ways to keep costs down is to bypass a demolition and work with the existing carcass.

If the layout is practical, all it takes to modernise an old kitchen is retiling the splashback, revamping the cabinet doors, installing a new benchtop and putting in a new oven and sink.



7 Double the bathrooms

These days, most buyers expect any house or unit with more than three bedrooms to have at least two bathrooms.

One of the easiest ways to add another bathroom is to convert the laundry, as it is already fitted out as a wet area and less work is required on waterproofing.

All the best home layouts position the laundry and bathroom next to each other, so plumbing can be easily transferred between the rooms cost-effectively.

While any renovation dealing with wet areas costs that bit extra, the return on investment is significant.

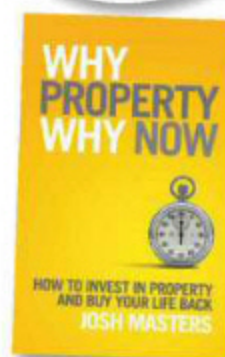


Investing in property

While full-blown renovations are a costly and time-consuming way to add value to your home, small improvements can greatly enhance the appeal and functionality of your property.

With 15 years of experience in the industry and hundreds of property purchases under his belt, Josh Masters is one of Australia's most respected buyer's agents.

He's also author of a new book, *Why Property Why Now* (Palmer Higgs, \$25), which is available online at joshmasters.com.au. It aims to show you how to make property investment work for you.



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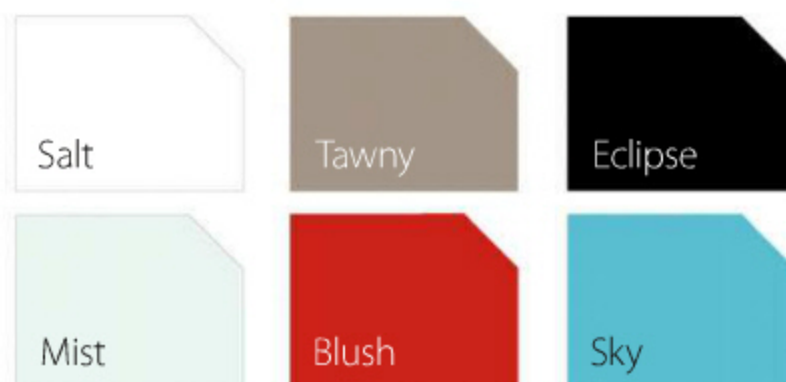
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Future perfect

A tiny vacant inner-city block becomes an ultra-green, award-winning home

WORDS SITA SIMONS PICTURES BELINDA MASON AND NICK WILSON

Contrary to most families, Sydney-born designer and builder Chris Knierim and wife Belinda were looking to downsize.

'The decision was really a product of my passion for living in the most effective, sustainable way possible, and you don't need excessive space if your home is properly planned,' says Chris.

'I knew that I needed to build something myself and put into practice all of the experience I had.'

Relocating from Sydney's north shore, Chris scoured the inner-city suburbs. What he found wasn't quite what he expected. A 4.9m wide sliver of space in a row of turn-of-the-century terraced cottages caught his eye.

One of the last vacant plots in all the city fringe suburbs, Chris's initial plan was to re-create a house of the period. The council had other ideas though and specified a contemporary design submission for the block.

Surprised but willing, he submitted his meticulously researched plans for the ultimate eco house and waited.

'I don't think they knew what to make of it!' he says.

Green dreams

While sustainable building and eco homes are catching on in Australia, Chris says that we are lagging far behind European countries.

Having left Australia in 2001 to explore building practices around the world, Chris lived and worked in Frankfurt and was blown away by the German approach to sustainability.

'It's normal practice there, and while you might think eco building is new, it's not. Because the Germans have been doing it for a long time, they have perfected and standardised all the elements,' says Chris.

'A lot of it is common sense, but it takes learning and a shift in perspective to make it work.'

When the local council approved the plans, he knew he was onto something special.

'This was a long-held vision I had, and I wanted to execute it to the best of my ability.'

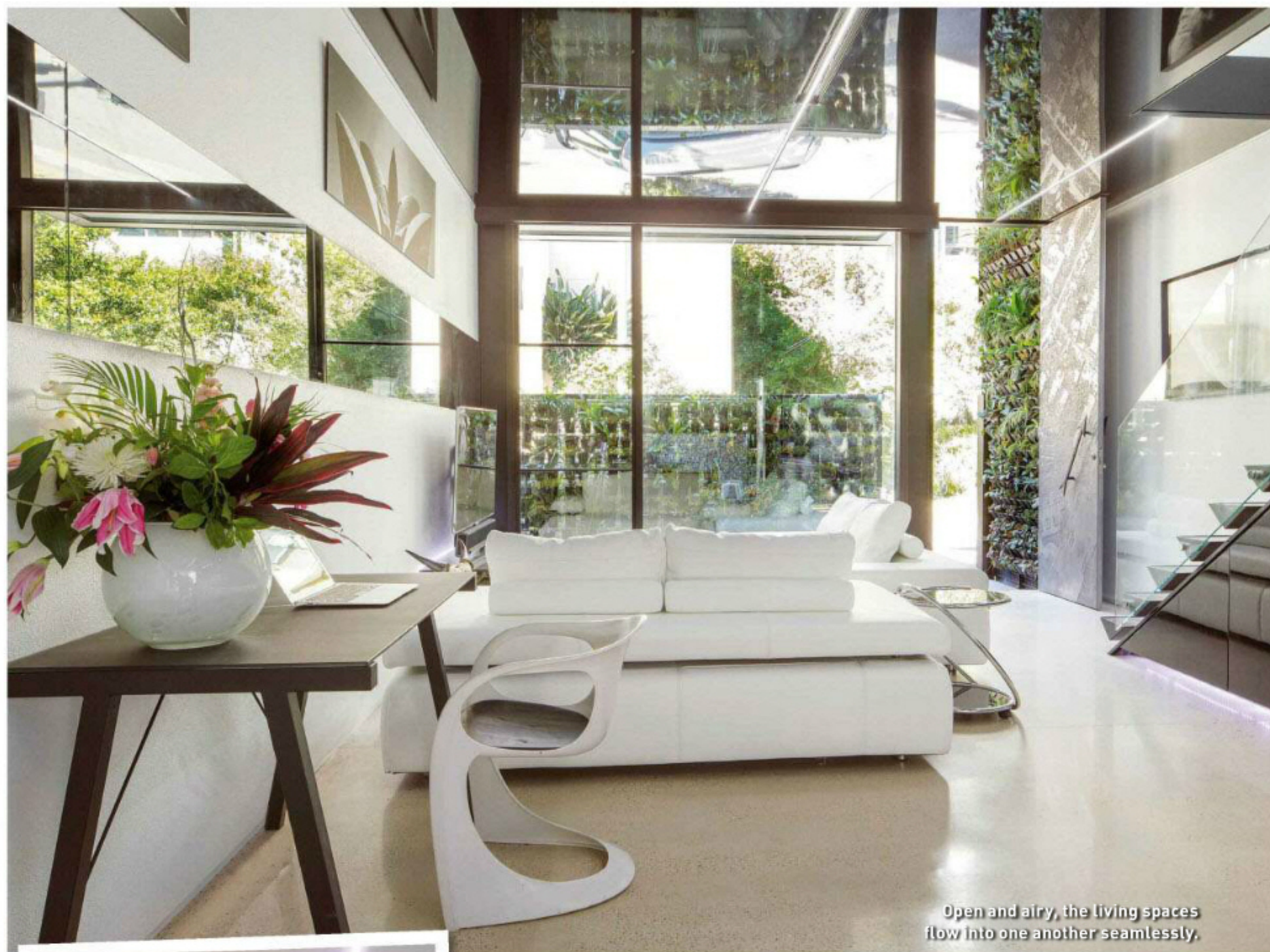
'Once I had the council on side, and excited about the fairly radical ideas, I couldn't wait to get started.' ➤



CHRIS KNIERIM



The ground floor of this eco-terrace is flooded with natural light and the innovative black mirror ceiling creates an illusion of spaciousness.



Open and airy, the living spaces flow into one another seamlessly.

The grand plan

'Planning, planning, planning. It's all about the plans. I have an advantage in this, being a designer and builder, as I consider the practical how-to elements in the design,' says Chris.

With such a small space in which to work, and located on a narrow street, Chris worked out every factor, such as exactly how trucks could fit down the street and how to manage without a crane because of power lines.

He calculated the number of bricks needed, ute load by ute load, from building site tips, and the time it would take to transport, clean and lay them.

Chris implemented many clever and innovative processes, where nothing was left to chance.

'The first thing we did was dig a hole at the back left of the site and

slope the ground so the runoff went into the hole. About 90% of the water used on site came from this hole, thanks to some good rain,' says Chris.

'This house also had to act as a stabiliser for the two single-skin brick cottages either side, and support its own concrete roof.

'We poured concrete into deep footings and built a steel frame as an anchor, then double-lined it with bricks to support the roof,' he says.

Great attention to detail

Just as the details and bones of the building were precisely planned, none of the interior design was accidental or generic either. Even the front door is relevant and connected to the whole.

'My wife, Belinda, is a photographer and she went up in a helicopter to take



Baroque meets modern in the opulent silver and charcoal master bedroom.

an aerial picture of the house and the neighbourhood in context. We then had the image laser-etched on the door.

'Even the front door handle is a hand-forged arrow that points to the north,' says Chris.

Inside, the ceiling sets the theme. A latex-type material, dyed black to be highly reflective, was heated in a steel frame, then installed and left to cool.

There was no waste and no seams, as the LED light strips cover the joints.

The living spaces are unhindered by walls and doors, with light and dark used to highlight certain features or make others appear to recede.

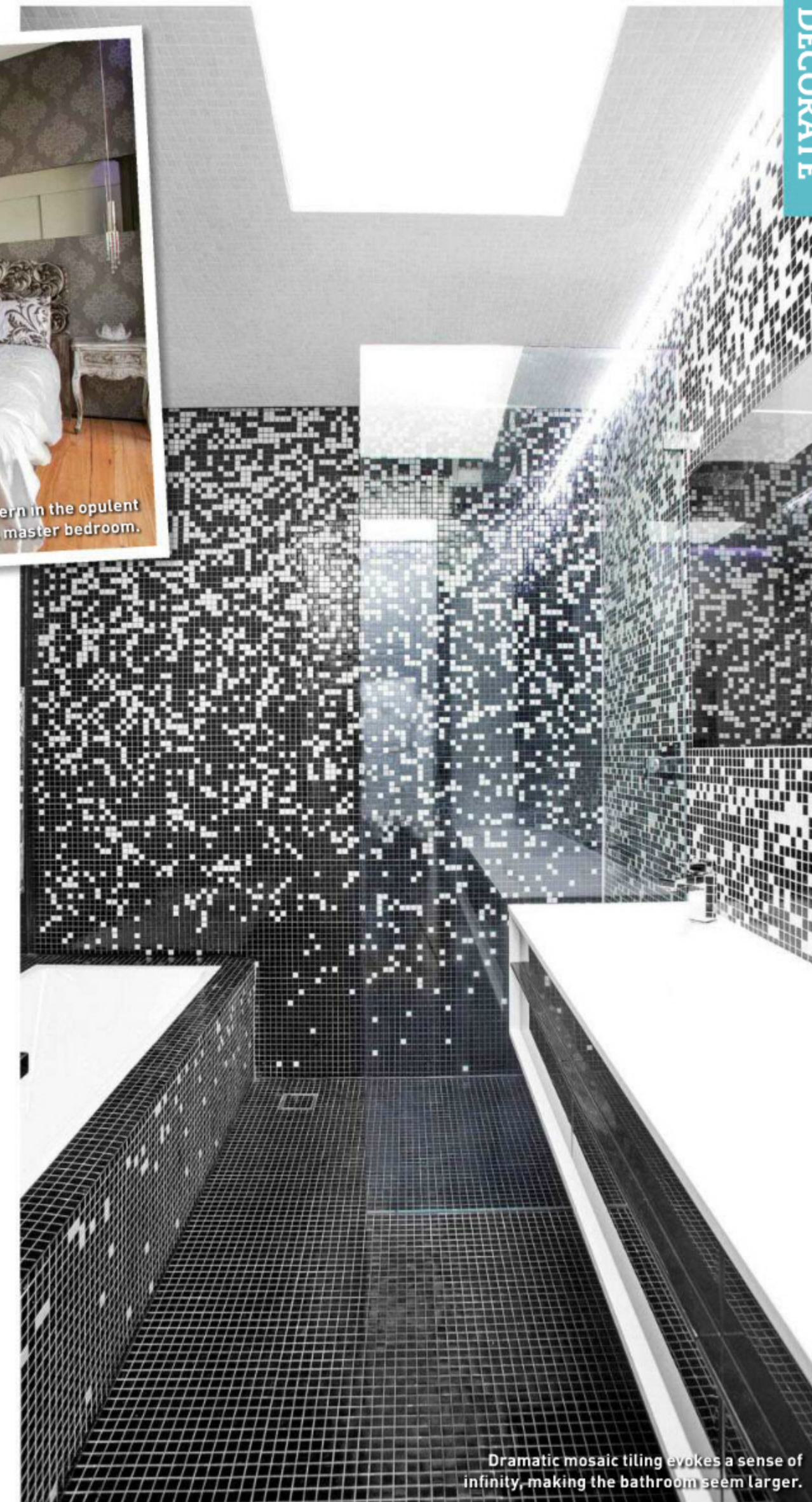
'I wanted the kitchen to be unobtrusive in the space, so we went black and kept everything minimal.

'A floating staircase made of fabricated triangular tubes that require no nosing is camouflaged into the space. On the other side, we have white walls with a band of recessed mirrors.'

Upstairs, the three bedrooms continue the theme of sophisticated comfort, using charcoal and silver to complement the natural materials.

'Building green is an investment yes. There's a lot to plan, but there are benefits, personally and globally, and huge savings to be made down the line.

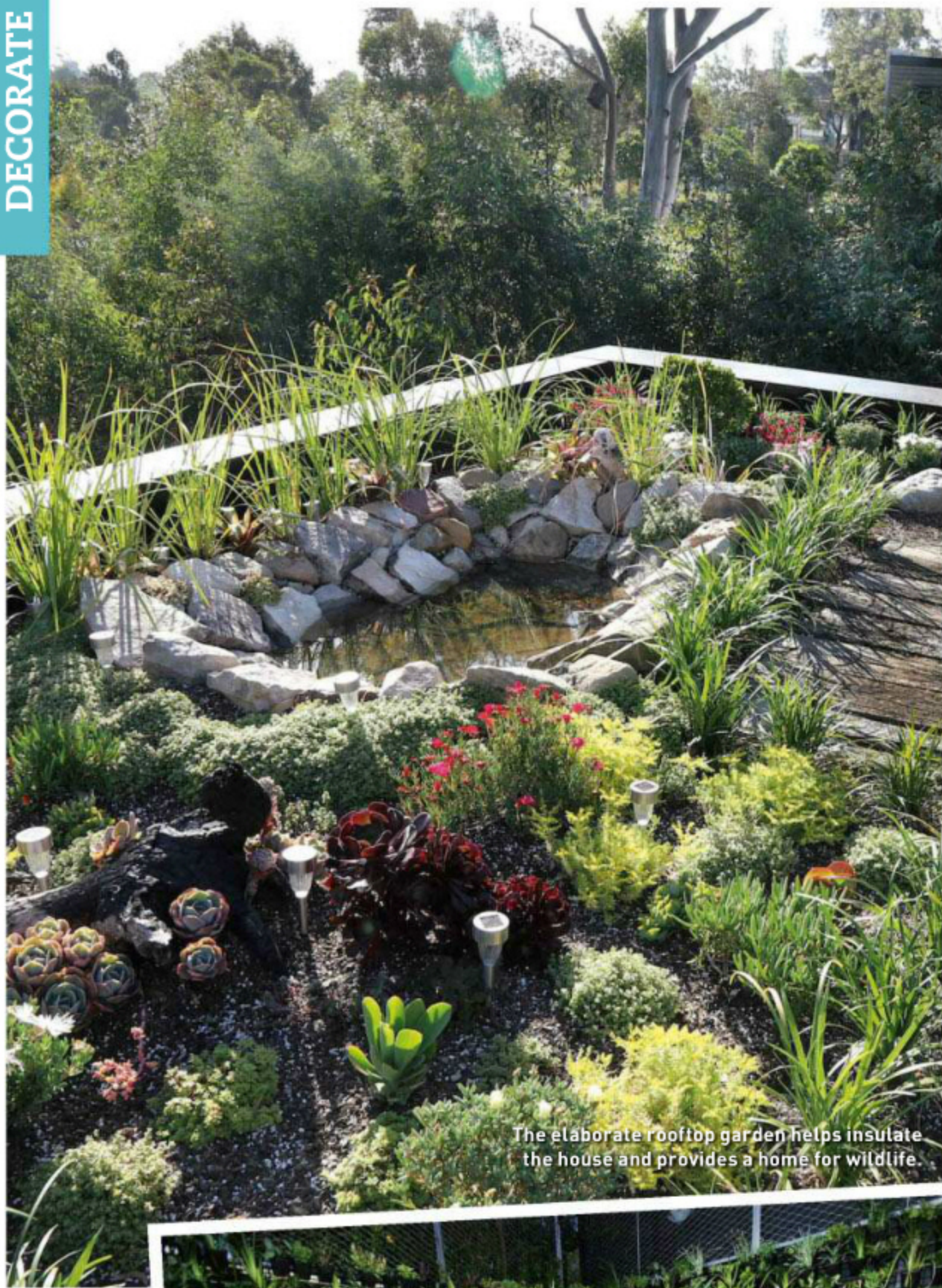
'I do think I have created my version of perfect, and this home does make a difference,' says Chris. ➤



Dramatic mosaic tiling evokes a sense of infinity, making the bathroom seem larger.



A floating staircase leads to the three bedrooms, bathroom and rooftop garden.



The elaborate rooftop garden helps insulate the house and provides a home for wildlife.



In the rear courtyard, a glass table with a waterfall makes a striking centrepiece.

Rooftop oasis

The cornerstone of Chris's philosophy is to utilise sustainable materials wherever possible.

'Everything I used was recycled or sourced as locally as possible to reduce the carbon footprint,' says Chris.

'The concrete contains a high percentage of recycled aggregate and the plasterboard is also recycled.'

'In terms of waste, we produced only one tonne from the whole project, most of which could, in turn, be recycled,' he says.

Externally, a 7m high vertical garden is not only visually striking, but also serves to prevent radiant heat bouncing off the masonry wall and back into the house.

A flowering rooftop garden helps insulate the house while providing an environment for bees, insects and birds at the same time.

The house is kept cool by a sophisticated cross-ventilation system, which utilises double-glazed windows and internal blinds to control the flow of heat around the house.

Energy from rooftop solar tubes is used to heat the underground concrete slab that doubles as a storage cell, providing thermal mass heating.

Also underground there is a 3500L tank, which supplies water to the green rooftop and vertical gardens, as well as a water feature at the rear of the house that uses evaporative cooling to duct chilled air into the internal spaces.

Strategically placed skylights and the use of opaque glass inserts in all the doors were added to keep the house light and bright throughout.

'I put in ducted air conditioning because no-one's going to buy a new house in an inner-city suburb without it, but we've never used it. It's never too hot and never too cold,' says Chris.



✦ **Get more online**
Visit handyman.net.au/mag for a guide on Installing Skylights.

An aerial photo of the house and surrounds is etched on the front door.

Treating glass surfaces

A finishing touch to this house's eco-friendly performance was the integration of a state-of-the-art surface treatment that is based on nanotechnology for the vast array of glass surfaces throughout the home.

Enduro Shield is a non-toxic, easy-clean treatment that is perfect for all glass surfaces.

It greatly reduces cleaning time by protecting glass surfaces against staining and etching caused by soap scum, hard water and lime scaling.

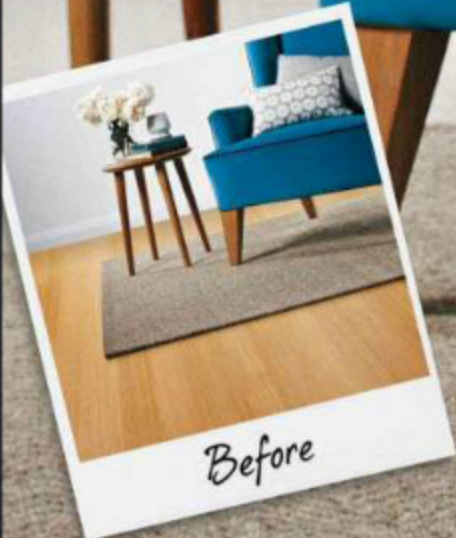
It can be used on both new and existing glass and is also a standard

feature of all Marbletrend shower screens (marbletrend.com.au).

Enduro Shield comes with a three-year warranty, and can either be applied with a DIY glass-coating kit or professionally installed by a certified applicator.



Enduro Shield 125ml Glass Kit, \$47. enduroshield.com



Before

Feast Watson Liming White.

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ENRICHING AUSTRALIAN TIMBER SINCE 1922



Design an aquarium full of colour to liven up your living room.

PICTURES THINKSTOCK

Setting up a fish tank

Provide a comfortable environment for these captivating low-maintenance pets

WORDS CARMEL ROMA

They're easy to keep and an attractive tank full of colourful fish doubles as an eye-catching design feature in a room.

According to Anthony Ramsey, manager of Auburn Aquarium and Pet Centre (auburnaquarium.com.au), looking after fish is relatively straightforward, even for beginners.

'It's important to know the requirements of your fish. Also don't add too many at once and don't overfeed them,' says Anthony.

To make things even easier, all-in-one tank systems are now available that combine filtration, temperature and lighting requirements.

TIP Change a quarter of the tank's water once a fortnight to keep it fresh.



Tuscan Path Aqua Translucent Aztec Pebbles, \$8 for 1kg. tuscanpath.com.au

Getting started

Create a safe and comfortable environment for fish to live in and they'll stay happy and healthy.

POSITION THE TANK on an aquarium stand with polystyrene under it to absorb unevenness and vibrations. Find a spot away from direct sunlight to prevent excessive algae growth.

THE QUANTITY OF FISH should be based on the size of each specimen as well as the size of the tank. The total length of all the fish shouldn't exceed the tank's length. For a 1000mm aquarium, eight 125mm fish are ideal.

Anthony advises filling the tank with different types of fish at various layers, with a combination of bottom dwellers and surface fish. Use plants and rocks to create a natural setting.

TANK LIGHTING is not essential, but a well-lit aquarium can make brightly coloured fish look their best. Special lights are required if plants or corals are growing in the tank.

THE WATER TEMPERATURE depends on the type of fish. Cold water species, such as goldfish, flourish in 12-20°C water.

Tropical freshwater species thrive in water from 23-28°C, while tropical marine fish prefer water from 24-29°C. The temperature should not exceed 30°C.

WATER ADDITIVES may be required, and can include water agers, chlorine neutralisers and other conditioners to make tap water safe for your fish. Controlling the pH level is also important for the health of fish. **AQUARIUM FILTERS** remove solid visible matter such as leftover food and waste, absorb toxins and encourage good bacteria.

The type of filter depends on the tank size, with basic sponge filters suitable for small tanks and external filters offering useful flexibility for larger tanks. ➤



Types of filters

Filters can be mechanical, chemical, biological or a combination of all three. Without a filter, the water in your fish tank will quickly become toxic and can kill the fish.

SPONGE filters use an external air pump connected to a sponge inside the tank with tubing. They cost from \$10, and are ideal for tanks with tiny fish, as they won't be sucked into the filter.

UNDER-GRAVEL filters, from \$12, consist of slotted plates covering the tank floor, each with inbuilt uplift tubes connected via air tubing to an external pump. Gravel should be vacuumed weekly to clean out waste.

INTERNAL POWER filters, from \$20, are quiet, fully submersible devices comprising a sponge filter and pump

that fits inside the tank. They are often used with an external filter in larger tanks.

HANG-ON filters, from \$20, sit outside the tank and are usually carbon-filled for chemical filtration.

They're ideal for tanks under 200L.

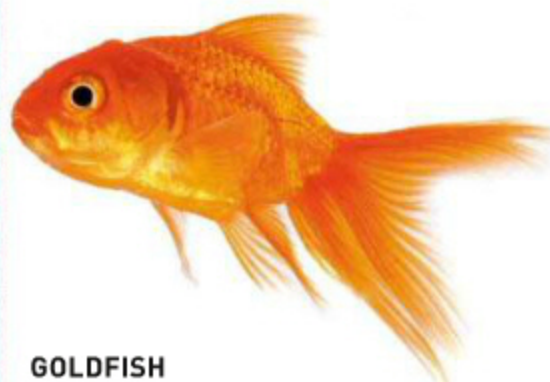
EXTERNAL CANISTER filters, from \$150, provide mechanical, chemical and biological filtration.

These filters require frequent maintenance and are recommended for large aquariums. ➤



Adding fish to an aquarium

Fish should be gradually introduced to a tank over at least a month, with the largest or most aggressive added last. Float the bag in the water for 15 minutes to equalise the temperature. Slowly let in tank water, then transfer the fish with a net.



GOLDFISH

Often kept in backyard ponds, these common fish are easy to care for. They will need a large tank, as they produce a lot of waste.



BETTAS

Commonly called Siamese fighting fish, bettas are colourful and easy to look after. They prefer smaller tanks, and males shouldn't be kept together.



ZEBRA DANIOS

Also known as zebrafish, these small tropical schooling fish are best kept in groups of five or more. They may nip at long-finned species.



NEON TETRAS

These small tropical fish with bright stripes are very hardy and can live up to 10 years. They are active in groups but lone fish will be shy.



GUPPIES

Male guppies are brightly coloured while females are duller. These tropical fish breed quickly, so keep only male ones together to avoid overcrowding.



CICHLIDS

These fish vary in colour, shape and temperament, with angelfish being the most common. Some aggressive species aren't ideal for beginners.

PICTURES: GETTY IMAGES, SHUTTERSTOCK, THINKSTOCK



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Home aquaponics

One of the downsides to owning fish is the regular tank cleaning required to keep your pets healthy and happy.

The AquaSprouts system, which is the brainchild of 20-year-old Texan student Jack Ikard, combines an aquarium with an edible garden.

This unique system works by pumping tank water into a clay pebble grow bed, where bacteria convert the fish waste into fertiliser.

The plants and the grow bed oxygenate and filter the water, which is then returned to the tank, meaning much less frequent cleaning is required.

It fits over a 500 x 300 x 250mm rectangular tank and is ideal for most types of herbs and leafy vegies.

Money is being raised for the project through the crowdfunding website Kickstarter.

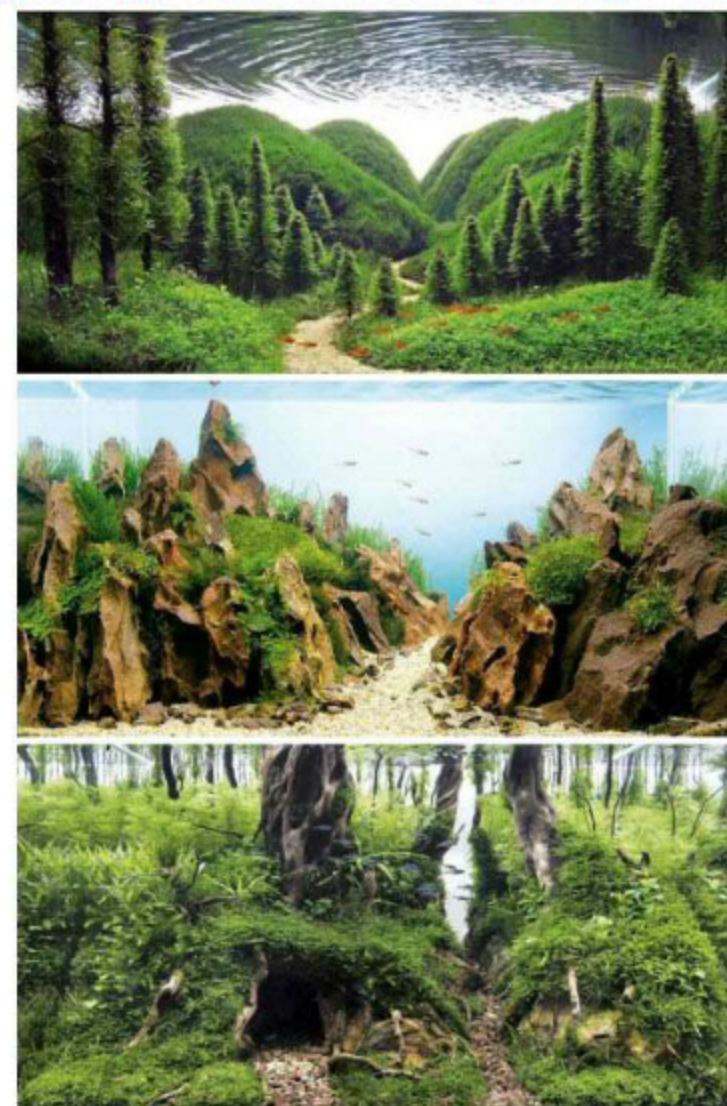
You can pre-order the system online (aquasprouts.com) later this year for about \$150.



The plants and grow bed act as the filter for the fish tank in this innovative aquaponic system.



PICTURES AUSTRAL



Aquascaping as art

Designed to look like incredible landscapes, these impressive underwater ecosystems are known as aquascapes.

Aquatic gardening or aquascaping is the art of arranging and maintaining aquatic plants, rocks and driftwood to create an aesthetically pleasing scene.

It's a competitive hobby that requires expertise in biology, design and photography, and plenty of patience as each aquascape can take months or years to create. Designs range from garden or forest-like scenes to simulations of natural habitats such as mangroves.

The International Aquatic Plants Layout Contest is the largest aquatic gardening competition in the world and is dominated by Eastern European and Asian nations.



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Built-in aquariums

Create an original feature and add living art to a contemporary home with a wall-mounted fish tank



A wall-mounted aquarium softens the industrial appearance of this modern building.



This tank offers a view into the kitchen area of an advertising agency.



In the conference room of this office, an aquarium is positioned among the cabinets to add colour to a sterile space.



As well as providing a contrast to the timber in this dining room, a fish tank adds visual interest during mealtimes.



An aquarium-cum-coffee table houses goldfish while two vertical tanks in the corner complete the unique look in this space.

One of the easiest ways to transform a room and create a calming atmosphere is with an aquarium. And a built-in tank can take advantage of an unused wall, act as artwork and even serve as furniture.

Mounting an aquarium in an internal wall can open up the space, as it creates a view through to another room. It is also a great way to conceal all the filter equipment.

For a load-bearing wall, a tank must fit between the studs to avoid expensive structural modifications. Longer tanks can be installed in walls that are not load-bearing.

TIP Aquariums can be fitted into wall cabinets for a similar effect.



A tropical aquarium dominates an entire interior wall of this converted warehouse.

PICTURE ALAMY

PICTURES ALAMY, AUSTRAL, GETTY IMAGES, THINKSTOCK

On the move

Plan ahead to avoid common pitfalls so your next residential relocation goes without a hitch

WORDS SITA SIMONS

Aussies are officially a nation of movers. The Australian Bureau of Statistics says we move on average at least four times in our lives, and with so many renters in our cities, this figure could easily be doubled.

The most common type of move is a local relocation, within the same or a neighbouring suburb, and data also shows the majority of us will stay within the same state for our lifetime.

But no matter how far or even how big the move is, the pressures and pitfalls can be just the same.

DIY or go pro?

While paying professional removalists to do the job is a stress-free option, it is somewhat expensive, with average costs ranging from \$2000-\$5000 and many variables affecting the final price.

With the pros, you have properly packed boxes, a guaranteed timeline, the right equipment to move large and heavy items, as well as a contract.

The Australian Furniture Removers Association (AFRA) has members who are accredited, proficiency tested, police checked and under contract to

abide by the standards. There's also a tribunal service to deal with issues.

A recent AFRA survey revealed that nearly 40% of respondents chose a removalist because of the price.

'Everyone wants a fair price, but there are risks with opting solely for the cheapest provider, and unless they are a member, there's little you can do if something goes wrong,' says AFRA Executive Director, Joseph Lopino.

Doing the whole job alone or with a few family members or friends also comes with problems.

'In our experience, people aren't good at estimating how much stuff they have. Time and effort is also hard to judge, so consider carefully what you are physically capable of,' he says.

You may have to hire a vehicle that will end up doing multiple trips, plus equipment and packing materials. ➤

Avoiding the cowboys

There are lots of good removalists who advertise locally but may not be accredited by AFRA. Use word of mouth to check them out, asking for testimonials from previous clients.

Understand the costing structure and the difference between a fixed price and a by-the-hour deal, getting a quote in writing upfront.

Be wary of a deal that seems too good to be true and ask where they are travelling from, as charges typically start and finish when they leave and return to their base.



PICTURE THINKSTOCK



Be prepared and pack efficiently so moving house doesn't blow the budget and turn into a stress-fest.



Insuring the move

Under Australian law, removal companies don't have to carry insurance. In most cases, because the goods haven't been packed by the removalist, they take no responsibility for the contents in the event of damages.

When the removalist is also packing the goods, insurance may be included in the quote, but as it's not always the case, do check.

If the removal company is not covering insurance, your current home and contents policy may cover your belongings in transit or storage. If not, consider taking out transit insurance.



Make a plan

'The biggest mistake people make is failing to plan. It can all be left a bit too late and this affects stress levels and, inevitably, the cost,' says Joseph.

Decide how the move will be done, then research your options. The AFRA website (afra.com.au) has free tips and checklists you can download.

Hiring a packing and unpacking service can be money well spent, and prices start from \$30 an hour.

If you do it yourself, start packing at least one month before the move and shop around for the right boxes.

Sturdy well-packed boxes make filling the truck much easier, saving time and money. Most homes will need small, medium and large boxes.

Pack and tape each box so they won't crush when stacked, or fill the top with foam or bubble wrap. Put heavy items in the smaller boxes and lighter objects in the larger boxes.

Moving and storing

An option for movers who like to take their time is to have a secure storage container delivered to the house.

You pack it yourself at your own pace, then it's collected and delivered to the new address.

It's quite a cost-effective system, with a container for a two-bedroom house costing from about \$250 a month.

The only requirement is a flat area on ground level that's large enough to accommodate the container at both addresses.

There are a few companies offering this service, including pods.com and uloadit.com.au.



Packing checklist

- ✓ **ORGANISE A SKIP** or a council pick-up for junk, and donate or sell everything else you don't want in the new house.
- ✓ **HAVE THE RIGHT MATERIALS** to hand, including marker pens, scissors, tape and bubble wrap. Use greaseproof or baking paper instead of newspaper to wrap items so they won't need washing at the other end.
- ✓ **START WITH STORAGE AREAS** such as the garage, shed, closets and bookshelves, as these don't contain everyday essentials.
- ✓ **LABEL EACH BOX** with the contents and the room it is destined for.
- ✓ **TAPE TOGETHER ESSENTIALS** such as the remote to the TV, the modem with the computer, cables and chargers together, and legs and screws with the sofa.
- ✓ **FILL EMPTY ITEMS** like suitcases and leave drawers full if the contents are lightweight, taping them closed instead.
- ✓ **USE THE CAR** to take valuables and clothes on hangers laid flat in the back.
- ✓ **PACK A BOX** with essentials like the kettle, food, drinks, towels, toiletries, toilet paper, soap, light bulbs, chargers and any medications.



PICTURES THINKSTOCK

PICTURES THINKSTOCK

Storage know-how ▼



ELECTRONIC GEAR

Laptops, TVs and other electronics need protection from humidity and damp. Remove the batteries, coil and tape the cord to the appliance, then seal it tightly in bubble wrap.

Put the appliance in a cardboard box big enough for it to sit upright, fill with packing peanuts and seal tightly. Label the box with a this-way-up arrow and store off the floor.



CLOTHES AND LINEN

For long-term storage, clothes and linen need to be spotlessly clean. Fold or roll, then pack in plastic storage containers with tight-fitting lids. Don't overfill, as fabrics need room to breathe.

Add sachets to the boxes to protect against mould, silverfish, dust mites and moths. Look for a recipe online to make them using lavender, bicarb soda and spices like cinnamon and cloves.



BOOKS AND PAPERS

Paper is susceptible to mould and mites, so use small boxes made of thick cardboard or plastic.

Lie books flat and cover any fragile ones with paper towel and bubble wrap. Use boxes with a tight seal and keep them off the floor.

Don't store paper in plastic bags or old food boxes, as this can attract insects and encourage mould.



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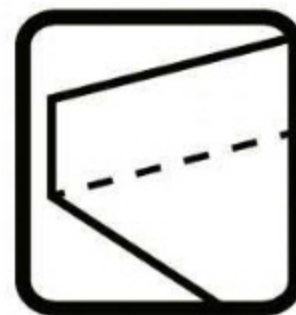
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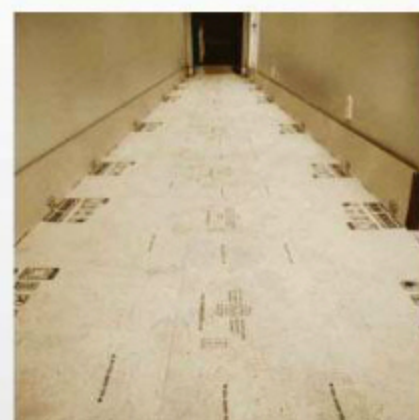
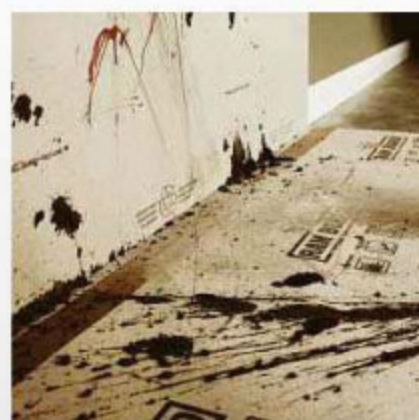
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Shifting furniture

Move heavy items like a pro so you don't damage them, yourself or your home

Whether you're just rearranging your living room or moving house, shifting furniture can be a big task. If it's not done correctly, you can waste a lot of time and energy. Here are a few simple techniques you can use when lugging heavy or awkward items so you don't wreck your back, your house or the furniture.



Curve chairs

A large armchair can be the opposite of easy to move. Take a tip from pro movers and angle it to get around corners.

Turn the chair onto its side and start moving it back-first through the doorway, then curve it around the door frame and slip it all the way through.

Hold high and low

Dressers, tallboys, filing cabinets and bookcases are all awkward pieces to handle, so make it a two-person job.

Tip the item sideways at an angle, then one of you hold the top and the

other grip the bottom. This centres the weight and prevents the furniture from swinging out of control.

It also makes carrying it up or down stairs easier, as the angle will roughly match the slope of the steps.

Use a ramp and a rope

If you have to move heavy items solo, use 19mm plywood as a makeshift ramp to slide the furniture over a doorstep or a few stairs.

Tie braided rope, such as static climbing rope, around an immovable object like the newel post at the top of the stairs to help you control the

speed of descent, and wear gloves to avoid rope burn.

If you have to move heavy items up or down a full staircase, it's best to hire a dedicated stair-climbing trolley, from \$11 for four hours. Many have an in-built strap to keep your treasures safely lashed on. ➤





Protect fragile furniture

For safeguarding the items you're transporting, as well as your house, moving blankets are invaluable.

You can rent them for about \$20 for five from removal and transport companies. Or you can buy them, which means you can use them again

for other tasks. Try a Pack & Wrap Heavy Duty Large Movers Blanket, about \$9, from Officeworks.

To avoid damaging the finish and the edges of furniture, wrap pieces in moving blankets, then secure with shrink wrap, available from hardware stores.



Stand sofas on end

If you have to manoeuvre a couch down a hallway and through a doorway, it's generally not possible to carry it horizontally and make the turn into the room.

Before entering the hall, turn the couch on its end and slide it to the door. You'll then almost always be able to angle it back-first around the door frame and through the door.

If the couch is a bit taller than the door opening, start with the top leaning away from the door to gain up to 100mm of clearance.



Move It Furniture Dolly, \$35, from Bunnings.

Get on the roll

The problem with using a trolley is that you have to tilt a large, heavy object far enough to put its centre of gravity over the wheels. This can make it difficult to get around corners and through doorways.

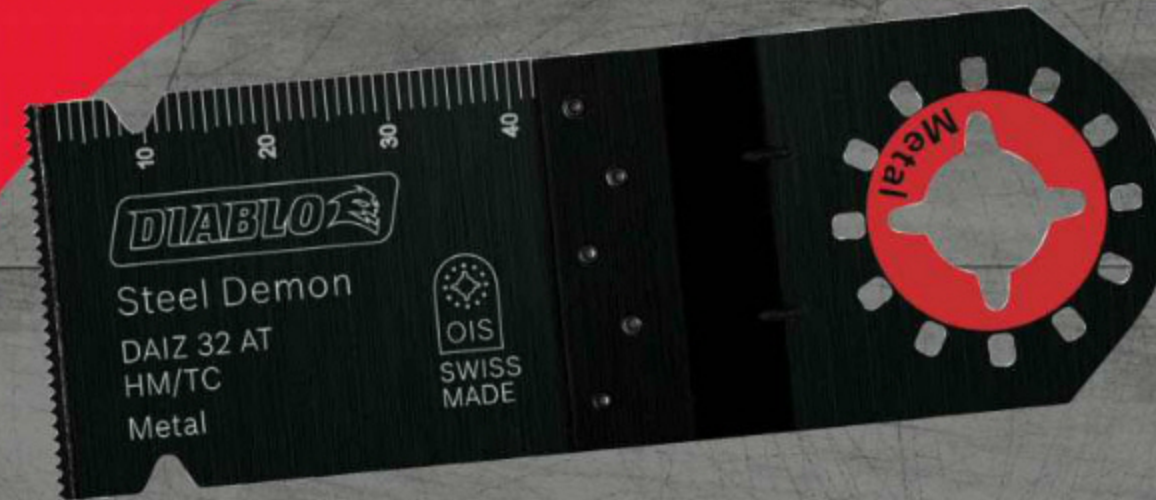
A dolly is a small platform with castors mounted under it. On flat surfaces, dollies enable you to move furniture and appliances around in any direction with ease.

Some low-profile systems are barely more than 30mm high, and come with a lever to help you jack up the object to be moved, then slip a mini dolly under each corner. ➤

PICTURE BOTTOM: ALAMY

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7

Slide it along

Furniture slides are available in lots of different shapes and sizes at hardware stores. It's also easy to make your own from plastic container covers, frisbees, moving blankets, towels and carpet remnants. Use soft, padded sliders on hard flooring and hard plastic ones on carpet.



8

Make a mattress sling

Trying to wrestle a heavy, floppy mattress anywhere is hard going.

While many have handles, they're not meant to be used for carrying. They're there to help you position the mattress, so they're not very strong.

An easy way to carry it is to make a rope sling by threading a length of rope through each mattress handle.

Next, slip a 130mm long by 25mm diameter piece of PVC piping over each rope end, then loop and knot the ends to create comfortable grips.

Finally, flip over the mattress so the sling is at the bottom.



Create a simple rope sling to give you and your helper a lot more control.



9

Plan where it lands

When you're moving to a new house, decide beforehand what furniture will go where. Sketch a floorplan with the actual measurements of all the rooms, measure each item of furniture, then design your layout.

This way, as they're moved in, each item can be positioned in its designated spot and won't need handling again.

To make it easy on the movers, tape a copy of the plan to the wall of each room so they can tell at a glance where everything goes.



10

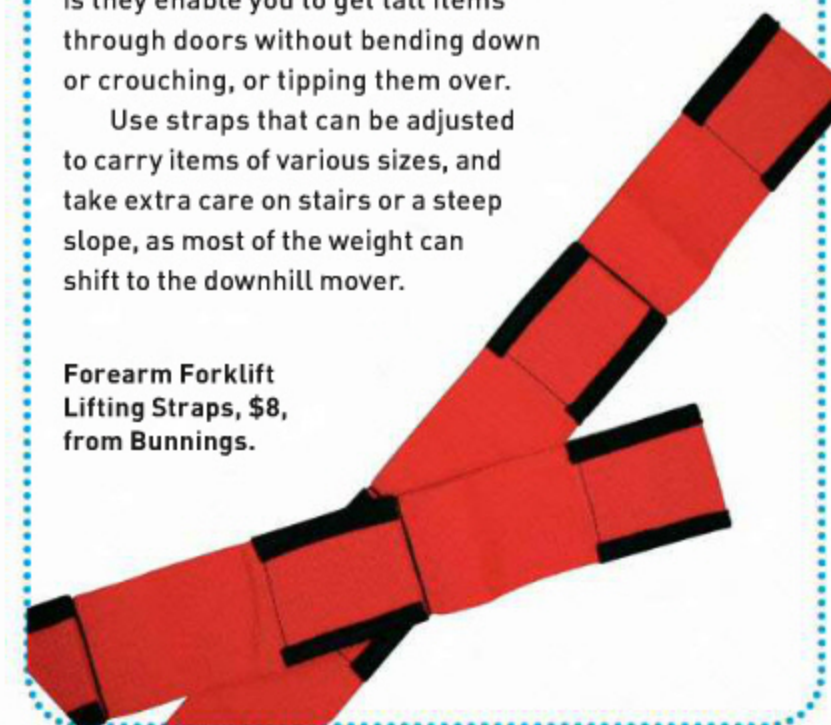
Secure with straps

Moving and lifting straps put less strain on your back as they rely on leverage against your skeleton, which enables you to use large muscle groups to do the heaviest lifting.

They also make it easier to move items with sheer sides that don't have convenient handholds. Another bonus is they enable you to get tall items through doors without bending down or crouching, or tipping them over.

Use straps that can be adjusted to carry items of various sizes, and take extra care on stairs or a steep slope, as most of the weight can shift to the downhill mover.

Forearm Forklift Lifting Straps, \$8, from Bunnings.



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Budget laundry reno

A multi-functional utility room gets an overhaul to keep up with a busy family and maximise the floorspace

WORDS FRANK GARDNER MAIN PICTURES STUART SCOTT

When they first bought their coastal home, *Handyman* readers Kate and Chad Griffith had already revamped the laundry as part of a total renovation.

But with a growing family, major extensions were on the agenda.

'The laundry isn't my favourite place to be, so I wasn't wasting money or living space on it,' says Kate.

Compact but functional, the laundry is on the middle level of the three-storey house, near the side door for easy access to the clothesline.

It's close to the kids' bathroom and directly below the ensuite of the new parents' retreat on the top floor.

'With three kids generating most of the washing, it seemed sensible to keep it near their rooms, and we plan to install a laundry chute from our ensuite above,' says Kate.

The laundry is a real utility room, housing the fuse box and manhole, and providing access to the upstairs plumbing, electrical and duct work.

The L-shaped room measures 2800 x 1600mm with a 1000mm

return at one end. The long wall was fitted with cabinets and appliances, as well as hamper storage, and the return used to house a freezer.

Working to a tight budget meant recycling the old appliances.

'I liked the idea of fitting the washer and dryer side by side under the bench. The sink was still in great shape, so we only needed a new tap.

'With a family of five, I need space to sort clothes, so the long bench was perfect,' says Kate.

Two powerpoints were positioned above the bench for everyday use and two under it for the appliances.

The double awning windows let in lots of light and air for the drying rack over the sink, and a wall shelf adds extra storage.

After the tradies had finished the wiring and pipework, the room was lined with plasterboard, then the cabinetry and painting done DIY. ➤



What it cost

Tradies	\$1050
Cabinetry	\$457
Benchtop	\$420
Tap mixer	\$69
Tiles and adhesive	\$150
Paint	\$140
Drying rack	\$30
Shelf and brackets	\$36
Lights	\$40
TOTAL	\$2392

After

The revamp took two weeks of plumbing, electrics, tiling and cabinetry installation.



A wall-mounted drying rack over the sink saves floorspace in the small room.

The flatpack solution

Kate and Chad wanted to do part of the work DIY to save money, so they installed flatpack cabinets and a laminate benchtop from Kaboodle.

For the base cabinets, they chose White Gloss doors in the Modern profile, and a Coconut Ice benchtop.

The first job was to mark a level line on the wall, 870mm above the floor, for the top of the cabinets.

A stud finder was used to mark stud locations on the height line, so it was easy to see where the studs were even after the cabinets were in position.

'The small space required exact measurements in order to fit two cabinets, the washer and dryer along the one wall,' says Chad.

An 800mm base cabinet for the sink was installed in the corner by the door where the tap plumbing and floor waste outlet were. Chad drilled the plumbing holes in the cabinet.

'The cupboard just fitted into position over the plumbing and we secured it to the wall,' says Chad.

The second 400mm cabinet didn't need plumbing holes but it was secured 400mm out from the corner to leave space for a hamper and to align with the wall stud spacings.

Before being secured, the cabinets were levelled in both directions and the height corrected by winding the legs up or down, as needed.

A cleat was cut to length and secured between the cabinets to help support the 2800mm long benchtop that would run along the whole wall.

'Getting the benchtop in was a challenge. It was such an exact fit between the walls and there wasn't a lot of room to manoeuvre it, but we managed with a fair bit of wangling and a few helping hands,' says Chad.

The sink was last and because they were recycling their old one, Kate and Chad had kept the original piece of benchtop to use as a template for cutting out the new sink hole.

'Even though it's small, the space is really functional and streamlined, and I absolutely love the big benchtop.

'It's still not my favourite room, but at least it makes the mountains of washing almost bearable!' says Kate.

Get the look

Streamline a small laundry space with new floor cabinets, then add wall-mounted storage and update the sink with modern tapware.



Kaboodle 800mm Base Cabinet, \$117. kaboodle.com.au



Mondella Chrome Cadenza Basin Mixer, \$69, from Bunnings.



Hills Wall Mounted Drying Rack, \$30. hillshome.com.au



Handy Shelf 900mm Style Shelf, \$18, and Brackets, \$18. handy-storage.com.au

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Install the cabinetry ▼



MEASURE THE TAP and drain hole positions on the wall and floor. Transfer the locations to the back and base of the sink cabinet, drilling each one with a hole saw slightly larger in diameter than the plumbing holes. Position both cabinets.



CUT A PINE CLEAT to length and secure it to the marked height line between the cabinets. Secure the cabinets to the studs using 50mm x 8g timber screws, then attach the benchtop from underneath the cabinet rails and the cleat using timber screws.



TRACE THE SINK opening onto the new benchtop using the old one as a template, then cut out the sink hole with a jigsaw. Install the new sink then tile the splashback and have a plumber connect the sink waste, taps and washing machine.

Find it at Bunnings

Dream kitchens

Choose a style that transforms the hub of your home and install it DIY to add value



Modern, well-designed kitchens make life easier for homeowners and attract a higher resale value than homes with dated or awkward spaces.

Choose a style and layout, then replace benchtops, update cabinetry and install new appliances to get a designer look on a DIY budget.

Classic eat-in

For a timeless feel in a large eat-in kitchen with a breakfast bar, pair traditional-looking cabinetry with stone-look laminate benchtops and modern appliances.

Choose cabinet doors and drawer faces with a profile, adding wine storage for extra functionality.



Clark Stainless Steel Flushline Tub, \$128. clark.com.au



Bellini Black Fascia Canopy Rangehood, \$351. belliniappliances.com.au



Kaboodle Charcotta Laminate Benchtop, \$242 a metre. kaboodle.com.au



Kaboodle 720 x 320 x 150mm Cremasala Wine Rack, \$158.



High-use kitchens require large preparation areas and smart storage.

Culinary delight

A kitchen with ample bench space and convenient amenities is sure to please any foodie or entertainer.

Plenty of storage in the form of deep drawers and cabinets is ideal for housing kitchen essentials as well as specialty cooking equipment. Dual sinks help keep the space tidy when preparing family dinners.

If you have enough space and regularly cook for a crowd, dual ovens can make juggling mains, sides and desserts a breeze. Mount them up high for added convenience.

Dark cabinets and a contrasting splashback give the kitchen a modern edge while the timber benchtop adds warmth to the space. ➔



Everdure Side Opening Electric Oven, \$686. everdure.com



Johnson 300 x 300mm Glass Mosaic Tile Sheet, \$16. johnsontiles.com.au



Kaboodle 160mm Discreet Kitchen Handle, about \$10.



Estilo 1080 x 480mm Stainless Steel Sink, \$132. estilo-kitchens.com



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Kaboodle 300mm Antique White Country Door, about \$46.



Elba White Glass Built-in Single Door Electric Oven, \$598. elba.com.au



Clark Vital Stainless Steel Sink, \$178. clark.com.au



Kaboodle Hickory Maple 2000 x 900mm Laminate Benchtop, \$410.

Urban cottage

Add old-world charm to a suburban home by installing a quaint, rustic kitchen. A light palette brightens the space, with country-style cabinet doors contrasting with dark timber-look benchtops for a warm, earthy feel.

Details like antique-look tap fittings and cabinet knobs add authenticity, while a timber island bench makes a dramatic statement and provides versatile seating for quick meals on the go.

Turn storage into a centrepiece by suspending a ladder rack from the ceiling to hang pots and pans.

Choose white appliances for modern convenience that won't detract from the vintage decor. ➤



Limited space calls for versatile features that maximise functionality.

Compact convenience

Make the most of a small space by combining an L-shaped kitchen with a two-seater dining table to create a multipurpose open-plan room.

Install affordable and durable laminate benchtops and add deep drawers to provide ample storage.

Fit a high-quality spray mixer to make washing up easy and install a compact retractable rangehood to save space above the stove.

Add a freestanding oven with a hotplate cover that doubles as bench space when the stove is not in use.

Create a contemporary look by pairing affordable fittings with a modern colour scheme, bringing the room to life with colourful crockery.



Kaboodle White Sesame 2250 x 600mm Laminate Benchtop, \$255.



Centique 40mm Mayfair Vegetable Spray Sink Mixer, \$119. awardbrands.com.au



Estilo 800 x 480mm Single Bowl Stainless Steel Sink, \$98.



Bellini Retractable Rangehood, \$129. belliniappliances.com.au

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Recycled reno

Salvaged from a friend's house nine years ago, *Handyman* readers Amy and Hilmar Hofer's kitchen cost only the labour to remove it. It was meant to be temporary, but grew with the family and became permanent.

The kitchen was later relocated to a different area while the space was being extended, then reinstalled with benchtops made from discarded desks.

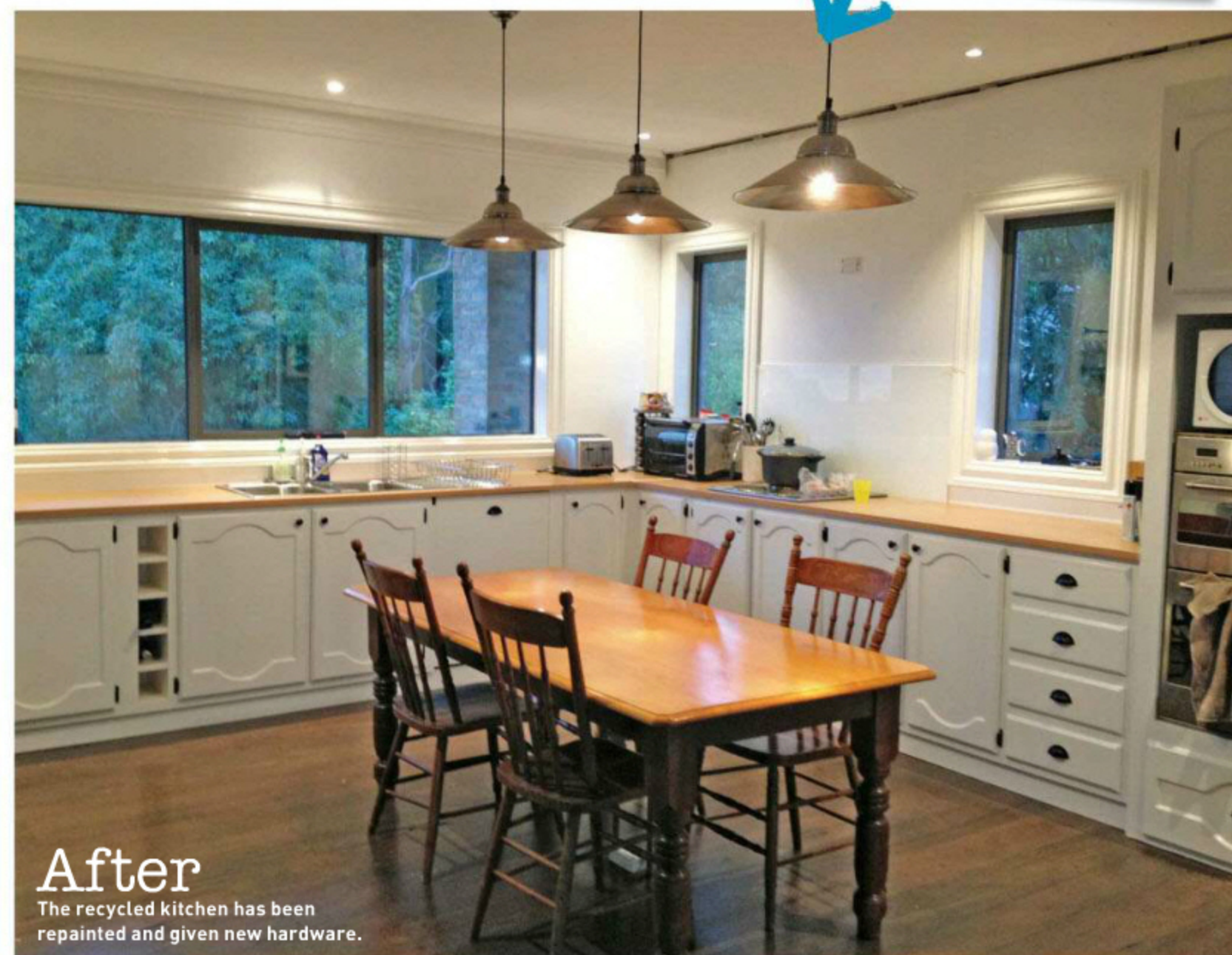
The couple then repainted the timber doors and drawers and replaced the hardware to give the cabinetry an instant update.

All the work was done DIY and, because Hilmar is an electrician, the cost of the reno ran into hundreds instead of thousands of dollars.

Reader
project



Before



After

The recycled kitchen has been repainted and given new hardware.

CASH FOR DIY

We love to share what our readers are working on, whether it's building a deck, revamping a room, landscaping the yard or making furniture. No project is too big or small, and the more unusual the better.

Send us photos of your DIY project for your chance to win \$300 and have it published in *Handyman*. Take high-resolution before and after pics, plus one of yourself, then submit them online at handyman.net.au.

WIN
\$300

Before

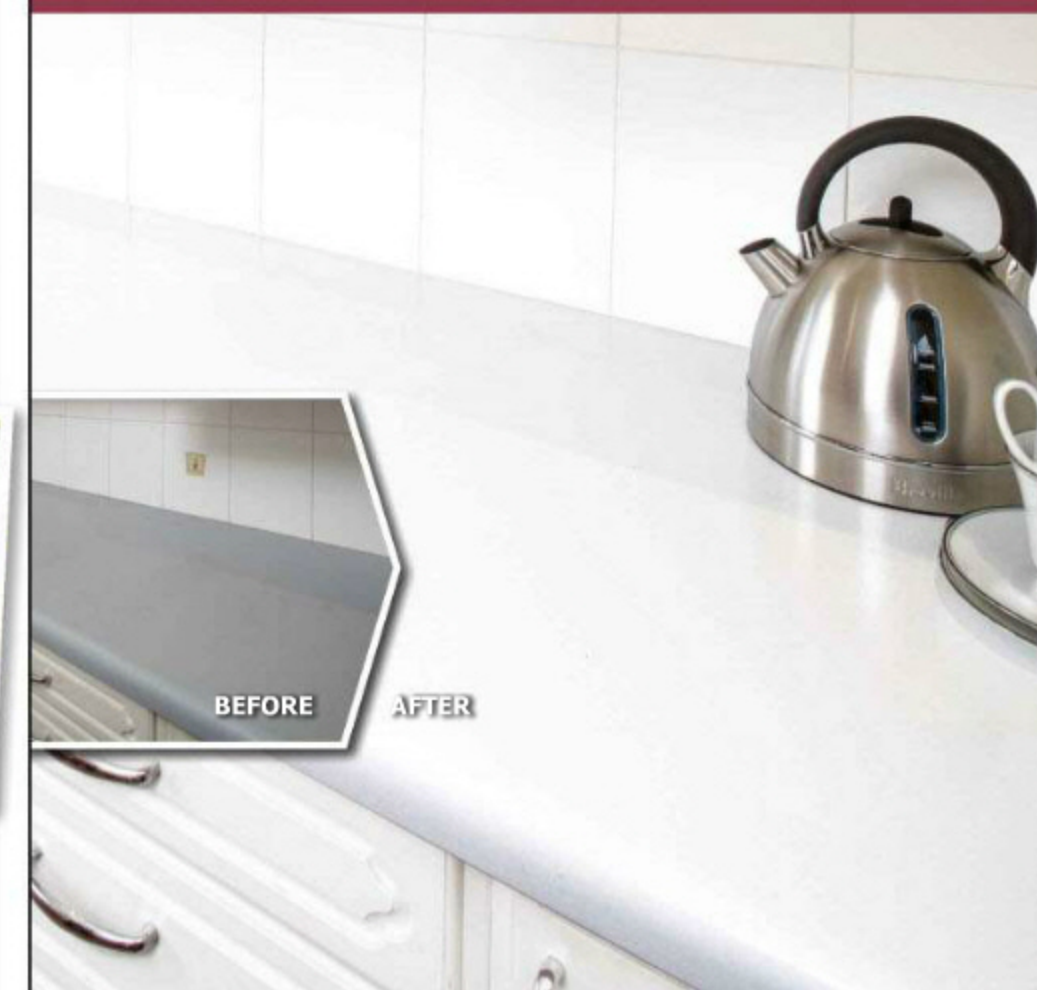


Before



Rethink the Kitchen Remodel

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We've Got it SAW-ted



MANUAL AND MULTIPURPOSE SAWS

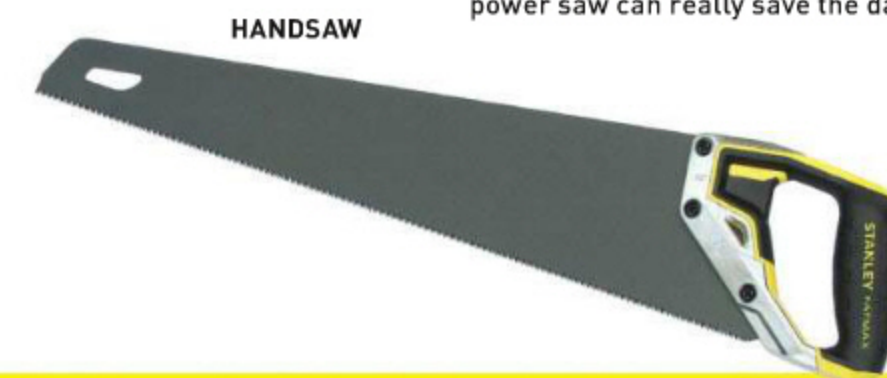
Sink your teeth into any DIY job with tools that span the spectrum from specialised to adaptable



HACKSAW



MULTIPURPOSE SAW



HANDSAW

*CUT TO THE CHASE

Even if your workshop is bursting with power tools, a decent handsaw is perhaps the only essential that is as irreplaceable as a hammer.

'Manual tools may not be ideal for big projects, but when it comes to precision and simplicity, they usually win hands down,' says Handyman Technical subeditor Gun Arvidsson.

'If you're only making one or two quick cuts, a handsaw is much less of a hassle than plugging in and cleaning up after a power tool.'

But when it's time to bring out the heavy artillery, especially for jobs that involve awkward angles or unusual materials, a multipurpose power saw can really save the day.

IN GOOD HANDS

Choose a reliable handsaw and other quality tools that will let you cut accurately and efficiently, as well as a heavy-duty power saw that will slice through many different materials with ease.

MANUAL SAWS vary greatly in shape, size and structure, and also whether the blade is held

under tension, is self-supporting or is reinforced along its back edge.

They take effort to use, so choose one that is comfortable to hold, as it will be so much more tedious if it gives you blisters.

MULTIPURPOSE SAWS are power tools that often go where others can't, while also being capable of

cutting an incredibly wide range of materials. Their adaptability is the result of clever design features or the many accessories and blades available for them.

This class of tool can be used for anything from heavy demolition jobs to cutting pavers and even cleaning a barbecue. ➤

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Ranging from general purpose tools for making straight cuts in timber, to those designed to cope with tight turns or materials including tile, metal, plasterboard and plastic, there's a manual saw for almost every DIY application.

*GENERAL PURPOSE HANDSAW

This classic design, also called a panel saw, has stood the test of time. The distinctive angled shape of the hand guard makes it easy to quickly mark cut lines at 90 or 45°.

Many mass-produced handsaws have induction-hardened teeth that

hold a sharp edge much longer than untempered saws. The downside is that such saws are impractical to resharpen.

This type of saw has a rigid blade that cuts on the push stroke, usually about 500-560mm, and a pitch that is rarely much coarser than 8tpi.



*COPING SAW



This is still the tool of choice for fine detail work, ranging from cutting the inside corner of a skirting profile to negotiating tight turns.

A scroll saw can often be used instead, but it's more expensive and less manoeuvrable if a workpiece needs to be cut in situ.

The blade is held between a pair of slotted pins that can be turned to enable cutting at any angle relative to the frame. The pin at the handle end is threaded to wind in and out of the handle, tensioning the blade.



*TENON SAW

As sliding compound mitresaws have become more affordable and popular, tenon saws have largely fallen out of favour as the tool used to make the joints they are named for.

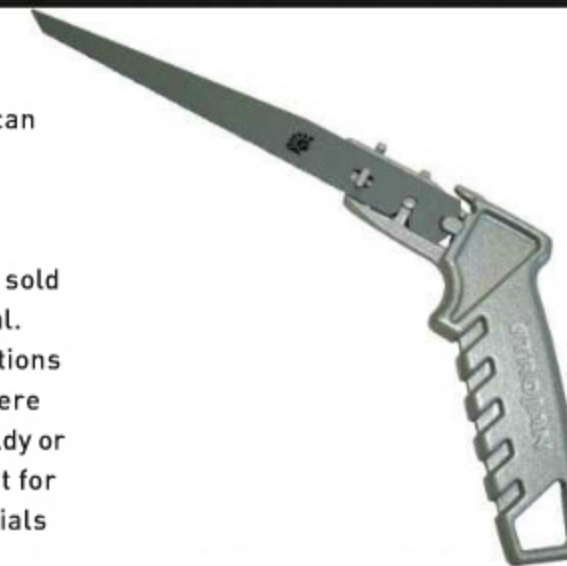
They are usually about 12tpi and feature a reinforced back, making them easier to use for precise sawing and a smoother finish.

This makes them perfect for cutting tenons, but the same qualities are valuable when cutting mitre joints, especially from intricately shaped mouldings.

*KEYHOLE SAW

With a narrow, rigid blade that can be mounted either vertically or horizontally, a keyhole saw is designed to cut in confined or awkward spaces, and is usually sold with blades for timber and metal.

It is used for similar applications as a jigsaw, but in situations where a power tool would be too unwieldy or finer control is needed. It's great for cutting openings in sheet materials after a starter hole is drilled.



*TOOLBOX SAW



This is the shortened version of a general purpose handsaw. It's small and light enough to be taken anywhere while offering a similar tpi count and other benefits of its full-length relative.

It's a popular backup saw that can be taken to worksites or kept for special occasions when a brand-new, factory-sharp edge is needed.

*JAB SAW



Also known as a wallboard saw, this has a short, rigid blade designed specifically for cutting plasterboard.

To start the hole, punch the sharp tip through the plasterboard, slightly away from the cut line, by striking the back of the handle.

Saw to the cut line, then along it, and finish by trimming the cut edge of the paper with a utility knife.

*PULL SAW

Traditionally, this type of tool was favoured by Japanese carpenters over saws that cut on the push stroke. It's an extremely versatile saw that comes in a variety of shapes and styles.

The razor sharpness of a pull saw is chiefly the result of how thin the blade can be manufactured.

It is kept straight by tension, rather than relying on the steel's thickness to resist pushing the teeth through the timber fibres.



*DOVETAIL SAW

Similar in form to a miniature tenon saw, this tool is also most commonly used for traditional joinery.

Although routers are now often used to make dovetail joints, doing it by hand is something of an artform.

Some variants feature a modified blade that allows them to cut flush with a surface, but without the flexion that a pull saw entails. ➔



FLUSH CUT

*HACKSAW



A hacksaw consists of a steel frame holding a narrow, disposable blade under tension by means of a wing nut or a quick-release lever, or both.

Hacksaws are primarily used for cutting metal, but the fine pitch of the teeth also makes them suitable for sawing brittle materials, such as plastic, that can be easily chipped.

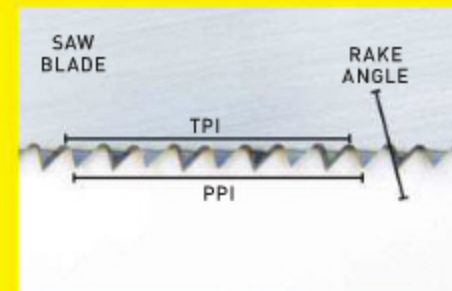


A hacksaw blade commonly has a pitch of 24tpi and is sold in lengths ranging from 250 to 400mm, with 300mm being the most popular.

Several frame types are available, including a junior version and a mini hacksaw. This is a handle that grips the blade from the back instead of both ends and should only be used for light jobs.

SAW JARGON

Manual saws differ greatly in structure and function, but almost all of them feature a toothed cutting edge with several common properties.



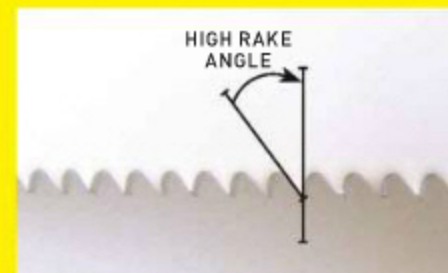
PITCH of a saw is the spacing of the teeth, described in teeth per inch (tpi), or points per inch (ppi). The tpi count is calibrated from the valleys between the teeth, while ppi is from point to point.



KERF is the width of the cut. The teeth of a saw are splayed outwards slightly, ensuring the kerf is wider than the thickness of the blade itself. This prevents the material being cut from pinching the blade.



STROKE relates to the action of moving the saw towards you and away from you as you cut. Saws can cut on the push stroke or the pull stroke, or both, depending on how the teeth are machined.



RAKE is the angle between the leading edge of each tooth and a line drawn at 90° to the row of teeth. Pull saws have a high rake angle of up to 45° while saws that cut on the push stroke are raked about 15° at most.

MANUAL SAWS



*ROD SAW

You may not need to cut a curved shape in a tile often, but a rod saw is about the only tool that can do this.

Standalone rod saws usually have a blade about 150mm long, but blades compatible with 300mm hacksaws are also available.

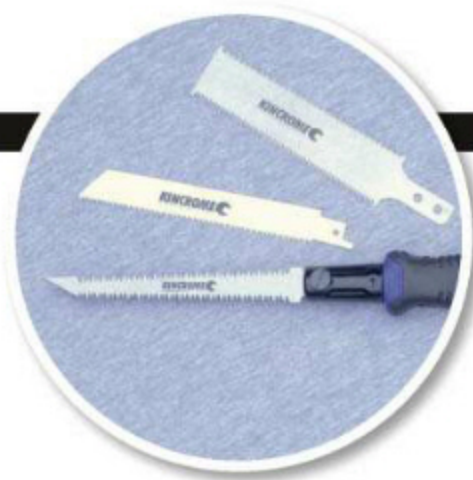
The carbide-grit blade's round cross-section allows it to cut in any direction relative to the frame.

*MULTI-BLADE SAW

The Swiss army knife of the toolbox, this usually comes in the form of a straight handle that can hold a range of different blades. Some types even have the blade mount on a pivot that allows it to fold into the handle.

They are usually designed to be compatible with reciprocating saw blades, offering a more portable and less heavy-handed way of cutting the same range of materials.

It's the perfect way to switch from timber to metal to carbide grit in a matter of seconds without carrying around a whole toolbox.



*PLASTIC SAW



Plastics are often brittle and have low melting points that can make them a challenge to cut neatly and without chipping or cracking.

This saw is designed with the properties of PVC, ABS and other plastics in mind. It has a coated-steel 10tpi blade that resists binding, and teeth that cut on the pull stroke. ➤

*LAMINATE SAW

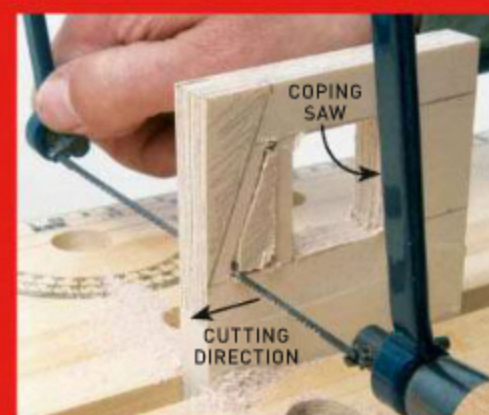


With a fine pitch and short, stout blade, this tool is great for cutting veneered or laminated materials, ranging from flooring to melamine.

The distinctive nose has its own row of teeth, so you can make plunge cuts by hand. This is invaluable for making cutouts in kitchen cabinetry if a jigsaw is impractical to use.

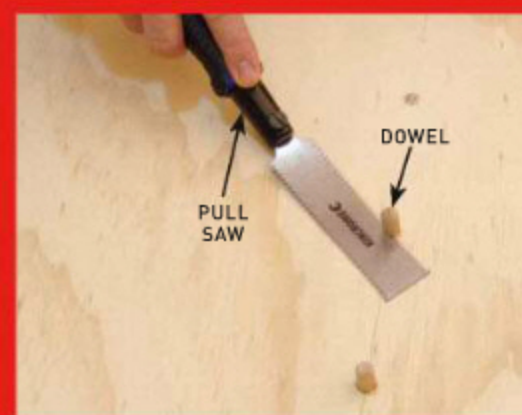
MANUAL SAW TECHNIQUES

Power tools are convenient for larger jobs that involve a lot of cutting. But for old-school craftsmanship, nothing beats the satisfaction and accuracy of sawing by hand using a tool that was developed for a specialised task.



CUTTING AN ENCLOSED SHAPE

Drill a 3mm starter hole and unhook the blade from the frame. Feed the blade through the hole, then replace it and wind in the tensioning spindle. Cut out the shape, adjusting the pins to turn the blade as needed.



MAKING FLUSH CUTS

Pull saws are perfect for trimming pieces of timber that are too bulky to cut with a chisel. Press the blade to the surface, bending it as little as possible to keep it under tension, then saw off the dowel using short, gentle strokes.



CREATING A TENON

Clamp the timber firmly, then saw down to the shoulder line, cutting diagonally into the corners first, then sawing parallel with the shoulder line. Saw away the waste at the shoulder and clean up with a chisel.

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MULTIPURPOSE SAWS

You will soon notice the limitations of ordinary power saws, especially when attacking a major reno. Arm yourself with a tool that can handle diverse materials and unusual working conditions, and you will be prepared for any contingency.

*WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH



Reciprocating saws are not tools that are famed for subtlety. Their trademark qualities are power, speed and adaptability, as well as how manoeuvrable their blades are in awkward spaces.

The reciprocating action is similar to that of a jigsaw, except

that the blades are usually longer and tougher, and the tool is designed to be grasped using both hands.

Even with the shoe pressed firmly against a workpiece, the kickback from a reciprocating saw can be formidable.

Cutting a perfectly straight line using a reciprocating saw can be a real

challenge, so if accurately sawing along a ruled line is a high priority, clamp a straightedge to act as a guide for the shoe wherever possible.

EXTENDED-RANGE SAWING

With a rigid blade that is well-suited to plunge cutting, a reciprocating saw can be great for jobs such as creating openings in floors or cladding during renovations without the overshoot typical of a circular saw.

The blade's reach usually exceeds that of an oscillating tool or jigsaw, allowing you to cut through fasteners such as framing nails with ease.

Most reciprocating saws feature tool-free blade change, an extendable shoe, variable speed and a trigger lock.

In addition to blades designed for cutting a wide range of materials, they are also compatible with various attachments, including scrapers, brushes and even files.

RECIPROCATING SAW TECHNIQUES

Famous for being able to cut in awkward spaces where other tools can't reach, a reciprocating saw has countless uses ranging from renovations to garage maintenance, and switching blades to suit the material being cut takes only seconds.



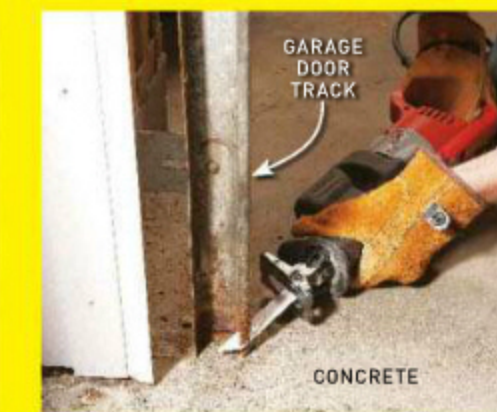
CUT THROUGH FASTENERS

Use a metal cutting blade to saw straight through fasteners when making modifications to plasterboard walls during a reno, allowing studs, noggins and other framing members to be easily knocked free.



PROTECT THE SURFACE

Reciprocating saws are notorious for heavy vibration, even when used correctly. To protect floorboards or other quality timber, cut a piece of pipe insulation foam or polystyrene and attach it to the shoe with masking tape.



TRIM A GARAGE DOOR TRACK

If the end of a garage door track is in contact with damp concrete, it can begin to rust. A reciprocating saw is ideal for cutting about 10mm off the end of the track before applying rust converter and metal paint. ➤

MULTIPURPOSE SAWS



A wax stick feed system lubricates the blades when cutting through metal.

*TWICE THE SLICE

With two circular blades that turn in opposite directions, a property called contra-rotation, the Ozito X2 Twin Cutter stands out from the crowd in function as well as looks.

A contra-rotating system has unique advantages, the main one being that the forces from two blades spinning in opposite directions cancel each other out, making the tool surprisingly agile even at full speed.

Unlike a circular saw, whose design hinges on pushing it forwards to cut, the X2 cuts in a backwards direction just as effectively as forwards.

There is also a shearing component to the cutting action, the same as the principle by which scissors work.

Despite a more complex gearbox, changing blades is straightforward, with the only extra effort being to lock the discs together using a supplied pin.

SAFETY FEATURES

Contra-rotating blades reduce the risk of kickback almost to zero. The X2 also features a retractable blade guard like the one on a circular saw.

The rear/side handle configuration allows it to be held like a small angle grinder, while still cutting similarly to a circular saw. This makes it perfect for major reno jobs, as it can safely be used on walls and at unusual angles.

TWIN CUTTER APPLICATIONS

The benefits of contra-rotation have long been utilised in the design of coaxial helicopter rotors and torpedo propellers. Now the same technology is available to DIYers for sawing metal just as effortlessly as timber without changing blades.



MAKING CUTS IN TIMBER

If cutting from an edge, the blade guard will retract automatically, as it does on a circular saw. Plunge cuts can be made by retracting the guard manually and keeping the tool at an angle of about 30° to the surface.



SAWING THROUGH METAL

The carbide-tipped teeth can cut metals ranging from copper pipe to steel roofing. When cutting metal, the blades need to be lubricated using supplied wax sticks that are pushed against the cutting edges by rotating the feed knob.



DEMOLITION DUTIES

The X2 can cut timber and metal with the same set of blades, making it great for demolition or a major reno. Its plunge-cutting ability also lets it saw openings in a plasterboard wall more quickly than using a jab saw.



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We care. Because we've been there.



MULTIPURPOSE SAWS

*VERSATILITY TO THE MAX

This tool is in a class all its own, but like other multipurpose saws, it does not have a single specialised role to play. The sheer versatility of this saw has the potential to give other power tools inadequacy issues.

The Saw-Max's name may seem ironic considering its compact size, but it packs a lot of guts into a small package, being capable of sawing through virtually any material from timber and metal to ceramic tile.

Similar in shape to the highly specialised power saws used in the operating theatre, this tool is just as lightweight and designed to be safely used one-handed, with a lock-off catch on the power switch.

Like a cross between an angle grinder and a circular saw, it has a base plate that allows the depth of cut to be controlled, and can also be used with a straightedge guide.

The base plate is small enough to ensure excellent visibility, making it easier to cut accurately.



A SAW FOR ALL SEASONS

Arguably the biggest advantage of the Saw-Max is that it lets you cut all the materials you are likely to face in a bathroom renovation or similar project using only the one tool.

In addition to a carbide-grit cutting disc for timber and plastic, the Saw-Max

comes with reinforced cutoff discs for metal and masonry, similar to angle grinder wheels.

A diamond blade for cutting very hard materials, ranging from marble to tile, is also included, and the many optional extras available extend the possibilities of this tool even further.

*ONE TOOL, MANY ROLES

The Saw-Max is not intended as a replacement for a circular saw when cutting large expanses of sheet materials, but it will get into places where a circular saw can't.

It can also make cuts that no other power tool is capable of, such as cutting wall trim in situ before installing a new floor.

Using the optional flush-cutting disc, it can simply be run along a length of the new flooring material to give the perfect clearance without having to remove the wall trim.

Other optional accessories include a mitre guide and rip fence.

Partnered with the masonry cutoff disc, these make it possible to cut pavers and similar objects with a degree of accuracy that is difficult to achieve without using bulky and expensive machinery. ➤



The optional flush-cutting disc makes it easy to trim skirting and architraves.

The masonry cutoff disc makes short work of bricks and pavers, while the diamond disc will even cut stone.

Designed for one-handed use, the Saw-Max makes it easy to cut materials that are tricky to handle.

BUYING GUIDE

Even if you do not have a passion for fine joinery, a few basic manual saws will always come in handy, while a multipurpose power saw is invaluable for all those tasks that are beyond the abilities of your other tools.

MANUAL SAWS



This 500mm saw has triple-ground teeth, a low-friction coating and reinforced handle, enabling it to cut surprisingly fast for an 11tpi tool.

Stanley Fatmax Tri-Material Hand Saw, \$25. stanleytools.com.au



For quick, clean cuts in plasterboard, this 9tpi saw has triple-ground teeth that cut on both strokes, plus a sharp point for starting a cut.

Irwin ProTouch 125mm Heavy Duty Jab Saw, \$17. irwin.com.au



This tool is built tough without compromising on precision, with a 120mm throat depth, tempered blade and soft-grip handle.

Stanley Fine Woodworking Fatmax Coping Saw, \$17.



Featuring onboard storage for up to five blades, this high-tension saw has a conversion slot allowing it to mount reciprocating saw blades.

Lenox High-Tension Hacksaw, \$45. lenoxtools.com.au



Perfect for use with a mitre box, this 12tpi tenon saw is reinforced with spring steel and has a 350mm blade with a cutting depth of 75mm.

Trojan Tenon Saw, \$10. trojantools.com.au



Styled after traditional Japanese pull saws, this double-sided tool has a 7tpi cutting edge and a 17tpi edge for razor-sharp accuracy.

Irwin 240mm Double Edge Pull Saw, \$25.

MULTIPURPOSE SAWS



This reciprocating saw features variable speed, tool-free blade change and comes with blades for cutting both timber and metal.

Ryobi 800W Reciprocating Saw, \$139. ryobi.com.au



With 125mm contra-rotating blades that can cut timber, plastic and metal, this heavy-duty all-rounder is just as effective for demolition as for building.

Ozito 1200W X2 Twin Cutter, \$69. ozito.com.au



Able to saw through everything from plastic to pavers, this nifty tool can also make flush cuts and plunge cuts, and comes with four blades.

Dremel Saw-Max, \$169. dremel.com.au

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STACK UP with the Ryobi Tool Blox range, starting from \$149 and sold separately.



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MOW FAST and fume-less with the Victa 40V Li-ion Cordless Lawn Mower, \$699.



SOAK UP spills and clean floors with the Oates Slide Wringer Flat Mop, \$25.99.



TRIM GRASS anywhere with the 18V Ryobi Hybrid Line Trimmer, \$199.



BLOW AWAY leaves with the Victa 40V Li-ion Cordless Blower and Vacuum, \$399.



HANG AROUND with the Round Net Swing, \$55, or Plastic Tyre Swing, \$79, suitable for most play sets.



PLAY SAFE with the Slide Enclosing Tunnel, \$49, which suits timber play sets in the Swing Slide Climb Range.



HOSE EASILY using the Gardena Comfort 25m Retractable Hose Reel, \$249, with automatic locking and retracting.



BLAST DIRT with the Gerni Classic 120.4 Titan Pressure Washer, \$298.



SIMPLIFY WATERING with the Holman 3005 Digital Automatic Tap Timer, \$65, featuring simple and easy programming.



CONTROL THE FLOW using the Gardena EasyControl Tap Timer, \$74.95, with digital display and removable face.



SET AND FORGET your watering with the Pope Two Dial Tap Timer, \$44.98, to keep the garden hydrated.



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TOOLS TABLESAW,
DRILL, BRAD NAILER

This traditional structure defines the boundary between garden zones while adding charm and character.

Exterior timber ▼

The garden arbour is built from 90 x 90mm treated pine posts rated H4 for in-ground use, with the rails, beams and slats cut from H3 rated treated pine.

Use a tablesaw to cut the slats to size from 70 x 45mm timber stock, getting three 20mm thick sections from each length. Cut the battens from 90 x 45mm timber, getting two 40mm thick sections from each length.

If the arbour is to be painted, you can use pre-primed, H3 LOSP finger-jointed treated pine in 42 x 18mm and 42 x 42mm sizes.

CLASSIC TIMBER ARBOUR

Frame a path with a decorative landscape feature built from treated pine in just a weekend

Garden rooms are popular in landscape design and you can bring the trend home with a custom-built timber arbour.

Large enough to span a path and act as an entranceway, it's made from treated pine for durability with no special tools required.

Most of the cutting and joinery can be done in the workshop, then it will take about half a day to assemble the arbour in its final location.

Save time by using a brad nailer when building the latticed sides, and a tablesaw for cutting the timber. If you don't have these tools, a hammer and circular saw will still do the job.

Allow a full weekend to build the arbour, applying an oil-based stain to protect the timber, then plant climbers to train over the lattice.

A simple structure

The arbour is made of four posts concreted in the ground and joined by rails, then slats attached to make the latticed sides. The top consists of beams and battens.

The rails are secured in shallow housings called stop mortises in the

posts, with matching timber plugs on the other side to create the illusion the rails go the whole way through.

A drill press is the best tool for drilling perfectly vertical holes in timber and will speed up cutting the stop mortises, or you can use a drill guide with a depth collar.

A Forstner bit is designed to cut wide, shallow holes with a flat base, so it is the best type to use when cutting the stop mortises. Drill pairs of holes to remove most of the waste, then square up the corners with a chisel.

Unlike a spade bit, it has a short central spur and sharp, level blades mounted on a flat disc to make it easier to control and more precise. ➤



Ryobi One+ 18V Cordless Brad Nailer, \$199, excluding battery. ryobi.com.au



Cutting the beams

For the decorative tapers at the beam ends, use a circular saw or mitresaw to cut 100 x 100mm triangles off the base corners.

Round over the edges slightly using a block plane or trim router with a 6mm roundover bit.

Mark the positions for the bolt hole centres 295mm from the ends, and 30 and 100mm up from the base edge of the beams.

Bore the 13mm deep recesses for the bolt heads and nuts on one face of each beam using a drill and 25mm spade bit. To drill the bolt holes the rest of the way through, use a 10mm twist bit.

Build the arbour



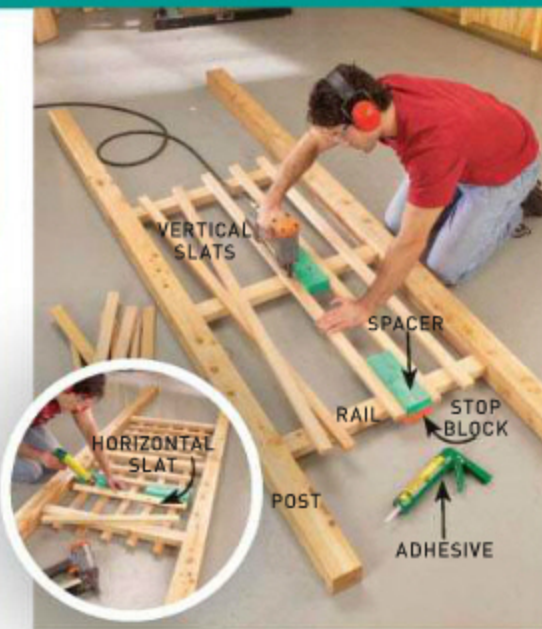
1 Cut the stop mortises

Position the posts side by side then clamp, using a builder's square to mark the locations of the stop mortises for the rails and plugs. Use a 35mm Forstner bit to drill overlapping holes 20mm deep at each marked location, cutting away the waste with a 25mm chisel.



2 Secure the rails

Insert the rails into the stop mortises between two posts, stand the assembly on edge and tap the pieces together until the inside measurement between the posts is 720mm. Secure with pairs of screws through the stop mortises. Apply a coat of sealer or paint to the stop mortises.



3 Attach the slats

Square up the frame, then make 200 x 82mm spacers from offcuts, with 50mm wide stop blocks. Use a brad nailer to secure the vertical slats to the rails with 50mm overhang. Turn over the assembly to attach horizontal slats to the vertical using construction adhesive and brads.



4 Erect one side panel

Lay out the arbour dimensions on the site and dig four post holes, 200mm in diameter and 650mm deep. Tamp the base of each hole and add 100mm of gravel for drainage. Erect one side panel, checking for plumb and bracing the posts to pegs hammered into the ground.



5 Concrete the posts

Stand the second side panel in the holes, clamping supports to the posts at ground level if needed, then attach temporary braces to hold it plumb and evenly spaced from the first panel. Measure the diagonals to ensure the structure is square, then concrete all four posts in position.



6 Install the beams

Drill 10mm bolt holes centred 30 and 100mm from the top of the posts, clamp the beams in position and bolt them to the posts. Secure the battens across the top of the beams with twist nails, using spacers for equal gaps, then attach the plugs in the stop mortises using adhesive.

Classic arbour

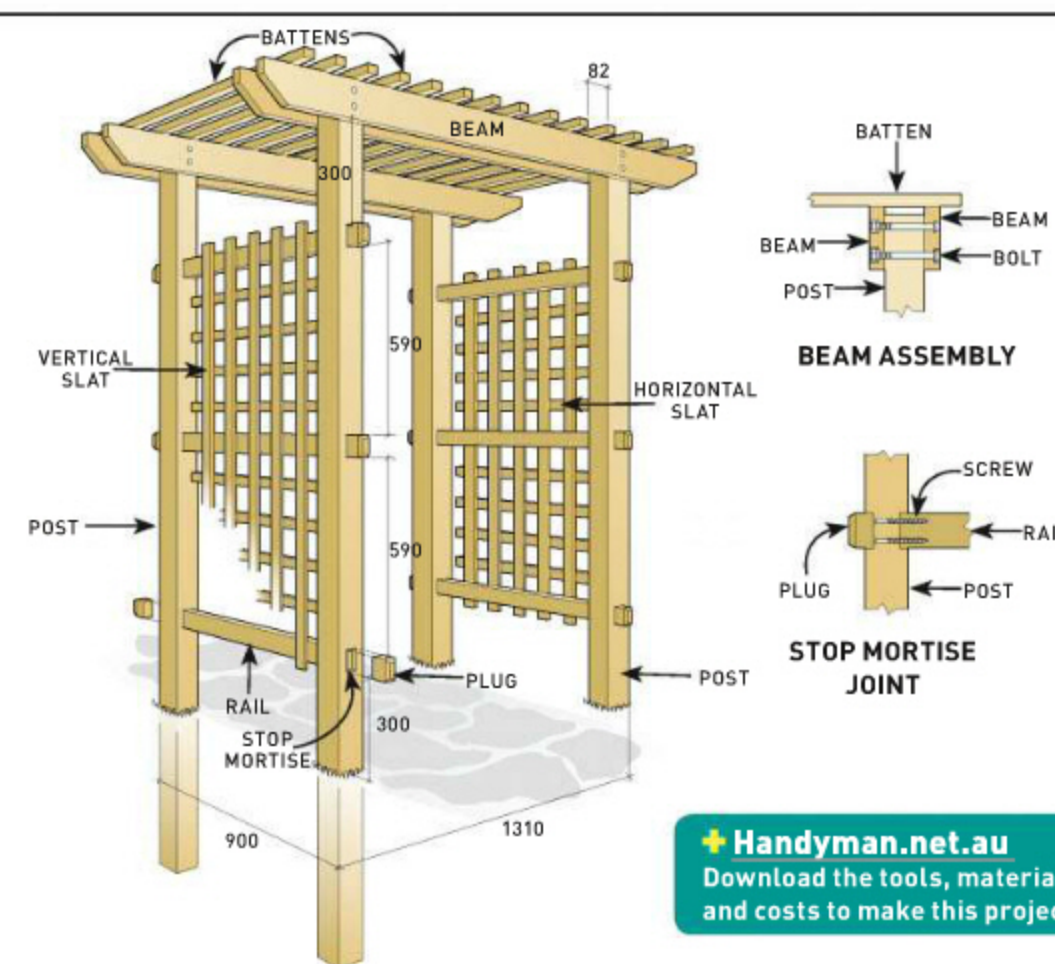
measurements in mm

CUTTING LIST

PART	SIZE	NO.
Treated pine		
Posts	2700 x 90 x 90	4
Rails	760 x 70 x 35	6
Beams	1850 x 140 x 45	4
Vertical slats	1490 x 45 x 20	10
Horizontal slats	650 x 45 x 20	16
Battens	1090 x 40 x 45	14
Plugs	70 x 70 x 35	12

FASTENERS

TYPE	USE
Treated pine screws, 75mm x 10g	Rails
Brad nails, 32mm	Lattice slats
Tech-shield cuphead bolts, M10 x 170mm	Beams
Galvanised twist nails, 65 x 3.15mm	Battens



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Garden arch

This rough-sawn timber arch has just six parts and can be built in a day using a drill, circular saw and jigsaw.

Simple but versatile, it has many landscape uses, including as a gateway in a fence, an opening in a hedge or a frame for a paved walkway.

Made of treated pine, the posts are sunk in the ground using quick-set concrete and the timber is finished with a penetrating oil, to deepen the natural pine colour and protect it from weathering.

With the treated pine, fasteners, timber oil and concrete, the total cost for the project comes to about \$400.

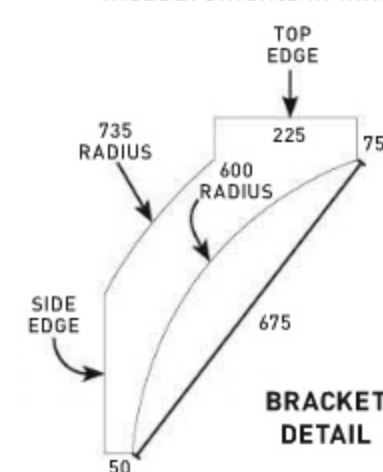


Feast Watson Natural Wood Shield Oil, \$109 for 4L. feastwatson.com.au



To add a landscape feature in a day, build a rustic timber arch.

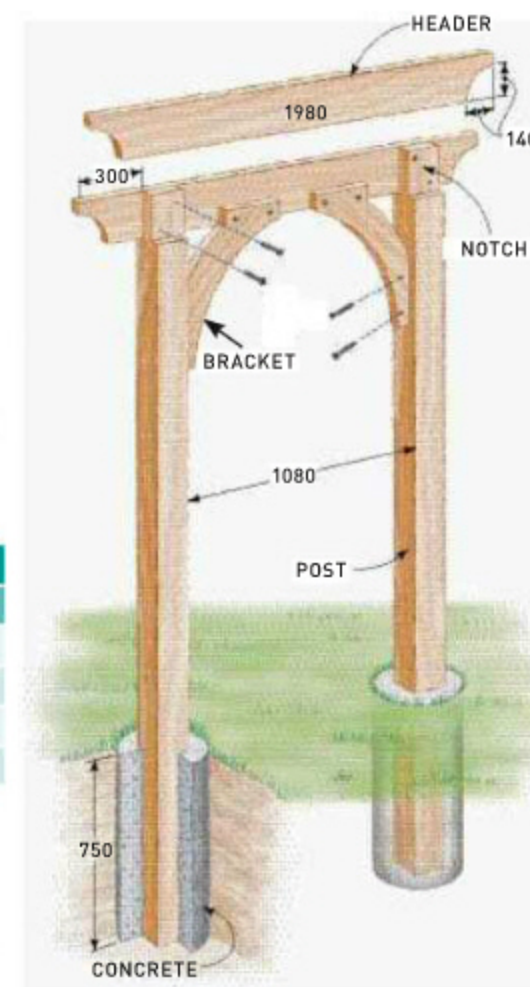
Garden arch measurements in mm



CUTTING LIST

PART	SIZE	NO.
Treated pine		
Posts	3000 x 150 x 150	2
Headers	1980 x 190 x 45	2
Brackets	800 x 240 x 45	2

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Download the tools, materials
and costs to make this project.



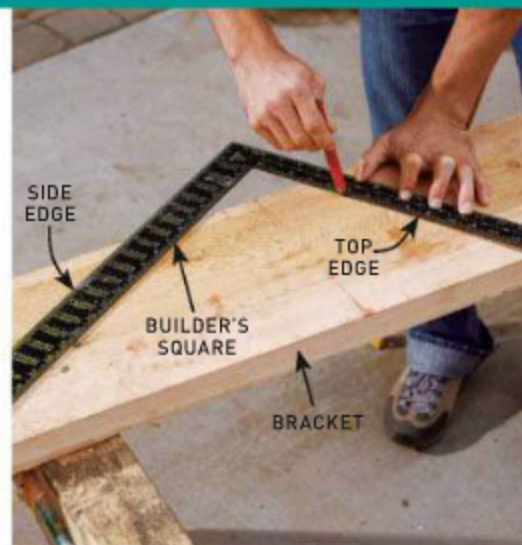
Build the arch ▼



1 Cut the notches

At the top of each treated pine post, make crosscuts for 190 x 45mm notches, using a circular saw set to full depth for the vertical cuts, then finishing with a handsaw.

TIP Use a circular saw to cut straight edges and a jigsaw for the curves.



2 Mark up the top pieces

On the two headers, trace around a bucket with a 280mm diameter to mark the curved ends. Set out the top and side edges of the brackets using a builder's square, then tap a flathead nail into a sawhorse for use as a pivot point when drawing the curves.



3 Cut the brackets

Hook the end of a tape measure over the nail head and use it as a guide to draw the inner arc of each bracket with a 600mm radius. Mark a second arc 735mm from the nail, then cut out the brackets and curves on the headers with a jigsaw and circular saw.



4 Assemble the arch

Drill 3.5mm pilot holes, then use 90mm x 14g screws to secure the posts to a header 300mm from the ends. Attach the brackets to the header with 75mm x 14g screws and to the posts using 90mm screws. Secure the second header with 90mm screws.



5 Raise the arch

Secure a 90 x 38mm spacer 750mm from the base of the posts. Dig two 250mm holes to 750mm deep, then plumb the posts using a spirit level and brace in position, securing with pegs. Pour in quick-set concrete, removing the spacer and braces when it is cured.

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The sound of birds chirping brings life to any yard, and you can attract birds by giving them a safe place to rest and feed.

These bird boxes have been custom-built by British woodworkers Eric Simonds and Den Humphrey.

'There is no reason why a bird box can't be interesting. No two designs are quite the same and they are artistic as well as functional,' says Den.

Each piece is made from English hardwood and can take up to four weeks to make, with designs that reflect the owners' personalities.



Resembling cans and boxes, this bird house suits the avid recycler.



Waterfront living is provided for a bird family with this tower.



Huge garden tools with hollow handles.



For the bird lover and cricket enthusiast.



This enormous bird box is shaped like a shotgun shell and is mounted on the wall.



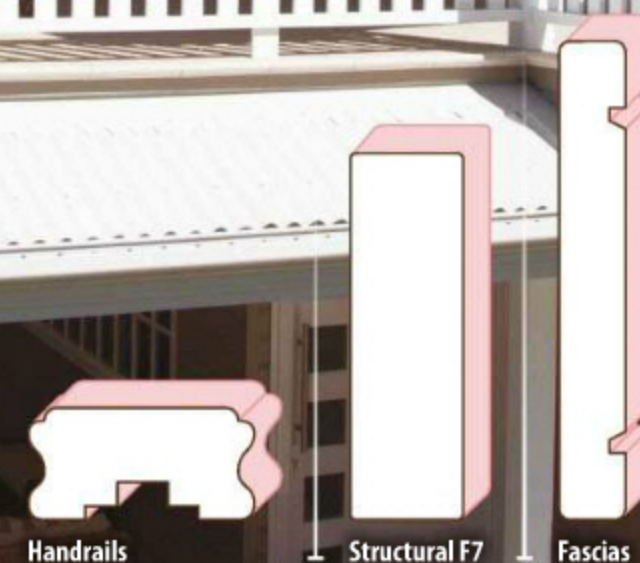
An alternate take on the bachelor pad.



Inspired by a wine barrel, this creation would be at home on a vineyard.

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Pond in a pot

Make an eye-catching water feature complete with a mini fountain in an afternoon

WORDS AND PICTURES ADAM WOODHAMS

Water features are on the garden wishlist for most homes, but what do you do when you only have a small space or you need something portable?

The simple answer is to turn a pot into a pond. Using readily available supplies, you can convert virtually any pot or container into a fabulous mini fountain.

The greatest advantage of this type of water feature is that you can match the look of it to any style of landscape just by selecting a pot that suits.

You'll find the hardest part of this project is waiting for the paint to dry.

All you need is a pot, pump, sealant and waterproof putty, then simply seal the pot, fill it with water, add the pump and switch it on.

We created a unique fountainhead by adapting an old sandstone grinding wheel and added a pond light for extra atmosphere at night-time. ➤



Aquapro 18 LED Multi Colour Pond/Garden Light, \$90. aquatecequipment.com

Preparing the pot

Thoroughly clean the interior of the pot, following the surface preparation instructions on the tin of waterproofing paint, then seal any drainage holes with putty.



1 SCRUB THE POT using a suitable outdoor cleaner and a stiff-bristled brush or broom. Rinse thoroughly, then leave to dry completely.

TIP We used 30 Seconds Outdoor Cleaner to wash the pot interior.



2 SEAL THE DRAINAGE HOLES with epoxy putty by kneading a small piece until blended to a consistent colour. Push the putty firmly into the drainage holes, leaving an overlap on the inside of the pot. Leave it to cure.



3 APPLY WATERPROOFING PAINT to the interior with a roller, allowing it to cure between coats. Position the pot in its final location and check for level from side to side, then back to front using a spirit level.



A large cauldron pot was used for this pond, but almost any shape or size will work well.



Select the pump

When it comes to pumps, the key is to get one that can push an appropriate volume of water to the required height.

This is expressed as the volume flow rate at the height of the output above the water level of the pond.

The volume of water flowing decreases with the height of the output. Check the pump packaging, as it should have a graph showing the pressure drop-off with height, to help you to select the right pump.

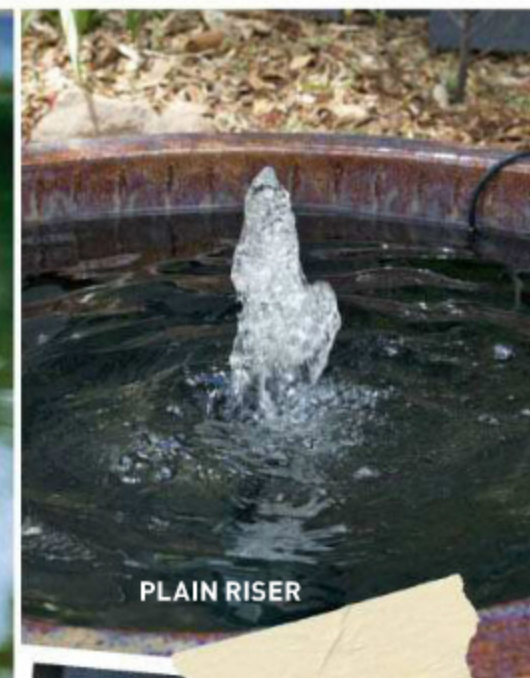
Position the pump in the pot and decide on the fitting needed for the output or fountainhead. It comes with

a variety of fittings, but extra riser pipe may be required for a deep pot.

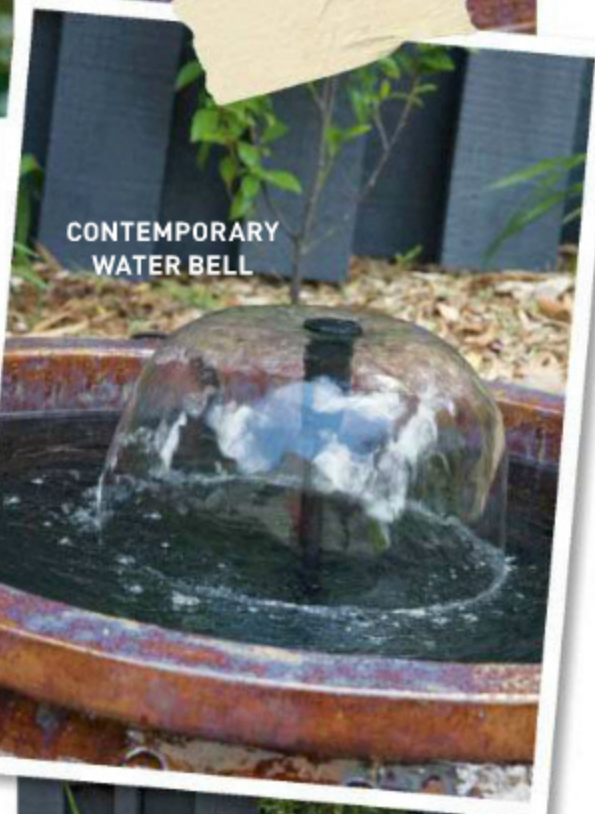
You can decide on the output or fountainhead after the pot has been filled, allowing you to compare the different styles.

Instead of choosing a pump that will run flat out to meet demand, opt for one with a slightly higher capacity than needed, adding an in-line tap to adjust the flow rate.

Aquapro 20W Fountain Pump Kit, \$82.



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Checking the weight

Where you locate your finished pond requires careful consideration, not only in terms of aesthetics but also due to its overall weight.

To work this out, add together the weight of the pot, pump and water, plus any extras such as a waterspout.

One litre of water weighs 1kg and there are 1000L in a cubic metre. Work out the

volume by multiplying depth by height by width, taking 15-20% off the total if the pot is very curved.

Convert the cubic volume to litres. So if the volume is 0.125m³ that equates to 125L or 125kg.

Don't position a filled pot that weighs more than 100kg on the outside edge of any cantilevered balcony or on a timber deck unless it's directly above a bearer and a pier or post.



PICTURE (TOP LEFT) ALAMY



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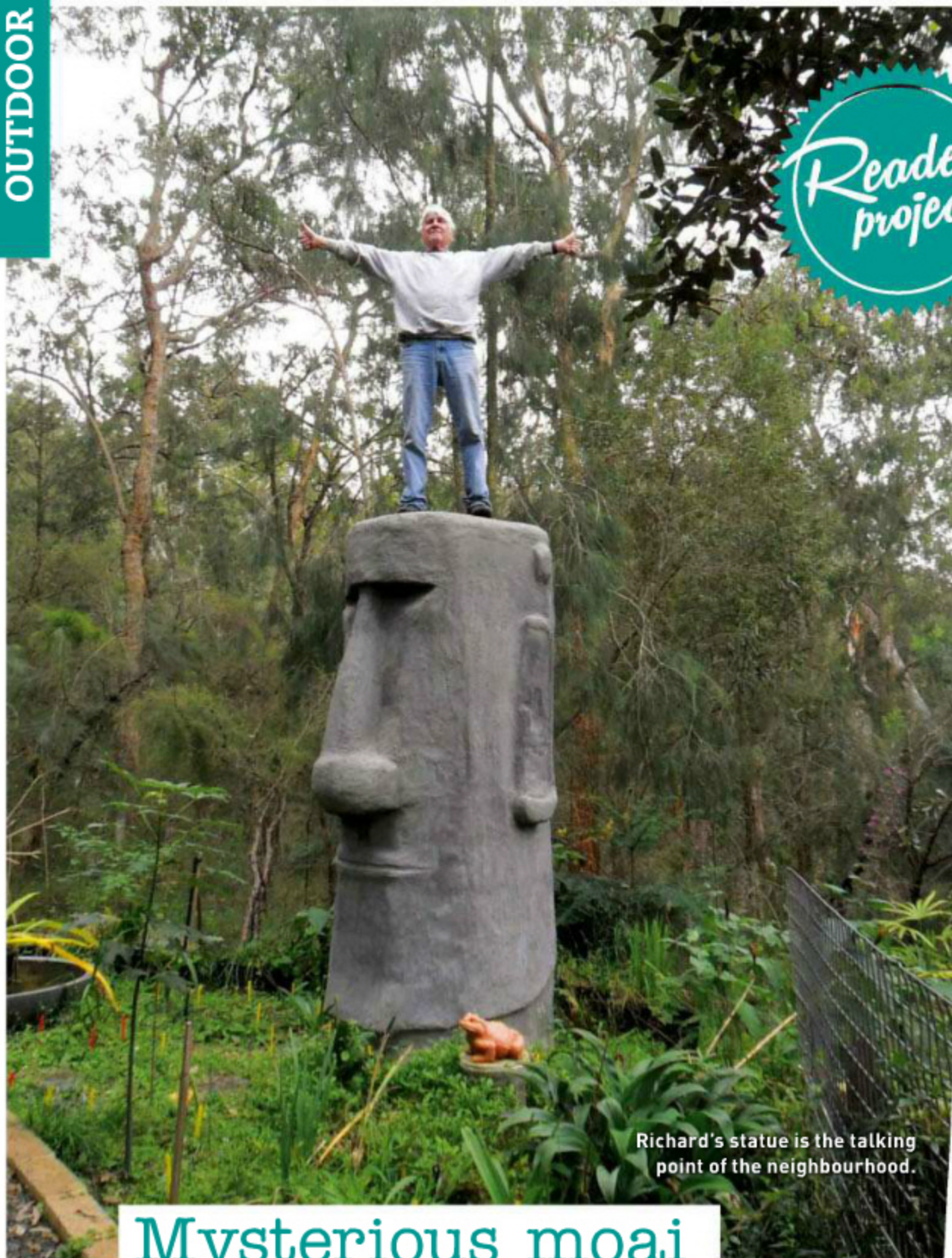
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Reader
project

Richard's statue is the talking point of the neighbourhood.

Mysterious moai

Handyman reader Richard Hanman had always wanted to construct an impressive statue in his backyard.

After retiring last year, he finally had time to make his dream come true.

He built this replica of a moai, the monolithic statues carved on Easter Island between 1250 and 1500AD. About 900 moai can still be found on the remote island today.

'I have always wanted to create something of statuesque proportions, and this replica weighs three and a half tonnes,' says Richard.

It took Richard two weeks, working two hours a day, to build. He started by constructing the concrete slab

that forms the base, adding a central pole for stability.

Most of the moai were carved from a type of volcanic rock that is native to Easter Island, called tuff.

Many archaeologists believe that the statues were 'walked' into position by teams of people working together pulling ropes.

Richard's statue, on the other hand, was built in situ from Hebel blocks cut and arranged in the shape of the figure. The blocks were positioned in layers to form a shell, then each layer was filled with concrete.

'To create the appearance of stone, I rendered the statue,' says Richard.



Hebel blocks on a concrete base form the main structure of the statue.



A cement render finish gives it the appearance of being made from stone.

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So mount an ordinary letterbox on a Federation-style stand, made from an 1850 x 90 x 90mm H4 treated pine post.

The letterbox itself is secured to a 400 x 90 x 90mm support arm with a decorative flourish at the end. Brace the arm with a fancy verandah bracket and top the post with a turned timber capital.

Adjust the post so the letterbox is at a comfortable height, allowing for 600mm of post in the ground.

With more than 45 shapes and sizes of letterboxes to suit any D.I.Y. project, head to your local Bunnings Warehouse for expert team member advice or visit bunnings.com.au.

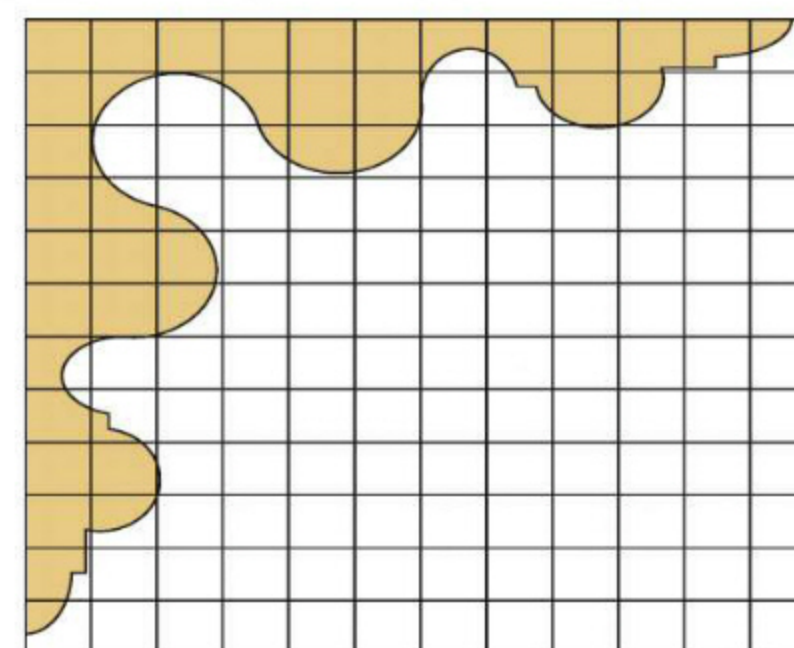


Sandleford Dune Post Mounted Mailbox in White, \$10.40.



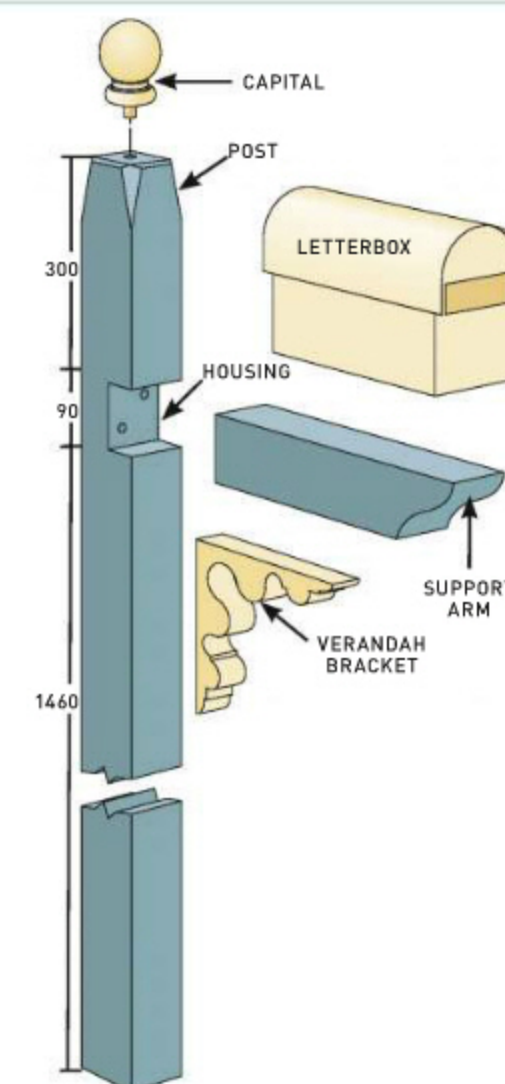
Australia Post recommends the letter slot is positioned 900-1200mm from the ground.

»Letterbox measurements in mm



BRACKET TEMPLATE
20 x 20mm grid

Buy a readymade verandah bracket or transfer the template onto treated pine to cut DIY with a jigsaw.



4 CUT THE HOUSING by making 45mm deep relief cuts using a circular saw, then chiselling out the waste. Drill 6.5mm clearance holes and secure the arm with 100mm bugle screws.



5 FINISH THE STAND by touching up the paintwork. Use adhesive to attach the capital, then secure a store-bought or DIY verandah bracket with adhesive and two 50mm x 8g screws.

»Sinking the post

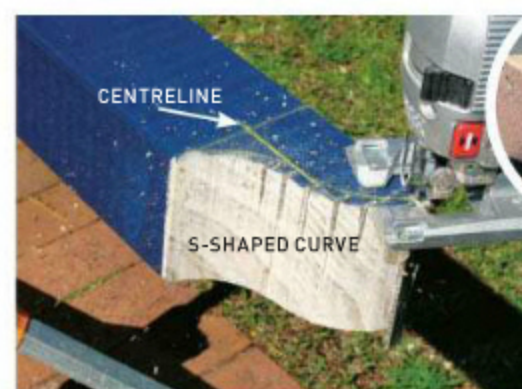
Excavate a 700mm deep hole 200mm in diameter, then add a 100mm layer of gravel in the base.

Position the post and plumb it using a spirit level before securing with quick-set concrete. Slope the top away from the post to improve water runoff, then leave to dry.

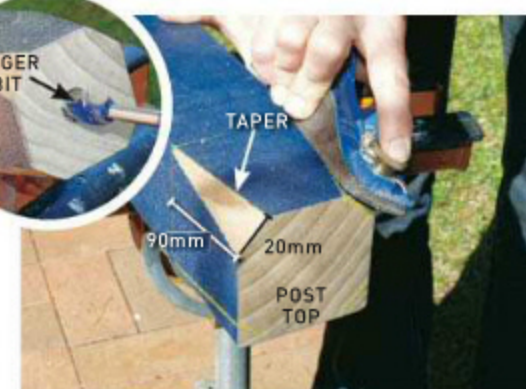
Secure the letterbox to the arm using 25mm x 8g panhead screws through the pre-drilled mounting holes in the base of the box.



1 MARK THE CURVE at the end of the support arm by marking the centreline on the timber and using a paint tin to trace a smooth arc above and below it, joining them into an S-shaped curve.



2 CUT THE CURVE using a jigsaw with an extra-long blade to make parallel relief cuts to the marked curve. Cut away the waste to create the curve, then sand smooth using a belt sander.



3 MARK A TAPER of 90 x 20mm on each top corner, then chamfer the post using a block plane. Use a 20mm auger bit to drill a 30mm deep hole for the capital in the centre of the top.

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THIS MONTH

Start planning for the new season so you can enjoy lots of lovely blooms and delicious vegies

Sow now

Plant the seeds of these flowers in every climate zone.

- CALIFORNIAN POPPY
- EVERLASTING DAISY
- PORTULACA
- NASTURTIUM
- RUDBECKIA

Grow now

Raise these vegies for an early summer harvest.

- CARROT
- POTATO
- RADISH
- SILVERBEET
- TOMATO

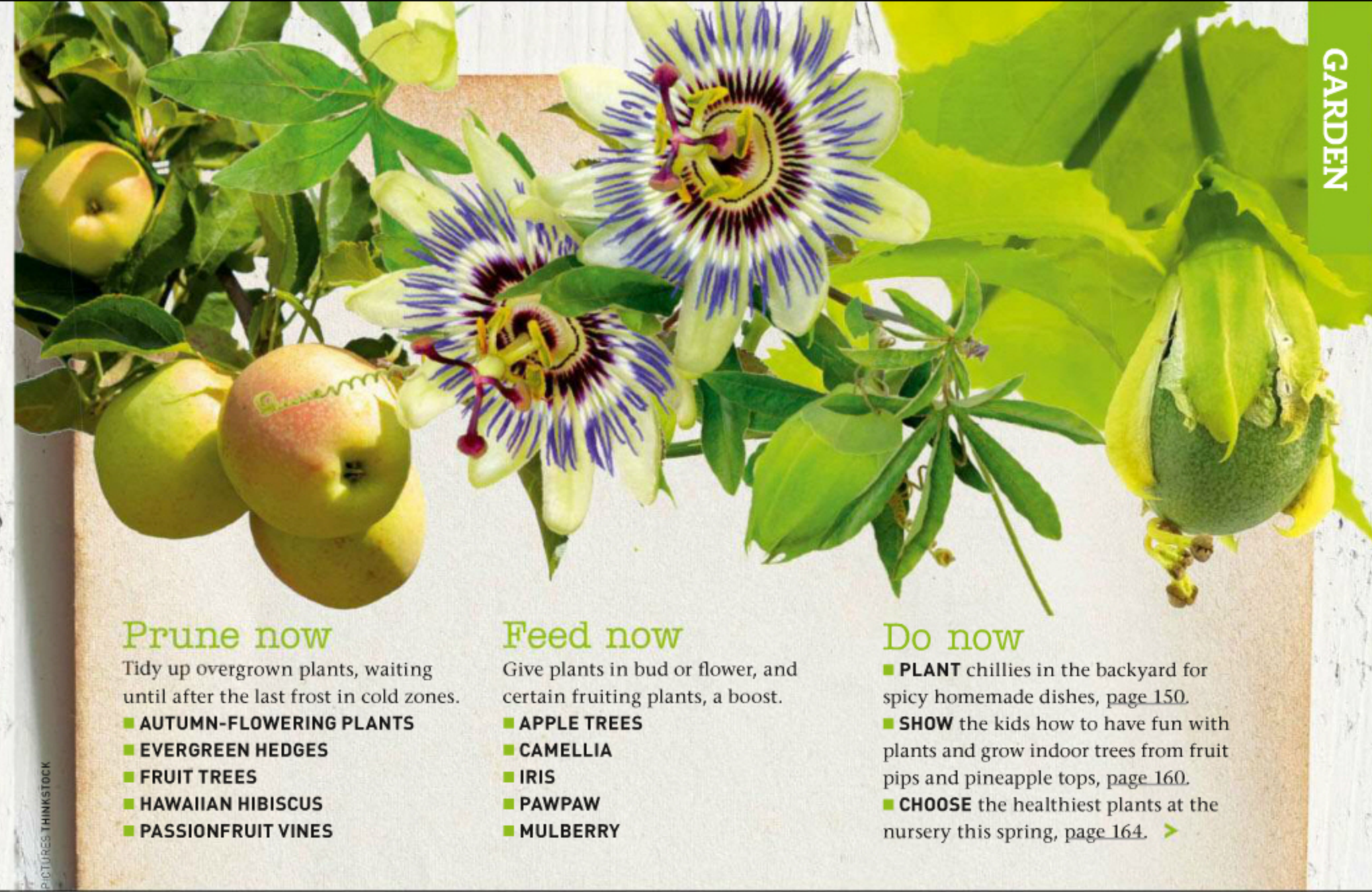
Harvest now

Crops sown in late autumn are now ready to pick.

- BEAN
- CAPSICUM
- FENNEL
- PEA
- LETTUCE



PICTURES THINKSTOCK



PICTURES THINKSTOCK

Prune now

Tidy up overgrown plants, waiting until after the last frost in cold zones.

- AUTUMN-FLOWERING PLANTS
- EVERGREEN HEDGES
- FRUIT TREES
- HAWAIIAN HIBISCUS
- PASSIONFRUIT VINES

Feed now

Give plants in bud or flower, and certain fruiting plants, a boost.

- APPLE TREES
- CAMELLIA
- IRIS
- PAWPAW
- MULBERRY

Do now

- **PLANT** chillies in the backyard for spicy homemade dishes, page 150.
- **SHOW** the kids how to have fun with plants and grow indoor trees from fruit pips and pineapple tops, page 160.
- **CHOOSE** the healthiest plants at the nursery this spring, page 164. ➤



Jobs for early spring

Get ready for the busiest time in the garden with a general tidy-up and a little TLC for roses.

- **DEADHEAD** winter-blooming shrubs that have finished flowering.
- **CUT BACK** and prune to shape evergreen summer-flowering plants like mandevilla.
- **PLANT** evergreens and dormant deciduous shrubs after the last frost in cool zones.
- **PRUNE** native plants lightly in subtropical and tropical areas.
- **FEED** roses in warm climates regularly, and water and mulch.
- **SPRAY** young rose seedlings with preventative fungicide.
- **CUT OFF** parts of trees and shrubs damaged by winter storms or frost.

■ **TRANSPLANT** container-grown roses into garden beds and water regularly until established.

■ **HOSE OFF** aphids on new shoots and check roses for any other pests and diseases.

■ **WATER** and feed lawns in all zones.

■ **TAKE** cuttings of frangipani, hibiscus and poinsettia in hot climate zones.



FRANGIPANI

PICTURE THINKSTOCK

Top pick

Covered with scented white blooms during spring, *Choisya* 'White Dazzler' is a versatile evergreen shrub.

Called the Hedge with an Edge, it can be used for formal and informal hedging, and in mixed borders. Or you can grow it in containers to take advantage of its 1.2 x 1.2m size.

Prune it to look formal or let it grow naturally, then trim it to shape after flowering finishes.

Bred to have increased frost tolerance and a more compact habit, this *choisya*, from PMA (pma.com.au) is easy-care with low water needs once established.

Give it a position in full sun and a feed in early spring to enjoy its deep green foliage year round.



CHOISYA
'WHITE DAZZLER'



AUSTRALIAN
GARDEN SHOW

A day at the show

Marking the official start of the annual NSW spring floral and garden event season, the Australian Garden Show is on at Sydney's Centennial Park from 4-7 September.

There's something for everyone, including a fresh flower market, free children's area and floristry workshops.

Don Burke and Graham Ross are just two of the famous Aussie gardeners taking part, with Indira Naidoo and Myles Baldwin returning as ambassadors for the show.

For more information, go to australiangardenshowsydney.com.au.

ryobi.com.au

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Sow and grow essential ingredients for the famous and flavoursome cuisines of the Americas, Asia, Europe, France and the Mediterranean.

Every seed packet has tips on how to cook and use the crop, with full recipes available online at johnsons-seeds.com.au.

Great guide

Don't put off starting that edible garden any longer. With *Grow Your Own Fruit & Veg* by Alan Buckingham (Penguin, \$40) you can get going right away.

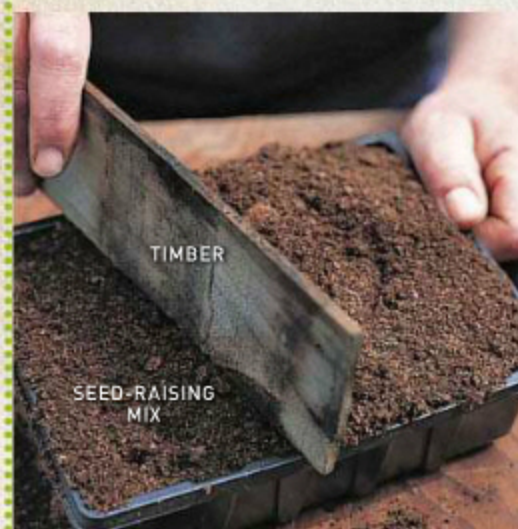
The varieties showcased in the book are all Aussie faves for temperate and tropical gardens, and easy-to-follow seasonal charts take the guesswork out of sowing, transplanting and harvesting.

Featuring step-by-step pictures and troubleshooting guides, this book is full of practical advice for hands-on gardening.



Sowing seeds

Spring is the prime time to sow seeds and while the basic technique is the same for vegies and flowers, the heat and light requirements may differ. For best results, wash the trays thoroughly and use a seed-raising mix not potting mix.



1 OVERFILL A TRAY with moist seed-raising mix, then level and firm the surface with a piece of timber.

TIP A tray cover stops the mix drying out, but remove it after germination.



2 SPRINKLE THE SEEDS evenly and sparingly across the surface of the soil. Sieve a thin layer of mix over the top, then mist with water or stand the tray in shallow water until the surface is moist.



3 WATER THE SEEDLINGS regularly and when they're large enough to handle, thin out and transplant into more trays or individual pots to give them enough space to grow.

PICTURE (TOP) THINKSTOCK

Festival of flowers

The biggest floral festival in the southern hemisphere is back from Saturday 13 September at Canberra's Commonwealth Park.

In its 27th year, Floriade is a month-long extravaganza of blooms, demonstrations and fun.

The 2014 theme is Passion, and the festival features four themed weeks, kicking off with Arts and Culture, followed by Food and Wine, Family Friendly, then Outdoors and Adventure.

Finishing up on Sunday 12 October, this celebration of spring offers heaps to see and do, including the popular NightFest, a twilight event featuring light shows, comedians and markets.

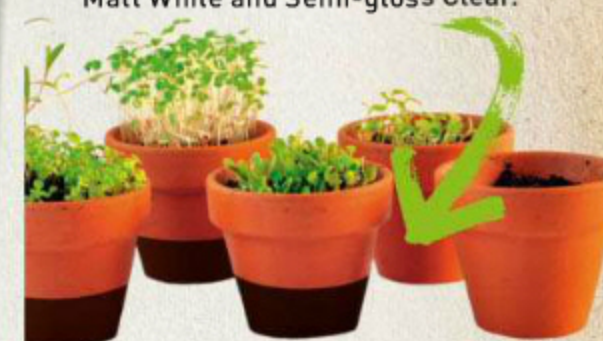
To find out more, visit floriadeaustralia.com.



Designer pots

Get the paint-dipped look outdoors with Rust-Oleum Peel Coat, \$27, a versatile spray paint that provides a soft, rubberised coating for decorating almost anything (rustoleum.com.au). Use it on pots, chairs and buckets, then peel it off to change the look.

It leaves no residue and also works well as a comfort grip on the handles of garden tools. Washable and durable, it comes in Matt Black, Matt White and Semi-gloss Clear.



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BUILT STRONGER TO LAST LONGER

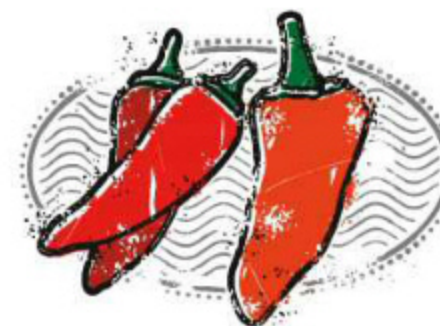
Kelso
TRADE TOOLS



Did you know?

Smokin' Ed's 'Carolina Reaper' chilli holds the Guinness World Record title for the hottest chilli in the world. Grown and harvested by Ed Currie and the Puckerbutt Pepper Company in the USA, it rates 1,569,300 on the Scoville Scale. This could be too hot for even the most ardent chilli lover! If you find yourself with a fiery mouthful of chilli, the most effective remedy is yoghurt or milk, especially when combined with cucumber as in raita, the Indian condiment. Don't reach for cold water or beer, as they can actually increase the heat.

PICTURE: GETTY IMAGES



Some like it hot

Easy to grow, good for you and boasting a multitude of culinary uses, chillies are a great addition to your diet

WORDS CHERYL MADDOCKS

They bring tears to your eyes, make your nose run and burn your mouth, but chillies are still loved by millions of people worldwide.

Chillies belong to the *Solanaceae* or nightshade family, which also includes potatoes, tomatoes and eggplants. Native to South America, they have been part of our diet for centuries.

About 6000BC, the inhabitants of Brazil and Peru began eating wild chillies, known as aji. Traces from this period have been found in Peruvian burial sites, so they were cherished enough to be carried into the afterlife.

They're good for your health, too. As well as being high in vitamin C, eating them in a meal helps control insulin levels, according to research by the University of Tasmania.

Regular consumption of chillies is also reputed to be beneficial for inflammatory diseases, and they have long been used in herbal medicine to stimulate the circulatory and digestive systems.

Handle with care

A chemical in chillies, called capsaicin, gives them their heat and therapeutic value. And the more a chilli contains, the hotter it will be.

Chillies are rated on a heat scale known as the Scoville Scale, which is divided into heat units. It is based on the dilution of ground chillies in sugar water to measure their pungency.

Most of the capsaicin is contained in the seeds and white ribs inside the fruit. Removing both from the chilli will reduce the heat.

Capsaicin levels in chillies are affected by the climate and environment, as well as by the cultivar.

Cool weather and too much nitrogen in the soil can slow the production of capsaicin.

TIP Wear gloves or wash your hands after handling chillies, and don't rub your eyes or other sensitive areas. ➤

Pohlmans 140mm Ornamental Chilli, from \$8. pohlmans.com.au



Storing chillies

Chillies can be dried and stored or frozen fresh, whole or chopped. **DRY** in the sun outdoors or on a windowsill, then cut in half lengthways and place on baking paper. Turn every day until dry.

Or thread the stalks on cotton and hang in a well-ventilated, dry spot for at least three weeks.

STORE chillies when dried in an airtight container for up to a year. **FREEZE** fresh chillies in freezer bags for about six months.



Grow your own

Chillies come from the same wild species as the capsicum, and there are more than 200 varieties of these short-lived perennial plants. In many parts of the world they are known as hot peppers.

Chilli fruit follows white flowers and comes in lots of shapes and sizes. Depending on the variety, they can ripen from green to shades of yellow, orange, brown, purple or red. The more mature a chilli is, the hotter it will be.

These warm-season plants can be grown in tropical and subtropical climates all year round.

If you grow your own, you will be rewarded with a bountiful harvest.

The seeds can be sown from August to December in temperate areas and from September to mid-November only in cold climates. They are also available as seedlings from nurseries.

SOW seeds 6mm deep in punnets, gently pricking out the seedlings and

transferring them to 100mm pots, giving them a sunny position. Plant them in the garden in a sheltered spot in full sun when they are 150mm high.

The soil should be free-draining and enriched with either compost, aged cow manure or Yates Dynamic Lifter before planting.

TIP Chilli seeds can also be sown directly into garden beds.

MULCH around the plants using either lucerne hay or pea straw.

FEED when flowers appear with Yates Dynamic Lifter Plus Fruit Food.

Avoid fertilisers high in nitrogen, especially when the plants are young, so there is not too much leaf growth at the expense of fruit.

Decorative and edible, chillies will grow well in pots.

Use a premium potting mix, water regularly and give them periodic feeds of a soluble complete fertiliser.



Mr Fothergill's Chilli Shake Seeds, about \$3. mrfothergills-seeds-bulbs.com.au

Choose a variety ▼



HOT

HABANERO This chilli has small tangerine-coloured bell-shaped fruit.
CAYSAN The long green tapered fruit of this plant turn bright red.
THAI The fruit of this variety change colour through shades of green, cream, purple and red.
CHA CHA Eye-catching white fruit tinged with purple mature to orange.



MEDIUM

JALAPENO This variety has green medium-sized fruit that mature from purple-black to red.
JALAPENO MEXICANA The green fruit turn purple-black upon maturity.
ANAHEIM This variety has thick-fleshed fruit that are ideal for stuffing.
SERRANO Turning from green to red, the fruit of this chilli are thin-skinned.



MILD

SEVILLE A compact variety that produces masses of small fruit that change to orange as they ripen.
SALSA Perfect for pots, this compact plant has lots of small fruit that turn a brilliant red as they mature.
HUNGARIAN YELLOW WAX The long fruit of this chilli change from green to yellow and light orange.



In the kitchen

Try these easy ways to use chillies in your everyday meals.

- **TOSS** into pasta dishes and stir-fries.
- **MAKE** chilli oil by warming 500ml of olive oil in a pot. Add 20g of dried red chillies and a couple of whole fresh red chillies, then heat for 3-4 minutes.

Decant into a sterilised bottle and seal. Store in a dark, cool spot and use after 3-4 months.

- **MARINATE** king prawns in chilli, lime and garlic, then cook on the barbie.

- **TURN** fresh chillies into sambal oelek, an Indonesian chilli paste.

Remove the stems, then chop the chillies in a blender. Add a little vinegar and salt, then process until a paste forms. Put in a sterilised jar and keep in the fridge to add to recipes.

- **ADD** chillies to your favourite meat, fish or chicken marinade.
- **MAKE** chilli jam. ➤

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| • Electric Orange | • Orange | • White |

Sunpatiens are available at your local Bunnings garden centre

PICTURES (TOP, BOTTOM CENTRE) LEE DASHWELL (BOTTOM RIGHT) THINKSTOCK

PICTURE GETTY IMAGES



Grow your own chillies so you have a ready supply of spicy fruit to add to your meals.

Chilli prawn and pea stir-fry

PREPARATION TIME 10 mins

COOKING TIME 6 mins

SERVES 4

INGREDIENTS

25g fresh ginger
1 fresh red chilli
300g white cabbage
1 tablespoon oil or canola oil
1 teaspoon sesame oil
300g frozen peas
350g peeled cooked large prawns
4 tablespoons chopped fresh coriander

1 PEEL and finely grate the ginger.

Chop the chilli into slivers and discard the seeds. Slice the cabbage into thin strips, about 3mm wide.

2 HEAT the oils in a large frying pan over high heat. Stir-fry the ginger and chilli for a few seconds, then add the peas. Stir-fry for 2 minutes or until they are completely thawed.

3 ADD the cabbage to the pan and stir-fry for 3 minutes. Add the prawns and cook for 1 minute to heat them through. Toss in the coriander, stir, then serve immediately.

COOK'S TIPS

■ SELECT the chillies according to how hot you want the dish to taste.

The strength is usually stated on the packaging. Mild to medium are good with light ingredients, and starchy accompaniments, such as noodles and rice, will absorb the heat.

■ USE ordinary or baby frozen peas in this recipe. Both work well, but baby peas are sweeter.

■ SWAP the prawns for small fresh scallops, and use them whole or slice large ones.

RECIPE READER'S DIGEST SUPER FOODS SUPER EASY © 2012

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PHOTOS: MATTHEW TURNER



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All about bush tucker

Living off the land provides a healthy and free seasonal diet full of nutrients capable of fuelling an active lifestyle

WORDS MONICA NYE

Hundreds of kilometres from supermarkets and fast food outlets in remote parts of Australia, many indigenous people live off the land with a bush tucker diet.

The food-hunting survival skills, passed down for generations, ensure outback inhabitants can survive on a bush diet and lifestyle, marked by long-distance walkabouts crucial for fleeing seasonal floods and famine.

This DIY style of sustenance includes foraging for witchetty grubs, picking macadamias, digging for honey ants and fishing for barramundi, which makes a bush tucker diet low in fat, high in protein and preservative-free.

Clarence Slooke, Educational Coordinator for Aboriginal Programs at The Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, says that while it is traditionally associated with the outback, edible

native fauna and flora is available anywhere in Australia, so the term bush tucker is really a misnomer.

'Any native equivalent seems to automatically end up with the word bush before it, like bush tomato, bush potato and bush banana,' says Clarence.

'This is mainly because these foods are indeed found in the drier climes of what is termed the outback.' >

Commercialising bush plants

According to Clarence, the two big commercially available bush medicines are eucalyptus and tea tree oil, while macadamia nuts are Australia's major commercially grown bush food and are exported overseas.



EUCALYPTUS

The leaves were traditionally used to make an infusion or oil for treating pains, sinus congestion, fever and colds. High-grade eucalyptus oil is created from the blue mallee tree.



TEA TREE

This oil, sourced from the leaves of the *Melaleuca alternifolia*, or tea tree, can be used to treat coughs and colds. The leaves can be made into a poultice for wounds or infused to treat sore throats.



MACADAMIA

This small but nutritious Australian nut is the only native crop to be traded internationally as a food product, and 70% of our harvest is exported to more than 40 countries.

PICTURES: ALAMY, GETTY IMAGES, THINKSTOCK



Native gardens ▼

Bush food gardens are fairly low maintenance and reward the home grower with ingredients to add a uniquely Aussie flavour to a wide range of recipes.

To grow bush tucker, start with easily available plants such as riberies and warrigal greens, and be realistic about the yields.

Choose plants suited to your climate zone and conditions, like self-sowing endemic natives.

Hardy natives suited to the Aussie climate, bush tucker plants have little need for fertilisers or pesticides.

EUCALYPTUS
BLOSSOM

Native Aussie foods

'Many other foods still grouped under the bush tucker label are actually rainforest plants, such as lemon myrtle and Davidson's plum, which are grown in more coastal locations,' says Clarence.

Bush tucker is defined as native fauna and flora. It includes protein such as crocodile and kangaroo meat, nuts, seeds, leaves, berries and flowers, as well as other edible plants.

Some of the survival skills vital to indigenous people include simple ways of telling whether a plant is poisonous.

'It all comes back to cultural knowledge that's traditionally passed down through the generations as a part of day-to-day learning and survival,' says Clarence.

'An Aussie bush tucker diet made for a very healthy Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, prior to the introduction of European foods like flour and sugar.'

'I'm sure there are many people in remote communities who still rely solely on traditional food sources for periods throughout the year.

'Once upon a time, Aboriginal people lived entirely off the land quite happily for over 40,000 years.'

Bush survival tricks

Living off the land is easy when you know how to avoid potentially lethal vegetation, says Clarence.

'There are a few little tricks to know if you're in an area with vegetation that's not familiar, so you don't eat the wrong thing,' he says.

'Rub a bit of the plant on an area of sensitive skin like the inside of your wrist. Wait a while and if it doesn't react, then rub a little more of the plant on the inside of your mouth.'

'Again, if you wait a while without a reaction, taste a bit. If there's still no reaction, it's fairly safe to assume it's not poisonous and safe to eat.'

Global appeal

Apart from food, Aussie flora also provides effective medicinal remedies.

Traditionally, bush remedies were used to treat tired and aching bodies, run down from the constant demands of fending off enemies and predators, or constantly setting up home in a safer, more sheltered place.

The reputation and popularity of bush tucker food has now ventured far beyond the camp fire, and the coastal and rainforest areas of Australia, as well as the tourist confines of The Royal Botanic Garden tours.

Today, it also enjoys a global reputation for food and medicinal plant applications.



Parkland Australian Bush Foods 180mm Warrigal Greens, \$14, from Bunnings.

PICTURES (FAR RIGHT) TALISA CLAVIJO (RIGHT) GETTY IMAGES

Preparing the tucker

Aussie bush tucker is traditionally eaten raw and is usually consumed as soon as it's sourced.

This is primarily due to a lack of refrigeration which, when combined with the hot and dry climate as well as the lack of preservatives, means the food is likely to perish fast.

A crude mortar and pestle may be used for grinding leaves, herbs or spices for flavouring.

If meat or fish is being eaten, it is cooked on a camp fire, which would then double as a heat source to take the chill off long, cold desert nights.

Finger lime, mountain pepper and lemon myrtle can be used in sauces and seasonings for barramundi, crocodile and other meat.

Clarence picks a native ginger berry at The Royal Botanic Garden Sydney.



Common edible plants ▼



BRUSH CHERRY



BUNYA NUT



DAVIDSON'S PLUM



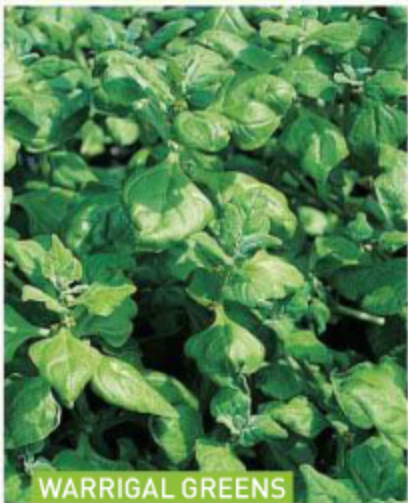
LEMON MYRTLE



QUANDONG



RIBERRY



WARRIGAL GREENS



FINGER LIME

PICTURES (TOP) THINKSTOCK (BUNYA NUTS) ALAMY (QUANDONG) GETTY IMAGES

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Fun plants for kids

Show junior green thumbs how easy it is to grow a tree from a seed, pip or cutting

The best way to get kids into gardening is to go for fast results and maximum enjoyment.

It's easy to grow a mini pineapple, date or lemon tree in a pot indoors, but don't expect too much in the way of fruit from your new house plants.

Growing from a seed, pip, root or top using grocery items or leftovers is simple. The seedlings usually emerge in just weeks but fruit can take years.

A great way to teach budding gardeners, it's also rewarding and a top way to create lots of free plants.

Sprout tops and roots

Try growing pieces of carrot top, ginger root or a sweet potato tuber from the supermarket.

The leafy part of a pineapple can be sprouted into a plant, as well as beetroot and parsnip tops.

CARROT Cut off a carrot top just below where the leaves grow.

Sit it in a shallow saucer of water or push it gently into the surface of a small pot of damp potting mix.

Ferny leaves will soon appear, and eventually small white flowers.

GINGER Fill a seed tray with potting mix and push in a piece of fresh ginger root, making sure the knobby eyes are facing up. Half-cover the root with moist mix and leave in a warm spot.

It will soon start to produce shoots and roots, but for the ginger plant to thrive and flower, it will need high temperatures and humidity.

SWEET POTATO Buy a sweet potato tuber and bury it in a grow bag or a tub filled with potting mix.

Keep the bag or tub indoors in a warm, well-lit position, such as on

a windowsill. The sweet potato will gradually produce shoots and roots.

Earth up the shoots as they develop and when the stems start to wilt, dig up the plant and harvest the sweet potatoes buried in the mix.

PINEAPPLE Choose a whole fresh pineapple that has a medium-sized, healthy-looking green top.

Cut off the top using a sharp knife, then strip off the small basal leaves to reveal a clear stump of about 25mm. Leave the stump to dry until roots develop around the base.

Rub off any dead tissue and leaves, then gently push the stump into a small pot filled with an open, free-draining potting mix.

Position the pot in a sunny spot with temperatures of at least 18°C.

New foliage will develop through the top. As the plant grows, replant it in a larger container and within a few years, it should produce a baby pineapple from a central shoot. ➤



Planting peanuts

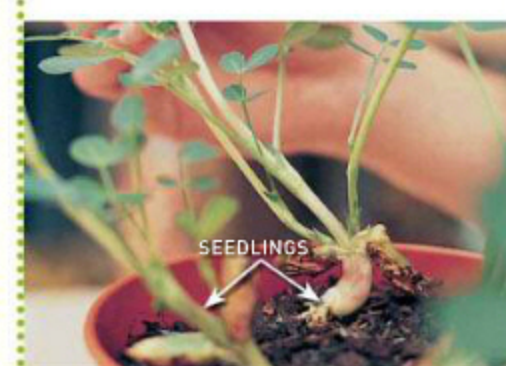
Use shelled, raw nuts, as salted or roasted ones won't germinate.



1 PUSH THE NUTS 25mm deep into a pot of moist seed-raising mix. Seal the pot in a polythene bag and leave in a dark place for one to two weeks to germinate.



2 REMOVE THE BAG and position in a well-lit spot with at least 75% humidity and a temperature of 20-30°C. Water well and mist daily to maintain humidity.



3 WHEN THE SEEDLINGS are 150mm tall, transplant each one to a 300mm pot. Reduce the humidity levels while the plants are flowering to aid pollination.



PICTURE SHUTTERSTOCK

PICTURE (TOP RIGHT) THINKSTOCK



Get the kids to save their apple pips and pot them up for gardening fun.

Pips and seeds

Seeds from store-bought vegies and fruit, such as tomatoes, capsicums, eggplants and melons, will germinate easily on a sunny windowsill.

You can also try growing seeds from apples, citrus and more exotic fruits you've just eaten.

Any fruit from your seedling tree will be different to the original fruit, but the results are often interesting.

The exceptions are nectarines and peaches. They can produce true to the original fruit on a tree grown from a stone and trained against a sunny wall.

TEMPERATE FRUIT TREES For apple, pear, plum, cherry or peach trees, plant three pips or stones into seed-raising mix in a small pot.

Seal the pot in a polythene bag, put it in the fridge for a few weeks to speed up germination, then position it in a cool, light spot indoors, keeping the potting mix moist.

Separate the seedlings once they are big enough to handle and plant them individually in larger pots.

Water regularly and feed during the growing season with a liquid high-potash fertiliser.

CITRUS TREES Some of the prettiest plants can be raised from the pips of oranges, lemons and grapefruit.

Citrus plants eventually form bushy shrubs and produce flowers and then edible fruit, but it may taste sour.

If the plants become large, prune them to a manageable size, although this will affect fruit production.

TROPICAL TREES The stones of a few exotic fruits like avocados and dates develop into interesting house plants.

Date palms can be enjoyed indoors for a few years and the seedling tree of an avocado plant grows tall and looks like a rubber plant.

An avocado grown from seed may mature fully and produce fruit if it is grown in a heated conservatory.

Remove an avocado stone and cut 10mm off the pointed tip.

Push the stone into potting mix with the cut tip just showing. Add gravel to the pot to improve drainage and keep the soil moist, not wet.

TIP For a bushier shape, pinch out the growing tip of the seedling.



Growing a lemon tree

Citrus pips germinate easily at any time, but they will produce better plants if sown in spring or early summer. **TIP** Feed lemon trees in spring and summer with a citrus plant food.



1 PLANT SIX PIPS about 10mm deep and spaced evenly in a small pot of seed-raising mix, then water well. Cover the mix with the base of a clear plastic bottle.



2 SEPARATE THE SEEDLINGS when they're big enough to handle. They should appear after about a month. Transplant them into individual small pots filled with lime-free potting mix.



3 POSITION THE POTS in a cool spot in bright but indirect light. As the plants grow, replant them into larger pots. Pinch-prune for a bushy shape or trim to size in late winter.

PICTURES (MAIN) SHUTTERSTOCK (LEMONS) THINKSTOCK

Sow a date stone ▼



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1 SOAK THE STONES in water for 48 hours, then plant vertically in a pot filled with potting mix. Cover with a polythene bag, then leave the pot in a warm cupboard.

2 UNCOVER THE POT as soon as the seeds sprout. Position in a sunny spot and repot the shoots when 100mm tall in individual pots in a peat-based mix. Don't overwater.

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Take home healthy plants

Head to the nursery with the know-how to pick the healthiest plants and get your garden growing

WORDS AND PICTURES JECICA BLAKE

Spring is in the air and most of us are keen to get growing and pop a few plants in the ground.

But it's disappointing to bring home an armful of pot plants only to have them curl up and die a week after getting them in the ground.

The problem could have started at the nursery. Most treat their potted plants with care, but some may get overlooked and become unhealthy.

Big isn't best

It's tempting to buy the tallest or biggest plant, but equating size with potential can be a waste of money.

The same applies to those bursting with blooms. A better option is to go for tight, compact growth with buds and avoid any plants in fruit.

Look for a weed-free, sturdy young plant with lots of new shoots and buds, and a healthy root system that will flourish.

Don't buy one that's twice the size now, as it may end up spare, feeble and gaunt. If you give a sturdy young plant a good start, it will soon thrive.

This advice applies to climbers as well, because while the plant with the longest stems could end up producing the most vigorous growth, it equally may not. ➤



Fiskars Aluminium Trowel, \$6. au.fiskars.com



Look for hardy plants that are weed-free.



VINE WEEVIL LARVAE

Avoiding pests and diseases

When buying from a nursery or garden centre, it's unlikely you will encounter many plant problems.

At other outlets, unless you check that a plant has a clean bill of health, you risk buying an ailing specimen and spreading pests and diseases around your garden.

To check for signs of pests, hold the plant up to the light and examine both sides of the leaves and the stems, particularly the new growth.

Black deposits on the leaves indicate fungi growing on the excreta of sap-sucking insects, so look for aphids. Discoloured leaves may be

due to nutrient deficiency or another disease.

The best way to test for vine weevils in the soil is to give the stem a gentle pull. If the roots are being eaten, the plant will easily come away from the soil.

PICTURE (INSET) GETTY IMAGES



Make sure your spring garden beds flourish by buying only the best plants.

Planting in the garden

Growing from seed is rewarding, but for an instant seasonal garden bed, transplant potted specimens from the nursery.



1 CHOOSE A SITE with the right amount of light and type of soil for the plant. Dig a hole as deep as the pot and twice as wide using a trowel.



3 ADD A SMALL HANDFUL of slow-release fertiliser, then position the plant in the hole so the top of the rootball is level with the soil.



2 WATER THE POTS thoroughly to drench the mix with a watering can, then gently lift the plant, slightly breaking up the rootball by hand.



4 BACKFILL THE HOLE using the trowel, then firm down the soil using your fingers, but don't compact it. Water the plant in well.



Add mulch to the garden bed to help keep the soil moist and repel weeds.

Checklist

When you're searching for the right plant for that empty spot in your garden, look for these signs and symptoms. If you have any concerns, talk to the nursery staff.

Read the label

Only buy plants suited to the planting site. You don't want a bougainvillea against a south-facing wall, as it won't flower. And a clivia planted in full sun will get leaf burn and flower poorly.

TIP If the soil is too acidic, dig over the garden bed and add lime or dolomite to raise the pH level.

Inspect the roots

Lift up the pot and look underneath it. If roots are growing through the drainage holes, the plant could be root-bound.

When it is planted out, the roots grow in circles around the rootball rather than spreading out.

This eventually leads to the death of the plant, as it can't take up enough air, water and nutrients.

If you buy a root-bound plant, tease out the roots before planting.

TIP Watch for problems such as root rot, caused by overwatering.

Measure the soil level

If the plant is potted very high in the pot, the water will flow over the side when it is watered, resulting in dry, stressed plants. The soil should stop about 25mm below the pot's edge.

Look for growth

If an established plant shows poor growth there's a good reason for it, so make sure it isn't stunted.

It may come from weak stock, so it will probably never amount to much, or it may have been badly neglected.



To avoid a costly mistake, look for lots of healthy buds, not stem growth.

The fact that it has been well watered on the day you see it doesn't mean it hadn't gone without a drink for days beforehand, or that it hadn't been lying on its side in a shady corner.

Don't buy until you've found a healthier, more vigorous specimen.

Do a health check

Look for signs of neglect, such as green foliage that is yellowing, leaves with brittle tips or petals collecting in the potting mix.

Any of these symptoms indicate the plant has been stressed and it is best avoided. It may have suffered from too little water, not enough nutrition or another type of neglect.

Also look out for weeds, as apart from being a sign of poor care, you don't want them catching a ride home with you and spreading to other pots and garden beds.

PICTURE (BOTTOM) GETTY IMAGES



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5 ways to enrich garden soil

Add compost

A well-rounded source of goodness, compost allows water to penetrate the soil. It provides slow-release nutrients, attracts worms and encourages a healthy root system. Best of all, you can make it from kitchen scraps.

Use bark

These mulches take longer to break down, so they don't need applying as often. They shade the soil, help retain moisture, repel weeds and look decorative, but don't add many nutrients to the plants.

Spread grass

Grass clippings add nutrients as they decompose. They also provide shade, keeping roots cool and reducing water loss in hot weather. Mix them with leaf litter or dig into the soil to avoid them forming a mat that will repel water.

Use manure

Cow manure improves soil micro-organisms and chicken manure, which is high in nitrogen and phosphorus, is great for the lawn and vegie patch. **TIP** Don't use manure from carnivores, such as dogs and cats.

Lay straw

Lucerne hay and pea straw strengthen the soil, so they're highly recommended. They also break down fairly quickly, which gives the soil a quick nutrient injection, and can be dug in to speed up the process.



PICTURES: GETTY IMAGES, THINKSTOCK

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