

62

PAGES OF OUTDOOR LIVING & ENTERTAINING

AUSTRALIAN

WIN A \$522 TOOL PACK page 156

Handyman

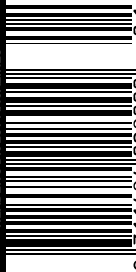
REVAMPYOUR GARDEN WITH
12 FESTIVE FIXES**INSTALL**FRENCH DOORS DIY
FOR JUST \$1065**CREATE**CHRISTMAS GIFTS
& DECORATIONS**BUILD THIS****SPLIT-LEVEL
DECK**page
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here!*

Fun furniture makeovers

page 102

*Grow*
lush begonias*Make*
cool treats

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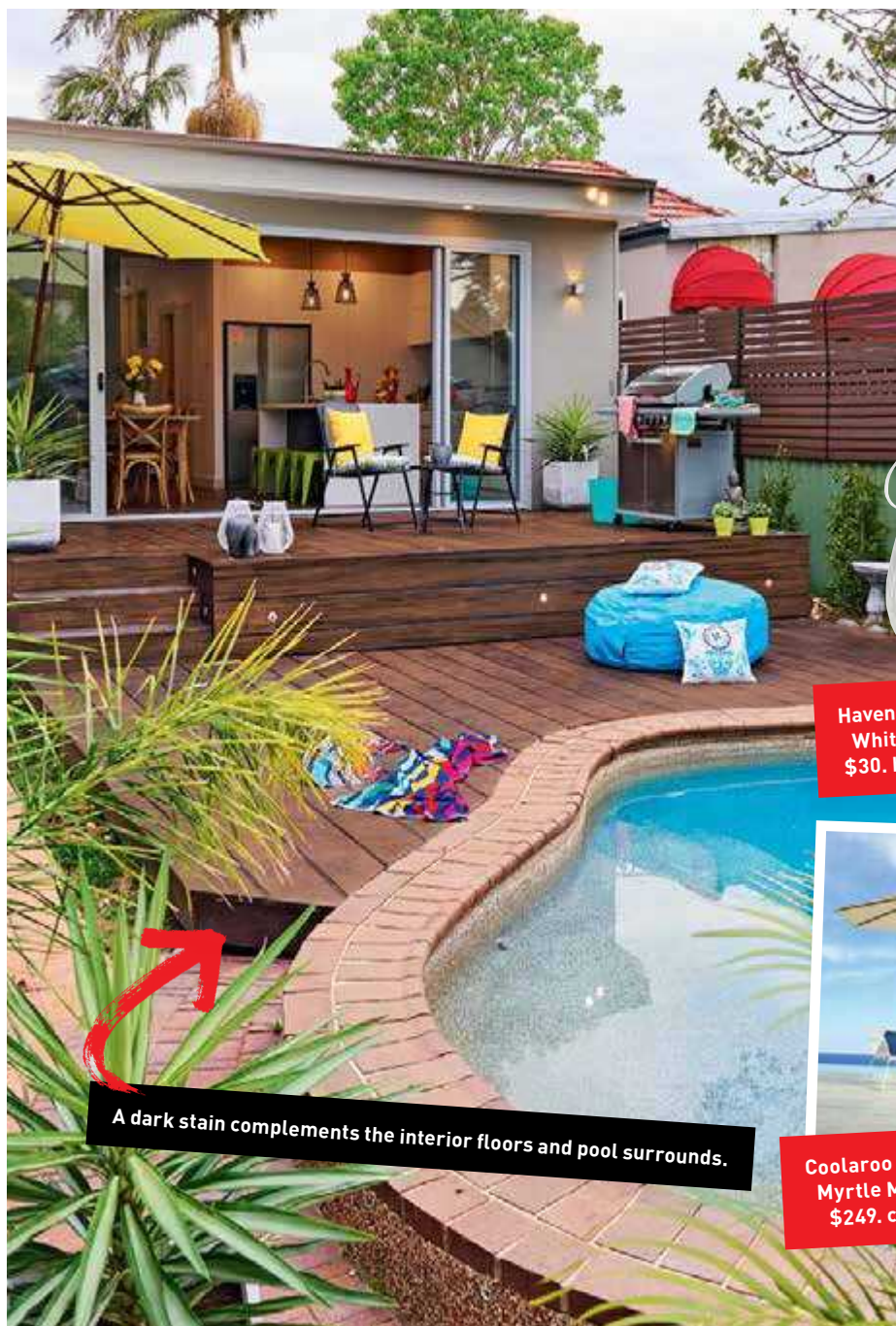


**GET THE
LOOK**

LOVE THE COVER?

Create an entertainer's delight by linking the house and pool with a designer deck

MAIN PICTURE SUE FERRIS



This split-level deck was designed to create a seamless flow from the open-plan kitchen and living spaces to the swimming pool, and features integrated lighting.

With room for a barbecue and outdoor setting, the top level is for entertaining while the lower deck is for lounging and sunbathing.

Large pot plants add greenery, and cushions add colour and extra seating.



Haven 31cm Pure Reflections White Tear Drop Lantern, \$30. haveninspired.com.au



Mojo Sky Blue MyPod Outdoor Cushion, \$150. mojobrand.com.au



Marquee Glen Hill Three-piece Bistro Setting, \$129. bunnings.com.au

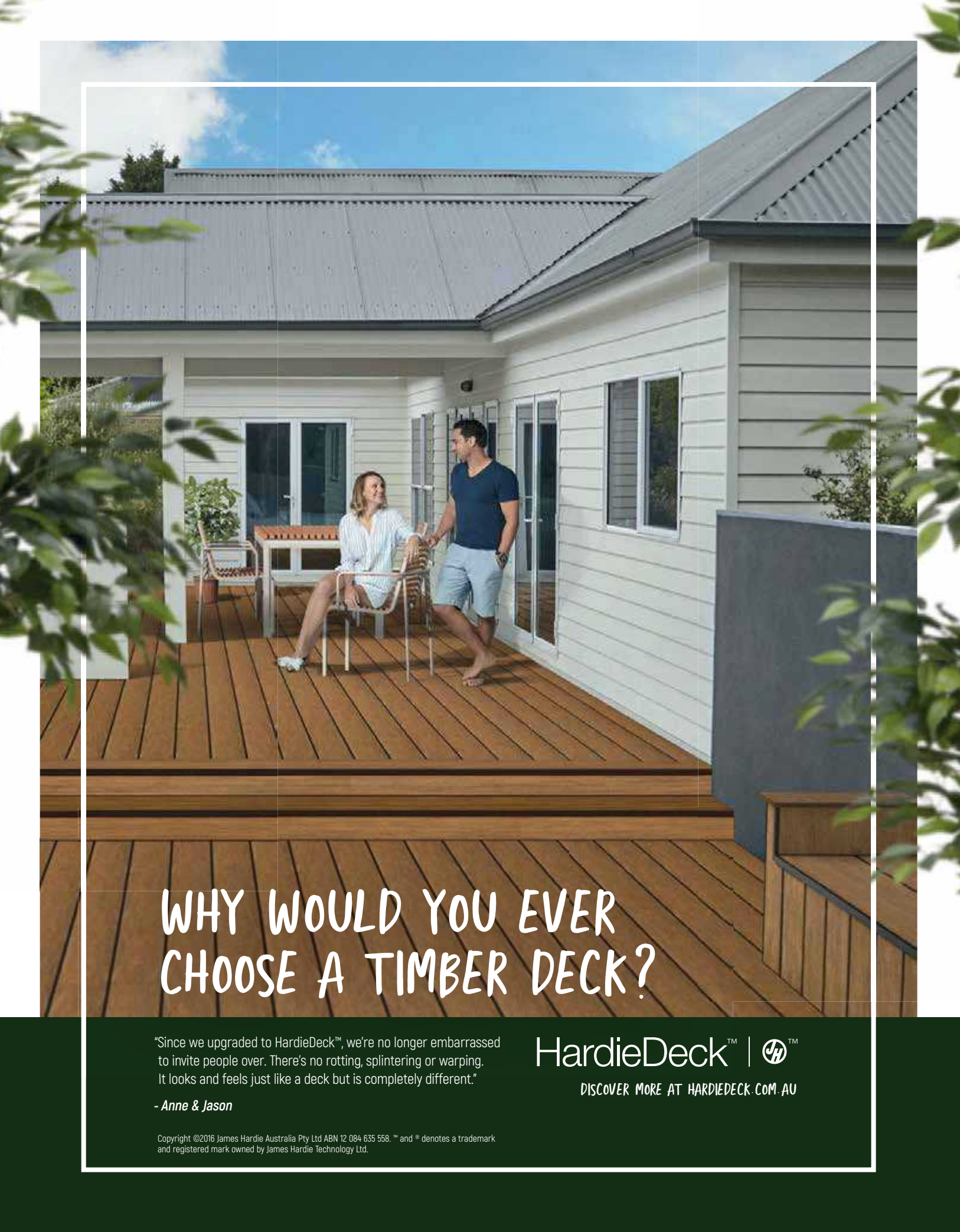


Coolaroo 3.3m Birch Round Myrtle Market Umbrella, \$249. coolaroo.com.au



Matador Artiste 4-burner Hooded Barbecue, \$750. matadorbbqs.com.au

A dark stain complements the interior floors and pool surrounds.

A man and a woman are standing on a wide, wooden deck in front of a modern house with white horizontal siding and a grey metal roof. The woman is sitting on a metal chair, and the man is standing next to her, looking at her. The deck is made of wooden planks and has a low wooden railing. The house has large windows and glass doors. The sky is blue with some clouds. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

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THIS ISSUE

HANDY HINT OF THE MONTH



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XMAS LIGHTS



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EDITOR'S LETTER



Happy holidays from
the *Handyman* team.
Back row (L-R): Cristian,
Dan, Nick, Thomas,
Alek, Leon, Curtis.
Front row: Nori, Lynn,
Artemis, Ashleigh,
Sheron, Kate.

Aussies love their decks and I'm no exception to this rule, especially because I don't have one! A back verandah, yes. Patio with a pergola, check. But not a real deck.

If you, like me, are deck-less, turn to page 24 for an inspirational gallery of designer Aussie decks.

Whether you have a sloping site or a cramped courtyard, there is a deck for you. From simple squares to clever curves and split-level specials, there's a solution for every home.

Project editor Stuart built not just one but two decks for this issue of the magazine, including the one on the cover. Check out his clever handiwork on pages 38 and 48.

And if you have an old deck that needs work, turn to page 60 for how to sand and stain timber in a few steps.

Celebrate the holidays

Get into the silly season with decos you can make using twine, gum leaves and pine cones for a rustic-themed Christmas, on page 96.

To make entertaining easy and fun, try our summer recipes for seafood, burgers, pavlova, ice-cream and more on page 120.

And if you're stumped for gift ideas, check out our round-up of perfect prezzies from page 13.

Plus we have 12 festive fixes to get the garden in shape for the holidays, page 168, and a Christmas tree you can make using succulents.

Happy DIYing,

Artemis



PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

TruClose Child Safety Gate Hinges from D&D Technologies, from \$33 for a pair, are Australian-made polymer hinges designed to suit gates around homes, pools and pet areas (au.ddtechglobal.com).

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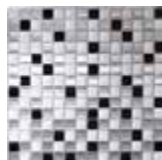
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AUSTRALIAN HANDYMAN MAGAZINE

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T: 1300 300 030

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Published by Reader's Digest (Australia) Pty Ltd
(ABN 81000565471) 80 Bay St, Ultimo, NSW 2007
©2016 Reader's Digest (Australia) Pty Ltd
Prepress by Colourpedia
Unit 7, 108-120 Silverwater Road, Silverwater NSW 2128
Printed by Times Printers Pte Ltd
16 Tuas Ave 5, Singapore 639340
Distributed by Gordon and Gotch Pty Ltd



Australian Handyman magazine is printed on PEFC-certified paper, providing an assurance that the paper is produced from sustainably managed forest, recycled and controlled source.

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PICTURE (BOTTOM RIGHT) ISTOCK

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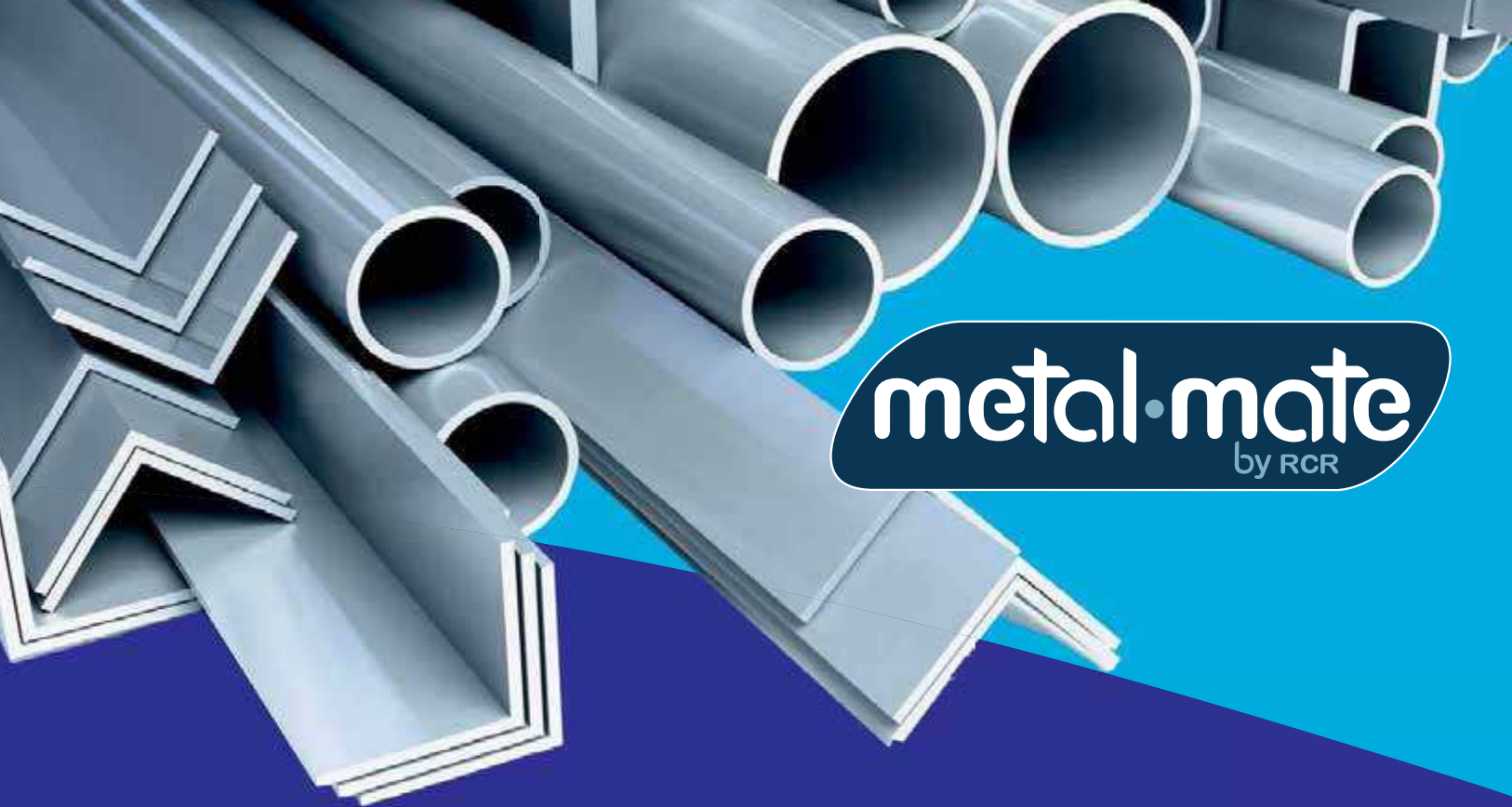
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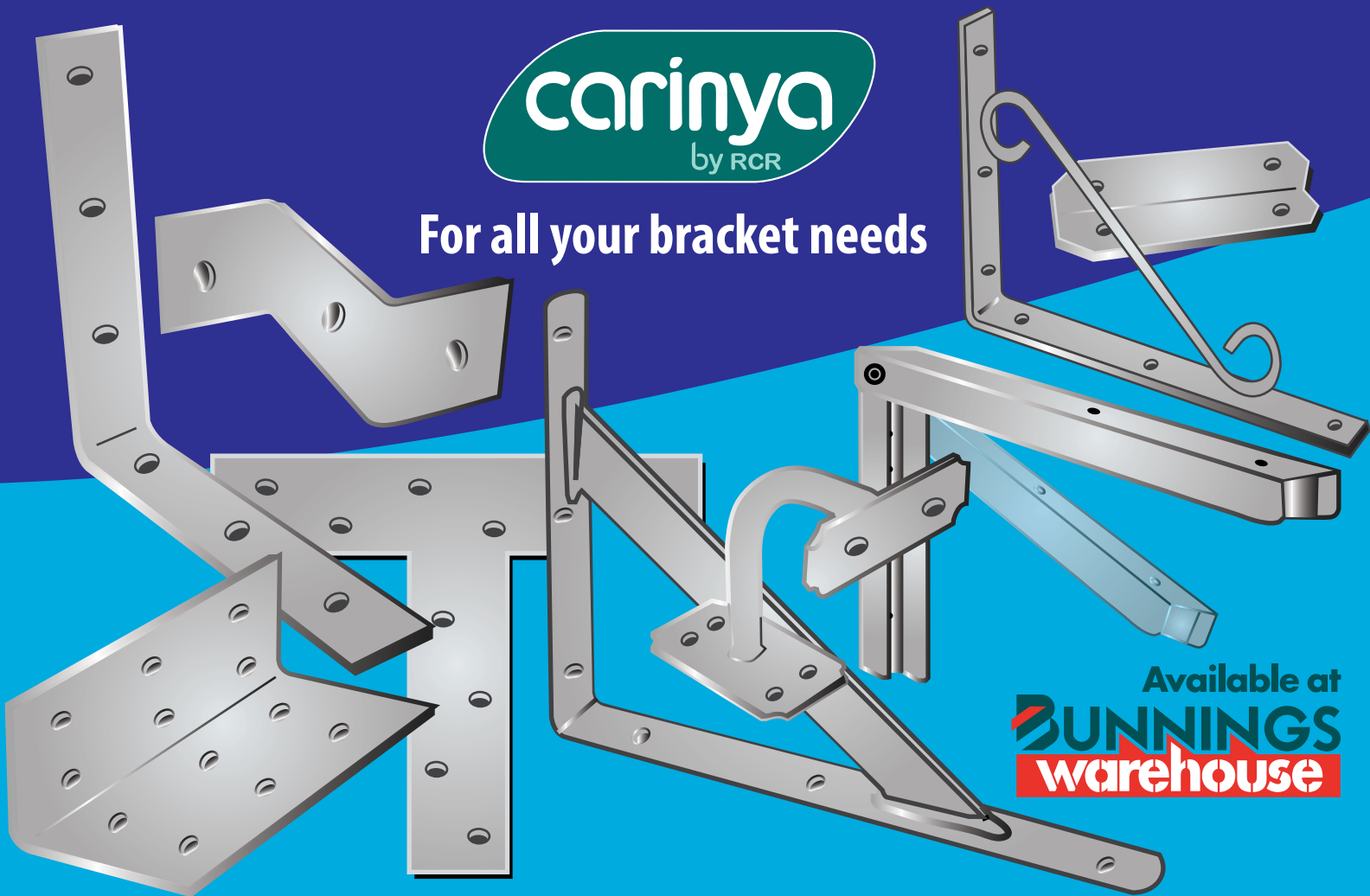
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TREADING THE BOARDS

Find innovative and problem-solving ways to extend your outdoor zone and create a welcoming deck

WORDS SITA SIMONS

The backyard isn't complete until there's a deck. But you can forget those preconceived rules of what, how and where, and get creative with your outside space.

Whether you're using hardwoods or softwoods, composite boards or rustic reclaimed timbers, deck design has come a long way.

Be inspired by this round-up of decks, that were designed to work with the site and function as a seamless extension of the home.



SHAPE SHIFT

This sprawling, unusual-shaped site on Sydney's leafy north shore was a challenge to landscape for garden designer Josh Harrison, of Harrison's Landscaping (harrisonslandscaping.com.au).

Josh says it was important to design a space that was interesting from above as it's overlooked by the living areas on the top floor.

To accommodate the angular deck and swimming pool, the steep site was totally overhauled, with further terracing and lawn added to the surrounds.

Dark-stained timber boards and the use of bluestone tie back to the deep tones of the house. ➤





POOL RULES

This substantial Edwardian house in Kew, Victoria, was renovated by Melbourne architect Melissa Bright of Make Architecture (makearchitecture.com.au).

To better match the building's generous proportions, new rear living spaces were created.

The owners wanted to make more use of the sunny rear garden, but the elevated pool dominated the backyard.

Building a deck with a curved edge both defined the pool zone and connected the two levels, resolving the previously difficult connection between the home and the swimming pool. ➤



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Sydney architect Elaine Richardson (erarchitect.com.au) says that installing a decked courtyard under a central void was the solution to utilising every inch of this area.

This spot now functions as both part of the house and an outdoor room. L-shaped folding windows enclose the area without the need for columns, allowing it to be a truly open space. ➤



PICTURE: BRIAN GROEHN

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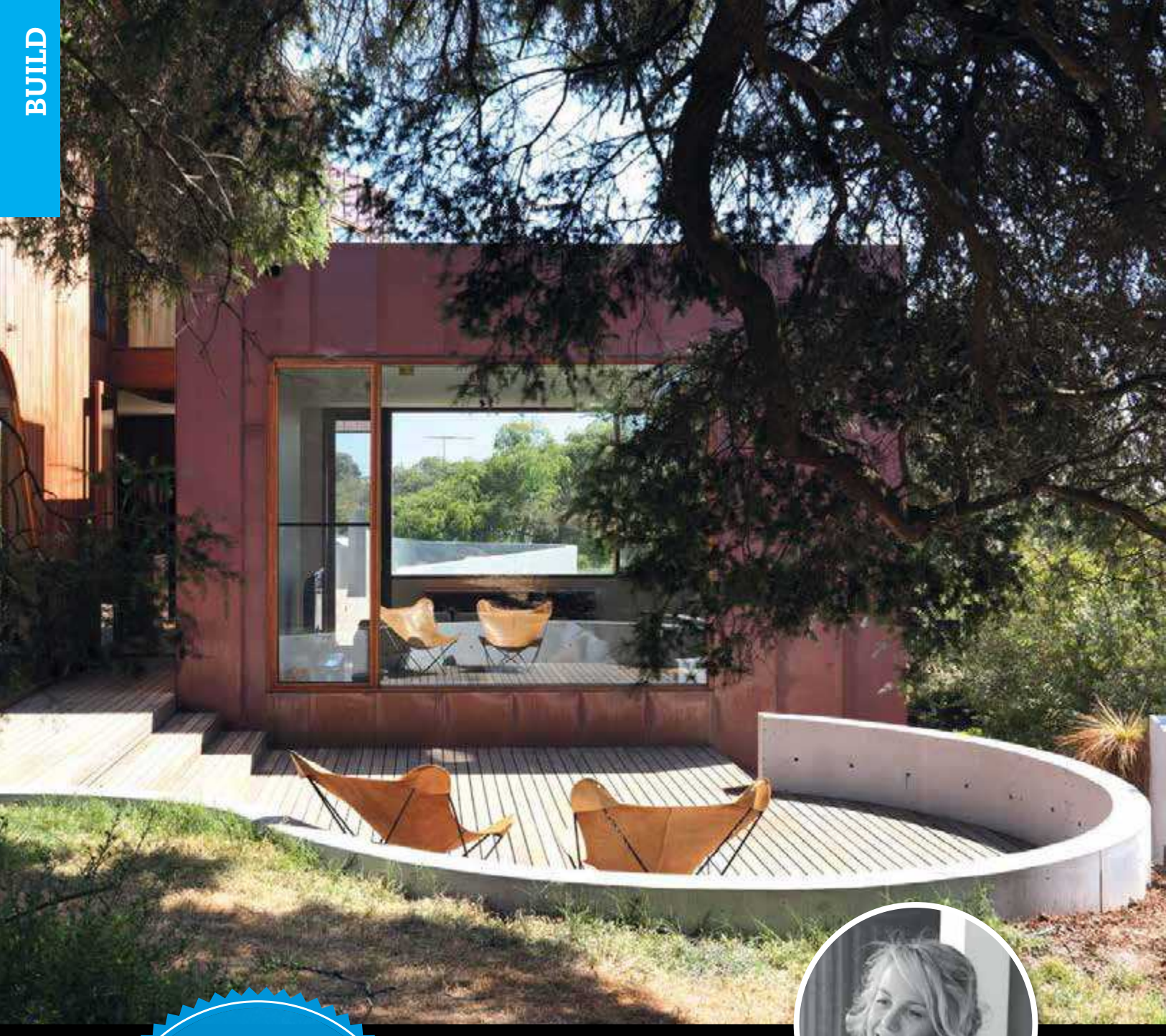


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DIY TIP

Decks often require approval and need to meet safety regulations, so check with your local council before building.

CURVED LINES

Its location on the edge of crown land meant there were strong parameters set for the footprint of this house.

To provide useful outdoor rooms, decks were installed on two sides, one for winter, the other for summer.

Victorian architect Kate Fitzpatrick of Auhaus Architecture + Interiors (auhaus-arch.com) says the decks are designed to be pockets within the surrounding leafy landscape.



A low concrete wall lends the notion of enclosure to the area and functions both as bench seating and a surface for drinks and other items.

The curved line is also a reference to the front of the house, which in turn contrasts with the strong linear form of the rear yard and the deck's horizontally installed boards.

PICTURE TREVOR WEIN

MIXED MATTER

A pool that had been in place since the 70s formed the central feature of this backyard, and its curved shape and the split levels presented a creative challenge to landscaper Denise Staffa of Outside In (outsidein.net.au).

A palette of mixed materials was used to bring it all bang up to date. Stone cladding on the pool wall creates depth and exposed aggregate on the flooring gives the curved pool a seamless look.

Feature paving breaks up the use of concrete, and the roof of the alfresco area was designed to mirror the roofline of the home. Deep timber decking softens the hard landscaping elements. ➤



PICTURE DMAX PHOTOGRAPHY

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ECO EASY

Terrace courtyards often present similar challenges in that they're long and narrow with limited light due to the surrounding houses.

Interior designer Anna-Carin McNamara of Anna Carin Design (annacarindesign.com.au) knew she would face difficulties getting plants to grow in this space.

And traditional timber decking would be also prone to mould because of the low light.

By using ModWood decking, which is a composite of timber and plastic, she was able to maximise the function of the space with none of the upkeep or ageing of timber.

A concrete square adds textural contrast and acts in a similar way to a rug to delineate a seating area. ➤



PICTURE (MAIN) SIMON KENNY HEADS HOT BROOKE HOLM

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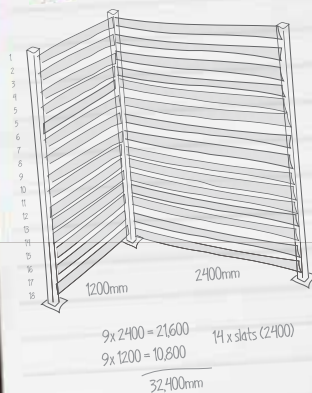
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Thinking Outside
think WHITES



PICTURE TIM TURNER PHOTOGRAPHY HEADSHOT STEVE TAYLOR



TREE SCENE

A large ash tree was the central point from which this urban deck developed. Instead of working against the design, the tree forms a visual and practical anchor.

It creates an organic canopy, meaning the space didn't need to be overly complicated with shade structures, says landscape architect Steve Taylor of COS Design (cosdesign.com.au).

The silvertop ash decking boards complement the palette of red brick and bluestone, which are used in an updated way to reflect the original character of the 50s Californian bungalow. ➤

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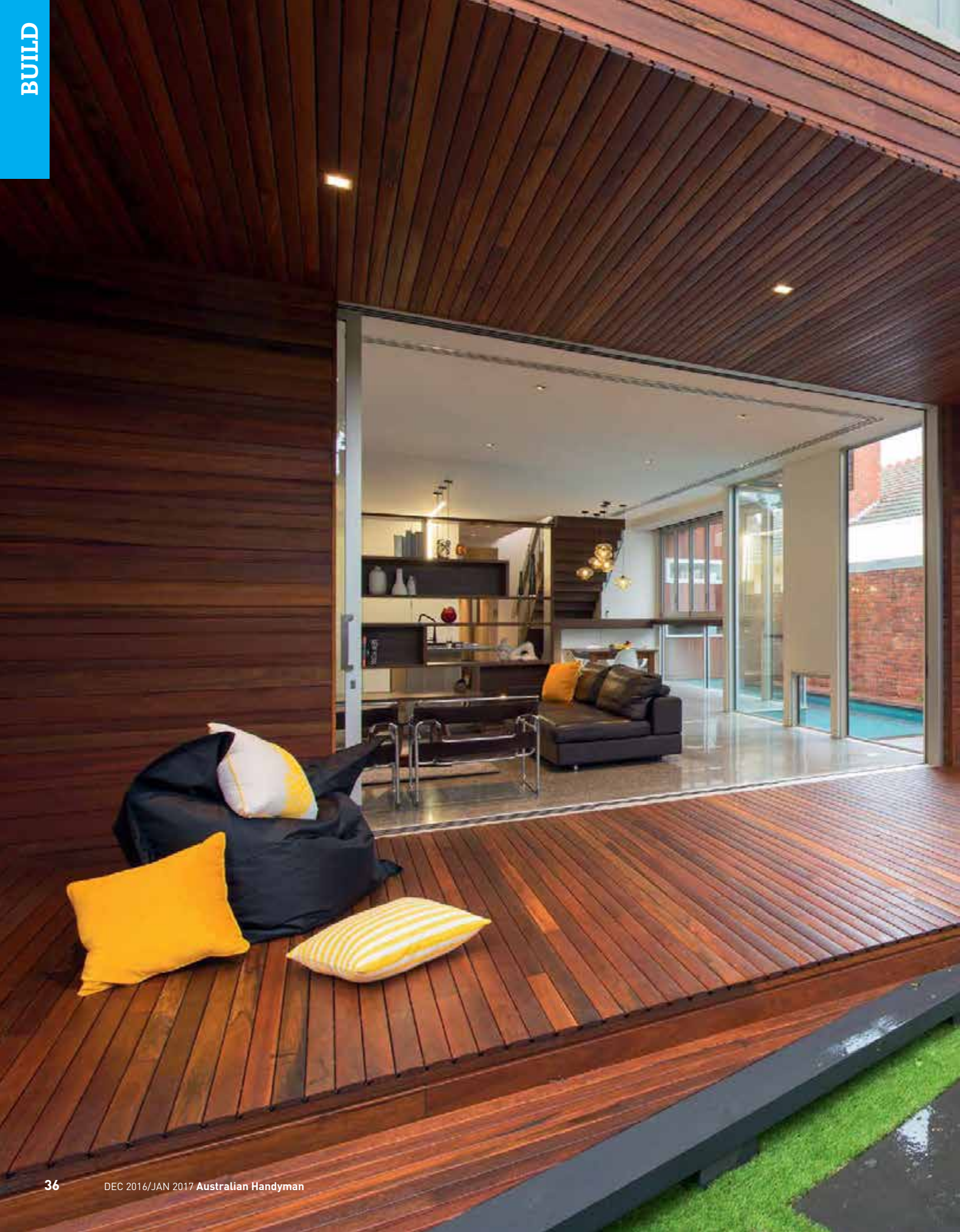
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DUAL TONES

Part-alfresco and part-verandah is how architect Lindsay Douglas of Dig Design (digdesign.net.au) describes this creative approach to a deck in Melbourne.

With all the functionality of a traditional deck, the design cleverly extrapolates on the principle of blurring the edges used throughout the interior.

The use of different-sized timber boards on the exterior wall helps to distinguish it from the surface of the deck.

There, narrow and uniform boards work both as a practical mechanism to enable the curve, and also as the unifying element that blurs any distinction between the floor, ceiling and sides. 🌿

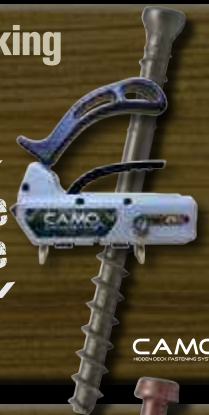
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BUILD *A* POOLSIDE DECK

Link interior and exterior living spaces with a stunning dual-level entertaining area

MAIN PICTURES SUE FERRIS PROJECT STUART SCOTT STYLING ARTEMIS GOUROS

The rear of this house had recently been renovated to open it up to the backyard, but with only a brick staircase leading to a small lawn, it lacked an outdoor entertaining space.

To take advantage of the poolside location, a dual-level deck was built to link the indoors with the outside.

Constructed as two separate decks connected with two steps, the upper level was designed to flow from the open-plan living area, while the lower deck provides a level space adjacent to the pool.

From inside the house, the decks visually merge, resulting in an outlook that flows seamlessly from the living area towards the pool.

The wide border of the upper deck subtly defines the two zones while also providing comfortable informal seating for relaxed gatherings.



The new deck extends the living area outdoors.

Before



Materials

Decking boards	\$4600
Timber frame	\$1225
Stain	\$269
Deck lights	\$444
Concrete	\$150
Stirrups	\$106
Joist hangers	\$63
Fasteners	\$334
TOTAL	\$7191

5
DAYS\$7191
COST**SAFETY TIP**

Check the fencing regulations for your pool, as restrictions regarding access from residential buildings vary between sites.

TOOLS

CIRCULAR SAW, JIGSAW,
PRESSURE WASHER,
ANGLE GRINDER,
DRILL

After

The new deck and landscaping creates an idyllic alfresco space.

Designing the deck

To create a low-maintenance deck, composite boards from HardieDeck were laid (hardiedeck.com.au).

The boards can be coated with clear sealer or stained to get the look of timber. We used Intergrain NaturalStain tinted in Rich Chocolate.

The upper level features posts set into concrete footings to support the bearers and joists. For the lower

level, the ground was excavated to provide clearance for the framework.

To minimise excavation, stirrups set in concrete footings hold the bearers. Joist hangers keep the joists flush with the bearer tops, and the boards sit flush with the pool coping.

The fencelines were planted with palms, yuccas and lilly pillies to create a lush, tropical look. ➤

BUILD THE DECK



1 Prepare the bearers

Cut a 150 x 50mm notch into the end of four bearers, then position the notched end of the bearers onto the brick house footings adjacent to the house bearer. Temporarily support the bearers level, then drill 6mm clearance holes and secure to the house bearer with two batten screws.



2 Excavate post holes

Measure 3000mm from the house on the outer bearers, spring a chalkline and trim the bearers to size. Measure the width of the deck at the house and cut joists to size. Clamp one joist to the end of the bearers and secure with triple grips. Plumb post positions, then dig 300mm holes to 600mm deep.



3 Install the posts

Measure from the top of the bearer to the base of the hole, deduct 50mm and cut the posts to length. Cut 140 x 45mm rebates into the tops of the posts to seat the bearers. Clamp in position, drill two 10mm clearance holes and secure with cuphead bolts, then pour concrete into the holes.



4 Frame the steps

Mark the first two bearers 600mm from the end. Cut a 140 x 45mm noggin to size and secure between the bearers at this point using screws. Secure a bearer between the noggin and the outside joist 1000mm from the first bearer. Cut the first bearer to create the recess and install additional posts for support.



5 Attach lower bearers

Support bearers in position 20mm below the pool coping and check for level. Secure the outer bearers flush with the outside of the upper deck posts with joist hangers. Attach the inside bearers to the sides of the upper deck posts using cuphead bolts. Mark post positions at 1500mm intervals.



6 Install the stirrups

Remove the bearers and dig post holes, then replace the bearers. Attach the stirrups to the bearers above the holes using two coach head bolts. Fill the holes with concrete to just above ground level and allow to set. Secure 140 x 45mm blocking around the pool coping using batten screws.

STUART'S PICKS



HardieDeck System,
about \$110 per sqm.
hardiedeck.com.au



Buildex 14g x 85mm Galvanised Bugle Batten Screws, about \$13 for 25. itwproline.com.au



Ozito PWE-1300 High Pressure Cleaner with Patio Head, \$79. ozito.com.au



Intergrain NaturalStain Water Based Exterior Merbau Stain, \$48 for 1L. intergrain.com.au



Laserframe Allseasons 140 x 45mm H3 MGP10 Structural Pine, about \$19 for 2.4m. chhwoodproducts.com.au



Securing edge boards

The upper deck features a 296mm edge board which overhangs the framing by 30mm.

To support the edge board, set the centre of the second and the second-last joist, as well as joists adjacent to the step, 273mm from the edge of the deck.

To support the mitred corners, secure 90 x 45mm blocking as necessary using batten screws.

Fascia boards need to be secured to posts and intermediate studs. To provide support, secure 90 x 45mm studs every 500mm between the upper and lower joists using batten screws. >



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Above image features Intergrain UltraDeck on Villa Mana, Bali. Intergrain®, UltraDeck and Hydroguard are registered trade marks.

BUILD THE DECK



7 Make the steps

Calculate the step height by dividing the final height difference between the decks by three, then mark the posts. Butt join 90 x 45mm lengths of timber to create two step frames. Cut posts to size with rebates at the ends and secure flush with the outside of the deck frame, then secure the step frames.



8 Secure the joists

Attach the upper joists using triple grips and nails, then secure additional joists to support the border. Space the joists at 450mm centres and secure using triple grips and nails at every bearer. Attach lower joists between the bearers flush at the top using joist hangers and nails.



9 Create the upper border

Secure a wingless jointer against the house with screws. Cut a 45° mitre at one end of an edge board using a circular saw. Position the board flush against the jointer overhanging the edge by 30mm and secure with decking screws. Continue laying edge boards around the deck perimeter.



10 Lay the upper deck

Secure wingless jointers against the front and back edge boards. Remove one wing from two winged jointers and secure at the sides. Lay boards from either side, inserting the wings into the boards and securing the jointers to the joists with screws. Rip an edge board for the centre and secure with screws.



11 Lay the lower deck

Position the first board with a 30mm overhang, then secure with screws. Lay boards across the deck using winged jointers, butt joining boards over joists. Leave a 10mm gap between the ends of jointers for drainage. Trace the curve of the pool coping, then cut the boards using a jigsaw and tungsten blade.



12 Attach fascia and steps

Secure the top fascia board against the overhang using decking screws at the top and a winged jointer at the base. Secure remaining boards with jointers, then clip in the top strip above all the jointers. Cut step treads and risers to size, then secure with screws and construction adhesive. ➤



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Screen the backyard

To add privacy to the new deck area, screening was installed on both fences using the Whites Screen Up system (whitesgroup.com.au).

Simple and easy to set up, the screen features two channels that can be fixed either to the side or the rear. Slats can then be inserted in

the channels and separated evenly using spacers to create a tidy look.

Ekodeck composite screening in 2400 x 67 x 15mm lengths, \$11 each, was used for the slats. It comes in a range of colours and looks like timber but it doesn't need oiling or painting (ekologix.com.au).

1 2 3



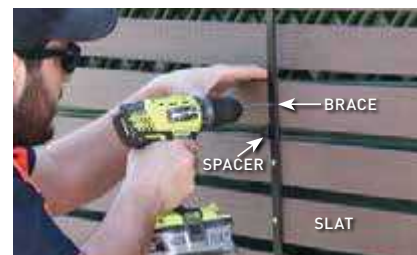
1 Secure the channels

Mark the fence posts 2000mm below the desired height of the screen. Clamp channels in position, check for level and secure to the fence posts using screws. Measure 1285mm from the top of the channel and secure the slat support bracket at this level.



2 Install the slats

Measure distance between the inside of the channels and cut slats to size. Insert the first slat and check for level, then insert a 20mm spacer into each channel followed by another slat. Continue to the top of the channel, then attach the top cap.



3 Attach the brace

Mark the centre of the top and base slats and clamp the brace in position. Drill a 5mm clearance hole through the brace only, then secure to the base slat with a screw. Using a spacer, secure the next slat. Repeat for all the slats, then trim the brace with a hacksaw.



Light up the deck

To create a space that can be used both day and night, lighting was installed by an electrician into the edge boards, fascia and beside the steps. Water-resistant LED lights from HPM were selected as they are efficient and ideal for outdoor use.

The upward facing deck lights in the edge boards subtly define the perimeter of the top level, while the step lights illuminate the stairs and cast a warm glow across the lower deck and pool.

GET THE LOOK



Northcote Pottery 30 x 35cm Charcoal Infinity Cube, \$55.
northcotepottery.com



Yucca Elephantipes, 200mm, about \$44, from nurseries.



HPM 2.4W 12V LED Calla Step Light, \$59.
hpm.com.au >

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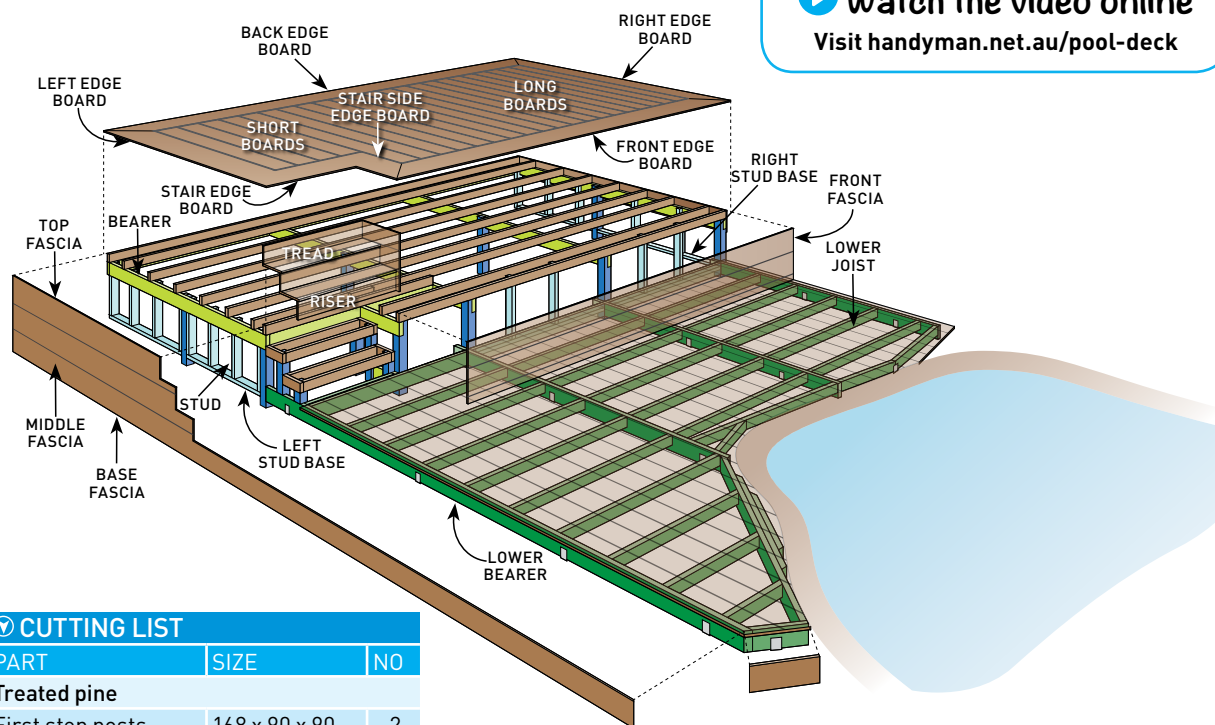
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POOLSIDE DECK

measurements in mm

▶ Watch the video online
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✓ CUTTING LIST

PART	SIZE	NO
Treated pine		
First step posts	168 x 90 x 90	2
Second step posts	354 x 90 x 90	2
Upper bearers	3150 x 140 x 45	4
Upper joists	5300 x 90 x 45	7
Studs	565 x 90 x 45	17
Front stud base	1706 x 90 x 45	2
Left stud base	1410 x 90 x 45	2
Right stud base	1110 x 90 x 45	2
Stair bearer	1706 x 140 x 45	1
Tread frame sides	910 x 90 x 45	4
Tread frame ends	266 x 90 x 45	4
Composite decking boards		
Long boards	2438 x 196 x 19	19
Short boards	1838 x 196 x 19	4
Back edge boards	2680 x 296 x 19	2
Front edge boards	2180 x 296 x 19	2
Right edge board	1515 x 296 x 19	2
Left edge board	2430 x 296 x 19	1
Stair edge board	1296 x 296 x 19	1
Stair side edge board	896 x 296 x 19	1
Front fascia	2165 x 296 x 19	4
Top fascia	2400 x 296 x 19	1
Middle fascia	2696 x 296 x 19	1
Base fascia	3000 x 296 x 19	3

✓ FASTENERS

TYPE	USE
10g x 50mm stainless steel decking screws	Fascia, stairs, edge and centre boards
8g x 25mm galvanised wafer head screws	Jointers
14g x 85mm galvanised bugle batten screws	Deck frame
M10 x 170mm galvanised cup head bolts	Posts, deck frame
M10 x 140mm galvanised cuphead bolts	Stirrups
8g x 16mm galvanised buttonhead screws	Screen channels
8g x 15mm galvanised stitching screws	Screen brace

Frame the curve

The curved edge of the pool means some of the lower bearers and joists need to be cut to size to suit the site.

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READY RETREAT

Use a steel frame and composite boards to build a bushfire-safe deck

PROJECT AND PICTURES STUART SCOTT

The old dairy at this rural property had been converted into guest accommodation, but as it was built on a slope, it lacked a level access point.

A deck was built off a set of French doors to create a level access point and an outdoor area, creating a seamless flow between indoors and out.

The property is in a fire-prone area with the maximum Bushfire Attack Level Flame Zone (BAL-FZ) rating, so the deck needed to comply with specific building requirements.

A Steel-Deck frame was designed online, ordered at Bunnings and built on site (steeldecks.com.au). Then Ubiq Inex cement-based composite boards, which are deemed non-combustible, were laid (ubiq.com.au). ➤

Materials

Steel frame and posts	\$2370
Decking boards	\$2776
Fasteners	\$311
Concrete	\$75
Adhesive	\$101
Sealer	\$235
TOTAL	\$5868

DIY TIP

When installing footings for deck posts, float the concrete so it falls away from the house to allow for water run-off.

Stuart



EXPERT SECRETS

Select composite decking boards for a low-maintenance option that's simple and easy to install.

Before



4
DAYS

\$5868
COST

TOOLS
DRILL, CIRCULAR SAW,
PRESSURE WASHER

After

The new deck increases the living space of the guest cabin.

BUILD THE DECK



1 Prepare the bearers

Lay out the ledger and bearer side by side and align the ends. Use the template provided to mark the joist bracket positions and holes. Drill two 5mm clearance holes through the ledger at each joist position and attach the joist brackets using the supplied pan head screws.



2 Secure the ledger

Support the ledger in position against the house slab. Drill two 14mm holes through the ledger 150mm deep into the slab at each end, and at two evenly spaced positions in between. Fill the holes with anchor adhesive. Insert the anchor studs, rotate to coat, then secure to the ledger with the nut.



3 Assemble the frame

Prop the bearer in position, allowing for a gradual fall away from the house, then attach the remaining brackets to the ends of the joists. Secure the two end joists and one intermediate joist to the ledger and bearer using pan head screws. Measure the deck diagonally to check it is square.



4 Install the posts

Plumb the post positions. Dig 300mm holes to 600mm deep. Measure from the bearer base to the hole bases, to cut the posts to length minus 50mm. Secure the post brackets to the posts and bearer. Pour concrete into the holes to just above ground level. Secure the remaining joists with screws.



5 Lay decking boards

Secure the fascia boards flush with the frame top using construction adhesive and screws. Cut the perimeter boards to size with 45° mitres at the ends and 10mm overhang. Secure the boards adjacent to the house, then the side perimeter boards. Lay the rest of the boards, butt joining them over joists.



6 Finish the boards

Use a pressure washer or hose and a stiff-bristled brush to clean the deck thoroughly to remove all dirt and dust. Apply a generous coat of clear concrete and paving sealer using a roller and allow to dry.

TIP If staining the boards, apply the stain before applying sealer.



Make the entrance

To create an entry for the deck, a single step with a planter on either side was made by building formwork and pouring concrete.

Once the concrete had set, boards were laid on top of the step and planter edges to match the rest of the deck.

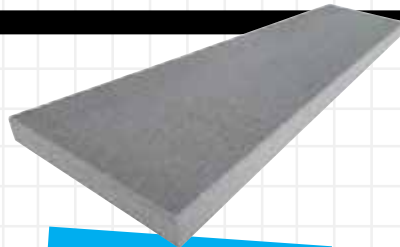
The planters were filled with palms and mondo grass to create a lush tropical look.

A simple step provides easy access to the deck and cabin.

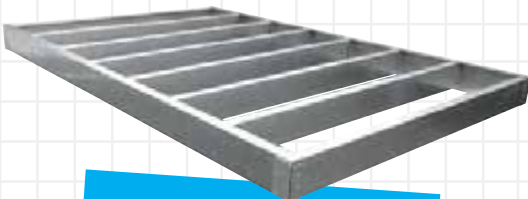
STUART'S PICKS



Sika SikaBond Multipurpose Constructive Adhesive, about \$4 for 300g. sikaretail.com.au



Ubiq Inex 140 x 19mm Decking Boards, \$31 for 2.7m. ubiq.com.au



Steel-Deck Frame, 6000 x 3800 x 185mm, \$1565. steeldecks.com.au



Ramset 160mm M12 Galvanised Anchor Studs, \$12 for 4. ramset.com.au



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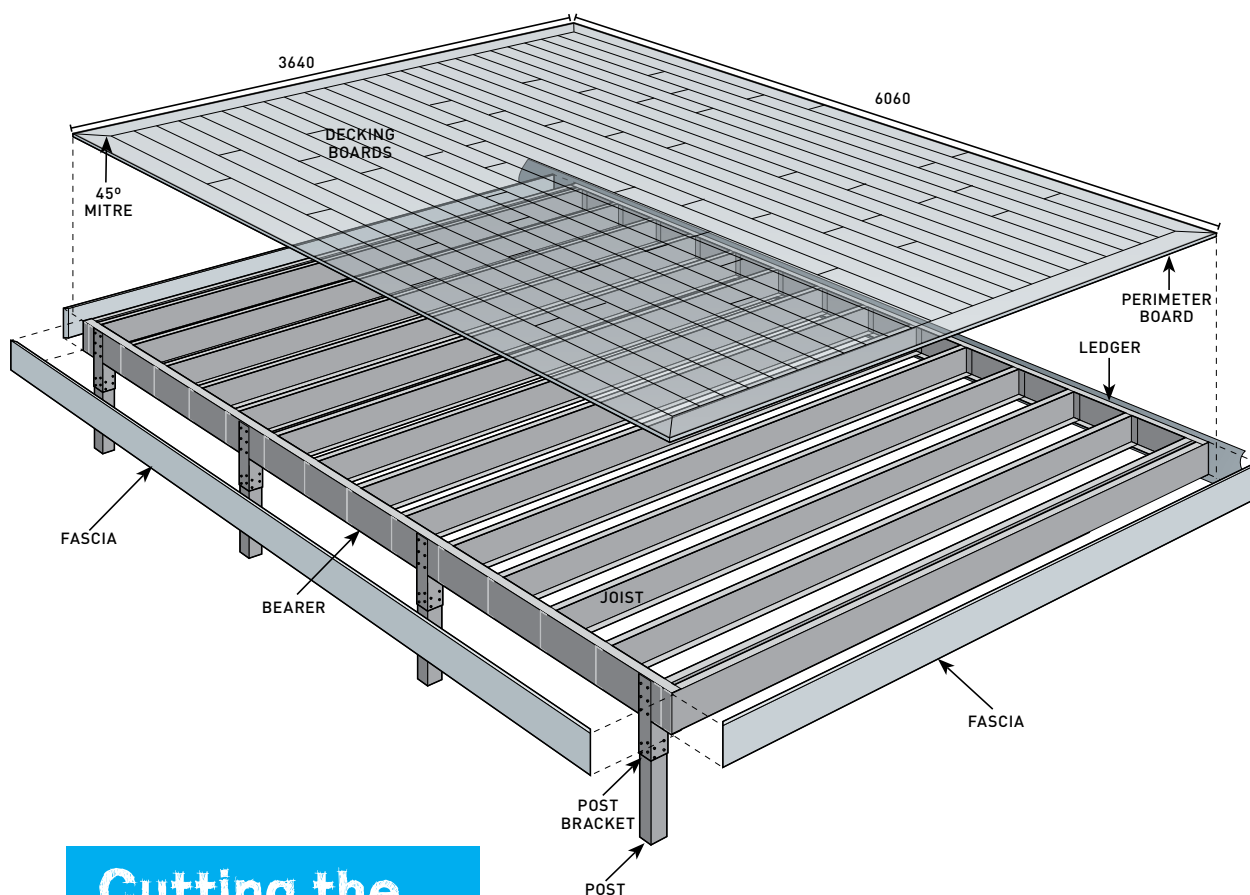
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STEEL-FRAMED DECK

measurements in mm



Cutting the boards

Regulations for building in Flame Zones require decking boards to be installed with no gaps.

This deck was designed to be the exact width of 26 Inex boards, so that none needed to be ripped.

The Ubiq Inex deck boards come in 2700mm lengths, so they were cut to size and joined over the deck joists, with the joints staggered by at least two joists. 🛠️

FASTENERS

TYPE	USE
44 x 5.5mm Spax-D decking screws	Decking boards, fascia
M12 x 160mm galvanised anchor studs	Ledger
10g x 16mm galvanised hex head screws	Joists
10g x 16mm galvanised pan head screws	Joist brackets, bearer, posts

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Cool down OUTDOORS

Enjoy summer in the backyard with heat-beating solutions for all spaces

WORDS SITA SIMONS

Summer is all about outdoor living and entertaining. That means making the most of the backyard and spending the long sunny days and balmy evenings relaxing on the deck or patio.

But as temperatures rise, it can become too uncomfortable to stay outside, with the lure of the air-con inviting a move indoors.

To turn your outdoor area into a shaded, breeze-cooled sanctuary and enjoy the best of both worlds, all you need is a few widely available and easy-to-install helpers. ➤



Shade solutions

Protecting yourself from direct sunlight is the first step in cooling down an outdoor space.

Shade umbrellas are mobile options that can be repositioned throughout the day to follow the trajectory of the sun.

Cantilevered versions which rotate give even greater flexibility, particularly for shading tables or seating areas.

Shade sails fixed onto poles or stretched from the eaves of the house, provide a more permanent solution.

A well-placed umbrella creates a shady retreat.



ABOVE Shade sails shelter outdoor areas from summer sun.
BELOW Keep your balcony cool with a classic awning.



PICTURES: ALAMY, ISTOCK



Breeze bringers

An outdoor-rated ceiling fan installed under a solid pergola or on a verandah can generate a pleasant cooling breeze and has the added bonus of helping to keep mosquitoes and other bugs at bay.

Metal and acrylic blades will weather the outdoor conditions better than timber. Some outdoor fans are rated to withstand contact with rain.

Add an extra level of cooling with a misting fan. These work on the same principles as air-conditioning but are at a much cheaper price point.

Full systems can be installed with multiple misting points that you can set on a timer, but even small misting fans at ground level will provide good cooling in a confined area. ➤



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PICTURES ALAMY, ISTOCK



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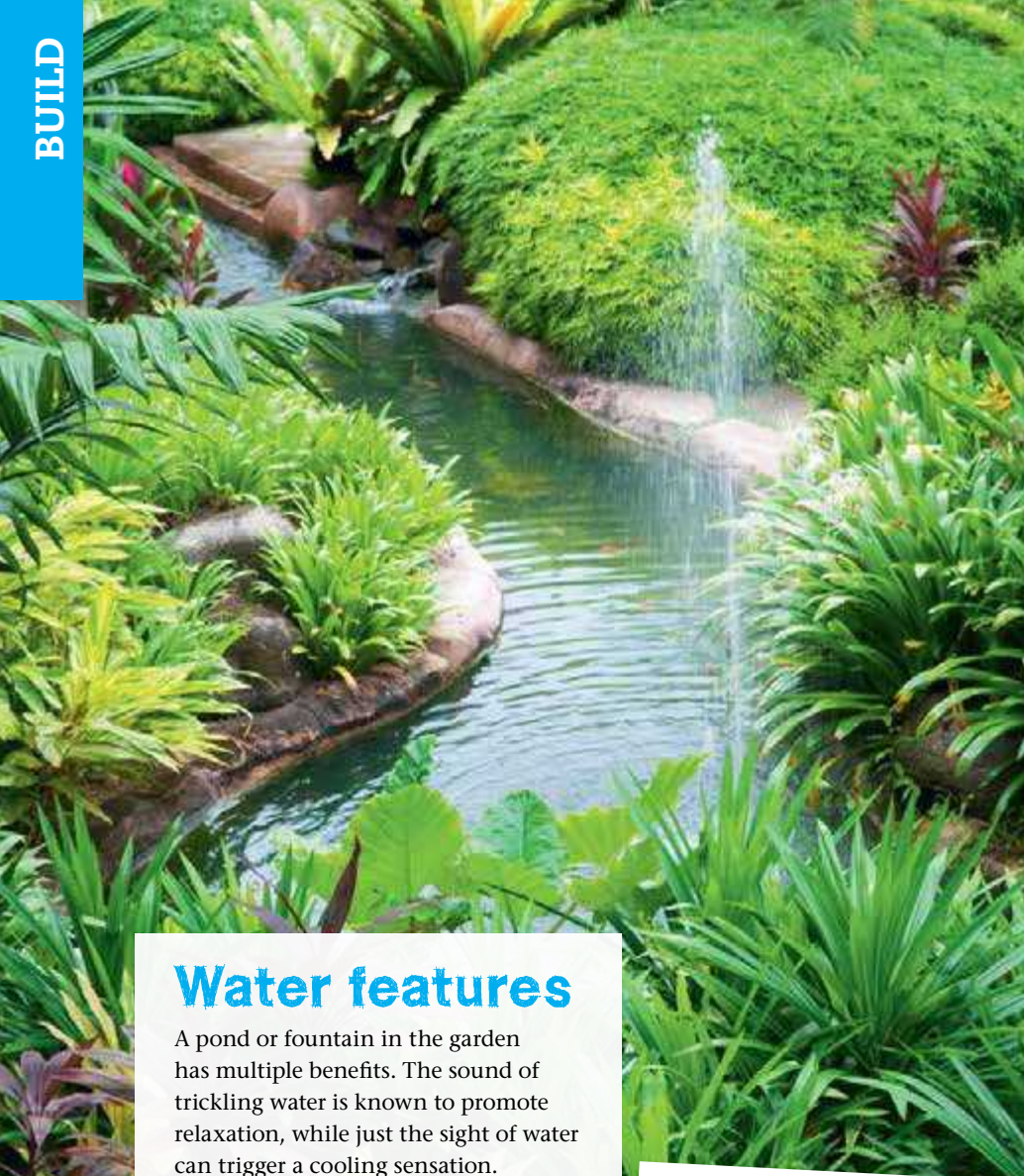
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Water features

A pond or fountain in the garden has multiple benefits. The sound of trickling water is known to promote relaxation, while just the sight of water can trigger a cooling sensation.

On a deck, a water feature or small fountain can add a decorative element to the overall design while providing evaporative cooling.

Remember that water features need regular maintenance for best performance, so make sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions and keep the water clean. 💧



ABOVE A fountain is an effective form of passive cooling.
LEFT Cascading water is cooling and relaxing.



TOP PICKS

Mimosa 2.5m Red Oriental Market Umbrella, \$98.
bunnings.com.au



Ryobi One+ Misting Fan, \$99.
ryobi.com.au



Coolaroo 3 x 3m Premier Triangle Shade Sail, \$65.
coolaroo.com



Water Magic 56 x 50 x 69cm Tolmer Waterfall Fountain, \$260.
northcotepottery.com

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TRANSFORM A TIRED DECK

Revive an outdoor entertaining area and dining setting in just a few steps

PROJECT AND PICTURES MELISSA DARR

Following a busy year of interior renovations, blogger Melissa Darr recently turned her focus to the outside of her home.

The deck at the back of the house was looking well past its prime and badly in need of a facelift.

Melissa and husband Bevan usually re-stain their deck every six months to keep it well maintained, but this time they had left it a little too long.

They decided to completely rejuvenate the deck by sanding back the boards, railings and outdoor furniture then refinishing the timber with a water-based stain.

'The deck looked quite worn and in need of more than a little TLC to bring it back to life. It was a bit of work but I'm happy with how it turned out,' says Melissa. ➤

After

The weathered deck is now an inviting alfresco dining room, all set for summer entertaining.

Before

Wire balustrading keeps the deck open to the views

DIY TIP

To check if your deck is clean enough to coat, sprinkle it with a little water. If it is absorbed, then the timber is ready for staining.

Get more DIY from Melissa
Follow her blog thewhimsicalwife.com

Melissa



EXPERT SECRETS

Rub very greasy spots on timber with mineral turps and wipe off the excess with a clean cloth.

DECK MAKEOVER

With summer here and the entertaining season in full swing, Melissa and Bevan revamped their back deck and balustrading, refinishing them in a water-based stain.



1 Sand the surface

Use an orbital sander with an 80 grit disc to sand the deck, posts and railings, paying special attention to flaking and peeling areas. Change to a 120 grit disc and sand again for a smooth finish.



2 Fill the gaps

Timber can contract and expand, so look for any gappy joints on the railings. Apply timber filler using a plastic spatula, sanding once dry. **TIP** Select a coloured filler that closely matches the tone of your timber.



3 Scrub the timber

Clean the surface by applying a deck and timber cleaner using a sponge mop. Leave for 15 minutes, then scrub it off using a hard-bristled brush. Hose the deck thoroughly and allow to dry completely.



4 Stain the deck

Apply 2-3 coats of a water-based stain to the boards in long strokes using a long-handled, soft-bristled brush, roller or an applicator. Allow about two hours for the stain to dry in between coats. ➤

MELISSA'S PICKS



Bosch 350W 125mm Random Orbital Sander, \$142. bosch-pt.com.au



Oates Long-handled Deck Scrub Brush, \$12. oates.com.au



Sikkens Cetol BLX-Pro Water Based Deck & Timber Stain in Teak, \$208 for 5L. tenaru.com.au

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DIY TIP

To achieve a smooth result, invest in a good-quality brush, and use long, even strokes to apply timber stain to furniture.

After

Sanded and stained, the chair is protected from the elements.



Before

After

A new finish turns a shoe rack into a decorative feature.



Before



Revamping timber outdoor furniture

The outdoor dining setting and wooden shoe rack were also sanded back at the same time as the deck, then thoroughly washed using the timber cleaner.

All pieces were refinished with 2-3 coats of the same stain to match the decking boards.

'Now, the table and chairs look as good as new, or maybe even better than when we first bought them,' says Melissa. 🍷



Stain outdoor furniture the same colour as the deck for a coordinated look

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INSTALL FRENCH DOORS

Let in the light with glass-panelled doors that open out onto a patio

PROJECT AND PICTURES STUART SCOTT

The carport at this property was recently converted into a combined guesthouse and artist's studio. It was enclosed with stud walls but original features such as the hexagonal slate roof were kept.

As part of the vaulted ceiling was enclosed to create storage, French doors were chosen for the main entry to maximise natural light.

We installed Corinthian Doors rebated 2040 x 820 x 40mm Windsor

WIN 40 Entrance Doors, \$259 each (corinthian.com.au).

Featuring clear bevelled glazing, the doors open outwards, and wide butt hinges allow them to be folded neatly against the exterior wall of the studio, to let in air and light.

One door is secured with a flush bolt at the top and base, and the other strikes against it with a rebated mortise lock and handset, to provide a secure entrance. ➤

DIY TIP

To hold a door upright when working, slot it into a notched timber offcut, then tap in a wedge to secure the door in position.

Stuart

EXPERT SECRETS

When fitting door hardware, always use good-quality sharp chisels that will cut easily and accurately.



Glass doors create a visual link between indoors and out.

TOOLS
DRILL, MITRESAW,
NAILGUN

**1
DAY**

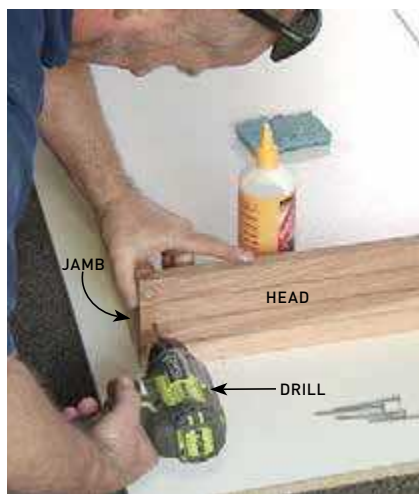
**\$1065
COST**

Materials

Doors	\$518
Jamb set	\$225
Interior architrave	\$42
Exterior architrave	\$20
Lockset with rebate kit and lever handles	\$152
Flush bolts	\$40
PVA adhesive	\$7
Hinges	\$47
Timber screws	\$7
Nails	\$7
TOTAL	\$1065

French doors were added to the converted studio to maximise airflow and light.

INSTALL THE DOORS



1 Assemble the frame

Leave a 1680mm wide x 2070mm high opening to allow for the rebated doors and frame with a 10mm clearance. Use a mitresaw to make relief cuts for both jamb housings in the head, then clean the waste with a chisel. Predrill 2.5mm holes, apply adhesive in the housings, then secure with three screws per side.



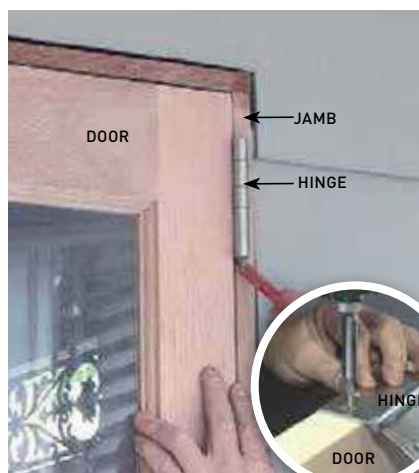
2 Install the frame

Position the frame in the opening and clamp. Plumb the jambs and check the head for level. Insert packers between the jamb and the wall at the hinge positions, securing with two screws through the stop and packers. Pack the head in the centre to ensure it is level, then secure with two screws.



3 Position the hinges

Mark hinge centres 100mm from the top and base, and at the centre of each jamb. Drill 2.5mm pilot holes, then secure the hinges with two screws, with a 5mm gap between the hinge and stop. Scribe around each hinge with a knife, remove the hinges, then chisel out rebates so each is flush with the jamb.



4 Secure the hinges

Test fit the doors, packing underneath to give 2-3mm clearance and planing the edges if needed. Mark the hinge positions on the doors, then remove the doors and hinges. Secure the hinges to the doors temporarily, predrilling 2.5mm holes. Scribe and rebate the hinges flush with the doors.



5 Hang the doors

Secure the hinges with screws, starting at the top. Test the doors close freely, adjusting as needed. Mark the positions of the lockset, handle and flush bolt on the doors and jamb. Fit the hardware, remove the doors to fit the flush bolts, then re-hang the doors and test the action.



6 Finish the doors

Remove the doors and the hardware. Secure the architraves with adhesive and nails. Use a nailgun to punch in nails and fill all holes. Sand the doors, architraves and jamb with 120-180 grit sandpaper. Prime and apply three coats of gloss or semi-gloss paint, then re-fit all hardware and re-hang the doors. ➤



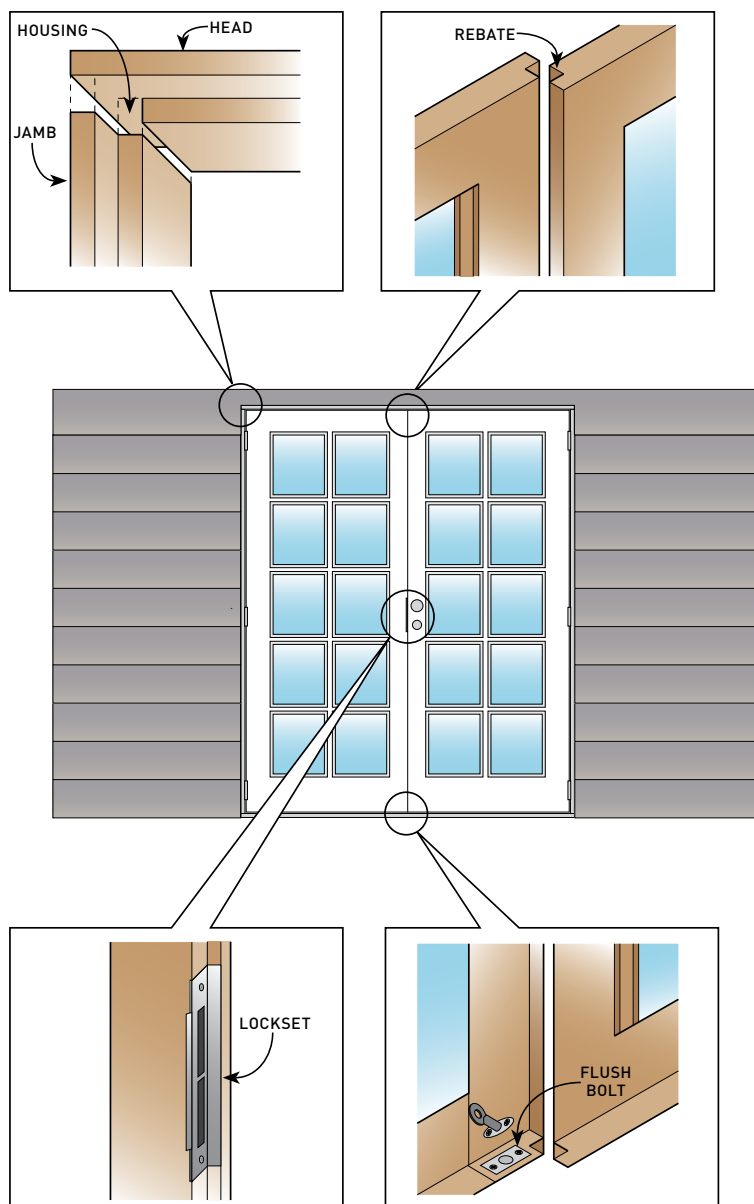
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FRENCH DOORS



CUTTING LIST

PART	SIZE	NO
Jambs	120 x 35 x 2045	2
Head	120 x 35 x 1650	1

FASTENERS

TYPE	USE
10g x 75mm galvanised timber screws	Jambs
40 x 1.6mm bullethead nails	Architraves

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DELUXE DINING

Turn the deck or patio into a summer entertaining area with an outdoor setting and a barbecue



Cooking a meal and eating it outdoors is one of the best things about summer. And with the range of gas and charcoal barbies plus pizza ovens available, it's easier than ever to be an outdoor chef.

To set up an alfresco dining space, consider the number of people in the

household and your entertaining needs to ensure you invest in the right-sized outdoor setting.

Create a comfortable and inviting seating area on the deck or patio with furniture designed for the outdoors that is made from durable materials, including timber, metal and wicker.



Make the most of the longer days and warmer evenings by cooking and eating outdoors

TIMBER

Bring all the comforts of the living room outdoors with timber armchairs and sofas for relaxing and dining, plus a pizza oven for alfresco cooking.

1 **MIMOSA** Avani 5-piece Timber Lounge Setting, \$999.

2 **FORNETTO** Alto Wood Fire Pizza Oven with Warming Tray, \$1299.

3 **MIMOSA** Avani Corner Sofa Setting, \$1399.

CONTEMPORARY

For a resort-style look and feel, swap the traditional outdoor dining setting for a fun bar table with stools, adding a cantilever umbrella to shade an open deck.

- ❶ **MIMOSA** Andaman Cantilever Umbrella, \$549.
- ❷ **MATADOR** Artise 4-burner Barbecue, \$750.
- ❸ **MIMOSA** Ancona 5-piece Bar Setting, \$579.

DIY TIP

Provide instant shade in any outdoor space with a cantilevered umbrella that can be angled for maximum sun protection. ➤



MEDITERRANEAN

Give your outdoor space a Mediterranean feel with egg chairs, a lounge and a coffee table. Pair them with a classic charcoal BBQ to try your hand at traditional cooking methods for food with a rich, smokey flavour.

- 1 **MIMOSA** Waiheke Resin Wicker 2.5 Seater Lounge, \$599.
- 2 **MIMOSA** Waiheke Resin Wicker Egg Chair, \$699.
- 3 **JUMBUCK** Charcoal Kettle BBQ with Pizza Ring and Rotisserie, \$199.
- 4 **MIMOSA** Waiheke Coffee Table, \$149.

DESIGN TIP

Choose a portable barbecue on wheels for a flexible outdoor entertaining layout that can be reconfigured for gatherings of any size.





MODERN

Use the deck for outdoor living year-round with a dining table and chairs plus a barbecue, adding a sofa or upgrading to an outdoor kitchen if you have the space.

- 1 MIMOSA Coral Bay 4-piece Sofa Set, \$1399.
- 2 MATADOR Titan 6-burner Kitchen, \$3290.
- 3 MIMOSA Coral Bay 9-piece Dining Set, \$899.
- 4 JUMBUCK 2-burner Barbecue, \$229.
- 5 MIMOSA Toronto Chair, \$89 each.
- 6 MIMOSA Toronto Table, \$299. ♡





ORIGINS

Composite boards

SAFETY TIP

When building a deck in a bushfire-prone area, check that the boards are suitable for the Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) of your property.



ABOVE Composite boards aren't restricted to decking and can also be used for screening or fences.

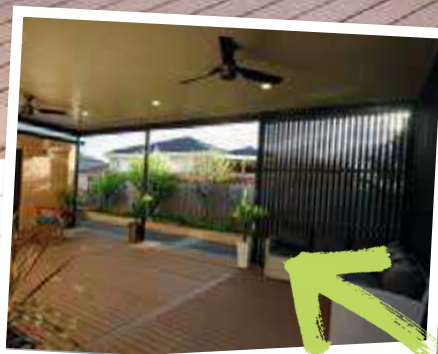


MODERN SOLUTION

Decking boards are traditionally made from natural timber but, in recent years, man-made products that offer a durable and low-maintenance alternative to timber have become available.

Composite boards are made from a variety of materials, ranging from fibre cement to recycled timber, plastic, bamboo and even rice husks.

Engineered to resist rot, they don't need regular sanding and refinishing like timber. Some boards come in a range of colours while others can be stained.



Types of boards

Wood Plastic Composite (WPC) boards are made from real timber fibres and high-density polyethylene or PVC.

Engineered Cementitious Composite (ECC) boards are made from high tensile fibre cement that is resistant to cracking.

Working with composite

As they are manufactured, composite boards are free from knots and cracks and are less prone to warping, making them simple and easy to install.

Many boards are available with a hidden fastening system or a tongue-and-groove profile, creating a tidy, modern look. Some boards require specific spacing to allow for expansion.

WPC boards can be cut just like timber, but ECC boards must be cut with a fibre cement blade. Always wear a respirator and goggles when cutting composite.

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BASIC SKILLS

Circular saw



Quick cutting

While they may be intimidating to beginners, circular saws are simple to use and make cutting timber and other materials quick and easy.

Corded saws provide ample power for repetitive cuts, while cordless saws are portable and ideal for situations when mains power is unavailable.

The adjustable baseplate allows the user to change the depth and angle of the blade, making bevel cuts easy.

There are different blades for a variety of materials but, generally, the more teeth, the smoother the cut.

Choose a 24-tooth blade for general cutting, or a 40-tooth blade for sheet material or fine cuts.

Circular saws cut on the upstroke, so ensure the good side of the timber is facing down to avoid splintering.



[Watch the video online](http://handyman.net.au/circular-saw)
Visit handyman.net.au/circular-saw



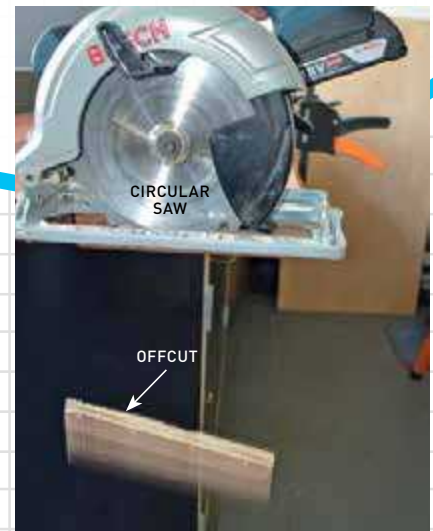
USE A CUTTING GUIDE

For accurate cuts, mark the cutting line, then measure the offset from the blade to the baseplate edge. If the piece being cut off is the one you need, add the blade thickness. Mark the offset and clamp the guide in position. With the baseplate against the guide, nick the timber to check the alignment, then make the cut.



SET THE BLADE DEPTH

To make neater cuts, position the unplugged saw against the edge of the timber with the blade guard retracted. Loosen the baseplate and adjust so the teeth extend about 5mm below the timber, then tighten the baseplate. **TIP** Set the blade at less than full thickness for grooves or housings.



LET OFFCUTS FALL FREELY

Avoid supporting both ends of timber when cutting, as this can make the blade bind, causing kickback. Instead, allow the offcut to fall freely. When crosscutting plywood, ensure it is supported along its entire length to avoid damaging the veneer, but don't clamp or restrict the offcut piece.



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3 BUDGET OUTDOOR MAKEOVERS

Transform neglected backyards into inviting recreational spaces

WORDS AND PICTURES CHERIE BARBER

A comfortable outdoor area is a fantastic asset for any home, but many backyards and courtyards are unkempt or lack facilities, making them unappealing or unusable as entertaining areas.

But it's possible to renovate an outdoor area on a budget to create a stunning alfresco space.

These three makeovers show how easy it is to turn neglected parts of the home and garden into accessible, functional and versatile extensions of the living areas, while adding value.

The key is working with existing features, recycling materials and spending in the right areas to get the maximum return on investment.

SAFETY TIP

Decks that are more than 1m high will need to have balustrading installed around the perimeter to meet safety regulations.

After

A concrete driveway makes the garage more accessible.

Before



**\$9300
COST**

Before

After

The new deck takes advantage of the existing covered awning.

Family appeal

Before improvements could take place in this backyard, a major clean-up was called for. The aim was to devise a spacious outdoor entertaining area and a family friendly backyard.

The land was uneven, so once the rubbish was cleared, an excavator was hired to remove the old turf and provide a level base for the new lawn.

To create a space for entertaining, the posts and roof of the existing shade structure were retained and a deck with balustrading was installed.

The kitchen window was converted to sliding doors to give level access to the new deck from the living areas.

As the house is a rental property, the landscaping was kept simple, with low-maintenance native gardens and a lush green lawn for kids to play on.

The walls, fence and garage were painted in a modern colour scheme, and a concrete driveway now provides access to the carport and garage, so the side area is usable again. ➤

After

No longer overgrown, the backyard now features a smooth, green lawn.

Before

**\$5000
COST**

After

Timber screening adds privacy to the compact courtyard.

Small-space solution

There was little about this plain courtyard to coax its owners outside, except to hang out the washing.

With grim concrete surfaces, no privacy and a complete absence of greenery, it needed an overhaul to turn it into a usable part of the home.

The key to the transformation was a warm expanse of decking laid across the concrete. A modular system was selected, meaning the framework could be laid directly on the slab without the need to create footings.

Matching timber slats were installed at each end of the courtyard for roof-height privacy screening.

A large day bed that spans the width of the deck was also built using the same timber slats.

The day bed not only provides extra seating but, scattered with bright cushions, adds a much-needed splash of colour and personality.

A contemporary grey shade was used on the walls, and the addition of modern light fittings and wall art help to transform the space.

Finally, a vertical garden and potted plants green up the space. ➤

Before

After

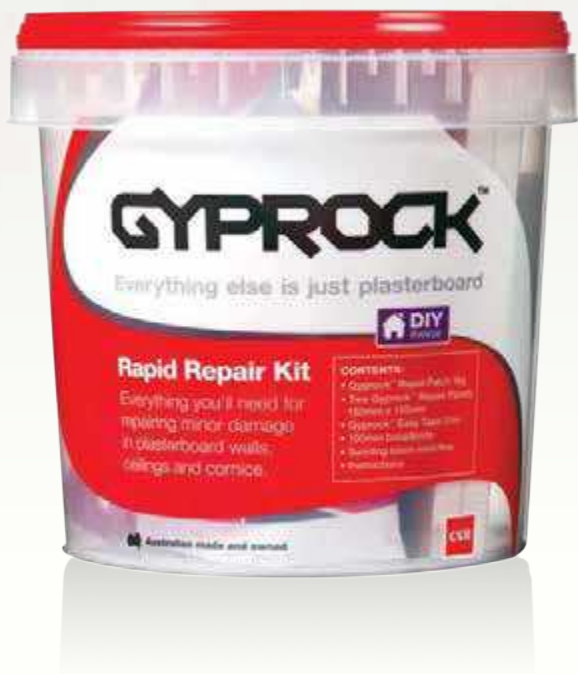
A vertical garden and potted plants green up the space.

Before



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- Mini Repair Panel – 580mm x 580mm

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Available at



Visit gyprock.com.au/DIY





Before

\$7100
COST



After

A tidy lawn and beds replace the tangle of shrubs and old paving.



Before

Hidden asset

This yard was like an untamed jungle but it was a big area with established shady trees, offering a good base.

To keep costs down and minimise waste disposal fees, the aim was to recycle as many materials as possible.

The old and unsightly pavers were removed and sold to a neighbour. The rubble was cleared and the earth levelled, then new turf was laid.

Timber sleepers were used to make garden beds, which were planted with

recycled shrubs. Hardwood and bamboo screens were installed to conceal the old fence for a fraction of the cost of replacing it.

Layers of compacted roadbase, black aggregate and binder were laid to create a budget-friendly driveway.

A new rear deck connects the house and backyard. And the house, garage, deck, fence and shed were painted in charcoal contrasted with off-white to tie them all together. 🌱



After

The new rear deck creates easy, level access to the backyard.

After

Laying a low-cost driveway gets rid of the uneven pavers.

Before



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FRONT *TO* BACK

A classic 1970s battleaxe block in Melbourne is renovated to focus on a big backyard

WORDS SITA SIMONS PICTURES LAUREN BAMFORD

Found in all Australian cities, 1970s brick-veneered homes were built quickly and cheaply in an era of economic growth that allowed for a standardisation in construction.

Love or loathe them, their handy locations and generous-sized blocks make them highly sought-after real estate, and their plain features are ideal for imaginative renovations.

For a growing family of five, who required more space and amenities, the time to rethink their Glen Iris, Victoria, home was long overdue.

With architect Emilio Fuscaldo from Nest Architects in Melbourne, (nestarchitects.com.au), they set out to design a new chapter for the home to honour the original design, but update the functionality.

DESIGN TIP

Mixing materials such as timber, metal and stone is an effective way to provide contrast and give an expansive area dimension and form.

Before

Reimagining the original

'You see a house like this and you know it has decent bones, but they weren't built for the functions we value today,' says Emilio.

The original layout had all the living spaces upstairs and bedrooms and bathroom downstairs.

There was no way out to the garden and backyard from the upstairs living area other than through a long corridor, down a set of internal stairs and out the back door.

'A major element of the brief was to ensure the family had really easy access to the backyard,' says Emilio.

The initial idea was to relocate the living spaces downstairs to create flow between indoors and out. ➤



A generous backyard offers the opportunity to create different levels and zones

After

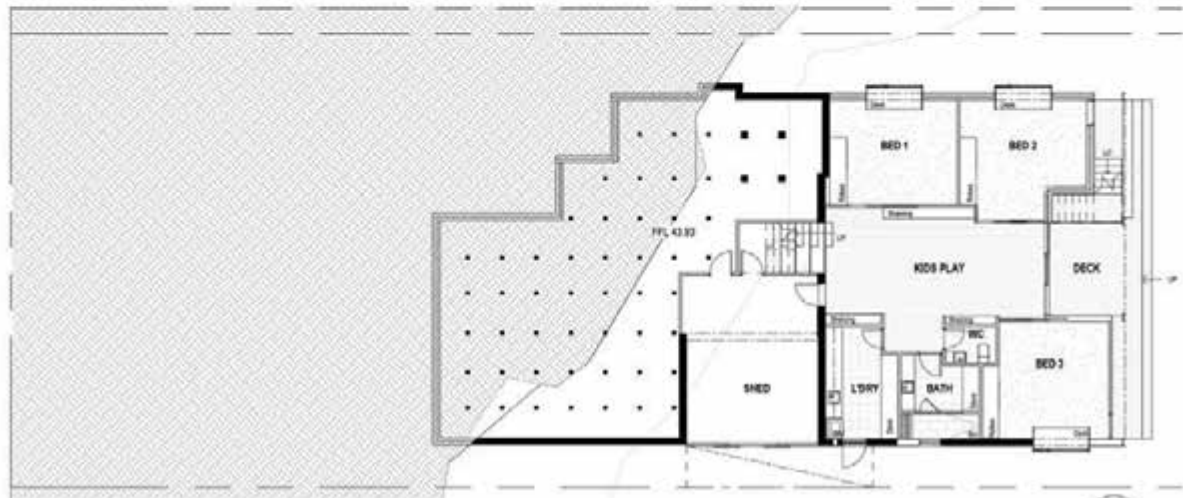
The layout of the house was reworked to make an easy connection to the big back garden.

FLOORPLAN



Ground Floor Plan

1:200



Lower Ground Floor Plan

1:200



Making new connections

To achieve the brief of connecting to the outdoors, Emilio went through several design proposals where he reversed the layout of the house. But in the end, the bedrooms remained on the ground floor.

While it is more straightforward to run living spaces straight out onto the backyard, doing so with this house would have lost the views those areas enjoyed.

'They were too precious to lose, so the challenge became how to connect

the house to the outdoors using the existing configuration,' says Emilio.

'It seemed to make most sense to allow the children's rooms to open directly onto the yard, as they are really who it's for, especially now they're at an age when they want to be inside on screens all the time.

'Equally, the parents were more appreciative of the views,' he says.

To create this link to the outdoors, the living spaces open onto balconies and an external staircase allows access to the backyard from upstairs.



Blurring the lines

Sensitive reorientations are a feature of Emilio's work, and he's conscious of the line between old and new.

The footprint of the home didn't change and the two front rooms were left intact, but the back was gutted.

'This was about integrating into the original, and avoiding a simple demarcation between an existing house and a new one,' says Emilio.

He blended the two by taking fresh elements into the original and drawing existing details into the new part, such as skirting, cornices, lighting, ceilings and flooring.

When well considered and carefully selected, these elements come together to blur the lines.

'You want to walk into a house and feel it's cohesive, rather than two cousins sitting beside each other. The result is more interesting and better integrated, rather than trying to be an architectural showpiece,' he says. ➤

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TIDY TIP

Tuck appliances out of sight in a corner of the kitchen to create a streamlined space with decorative and not just functional elements.

Colour plays a big part in the open-plan upstairs kitchen.

Warming the interiors

The entire top floor is dedicated to the living, kitchen and dining areas, and the master suite. Each area has its own private balcony for taking in the view.

An internal staircase opens onto a central upstairs hallway, with the kitchen and dining to the left and living room to the right.

Natural light floods the space and custom-built joinery in textured blue panels runs the length of the hall.

The architects designed the vertical pattern on the panels, which was custom-routed into the MDF and painted with enamel.

'This reads as a continuous surface. If it was all just flat panels, you'd only pick up the cupboard doors and there

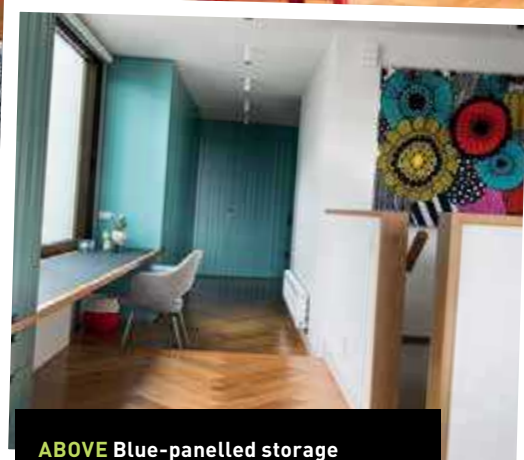
are a lot of them. They provide masses of storage,' says Emilio.

There is a strong mid-century aesthetic, with lots of warm timber in the parquet flooring, furniture and internal cladding. The living room features a low bluestone bench, an element Emilio likes to include.

'We always ensure there is enough horizontal shelving and benching so that it can be decorated,' he says.

A timber-clad column holds an inward and outward fireplace, which vastly extends life outdoors in the often chilly Victorian climate.

The kitchen is welcoming and warm, highlighting rich American oak and featuring more coloured storage cupboards, this time in green.



ABOVE Blue-paneled storage cupboards line the upstairs hallway. **BELOW** Timber and parquetry works with the mid-century aesthetic.



Creating smarter spaces

The children's bedrooms are generous, each with a study area. Stand-alone desks would have taken up a lot of space and made the rooms feel small.

'We had an idea to create a new window that borrows space from outside with an extruded frame and a huge sill that acts as the desk so it sits halfway in and half out.

'In this way we provide the function but take much less room. My theory is that making a kind of cocoon, where the kids are sitting in the space, might be better for their concentration,' says Emilio.

This also works from the outside and gives the wall expression and articulation with the steel window frames, which then tie to the other steel features on the home. ➤

Space is borrowed from outside to make way for built-in study areas in the children's rooms.

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ABOVE A central play area opens off the children's rooms downstairs.



BELOW The blue panels from the hall feature in the master bedroom.



Making inspiring choices

The master suite is on the same level as the living spaces and features a dressing room and bathroom.

The dressing room was added directly off the back of the bedroom and leads into the ensuite. It was done in the same green as the kitchen, and provides folding and hanging room, plus a large full-length mirror.

The generous ensuite features a freestanding bath in the centre as well as a shower, and it all comes alive with the gorgeous tropical wallpaper the owners imported from the US.

'It was an inspired choice for this area and makes it incredibly inviting

and grown-up. In Australia, we tend to avoid colour and patterns and making bold statements,' says Emilio.

The children's rooms all open onto a large central play area.

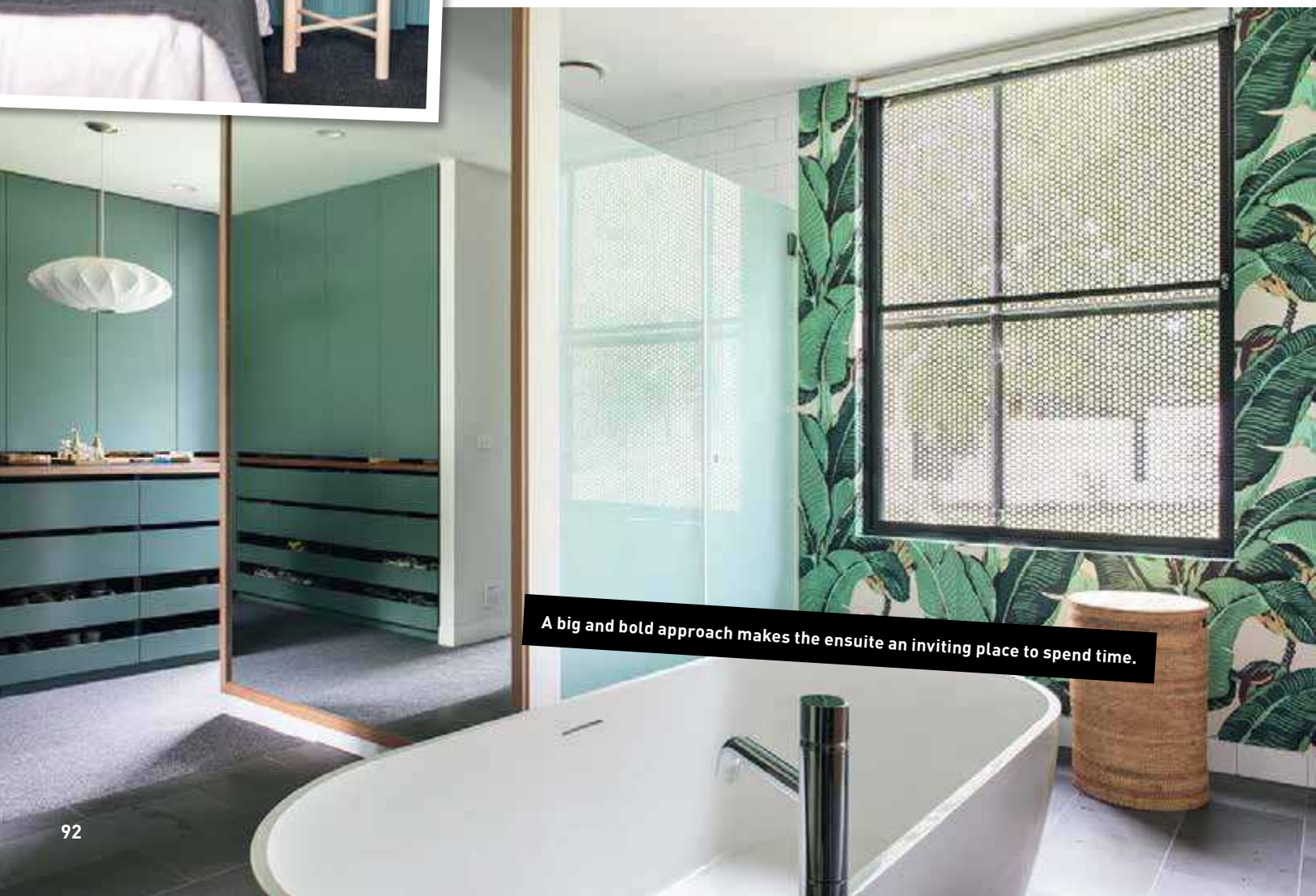
'We wanted to foster multiple use, and encourage the children to come out of their bedrooms and into the communal space.

'Sliding doors are a way of making the division between the rooms less strict. If you have mean little doors, it's more difficult to entice a child in or out of the room,' says Emilio.

With all the doors open, the children's bedrooms just become part of the overall space. ➤



Different tones of a similar colour unify the palette without becoming predictable



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After

The facade retained the original lines but was given a modern surface treatment.



Before



Updating the exteriors

'We wanted to make a dramatic change to the exterior without erasing its features and textures,' says Emilio.

A light cement bagging emphasises the lines of the house.

'This references the history of the build, while bringing it right up to date. We coupled it with plate and perforated steel that act as privacy screens and details around windows.

'Up close, the white brick is rough and patterned, giving a lovely contrast against the sharp steel,' says Emilio.

Timber lining boards soften the house and give it some warmth. The building is large and tall, so the scale

is broken from the back to make it appear less imposing.

Open steel balustrading and the graphic articulation of the external staircase, and the non-uniform balconies add dimension. This draws the eye to many smaller elements rather than just one large mass.

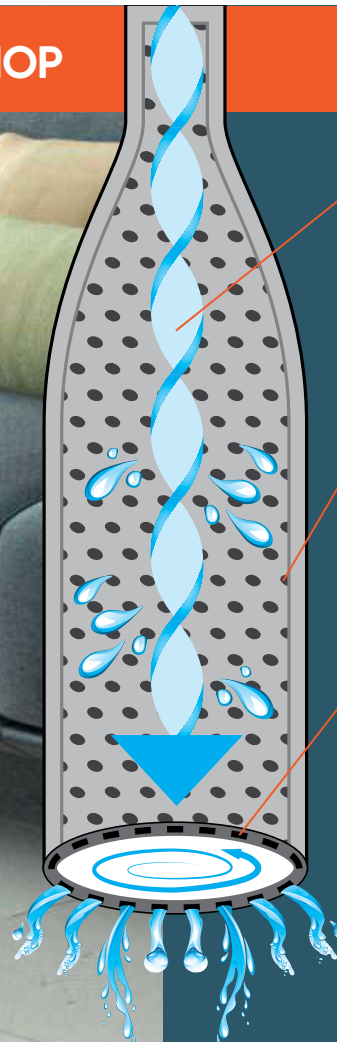
'We wanted to use materials that have a lot of natural patina to them, and that will change and age.

'This is not a maintenance-free house. It requires upkeep, needs attention and a management regimen, but it will last and last and only ever get better with age if it's properly cared for,' says Emilio. 🌱



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GET CRAFTY FOR CHRISTMAS

Design a rustic table setting and make festive decorations for the season

PROJECTS AND PICTURES MELISSA DARR



Decorating for the holidays is fun and the shops are full of ornaments and accessories.

But with just a few tools and materials you can decorate DIY and put your own stamp on the season.

Craft blogger Melissa Darr has created a festive table setting and decorations you can make to give Christmas a rustic theme this year.

Set the table with log placemats, dress the front door with a native wreath, decorate with pine-cone trees and trim the tree with twine baubles.

These decorations can also be made as one-of-a-kind Christmas gifts.

 **Make your own decorations**

Get inspired at pinterest.com/DIYhandyman

Set the table

Lay a hessian runner along the centre of your dining table and arrange small pine-tree branches on top.

Set out candles in varying heights and tealights in holders, then add pine cones and a few gold or red stars, depending on your colour scheme.

Create a stunning centrepiece with a cake on a stand, topped with strawberries, red berries and greenery.

Or, make a floral arrangement with a Christmas colour theme. ➤



For the finishing touches, add a napkin tied with string and decorated with a berry sprig, and name tags garnished with rosemary.

MELISSA'S PICKS



Whites Outdoor 100m Jute Twine, about \$8. whitesgroup.com.au



Uni-Pro Foam Brushes, about \$3 for a set of four. unipro.com.au



Dulux Duramax Bright Finish Spray Paint in Silver, \$20 for 300g. dulux.com.au



Dulux Duramax Metallic Finish Spray Paint in Gold, about \$14 for 325g.



Sika SikaBond PVA Woodworking Glue, \$18 for 500ml. sikaretail.com.au



Ozito 10W Trigger Flow Glue Gun, \$15. ozito.com.au



Ryobi 300W Random Orbital Sander, \$89. ryobi.com.au

TIMBER PLACEMATS

An outdoor table setting calls for rustic placemats, so Melissa had her husband Bevan slice rounds from a log out of the woodpile, then simply sanded them smooth.

The placemats tie in perfectly with the other natural materials used to decorate the festive table.

What you need

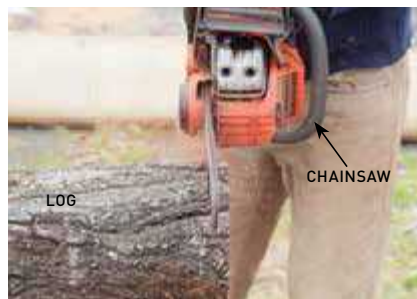
Log
Chainsaw
Orbital sander
80 grit sanding disc
120 grit sanding disc
80 grit sandpaper
Sanding block

DIY TIP

Make sure you select a well-seasoned log to use for the placemats, as green timber will not be suitable.



1 2 3



1 Cut the log

Use a chainsaw to carefully cut the desired quantity of 15mm-thick rounds off the log for the placemats. Give each round a light sand to remove any sharp edges using 80 grit sandpaper and a sanding block.



2 Sand the rounds

Use an orbital sander and 80 grit disc to smooth off any unwanted bumps on each side of the rounds. Change to a 120 grit disc and sand each side of the rounds until the surface has the desired smoothness.



3 Finish the placemats

Rinse off each round, then use a soft cloth to remove any built-up sawdust. Leave the placemats in a sunny spot to dry thoroughly.

TIP To seal the placemats, apply a light coat of a matt varnish.

PINE CONE TREES

SAFETY TIP

When using spray paint, always work in a well-ventilated area and protect the surrounds from overspray.

For a little extra flair, add a red bow to the front of one pot.

What you need

- 3 mini terracotta pots
- Silver spray paint
- Green acrylic paint
- 3 pine cones
- Paintbrush
- Green glitter
- Hot glue gun
- Silver cardboard
- Star punch

These cute potted pine-cone trees are quick and easy to make and will add a wonderful festive feel to your home.

Melissa painted the pots and pine cones, added a sprinkle of glitter, glued the pine cones to the pots, then topped them off with a silver star.

Group the trees on a shelf, styled with ornaments, or arrange on a tray and use as table decorations.

'If you want to keep your kids busy during the holidays, put them to work helping to make these mini trees. They'll love taking part,' says Melissa.

1 2 3



1 Spray the pots

Cover a work surface with newspaper. Spray the outside of the pots lightly with silver paint, except for the base. Allow to dry for about an hour, then apply a second coat. Leave to dry completely for another two hours.



2 Paint the cones

Paint the pine cones with green acrylic using a brush, making sure it gets into the crevices. Allow to dry, then apply a second coat. While the paint is still wet, sprinkle glitter over the pine cones and leave to dry.



3 Make the trees

Run a bead of glue around the base of each pine cone using a hot glue gun and quickly insert into a pot, making sure they are upright. Punch stars from silver cardboard and glue to the tops of the pine-cone trees. ➤

NATIVE WREATH

Tie a cheerful wreath to your front door to welcome guests to your home.

Melissa made her wreath using six different types of foliage attached to a wooden ring and hung it from the door using ribbon. To add colour, she sprayed the gum leaves in gold.

'What better way to celebrate a merry Aussie Christmas than with a beautiful festive wreath made from native foliage?'

What you need

Wooden or wire craft ring
(about 350mm)
Gold spray paint
Scissors
Jute twine
Sprigs of native foliage, such
as wattle and gum leaves
Plastic twist ties
White ribbon
Upholstery nail

DIY TIP

Choose healthy foliage and mist-spray the wreath every 1-2 days, depending on the weather, to stop it wilting and make it last.



Florist rings are available at most craft stores.

1 2 3



1 Spray the leaves

Cover a work surface with newspaper, then spray the gum leaves with gold paint. Allow to dry and apply a second coat. Cut foliage into 200mm lengths. Make 12 bunches using a sprig from each plant, securing with a twist tie.



2 Attach the foliage

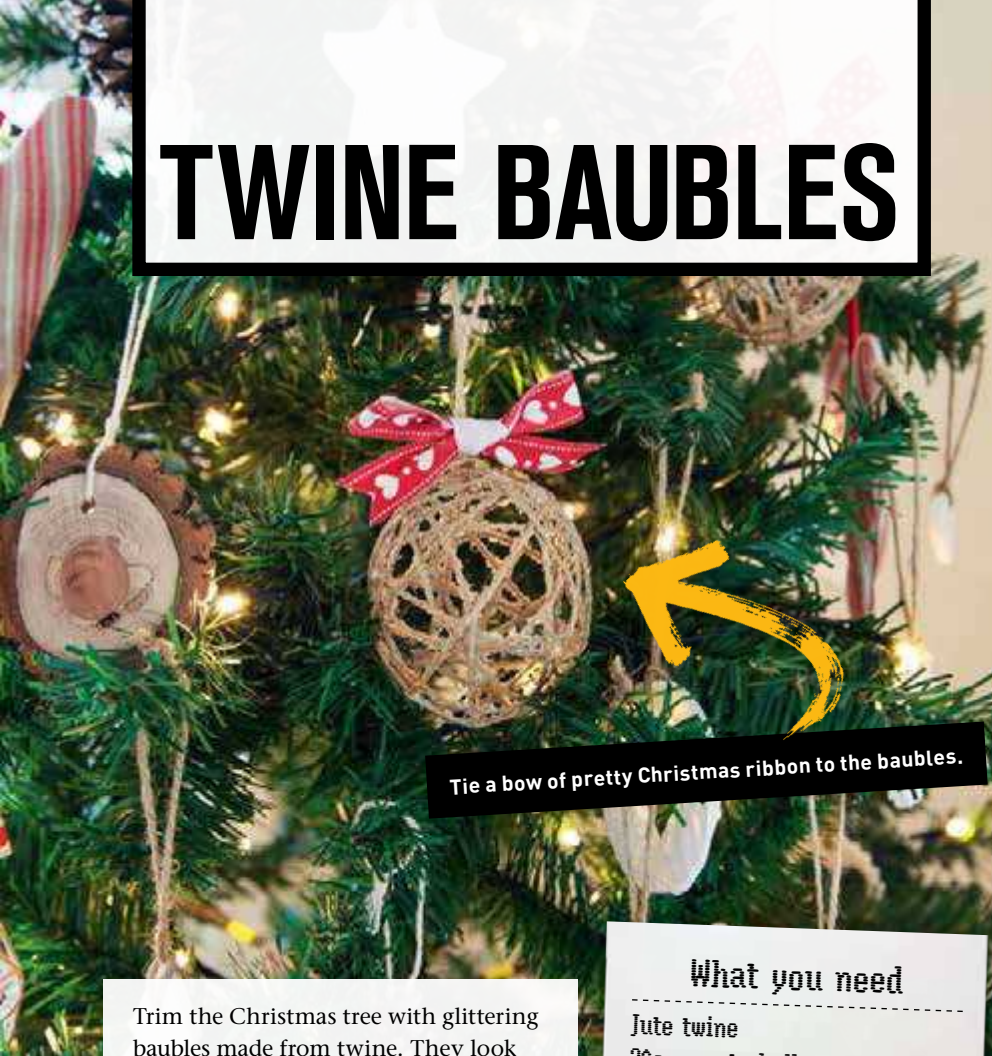
Lay one bunch of foliage on the craft ring and tie the twine around the base several times to secure it firmly. Put a second bunch of foliage near the first, and attach with twine. Repeat until the wreath is completely covered.



3 Hang the wreath

Cut the ribbon to the required length, depending on where you are going to hang the wreath. Tie the ribbon to the craft ring in among the foliage and hang the wreath on a door using an upholstery nail.

TWINE BAUBLES



Tie a bow of pretty Christmas ribbon to the baubles.

Trim the Christmas tree with glittering baubles made from twine. They look intricate but are very easy to create by wrapping twine around a balloon.

'Twine baubles are perfect for a rustic theme and spraying them with glitter paint will add a bit of glitz to your tree,' says Melissa.

What you need

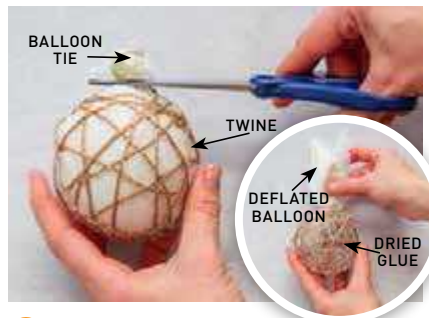
Jute twine
20cm party balloons
Plastic wrap
PVA adhesive
Foam brush
Glitter spray paint
Scissors

1 2



1 Wrap the balloons

Blow up balloons to the desired size, tie off and cover with plastic wrap. Attach the twine with a dab of adhesive, then wind it around each balloon. Cut the end and glue down. Dab adhesive all over the balloon using a foam brush.



2 Finish the baubles

Leave to dry for 24 hours. Cut the ties to deflate the balloons, then pull out with the plastic wrap. Use a skewer to remove the dried glue, then spray the baubles with glitter. Leave to dry. Attach a piece of twine as a hanger. ✨

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UPCYCLING FOR OUTDOORS

Think twice before throwing out those preloved pieces, as it's quick and easy to revamp them DIY

PROJECTS AND STYLING TRACY MARYON AND AMANDA SHAW MAIN PICTURES SUE FERRIS



There's always a way to repurpose a preloved or discarded item and put it to good use again.

Here, we turned a tatty disused louvre door into a vertical plant holder, which is ideal for balconies.

A worn, sorry-looking table and four chairs have been transformed into a colourful outdoor setting.

And an old dinosaur model toy metamorphosed into a planter.

They're quick and easy projects, and you'll have great fun into the bargain.



Before



Before



After

The painted table and chairs now look like a matching set.

VINTAGE SETTING

A garage sale find for just \$20, this table was well past its prime. The chairs were salvaged on council clean-up days on different occasions, but we managed to get four exactly the same.

To give the timber table and chairs a vintage look they were painted in two shades of green, then sanded back.

They were first primed, then painted in a water-based dark green

and light green, with each coat allowed to dry thoroughly in between.

We sanded the light green paint to reveal the darker colour beneath and a little of the primer in places.

To finish, they were coated with water-based varnish for protection.

The setting is ideal for alfresco dining on a summer's day, or all year round on a covered verandah. ➤



Amanda & Tracy

EXPERT SECRETS

Use a cork block when sanding large, flat areas for extra pressure and to give a smoother finish.

★
Painted in shades of green, the setting blends in with the natural surroundings



STYLE TIP

Position the largest and most eye-catching tin in the centre to act as a focal point, then arrange the smaller tins around it.

After

Vintage tins make eye-catching planters on the refinished louvre door.



VERTICAL GARDEN

Found by the roadside, this louvre door was turned into a plant holder.

We scoured op-shops, council clean-ups and garage sales for quirky tins in different sizes to use as pots.

The door was painted and sanded back, then the potted tins were hung on the slats using S hooks.

To make it both functional and decorative, the tins were planted with a mix of herbs and flowering plants. The plants can be changed with the seasons for an ongoing display.

The stand can be leant against an exterior wall or used to add colour to a side passage, and it can be easily moved about to catch the sun.

- 1
- 2
- 3



1 Paint the door
Apply primer, then paint the door in white. Select the best side, then coat the frame in green. When dry, sand the frame with medium-grit paper to reveal the white paint and timber in places. Lightly sand the edges of the slats.



2 Make the holes
Use a bradawl to make several small drainage holes in the base of each tin. Make a hole at least 10mm down from the rim of each tin, big enough to fit an S hook. Insert the S hooks in the tins.



3 Hang the tins
Add a layer of blue metal aggregate to the tins for drainage, then a layer of potting mix. Position the plants in the tins and top up with mix, firming it down. Hang the tins on the slats using the S hooks. ➤



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DINOSAUR PLANTER

Bought from a market for \$5, this dinosaur model toy was given a new purpose as a novelty plant pot.

With the help of Nina Shaw, we set to work to transform the tyrannosaurus. Nina marked the plant hole and spray-painted the dinosaur in red.

The plant hole was then cut out, which was tricky, as the plastic is tough, so this was done by the adults. Lastly, the plant was carefully inserted into the hole.

GROW TIP

Choose plants with shallow root systems, such as succulents, or re-pot your plant when it gets too big for your planter.

After

The tyrannosaurus planter strikes a very impressive pose among the greenery.



1 Mark the hole

Use a pencil to draw a curved line along each side of the dinosaur's back to mark out a hole large enough for the plant you are using.

TIP Nina drew lines about 120mm long for the planting hole.



2 Apply the paint

Lay newspaper on a flat surface to protect the surroundings, then spray the dinosaur with two coats of paint, allowing it to dry in between coats.

TIP We used a paint and primer in one that is suitable for outdoors.



3 Add the plant

Pour potting mix into the hole, pushing it right down into the tail and neck of the dinosaur, but leaving room in the centre for the plant. Add the plant and fill around it with mix, firming it down well. ➤



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Uni-Pro Cork Sanding Block, about \$3. unipro.com.au



Trojan Scratch Awl, about \$6. trojantools.com.au



Zenith 50mm Zinc Plated S Hooks, \$4 for five. itwproline.com.au



Rust-Oleum 2X Ultra Cover Paint + Primer in Gloss Apple Red, \$12 for 340g. rustoleum.com.au

A paint job turns old toys into one-of-a-kind planters.

Cutting the hole

Use a handsaw or hacksaw to carefully cut around the marked hole in the dinosaur, being sure to cut away from your hands.

Trim the edges all around the hole using a scalpel, then touch up with spray paint.



Adding the detail

Features were added to the face of the dinosaur with acrylic paints.

The eyes were painted in green with a black line down the centre, the nostrils in black and the teeth in white.



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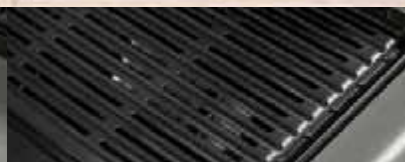
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**THE SIGN OF A
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Child's play

Be inspired to create a special Christmas gift that will capture the imagination of any child

WORDS ASHLEIGH PERRIOTT PICTURES STEVE PERRIOTT

Leave the store-bought toys on the shelf this year, or leave them for Santa to deliver, and give the kids a one-of-a-kind Christmas present made specially for them by you.

These creative DIY gift ideas are easy to make, each taking just a day to complete, and simple to customise using colour and accessories.

Dress-up mirror

Children love dressing up, and this mirror makeover will light up the life of junior performers, helping them get into character for their play acting.

To make it, a basic mirror with an untreated pine frame was modified to feature coloured LED lights. Paint, flowers and glitter add extra sparkle.

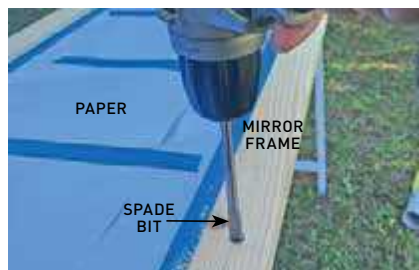
Materials

Framed mirror	\$88
Fairy lights	\$10
Faux flowers	\$7
Paint	\$10
Glitter	\$3
PVA adhesive	\$2
U shape staples	\$3
Painter's tape	\$10
TOTAL	\$133



Let your child enter a world of fantasy in front of this mirror fit for a star

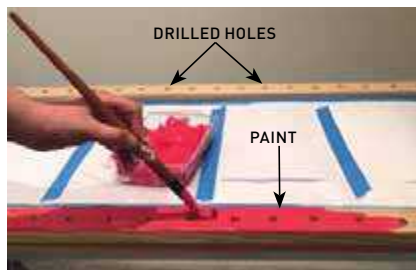
1 2 3



1 Prepare the frame

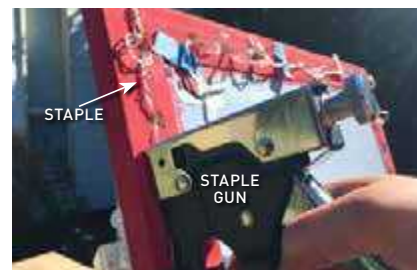
Tape paper over the mirror to protect the glass. Temporarily secure the lights to the frame using tape. Mark the location of each light, then drill holes using an 8mm spade bit.

TIP Clamp an offcut to the underside of the timber to prevent splintering.



2 Paint the timber

Sand the frame with 120 grit abrasive paper, then again with 180 grit. Apply two coats of paint, letting it dry in between coats. Sprinkle glitter over the second coat while still wet. Leave to dry, then attach fake flowers to the painted frame with PVA adhesive.



3 Attach the lights

Push 1-2 fairy lights through each hole from the frame back and tape in position. Use a staple gun to secure lights to the frame with a U shape staple either side of each hole, then remove the tape. Insert batteries for the lights into the power box. ➤

For more fun ideas go to bunnings.com.au/diy-advice/kids

SAFETY TIP

For younger children, securely mount the dress-up mirror on a wall to prevent it falling over while they are playing.

DRESS-UP MIRROR

 Watch the video online
Visit handyman/dress-up-mirror



TOY CAR GARAGE

Build young revheads a parking garage to house their fleet of toy cars and trucks. The kids will love launching vehicles off the long ramp, while you'll love seeing their toys off the floor.

A small timber crate forms the garage, PVC pipes create the car spaces and felt is used to make the road on top.

The ramp was crafted from DAR pine and is attached with hinges for flexibility and easy storage. All the timber was painted fire-engine red. ➤

Materials

44 x 32 x 20cm crate	\$40
50mm PVC pipe	\$41
50mm hinges	\$3
Polyurethane sealant	\$19
PVA adhesive	\$2
DAR pine	\$7
Paint	\$10
Felt	\$9
Letter stickers	\$3
Screws	\$2
TOTAL	\$136

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Visit handyman/toy-car-garage

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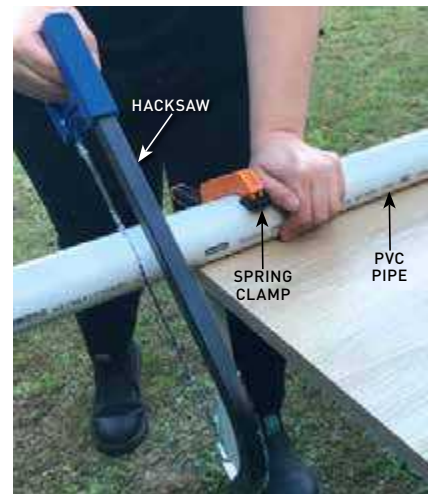
1 Prepare the ramp

From a 1200 x 140 x 12mm length of pine, cut a 550 x 140mm ramp using a circular saw. Mark a 300 x 80mm piece for the sign in pencil, then cut out with a circular saw, using a straightedge guide to rip the board. Lightly sand the edges with abrasive paper to remove any roughness.



2 Paint the pieces

Apply a non-toxic paint to the crate, ramp and sign using a mini roller. Touch up the edges with a small paintbrush for an even finish. Leave to dry for 30 minutes, then apply a second coat, ensuring even coverage on both sides of the timber. Allow to dry thoroughly.



3 Cut the pipe

Using a permanent marker, mark the PVC piping into 27 sections, 180mm in length. Secure the pipe tightly to a workbench with spring clamps, then cut the pipe sections with a hacksaw. Sand off any rough edges with 120 grit abrasive paper to provide an even surface for the sealant.



4 Secure the pipes

Apply an even bead of polyurethane adhesive/sealant around the pipe rims and down the outer sides to secure to the crate and adjacent pipes. Position the pipes in the crate in alternating rows of five and four, until there are six rows. Allow the sealant to cure for four hours before moving the crate.



5 Add the sign

Position the sign on the lip of the crate and mark screw locations on each end and in the centre. Predrill holes, then attach sticker letters to say 'Parking Garage'. Clamp the sign to the crate, securing with three 6g x 25mm screws. To prevent splitting the timber, use a low drill speed.



6 Attach the ramp

Secure two 50mm hinges to the inside face of the ramp with four 6g x 15mm screws. Position the ramp on the empty end of the crate, predrill holes and attach with four more screws. Cut a black felt road and attach with PVA adhesive to the garage roof, adding a strip of white felt as a road line.

TOP PICKS



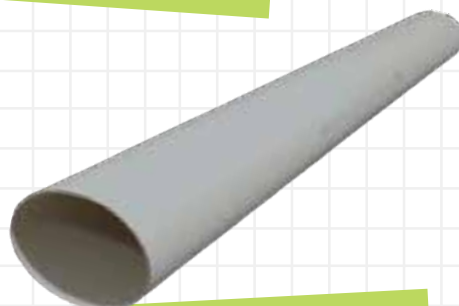
Boyle 44 x 32 x 20cm
Large Craft Fruit Crate, \$40.
boyleindustries.com.au



Click 100 LED White Battery
Operated Fairy Lights, \$10.
bunnings.com.au



Everton 1300 x 480mm Mirror
with Untreated Timber Frame,
\$88. everton.com.au



Holman 50mm x 1m DWV
PVC Pipe, about \$7.
holmanindustries.com.au



Sika Sikaflex 11FC Polyurethane
Adhesive Sealant, \$19 for
310ml. sikaretail.com.au

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GIFT GUIDE

Have a very DIY Christmas with this home and garden round-up

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Stay cool this sunny season under the Mimosa 3.5m Andaman Cantilever Umbrella, \$599.



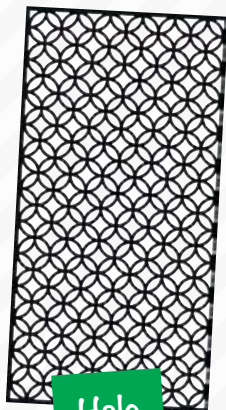
Light up your workshop, yard or campsite with the ultra-bright, rechargeable Batlight Torch, \$34.90.



Feast on fresh vegies with The Organic Garden Co 200 x 100 x 41cm Grey Raised Garden Bed, \$99.



Turn your garden into a private oasis with 1800 x 900 x 7mm screening panels, \$99 each.



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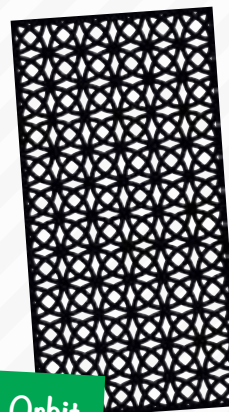
Riverbank



Jungle



Tangle



Orbit



Woodland

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Bring the playground to your backyard with the Manor Multi Playset, \$699.

Splash out on a special seat for little ones with the Baby Swing Set, \$67.



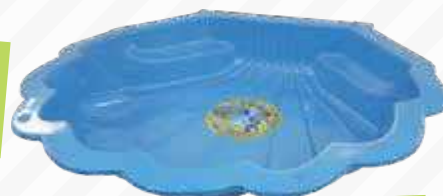
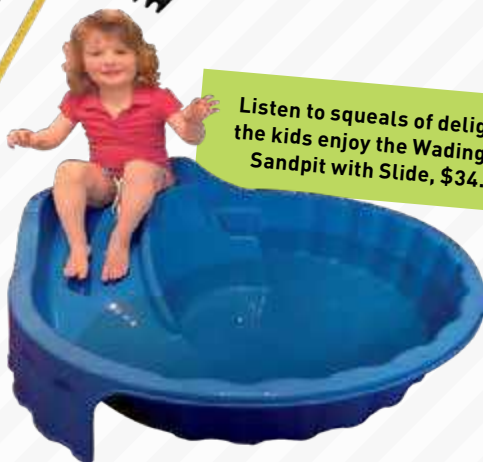
Give little ones hours of outdoor fun with the Freestanding Water Slide, \$99.



Put your young excavator to work with the Kid's Sandpit Digger, \$29.90.



Listen to squeals of delight as the kids enjoy the Wading Pool Sandpit with Slide, \$34.90.



Splash out on a warm-weather treat, the Clam Shell Wading Pool and Sandpit, \$13.45.



HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING RECIPES

Create a mouthwatering menu to celebrate the season from this line-up of colourful dishes with a tasty twist



Coconut and chilli prawns

PREPARATION TIME 15 minutes

COOKING TIME 8 minutes

Ingredients

16 large raw prawns (about 500g)

½ cup (50g) shredded coconut

2 small red bird's eye chillies,
stalk ends cut off

1 clove garlic

1 tablespoon chopped fresh ginger

1 teaspoon dried shrimp

1 tablespoon chopped coriander
roots and/or stems

2 tablespoons grated palm sugar
or brown sugar

1 tablespoon fish sauce

Juice of ½ lime (about 2 tablespoons)

SWEET CHILLI DIPPING SAUCE

¼ cup (85g) orange marmalade

2 tablespoons sweet chilli sauce

2 teaspoons lemon juice

1 PREPARE the dipping sauce.

Put the marmalade and sweet chilli
sauce in a small microwave-safe bowl.

Microwave for about 30 seconds, until
bubbling, then stir in the lemon juice.

2 PEEL the prawns, leaving the tails
intact. Use a sharp skewer or cooking
needle to pierce the back of each
prawn and loop out the digestive
tract. Try not to split the prawns.

3 TOAST the shredded coconut
in a non-stick frying pan, stirring
continuously, until light golden, for
about 3 minutes. Set aside. Preheat
a grill or barbecue to very hot.

4 GRIND the chillies, garlic, ginger,
dried shrimp and coriander in a food
processor or with a mortar and pestle.

5 POUR the ground chilli mixture
into a small saucepan and add the
sugar and fish sauce. Heat until
bubbling, then cook for 1 more
minute. Cool and add the lime juice.

6 TOSS the prawns in the cooled
mixture until all well coated. Arrange
the prawns on a grill tray or barbecue,
straightened out with the leg sides
down and drizzle over any leftover
chilli mixture. Grill for 3-4 minutes or
until cooked to your liking.

7 SPRINKLE the toasted coconut
over the cooked prawns and serve. >

Serves 4 as a starter



FESTIVE FOOD

Serves 4

Moroccan-spiced chicken breasts

PREPARATION TIME 15 minutes,
plus 30 minutes marinating

COOKING TIME 21 minutes

Ingredients

4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (about 800g)
1 cup (250g) Greek-style natural yoghurt
Finely grated zest and juice of 1 lemon
1 tablespoon olive oil, plus extra for brushing
5cm piece fresh ginger, peeled, finely grated
1½ teaspoons ground sumac
½ teaspoon ground cumin
1½ teaspoons ground turmeric
1 teaspoon sweet paprika
½ teaspoon cayenne pepper
Steamed zucchini and yellow pattypan squash sprinkled with sumac, to serve

QUINOA HERB SALAD

1 cup (200g) quinoa
250g jar roasted red capsicums, drained, chopped
2 preserved lemon rinds, thinly sliced
1 cup (40g) coriander leaves
1 cup (40g) fresh mint leaves, torn
½ cup (20g) fresh basil leaves, torn

1 TRIM the chicken breasts and pound them out a little to a similar thickness so they cook evenly. Put the chicken in a large zip-lock plastic bag. Add ½ cup (125g) yoghurt, lemon zest and juice, oil, ginger and spices.

2 SECURE the bag, then lightly massage the marinade into the chicken. Stand for 30 minutes, or refrigerate for up to 12 hours.

3 MAKE the salad while the chicken breasts are marinating. Put the quinoa

and 3 cups (750ml) water in a large saucepan. Bring to the boil, reduce heat to low and cook for 12-15 minutes, or until the quinoa is tender. Rinse under cold water and drain well. Toss the cooked quinoa with the roasted capsicum, preserved lemon and herbs just before serving.

4 BRUSH a hot barbecue plate or chargrill pan with the extra oil. Lower the heat to medium-high and cook chicken for 3 minutes on each side, turning once only, until cooked through. Transfer the chicken to a serving plate, cover loosely with foil and set aside to rest for 2 minutes.

5 COMBINE the remaining ½ cup (125g) yoghurt with 2 tablespoons water. Drizzle over the chicken or serve separately. Serve the chicken with the quinoa herb salad and the steamed zucchini and squash.

Serves 4 as a starter

Oysters with herb and lemon oil

PREPARATION TIME 10 minutes, plus 30 minutes marinating
COOKING TIME Nil

Ingredients

¼ cup (10g) fresh flat-leaf parsley leaves
1 tablespoon fresh tarragon leaves
2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill leaves
2 teaspoons finely grated lemon zest
¼ cup (60ml) extra virgin olive oil
12 fresh oysters, on the half shell
2 teaspoons chopped fresh chives
Freshly ground black pepper

- 1 PUT** the parsley in a small heatproof bowl and cover with boiling water. Stand for 30 seconds, then drain and plunge into a bowl of iced water. Drain well and pat dry with paper towel.
- 2 COMBINE** the parsley, tarragon, dill, lemon zest and oil in a small food processor and process until the herbs are well chopped. Pour into a very fine sieve over a bowl. Leave for 30 minutes to strain, pressing with the back of a spoon.
- 3 ARRANGE** the oysters on a serving platter. Spoon a little herb oil over each oyster, top with chives and season with freshly ground black pepper. Serve immediately.

Oysters with bloody Mary dressing

PREPARATION TIME 20 minutes
COOKING TIME 6 minutes

Ingredients

¼ cup (60ml) salt-reduced tomato juice
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh herbs, (we used basil, oregano, thyme, parsley and tarragon)
½ small ripe tomato, very finely diced
½ small stalk celery, very finely diced
¼ small red onion, very finely diced
¼ teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
¼ teaspoon Tabasco sauce
Freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon vodka (optional)
12 large fresh oysters, on the half shell

- 1 PREHEAT** the oven to 200°C. Combine the tomato juice and herbs in a small bowl and leave to infuse for 10 minutes, then strain.
- 2 COMBINE** the strained tomato juice with the tomato, celery, onion, sauces, pepper and vodka, if using, in a small bowl.
- 3 ARRANGE** the oysters on a large heatproof plate. Drizzle each oyster with 1 teaspoon of the dressing. Put a wire rack in a large roasting pan or baking dish and put the plate of oysters on the rack.
- 4 POUR** boiling water carefully into the roasting pan so that it comes to

just under the rack. Cover the pan with foil, tucking it around and under the rim to trap steam during cooking.

- 5 PUT** the pan in the oven to steam the oysters for 3-6 minutes, depending on their size. Carefully remove the foil and serve the oysters immediately. ➤



When serving oysters, supply a small fork and a finger bowl for each diner



FESTIVE FOOD

Serves 6

Herb and spice burgers

PREPARATION TIME 15 minutes, plus 25 minutes standing

COOKING TIME 14 minutes

Ingredients

3 slices thick white bread
500g lean beef mince
1 small red onion, finely chopped
3 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
3 tablespoons chopped fresh oregano leaves
1 tablespoon chopped fresh rosemary leaves
1 clove garlic, crushed
4cm piece fresh ginger, peeled, finely grated
1 tablespoon olive oil or olive oil spray
2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
2 teaspoons cumin seeds
Seeded bread rolls, lettuce leaves, tomato and red onion slices, to serve
Greek-style natural yoghurt, to serve

1 REMOVE the crusts from the bread. Tear the bread into small pieces and put in a large bowl, then pour $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (125ml) water over it. Set aside for 10 minutes, or until the bread absorbs most of the liquid. Stir mixture with a fork until smooth.

2 PUT the beef mince, onion, herbs, garlic and ginger in a large bowl. Add the bread mixture. Using wet hands, bring the mixture together and knead lightly until just combined. Don't overwork the mixture, or it will become pasty.

3 SHAPE $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup amounts of the mince mixture into 6 balls using wet hands. Roll the mixture between your palms, then gently flatten each one into a hamburger patty. Keep the size consistent, so they cook evenly and at the same time.

4 BRUSH or spray each patty lightly with oil. Combine the black pepper and cumin seeds and sprinkle over each patty. Cover and refrigerate for 10-15 minutes to firm.

5 HEAT the barbecue or grill pan to medium-high. Add the patties to the barbecue or pan and lower the heat to medium. Cook the burgers for 6-7 minutes on each side, turning them once only, or until cooked through. Serve the burgers on seeded bread rolls with the lettuce, tomato, red onion slices and yoghurt. Serve with extra yoghurt on the side and the pepper and cumin mixture. ➤

COOK'S TIP

Try using different fresh herbs and spices, such as fresh mint or coriander, and add ground allspice or cumin to the mince.



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Serves 6

Strawberry and basil granita

PREPARATION TIME 15 minutes, plus about 5 hours freezing

COOKING TIME 5 minutes

Ingredients

2 tablespoons caster sugar
4 x 15cm stalks basil with leaves on, roughly chopped
½ teaspoon black peppercorns
500g strawberries
Small basil leaves, to garnish

① **COMBINE** the sugar and ½ cup (125ml) water in a small saucepan and stir over low heat until the sugar dissolves. Add the chopped basil and peppercorns and turn off the heat.

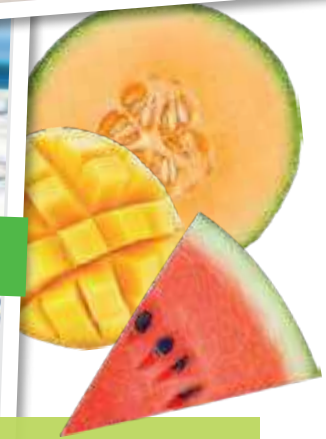
Set aside the mixture to cool, then strain it into a bowl.

② **HULL** the strawberries, rinse and pat dry. Process in a food processor until puréed. Strain into the bowl through a fine sieve to remove the seeds.

③ **POUR** the strawberry mixture into a shallow plastic or glass container, cover and freeze for about 1½ hours, or until starting to freeze around the edges. Stir and scrape with a fork to mix evenly. Return to the freezer. Repeat every hour for 2-3 hours, then scrape into an airtight container, cover and keep frozen until required. Serve the granita in glasses, garnished with small basil leaves.



Serves 8



Melon and mango with ginger and fresh herbs

PREPARATION TIME 10 minutes

COOKING TIME Nil

Ingredients

½ rockmelon (about 800g)
½ honeydew melon (about 650g)
600g piece watermelon
2 mangoes, flesh diced
1 tablespoon honey
2 tablespoons finely shredded fresh mint leaves
1 tablespoon fresh lemon thyme leaves
2 teaspoons finely grated fresh ginger

① **USE** a melon baller to cut the melons into balls, avoiding the seeds. Put in a large shallow bowl and add the remaining ingredients.

② **TURN** gently to combine. Set aside for 30 minutes for a syrup to form and allow the flavours to combine. Gently turn once or twice again while standing, then serve.

Serves 8



FESTIVE FOOD



Fruity pavlova

PREPARATION TIME 20 minutes

COOKING TIME 1½ hours

Ingredients

4 eggwhites
1 cup (230g) caster sugar
2 teaspoons cornflour
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon white vinegar
300ml carton thickened, heavy or double cream, whipped
Sliced kiwifruit, bananas and strawberries, brushed with lemon juice to stop them browning, to serve
Passionfruit pulp, for drizzling

❶ **PREHEAT** the oven to 120°C. Using a 20cm cake tin or plate as a guide, draw a circle on a sheet of baking paper with a pencil. Lightly coat a baking tray with oil to keep the paper from slipping. Place the paper pencil side down on the tray.

❷ **BEAT** the eggwhites with a pinch of salt in a large bowl, using very clean electric beaters, until soft peaks form. Add the sugar gradually, about 1 tablespoon at a time at first, beating after each addition until dissolved.

❸ **SIFT** over the cornflour and add the vanilla and vinegar. Beat to combine. Spread the mixture on the baking paper to a 20cm circle. Make vertical ridges around the side of the meringue with a small non-serrated knife.

❹ **BAKE** for 1½ hours, then turn off the oven and leave the oven door open slightly to let the pavlova shell cool down completely.

❺ **SLIDE** a large knife under the cooled pavlova shell to loosen it from the baking paper. Carefully slide the pavlova shell onto a serving plate. Spread over the whipped cream, then top with the sliced fruit and drizzle with passionfruit pulp. Serve within 30 minutes of topping.



Serves 8

Banana and raspberry yoghurt ice-cream

PREPARATION TIME 20 minutes, plus freezing and draining
COOKING TIME Nil

Ingredients

3 large, ripe bananas, about 500g in total
1 cup (250g) low-fat Greek-style yoghurt
200g frozen raspberries
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

❶ **CUT** the bananas into 2cm slices, and put in a resealable plastic bag. Expel the excess air, then tightly seal. Freeze for about 6 hours, until firm.

❷ **LINE** a sieve with muslin and stand over a bowl, with the sieve clear of the base. Spoon the yoghurt into the muslin, gathering the ends and twisting to enclose. Position a saucer on the muslin and weight it with two 400g cans. Put in the fridge to drain for 4 hours.

❸ **COMBINE** the frozen bananas, raspberries, drained yoghurt and vanilla extract in a food processor. Process mixture until smooth and evenly combined, occasionally stopping and scraping down the sides using a rubber spatula.

❹ **TRANSFER** the mixture to an airtight container and freeze for 6 hours, until firm. Remove from the freezer 10 minutes before serving, so the ice-cream can soften. Or, to make individual serves of ice-cream, freeze the mixture in 8 x 100ml ice-block moulds. ❧



SEE THE WORLD

Take a journey into fantasy land



Underground retreat

Nearly 80 years ago, author J.R.R. Tolkien wrote, '... it was a hobbit-hole, and that means comfort'.

He was describing Bag End, the home of Bilbo Baggins in his much-loved children's classic, *The Hobbit*, published in 1937.

In real life, Mr Baggins' cosy home can now be found tucked into the earth in the Columbia River Gorge mountainside in central Washington state, US.

Created by designer Kristie Wolfe, a tiny house aficionado, The Hobbit Hole is a faithful copy of the original pocket-sized dwelling and is currently listed for rental on Airbnb.

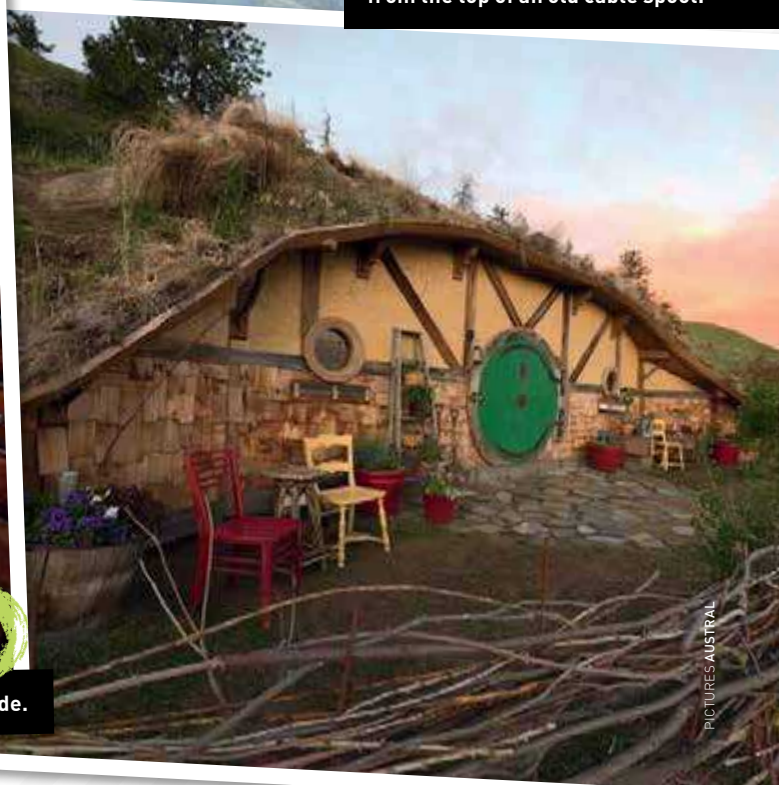
It's no wonder Bilbo was so reluctant to leave his cosy home.



↑ Owner Kristie Wolfe stands at the iconic round front door, made from the top of an old cable spool.



The deeply recessed door opens onto beautiful countryside.



PICTURES AUSTRAL



← The freestanding bath sits snugly in a nook lined with recycled timber.
 ↓ Hanging above the handsome carved timber bed, piled with chintz cushions, old-fashioned lanterns provide a warm, welcoming light.



Fact check

The Hobbit Hole is a 20-minute drive from the nearest town and sleeps two in a queen bed.

- ✦ Set on a two-hectare plot above Lake Chelan, it has spectacular views of the rural landscape.
- ✦ Boulder-throwing giants are banned but pets are permitted.
- ✦ The property is off the grid with a propane fireplace, solar power, septic tank and trucked-in water.
- ✦ Reclaimed timber was used to make the wall panels, flooring and a woodworker's bench.
- ✦ The nearest neighbours are mostly deer, rabbits and birds.
- ✦ Kristie is planning to build more hobbit holes and a communal kitchen. The current house has no space for a kitchen.



Near the stone-clad fireplace, a chessboard sits beneath a circular window set behind a repurposed mirror frame.



Go camping this summer

Take advantage of the warm weather and explore nature on a budget getaway

WORDS DANIEL BUTKOVICH

Heading off on a family or group holiday can often be challenging, with work and school commitments, and expensive airfares, making it difficult to get away.

But with summer here, and school holidays under way, it's the perfect time for camping.

All it takes to experience the natural locations near you is a few inexpensive essentials and a bit of planning. ➤



Camping holidays are easier than you might think with the right gear.

PICTURE STOCK



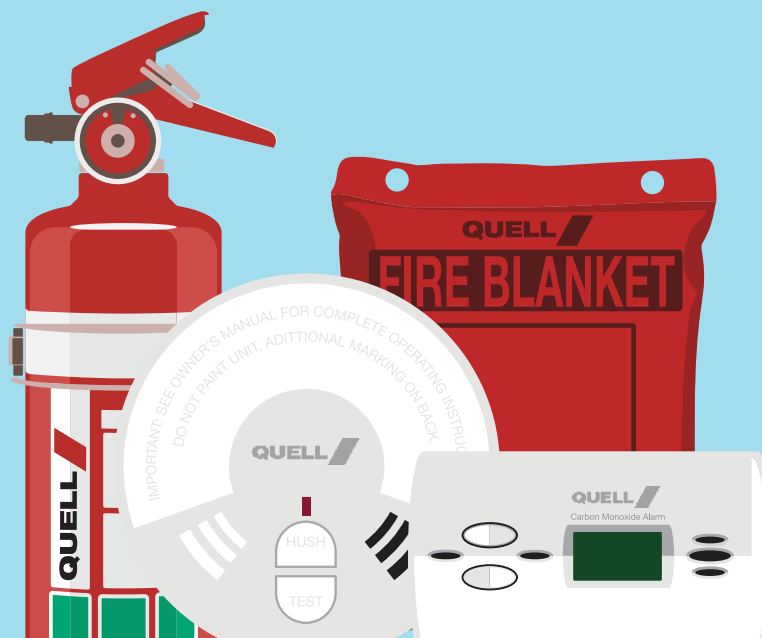
~ THIS SUMMER ~

Travel Well

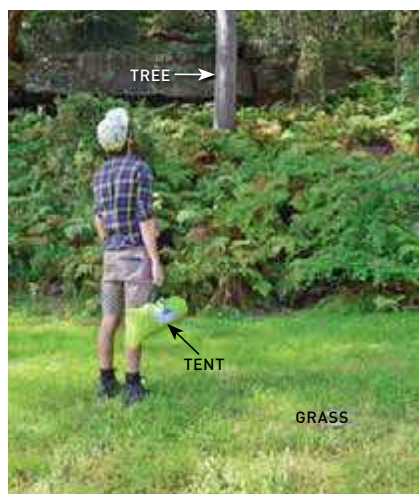
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SET UP A DOME TENT



1 Select a site

Choose a flat area without large branches overhead to set up the tent. Select an area that receives morning shade, as the heat of direct sunlight can become unbearable in summer. Clear the ground of twigs and rocks that may damage the tent. Ensure campfires are a safe distance away.



2 Insert the poles

Lay out the tent, then assemble the poles and lay them in position. Insert the poles through the sleeves, pushing rather than pulling to avoid them coming apart or catching on the fabric, then attach the clips to the poles.

TIP If there is a slope, position the tent so your feet will be facing downhill.



3 Erect the tent

Insert one end of the first pole into the eyelet at a corner, then insert the other end into the opposite corner, bending the tent pole and adjusting the fabric as necessary. Repeat for the other pole to raise the tent.

TIP Have a second person help you align the poles with the eyelets.



4 Hammer in the pegs

Reposition the tent if required, then hammer a peg through the eyelet into the ground at one corner using a mallet. Pull the opposite corner taut and drive in a peg, then repeat for the other corners, ensuring the sides are taut. When camping on a sandy site, keep the tent anchored with sand pegs.



5 Attach the fly

Drape the fly over the top of the tent, ensuring the guy ropes are on the outside and the entrance flaps align with the door of the tent. Secure the fly by attaching the hooks to the eyelets at each corner.

TIP Avoid touching the fly if it rains, as this may cause water to seep through.



6 Secure the guy ropes

Create a loop of rope at the lower end of the tensioner. Pull the guy rope out from the seam towards the ground at a 45° angle and hammer a peg into the ground through the loop. Tighten the tensioner until the rope is taut.

TIP Stake guy ropes as close to the tent as possible to prevent trip hazards.

Pop-top campervans can be set up in a few minutes.



Where to go

Choosing a destination is the first step, as campsites have different levels of amenities and this determines what you'll need to bring. Booking is always recommended during peak periods.

Holiday parks are ideal for first timers, as they normally have hot showers, gas barbecues and the option of powered or unpowered sites.

National parks offer beautiful natural attractions and fun activities, but usually have fewer facilities.

Bush campsites normally don't have any amenities, so you'll need to bring everything with you.

Tent vs RV

For occasional campers, a dome tent is ideal. They're affordable, easy to set up and pack away, and don't take up much car space.

If you're a keen camper with a big family, consider a camper trailer. They feature a large tent, cooking facilities and storage, but you'll need to tow it and they may be too big for some campsites.

A campervan or caravan is ideal for taking the luxuries of home with you. Well equipped with proper beds, they're the most expensive option, but you can rent one to try the lifestyle.



Fire safety

Sitting around the campfire is a quintessential camping experience, but fires have risks and shouldn't be treated lightly.

Pay attention to fire danger signs and don't light up on hot, windy days. Never light a fire if a ban is in place.

Keep campfires well clear of tents and equipment, and have a bucket of water nearby in case the fire accidentally spreads.

Before you leave the campsite, ensure your campfire is completely extinguished by thoroughly dousing any hot coals with water. >

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CAMPING KNOW-HOW

Store food securely

Animals can be more dextrous than you think, and those that live near campsites may have learned how to find their way into food boxes. Secure the lid with a bungee cord to keep out unwanted intruders.



Clean before packing up

Leaving excess moisture on the tent fabric when packing it up will cause mould or mildew, leading to unpleasant smells and stains. Bring a towel to wipe down the tent fabric before packing it away.



Prepare food in advance

To save time at the campsite and make packing easier, chop vegetables in advance and pack them in plastic containers. This also prevents food from becoming waterlogged in the cooler as the ice melts.



Make a tuckbox

Pack essentials like tea, coffee, sugar, salt, oil, long-life food, cups, plates and cutlery into a clear box, using compartments to keep it tidy. Replenish the box after every trip so it's stocked and ready for next time.



DIY ice bricks

Freeze water bottles the night before and use them as ice bricks in your cooler. The solid bricks keep the interior cool for longer, and when the ice melts you can drink the cold water.





Bring your own firewood

Many campsites don't allow firewood collection, and even if it's permitted, at popular sites good fuel can be hard to find. Bundle logs and kindling at home when you're tidying up green waste and set them aside to dry so you'll always have a supply at hand.

Keep out dirt

Peg down a piece of shade cloth to create a comfortable, dirt-free area in front of the tent. Pack a doormat and wipe your feet before entering to keep the tent clean inside. >



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What to pack

Once you've established what kind of facilities are available at your chosen campsite, you can figure out what you need to bring with you.

Many campsites don't have drinking water, so you'll need to pack at least 5L per person per day for hydration and hygiene. A jerrycan with a tap is ideal for carrying water.

If you're not a frequent camper and don't have all the gear, borrow from friends to keep costs down.

For a full packing list, visit handyman.net.au/camping-checklist.

Camping essentials

- ✓ Tent
- ✓ Sleeping bags
- ✓ Mattresses
- ✓ Cooking utensils
- ✓ Plates, bowls, knives and forks
- ✓ Cooler
- ✓ Water supply
- ✓ Torches and lanterns
- ✓ Camp chairs
- ✓ Folding table
- ✓ Ropes
- ✓ Insect repellent
- ✓ First-aid kit
- ✓ Sunscreen



For a quick getaway, you'll only need to pack the basics.

DAN'S PICKS

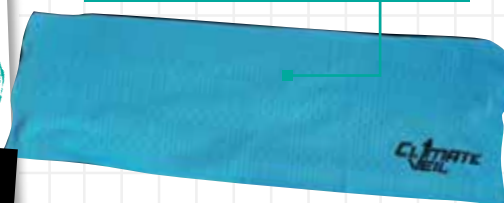


If you're using appliances outdoors or connecting to a powered site, you'll need to protect the cables. The Ampfiban X1, \$40, features waterproofing and cleats to prevent disconnection, keeping you powered (ampfiban.com.au).

Ropes are essential for securing items to roof racks or keeping awnings taut. The Uni-Pro Grippie, \$10, features spring-loaded cams and makes it quick and easy to tighten, join and secure ropes or bungee cords (unipro.com.au).



To stay cool in hot weather, drink plenty of water, take breaks to rest in the shade and use a Climate Veil Cooling Towel, \$30. It works through evaporative cooling, so just wet it, wring it and snap it to activate (climateveil.com.au).



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HOME **SAFE** HOME

Remove the temptation for thieves to target your home by installing tough locks and smart alarms

WORDS ADAM WOODHAMS

The Christmas and New Year period is when many of us spend long days at the beach or head off on a well-earned holiday.

It is also the time when break-ins rise significantly, as thieves take advantage of your absence, intent on relieving you of your newly received Christmas gifts and other possessions.

But there are easy steps you can take to make your home more secure and deter intruders. And they don't take a lot of time or cost a fortune to do.



PICTURE SHUTTERSTOCK

LOCK UP TIGHT

Installing good quality locks on all doors and windows is the first step to improving home security.

Basic door locks seldom provide a suitable level of protection. To make sure a door is truly secure, you need a lock with a deadbolt that can only be opened with a key or code.

Windows and sliding doors can be secured with the addition of a locking bolt. These are easy to retrofit, so it makes sense to boost your protection.

Sliding door bolts and window locks come with a selection of screws and bolts for either metal or timber frames, so ensure you fit the right ones.

For added peace of mind, one-way screws on window locks ensure they can't be removed once fitted. ➤



The most common break-in point is forced entry via a window



With an automatic alignment feature, putting in a lock is made simple with the Ryobi Wood/Metal Door Lock Installation Kit, about \$26 [ryobi.com.au].



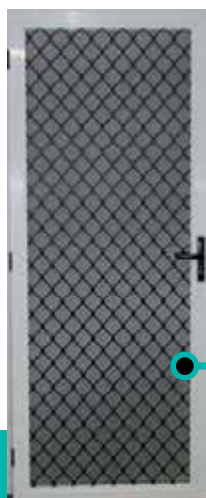
A classic double deadlock, such as the Lockwood 355 Double Cylinder Deadlock, \$163, offers the maximum level of security on entry doors [lockweb.com.au].



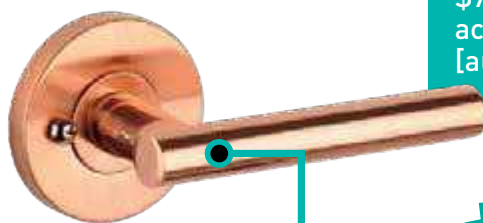
The Gainsborough Angular Trilock, \$210, packs security and style in a matt black entry set with 3-in-1 locking, privacy or passage modes and deadbolt [gainsboroughhardware.com.au].



Add an extra layer of security with a quality screen door. The Protector Aluminium adjustable model, \$199, fits various sizes so you can DIY [protectoraluminium.com.au].



Secure rear or side gates with the LokkLatch Deluxe by D&D Technologies, about \$71, to keep thieves from accessing your home unseen [au.ddtechglobal.com].



Complement metallic accessories with the luxe Lane Security Privacy Door Lever in Brushed Copper from ITW Proline, \$49 [itwproline.com.au].

DIY TIP

When installing multiple window locks, buy them keyed alike so one key works for every lock. Look for the key number on the pack.

PROTECT MEMORIES

In these digital days so many of the things we treasure, such as family photos, music and movies, are stored digitally on our computers.

Theft or damage through fire or storms while you are away can mean you lose precious records. The smart solution is to make data backups.

It is easy to make backup copies of essential material, such as photos and music, or better still clone your entire hard drive so that you effectively have a duplicate copy of your computer.

When you make a backup copy, it's important to keep it updated and stored securely at home or another safe off-site location.



A fireproof, water-resistant lock-box or safe, such as the First Alert 26L Security Chest, \$249, is perfect to stow backup hard drives, valuables and documents [altamonte.com.au].



The clever Sandleford Floor Vent Safe, \$61, sits in the floor and can be covered with standard vents to look like part of your central air system [sandleford.com.au].



For an organised and safe home backup system, the Seagate Backup Plus Hub, from \$229, is an all-inclusive solution for your digital needs [seagate.com].



Engineer Sam Zavaglia from Seagate, the data protection experts, has the following advice on keeping your online valuables safe and easily accessible.

- ✦ **ORGANISE** your data in specific folders from the beginning so it will be easier to find what you need as your material builds up over time.
- ✦ **HAVE** a backup plan. Always double your backup by having another copy of your files saved onto a different drive.

✦ **ENSURE** you spring-clean your digital library just as you would do your home and delete any versions of the same document you no longer need.

TIP There are apps to help you locate and clean out any duplicate files.

✦ **CHOOSE** when and how you want to back up your files. Set it up automatically or do it manually.

✦ **SELECT** good-quality hard drives because data such as photos are priceless and irreplaceable. ➤





PRESTIGE Square D Handle 192mm and Flat Round Knob 32mm



ZENITH Round Robe Hook

BRING A TOUCH OF INTEREST TO YOUR HOME WITH BRUSHED COPPER

While silver, chrome and stainless steel are three metallics commonly used in the home, warmer metals like copper, are having their moment to shine. The texture and gleaming finish of copper provides a sophisticated warmth to most palette choices.

WWW.THEKEYTOSECURITY.COM.AU

KEEP UP APPEARANCES

The easiest way to make your home look occupied while you're away is to create the appearance of business as usual.

- **GIVE** neighbours the dates you're away and your contact details, and ask them to bring in bins.
- **PAY** a small fee to have Australia Post hold your mail, or ask neighbours to clear your letterbox regularly.
- **TELL** the company that monitors your alarm system about your holiday plans.

- **KEEP** up bookings such as pool care.
- **MOW** the lawn before you leave. If you'll be away for more than two weeks, arrange to have it trimmed again.
- **FIT** motion sensors to exterior lights.
- **SET** timers to turn on appliances and lights. Sequence bedroom lights to turn on after the lounge room ones go off.
- **CHECK** voicemail remotely and keep the greeting as if you're at home.
- **ADD** outdoor solar lighting. Try ones with motion-sensor switches.
- **PUT** an auto-twilight switch on wired outdoor lighting to turn on at sunset.
- **CONNECT** a programmable timer to an irrigation system to water the garden.



PETS

Traditionally, pets such as cats and dogs get packed off to the cattery or boarding kennels for the holidays.

But if your pets will be safe indoors, or have suitable secure and protected outdoor spaces, consider leaving them at home and have a minder come in to feed, water and walk them.



The HPM Light Patrol Security Sensor, \$42, is a 180° device that can be fitted to existing outside lights and set to switch itself on at sunset [hpm.com.au].



Use an intelligent, hands-off device, such as the Holman iWater Bluetooth Tap Timer, \$99, to remotely control garden watering via an app [holmanindustries.com.au].



For motion-sensing lighting in stylish colours and finishes, switch on to the Avalon Twin LED Spotlights, about \$144, from Brilliant [brilliantlighting.com.au].



The high-tech Forta LED 30W Floodlight from HPM, \$129, with movement sensor is ultra energy-efficient and ideal for monitoring areas such as driveways.



DIY TIP

Tech savvy? Install a security system that can be controlled by an app and managed from your smartphone or tablet device.



Getting social

We all love to let our friends know just how awesome our holiday is.

But by posting holiday happy snaps to your public social media profiles you are potentially advertising your home is empty.

So set the security of your social media accounts to allow material to be viewed only by known 'friends'. ➤

DON'T THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX

When you need peace of mind that your valuables are secure this holiday season -
Lock up with a Lockwood Digital Home Safe.



To find out more visit lockweb.com.au or phone 1300 LOCKUP
to speak to one of our friendly Lockwood representatives.

Available at
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Small Digital Home Safe - 4210901
Medium Digital Home Safe - 4210902
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SECURITY SYSTEMS

Once the domain of only the most luxurious homes, full security and camera systems are now affordable and, in many cases, quite easy to DIY.

Most burglars will avoid alarmed properties and security system decals and signs are also effective deterrents, say experts from ADT Security, who gave us this advice on alarm systems. For more, visit adtsecurity.com.au

➤ **INSTALL** a wireless system which avoids expensive cabling, is harder to disarm and much easier to take with you when you move home.

➤ **CONSIDER** a back-to-base monitored alarm system to ensure your home is protected 24/7. A fully monitored system can cost as little as \$300 to install and about \$1 a day to monitor.

➤ **SELECT** a system that can be expanded as your needs change.

➤ **DESIGN** your system with different zones so at night you can move around bedrooms and bathrooms while the rest of the home is on alarm mode.

➤ **FIT** a battery as backup in case of blackout or someone cutting the power.

➤ **ADD** an extra layer of protection by connecting your monitored alarm system to your smoke alarms.

RIGHT Choose a system that can be expanded DIY as needed.

BELOW Set zones so you can move around in bedrooms and bathrooms while all the other rooms stay alarmed.



Protect the shed

Sheds and garages are another favourite target for housebreakers.

They offer easy pickings for a handy supply of break-in tools, such as hammers, chisels, crowbars and ladders.

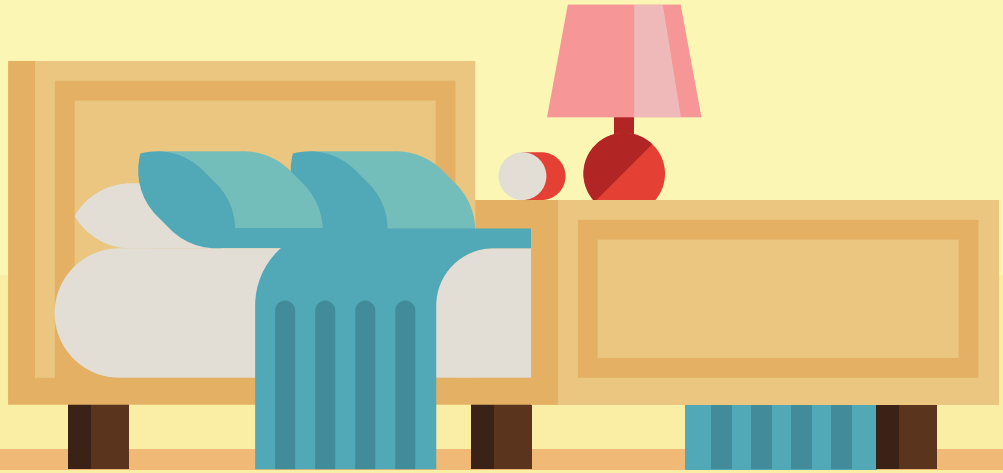
Keeping equipment and tools safe is straightforward with the right locks and secure storage. ✎



Use a Master Lock Mini Python 1.8m x 5mm cable lock, about \$26, to secure large items, such as ladders, to stop intruders using them [bunnings.com.au].



Store your gear in a fully lockable 5-drawer tool chest from Ultimate Storage, \$299, to keep it out of the wrong hands [ultimatestorage.com.au].



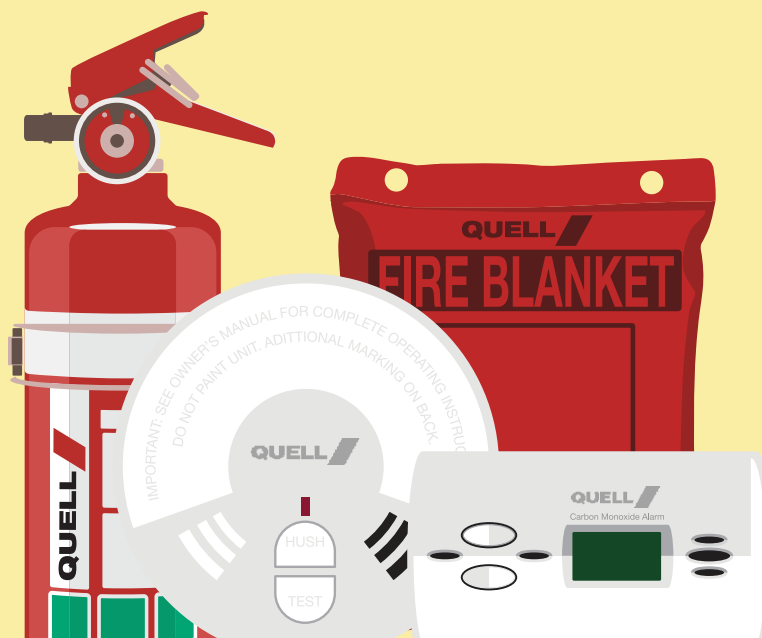
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quell.com.au





INVASIVE INSECTS

Protect your property from pesky pests to prevent structural damage and stop disease in its tracks

WORDS ASHLEIGH PERRIOTT

As the weather warms up and the sunny season gets under way, the conditions are perfect for a range of pests, dormant over winter, to start plaguing your home as they emerge from their hideouts.

Higher temperatures and rain favour bed bugs, mosquitoes, wasps, termites and more, leading to a rapid rise in their numbers.

Be prepared and you'll remove the risk of these roaming raiders setting up shop in your home, potentially bringing disease and leaving costly damage in their wake.

Termites can munch their way into your home.

PICTURE SHUTTERSTOCK

BED BUGS

Nearly eradicated in the 1950s, bed bugs have reappeared in recent years as they became resistant to certain pesticides. The brown, flat, oval bugs grow to 4-7mm as adults and feed on blood, biting people as they sleep.

Commonly brought into the home in luggage after a stay at an infected hotel, bed bugs hide in mattress seams, bedheads, carpet and furniture.

Signs of an infestation include a sickly sweet smell, dark stains or blood spots on sheets and mattresses, and live insects or shed skins.

Spot them early and eradication is a DIY job. But their small size and nocturnal nature often mean you'll need a professional to tackle removal by the time they're discovered.



Hovex Germgard Crawling Insect Killer High Performance, \$10 for 350g. hovex.com.au

Pascoes Garden Pro Ant Killer, \$5 for 500g. gardenpro.com.au

Wash and dry clothes at the highest possible temperature after a trip to kill bed bugs.



Avoid standing water to deny mozzies a breeding ground.



MOSQUITOES

The scourge of backyard barbecues, mosquitoes thrive in summer and are most active at dawn and dusk.

Their bite causes a small itchy bump on the skin, but in tropical areas they can spread serious diseases, such as dengue fever.

To prevent a plague at your place, remove still water sources, such as

pots and puddles, where they breed. Fill plant saucers with sand to retain moisture and stop water pooling.

Install screen doors and window screens, use citronella candles and wear DEET-based repellent.

A bug zapper is also a great way to deter mosquitoes in outdoor entertaining areas. >



EnviroSafe Mosquito Drops, \$12 for 45ml. envirosafeaustralia.com.au



Gecko Triple Lure Insect Trapper, \$115. geckoinksectkillers.com.au

WASPS

While most wasp species are solitary, non-stinging garden pest controllers, a few clash with humans and have a painful sting.

Wasps usually build new nests in summer, with workers dying off over autumn while the queens hibernate in winter.

They may build nests in roof or wall cavities around the home, and in areas such as the garage.

Wasps can penetrate through brick.

European wasps scavenge food scraps and often build nests in a hole. To remove them, call on professionals as they are aggressive and their sting is painful.

Paper wasps will attack to defend their nests, which often hang from fences or eaves. Apply insecticide at dusk to kill workers or they will rebuild in the same spot.

Paper wasp

European wasp



PestXpert Wasp Jet Long Reach Spray, \$17 for 400g. pestxpert.com.au



The Buzz Insect Control Fly Catcher, \$14 for two. bunnings.com.au

TERMITES

With timber being their primary food source, certain termite species can cause potentially expensive damage to decks, houses and trees on a property.

They thrive in high humidity and will often eat their way inside through submerged timber, such as deck posts or footings, making them hard to spot until they are well established.

Use structural timber that is treated to deter termites and prevent damp in your home.

Or, avoid using timber when it will be in direct contact with the soil and try alternative building materials or lay a concrete slab for foundations.

If none of this is possible at your place, schedule an annual check with a pest specialist or spray high-risk areas with insecticide as a preventative. 🍋

Termite damage leaves timber hollow and weak.

David Grays Ant and Termite Spray, \$15 for 500ml. davidgray.com.au

Brunnings Termite & Ant Insect Killer Concentrate, \$15 for 500ml. brunnings.com.au



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FIREPROOF YOUR HOME

Smart moves to make now to reduce the danger when bushfires threaten

WORDS ADAM WOODHAMS

Bushfires have the potential to impact us, whether we live in rural, regional or suburban areas, so being prepared is essential.

Having an emergency plan is the best chance you'll have to come through a major event unscathed.

Even if your property doesn't back onto bushland, it's still wise to take basic measures to get ready because given the right circumstances fire can roar deep into suburbia.

Homes 100 metres or more from the fire front can be impacted by ember attack, which is when smouldering leaves and ash are carried by heatwaves ahead of a fire.

And, burning bark can be blown kilometres ahead of the fire.

SAFETY TIP

Keep updated on fire danger ratings and alert levels for your area and be familiar with the emergency radio frequency.



Garden guidelines

Minimise fire danger in the garden with a little planning.

- + Avoid using wood or plant-based mulches close to your home or outbuildings. Use non-flammable mulching materials such as pebbles.
- + There are many plants and trees classed as low-flammability. Your

local fire service may have a list or Google 'fire-resistant trees Australia'.

- + Be aware of which plants are considered more flammable and put them well away from the house.
- + Avoid planting any vegetation right up against your home.
- + Use landscaping materials with low or no flammability.



Plant trees away from the walls of your home.

PICTURES ISTOCK



Trim trees so canopies are high above ground level.



ABOVE Keep hoses ready and ensure they're long enough.
BELOW Don't store flammable materials near your house.



Easy maintenance and preparation

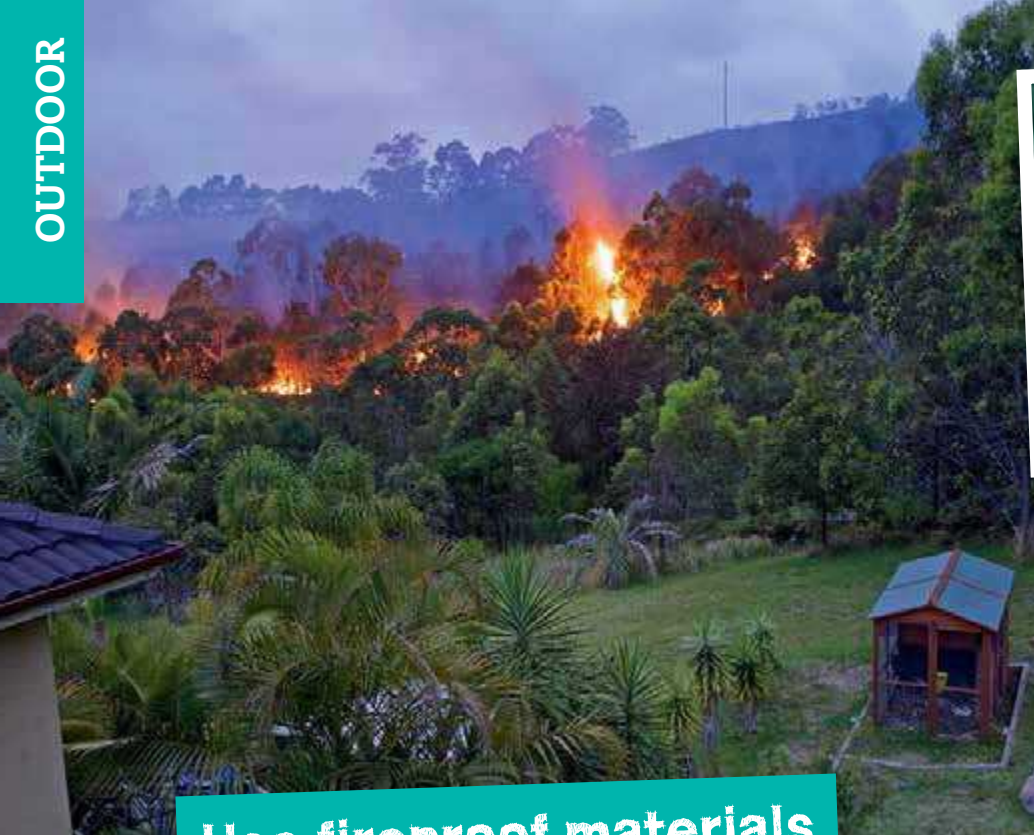
Follow these simple guidelines to help keep your property safe.

- **MOW** lawns regularly and keep them free from dried or dead grass.
- **TRIM** dead branches from vegetation.
- **PRUNE** off branches near the roof.
- **KEEP** roof gutters and garden, path and driveway drains free of leaves.
- **RAISE** the tree canopy to at least two metres above ground.
- **STORE** potentially explosive fuel, gas bottles, petrol-driven tools, paints or bulk chemicals away from your home.

- **MOVE** flammable items, such as firewood, hanging baskets, garden furniture, dog kennels and doormats, well away from the house.
- **ATTACH** quality fittings to garden taps and have hoses long enough to reach every corner of your property.
- **INSTALL** a 'static water supply' sign or similar to alert fire services to water sources such as a tank, dam or pool.
- **INVEST** in a small transfer pump and suitable fire hoses and nozzles to use with a fixed water supply, such as

a pool or dam, as mains water can be unreliable in times of emergency.

- **DEVELOP** a bushfire survival plan for your household, including pets and livestock. Your local fire authority can provide advice on preparing one.
- **DECIDE** whether you will stay to fight a fire or leave. If you plan to leave, have possessions packed and ready, plan your route and leave early.
- **STAY** to fight the fire only if you are well prepared and always inform local authorities of your decision. ➤



Use fireproof materials

If you live in a designated 'bushfire prone' area and you are renovating or building, then you need to integrate fire-resistant materials into your plans.

Much of what you can build is now covered by appropriate design guidelines in the Australian Standard AS 3959:2009. You have a legal obligation to comply with these rules.

But there are many high-quality, low-flammability materials that will integrate beautifully into your designs.

Consult with your builder, engineer or architect about the options available.

- **KNOW** about the relevance and impact of fire zoning for your area.
- **CHOOSE** timbers with natural fire resistance such as merbau, blackbutt and spotted gum.
- **INSTALL** fine metal mesh gutter guards classed for ember resistance.
- **ADD** metal mesh ember guards in gaps or cracks where embers may settle.
- **PUT** in quality metal mesh flyscreens.



DIY emergency kit

A basic survival kit can be a lifesaver in a crisis.

Store it in an easy-to-carry, watertight box in a place you can find with the lights out.

Every six months, check that the contents are in working order and not past their use-by dates.

- ✓ Quality first-aid kit
- ✓ Blanket or sleeping bag
- ✓ Tarpaulin
- ✓ LED torches and lantern
- ✓ Small AM radio
- ✓ Spare batteries for torches and radio
- ✓ Power bank to re-charge mobile phones
- ✓ Bottled water
- ✓ Food such as muesli bars
- ✓ Reflective safety vest
- ✓ Heavy-duty gloves
- ✓ Coil of rope
- ✓ Duct tape

FIRE DOORS

Doors are an area of design and construction that can be a weak point when it comes to fire.

Corinthian Doors BAL40 entry door system is designed to withstand fires in high-risk zones (corinthian.com.au).

The system combines the door, frame, hinges, seals, handle and lock for a high level of protection.

The 15 different designs will suit any property, and the thermal and sound-dampening properties of the doors will keep your home quiet and well-insulated.



PICTURES (TOP) ISTOCK

EMERGENCY ESSENTIALS



Rhino CCB600 Blue Cargo Case, 600 x 550 x 400mm, \$155. rhinoboxes.com.au



Family First Fire Resistant Document Bag, \$11. family-first.com.au



Coast Polysteel 600 Flashlight 620 Lumens, about \$61. bunnings.com.au



Silvan Selecta 400L Fire Fighting Unit, \$1998. silvan.com.au



Bear Easy Tear Professional 48mm PVC Duct Tape, about \$7 for 30m. saint-gobain.com.au



Scott Safety UniSafe Large Orange Hi-Vis Day/Night Safety Vest, \$7. scottsafety.com



Ozito Power X Change 18V Workshop Radio, \$49. ozito.com.au



St John Ambulance 150-piece Comprehensive First Aid Kit, \$50. stjohnambulance.com.au

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Build a new garden bed

Use sleepers to create a timber planter to grow herbs and vegies

Growing vegetables, herbs and flowers at home is incredibly rewarding, but it can be challenging if your soil is poor.

Building a raised garden bed is an easy landscaping solution that allows you to grow plants in the best soil possible and eliminates the need for excessive excavation.

Hardwood timber sleepers are ideal for building a garden bed, as they're strong and won't degrade after prolonged contact with the soil.

What you need

- Timber sleepers
- Batten screws
- Steel stakes
- Circular saw
- Cordless drill
- Spirit level
- Roofing square
- Stringline
- Mattock
- Mallet



Raised garden beds provide good drainage and help prevent soil compaction



1 Set out the bed

Lay two sleepers on the grass where the bed is to be built. Position them where the long sides will be installed, then measure the distance between the sleepers to determine the length of the short sides.



2 Cut the sleepers

Use a tape measure and square to mark the sleepers, then cut them to size using a circular saw to create the short sides. If the bed is longer than one sleeper, halve the overall length and cut four sleepers to size.



3 Assemble the frame

Position the short sides between the long sides, then drill pilot holes and secure the sleepers with two batten screws at each corner, checking that the corners are square. Repeat at the other end of the garden bed.

GROW TIP

When creating a new garden bed, fill it with a premium garden soil mix and install drip irrigation to keep plants hydrated.

Watch the video 'How To Build A Garden Bed' at bunnings.com.au/diy-advice



4 Excavate the site

Mark the outline of the frame on the grass, then have a second person help you remove the frame. Use a mattock and shovel to remove the grass from the area, taking care not to disturb any existing plants.



5 Reposition the sleepers

Dig a trench for the sleepers around the perimeter so the top of the garden bed sits 50mm above ground level. Move the frame back into position, and check for level, then use a stringline to check that the long sides are straight.



6 Secure the sleepers

Drive stakes into the ground on the inside of the bed using a mallet, securing to the sleepers with four galvanised screws. Join sleepers together by securing stakes at each joint with two screws into each sleeper.

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For your chance to win, go to handyman.net.au/stanley and tell us in 25 words or less why you need this tool pack.

Entries close 26 January 2017. The winners will be announced on the website in March 2017. Visit handyman.net.au for the full terms and conditions.



Get the job done well with the Stanley 87-piece Metric Hand Tool Set, \$199.



The Stanley FatMax 560g Large Strike Face Hammer, \$30, has a 70% larger strike face for improved accuracy.



The Stanley 16-piece Cushion Grip Screwdriver Set, \$35, has large, soft handles for improved comfort and grip.



Featuring an adjustable ball joint, the Multi Angle Hobby Vice, \$40, can be fixed in almost any orientation.



The Stanley FatMax Exo Retractable knife, \$20, features a magnetic exposed slider for fast blade change.



Tough and lightweight, the Stanley FatMax 1200mm Carbon Fibre Level, \$149, is perfect for overhead levelling.



The Stanley FatMax 585mm Tool Box, \$50, has an all-round water seal for the ultimate protection of your tools.

Handyman BUYER'S GUIDE

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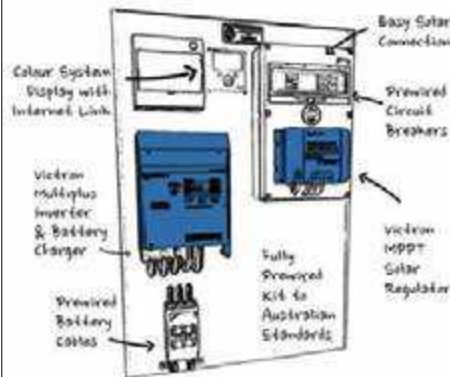
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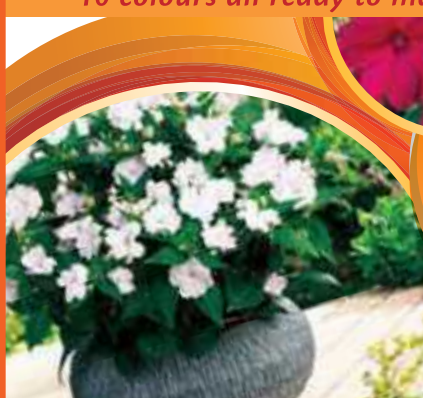
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This month

Get ready for the holidays and keep the garden looking lush all summer

Do now

- + **PREPARE** for the festive season with these fast fixes, page 168.
- + **TAKE** cuttings to grow new plants for free, page 176.
- + **CONTROL** pests using organic methods, page 186.

Flowers to sow

Plant now for late-summer blooms in all climate zones.

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Broccoli



WHAT'S IN COLOUR

✦ **SALVIA 'BLACK & BLOOM'** Featuring deep-blue blooms on black stems this *Salvia guaranitica* cultivar will make a statement in any landscape.

Reaching 1.2m high and spreading to 1.2m wide, it has a mounded, upright habit and flowers in spring, summer and autumn.

Beautiful but very tough, *Salvia* 'Black & Bloom' thrives in drought, heat and humidity. Give it a position in full sun in well-drained soil.

✦ **SUNPATIENS** For non-stop colour from spring through to autumn in any outdoor area, plant SunPatiens.

Easy to grow in full sun or shade, they also love heat and humidity and are virtually maintenance-free.

There are 10 colours to choose from and you can use them in beds, pots or hanging baskets.

Give them well-drained soil, water in well after planting and keep moist until established.

Salvia 'Black & Bloom'



SunPatiens



To-do list

Keep the garden thriving in the heat of summer.

- ✓ **ADD** water to a backyard pond or water feature to top it up in dry weather.
- ✓ **MIX** water-storage crystals into the potting mix of containers and hanging baskets.
- ✓ **MULCH** all beds and pots, including fruit trees, shrubs and vegies.
- ✓ **WATER** lawns deeply and weekly in dry weather.
- ✓ **DEADHEAD** roses.
- ✓ **USE** soaker hoses or install a drip-irrigation system to water the garden more efficiently.
- ✓ **MIST** indoor plants using a spray bottle.
- ✓ **KEEP** foliage around water gardens damp as a habitat for frogs. ➤

HANGING POTS



Indoor hanging planters

Turn decorative pots into hanging planters in a few simple steps and use them indoors, on a covered verandah or under a pergola. All you need are the pots and plants, plus sisal rope and hooks for hanging them.

Mark holes about 20mm down from the pot rims to drill holes for the rope, using a bit to suit the material. Thread the rope through the holes, tying knots at two points along the length, then attach to a hanging hook.

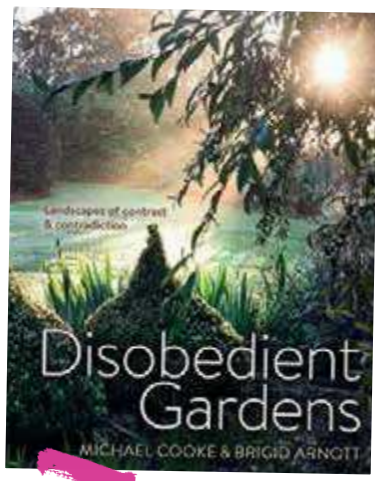
Ensure the hook is rated to take the weight of the planted pot, then secure the hanging hook into timber beams, or a plasterboard or masonry wall.

BOOK CLUB

Aussie landscape designer Michael Cooke is a fan of garden contradictions and contrasts.

'I like ... sun and shade, messy and neat, organised and considered,' he says.

In *Disobedient Gardens* (\$60, Murdoch Books), Michael shares five of his 'disobedient' gardens, all beautifully photographed by Brigid Arnott, and talks about what makes them unique. 📖



Peaches

Prune now

Thin out fruit trees if needed and remove any dead or diseased wood.

- + APPLES
- + PEARS
- + PLUMS
- + PEACHES
- + NECTARINES

Harvest now

Pick fruit from trees, vines and canes during summer.

- + BANANAS
- + CHERRIES
- + GRAPES
- + BERRIES
- + MELONS

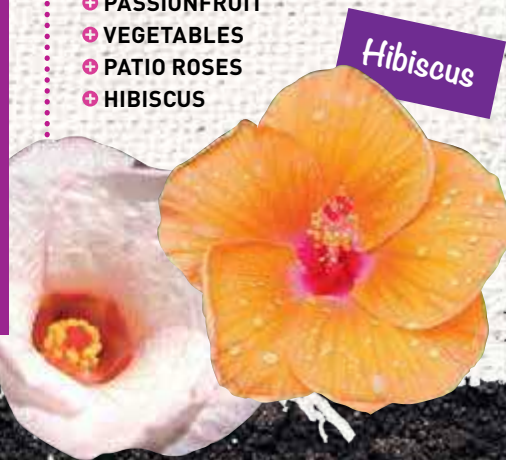


Cherries

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Hibiscus

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—12— *FESTIVE FIXES*

Get your garden looking its best
before the celebrations begin

WORDS CHERYL MADDOCKS

Christmas draws close again, signalling the start of the holiday entertaining season.

Before you know it, the presents will be under the tree and relatives and friends will be arriving to celebrate.

So if your garden isn't already looking spick-and-span, now is the time to take action.

Here are a dozen quick and easy ways to polish up the garden ready for the holidays.



PICTURE: ISTOCK

1 Clear the way

Spotless paths, driveways and courtyard floors always look welcoming. So if weeds are growing between bricks, gravel or pavers, remove them by hand or the use of a chemical-free spray.

You don't want guests slipping on paths covered in algae, slime or moss, especially if they're carrying the Christmas pudding.

So apply a cleaner, opting for one in a ready-to-use container that you simply spray on and hose off.

2 Tidy up beds

Summer sees weeds proliferate like trifids, and while removing them may seem tedious, tidy garden beds do improve appearances.

After weeding, top up your mulch to conserve moisture and help keep future weeds at bay.

Use lucerne hay, sugar cane or pea straw on garden beds, and pine bark or eucalyptus mulch on shrub beds. On succulent gardens and in fire-prone areas, use gravel, scoria or pebbles.



3 Set the scene

Add a feature with an outdoor dining setting, a piece of garden art such as a simple sculpture, or a tall pot brimming with the strappy foliage of a colourful cordyline or flax.

A birdbath surrounded by flowering plants makes a lovely picture and ensures the birds will be visiting.

Beautify empty spaces in garden beds with advanced potted annuals and perennials, and small shrubs. ➤



4 Tend the lawn

Everyone loves a lush lawn, and as well as looking good, it has the added value of absorbing carbon dioxide, trapping dust and keeping you fit, especially if you use a hand mower.

Impress guests by mowing your lawn and trimming edges a little before the big day.

Don't cut the grass too low, as it will withstand heat better if not cropped closely. If it looks a bit dull, a hose-on fertiliser will green it up in a few days.

5 Scent the air

We all like to entertain outdoors in the evening, and summer is the time when the fragrances of many flowering climbers are at their best.

Drape them over courtyard walls or grow them over a pergola,

then relax with friends and enjoy the intoxicating evening fragrance.

Try these white-flowering vines, *Beaumontia grandiflora*, Chilean jasmine (*Mandevilla laxa*), Star jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*) and Madagascar jasmine (*Stephanotis floribunda*).

Star jasmine

6 Paint a picture

A fresh coat of paint works wonders to revive faded outdoor furniture, such as garden seats and dining settings.

It's also an easy way to transform courtyard walls and planters. So if your outdoor area is lacking colour or features a lot of weathered timber, use paint to create a new look DIY.



7 Light the night

When the sun goes down outdoor lights work their magic in the garden.

Add rustic lamps to a table for nighttime dining or illuminate the garden so it can be viewed from indoors. Use small spotlights to highlight favourite plants, a water feature or a statue.

Uplights will accentuate walls or feature trees and shrubs while fairy lights create pretty effects. Wrap them over tree branches or string them around a patio.

Solar-powered lights come in a variety of sizes and types, including fairy lights and stakes. They are handy to light pathways or highlight swimming pools, walls and plants.



Install a water feature in the garden to enjoy its calming sounds

8

Add a fountain

Water features are a great addition to the garden, as they have both a soothing and cooling effect. They come in lots of shapes and sizes, or you can DIY using a pot and pond pump. ➤



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9 Beat the heat

Shade is always welcome in the summer, especially if your Christmas lunch is going to be held outdoors.

Patio umbrellas and shade sails provide instant solutions. Look for those that tilt vertically and horizontally, and also swivel, so you can reposition them as the sun moves during the day.

10 Add potted colour

Pots brimming with flowers bring colour and life to the garden.

Use them to decorate outdoor entertaining areas, or position a flowering pot plant at the front door to create an inviting entry.

Large pots hold water better than small ones and they're bolder

in appearance than a collection of small pots. Nurseries are bulging with flowering plants at the moment, so buy advanced potted colour for instant impact.

Plant alyssum, alstroemeria, amaranthus, bedding begonias, calibrachoa, catmint, fuchsia, gaura, geranium, gerbera, impatiens, lobelia, petunia, salvia and verbena.

11 Hang pretty baskets

Transform dull or bare areas with cheerful hanging baskets. Hang them in trees to liven up empty areas of the back garden, or brighten a pergola with colourful cascading flowers.

Hanging baskets designed to fit flat on walls can be used to turn a surface from boring to beautiful.

➤ **SUN** Brachyscome, calibrachoa, coleus, *Dichondra* 'Silver Falls', petunia and sweet alyssum.

➤ **SHADE AND PART SHADE**

Trailing and bedding begonias, impatiens, ferns and fuchsia.

12 Re-pot old faves

Before you rush to the nursery to buy new plants to decorate outdoor areas, take a look at your existing plants.

If they're looking straggly and not growing well, maybe they simply need to be re-potted.

It is best to do this every three years, even if the plant has not outgrown its pot, as the potting mix degenerates and needs renewing.

You can replant into the same container, but if the plant has grown considerably or is root-bound, then move up to a bigger pot size.



More inspiring ideas

- ✦ **BRIGHTEN** a dark courtyard with a large outdoor mirror to reflect light and increase the sense of space.
- ✦ **MAKE** lanterns to hang in trees using pretty jam jars. Put a tealight candle inside and wrap thin wire around the top to create a hanger.
- ✦ **CREATE** a wreath for the front door to spread Christmas cheer and

welcome guests. Camellia, laurel or gardenia leaves make a shiny green display or, for an Australian theme, cover the wreath in eucalyptus leaves.

- ✦ **FLOAT** favourite blooms in a bowl filled with water on an outdoor table setting to add colour and a sense of tranquillity. Any attractive bowl that is watertight will do. ✦

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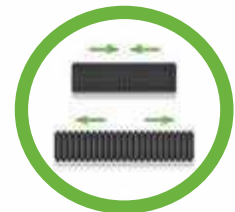
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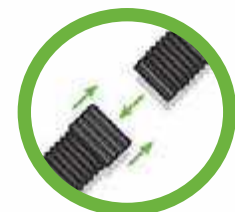
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SUCCULENT XMAS TREE

Pine is the traditional species used for Christmas trees, and while live trees look spectacular at first, they don't last more than a week or two in the hot Australian summer.

Instead, you can create a colourful living centrepiece using wire mesh and succulents. These drought-tolerant

plants store water in their leaves, making them ideal for creating a festive display in a hot climate.

The secret to keeping them alive and healthy is a layer of sphagnum moss secured to the wire frame. It retains water for a long time, allowing the cuttings to thrive and strike roots.



1 2 3



1 Make the frame

Wearing gloves for protection, roll steel mesh into a cone shape, then secure with wire along the edge. Cut the mesh using wire cutters and trim any sharp edges, then tuck the rim underneath to create a level base.



2 Add the moss

Hydrate a block of sphagnum moss by soaking it in a bucket of water and breaking it apart with your hands. Push clumps of moss through the gaps in the mesh to secure it firmly until the cone is completely covered.



3 Insert the cuttings

Prune cuttings with about 50mm of stem and remove excess leaves. Make small holes in the moss using a pencil, then push the cuttings into the holes. Start with large cuttings first, then fill any gaps with smaller specimens.



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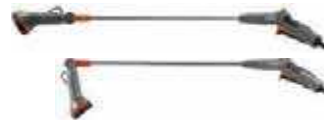
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GROW FROM CUTTINGS

Boost your plant collection for free this summer by propagating

WORDS CHERYL MADDOCKS

Plants can be expensive and a drain on the budget, especially if you're improving or even starting a garden from scratch.

But you can easily have beautiful flowering shrubs and herbaceous plants for nothing, simply by taking cuttings.

You won't have an instant garden but, in a couple of years, you'll have lots of leafy, bushy and blooming plants that you've cultivated yourself.

Summer is here and it is the perfect time to take herbaceous and semi-hardwood cuttings.



Cheryl

EXPERT SECRETS

If you take a cutting from a plant with an interesting flower or leaf, the new plant will be a clone with exactly the same characteristics.

How to take a cutting

Take cuttings in the morning, when the stems have more moisture.

➤ **FILL** a 100mm plastic pot, which will hold about 4-5 cuttings, with a good-quality seed-raising or propagating mix.

➤ **CHOOSE** cutting material from the top or outer growth of the plant.

➤ **CUT** just below a pair of nodes. For semi-hardwood, take cuttings about 100-150mm long, with at least four nodes on the stem.

For herbaceous, take cuttings about 75-100mm long, with at least three nodes on the stem.

➤ **PINCH** out the top shoot. Remove the leaves from the base of the cutting, leaving a couple on top.

➤ **DIP** the ends of the cutting into a hormone rooting powder.

➤ **MAKE** a hole in the mix using a pencil and insert the cutting by at least half its length, firming the mix around it to hold it in position.



- 1 Take a semi-hardwood cutting with at least four nodes on the stem.
- 2 Pinch out the top shoot.
- 3 Remove the lower leaves from the base of the cutting to prevent moisture loss.



PICTURES CHERYL MADDOCKS (BOTTOM LEFT, BOTTOM RIGHT) SHUTTERSTOCK



Provide humidity

Plant cuttings need humidity to form roots.

You can buy a mini greenhouse or make your own by placing small bamboo stakes around the edge of the pot and covering it with clear plastic. Just ensure the plastic doesn't touch the plants.

Potted cuttings can also be put into a wooden or polystyrene foam box and covered with glass.

Or, you could cut large, clear soft-drink bottles in half, then upend them over the cuttings. ➤

Gardenia is a good choice for growing from cuttings.

Taking root

Position the potted cuttings in a warm shady spot and use a mist sprayer to water, checking regularly that the mix is moist but not wet.

In 6-8 weeks, check to see if the cuttings have taken root by gently pulling the stems. If they feel firm, it means roots have formed. Strong new growth on a cutting also indicates that they have taken root.

Don't give up on them, as some plants, especially roses, take longer.



When taking cuttings, good after-care is essential for success



Semi-hardwood cuttings

These are also known as semi-ripe cuttings, and are taken from hardened spring growth.

The wood has been growing for a couple of months and should snap quickly when bent.

These plants will grow easily from cuttings, but be adventurous

and give anything a go, as you never know what may strike.

WHAT TO PROPAGATE Abelia, azalea, bottlebrush, begonia, box, camellia, fuchsia, gardenia, Geraldton wax, grevillea, bay, New Guinea impatiens, hibiscus, lavender, lilly pilly, mint bush, murraya, plumbago, rosemary, roses and westringia.

GROW TIP

If you are unable to propagate the cuttings immediately, store them in large plastic bags in the fridge or a cool, shady spot.

Abelia

Lavender

Fuchsia

Camellia

Create a gorgeous hedge with lavender cuttings.



Herbaceous cuttings

This type of cutting is taken from the soft new growth of herbaceous plants. Roots usually start growing in about 10-14 days.

These cuttings can also grow roots if placed in a glass of water.

WHAT TO PROPAGATE Cane begonia, coleus, pelargonium and chrysanthemum.



Cane begonia



Coleus

Potting up

Transplant each rooted cutting into individual 100-150mm pots using a good-quality potting mix and place in a warm shady spot.

Harden sun-loving plants after a week by exposing them gradually to more sunlight.

Water regularly and feed fortnightly with half-strength soluble plant food.

Keep the new plants in their pots until large enough to be planted into a garden bed. ☺

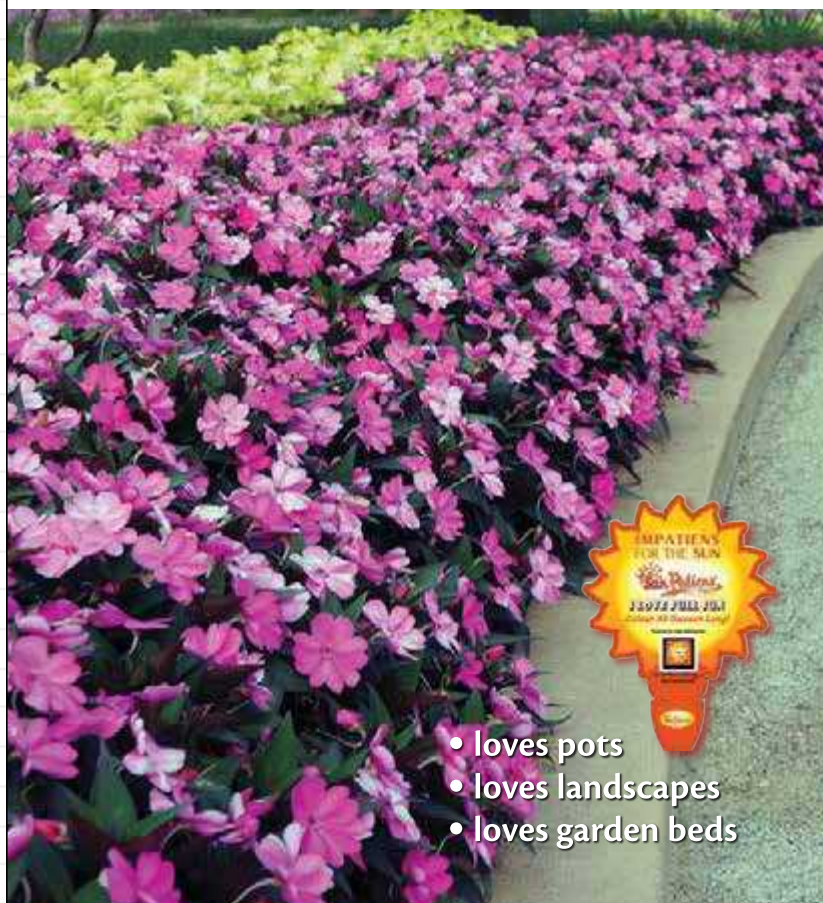
PICTURES SHUTTERSTOCK

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- loves landscapes
- loves garden beds

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RAISING BEAUTIFUL BEGONIAS

Plant these star performers to brighten shady spots in garden beds or bring indoors as potted colour

WORDS CHERYL MADDOCKS

Finding good-looking plants for shaded and semi-shaded areas is not always easy, but begonias are great choices for these difficult places.

They have lovely flowers and abundant foliage, and will also happily grow in pots. If you're forgetful with the watering from time to time, don't worry, as they won't drop dead.

Begonias belong to the Begoniaceae family and there are about 1200 species and many different cultivars of these stunning plants.

Mass-planted begonias make a spectacular display.

PICTURE SHUTTERSTOCK

WHAT TO PLANT

There's a begonia for just about every position in the garden and home.

Bedding begonias will grow in sun and produce flowers for months in either garden beds or containers.

The pretty leaves and flowers of cane begonias make them standouts in shady, tropical-style gardens.

Rex begonias with their colourful leaves make handsome indoor plants.

Elatior begonias will bloom for months indoors and the large flowers of tuberous begonias look wonderful cascading from hanging baskets.



Always water in the morning to prevent mildew on leaves



Versatile bedding begonias thrive in containers and pots.

GROW TIP

Begonias are more likely to die from over-watering than under-watering.

For those grown outdoors, water less in the wetter months.

Bedding

Also called semperflorens or wax begonias, these are available as seedlings and grow to 200-250mm.

Semperflorens means 'ever blooming' and they live up to their name, as they flower continuously from spring to the end of autumn.

While bedding begonias are usually sold as annuals, they are actually perennials and will bloom again in all but frosty climates.

They come in pink, red and white with waxy bronze or green leaves. Look for powdery mildew on leaves and treat with an organic fungicide.

➤ **PLANT** in pots or garden beds in full sun or partial shade. In cool areas, too much shade will reduce flowering and in very hot areas, excessive sun can burn the leaves.

➤ **WATER** regularly if in full sun.

➤ **FEED** bedding begonias monthly using a soluble plant food.

➤ **PROPAGATE** by taking cuttings from near ground level. Trim excess leaves, leaving two at the top and put in a propagating mix.

Water and cover with plastic. When the roots develop, transfer to small pots for several weeks before planting out in the garden. ➤



PICTURES ISTOCK

Bedding varieties can be grown from seed.

Cane

Known as cane, angel wing (*Begonia coccinea*) or tree begonias, these elegant plants have upright stems and clusters of drooping flowers.

But their beautiful spotted leaves are likely to attract just as much attention as their lovely blooms.

✦ **PLANT** outdoors in frost-free areas in a position that receives morning sun or dappled light. Grow in beds or in large pots.

Give the plants space and room to spread, as new canes

grow from the root system on the outside of the existing ones.

✦ **WATER** when the surface of the potting mix is dry. Do not overwater.

✦ **FEED** in spring with a six-month controlled-release fertiliser, or use a soluble plant food every 3-4 weeks.

✦ **PRUNE** in late winter to early spring by cutting out all old, brown canes to just above ground level.

Trim the other canes to the height you desire and new growth will appear from the top node.



Flower colours include orange, red, pink and white.

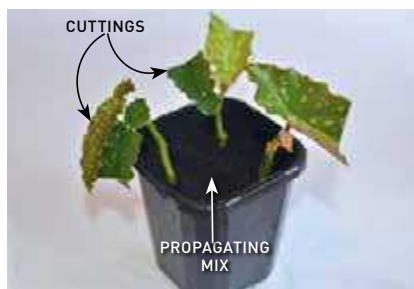
1 2

TAKE CUTTINGS of cane begonias now and they should be ready to plant out into garden beds, or large containers, in about 4-6 weeks.



1 Take the cutting

Fill a 100mm pot with propagating mix. Take a tip cutting with 3-4 nodes from where the leaf meets the stem. Remove all but the two top leaves from the cutting and cut large leaves in half to reduce moisture loss.



2 Plant into pots

Insert the cuttings into the mix with at least two nodes below the surface. Firm them into place and put the pot in a warm but shaded position. Keep the mix moist but not overly wet. Plant out when the roots appear.



PICTURES CHERYL MADDOCKS, MAIN | ISTOCK



These begonias range in size from 500-2000mm high.

CHERYL'S PICKS



Yates Thrive All Purpose Soluble Fertiliser, \$7 for 500g. yates.com.au



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Rex

These indoor plants, also called king begonias, are grown for their ornamental foliage that comes in swirls, stripes and spots in black, red, purple, green and silver.

✚ **GROW** indoors in bright light but not direct sun.

✚ **HUMIDITY** is essential or the leaf margins will become brittle. Boost humidity in air-conditioned rooms by standing the pot on a dish of pebbles. Add water so it sits just below the pebbles.

✚ **WATER** sparingly and only when the surface of the pot feels dry. Overwatering is a common cause of death. Water less in winter when growth slows down.

Rex begonias may be grown outdoors in tropical and sub-tropical climates.



These showy plants flower in colours from subtle white, cream or pink to brilliant scarlet, red, orange or yellow.



Tuberous

The winter-dormant *Begonia tuberhybrida* flowers from midsummer to early autumn.

When the tubers die back in late autumn, put them on a tray, cover in nearly dry potting mix and keep in a cool, dry position. Re-pot in early spring.

✚ **GROW** in hanging baskets or pots on well-lit balconies out of wind and direct sun. Buy tubers in winter when growth is dormant or in summer when in full bloom.

✚ **WATER** when the surface of the mix is dry. Do not overwater.

✚ **FEED** them fortnightly using a soluble plant food.



GROW TIP

Elatior begonias will flower for 6-8 weeks. To keep them looking their best, regularly pinch off any dead blooms.

Elatior

Compact and bushy, these indoor begonias produce single or double flowers in shades of red, white, pink, orange or yellow.

✦ **GROW** indoors in bright light but not direct sun.

✦ **WATER** when the surface of the potting mix dries out.

✦ **FEED** them fortnightly with a soluble plant food.

✦ **PRUNE** to leave two nodes on each stem when plants become leggy and flowering diminishes.

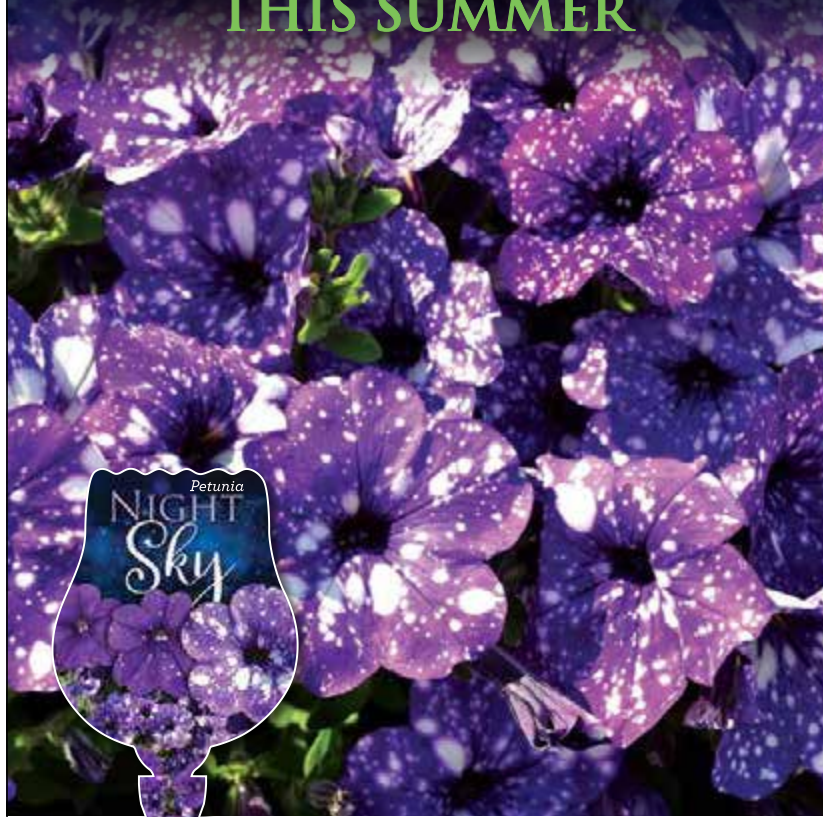
✦ **PROPAGATE** by taking tip cuttings, making sure to include at least three nodes on the stem. ✦

PICTURES: ISTOCK

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PROTECT PLANTS

THE NATURAL WAY

Keep your patch free from pests, diseases and weeds with easy-to-use organic solutions

WORDS CHERYL MADDOCKS

The pollen and nectar of daisies attract beneficial insects.

 Choose companion plants
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Organic gardening is all about using natural methods to care for your soil and plants, and also control pests.

When you garden in this way, you become more aware of the environment and nature's balance.

Chemical sprays, while effective, can alter this delicate state by killing off beneficial insects.

But it is surprisingly easy to protect the garden organically from pests, diseases and weeds, as there are simple, non-toxic approaches for many of the most common offenders.

PICTURE SHUTTERSTOCK

PREP FOR SUCCESS

Careful preparation can avoid garden problems, and having good soil as a base and using the right plant in the right place is key.

If pests continually attack a plant, it may be unsuited to its situation and not growing well, making it vulnerable. The soil may be too heavy, the climatic conditions incorrect, or the position too hot or too shaded.

Good garden management means getting to know your plants and observing them regularly so you can spot pests or diseases before they develop into major infestations.



Keep tools clean to avoid spreading pests or disease to other areas of the garden

Good insects are attracted to wild thyme.

PEST TIP

To encourage native birds into the garden to devour unwanted insects, establish a selection of plants that are indigenous to your location.

Calendula is a favourite plant of bees.



Attract good insects

Select plants that create a desirable environment for beneficial insects that help to control pest populations, such as parasitic wasps, assassin bugs, hoverflies, lacewings and ladybirds.

Beneficial insects prefer small and abundant flowers, such as those from the daisy family (Asteraceae), which are excellent sources of the

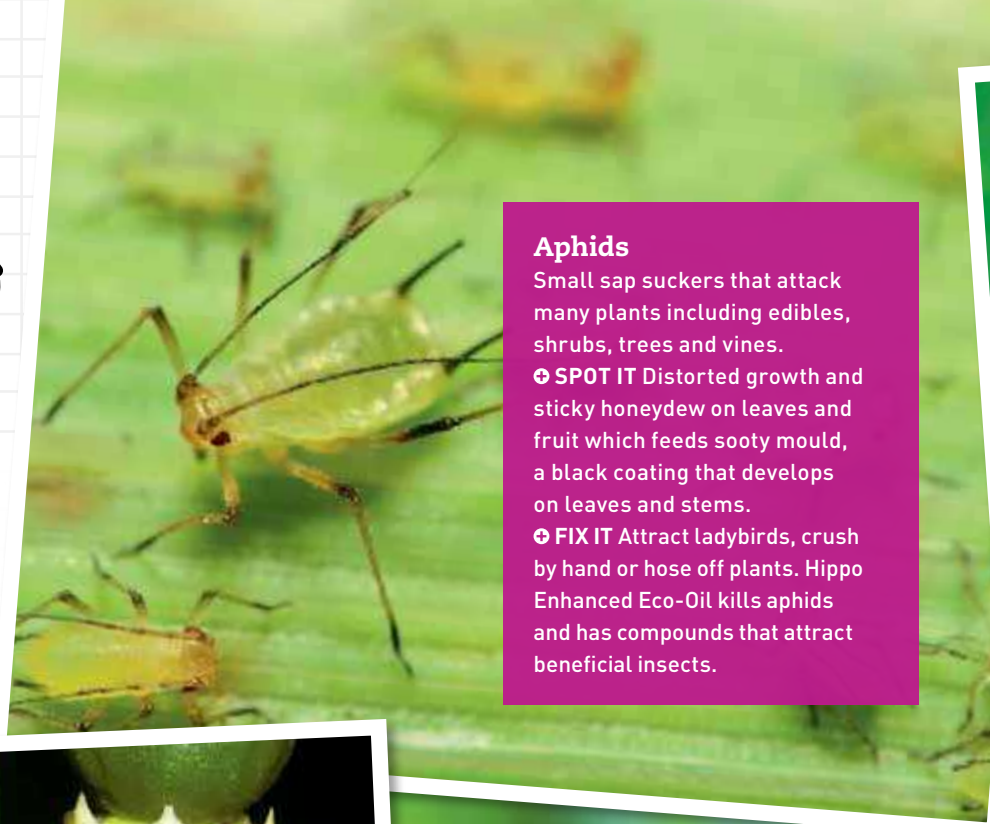
pollen and nectar which attract species that feast on predators.

Bees and beneficial insects are also attracted to plants in the mint family (Lamiaceae) which produce clusters of tiny, two-lipped flowers. **PLANT** Aster, basil, catmint, cosmos, dill, fennel, lavender, lemon balm, marigold, mint, oregano, Queen Anne's lace, sage, sunflower, sweet marjoram, tansy and thyme. ➤

PEST BUSTERS

Dealing with pests organically does not necessarily mean you have to mix your own sprays.

You'll find many products on the market classified as organic sprays that are kind to beneficial insects and the environment.



Aphids

Small sap suckers that attack many plants including edibles, shrubs, trees and vines.

✚ **SPOT IT** Distorted growth and sticky honeydew on leaves and fruit which feeds sooty mould, a black coating that develops on leaves and stems.

✚ **FIX IT** Attract ladybirds, crush by hand or hose off plants. Hippo Enhanced Eco-Oil kills aphids and has compounds that attract beneficial insects.

Bronze orange bug

Also called stink bugs, these sap suckers attack citrus trees, including native varieties.

✚ **SPOT IT** Small, flat, green nymphs grow into black or dark-brown adults of about 25mm long. Both cause flower and fruit fall by sucking on stalks.

✚ **FIX IT** Remove adults and place in a bucket of hot water and detergent. Wear gloves and eye protection, as the bugs can squirt a toxic acidic substance.

Spray nymphs in winter with Yates Nature's Way Citrus & Ornamental Spray.



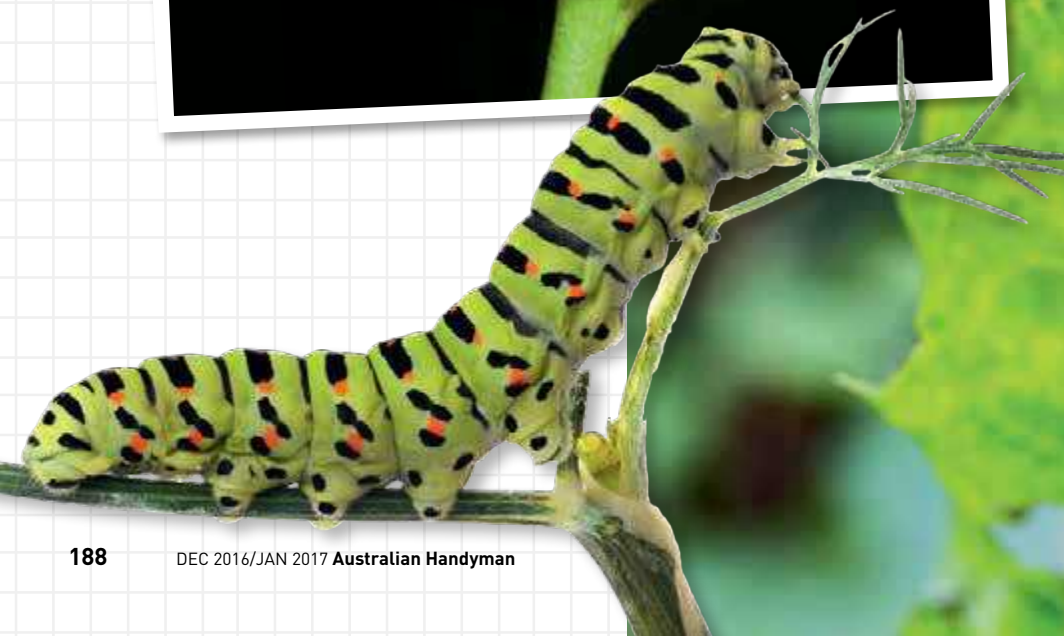
Caterpillars

Most species feed on tree and plant leaves but some eat fruit.

✚ **SPOT IT** Chewed leaves on young and old growth, or seedlings being eaten.

✚ **FIX IT** For small infestations, remove by hand and destroy.

Or use Yates Nature's Way Caterpillar Killer. It controls most caterpillars with a natural bacteria that kills the larvae once it is ingested.





Fruit fly

Attacks fruit and vegies.

➤ **SPOT IT** This insect makes tiny holes in fruit. It lays eggs under the skin and the hatching larvae feed their way to the core, causing the fruit to rot.

➤ **FIX IT** Detect early in the season with an Eco-Lure trap.

Use a Eco-Naturalure bait weekly to destroy them. This contains a protein bait to attract and natural insecticide to kill.

Place an exclusion bag over the young fruit to prevent the flies reaching it. Seal infected fruit in a plastic bag, cook in the sun, then bin. Do not add to compost.



Mealy bug

This small sucking insect likes ferns, palms, cacti, succulents, trees and shrubs.

➤ **SPOT IT** Small, pale-pink, yellow or grey bodies covered in white, powdery wax. Often found on indoor plants, as mealy bug thrives in humid conditions.

➤ **FIX IT** For a mild outbreak, dip a cotton bud in methylated spirits and dab it on the insects.

Spray widespread infestations with Yates White Oil.

Slugs and snails

Happy to eat their way through the garden, they love vegies.

➤ **SPOT IT** Telltale slime trails, seedlings disappearing overnight and chewed young leaves.

➤ **FIX IT** Sprinkle coffee grounds or eggshells around plants, or sink a small beer-filled container into the soil with the rim just above the ground. Empty the trap daily.

Iron is the active ingredient of eco-friendly Multicrop Multiguard Snail & Slug Killer and is taken up by plants as pellets break down.

Scale

Sap suckers that like many plants but citrus attacks are common.

➤ **SPOT IT** Small raised lumps on leaves or bark. Colour varies and the different types of scale will attack different types of plants.

➤ **FIX IT** For a minor infestation, scrape off with a fingernail.

Spray bigger outbreaks with Yates Pest Oil.

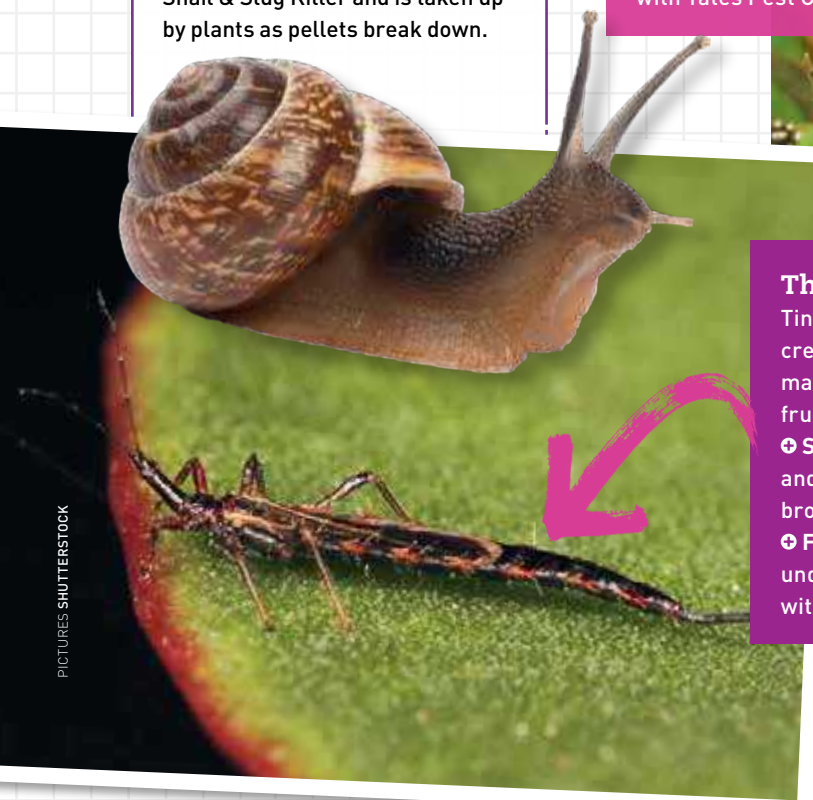


Thrips

Tiny black, yellow, brown or cream sucking insects that like many plants, especially roses, fruit trees, azaleas and tomatoes.

➤ **SPOT IT** Distorted young leaves and silvery grey older ones, and brown and damaged flowers.

➤ **FIX IT** Spray the tops and undersides of leaves and flowers with Hippo Enhanced Eco-Oil. ➤



DISEASE FIXES

Healthy plants are much less likely to be attacked by diseases. Make sure you select the right plants for your climate and give them the correct positions, such as in full sun or part shade.

But when problems do appear, there are natural fixes to try.

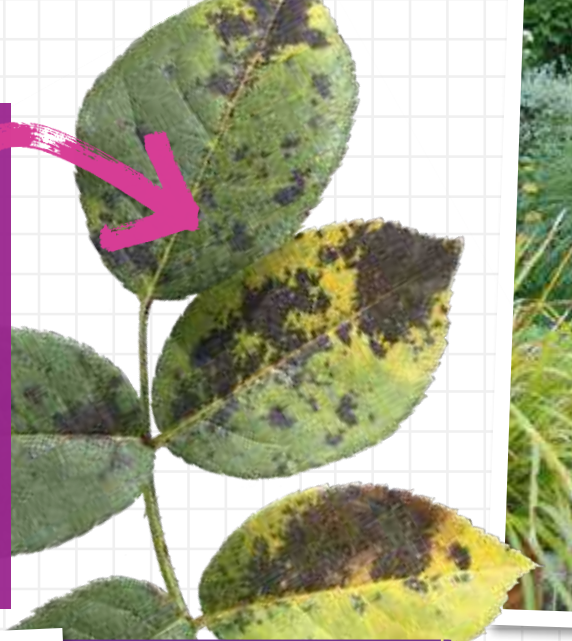
Black spot

A fungus that affects many plants, but especially roses.

⊕ **SPOT IT** Almost circular black spots appear on leaves, which will also turn yellow and fall prematurely.

⊕ **FIX IT** Water in the morning so leaves are not wet at night. Ensure good airflow around rosebushes, as the fungi like humid conditions.

Spray affected plants with a product such as Eco-Organic Garden Eco-Fungicide.



Downy mildew

This fungi attacks cucurbits, roses, grapes and ornamentals.

⊕ **SPOT IT** Patches or spots on the upper surfaces of leaves, with furry growth beneath.

⊕ **FIX IT** Never water the foliage of susceptible plants but apply at the roots in the morning, and use a seaweed solution weekly.

Mix one part whole milk with nine parts water and spray weekly. Or use Eco-Organic Garden Eco-Fungicide.

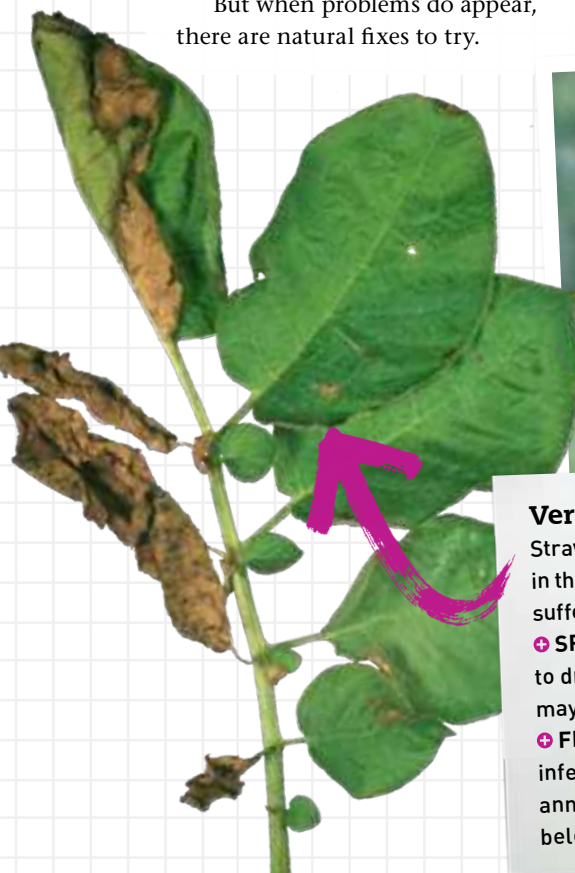


Verticillium wilt

Strawberries, tomatoes and plants in the potato family (Solanaceae) suffer from this disease.

⊕ **SPOT IT** Lower leaves start to dry out and the whole plant may eventually die.

⊕ **FIX IT** Remove and destroy infected plants. Rotate your crops annually, especially plants that belong to the potato family.



Powdery mildew

Affects ornamentals, apples, vegies, strawberries and pawpaw.

⊕ **SPOT IT** Faint white spots on the leaves that increase in size until covered in white powder.

⊕ **FIX IT** Apply a seaweed solution weekly to vulnerable plants as a preventative measure.

Mix one part whole milk with nine parts water and spray weekly. Or use Eco-Organic Garden Eco-Fungicide.



Blossom end rot

This disease affects the base of tomato and capsicum fruits.

⊕ **SPOT IT** The bottom of fruit looks sunken and blackened.

⊕ **FIX IT** Address a lack of calcium in the soil or irregular watering, both of which can cause this rot.

Add liquid lime to the soil, and water regularly and deeply.





SPRAY BASICS

Making regular checks of your plants means you can manage problems as they arise. Use a commercial spray to deter a specific disease or pest. Or, make a DIY spray to zap sap-sucking insects.

✦ **READ** the maker's label for guidance when spraying on hot days, as this can stress plants. The maximum temperature usually recommended is 27°C.

✦ **AVOID** spraying on windy days so it doesn't drift and is applied directly to the plant. Early morning or evening is best, when the air is still and there are fewer beneficial insects around.

✦ **COVER** the undersides of leaves, as well as spraying the top, as many pests tend to conceal themselves there.

✦ **MAKE** your own soap spray to kill sap-sucking insects, such as aphids, thrips and bronze orange bugs.

Dissolve 2-3 teaspoons of liquid soap in two cups of water. Shake well and apply directly onto plants.



Did you know?

Weeds can be food sources for pests and diseases, so keep them at bay by planting bare spots in the garden, mulching frequently, and digging up the whole plant, roots and all, to remove it. Use vinegar to spray weeds on paths and paving. ✦

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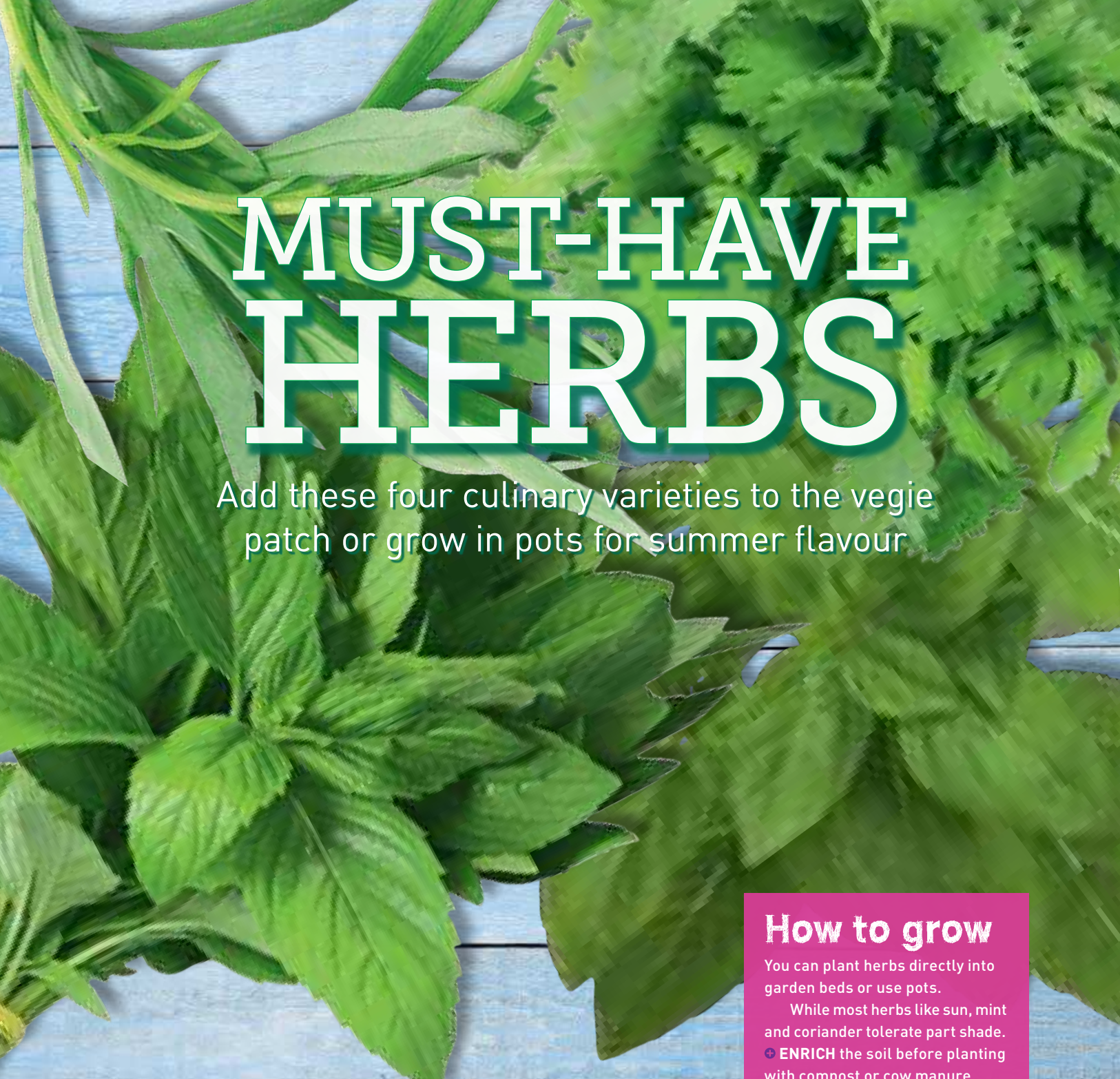
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MUST-HAVE HERBS

Add these four culinary varieties to the vegie patch or grow in pots for summer flavour

There are thousands of plants that are classed as herbs, and over the centuries, many have been used to flavour food, freshen the air, treat ailments, ward off pests and diseases, and as decoration.

As well as being staple kitchen ingredients, the leaves and flowers of herbs add lovely fragrances and colours to the garden.

You will have an ongoing harvest in summer, but any excess won't be wasted, as you can freeze herbs to use in winter when they're more scarce.

To make picking easy, dedicate an area for herbs close to the back door or use a sunny kitchen windowsill.

Basil, coriander, tarragon and mint are all easy to grow and will thrive in most climates.

How to grow

You can plant herbs directly into garden beds or use pots.

While most herbs like sun, mint and coriander tolerate part shade.

✦ **ENRICH** the soil before planting with compost or cow manure.

✦ **PLANT** in a sunny position in well-drained soil, or in a premium potting mix if using pots.

✦ **WATER** regularly and feed fortnightly with a soluble plant food to encourage new leaves.

✦ **HARVEST** herbs regularly in summer to promote branching and growth in autumn. Remove flowers to keep plants leafy.

CORIANDER

This is an annual herb belonging to the Apiaceae family. In hot areas, choose slow-bolting varieties suited to leaf production and delayed flowering.

All parts of this plant are used to flavour cooked dishes, salads or salsas.

The sharp-tasting leaves resemble flat-leaf parsley and are used in Asian, Indian and Middle Eastern dishes.

Use the leaves fresh or chop and freeze in ice-cube trays for later.

The dried seeds and roots are often used in curries and spice pastes. Roasting the seeds enhances their flavour. They work well in sweet or savoury dishes, whole or ground.



Appetite arouser

The seeds of coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*) are known for their antispasmodic properties and they can have a stimulating effect on the appetite.

Coriander is often used in traditional medicine with anise, caraway, cardamom, fennel and anise to ease indigestion.

Cut a bunch of basil to use as a pretty, aromatic centrepiece for the dining table.



BASIL

Aromatic basil has a distinctive scent and flavour and is extensively used in European and Asian cooking.

There are many types suited to different cooking styles. If you like Asian cuisine, you could plant 'Thai' or 'Lemon' basil. But if a recipe calls for basil, then common or sweet basil (*Ocimum basilicum*) is what is meant.

Use your fingers to shred the fresh herb if using it in salads or pasta dishes when appearance matters, as cutting with a knife can bruise and darken the leaves.

Basil teams well with fish, chicken, egg and rice dishes, and with tomato and vegetables, especially beans, capsicum and eggplant.



Time for tea

Today, sweet basil is known more for its pleasant taste than its medicinal benefits.

But, due to its mildly sedative properties, basil was traditionally prescribed by herbalists as a tea for easing nervous irritability. >

TARRAGON

A sun-loving perennial, French tarragon (*Artemisia dracunculus*) is an essential part of the cuisine of France.

It can grow to a height of 600mm and will perform best when the old foliage is cut down to ground level at the end of autumn.

The slender aromatic leaves have a complex taste, blending sweet anise and basil with resinous undertones.

Use this distinctive flavoured herb sparingly, either fresh or dried.

It goes well with fish, eggs, poultry, veal, cheese and salads. Chop the leaves and add them to mayonnaise, salad dressings and salsa verde.

Use tarragon to flavour chicken dishes.



Health helper

Tarragon is mainly known today for its culinary uses, but in various countries, it is used as a traditional medicine to treat diabetes symptoms, and recent studies seem to support this.

The herb is a good source of vitamins A, C and B6, and contains antioxidants that can help to neutralise free radicals.

MINT

Fast-growing mint has an invasive nature and is best grown in a pot with a saucer to avoid direct contact with soil and stop it spreading.

Mint likes to be kept moist and will grow happily in a semi-shaded spot.

There are many varieties of mint, and peppermint and spearmint are the most commonly grown.

Peppermint has a strong flavour and makes a great digestive herbal tea.

Spearmint is the variety that is traditionally used in the mint sauce served with roast lamb. It also teams well with potatoes and peas, and can be used in salads and fruit drinks.



Refreshing facts

Peppermint (*Mentha x piperita*) helps to relax the gut, working to relieve cramping, gas, indigestion and inflammation.

Drinking a cup of mint tea may also relieve nausea. Fresh mint contains small amounts of fibre, vitamin A and potassium. ☺

Did you know?

Peppermint and pennyroyal (*Mentha pulegium*) are natural insect repellents.

A few drops of peppermint oil added to a damp cloth and wiped on benches can deter ants and cockroaches. And a little dried pennyroyal mint under your dog's bedding can help repel fleas. But don't use with expectant dogs and cats.

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REPOT A PLANT



As your plants grow they may need transplanting into larger pots.

If you can see roots on the surface of the soil or sticking out of the drainage holes, then the plant is rootbound and needs to be repotted so that it has more room to grow.

Make sure to use a premium potting mix, as they have all the nutrients a plant needs to thrive.

Materials

Pot
Plant
Potting mix
Fertiliser
Seaweed solution
Watering can
Gloves
Mask

1 2 3



1 Add potting mix

Cut open the bag of potting mix carefully. Grab a couple of handfuls of the potting mix and add a layer to the base of the pot.

TIP Always wear gloves and a mask when handling potting mix.



2 Remove the plant

Lift the plant out of the pot. You may need to hold the stem, turn the pot upside down and tap the base while slowly pulling it away from the plant. If the roots are tightly bound, pull them away from the rootball.



3 Transfer into the pot

Position the plant in the centre of the new pot and fill around it with potting mix, firming it down. Water in using a seaweed solution to help promote root growth and prevent transplant shock. Fertilise regularly.

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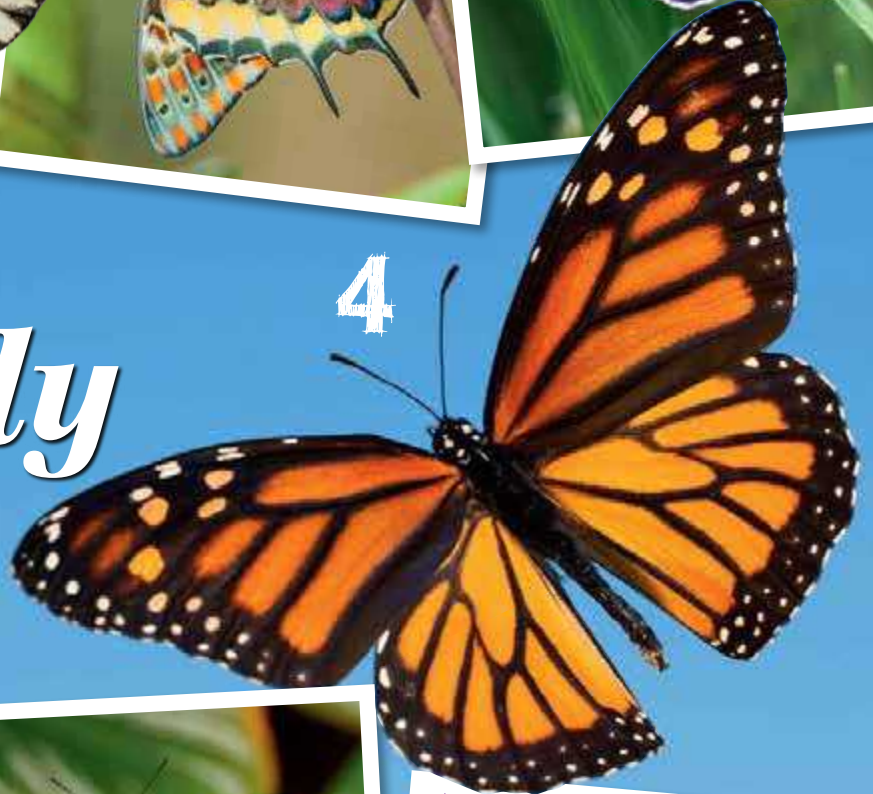
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Name that Butterfly

Can you identify these flying beauties? The answers are at the bottom of the page

4



5



6



7



9



10



8



ANSWERS 1 STRIPED ALBATROSS 2 TAILED EMPEROR 3 PURPLE COPPER 4 MONARCH 5 SCARLET JEZEBEL 6 CRUISER 7 AUSTRALIAN PAINTED LADY 8 BLUE TRIANGLE 9 RINGED XENICA 10 LARGE GRASS YELLOW