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Editor's LETTER



As the temperature heats up, we're starting to venture outdoors and make the most of our alfresco spaces – and this issue we'll tell you all you need to know to get yours looking fantastic.

Turn to page 24 where we reveal the secrets to brilliant landscape design, discover how to create a stylish and usable outdoor room (page 34), and learn about the latest exterior lighting tech (page 88). Make sure you're equipped with the best tools for the job

by checking out our feature on edgers and trimmers on page 100.

We also show you how to replace weathered decking boards with new ones (page 56), capture views and maximise space by raising a deck (page 60) and repurpose pallets into awesome projects (page 80).

Interior inspiration

Meanwhile, indoors, we show you how to update a tween bedroom into one fit for a teen (page 50) and upcycle a retro

drinks cart (page 54) for cocktail hour. While you're at it, why not create the ultimate master ensuite (page 72). Happy DIYing!

EDITOR
ZOE MEUNIER



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NEW ZEALAND Handyman

EDITORIAL

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BARN-STYLE *beauty*

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WORDS JACKIE BRYGEL

She's the co-founder and creative director of a boutique Sydney renovation company, Three Birds Renovations (threebirdsrenovations.com). But when it came to transforming a dark and somewhat dilapidated 1970s house into her own family's bright modern coastal barn home, Bonnie Hindmarsh knew one thing for certain – she only had herself to please.

'This renovation was a little bit different because it was my place. My husband Nathan pretty much gave me free rein and trusted my design choices,' says Bonnie with a smile. ►

Coast meets country style at this rambling homestead in the Hills District of Sydney.



‘We’re all in that honeymoon stage at the moment. We’re just in love with everything’

‘With Three Birds, we’re up to our ninth renovation in four years. But this is the home we’re planning to stay in and enjoy as a family for a long, long time. As a result, the choices needed to be timeless and have longevity, which is actually the way I design most houses.’

Over 14 months, Bonnie oversaw the extensive transformation of the Sydney Hills District home, nestled within lush greenery on a sprawling two-hectare allotment. And despite at least one rather significant hiccup along the renovation way, the result is exactly as Bonnie envisaged.

Most importantly, the house perfectly suits Bonnie, Nathan and their four young sons. Even the clan’s pair of British bulldogs have wasted no time making the stylish abode their home.

‘We’re all in that honeymoon stage at the moment. We’re just in love with everything,’ says Bonnie.



Green is seen from virtually every aspect of the home’s interior.

Time for change

Living in the dated brown brick home just as it was for five years, Bonnie and Nathan always knew they would one day tackle a major renovation.

‘It was a tough five years because the house was literally falling apart. There was a huge storm that damaged the property quite significantly, so it was looking a little bit the worse for wear,’ says Bonnie.

‘We held out, though, and I’m glad we did. It was good living there first and seeing exactly where the sun comes in – where it gets hot in summer and stays cool in winter.’

With DJ Building & Construction taking charge of the works, the renovation commenced, while the family lived in a small granny flat on the property.

They resided there a little longer than planned, as the project turned into a far greater undertaking than was originally anticipated.

‘Once we started getting stuck into it and knocking out walls, the builder let us know that the walls were practically

paper thin from termite damage. We ended up knocking down 90% of the home, but we kept a beautiful fireplace and another wall in the dining area with some big old doors. I’m so glad we were able to keep a few features of the home that I really loved,’ says Bonnie. ►

‘It was good living there first and seeing exactly where the sun comes in – where it gets hot in summer and stays cool in winter’

The kitchen and dining area were central to the home’s new layout.



With four boys and two dogs, the all-white theme might be scary. But Bonnie insists everything is washable.

Bright idea

Drawing inspiration from what she has dubbed a 'modern coastal barn look', Bonnie also knew from the outset that white in all its pure glory would play a starring role.

'As for where I got the concept of 'modern coastal barn' from – who knows?' she laughs. 'But I think it was a mix of my absolutely loving the coast yet being so far away from it, while still wanting to achieve that real holiday feel for my family permanently.'

'I've always loved white coastal cottages, as well as that style of big

American barns and New Zealand farmhouses – they're just beautiful.'

Interestingly, Bonnie wasn't fazed by the thought of living in a pristine white house with four young boys and two dogs.

'Walls can be wiped down if need be – pretty much everything is washable. The engineered timber floor has a grain through it, so you don't see every scratch, the white sofa in the main living area has machine-washable covers, and the kitchen benchtops are Caesarstone, so it's all very low-maintenance.' ►



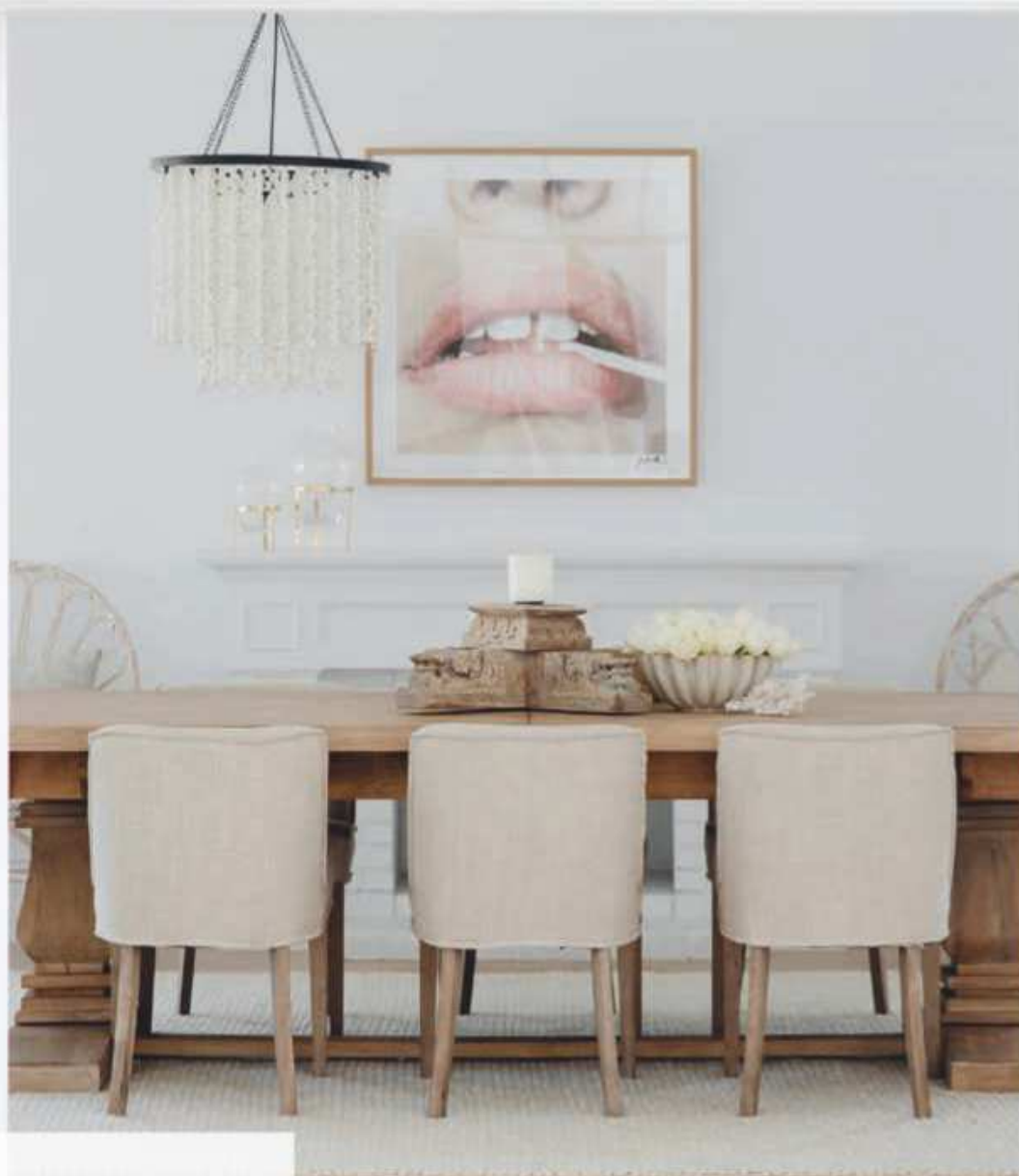
'I wanted to create a home that I love with a lightness and a certain feel to it, but also something that would be really durable for the whole family'



‘It was important to have height with the ceilings. In the main section of the house, the raked ceilings are about 7m high’



Green highlights indoors keep rooms feeling lush and clean.



Boxes ticked

When it came to Bonnie's brief, there were some key non-negotiables. With a growing family, it was important that the home be as open as possible, while still offering intimate spots to cosy up in.

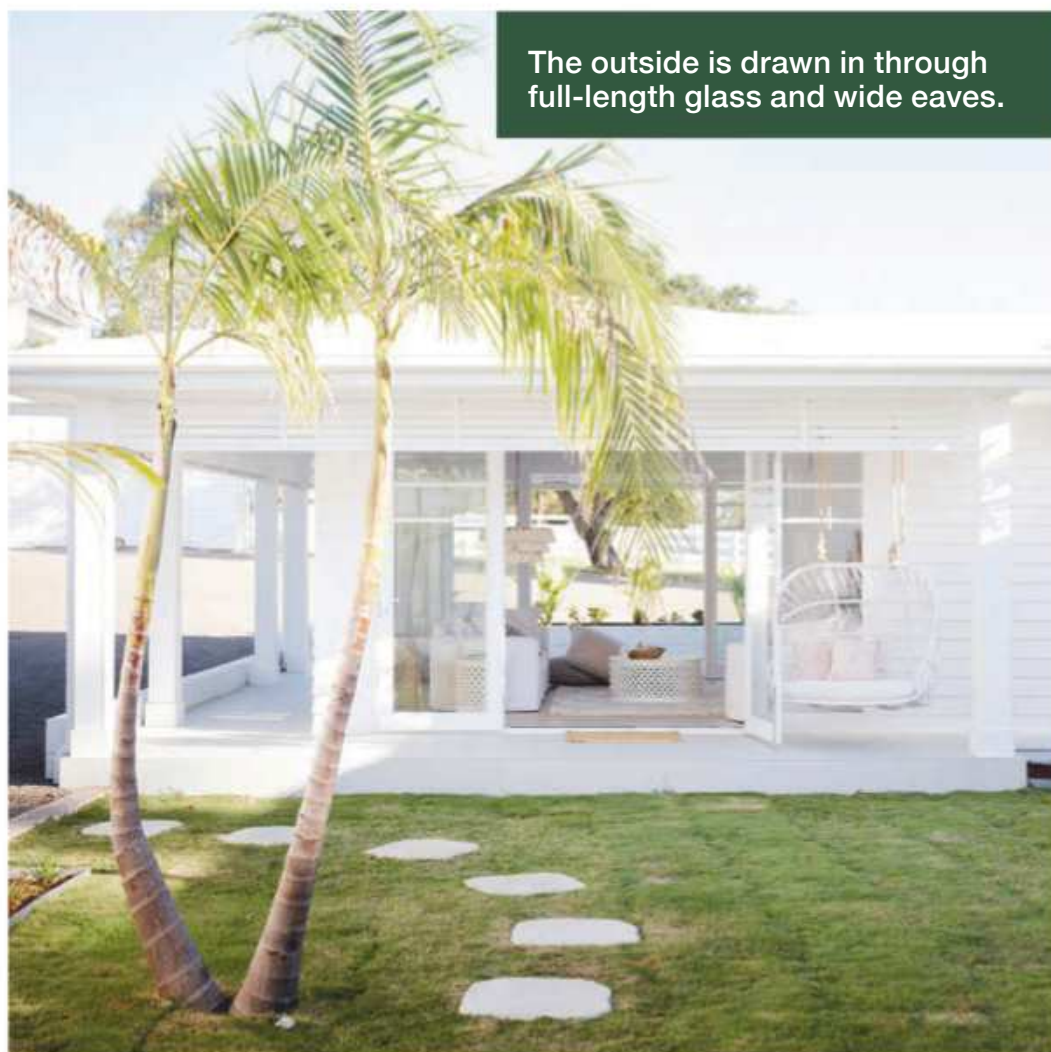
'We had to have really functional entertaining spaces, as we've got a big family and we're always having friends over,' says Bonnie.

'I wanted an open kitchen right in the middle of the house, and it was important that the home be single level to give it that sprawling, rural property feel.'

Also on the wish list was an abundance of natural light and views of the verdant outlook outdoors from almost every room.

'It was important, too, to have height with the ceilings. In the main section of the house, the raked ceilings are about 7m high,' says Bonnie.

'My favourite elements of the house are the indoor and outdoor entertaining areas. We built it for people – for all of our friends and family. It really is the most perfect house for all of us.' ►



The outside is drawn in through full-length glass and wide eaves.



Natural hues and simple patterns complement the elemental palette of the home.

Get the look...

Bonnie shares her top three tips for achieving a 'modern coastal barn look':

1. Cladding is probably the most important thing. A clad home is both coastal and barn-like.
2. Incorporate beautiful high ceilings where possible.
3. Think white. For this home, I did everything from the ceilings to the walls and cabinetry in Dulux White on White. ❖



The pool area gives this large family home a resort feel.



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GREAT *estate*

Smart landscape design makes the most of every corner of your outdoor space

WORDS JOHANNA LEGGATT

There is often a large gulf between what we would like our outdoor spaces to look like – sculpted, manicured, blooming – and how they appear in real life.

Unless you're a natural green thumb or have hired professional help, it's easy to let the weeds push through the garden beds or to turn a blind eye to the plant that has collapsed in on itself in quiet protest, desperate for a feed.

But the good news is it doesn't cost much to overhaul your outdoor space and you don't need to spend hours on end tending to your plants and herbs.

All you need to do is get a few basics of landscape design right. ►

ASK FOR HELP

All of *Handyman's* experts agree that you need to put some careful thought into your outdoor space, and this means seeking out those in the know.

Australian horticulturist Adam Woodhams suggests readers get acquainted with workshop.com.au, a friendly online forum for sharing gardening and landscaping tips.

'It's a great resource for people to read about other people's gardening queries and share your own, and it's done in a really open and respectful manner,' says Adam.

Landscape architect and owner of trades directory Renovating Mums, Marissa Towndrow, recommends visiting your local nursery or Bunnings for advice on the right kinds of plants that will work in your area.

'I would also advise people to hire a landscape architect to do a concept design first,' says Marissa.

'These cost around \$500, and will present a full list of the best plants for your outdoor area.'

Marissa's last point is crucial, according to Adam.

'People will often fall for what I call the 'cute puppy syndrome', where they see a plant they like and they just have to have it,' says Adam.

'But they don't realise what it's going to grow into – how big or how suitable it will be for their space.'

CURATE THE SPACE

Another common mistake many people make is to treat the outdoor space like an interior decorating scheme, says Adam.

'They will place plants where they would *like* them to go, without thinking whether this works in terms of flow and how certain areas are used,' he says.

Start by planning out the bigger structures you wish to incorporate, such as an arbour or a particular area of paving, and then work your way down to smaller inclusions from there.

DIY TIP

While you're working out what to plant, use plenty of mulch in the garden beds. Mulch conserves moisture and keeps weeds down.



Orientate your spaces according to the sun's position at various times of the day

'If you want to put in a hedge, for example, that would be one of your first considerations, because a hedge can change the shading and the light in the garden. The bigger choices influence the smaller ones,' says Adam.

When planning, it's important to focus on practicalities as much as aesthetics, explains Marissa.

'Consider if there is space for the children to kick balls and make mud pies, and if there is space for growing

vegetables and herbs, as well as room for the family pet,' says Marissa.

'You also need to consider the requirements for drying the washing, housing gardening tools and storing rubbish bins.'

Don't forget to properly orientate your spaces so that you know where the sun is at various parts of the day; this way you allow for shaded as well as open areas. Make sure you also allow for differences between winter and summer sun. ►



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‘If you’re not sure what plants to choose, go for a wander
up your street and see what is growing successfully
in your neighbours’ gardens’

PICTURE GETTY IMAGES RIGHT LISA ELLIS GARDENS



For instant wow factor, start with a few big statement plants.



PLANTING KNOW-HOW

Another big consideration for DIYers is how to create enough privacy.

Lisa Ellis, of Lisa Ellis Gardens in Melbourne, suggests planting evergreen hedges as screens.

‘They’re great at blocking out eyesores and ensuring plenty of privacy with a sense of seclusion,’ she says.

Adam is a big fan of non-invasive clumping bamboo as a screen.

‘Bamboo gets a bad rap because some varieties can go wild and take over garden beds, but the clumping bamboo is very restrained and can provide a 3m-tall, solid green screen in less than two years,’ he says.

‘I can’t think of another plant that can do that.’

Adam suggests spending money on a couple of big statement plants, and then

selecting more budget-friendly plants for the rest of the space.

‘It adds a wow factor straightaway,’ he explains.

‘If you’re not sure what plants to choose, go for a wander up your street and see what is growing successfully in your neighbours’ gardens.

‘Soil conditions really do vary from suburb to suburb, so it’s very important to look at the gardens in your immediate area and see what’s thriving.’

Marissa says fake grass has come a long way and now looks very realistic, but she does warn that it can get very hot in summer.

‘Outdoor entertaining areas that are paved or concreted can also be very versatile. You can then use planter boxes and pots to frame and soften these areas,’ says Marissa. ►



A cottage garden will come to life in the warmer months

CREATE A LOOK

Some tried-and-true plants can be called upon to help create a particular style or theme in your outdoor space.

Lisa recommends the following plant selections as a starting-off point for the following styles.

◆ **COTTAGE** Opt for varieties of lavender and perennials such as sedum. Russian sage and pink gaura will also fare well, while dahlias come to life in the late summer and early autumn cottage garden.

◆ **TROPICAL** There is nothing more impressive in a tropical garden than a *strelitzia nicolai*, the large form of the common bird of paradise plant, and they act as great screeners, too. Non-invasive clumping bamboo can also work well, as can numerous types of the gardenia family. Also check out the hardy philodendrons and popular colocasia, also known as elephant ears.

◆ **MEDITERRANEAN** If it's a stunning Mediterranean outdoor area you're after, go mad on the various types of rosemary – which is extremely resilient – as well as some pomegranate and flowering quince bush. You can also grow fruiting lemon and olive trees in pots, but just make sure the pots are large enough for them.

◆ **NATIVE** Lovers of native gardens can use kauri, totara, rimu, kowhai, lancewood, hebes and phormium, among others. For hedges or backdrops, you could plant the hardy native evergreen corokia, which comes in a variety of hues, or you might use a local version of pittosporum, one of the most popular shrubs for hedging, shelter and screens. You could also choose New Zealand-raised varieties of rhododendrons, camellias, azaleas, maples, paeonies, daffodils, lilies and roses, and locally bred grasses. ►



PICTURES (LEFT) FLUID LANDSCAPE DESIGN (TOP) LISA ELLIS GARDENS

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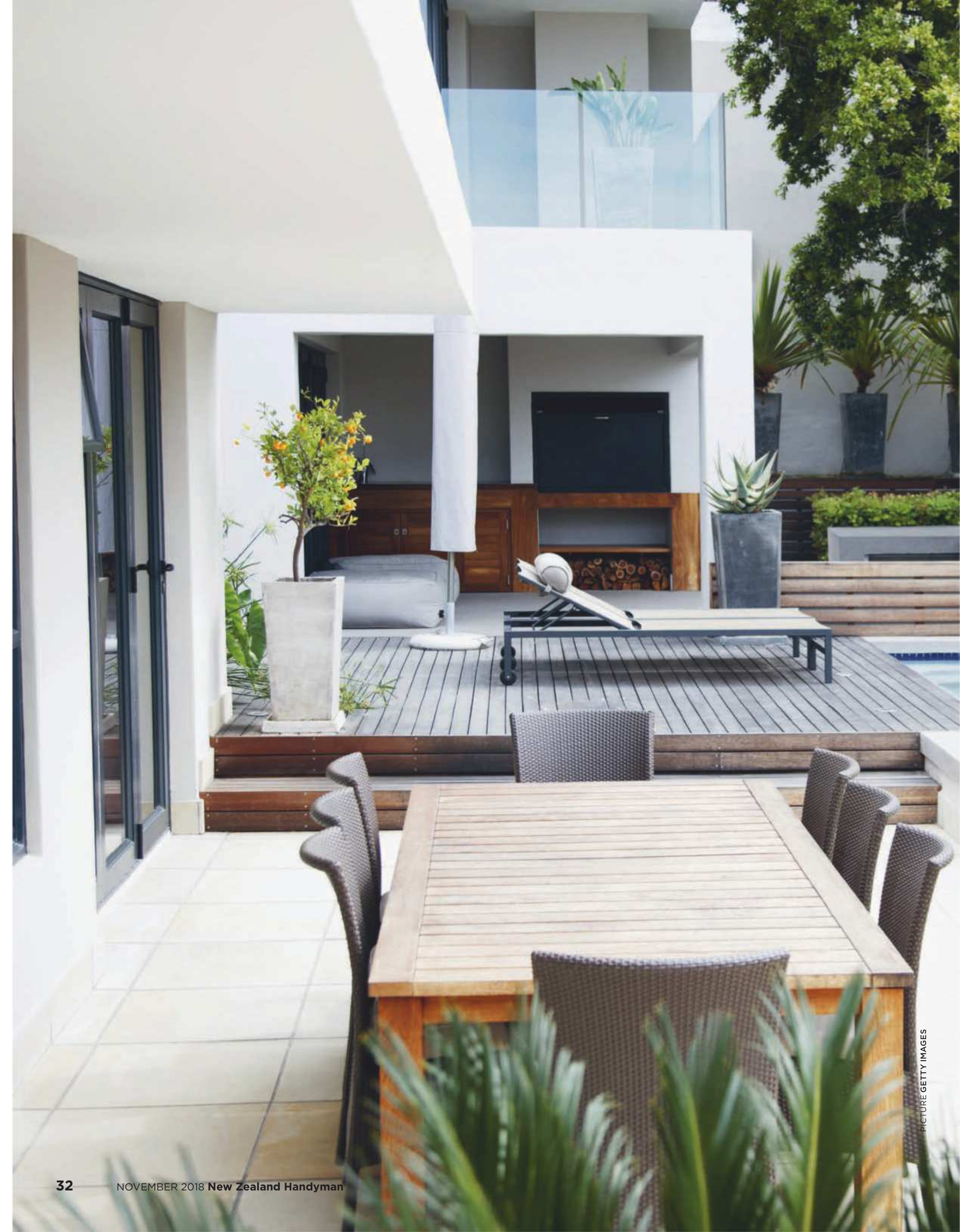
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DIY TIP

When outdoor space is limited, use potted plants to create borders to distinguish different zones in your garden.

THE ART OF THE INTEGRATED GARDEN

While some of us will always have an enduring love for a particular style of garden, Adam says it's more popular these days for people to mix and match.

'People are feeling much more comfortable about simply expressing themselves and not worrying about following a certain style,' he says.

The merging of indoors and outdoors is another big trend.

'As our blocks have become smaller in recent years, so have our outdoor spaces. So what we're seeing now is the complete integration of the inside and outdoor environment,' says Adam.

'The outdoor space is no longer this bolted-on separate area, but a seamless space where you almost can't tell if you're indoors or outdoors.'



Garden areas are seen as an extension of the house

Marissa has noticed a similar trend, with the garden becoming an extension of the house.

'Outdoor furniture is leading the way in this respect, too, and we are seeing the use of outdoor rugs and extensive built-in outdoor kitchens,' says Marissa.

Stackable or bi-fold doors in the kitchen can really open up the space, while servery windows have become popular ways to connect the inside to the outside.

Finally, our landscaped areas are becoming productive pockets of land, with a real focus on growing as much as possible in whatever space we have.

'Space for vegie gardens, even on balconies in high-density living, is becoming popular,' says Marissa.

'People are becoming more sustainable with the design of their outdoor spaces.' ♦

Lines are blurred these days between indoors and outside.



Extend your living space outside for the perfect balance of comfort and nature

WORDS LISA SANDERS

TAKE THE INDOORS OUTDOORS

We live in a great climate. Our night skies are world famous. We are renowned for our love of the great outdoors ... no wonder, then, that the so-called 'outdoor room' has become such a big part of the grand designs of so many New Zealanders.

They may offer a view of the stars, but organising one is not rocket science. An outdoor room can range from a simple bistro

table and two chairs in a cosy courtyard to a house extension complete with roof, walls, fully-equipped kitchen, dining and lounge areas. The most common outdoor rooms sit somewhere between these two extremes.

Ideally, an outdoor room allows you to do the things you love doing inside your house: cooking, eating, relaxing, playing, socialising and even sleeping. Now, where's that day bed? ►

GET CONNECTED

Great outdoor rooms feel like a continuation of your home, even if they're not attached. Ruth Francis, design director of New South Wales company Forever Home Design (foreverhomedesign.com.au), says, 'Modern families like to connect and be together. We want to cook and be able to see everyone and join in, not to be separated.'

'I receive a lot of requests to fix old-style layouts, where the kitchen doesn't connect to the garden or there's a deck and a kitchen, but they're not well linked.'

Even if your outdoor room is under a pergola at the end of the garden, there are ways to connect it to your house. It could be as simple as laying pavers to lead the way and linking its design to that of your home.



THE BIG PICTURE QUESTIONS

Ruth Francis begins any job by asking clients three thought-provoking questions. First of all, what do you love about your outdoor area? Secondly, what annoys you? And lastly, what's missing from it?

'Maybe you love the morning sun, but it gets too hot in the afternoons. You enjoy looking at the trees, but not your neighbours,' Ruth explains.

The other thing to remember is that comfort comes first, just as it does inside. If your outdoor room isn't appealing and comfy, you won't use it.

The other biggie is budget. There are many cost-effective products available, so do your research and work out what you have to spend on each element. You may also need to check building restrictions with your council.

SIZE, SPACE AND FUNCTION

The size of your backyard and purpose of your outdoor room determines its dimensions and what's in it. Draw a plan and test it visually by marking it out on the floor with chalk or tape. Or use a 3D room planning app.

'It's important to have enough space to make your room inviting. People often build decks that are just big enough for the table and chairs with no room to walk around them comfortably,' says Ruth.

When it comes to positioning furniture, Ruth says, 'To be able to relax, most people like to look out at natural surroundings and have their backs protected by something like a wall or fence. It's a primal thing.' ►

PICTURES (TOP) HIGHGATE HOUSE (INSET) FLUID LANDSCAPE DESIGN/TIM PASCOE PHOTOGRAPHY

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WEATHERING THE ELEMENTS

You don't have to cover your outdoor room but it will protect you from the weather and extend your alfresco lifestyle into the cooler months. There are many options for every budget.

Permanent structures

Purse-friendly choices include DIY pergola kits with powder-coated aluminium frames and polycarbonate roof panels, or aluminium pergola gazebos with sliding retractable shades. Roof systems with adjustable open and close louvres are more expensive but also more versatile. Some have sensors signalling them to close when it rains.

The other choice is a retractable roof that moves back and forth along a lightweight tracking system. They can also be fitted to an existing structure. Ruth Francis says she's even used one for a carport. 'They are often cheaper and some of them are really nicely designed.'

Blinds

Blinds attached to permanent structures or combined with awnings provide extra protection and screen out unwanted views. They also make your room cosier in the cold.



Awnings

'Retractable awnings give you the option of sun or shade and don't require a pergola or structure. Plus, they are

Shade sails and umbrellas

A shade sail instantly turns a simple table and chairs into the next best thing to an outdoor room. For about \$100, one stable structure and a couple of posts, you can go under cover in style. You can also buy all-weather shade sails.

Umbrellas are still a super-easy way to provide shade, particularly in small spaces. Choose a cantilevered design that moves around with the sun.

easily retro-fitted,' says Ruth. Folding arm awnings are either crank operated or motorised; the more luxurious brands' models come with integrated heaters and lights. When it comes to smart technology, some awnings are not only fitted with sun and wind sensors but they also work with your automation systems, so you don't have to be home to operate them. ►



After

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LIGHTING THE WAY

The growing popularity of outdoor rooms has led to an avalanche of lighting options. Where do you start?

A well-designed lighting scheme is a balance between functionality and aesthetics.

Adele Locke, director of Mint Lighting Design in Melbourne, says the

first thing to note is that you need a lower level of lighting than inside.

‘If your outdoor area is too brightly lit, you’ll feel like you’re on display when you want to feel relaxed. It’s possible to mix darker zones with slightly brighter areas, but generally the ambience you’re after is cocktail hour in a fantastic bar – an atmosphere that encourages

a relaxing chat. Apart from cooking, there’s no real need for bright lights.

‘It’s important to get the right advice. If you’re renovating it reduces the number of decisions you have to make and ensures the best result,’ she says.

If you don’t get the lighting right, then you’re less likely to want to use your outdoor room.



ADELE'S DOS AND DON'TS TO GET YOUR LIGHTING RIGHT

- ✓ **Do** consider where the light will hit in your outdoor room.
- ✓ **Do** use warm white globes, which are not as stark as cool ones.
- ✓ **Do** keep your outdoor lighting scheme similar to the one inside your house for consistency, but tone it down.
- ✓ **Do** choose lights that won't blind you with their glare. You shouldn't be able to see where the light is coming from. Up and down wall lights are a great option.
- ✓ **Do** your research. Even very low budget lights create a welcoming ambience. Think fairy lights twinkling in trees and festoon lights strung across the garden.
- ✗ **Don't** place a light straight above a barbecue that has a large lid as it can cause shadows when open. Ideally the light should be between the barbecue and the cook. Wall lights work well here.
- ✗ **Don't** use too many cheap diffused down lights as it creates an unpleasant environment. This will result in you not using the lights or your outdoor room as often as you could.
- ✗ **Don't** have ceiling fan blades any closer than 300mm to your down lights as the fan will 'chop up' the light and cause strobing – after all, we want to create a cosy cocktail bar, not a nightclub! ►

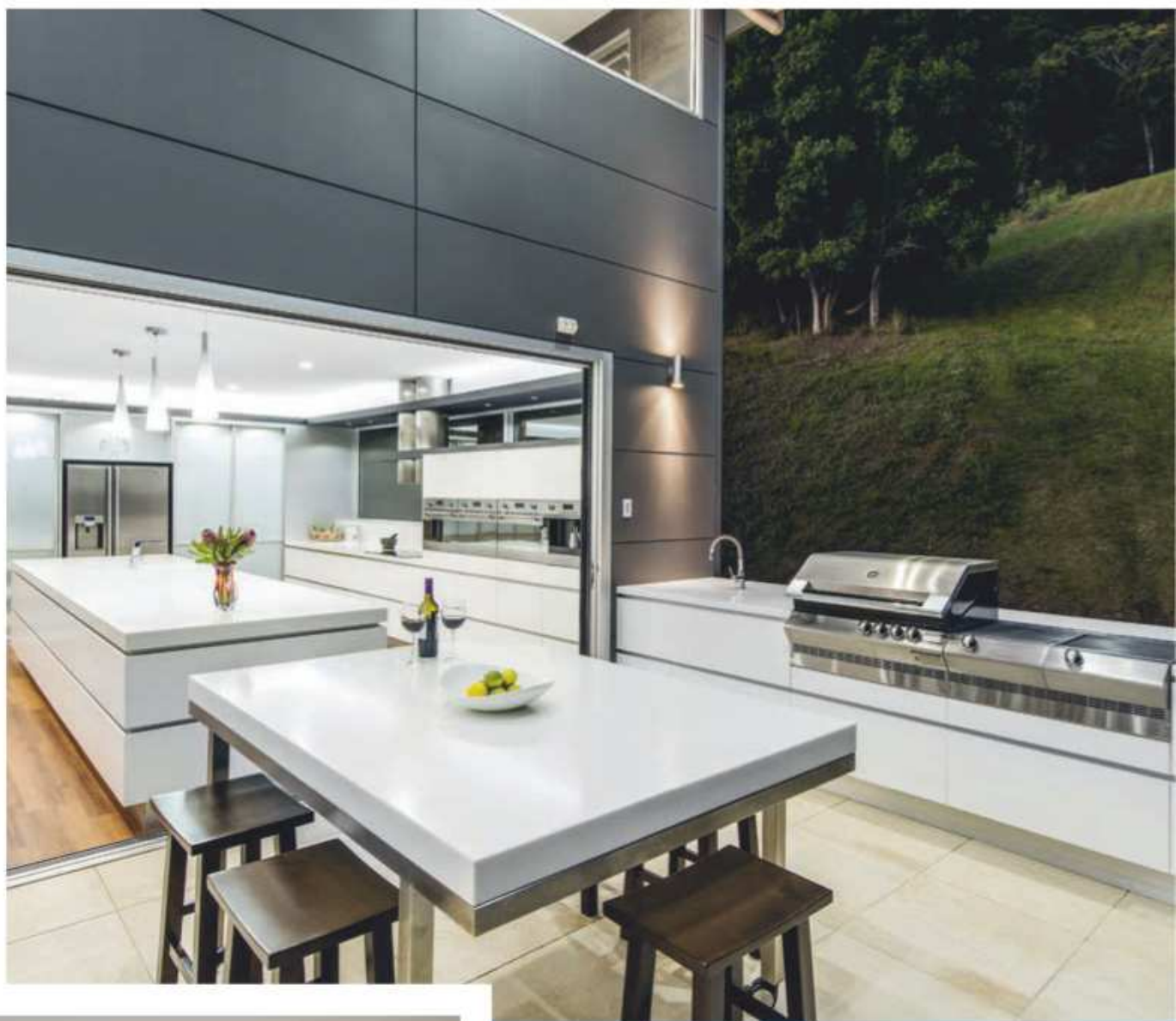


ALFRESCO COOKING

You don't have to settle for the lone barbecue in a corner: as long as you have the space, budget and meet any safety requirements, you can have a fully functioning outdoor kitchen.

How you want to use your kitchen will determine the equipment and storage you'll need: think about fridges, burners, smokers and pizza ovens. Divide your outdoor kitchen into the same areas as an indoor kitchen: preparation, cooking and serving. Then consider the materials to use. Tiles on the floor can become slippery, while decking, paving and other flooring can be coated to protect it from grease and food stains.

Other safety considerations include the use of combustible materials, storage of gas bottles, ventilation and insulation between cooking equipment and timber. It is advisable to have a professional help design and make safe your outdoor kitchen.



Electric radiant heaters, such as the Thermofilm 3200W Classic Electric Outdoor Heatstrip, \$899, offer superior technology and style (heatstrip.com.au). ABOVE The outdoor kitchen rules.

STAYING WARM

Heating extends the use of your outdoor room, allowing you to stay out later and longer. And there are lots of options to choose from.

Electric radiant heaters are affordable, effective and economical to run. They can be easily fixed to a wall or ceiling. There's also a huge range of stylish gas heaters for your patio or tabletop. They're mobile and don't require a plug-in power source, which makes them a no-fuss option.

Fire pits and chimeneas are big hits at social gatherings as they provide ambiance and a different kind of outdoor experience – just add blankets, sticks and several bags of marshmallows. You can even use your chimenea as a mini barbecue! For the elegant look of fire without the burn, check out the gas heaters featuring glass and real flames from brands such as Decofire. ♦

PICTURES (TOP) KIM DUFFIN, SUBLIME ARCHITECTURAL INTERIORS/STEVE RYAN, RIX RYAN PHOTOGRAPHY (LEFT) THERMOFILM

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EASY ACCESS

WORDS DONYALE HARRISON

Invest in your future and make your home accessible





Indoors to outdoors is a smooth transition while raised garden beds are in easy reach.



PICTURES POSITIVE FOOTPRINTS/NICK STEPHENSON



Accessible design also makes economic sense – if you plan to sell later, you'll increase your potential market

It's easy to put off thinking about accessibility around the house.

We treat it as a worry for old age, but chances are your home will one day contain someone on crutches or with limited hand strength.

All the design details that are necessary for the one million New Zealanders living with disability are brilliant for the injured and convenient for all. They'll also help you stay comfortably in your home as you age.

Accessible design also makes economic sense. The same elements

cater for older people, disabled access, young parents with prams, and active families with bikes and scooters. So, if you plan to sell later, you'll markedly increase your potential market.

In New Zealand, the Building Act 2004 defines the buildings that must be accessible for people with disabilities. However, these requirements do not apply to residential housing.

While too few homes are fully accessible, there are many ways you can improve things, from basic fixes to serious revamps. ►



This sustainable home by Positive Footprints was designed with accessibility in mind, featuring flowing spaces and easy in-out access.



For helpful accessories, such as jar openers, and more specialised aids, there are many providers including Life Unlimited Store (lifeunlimitedstore.co.nz), Independent Living (ilsnz.org) and Access Mobility (accessmobility.co.nz).

EASY OPTIONS

The following improvements are simple inexpensive ways to make life easier.

- ♦ **MIXER TAPS** with lever handles are easy to use. Protect young and old hands with temperature-limiting technology that prevents the tap being turned above a safe heat. You may need a plumber to install these, but the expense is paid off in convenience.
- ♦ **GRAB RAILS** positioned near the bath, toilet, or on walls beside short flights of steps help with stability, sitting and standing. They come in a range

of lengths, including ones that can be folded in or out as needed.

- ♦ **LEVER HANDLES** require less strength and dexterity than knobs and are available in models to suit all purposes. Replacing a knob with a lever is a half-hour job, but make sure you know the distance from the edge of the door to the centre of the doorknob opening (backset measurement) so you can match it on the new handle. Some lever handles are reversible and some are designed for installing on the left or right side of a door. If you're renting your



home or just need a temporary bar, there are also suction models that can be installed in seconds.

♦ **RAIL SHOWERS** are ideal for people with mobility problems who may have difficulty standing in the shower. The long hose lets you direct water and they generally come with grab rails. They screw into standard fittings so most can be installed DIY with little effort.

♦ **ADD GRIP** to tiles and concrete floors with a liquid resurfacer. These add invisible layers of 'grittiness' to help keep your balance, and are as easy to apply as mopping.

♦ **ACCESS AIDS** including shower seats, bathtub steps, kitchen steps and more are readily available. Minimising the distance down to the loo or the sofa helps protect bad knees, hips and backs. Raised toilet seats clip onto your standard pan and have handles attached to help you get up and down. As for the sofa: raise it up on blocks that screw into the legs.

♦ **LEAVE SPACE** in passageways and around doors. A metre's width is enough for crutches, a pram, walker or a wheelchair, or to avoid banging into corners if you're just a bit wobbly. Castors make it easy to shift spare chairs, bars, chests and tables out of the way. ►

Editor's picks



Croc Grip Anti-Slip Grit Tape
48 x 5000mm in White, \$13.35.
bunnings.co.nz



Evacare WELS 3-star
9L/min Rail Shower
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Methven Naida
Extended Lever
Basin Mixer, \$229.
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Evacare 300mm Towel
Rail with Grab Rail,
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Evacare 450mm
Knurled Grab Rail,
\$39. bunnings.co.nz



Samsung Keyless Voice
Guided Deadbolt Digital
Door Lock, \$412.90.
samsung.co.nz



A BIT OF A RENO

If you're making a few changes around the house, consider undertaking them with accessibility in mind.

◆ **WIDE DOORWAYS**, halls and walkways look great and allow places for turning if you have a mobility impairment. Cavity sliding doors that

are mounted from above are easy to open and don't add a trip hazard.

◆ **TIMBER FLOORS**, tiles or vinyl provide smooth surfaces without trip hazards. Thick carpet can impede people using wheelchairs, walkers, crutches and walking sticks.

◆ **KITCHEN CABINETRY** that's accessible benefits everyone. Add deep drawers with easy-pull runners to cabinets and you'll never ferret down the back for a pot again. Keep the benchtop separate from the cabinet units below so one or more units can be removed if you need to fit a wheelchair underneath for bench access. Keep the most-used areas such as the sink, bench, dishwasher, fridge and stovetop close together.

PICTURE POSITIVE FOOTPRINTS/SIMON BLACK

MAJOR WORKS

When it comes time for a new build or a significant renovation, you can put all these ideas into practice, but it's also an opportunity to look at the whole house.

Keeping everything on one level, including the entrance, is ideal. Where that's not possible, zone your major living areas all on the ground floor and keep the top level for guest rooms, storage and other lower-use needs. If your multi-level house can't be adapted, consider lifts or stair lifts.

Look at the plans early on and make sure there are regular wide spaces. Wheelchairs, walkers and prams require at least a 1.5m turning circle. Add space in areas where it will be needed, such as bathrooms and the kitchen.

Check your details. Look for non-slip tiles, especially in the bathroom. Position power points and light switches at levels people can reach – you may need to raise them if bending is an issue. Lighting can also help avoid trips, especially near stairs and changes of floor surface. Consider installing motion-sensor edge lighting here.

The garden is just as important. Wide ramps and slopes are perfect for prams, as well as walkers and wheelchairs. Make sure the inclines are manageable and paths are at least a metre wide.

Good paving makes it easy to wheel over a path, and is safer for walking in heels, too.

Motion-sensor lighting along garden paths and entertainment areas will help combat trip hazards at night, while raised beds or tall pots mean you don't need to bend or squat to garden. As a final touch, add easy-opening, self-closing gates. ❖



Wide doorways, halls and walkways look great and allow places for turning

◆ **SHOWERS** are much easier to use than baths, especially fashionable 'wet room' styles with no barriers at the floor level. Add a sitting bench that can double as a low shelf and either no door or an extra-wide door.

◆ **TRANSITION POINTS** make coming and going easier. Add a bench or shelf by front and back doors, both inside and out, where you can put your

bag down and use both hands to open the door, or sit to remove shoes. For people who frequently lose things, the indoor ones are also handy to store everyday items.

◆ **LOWER WARDROBE RAILS** both double your storage space for hanging garments and make it easier to reach from a seated position. Drawers instead of shelves help, too.



Tween to Teen

ROOM REVAMP

Cherie Barber shows you how to make over a bedroom for your maturing teen – without breaking the budget

WORDS AND PICTURES CHERIE BARBER

During the time of growth in maturity and personality from tween to teenage years, how your teen styles their bedroom is just as important in expressing their newfound tastes as the clothes they wear. But this personal style overhaul doesn't have to come at a prohibitive cost.

With a combination of creativity and clever ideas, renovation expert

Cherie Barber shows how it's possible to transform a space in less than a day, and all for just a few hundred dollars.

To transform 11-year-old Ava's pastel-coloured room into a modern, tropical-themed paradise, Cherie recommends upcycling as much furniture as possible.

'Pretty much anything that's still in good shape is a candidate for upcycling,' she says. 'It's just a matter of choosing



Cherie Barber and Ava proudly show off the new study area.



Before



After

A place to work and a place to relax – and guess who's feeling all grown up?



the old timers you'd really like to see reinvented in a fresh colour or design. Look for on-trend retro pieces, bland pine furniture, interesting shapes or just an old favourite that needs new personality. And it's not just timber that scrubs up well. Plastic, metal, fibreglass ... you can pretty much find a paint for any surface.'

When it comes to planning the perfect teen bedroom, Cherie says it's essential to provide a space to study and to store all the associated paraphernalia, such as books and computer gear.

'If space allows, it's great to include a lounging area where they can hang out with friends – and install blackout blinds for the endless hours teenagers spend sleeping!'

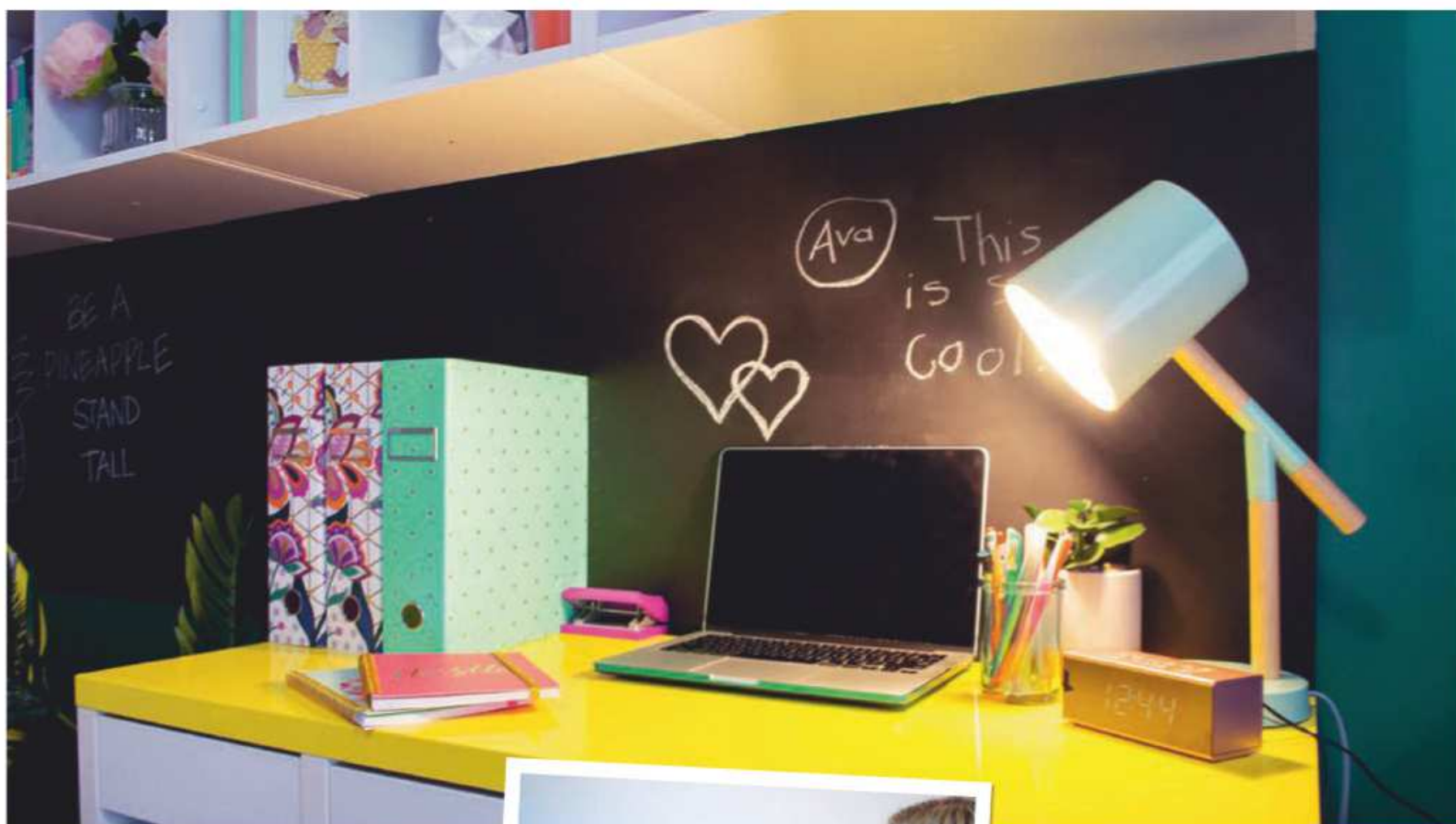


Here Cherie explains her step-by-step process to achieve the ultimate tween-to-teen bedroom makeover.

1 SINGLE TO DOUBLE

Kicking off the bedroom overhaul was the all-important move from a single to a double bed. After finding an old metal bed frame at a local garage sale, Cherie spray painted it using a fuchsia two-in-one primer and paint to inject some colour. This type of paint is easy to apply and bonds well to a multitude of surfaces. ►

A double-bed frame picked up from a garage sale gets a facelift.



2 ADD A TROPICAL PUNCH

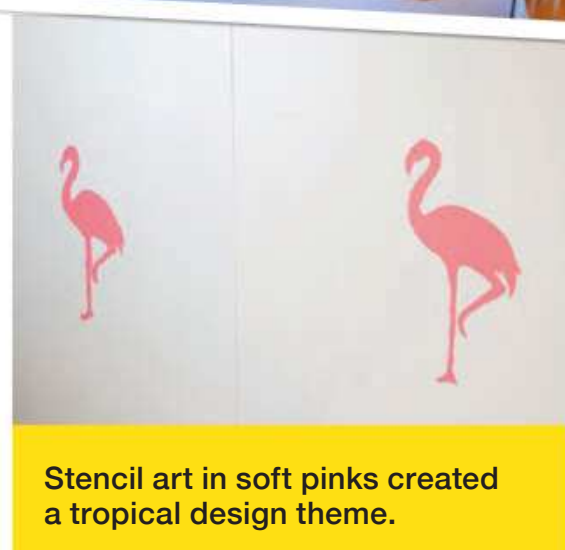
Cherie then brought the tropical theme to Ava's existing desktop and chair by spray painting them a lemon yellow colour.

'The most effective way to avoid overspray when spray painting is to be as targeted as possible with your painting,' advises Cherie. 'For best results, hold the can approximately 15-20cm from the surface and apply in sweeping, steady strokes, overlapping the previous stroke by about 50%. Safeguard all your surrounding surfaces with drop sheets or big pieces of cardboard. A great tip is to use a large cardboard box as a spray booth for smaller items.'

As an easy way to enliven Ava's wardrobe doors, Cherie painted on pink flamingo shapes using stencils she found online. 'The pretty pink tone is ideal to further integrate the tropical theme.'

3 MESSAGE BOARD

To help with their busy schooling and social lives, teenagers need somewhere to scribble notes. Chalkboard paint provides a hard-wearing finish that transforms surfaces into a fun and functional surface for writing. Cherie picked up a piece of melamine and



Stencil art in soft pinks created a tropical design theme.

coated it with black chalkboard paint to create the perfect message board.

4 THE FINAL TOUCHES

By upcycling Ava's pre-loved pieces, Cherie managed to stick to the budget yet create a completely new space fit for any teenager. With the addition of a range of tropical-themed decor items such as bedsheets, wall pictures and pineapple cushion, Cherie's stylish and affordable

Clever respraying gave the desk new life in lemon yellow.



bedroom upgrade was completed.

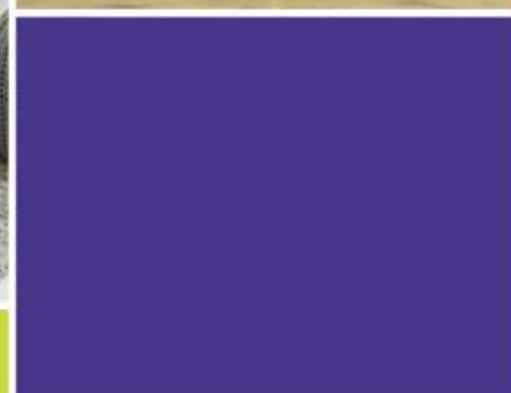
'When combining bold colours, my number one tip is 'less is more'. Go with a painted feature wall or a striking wallpaper, rather than immersing a whole room in a punchy colour your teen might soon tire of,' Cherie says. 'Complementary colours harmonise. Restricting your bold colours to accessories like duvet covers, cushions and art means they can easily change with your teenager's fickle tastes.' ♦



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UPCYCLE A

Drinks Trolley

Transform a second-hand drinks trolley find into a chic entertainer's delight

PROJECT AND PICTURES MELISSA DARR

Get more DIY from Melissa
Follow her blog thewhimsicalwife.com

Before



After

From drab to absolutely fab in a few simple steps.

Picked up for a bargain from an online classifieds page by blogger Melissa Darr, this tired old drinks trolley was dated and slightly daggy but the bones of the piece had serious potential.

All it needed was a simple clean-up and coat of paint to make it shiny and new again, while the addition of mirrors onto the tray surfaces transformed it from good to gorgeous. Melissa used a local business to custom-make the mirrors to fit.

This project is perfect for the novice DIYer to complete over a weekend and requires minimal materials.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Grade 0000 steel wool
- Masking tape
- Metal primer spray paint
- Bright gold spray paint
- Mirrors (custom-made)
- Window & glass silicone

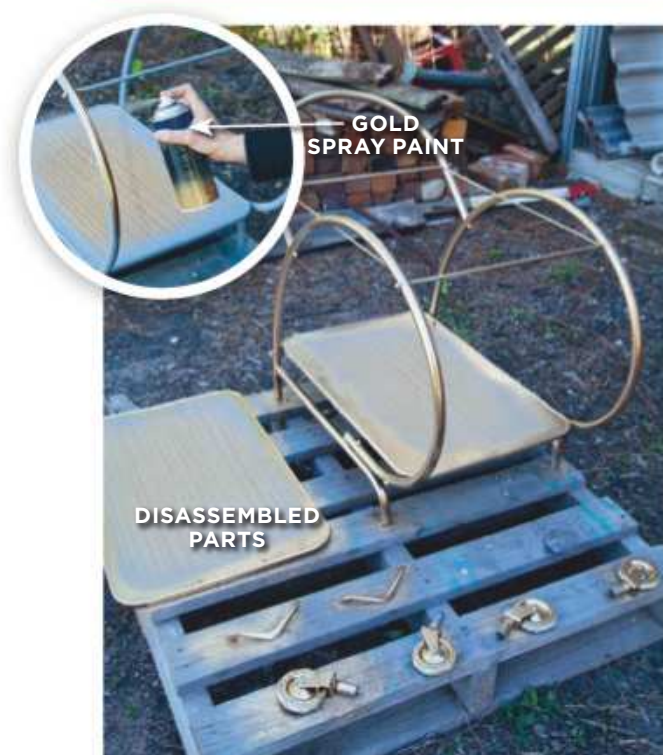


1 Prepare to paint

Scrub the metal frame of the trolley using the steel wool to remove any grime or rust. Wipe the whole trolley with a damp rag to remove any dirt or dust. Remove the handles and wheels and tape up any areas that need protecting from paint.

2 Paint the trolley

Set the frame and accessories on a flat, well-ventilated surface, preferably outside where overspray won't cause a problem. Spray all metal surfaces using the metal primer. Let this dry for an hour before repeating with a second coat. Again, allow to completely dry.



3 Reassemble the trolley

Once the primer has completely dried, apply two coats of gold spray paint, allowing at least an hour's drying time between coats. Once all pieces have dried, reassemble the trolley. Wipe over the trays with a damp cloth.

4 Fix the mirrors

Apply small amounts of Parafix Window & Glass Silicone to the tops of each tray. Line the custom-made mirrors up over the top of the tray and gently press down, making sure the mirror is evenly set onto the tray top.

5 Accessorise

Repeat this process with the second mirror on the second tray. Wipe off any finger marks with a soft cloth. Place your as-new drinks trolley in the perfect entertainers' corner of your home. Fill with your favourite drinks selection. ♦

REVAMP THE DECK

Upgrade the boards and balustrading to overhaul a small deck

WORDS AND PICTURES ADAM WOODHAMS

A timber deck is one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to expand or create an outdoor living space DIY.

Once you've added or extended a deck, maintenance is fairly basic, but there does come a time when the boards need more than just their annual cleaning and oiling.

Looking after decking boards will certainly extend their lifespan but timber deteriorates over time, making replacement inevitable.

This job is easier than you may think, even if you've never laid decking before. The key is to measure up accurately, then lay the boards systematically, securing them to the existing joists.

MAKE IT NEW

This neglected elevated deck had become a desolate and unused space.

It was also dangerous because of the condition of the balustrading and several rotten boards. The timber decking and balustrading had to be completely removed and replaced to

make the deck safe and usable.

Measure up to buy new decking, allowing for spacing between boards.

If possible, order decking boards long enough to fit the required length without joints. Lengths up to 5.4m are readily available, but boards 6m long can often also be ordered.

For this project, treated pine decking boards were used, and finished with exterior oil in a natural tone.

The new balustrade was built by securing 2400 x 900mm black fence panels to the timber posts. The Protector Aluminium flat-top panels cost \$75 each (protectoraluminium.com). ►



Cabot's Oil-based Natural Decking Oil, \$68.50 for 5L. cabots.co.nz

DECKING FASTENERS



Timber decking boards are secured using galvanised or stainless steel screws or nails.

For treated decking, it's critical you use the right nails or screws. This is because some treated timber corrodes conventional fasteners more quickly than other treated pine or hardwood timbers.

TIP Drill pilot holes for fasteners in hardwood decking or joists.



Before

After

New decking boards team with metal balustrading. A privacy screen was also added to turn the balcony into an outdoor retreat.

LAY NEW DECKING



1 Remove the old boards

Start by removing the existing boards. Ideally, you want the nails or screws to come out when you lift the boards. On this deck, a wrecking bar had to be hammered under each board to loosen the tight nails.

TIP Take care not to damage the joists.



2 Paint the posts

If you plan to paint, you'll find it much easier to do this before the new decking is laid. We painted the timber balustrade posts with an exterior low-sheen paint in a charcoal shade to complement the colour of the new balustrade panels.



3 Secure the new boards

Working from the outside edge in, attach the boards with two fasteners at each attachment point, using a large chisel as a spacer for even gaps. Drill pilot holes to prevent splitting.

TIP When joining boards, the shortest must be secured to at least three joists.



4 Install the balustrade

When the new decking boards have all been secured, install the new balustrading panels. The mounting brackets come with the right screws for securing to metal. If securing into timber, you will need 65mm x 12g hex head timber screws.



5 Oil the decking

Clean any sawdust or dirt off the decking boards. Then seal the boards with a quality decking oil, applying it evenly with a long-handled lamb's wool applicator pad.

TIP We chose to use Cabot's Oil-based Natural Decking Oil.

BUILD A PLATFORM



To make working on a deck safer, even at ground level, join four of the old boards with screws for a work platform. Use it to safely inspect the joists and bearers for damage and make repairs, and to remove any protruding nails. ❖



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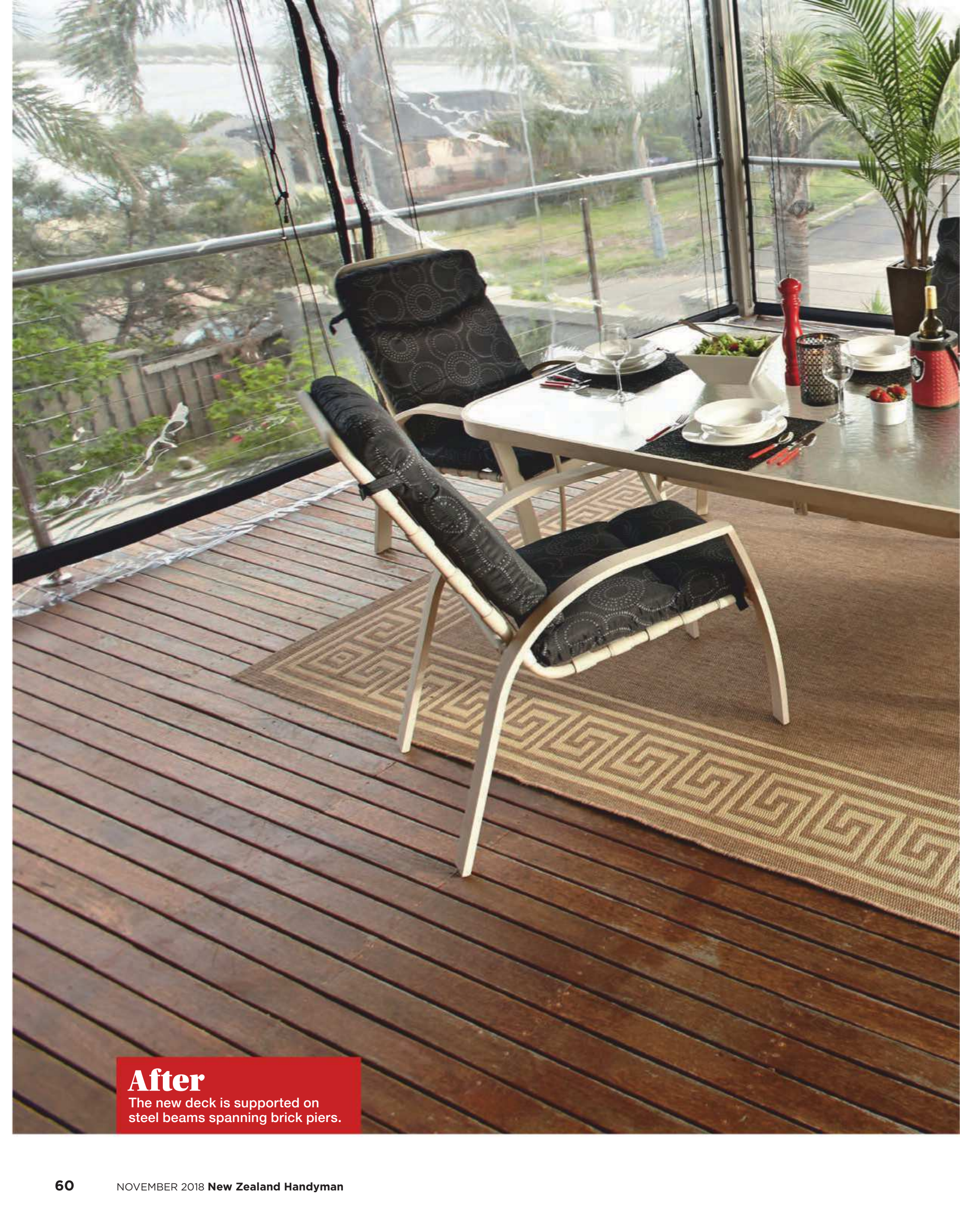
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After

The new deck is supported on steel beams spanning brick piers.

RAISE a deck

Adding an outdoor room to this coastal home opens up the views

PROJECT FRANK GARDNER MAIN PICTURE STUART SCOTT

The original design of this home featured a narrow balcony that didn't take full advantage of the sweeping bay and mountain views.

'We love eating alfresco, so we decided to knock down the balcony and build a deck big enough for the whole family to enjoy our beautiful outdoor setting,' says home owner Frank.

Engineer-specified plans, including dimensions, heights and material sizes, were drawn to scale, then submitted to council for development approval.

FOOTING THE BILL

He knew the deck could blow out the reno budget, so Frank worked with tradesmen to help save on labour costs and sourced some of the materials, such as the bricks, from recycling yards.

'The money we saved went towards a beautiful set of cedar French doors between the family room and the new deck,' says Frank.

To prepare the site, the old 1200mm wide balcony was removed, then the deck area was set out and squared up at ground level.

Concrete footings were poured, then brick piers were erected to carry the weight of the deck, with steel

beams positioned on top and tied to the piers using threaded rod.

A stringer was bolted to the floor joist stubs of the original balcony to support the new joists, which were then fitted inside the steel beams and braced with blocking.

To finish, hardwood decking boards were laid and a new stainless steel wire balustrade was installed. ►

OFF WITH THE OLD

The old balcony was supported by the house floor joists cantilevered at the front of the building.

First the balustrade and decking were removed, then the joists were cut back to within 10mm of the plastered brickwork on the house wall.

'The remaining joist stubs were used as solid attachment points for installing the new stringer, instead of securing it with Dynabolts to the soft dry-pressed brickwork of the house,' says Frank.

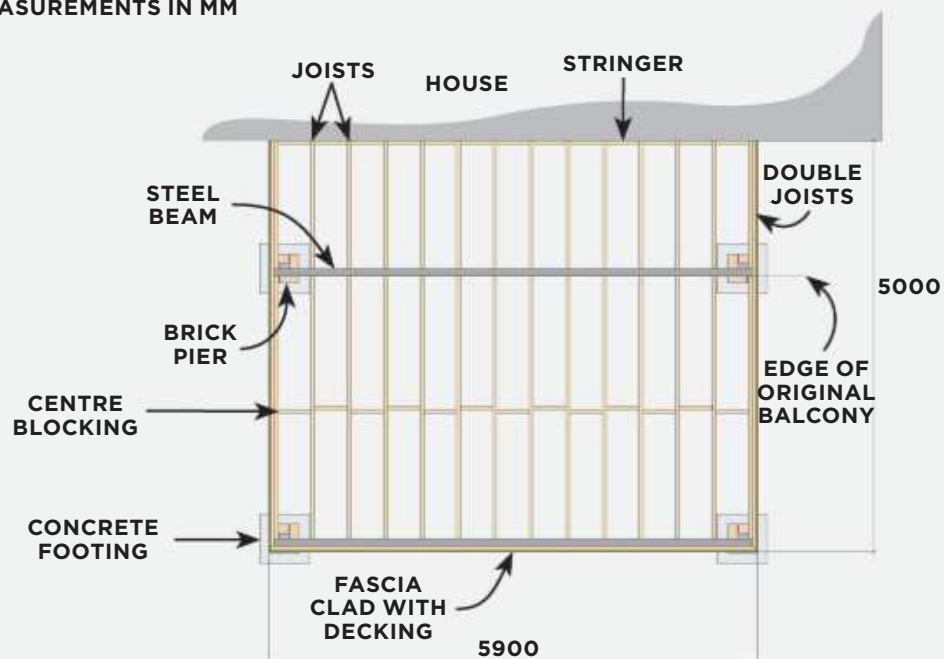
Before





The pier height allows the deck to be level with the house's upper floor.

DECK FRAMING MEASUREMENTS IN MM



SETTING OUT THE DECK

'It was important to have a seamless transition from the house to the deck across the door sill,' says Frank.

To achieve this, the new joists were positioned flush with the top of the remaining floor joist stubs.

'It was easy in the end, as we simply aligned the new joists with the old because they were spaced at perfect 450mm centres,' says Frank.

Plumb lines were established from the outer joist stubs down to ground level and a 5.9 x 5m stringline setout was pegged in position, then the footing locations were marked.

ATTACHING THE STRINGER

The joist setout was marked on the stringer and notches cut to fit over the joist stubs, then recesses were drilled for coach screw heads and the stringer was secured flush to the wall.



1 Cut notches

Using a circular saw, cut notches to a depth of 10mm at the back of the stringer between the setout marks. Use a chisel to square up the notches and remove the waste.



2 Drill the recesses

Turn the stringer over, then use a 25mm spade bit to drill 15mm deep recesses to accommodate the coach screw heads on the front side between the joist setout lines.



3 Fix the stringer

Prop the stringer in position, making sure the notches are slotted over the joist stubs. Drill pilot holes into the joists, then make secure with stainless steel coach screws.

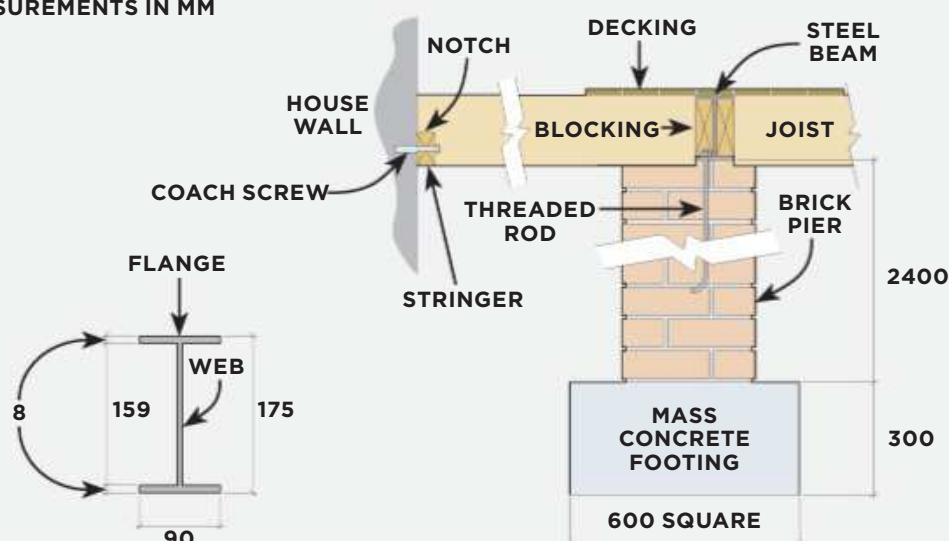
The engineer-designed footings were dug using a shovel and fencing bar, then once the council inspection was complete, they were filled with just over half a cubic metre of concrete.

A steel float was used to level the concrete just above ground level, then a bricklayer was employed to build the four 350 x 350mm piers up to a height 195mm below floor level.

'I mixed the mortar myself and also lugged the bricks to help save on labour costs,' says Frank.

M12 threaded rod was embedded in the centre of the brick piers to tie down the steel beams.

SUPPORT STRUCTURE MEASUREMENTS IN MM



STEEL BEAMS

Two hot-dipped galvanised steel beams were positioned on top of the brick piers to carry the deck load. At either end of the beams, 15mm holes were drilled for the threaded rod.

Says Frank, 'I held my breath as the beams were lowered into place.

'Amazingly the holes aligned perfectly and the rods slotted smoothly through the holes.'

The beams were then secured in position using washers and nuts.

TIP The rod was cut to length using an angle grinder and metal cutoff wheel. ►





Before being lifted into position, the joists were notched at ground level.

ADDING THE JOISTS

'This was the most time-consuming part of the job, as 30 joists had to be prepared before securing,' says Frank.

The top of the joists had to be level with the top of the steel so the decking could remain flush across the beams. This meant notches needed to be cut in the ends before they were secured.

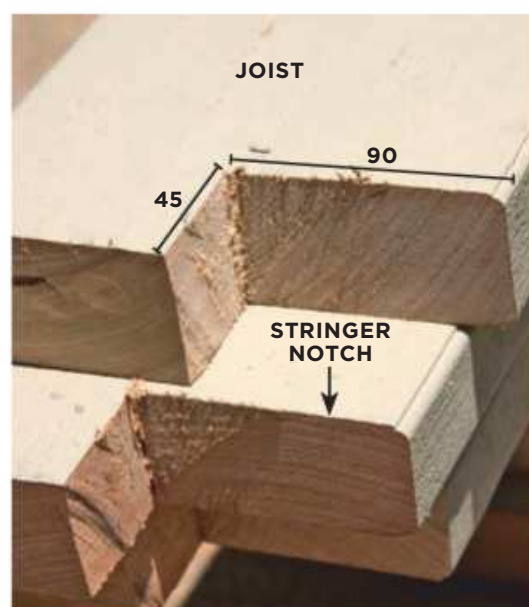
Once the joists were in position and supported by the base flanges of the beams, they were then aligned with the setout marks.



The 450mm joist setout was marked on top of the stringer and both steel beams.

PREPARING THE JOISTS

The short joists needed a single notch at one end to fit over the stringer, and two notches at the other end to fit inside the flanges of the I-shaped beam, while the long joists needed double notches on both ends.



- 1 Cut notches for stringer**
At one end of both of the shorter joists, mark 90mm in from one edge and 45mm from the end, then cut out notches using a handsaw.



- 2 Prepare the beam notches**
Clamp five joists together and cut 40 x 10mm notches on the top ends and 40 x 25mm notches on the base ends, then chamfer the corners using a planer.



- 3 Attach joists to stringer**
First skew-nail through the sides and through the top into the joist stubs. Attach joist hangers to bring the joints to full strength. ►

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BRACING THE JOISTS

'To prevent any lateral movement of the joists in the beams, 140 x 45mm timber blocking was cut to fit between each pair of joists,' says Frank.

Three 5mm clearance holes were drilled through the vertical web of the beam, then the blocking was secured

using 40mm x 8g stainless steel screws through the clearance holes.

To attach the blocking on the other side, 10mm holes were drilled in the blocks to provide access for drilling clearance holes through the steel. The block ends were also skew-nailed to the joists using a nailgun.



The spacing between the joists was measured to fit the blocking.



A sliding mitresaw was used to cut the blocking to fit between the joists.



Clearance holes 5mm in diameter were drilled through the steel web.

SECURING THE FRAME

Once the framework was complete, it was time to cover the exposed beam as well as add bracing and blocking for maximum strength and rigidity.



1 Add the fascia

Treated pine was clamped to the outside of the front beam and held with Ramset nails before being secured from the reverse side with screws. Decking boards were then secured to it with nails.



2 Cross-brace the deck

For further stability, metal strapping was crisscrossed corner to corner and tightened using a tensioner. This bracing was secured to the joists using 40 x 2.8mm galvanised clouts.



3 Secure centre blocking

A centre row of blocking was secured perpendicular to the joists. Every second block was offset 45mm so the blocking could be secured through the sides of the joists using nails.

LAYING THE BOARDS

To clad the framework, hardwood decking boards were chosen.

'We started laying the boards at the side of the steel beam closest to the house, working our way back to the house and then out to the front of the deck,' says Frank.

Three boards were laid down at a time and secured to the joists, with pilot holes drilled in the board ends to prevent splitting.

Holes were drilled through the top of the steel beams to secure the boards to the blocking.

The balustrade was secured, then the boards were left for six weeks to release the tannins, and the deck was oiled to finish.



CHECK the steel beam for straightness before using it to bring the boards into line.



LAY OUT and secure three rows of decking boards at a time.



DRILL clearance holes in the steel beams to secure the decking boards to the blocking. ♦

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Bespoke BATHROOM on a budget



After

Timber finishes on the vanity and framing transforms the room.



Before

DIY specialist and furniture maker Natasha Dickins upgrades a bathroom by adding custom timber features

Bathrooms more than 20 years old tend to feel dated, regardless of how clean they are. With this entire house getting ready for a major refurb, this area needed a temporary spruce-up to make it more usable for a year or so.

A budget of about \$1000 and a couple of DIY days were all that was needed to transform it into a more practical space – and add specially handcrafted timber elements for warmth and interest.

The makeover plan was to address several problem areas.

- ♦ The shabby vanity was too big for the space. Replacing it with a smaller, more elegant table with a shiny new sink and mixer makes it modern again.
- ♦ The odd placement of the mirrors was explained when they were removed from the wall to reveal a former window. One mirror was repurposed with a simple timber frame and rehung.
- ♦ The hidden window cavity was the perfect size for display shelving to make up for losing the vanity drawers and shower caddy while continuing the handcrafted theme.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Timber
- Mitre saw, handsaw
- Drill/driver
- Bits, countersink bits, Forstner bit
- Galvanised screws, adhesive
- Galvanised brackets
- Bar clamps, F clamps
- Timber filler
- Sandpaper, sanding block, orbital sander
- Varnish, mini roller, paintbrushes
- Painter's tape
- Anti-mould paint
- Bathroom fittings

BUILD A *vanity table*



For this project, Tasmanian oak has been chosen. It's a hardwood that can easily handle moisture if it's sealed well.

Two oak panels of 1200 x 600 x 18mm thick was more than enough timber to cut a tabletop of 850 x 450mm, a splashback of 850 x 200mm, and a base shelf of 750 x 350mm. The frame is made out of 7m of dressed 65 x 19mm oak. When assembled it's 750mm wide and just under 400mm deep.

This vanity table is designed to come together like a flatpack, with the top attached using brackets and the base shelf simply resting on the base rails so it can be easily removed. Use a countersink bit when predrilling all screw holes.

Have the table completely finished, with plenty of time for the varnish to dry, plus the basin, plug and mixer ready for the plumber to install.

TIP This table is just over 820mm high, which is lower than a kitchen bench but standard for a bathroom worktop.



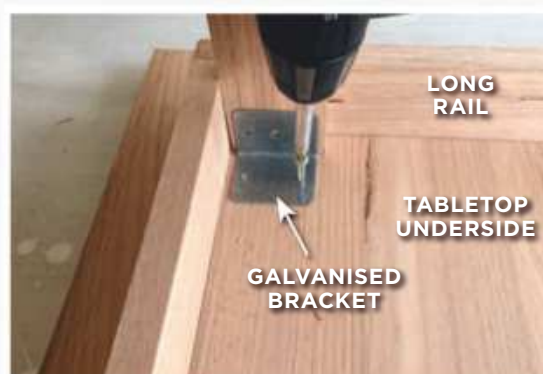
1 Make the apron

Cut two pieces of timber to 750mm and two pieces to 360mm, then butt the short sides against the long ones. Predrill (countersink) two holes into each join and then secure with 40mm screws.



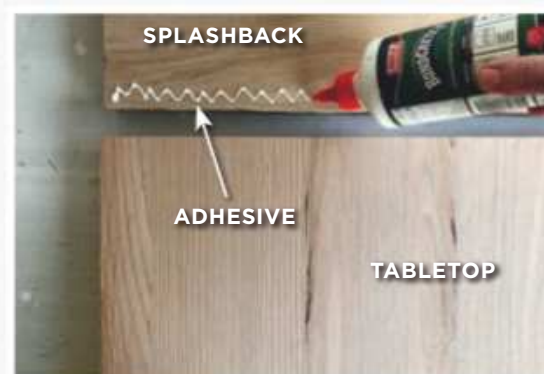
2 Attach the legs and rails

Cut four legs to 800mm and two base rails to 322mm. Position the legs inside the apron, against the long sides. Secure with two 30mm screws. Position the base rails inside the legs, 300mm from the floor, and secure with 40mm screws.



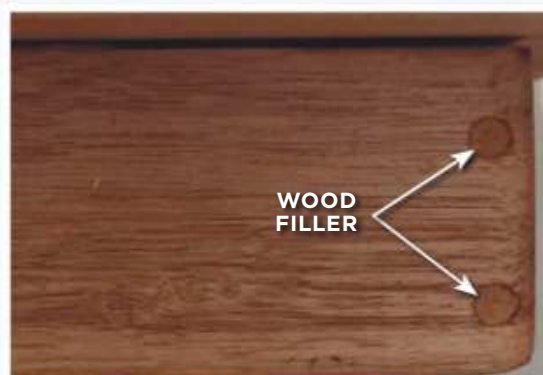
3 Attach the top to the frame

Turn the pre-cut tabletop upside down to position the frame 50mm from the front and sides and flush with the back, using four 50 x 50mm galvanised brackets with 15mm-long screws to attach the top.



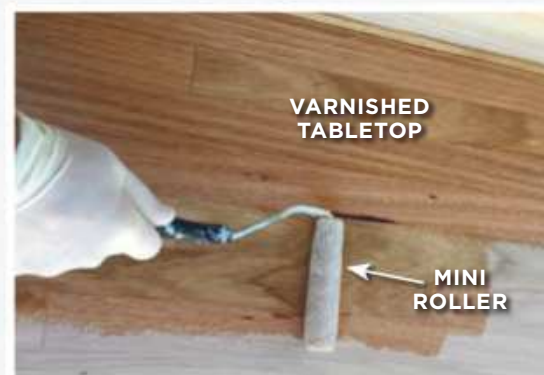
4 Secure the splashback

Dry fit the splashback to the back edge of the tabletop. Countersink along the base edge, then apply Bondcrete adhesive, clamp and secure using 40mm screws. Let dry.



5 Sand all over

Cover the holes with Timbermate Wood Filler in Oak and let dry. Drop in the base shelf to sit on top of the base rails. Sand all over with 180-grit abrasive paper, rounding over the edges and corners; then finish all over with 240-grit.



6 Apply the sealer

Remove dust with a damp cloth, then apply three coats of Monocel Clear Satin Gold Marine Grade using a mini roller with microfibre cover, leaving to dry between coats. Finish with a fourth coat over the tabletop, splashback and base shelf for extra protection. ►

REPURPOSE A *mirror*



1 To take down a large wall-mounted mirror, pop the screw caps off and remove the screws with a drill, working upwards from the base and calling in an extra pair of hands to prevent it from falling. **TIP** Keep the mirror intact. This mirror had a slimline aluminium frame with support brackets at the back.

2 Choose a round-edge moulding wide enough to cover the aluminium frame, such as the 40 x 8mm Tasmanian oak round-edge coverstrap moulding shown. Then cut the timber to fit around the perimeter of the mirror, keeping it flush with the inside of the existing frame. **TIP** Use butt joints at the intersections as it adds more strength to the frame than mitre cuts.



Before

3 Working on a flat surface, apply Bondcrete adhesive to the moulding. Position it over the existing frame, then clamp and leave to dry.

4 From the back, check the edge of the mirror to determine the position of the screws. From the front, countersink through the timber and aluminium frame, avoiding the mirror.

5 Position the mirror in the bathroom, checking it will attach to studs on at least two sides, then secure it to the wall using 60mm screws. **TIP** Cover the holes with Timbermate Wood Filler in Oak and leave to dry.

6 Use painter's tape to mask around the mirror, then lightly hand-sand over the filler and around the new frame using 180-grit abrasive paper.

7 Use a mini roller with microfibre cover to apply three coats of Monocel Clear Satin Gold Marine Grade, leaving to dry between coats.



Apply adhesive and clamp the border over the existing frame.

MAKE RECESSED *shelving*

Removing the mirrors revealed a hidden window cavity, which was the perfect spot to install display shelving.

The dimensions of your shelving will differ, but the key is to buy lengths of dressed pine that will sit flush to the bathroom wall once plywood backing is installed in the cavity. In this case, 90mm pine fitted with a 7mm-thick plywood back. The shelf is finished in the same specialised anti-mould paint that we used on the bathroom wall for a seamless look. The timber shelves shown are made from 65 x 18mm Tasmanian oak with 25mm oak dowel supports, both sealed with Monocel Clear Satin Gold Marine Grade varnish.



After

PICTURE AGENCY/PHOTOGRAPHER



1 Make the frame

Measure up a frame to go inside the cavity. Countersink and secure with two 40mm screws for each join.



2 Make the backing

Use the frame to mark out and cut the plywood backing, then paint the outside back to protect against mould.



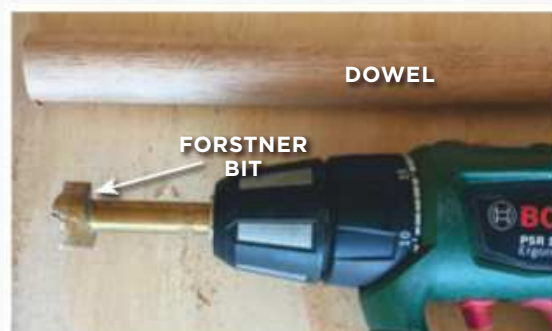
3 Attach the backing

Attach the backing to the frame by countersinking and securing around the edges with 25mm screws.



4 Design the shelves

Devise the setout of your shelves, cutting three lengths of timber to fit snugly inside the frame. Working from the base, one section at a time, cut the dowel supports to fit as you go.



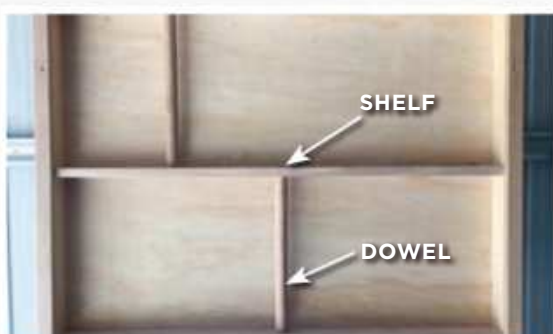
5 Secure the first shelf

Use a 25mm Forstner bit with a drill to make 4mm-deep recessed holes to hold the dowel at the bottom and top. Apply adhesive, then position the shelf above, fitting it snugly into the frame.



6 Secure the second shelf

Cut the dowel to fit the next shelf, make the recessed holes at the top and bottom, and position the shelf without adding adhesive. Measure the top dowel support to fit, make the recessed holes, apply adhesive and assemble.



7 Square the shelves

Measure and adjust the shelves as needed until square. Allow to dry.



8 Varnish the shelves

Remove shelving from the frame. Lightly sand all over. Apply three coats of varnish.



9 Paint the frame

Paint the frame with the same paint as the bathroom walls, applying two coats.



10 Reattach the shelves

Reposition the shelves in the frame, attaching the shelves to the frame with 40mm screws, measuring both ends from the base to ensure they're straight.



11 Attach the frame moulding

Cut 30 x 19mm picture frame moulding to fit around the frame. Countersink the screw holes, varnish, allow to dry, then attach to the frame with 25mm screws.



12 Finish off

Position the shelving in the cavity, securing it to the framework using 60mm screws. Cover screw holes with filler, sand and touch up with wall paint. ♦



After

Arina and Craig's future is bright in their newly styled bedroom.

ENSUITE SALVATION

The Living Room's
Barry Du Bois
creates a new
master suite, with
all the extras

Arina and Craig's brick veneer house was built back in the 1960s – so it was always going to require a lot of renovation work to improve it and make it more functional. Parents to baby Lara, they plan to expand their family, and they continue to enjoy visits from family and friends, so the most obvious change was to add a second bathroom to the house.

Their current master bedroom was built as an extension by the previous owners, and was joined to the main house by another smaller room, which

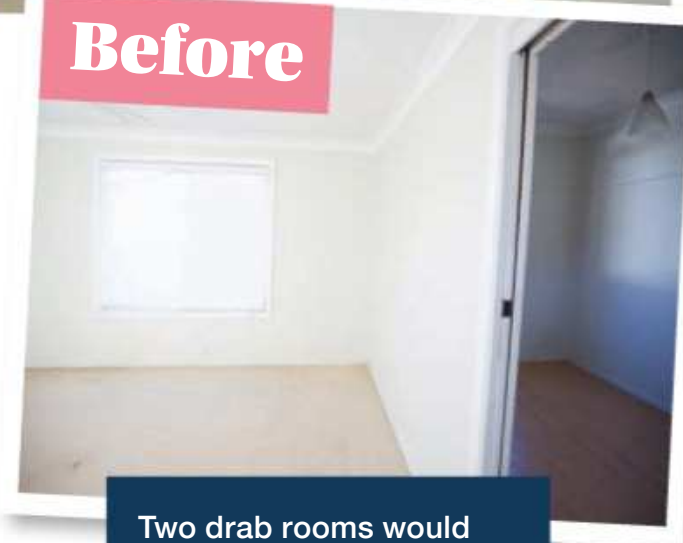


they had been using as a walk-in wardrobe. They knew that they could better utilise the space if they turned the two rooms into a master suite, but they were struggling to come up with a way to do it. Barry Du Bois and *The Living Room* team came to the rescue.

THE PLAN

Barry's idea was to use this space to its full potential – starting by dividing the makeshift 'wardrobe' into a brand new ensuite on one side and a new walk-in

Before



Two drab rooms would turn into one master suite.

wardrobe with plenty of storage on the other. He would also add a storage island in the revamped master bedroom.

Fortunately the house sits on piles above the ground, making plumbing in the new bathroom much easier.

The first job was to rip up the floor to install the new plumbing. Once the ensuite floor was put down, Barry erected a three-quarter high wall to separate the ensuite and walk-in. Leaving the top of the wall open allows light to filter through the two spaces.

THE ENSUITE

'Your best friend in a wet area like this ensuite is natural light and ventilation and the best way to do that is with a skylight,' explains Barry.

The VELUX skylight Barry installed is solar-powered and has in-built sensors that will automatically shut the window if it starts to rain. Not only does it help



After

The skylight and vent in the ensuite keeps things light and airy.

to create extra light and airflow, it also prevents any mould build-up, keeping the bathroom more hygienic.

Classic white tiles were selected for the ensuite walls to reflect the light and make the room appear bigger, while large floor tiles meant less grout lines for a seamless finish. Barry chose a floating vanity to add to the illusion of space, while modern black tapware stood out against the white and complemented the grain of the timber vanity top.



The solar-powered VELUX skylight is easily controlled.



Barry builds the bathroom from the ground up; Kyal installs the wardrobe system.

THE BEDROOM

In the master bedroom, the walls and ceiling were painted in the same shade of white to give the room a contemporary look.

Barry then reconfigured the bedroom and built a storage island beyond the end of the bed to avoid having furniture pushed up against walls, which can really close in a space.

‘What I wanted to do was give you an opportunity to maybe have a TV stand here, which I’ve wired up, but also more storage space,’ he told Arina and Craig.

‘This creates not just a transient zone but also a very usable space.’

THE WARDROBE

Craig and Arina’s makeshift wardrobe had taken up too much space. A new wardrobe with sliding doors tidied the area up, while also providing an entranceway into the master bedroom.

The Flexi Storage Sliding Wardrobe was perfect for this job. It was easy to put together, but Barry called in DIY expert Kyal Demmrich to assemble it in the chosen location.

And that was it: job done. An entire new master bedroom with ensuite and walk-in wardrobe. Thanks, team! ♦

HOW TO LAY

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STEPPING STONES

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WHAT YOU NEED

- Stepping stones
- Wheelbarrow
- Cement
- Spirit level
- Brickie's sand
- Goggles
- Gardening gloves
- Mask
- Measuring equipment
- Stringline
- Posts
- Mallet
- Spade
- Hammer
- Spray paint

By installing a stepping stone path, you add an attractive formal walkway, while protecting your lawn or gravel path from foot traffic. It is a simple DIY project you can easily accomplish in a day, with just

a few basic tools, the stepping stones and cement. Paving stones are usually 400 x 400mm square and come in a selection of colours and tones so you can choose the product that best matches your house and landscaping style.

1 2 3



1 Dry lay stones

Place the stepping stones on top of the ground to work out their position. Determine the correct spacing by placing the stones one stride's length apart. Measure an equal distance on each side of the stones to get a centred, even appearance for the path.



2 Make a stringline

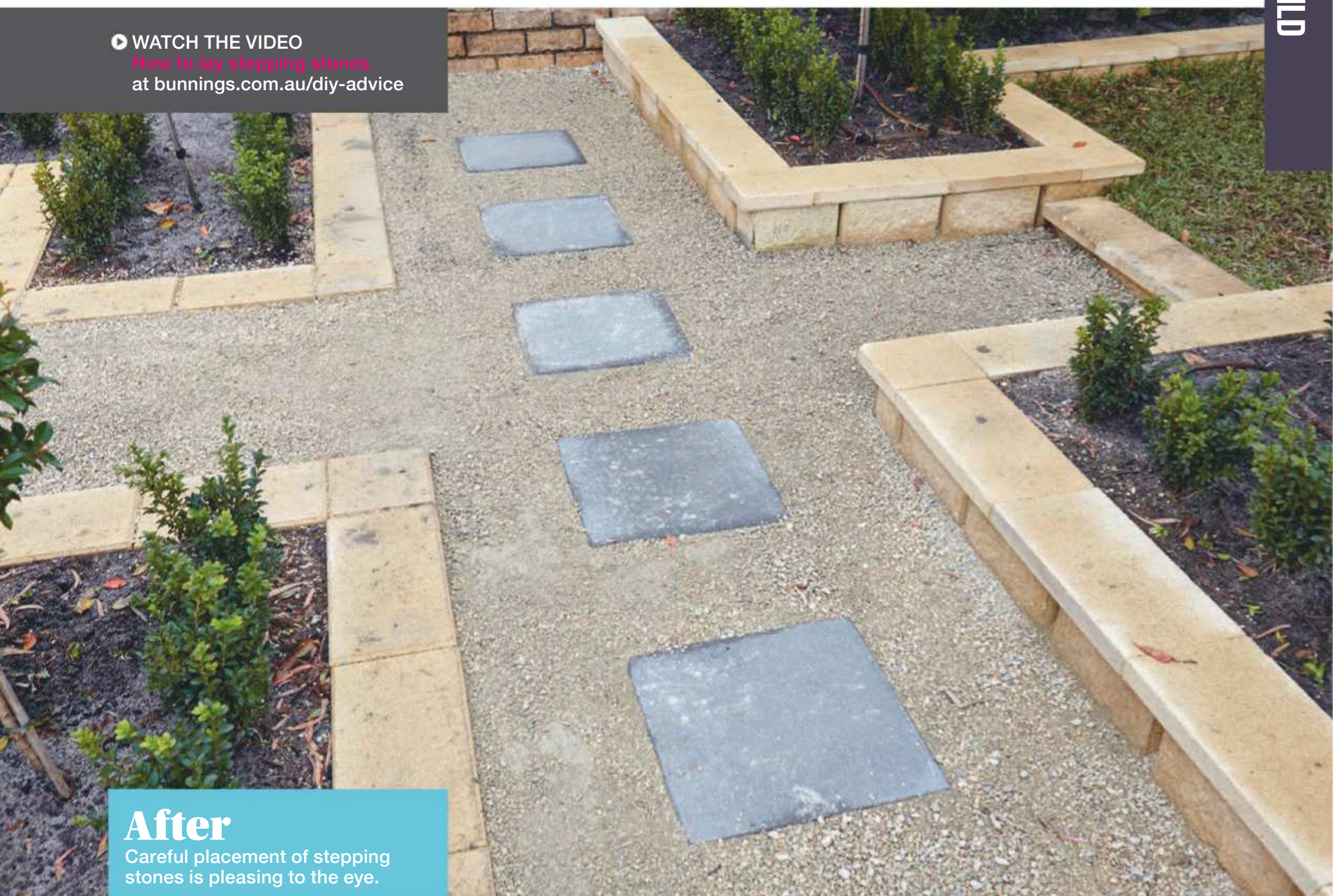
Line up a post with the edge of the stone at the end of the path. Hammer it into the ground with a mallet. At the other end, hammer another pole into the ground, on the same line. Tie your string to one post and roll it out to the other pole and tie the string to that pole.



3 Mark up the stones

Shift each stepping stone to align with the string so that they form a perfectly straight line. Mark the positions of your stones by spray painting the ground around the corners of each stone, being careful not to spray the top of the stone.

▶ WATCH THE VIDEO
How to lay stepping stones
at bunnings.com.au/diy-advice



After

Careful placement of stepping stones is pleasing to the eye.



4 Dig the holes

Move the stepping stones and dig holes between the marks. Make each hole a bit deeper than the height of the stone. Don safety gear. Mix mortar in the wheelbarrow using 5-parts sand to 1-part cement. Use enough water for the mortar to stick to the spade.



5 Place mortar in the holes

Using your spade, place enough mortar in the holes so that the stones will be level with the ground. Put each stone back in place making sure it's lined up with the stringline. Use the spirit level to check levels in both directions and tap the stones into place.



6 Backfill around the stones

Cover the mortar and edges of the stepping stones by backfilling around all of the stones using the gravel that you removed when you dug the holes. Remove posts and stringline. Leave the area to dry for at least 24 hours before you walk on the stepping stones. ♦

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Take outdoor living to the next level with this Nebraska Cement Dining table, from Mimosa, ideal for enjoying the long summer evenings, \$1,999.



Add a touch of class to outdoor living with this Hartman Koh Samui Corner Lounge Setting, \$1,999.



Add a protective shield from dirt and stains with Endure interior paint Matt White, 10L \$145



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A DRY AND HEALTHY HOME PRIZE PACK

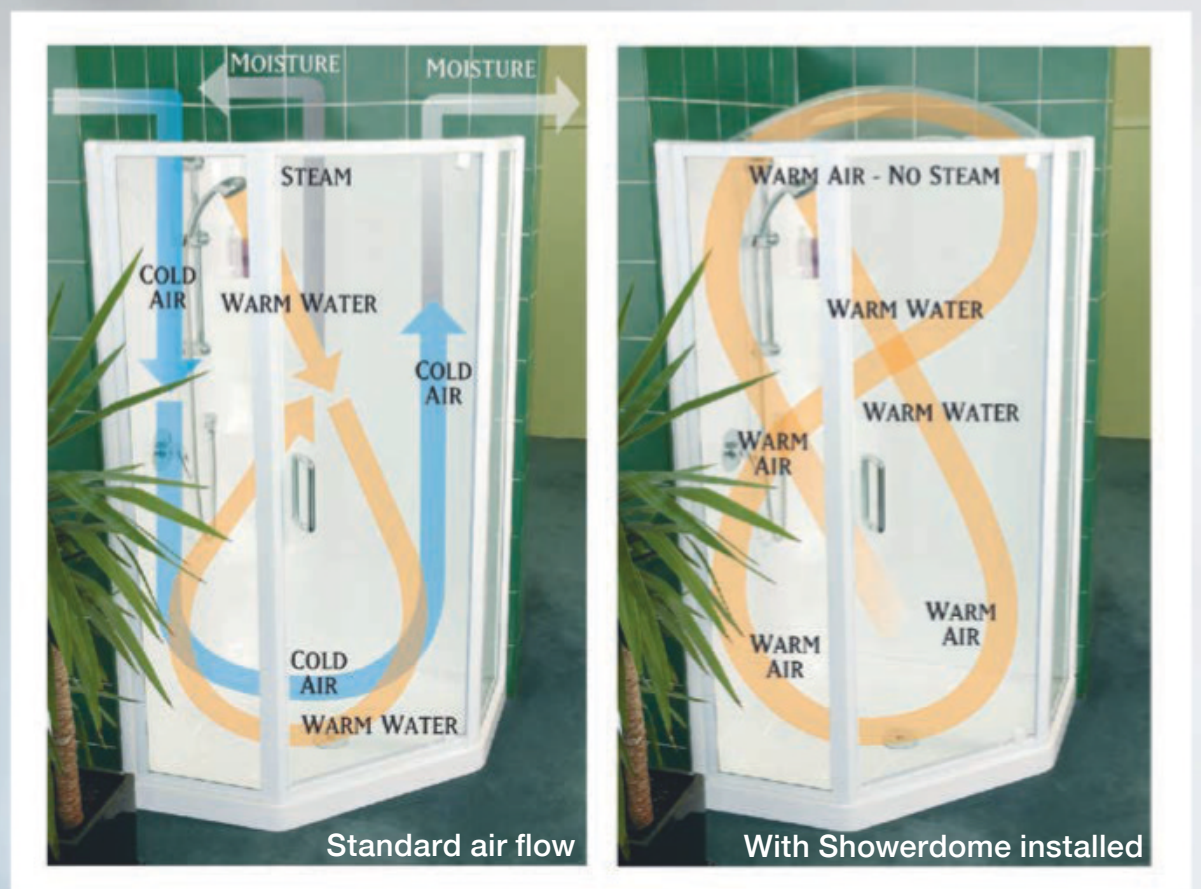
Handyman New Zealand is giving away one DIY Unovent Home Ventilation System Kitset with 3 outlets and Unovent PollenGuard Helix Filters, valued at \$1,365, and one DIY Showerdome kit, valued at \$299

A HEALTHIER HOME COULD BE YOURS!

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BUILD A PALLET PLAY TENT



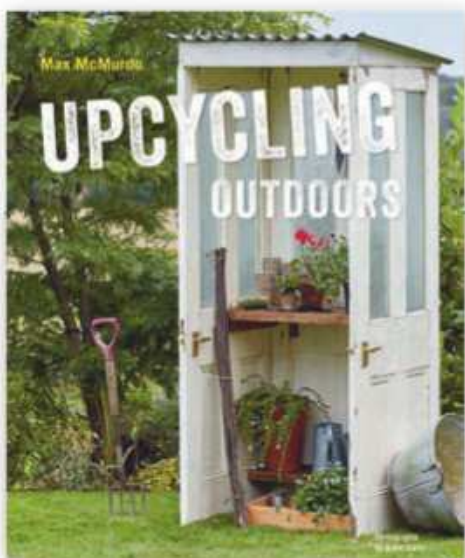
Upcycling expert Max McMurdo shows how to build a fun play tent out of recycled pallets

Upcycling isn't just for adults – in fact being creative with junk really brings out the child in me! When I was growing up I'm pretty sure I spent my entire school holidays building dens.

The joy of this design is that you can create a magical space in your garden or a den for the kids using just two identical pallets, some fabric or a bed sheet, a hammer and nails. The joy of using pallets the same size is that the wood is already the right length so you don't even need to cut anything! That means

you can get the kids involved. What could be better than helping your children create their own teepee out of reclaimed materials and then watching them making it their own, enjoying the great outdoors with their friends.

Of course, if you're a big kid like me you might consider creating a larger, adult-sized teepee using more than two pallets and a couple of bed sheets. To add a real magical sense of fairytale glamour, dress with lots of scatter cushions, some soft throws and a string of battery-operated lights. ►



This is an edited extract from *Upcycling Outdoors* by Max McMurdo (Quarto UK, \$40). Photography by Brent Darby.

WHAT YOU NEED

- 2 pallets of the same size
- Old bedsheet or large length of fabric





1 Break up a pallet

Separate the wood on your pallet using either a pallet breaker or a hammer and breaker bar. Remove the nails by hammering them back through (you may have to straighten them first).



2 Mark A frames

To create a safe, strong structure you will need an A frame at each end. Mark a spot one pallet-board width down from the top of a board to create a good overlap.



SAFETY TIP

Make sure that all old nails are removed and any really rough pallet wood is sanded smooth.

3 Attach end pieces to base

Line up the two marked spots and nail the pallet pieces together to create an A frame for each end. Nail the bottoms to the corners of the pallet base.



4 Attach top rail

To give additional strength to the structure and to support the fabric cover, nail a cross bar into place where the A frames cross.



5 Secure cover

Measure, mark and cut your fabric to size. Throw over the cross bar and secure with nails at the bottom, pulling the fabric taut.



6 Make cosy

Dress the interior with cushions and throws. Fairy lights can add glamour. ❖

MAKE A PALLET PHOTO FRAME

DIY enthusiast and owner of Le'Pallet Enterprise, Rylie Mayfosh, is an expert at making items out of pallets. Here, he shares his tips and a simple photo frame project.

'This is a great little DIY project that's so straightforward you can try at home with the kids,' he says. 'It will leave your friends saying, 'Wow ... how?''

WHAT YOU NEED

- Laser-printed photo
- Pallet timber
- Mod Podge Photo Transfer Medium
- Mod Podge Matte Finish
- Plastic sheet or scrap surface
- Foam brush
- Rubber roller or card
- Soft cloth, damp cloth
- Orbital sander
- Fine-grit sandpaper
- Scissors, string



1 2 3



1 Print your photo

Print your photo using a laser printer (not inkjet printer) onto regular document paper (not photo paper). Be sure to print it in reverse so that when the photo is transferred, it won't come out back-to-front. This is especially important if it has writing on it. If you don't have a laser printer at home, any printing store can do this for you. Cut around the photo.



2 Make the pallet frame

Measure your photo and add an extra 30mm to each side to give you the dimensions of the pallet frame. Cut your pallet pieces to length using a drop saw, then apply timber adhesive along the edges and secure together. Add two thin strips of bracing to the back to make the frame sit off the wall. Give your frame a light sand with an orbital sander to ensure there are no lumps and bumps.



3 Apply the photo transfer

Place the photo right-side up onto a plastic sheet or scrap surface. Use a foam brush to spread the Mod Podge Photo Transfer Medium all over, leaving no gaps or excess paste. Place the photo right-side down on the pallet frame, using your hand to work it from the middle out towards the edges. Remove any bubbles using a rubber roller, card or soft cloth. Allow to dry for 24 hours.

HOW TO DISMANTLE A PALLET

Depending on the finish you are going for, there are a few ways of dismantling a pallet.

- To give it the original rustic look, you can leave the nail heads in by using a reciprocating saw, cutting down the side of the pallet where it attaches to the beams.



- You can also use a circular saw. Cut down both sides just inside the nail line, then prise off the slats with a claw bar.



- My favourite dismantling method is using this pallet-buster I had made up. It's not only easy on my back (I have recently undergone major surgery), but it keeps the whole plank from splitting when pulling up nails, making every piece usable.



RYLIE'S PALLET PROJECT TIPS

- ♦ **FIND** suitable pallets around building sites, industrial areas, at Bunnings and on TradeMe. Remember the rule, though: if it's not yours, ask before taking.

- ♦ **CHOOSE** the right pallets for the best results. Look for pallets that are clean and free of stains or spill marks – you don't know what may have been spilled on them!

- ♦ **FINAL TIP:** Just get out there and have fun. The rustic pallet look has become popular over the years and, with plenty more years ahead, the right project is waiting for you. ♦



4 Remove the paper backing

Place a damp cloth over the paper. When the image starts to appear, rub your thumb in a circular motion over the damp paper, gently peeling it up to reveal the image on the timber. Work slowly to avoid peeling through the image. If necessary, change to rubbing with a soft cloth if this is more effective in removing the paper without scratching the image.



5 Finishing details

To finish the project, use fine-grit sandpaper to sand back the edges of the image for a rustic look. Using a foam brush, seal the image with Mod Podge Matte Finish and leave to dry. You can leave the timber edging raw or play around with some rustic stain effect. Add a piece of string across the back and you're ready to hang this unique pallet photo frame on the wall.

Handyman

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As the days get longer and the weather turns balmy, we're starting to enjoy our outdoor spaces with greater frequency. A strategically illuminated backyard, balcony or deck is not only much more inviting and aesthetically pleasing, it's also much safer and makes for a more secure home.

New technological advances mean the range of outdoor lighting has never been greater, as smartphone-powered LED systems and solar options offer user-friendly methods to transform your dark yard into a beautifully lit, entertainer's paradise.

All in the planning

When starting an outdoor lighting design from scratch, careful and proper planning is essential.

'Always map out a plan for your garden before you start, ensuring that key features are highlighted, and important pathways are well lit,' says Mark Harries, an Australian lighting expert. 'Utilise path lights along walkways, and deck lights are the perfect option for patios or staircases.'

Mark advises that special consideration be given to the positioning of lights to achieve the desired mood and practicalities.

'Point spotlights away from people's eyes, so they reflect off a wall or a tree and bring features to life. Make use of highly reflective surfaces such as painted walls so that the maximum amount of light is dispersed.

'Position your lights to deliver soft lighting across the area where people will gather. You may also choose to concentrate light on any working area, such as the barbecue or where people will be eating.'

SAFETY TIP

While solar lights and 12V lights can be installed DIY, 240V lights must be installed by a licensed electrician.

Spotlight on style

To illuminate outdoor features, use one of the new 12V lighting systems to strategically position lights around your yard. Like many products, outdoor lights have embraced the tech age, with Bluetooth technology allowing many of these systems to be powered remotely from a smartphone app.

Floodlight it

Floodlighting is important in many situations around the home and garden. LED floodlights offer plenty of illumination for a fraction of the running cost of halogens.

Mercantor has just released a new range of floodlights through Bunnings. These stylish LED lights come in 20W, 30W or 50W in the MX101 series (1700, 2550 and 4250 lumens respectively), and 20W and 30W for the MX101 sensor series.

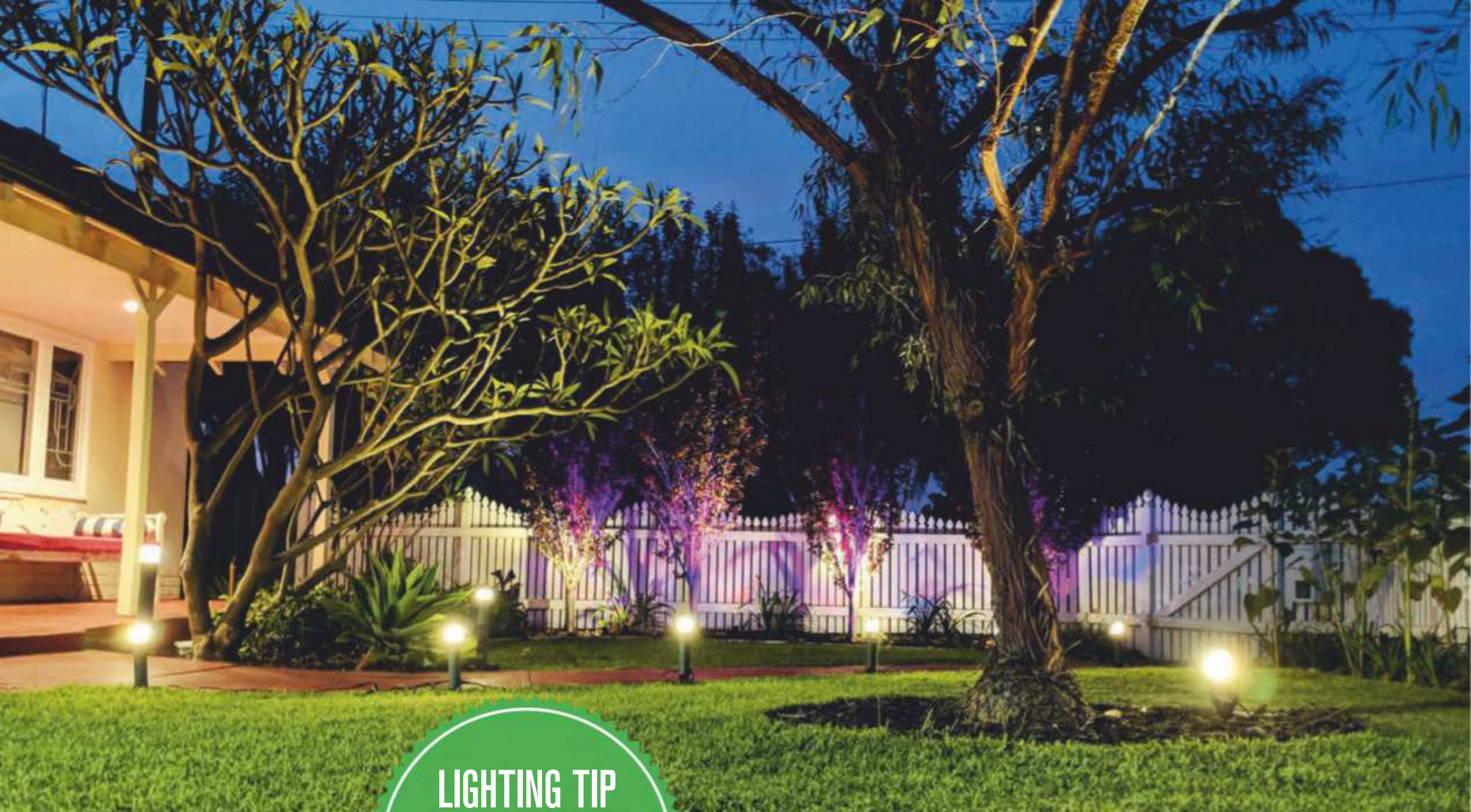
They are available in either black or white and feature a polycarbonate cover and aluminium housing for strength and durability. A 'jack bracket' for a 180° tilt angle is included, as is an additional long bracket for corner installation. A 60cm cord and plug are also packaged.

These IP65-rated lights feature a 120° beam angle. ►

Mercantor MX101 series
LED floodlights, normal
range from \$35, sensor
range from \$50.



A stunning garden is created with easy-to-install spotlights.



LIGHTING TIP

Add sensor activated lights near access doors for home security.

Lighting types

For spaces that have multiple uses, consider light layering. This means you'll be able to easily change your lighting from practical to atmospheric with the flick of a switch. Whatever lighting style or mood you're after, they will be a combination of three different types – ambient, task or accent.

♦ **AMBIENT LIGHTING** should illuminate the entire space. In an outdoor area this could include a ceiling light, the light from a ceiling fan, a large spotlight, several downlights or well-spaced wall lights.

♦ **TASK LIGHTING** does just what its name suggests – it illuminates areas where you are performing a specific task. For example, this may be a clip-on barbecue light, downlights above a servery or a pendant hanging over an outdoor dining table.

♦ **ACCENT LIGHTING** provides a bit of drama and interest. These lights highlight the features that you want to stand out and can make any outdoor

space feel warm and inviting.

When creating accent lighting, look for beautiful trees that can be uplit, areas of lush green or colourful foliage, or features of interest such as a sculpture, fountain or pond that can be highlighted with spotlights.

Colour your world

When choosing your lighting scheme, don't limit your colour palette to various shades of white. Coloured lights are an effective way to create different effects and moods in your yard. Yellows and

reds add warmth, green boosts the colour of your plants, and white or blue can make an area seem fresh and cool.

'White lights are the best option for visibility, and coloured lights are best for adding character,' says Mark Harries. 'Coloured lights can have a red, green and blue LED, which means they can make any colour on the spectrum. Plus, some of these newer lights come with an app that has a great selection of pre-programmed special effects to make the lights change over time. The possibilities are endless.'



Divine decks

Decks are hubs for entertaining and relaxing, which means suitable lighting is essential to continue enjoying your deck after dark. For a professional-looking finish, install deck lights underneath railings or in the decking boards.

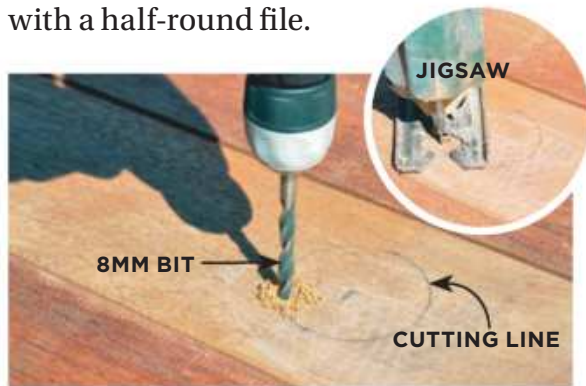
Fitting deck lights

These deck lights are powered by a solar panel, although the method of installation is similar for all deck lights.

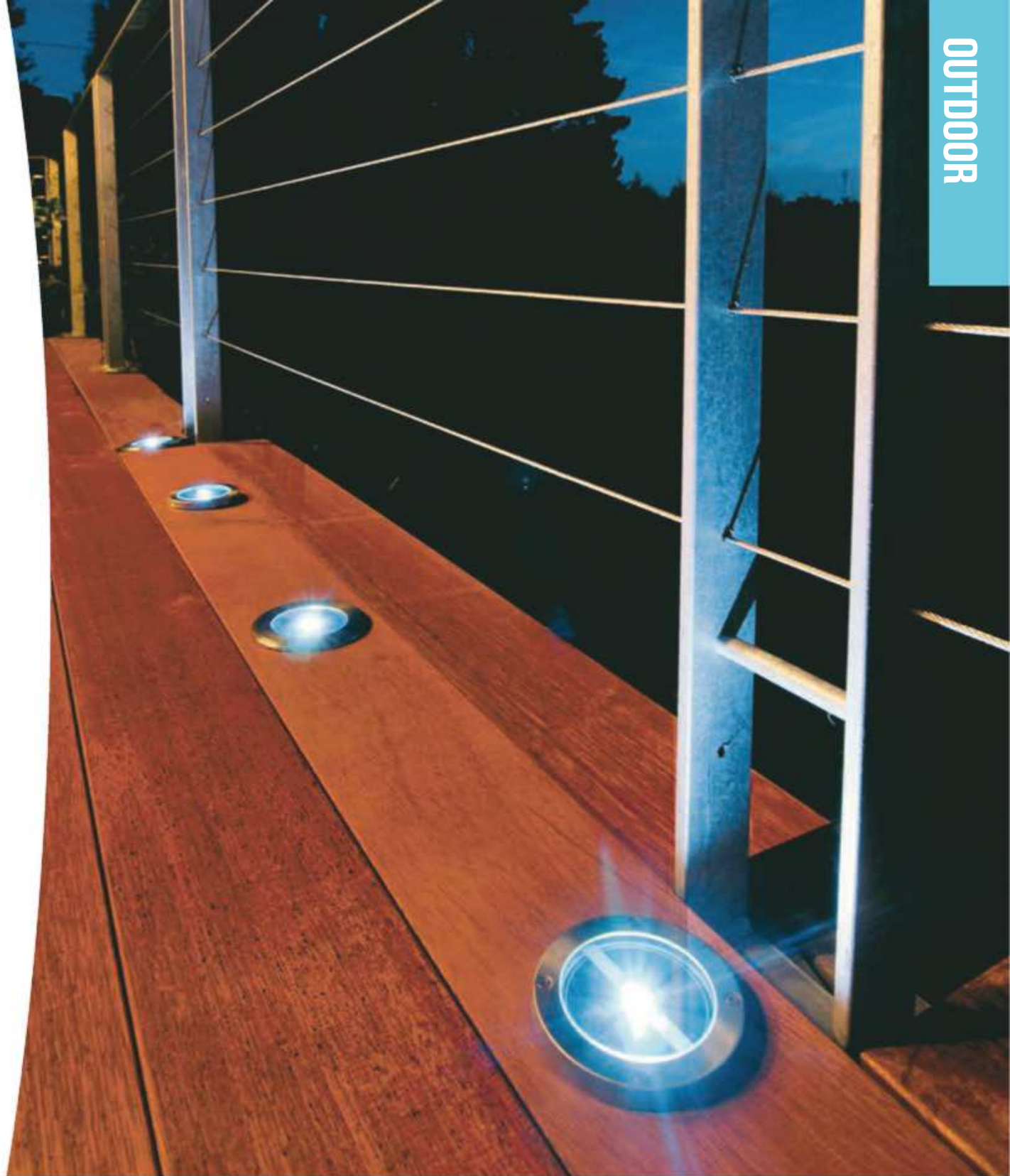
1 Mark the setout by positioning the solar lights along the deck in the centre of the board at equal intervals, then draw around the base of each light.



2 Cut the hole by drilling a starter hole in the deck with an 8mm bit, then cutting along the line with a jigsaw. Clean up any rough edges with a half-round file.



3 Switch on the lights by pushing the button underneath, then slot them into the holes. The sensor will turn on the lights automatically at night.



DEALING WITH MOISTURE

Factor in the elements when working with lights outside.

♦ **OUTDOOR BULBS** sometimes burst because of moisture or changes in temperature. Turn off power at the main switchboard, using a circuit tester to check.

To remove the bulb from the light, reach into the metal base with needle-nose pliers and open them as fully as possible, twisting to remove the bulb.

♦ **EXTENSION CORDS** for outdoor use are well-insulated and waterproof but the socket is not. It is essential to waterproof the

connection between the plug and socket for safety.

To waterproof where the two lines connect, the easiest option is to encase the plug and socket in a box designed to house and safely insulate the connection.

♦ **CHECK THE IP RATING** of your outdoor lighting. The first digit in an IP rating refers to how dustproof a fitting is; the second digit refers to how waterproof a fitting is. High-end outdoor lighting will be IP rated 67 or 68, however a rating of 44 will be suitable for general outdoor use though preferably not exposed directly to heavy rain. ♦

KEEP YOUR *Garden Cool*

Clever ways to manage the garden so it can cope with hotter days and drying conditions

WORDS CHERYL MADDOCKS

Beautiful warm weather, glorious sunny days, lazy lunches and evening barbecues are what summer is all about.

It's a great time to be enjoying the outdoors, but it's also a tough period for your garden. If you're sweltering in the heat, then your plants will also be feeling the effects.

Gardens are instrumental in cooling the surrounding environment, so it's essential to keep plants alive and looking good in really hot, dry conditions. Here, we show you how.



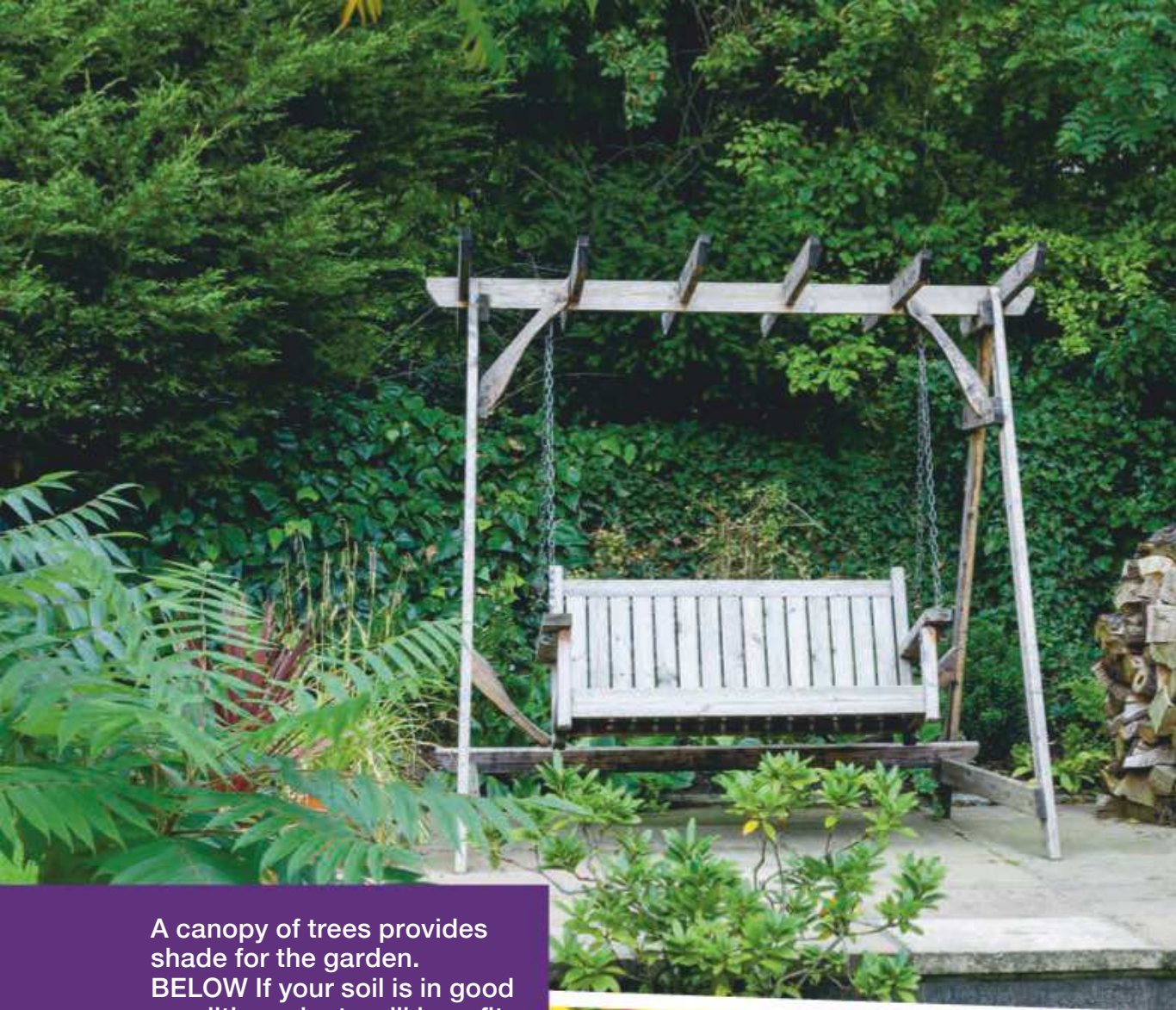
EXPERT SECRETS

Don't be too concerned if plants wilt a bit in extreme heat, as they'll bounce back in the evening when it's cooler.



PICTURE ALAMY

Gardens have a cooling effect on the immediate environment.



A canopy of trees provides shade for the garden.
BELOW If your soil is in good condition, plants will benefit.



Provide shade

Trees are nature's air conditioners and provide much-needed summer shade.

If you don't have an effective shade tree, now is a good time to undertake research with a view to planting during autumn when the weather cools.

Selecting the right tree for the right position is essential if you want to enjoy it for years to come.

To cool the garden, position deciduous trees in the northern and western areas.

Your local nursery can help with shade tree options and give advice on trees that may have a negative impact on house footings, and water and gas pipes.



It's important to plant trees in the right position.

Condition the soil

Good soil holds water for plants during hot weather, so ensure the soil remains moist and healthy by conditioning it regularly. Adding organic matter on a regular basis will build up structure.

Apply a layer of compost, mushroom compost, or cow or chicken manure to the soil and lightly fork it through.

If your soil is very sandy, you will need to condition it at the beginning

of each season and regularly add a soil wetter. This will improve the penetration of water into the soil so it reaches the roots of the plants.

Remove any mulch before adding a soil wetter, then replace. Soil wetters can be applied to lawns.

Water storage crystals also hold water, so dig them into the soil in spring when you are planting. ►



Group plants in garden beds according to their water requirements and grow close together to shade the soil.

Add mulch

Mulch helps retain moisture and keeps the soil cool but when applied too thickly, it can prevent water permeating the ground.

Research has shown that a 50mm layer works as well as a thicker layer and makes it easier for water to penetrate.

Never add mulch to dry soil, but apply it after heavy rain or a deep watering, and always water the soil again afterwards. Use organic mulch such as lucerne hay or sugar cane, as it will break down and add even more structure to the soil.

Make sure the mulch is clear of tree trunks and plant stems to prevent fungus or rot developing.

Pot plants can also be mulched. Sphagnum moss, pebbles and tumbled glass are effective and look good, too.



Mulching makes a garden more drought-resistant.

HOT TIPS

- ◆ **SPRAY** vulnerable plants with Yates DroughtShield. This helps reduce the amount of water lost on the leaves and also protects them from wind and sunburn.
- ◆ **WAIT** until the hot weather is over to cut off leaves that have been damaged by the heat, as the dead leaves will protect the lower leaves.
- ◆ **REMOVE** weeds as soon as you see them. They're the curse of gardeners because they compete with your plants for much-needed summer water.
- ◆ **CHOOSE** plants that suit your local environment. Take a walk around your neighbourhood and check what grows on council

roundabouts and in parks, as these plants are hardy and usually rely on rainwater.

- ◆ **MAKE** your own compost. It's free plant food and builds up the structure of the soil. Lawn clippings, vegie scraps and other green waste will break down quickly during summer.
- ◆ **BEAR** in mind that summer isn't the best planting time for trees and shrubs, but if you need to, add a few stakes around the plant and drape over shade cloth to protect them from extreme heat.
- ◆ **PLACE** annuals and perennials so they will touch each other when they reach maturity. Close planting shades the soil.



If using a sprinkler to water your lawn, make sure you move it around to provide even watering over the entire area.

Water wisely

We all want to conserve water and how you water your garden is important so it survives the heat of summer.

- ♦ **WATER** the garden deeply in the cool of the day once or twice a week to encourage the plant roots to go deeper into the soil. A good watering allows water to soak into the top 150mm.
- ♦ **APPLY** water where it is needed. Some plants need less water than others, even if they've been grouped correctly.

If one plant is wilting in the bed, apply water directly to the roots of that plant instead of to the whole bed.

- ♦ **START** watering the highest part of the garden first so run-off will soak into lower, drier areas.

Water carefully to avoid run-off, which carries soil and dissolved nutrients into stormwater and river systems.

- ♦ **CONSIDER** installing a drip irrigation system so water is delivered directly to the roots, and you won't lose water from wind, evaporation or run-off.

- ♦ **CHECK** the soil before watering. Insert your finger into the soil beyond the top 20mm to see if it is already damp, rather than watering routinely.

- ♦ **HARDEN** plants by allowing the soil to dry out before you water. Slowly decreasing the amount of water applied will result in the leaf tissue becoming a little tougher. Many plants are hardier than you may realise. ►



The best time of day to water the garden is early in the morning before the temperatures begin to rise.





Grass will tolerate heat more easily if it is kept in a healthy state.

Look after the lawn

Lawns are tougher than you think and will let you know they're in stress when they start to wilt or change colour.

But even if the grass turns brown over summer, it will revert to green when it rains or you water it.

- ♦ **CHOOSE** water-efficient lawn varieties such as 'Sir Walter' and 'Palmetto', as these two grasses have good drought and heat tolerance.
- ♦ **AERATE** the lawn occasionally using a garden fork to help the water soak in.
- ♦ **WATER** your lawn for longer, but less often, to encourage deeper roots and drought tolerance.

If the grass springs back when you tread on it, the lawn doesn't require water. If it stays flat, it needs a soak.

- ♦ **MOW** only the top third of the leaf area, leaving it 75mm or higher. Save clippings and age them to use as a mulch or add them to the compost heap.
- ♦ **CONSIDER** reducing the lawn area. Front lawns that are barely used can be replaced with tough ornamental grasses that don't need mowing.

Backyard lawns can be replaced with pavers surrounded by garden beds filled with water-efficient plants and groundcovers.



POT PLANT CARE

Potted plants dry out quickly during summer and often need to be watered every day.

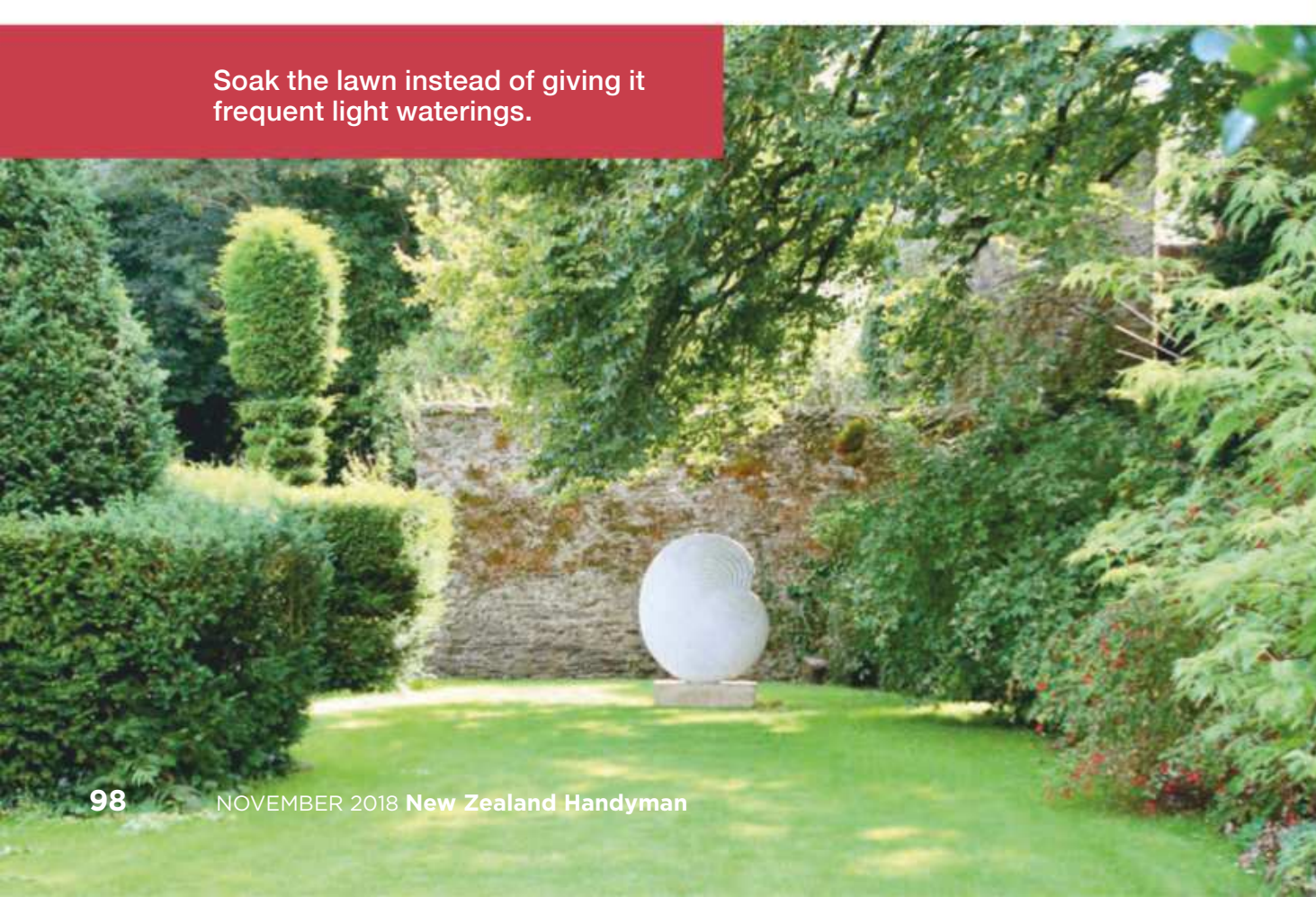
Add water-holding crystals to the mix when re-potting.

Always water pots deeply, continuing until it starts to run out of the drainage holes.

Plastic pots retain water better than terracotta ones, so plant in a plastic pot and use a larger, attractive terracotta container as a sleeve.

Spray unglazed pots with a sealant or line the sides with black plastic to retain moisture.

Mulch with pebbles, sphagnum moss or lucerne hay to help retain moisture. ❖



Soak the lawn instead of giving it frequent light waterings.

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CUTTING EDGES

Choose the right tool for
trimming your lawn borders
and garden hedges

WORDS MARC MCEVOY

A tidy lawn and garden takes work. Mowing, fertilising and watering are important, but to create a neat landscape that increases the kerb appeal of your home, you must trim your edges and hedges, and those tasks require the right tools.

A mower will cut a large area of grass but it isn't effective for those last few centimetres of growth at the edges of fences and walls or around tree trunks or other objects. Here, you need a line trimmer to create sharp boundaries. And to achieve a clean line between the lawn and a path or garden bed, you

need a lawn edger. It will leave a neater separation than a trimmer.

Hedges also need to be trimmed to create neat fence-line boundaries or backdrop foliage as well as promote growth in your garden.

The choice among trimmers and edgers also comes down to electric or petrol-driven. Electric devices can be either corded and run by mains power, or cordless with rechargeable batteries.

Cordless trimmers and edgers give you unrestricted movement. Petrol devices are noisier, heavier and emit fumes, but they have more grunt. ►

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LINE TRIMMERS

ELECTRIC

All line trimmers operate with a nylon line in a hub that spins at a rapid rate at the end of a shaft to cut through grass and weeds. The rotation is controlled by a variable speed trigger.

The line will have to be replaced as it wears out. Depending on the model, this is done either manually or automatically.

Corded electric line trimmers, which run on mains power, require an extension cord to reach your work site. They are similar in power to a petrol-driven trimmer while being lighter. They are also relatively inexpensive, easier to start than petrol models, and quieter to use.

Light-duty devices can have the motor mounted at the cutting end of the shaft, but more powerful trimmers have a motor mounted at operator height and a bent shaft.

Line trimmers are usually intended for lighter work than brushcutters.



A mains power line trimmer needs a cord, but is quiet and easy to start.

Battery-powered trimmers can roam over large areas.



PETROL

Powered by either a two-stroke or four-stroke motor, petrol line trimmers have more power than electric models. They come in dual-handle units and have either a straight or bent shaft to vary the cutting angle.

Petrol-driven models, which are usually more expensive than electric models, are great for trimming areas that are too big for trimmers with extension cords.

A four-stroke version is heavier than a two-stroke, but it is more powerful and emits fewer fumes. Petrol trimmers require more maintenance than electric models, including oil, filter and spark plug changes. Two-stroke models run on a mix of oil and petrol. This produces a smoky exhaust, which makes them harsh on the environment.

DIY TIP

Avoid ringbarking trees or bushes with a line trimmer by hand-weeding the grass up to 10cm around the base.

SAFETY TIP

Wear steel-capped boots and safety glasses when using edgers or trimmers as debris can be flicked at high speed towards the user.

CORDLESS

To avoid restricted movement while trimming, cordless models are a good option. They operate in the same way as corded electric devices but run on a rechargeable battery instead of mains power.

Recent advances in lithium-ion batteries have greatly increased their capacity, so that a cordless trimmer with a heavy duty 4.0Ah battery can run for up to an hour on one charge.

The best, most powerful ones for home use are 18-volt models. Without a cord, they are convenient and easily manoeuvrable.



Brushcutters pack plenty of power for serious tasks.

BRUSHCUTTERS

These are the stronger cousins of line trimmers. They have an X- or Y-shaped steel blade instead of a nylon cord and are designed for heavy-duty applications, such as clearing thick, long grass that might include weeds, shrubs and small trees.

Brushcutters spin a blade parallel to the ground in a hub driven by an electric or petrol-driven motor on the end of a shaft.

The electric cutters can be corded or cordless with rechargeable batteries, and the petrol models come with two- or four-stroke engines.

Brushcutters can be a bit heavier and harder to manoeuvre than line trimmers, so they often come with a harness and adjustable dual handle or bicycle-style double-grip handle for extended use. ►

EDGERS

If you have a lot of lawn bordered by hard surfaces and you want to create precise, neat edges along paths and other walkways that look like they have been done by a professional, use an edger.

Edgers are cutting devices powered by electric or petrol engines guided by wheels connected to a push handle. The cutting mechanism is a spinning steel blade that rotates vertically, creating a clean separation between the lawn and the edge. They generally come with adjustable height levels.



Petrol-powered edgers help you achieve a pro's finish.

While cordless 18V electric models are great for average-sized yards, it might be worth investing in the more powerful 36V models or petrol-driven devices if you have a lot of concrete paths crisscrossing your lawn or lines of pavers enclosing the grass. Check for a marking on the blade cover that helps you follow the correct line.

An edger will also create a gap between your lawn and garden that prevents grass roots from invading your flowers. It helps define different areas of your garden.

MANUAL

Manual edgers have been around a long time. The most common type has a hardened-steel star-wheel blade on the end of a handle. Pushing rotates the star-wheel blade and produces a cutting action.

They are inexpensive and simple to use but require considerable physical effort to produce a neat, precise edge between your lawn and path or other firm edge.

Other types include a steel cutting wheel attached to a drum on a handle that works like a star-wheel edger, and a half-moon steel edger on a long handle, which cuts edges when you manoeuvre it from side to side.



Star-wheel and half-moon edgers require physical effort.



HEDGE TRIMMERS

Hedges form barriers and boundaries between your home and the street or a neighbour's property, as well as backdrops for your floral displays.

The most common hedges can be easily shaped with hedge trimmers. Maintaining them this way not only controls their appearance but it inspires new growth where you want it.

You can use hand shears for trimming, but if your hedge is large, save your strength and use a petrol-driven or electric trimmer. The electric devices come in corded or cordless models, but you must take extra care with corded trimmers to avoid severing the cord.

Trimmers that are powered by rechargeable batteries are easier to use in hard-to-reach places. ♦



Battery-operated hedge trimmers are convenient and safe for domestic use.

Top picks



Ryobi One+ 18V 5.0Ah
Line Trimmer Kit,
\$249. ryobi.co.nz



Cyclone Rotary Turf Edger,
\$46.90. bunnings.co.nz



Ryobi 52cc Brushcutter/
Line Trimmer, \$349.
ryobi.co.nz



Victa 25.4cc Swift-Start
Curved Shaft Trimmer,
\$239. victa.com



Fiskars Long Handle
Edger, \$44.50.
fiskars.co.nz

DeWALT 54V 9.0Ah XR FlexVolt
Li-Ion Brushless Brushcutter
Combo Kit, \$698.
dewalt.co.nz



Ozito Power X Change 18V
Hedge Trimmer Kit, \$147.
ozito.co.nz



Masport 98cc Petrol Edger,
\$599. masport.co.nz





FOCUS ON *Foliage*

Bring pizzazz to your garden with
some bold or colourful leaves

WORDS CHERYL MADDOCKS

Leaves are one of the most significant aspects of garden design. Big, bold, small or strappy – hard-working foliage plants create contrast and inject interest. They also keep their ornamental value all year, while the more commonly perceived star attractions of the garden, flowers, are transient with the seasons.

The popularity of foliage in modern gardens revolves around its enormous variation. Leaves come in a choice

of colours and have any number of different textures and structures. The enormous array of leaf shapes and compositions can look stunning. They can also be variegated, double or single coloured, and they can smell good, too.

Foliage is particularly important in small gardens as it can help to unify the selection of plants into a cohesive design. We show you how to zhoosh up your garden with a focus on foliage. ►

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DESIGN IDEAS

- ♦ **SHAPE** Placing plants with different leaf shapes next to each other brings out the best in both of them. Put large rounded leaves next to both strap-like leaves and deeply divided foliage.
- ♦ **HEIGHT** Tall ornamental grasses make arresting accents.
- ♦ **COLOUR** Different tints and shades of green foliage – from lime green to cool blues and dark purplish green – create a stylish relaxed look.
- ♦ **CONTRAST** Use green foliage for the main composition and accentuate with coloured

varieties. Purple leaves look stunning placed next to light green ones. Or use silver foliage as a point of difference.

- ♦ **TEXTURE** Variegated foliage in striped, dappled or multicolour patterns creates an eye-catching display.
- ♦ **FORM** Architectural and strappy foliage can look arresting in large pots.
- ♦ **POSITION** Grow epiphytic bromeliads on fences, tree branches, trunks and stumps, or tall ferns and palms. You can fix them to walls or use them to decorate a screen.

FRAGRANT LEAVES

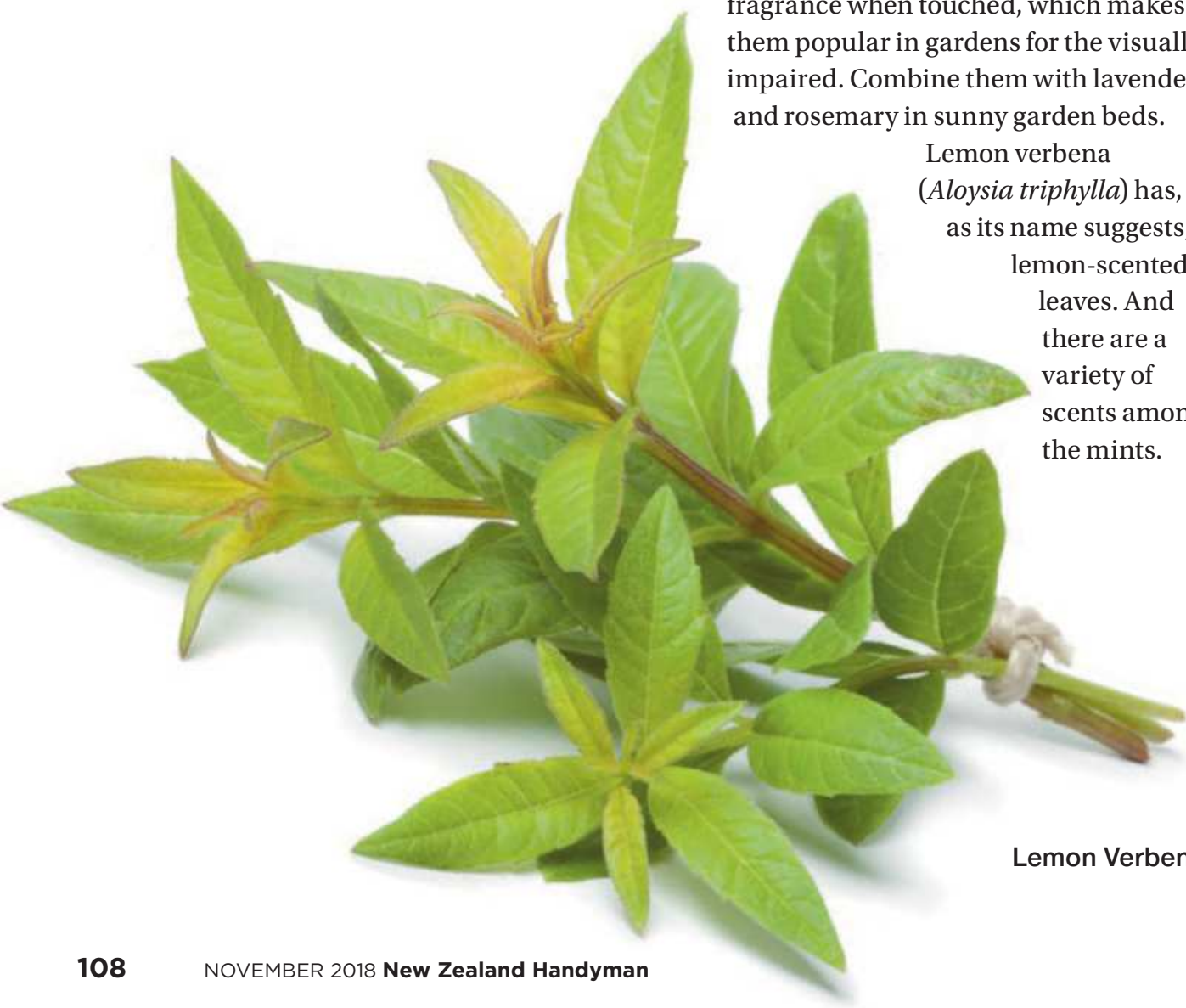
The appeal of plants to the sense of smell is among the strongest of a garden's delights. And while flowers are most often associated with perfume, many leaves are just as fragrant. Plant scented leaves near pathways, entrances or steps so you can touch them as you pass.

What to grow

Lemon myrtle (*Backhousia citriodora*) is a small tree that reaches a height of around 6m, and has strongly scented leaves that can be used in cooking. It can also be clipped as a hedge.

Scented-leaved geraniums (*Pelargonium cultivars*) release a strong fragrance when touched, which makes them popular in gardens for the visually impaired. Combine them with lavender and rosemary in sunny garden beds.

Lemon verbena (*Aloysia triphylla*) has, as its name suggests, lemon-scented leaves. And there are a variety of scents among the mints.



Lemon Verbena

COLOURFUL LEAVES

You can create some interesting leaf compositions when coloured leaves are mixed in among the green.

What to grow

The red, green, pink and yellow leaves of coleus rival those found in any flower. Grow coleus where it gets morning sun in frost-free areas and pinch it back to create a more bushy habit.

Give beefsteak plant (*Iresine herbstii*) some sun so that its brilliant purple-red leaves retain their colour. The purple leaves of *Alternanthera dentata* can be clipped to make an attractive hedge.

Acalypha, aglaeomena, caladium, croton, rex begonia, maranta and calathea all have species or cultivars with large or colourful leaves that look good in garden beds or pots in frost-free areas.

The many different cordyline, flax and yucca cultivars are also contenders for inclusion because of their strappy leaves and range of sumptuous colours.

Large-leafed cannas have tropical flair. The burgundy, red, pink, yellow and deep green leaves of the Tropicana cultivar make a dramatic display, while Black has deep purple leaves and Gold has leaves with green and gold stripes.



Varied form, colour, shape and height strike a stunning note in this garden. TOP RIGHT Spectacular beehive ginger.



GARDEN TIP

Foliage forms the substance of a garden and holds everything together when there are no flowers.

TROPICAL TREATS

Gingers and heliconias are iconic tropical and subtropical perennial plants with large, vibrant leaves that make eye-catching architectural statements. And the bonus is their flamboyant flowers.

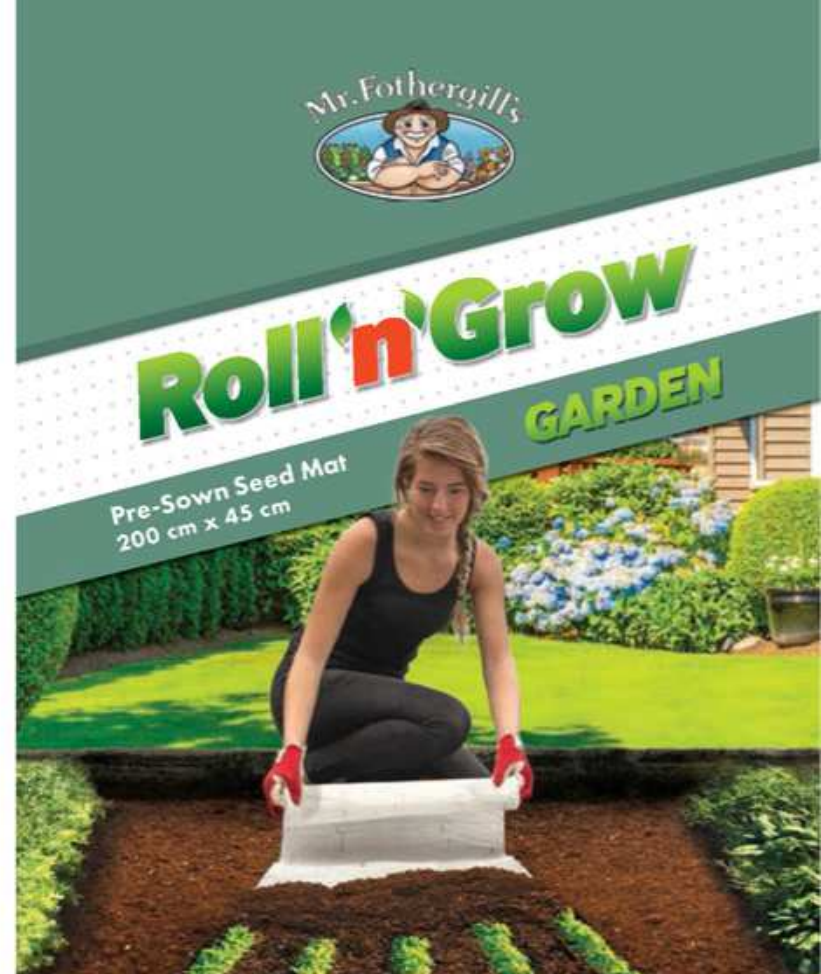
What to grow

Blue ginger (*Dichorisandra thyrsiflora*) has large canna-like leaves and intense blue flowers. Beehive gingers from the *Zingibar* variety produce 120cm high lush foliage and spectacular flowers.

Shell ginger (*Alpinia zerembut*) has exotic tropical-looking foliage and spectacular hanging flowers. It will grow outside the tropics if given a warm, frost-free spot.

Torch ginger (*Etlingera elatior*) displays beautiful red flowers that resemble waratahs. They shine among dark-green tropical-looking foliage.

Heliconias, like gingers, have large tropical leaves and dazzling exotic-looking flowers that are either erect or pendulous. There are many different species and cultivars. These heat lovers like regular watering, a feeding in spring with a complete fertiliser, and protection from wind. ►



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ARCHITECTURAL FOLIAGE

Some plants have very distinctive, architecturally shaped forms. It may be the texture, size or boldness of the leaves, or the shape of the plant itself. Plants with bold forms can draw the eye as much as garden ornaments when distributed throughout the garden.

Use them on their own as a focal point, as feature plants in courtyards or in pots on balconies.

What to grow

Large-leaved acanthus makes an impact and will grow in sun or semi-shade. The large rosette of grey-leaved *Agave attenuata* looks stunning in sunny garden beds and pots. Taro leaves, especially the dark-leaved cultivar Black Magic, create a lush tropical look, while the large grey leaves of cardoon and globe artichoke make an impact.

Philodendron 'Xanadu' has beautiful large, architecturally shaped leaves, as does bird's nest fern (*Asplenium nidus*). Both grow well in morning sun and Xanadu will tolerate full sun.

BROMELIADS

The leaves of the bromeliad are striped, spotted or brightly coloured, so they offer great landscaping possibilities.

Group bromeliads together in pots of various heights to make permanent eye-catching colour statements in shades of red, burgundy, pink, silver and purple, mixed with tones of green.

When planted in the ground, bromeliads must have good drainage. You can simply plant the bromeliad in a pot into the ground, with the rim raised above the soil level. A combination of half potting mix and half orchid mix is ideal for bromeliads in containers.

What to grow

There is a huge choice of rosette-shaped bromeliad species and cultivars with different leaf markings and colours among the neoregelia, guzmania and aechmea varieties.

The wonderful maroon-leaved *Alcantarea imperialis* 'Rubra' has a rosette that can reach a span of 1.5m. It takes ten years to produce its tall 2.5m flower spike and is more sun tolerant than many bromeliads. Just as stunning is *Vriesea hieroglyphica*, which has shiny green leaves marked with dark, hieroglyphic-like cross bands. ►

DESIGN TIP

Use the strappy leaves of tall architectural grasses, colourful flax or lomandra next to large leaves.

Contrast strong forms and shapes. BELOW Bold bromeliads.



PICTURES CHERYL MADDOCKS

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SUCCULENTS

The foliage of succulents can look stunning in garden beds and pots. They look good throughout the year, feature an enormous variety of leaf shapes and sizes and are low maintenance.

Succulents are perfect for time-poor gardeners because potted ones won't die if you are occasionally too busy to water them and those in garden beds can easily survive on rainwater alone.

You can use low-growing succulents as frontline border plants in beds or taller ones as features.

What to grow

Large agaves and aloes look good in garden beds and large pots. Clumps of aeoniums also make architectural statements in pots and garden beds. The reddish-black rosettes of *Aeonium* 'Zwartkop' are standouts, as are the huge green rosettes of *Aeonium undulatum*. *Cotyledon orbiculata* is valued for its striking grey leaves and Echeveria cultivars come in many different shades and shapes and are perfect for pots.

Stay tuned for more on succulents in next month's issue of *Handyman*. ❖

Some agaves have striking leaves. Succulents add wow.



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NEXT ISSUE

GARDEN

Establish a waterwise garden by planting hardy and attractive succulents.

PLUS Grow delicious summer vegetables to have healthy food at your fingertips.

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Make your garden into a tranquil oasis by installing a calming water feature.

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