









## Inside issue 57

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These products are independently selected by our editorial team. If you have recommendations for products you think would be of interest we'd love to hear from you. Email: sanctuary@renew.org.au



## Recycled timber and plastic decking

Timber decks require regular maintenance, otherwise they quickly splinter, wear, fade and need repair. Composite decking system Ekodeck is engineered to look and feel like natural timber decking, but is more durable and long-lasting, requires less maintenance than timber and is environmentally friendly for its material use. The product is made from reclaimed timber and recycled plastic, helping to reduce deforestation and save a substantial amount of waste plastic and timber from entering landfill. The decks are said to be tough and durable with a similar hardness to spotted gum, and UV protected which means they are unlikely to fade to grey with sun exposure. The system is also termite resistant. Prices start at around \$99 per square metre.

www.ekodeck.com.au

## From decks to outdoor rooms

The outdoor deck has become a haven for some people stuck at home during Covid restrictions, helping to extend a household's living area and time spent outdoors. Adding a roof to a deck enables more year-round use of the space, making an outdoor living room of sorts without the expense of building and extending out into the backyard. Louvretec's Opening Roofs feature louvre blades that open up to 180 degrees for full enjoyment of the weather, with a retractable option for those who want an open space above from time to time. The benefit of a louvre system is being able to choose sun or shade, or to decide between cooling breezes or wind protection. The system can be hand operated or motorised, with the louvres made from durable aluminium and available in a range of powder coated or anodised colours. The roofs are custom made to requirements, with pricing on application from Louvretec.



www.louvretec.com.au



## Prefab studio - no nails or screws

Another way to add a room to your home without commencing major building works is to add a studio to the backyard. Assembly Three, in collaboration with Studio 9, has produced a range of architecturally designed and prefabricated studios, offices and small dwellings that can be customised and assembled in your garden or on a block of land. Assembly Three uses a lightweight and reusable plywood framing system called XFrame, which is said to use 30 per cent less material than standard timber wall framing and can be put together without the need for nails, glues or screws. The structures are flat-packed, which saves the hassle of trying to crane a pre-built room into a backyard or the difficulty of delivering via truck to remote areas. The 27-square-metre AX3 Office is ideally suited as a work-from-home setup, with larger suites available with bedrooms for accommodation purposes. The AX3 Office starts at \$99,000, with a 22-square-metre Studio starting at \$88,000.

www.assemblythree.com.au

## **REVIEWS**

If you have recommendations for films, books, smartphone apps, podcasts, websites or anything else, email: sanctuary@renew.org.au

## BOOKS



## Re-Think Design Guide: Architecture for a post-pandemic world

RIBA Publishing, 2021 \$58

Review by Tom Hawking

One persistent narrative about the Covid pandemic has been that if there's one silver lining, it's that the last two years have been an opportunity for society to pause and reflect. *Re-Think Design Guide* extends the idea of pausing and pondering to architecture, exploring ways in which designers will have to change and evolve as the world reopens.

The book comprises eight chapters, each put together by a different editor and each dedicated to a different broad architectural type. The editors were clearly given plenty of leeway in how they approached their chapters, and the result is an interesting, if somewhat disjointed, reading experience: some chapters feature multiple short pieces by various experts, an approach that provides a diversity of voices and expertise at the expense of indepth discussion, while others provide an extended essay on a single topic.

Despite this somewhat scattershot approach, a surprisingly coherent narrative emerges from the book. As architect Julia Park writes in her introduction to the chapter on housing, "[Covid] has deepened existing cracks and revealed new weaknesses in our lives ... it is right to see Covid as the catalyst for long-overdue change".

The long-overdue change in question varies from chapter to chapter, but recurrent themes include a lack of adaptability and flexibility, along with the way in which Covid's ongoing legacy – a dramatic increase in homeworking, for instance – requires fundamental changes in design. There's also a heavy focus on sustainability in the face of the climate emergency, largely on the basis that the pandemic has exposed how poorly prepared we are to deal with an unprecedented global emergency – of which there are plenty more to come.



## Soil

Matthew Evans
Murdoch Books, 2021
\$33

Review by Jacqui Hagen

The opening chapter of *Soil: The incredible story of what keeps the earth, and us, healthy* works hard to convince the reader that the stuff below our feet is not a dull subject. Author Matthew Evans need not have gone to such lengths, though; upon reading further, it soon becomes clear that this is a truly compelling book.

With a friendly, conversational tone, Evans keeps up the stream of mind-boggling facts: that a single spoonful of soil contains more living things than there are people on the planet; that there was a time on earth when it rained for centuries straight; that turning soil with the humble plough has released over a third of the increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere since the Industrial Revolution. You'd be forgiven for leaning back in your chair and whistling in awe at least once a chapter. It's not all trivia though; there's a gentle reflectiveness woven throughout the book, with Evans' anecdotes and observations helping to build an irrefutable argument that soil is so much more complex, exciting and important than most of us realise, and that all natural systems on earth will collapse if we continue to degrade it.

Last year, when those of us in Melbourne went through that endless coronavirus lockdown and access to the natural world became so precious, the words of a friend often rumbled around in my brain. He casually mentioned that the complexities at play within his small backyard garden were enough to provide a lifetime of learning and stimulation. While *Soil* covers much more expansive topics than a backyard compost pile, in essence it feels like an ode to that sentiment. It's a beautiful read, and an important one. Our future depends on a better understanding of soil, and this book is a great place to start.

## Surprise package

LOCATION Giralang, ACT • WORDS Rachael Bernstone • PHOTOGRAPHY Ben Wrigley



## At a glance

- Modest renovation to a brick veneer cottage
- Layout reconfiguration and tiny extension (just 13 square metres) for much improved liveability
- Energy rating increased from 3.8 to 7.7 Stars
- Transition to all-electric operation and gas connection removed

From the street, there is little to hint at the transformation that turned this Canberra ugly duckling into a swan.

Having lived in their little brick veneer house in Canberra for ten years before moving to Melbourne, owners Rachel and Kathryn were well aware of its shortcomings when they started planning their return to the national capital.

"It was looking a bit shabby, and we needed more living space and separate spaces for our teenager," says Kathryn. "Also, the house was very, very hot in summer and cold in winter, largely because of the old aluminium windows."

Despite those faults, they liked the location, the north-facing orientation and the outlook to playing fields across the street. Their early research suggested they could make some improvements that would help them create a more comfortable and enjoyable home.

"We didn't want to buy and sell and move," Kathryn says. "We did initially consider knocking down and rebuilding, but we wanted the most cost-effective option, and we were happy to use the existing fabric of this house to make it into what we needed. That involved raising the performance in terms of passive heating and cooling, so that it would be more energy efficient and environmentally friendly."

Rachel's research led the couple to the team at Light House Architecture & Science, who have retrofitted many Canberra homes to deliver better spatial and thermal performance without resorting to wholesale demolition.

The couple worked with Light House owner and chief building scientist Jenny Edwards and architect Duncan Hall on the project. "We are now focusing on not knocking down homes unless we really have to," says Duncan. "There is so much potential to increase the comfort and performance of lots of pretty uninviting building stock, and each existing house out there represents a massive investment in material, money and carbon – too much to scrap and send to landfill."

To start the design process, Kathryn and Rachel completed an online questionnaire to determine what they liked and didn't like about their current house. "Then we met with Jenny and Duncan and they talked about the thermal properties and orientation, and how the house would behave in summer and



↑
The renovation included removing internal walls and opening up the eastern side of the house so that the kitchen,

dining and living spaces flow together.

Despite the minimal increase to the footprint, the house works so much better. "It's still a small house, but now everyone has their own space," says homeowner Kathryn, "and I'm amazed at how much storage we have."



# Wedge of calm

LOCATION Coburg, VIC • WORDS Fiona Negrin • PHOTOGRAPHY Maitreya Chandorkar



## At a glance

- 8.4-Star Passive House on a tiny urban site
- Prefabricated crosslaminated timber (CLT) construction
- Designed to make the most of every bit of space
- Green roof and pocket gardens including a pond and vertical kitchen garden

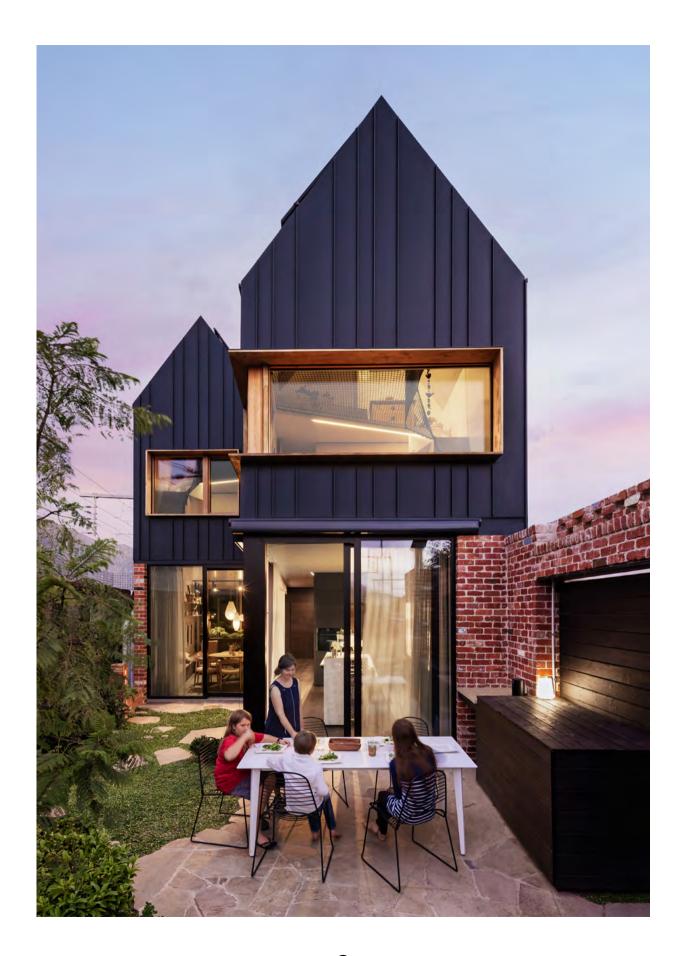
Personal setbacks and a seemingly inhospitable location proved no impediment to this architecturally distinctive Passive House in inner Melbourne.

In 2017 architect and designer couple Felicity and Marc Bernstein bought a wedge-shaped shard of derelict land next to a noisy train line in Coburg, Melbourne. Just 250 square metres in extent, it was dirt cheap, and for good reason: the local council wouldn't let anyone build there and banks wouldn't finance a loan. Not that the couple were deterred. "We wanted to build a family home in the city. The block was the right size and it was exactly in our price range," says Marc, "and we like a bit of a challenge!" Four years later, and after eventually bringing both council and bank on board, the family are happily living in their dream home, though not without a cruel twist to the story.

Hutt House is an architecturally distinctive and high-performing 8.4-Star all-electric house. Marc and Felicity chose to augment passive solar design with Passive House principles because of the quality control they feel it affords. "With Passive House you can predict the amount of energy the house is going to use, and why, when and where – and you can respond to it," explains Marc. He adds that it gave them more flexibility in design because they weren't forced to rely on northern solar and thermal mass, having other tools at their disposal.

Airtight construction, high levels of insulation and thermal bridge-free design are three of the Passive House standard's measurable requirements. Hutt House is built on a concrete slab that's continuously insulated to prevent heat transfer (thermal bridging) where the slab meets the walls. They've used wood-fibre insulation which stores carbon, mitigates thermal bridging and is breathable unlike conventional polystyrene, which can collect mould and condensation. The walls and roof are built with prefabricated cross-laminated timber (CLT) which is quick to erect, noise-reducing, carbon-storing and insulating. Quite the superhero material, it aids airtightness in a natural building and contains less embodied energy than steel frames.

Every bit of the house's 78-squaremetre footprint and two and a half storeys



# Three into one

LOCATION The Gap, QLD • WORDS Emma Scragg • PHOTOGRAPHY Todd Hunter McGaw



## At a glance

- Pavilion-style family home created from three relocated buildings
- Courtyard design for privacy, outdoor living and natural ventilation
- Finished house crafted over years using plenty of reclaimed materials

Beginning with three salvaged buildings trucked to site, this airy family home in Brisbane's west is finally complete after years of owner-builder love.

Hidden in the midst of a lush edible garden and revegetated bushland, Julie Borgelt and her partner Adam's home appears to have been there forever. But its richly embedded history is a relatively recent arrival to their dream site in The Gap in Brisbane's west. Julie and Adam had always liked the idea of a pavilion house, and funds were limited, so once they had secured their block they acted quickly to rescue three unwanted buildings from two different sites - an army barracks and a housing commission development. "If you can get these buildings off in four weeks, you can have as many as you want," they were told at the barracks. They chose the two simplest buildings for their uncomplicated layout: simple roof trusses and single room width, ideally suited to adaptation and for optimal cross ventilation. The third building acquired was an early 1900s house of solid hoop pine. As an

experienced architect, Julie was able to see the opportunities to design and configure a home from these three pieces in a limited timeframe. The resulting scheme created a U shape of buildings around a level courtyard, with the house as the heart (kitchen, dining and living areas) and the barracks buildings either side as wings for parents and kids. In an amazing effort, they had building approval within two weeks and the buildings delivered within four.

The buildings were placed on their new stumps at the end of 1999 – during the wettest summer in fifty years – without a hitch. For the barracks buildings this was the start of their third incarnation. The cost back then to move and restump was \$33,000 for the three buildings, and the family immediately had a spacious

 $\nearrow$ 

The three buildings that make up Julie and Adam's home were placed around a grassy courtyard and connected with extensive verandahs, including sculptural linking sections at the junctions. Inside the restored Queenslander that forms the main house, a central unit accommodates the pantry and other storage.

ceilings in the parents' wing, Julie prefers the warmth of the ply.

The family love where they've landed. "It's the fact that we are on a slope, that we're looking out into the trees we've planted. Our repurposed buildings create this warm hug, our own private oasis with a backdrop of native bush," says Julie. The house continues to work brilliantly for their sons, now young men. "My own parents' belief was, rather than sending your young adult kids off somewhere else where they can get into trouble, you invite them and their friends back to your place. We've always liked having a welcoming place for everyone to come," says Julie. The flat, grassed courtyard is a popular party spot. Volleyball is a regular favourite and now with LED shuttlecocks, nighttime badminton is a hit.

Adam and Julie's design and build journey may offer one solution to the current building challenge of material shortages and escalating prices, exacerbated by the Covid pandemic. While for them, adaptive reuse of existing buildings was partly about affordability, they also recognise the quality of old, slower-growth timber, the stored carbon and the buildings' history. Julie emphasises the value of engaging a professional designer when working with old buildings. "Architects know what to be respectful of in old buildings; they understand their significance, how to improve and treasure them," she says. Of their own finished house: "I like the character. The buildings themselves are full of life. They've got a history embedded in them." §



## 



- (1) Entry
- 2 Bedroom
- 3 Living
- (4) Kitchen
- (5) Dining
- **6** Bathroom
- Laundry
- 8 Music/guest room
- Office
- 10 Pantry
- 1 Walk-in robe
- 12 Verandah
- (13) Lawn courtyard
- (14) Clothesline
- 15 Ramped path

## Playing for keeps

LOCATION Maleny, QLD • WORDS Rebecca Gross • PHOTOGRAPHY Hannah Puechmarin

There's nothing new under the sun at Ali and Clay's Sunshine Coast home: they bought and transported an unloved old house and rejuvenated it with reclaimed and second-hand materials and vintage finds.

In our increasingly throwaway society, products are often considered disposable, tossed out in favour of the latest trend or because repair and reuse isn't possible or cost-effective. This applies not only to consumer goods, but to houses and everything that goes into their construction, fixtures and furnishings but there is another way, as Queensland couple Alison McNaughtan and Clay Stokoe have demonstrated. Buying an abandoned century-old house replete with history, they had it moved to their property and renovated and fitted it out with salvaged and second-hand materials, fixtures and furniture. Taking on a slow and considered renovation and restoration, the couple are playing for keeps.

Ali and Clay live on a 29-hectare property outside Maleny in the Sunshine Coast hinterland. The block had no house on it when they bought it, so they shopped around for an old Queenslander, finding one that fit their criteria 300 kilometres away. "I wanted to live in a traditional Queenslander, and Clay wanted to build a house, so buying an old one and relocating and restoring it was a good solution for us," explains Ali. Dating back to 1915, the house had period details, timber panelling, and no modern kitchen or bathroom. "It captivated us with its intact features, like the timber walls that had never been painted," says Clay. They asked a friend to check its structure and condition. He gave it a clean bill of health, and once it had been transported to the site on three trucks, Ali and Clay gave it a new lease of life.

Positioned at the top of a rise, the house is oriented for solar access and views over the bushland property. The layout of the house was kept intact, with the exception of minor changes to internal walls and ceiling height in the lean-to along the south side and the partial



## At a glance

- Century-old Queenslander relocated and restored
- Positioned on the block for passive solar performance and views
- Materials, fixtures and furniture almost exclusively second-hand

## **HOUSE SPECIFICATIONS**

## HOT WATER

- 2 x 22,000L rainwater tanks connected to house and vegetable garden
- Nature Loo Classic 750 composting toilet
- Waterwise greywater system water used to irrigate fruit trees

## PASSIVE DESIGN. HEATING & COOLING

- High ceilings and natural cross ventilation
- House is 900mm off the ground and placed on a ridge for maximum air movement for ventilation
- French doors fitted to all bedrooms for cross breezes
- Verandahs on three sides for shade
- Tall vegetation planted on western side of house to block summer sun from early afternoon but admit afternoon sun in winter
- Vegetative wind buffers planted on southwestern side of house

## **ACTIVE HEATING & COOLING**

- Ceiling fans to all living areas
- Second-hand Schooner slow combustion heater

## **BUILDING MATERIALS**

- Hardwood-framed house with timber wall linings and floors salvaged and relocated to
- Walls, floors, cladding and decks restored as needed using additional recycled hardwood framing timber, recycled hardwood

floorboards from demolition yards, reclaimed chamfer boards and hoop pine vertical join (VJ) boards from Gumtree

- Roof: new corrugated galvanised roof from Stratco Sunshine Coast
- Second-hand kitchen from Gumtree
- Recycled timber joinery
- Insulation: Earthwool batts to walls and ceiling (R3.5); Knauf Earthwool blanket to roofs, including verandahs; underfloor insulation is planned

## WINDOWS & GLAZING

- Existing windows repaired where possible, and matching casement windows sourced from Gumtree where needed
- New louvre windows from Maleny Glass and Aluminium, with owner-made recycled timber frames, to dining room, kitchen and toilet

## LIGHTING

• All recycled light fittings with LED globes

## PAINTS, FINISHES & FLOOR COVERINGS

• Haymes low-VOC interior paints

## OTHER ESD FEATURES

- All furniture, kitchenware and appliances, and most building tools, were purchased secondhand
- Australian-made brass tapware from CB Ideal
- Very productive vegetable garden, and fruit tree orchard has been planted

## **BUILDER**

Owner-builders

## PROJECT TYPE

Relocation and restoration of old house

## LOCATION

Maleny, QLD

## COST

\$269,000, including \$104,000 for purchase and relocation of house

## SIZE

House 98m<sup>2</sup> Verandah 85m<sup>2</sup> Land 29ha

## **BUSHFIRE ATTACK LEVEL**

**BAL-Low** 







## **OLD HOUSE, NEW PLACE:**

The lowdown on relocated homes

WORDS Madeleine De Gabriele



Traditional Queenslanders are often excellent candidates for relocation; Alison McNaughtan and Clay Stokoe moved this one 300 kilometres to their block outside Maleny in the Sunshine Coast hinterland. For the full story, see p49. Image: Clay Stokoe

Creating your new home by relocating an old house is perhaps the ultimate exercise in recycling. Although it can be a complex business, it has a range of environmental and financial benefits and is worth serious consideration. We take a look at the pros and cons.

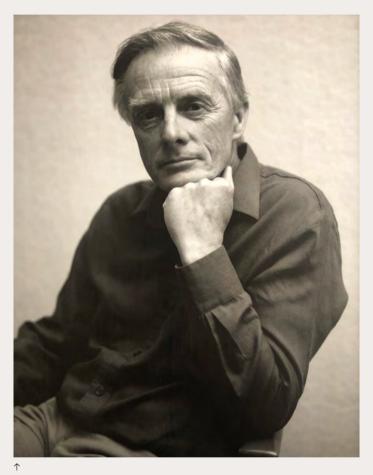
The spectacle of an entire house caravanning serenely down a highway on the back of a couple of trucks is a comparatively common sight in Australia's tropical regions. Queenslander bungalows, with their high stumps and lightweight construction, are ideal for hauling down the road (or even across the state). But it's not just northern Australians who are picking up sticks – and floorboards, plaster and windows – and setting out for greener pastures: it's a growing trend in many places, with specialist operators from Perth to northern New South Wales.

Relocating an existing house can be hugely rewarding. For a start it's highly sustainable as it effectively recycles a significant proportion of a house's materials, avoiding most

## **DESIGN POWERHOUSE:**

Remembering Derek Wrigley OAM, 1924-2021

WORDS Jenny Edwards



Derek Wrigley in 1988. Image: Ben Wrigley

Architect, inventor, educator and polymath Derek Wrigley passed away last winter aged 97. In this moving tribute, building scientist Jenny Edwards of Light House Architecture & Science describes his contribution to the Canberra architectural landscape and to practical sustainable design in particular, and the inspiration he offered her own career.

Derek Wrigley led a fascinating and incredibly productive life. He had a profound impact on many people: colleagues, clients, family, friends, acquaintances and members of the public, including plenty who never met him in person but enjoyed his books and open-home events.

This is not a proper obituary; there have been many beautiful obituaries written about Derek since he passed away at winter solstice this year, and I encourage you to read them. Instead, this is a short story about my brief interactions and short friendship with Derek and how he inspired me. I hope it sheds light on one tiny portion of the great legacy he leaves and encourages others to dare to create change. Don't underestimate how big an impact your own actions can have on the people and world around you – Derek's certainly loomed large in my world, and this is my personal thanks to him.

## A LONG LIFE IN BRIEF

Recently, I was rereading the articles Derek wrote for *Sanctuary's* sister publication, *Renew*, back in the noughties. At the end of the last article he is described as "a solar architectural consultant with a passion for simple and functional design". This is a very modest description for a man who wore so many hats, so very well: architect, designer, maker, sculptor, inventor, builder, environmentalist and educator.

Derek studied architecture and town planning at Manchester University in the UK. In 1948 he emigrated to Australia where he practised as an architect and did some building before becoming a lecturer in design and construction at the New South Wales University of Technology (now the University of NSW) in 1951. He was a co-founder of the Industrial Design Council of Australia in 1956 and was awarded Life Fellowship of the Design Institute of Australia in 1980, having been an active member since it began in 1953. In 1957 he moved to Canberra as Assistant University Designer for the Australian National University (ANU). Derek's jam-packed 20-year career at the thriving new university involved the design of buildings, interiors, landscapes, graphics and more.

He left the ANU in 1977 to pursue his growing interests in passive solar design and inventing things to improve the way people live. During this period he was commissioned to design furniture for the Australian High Court, and he was a pioneer in design for the disabled, providing pro bono services and engaging other volunteers to develop bespoke devices to improve people's quality of life. He designed



OUTDOORS

# Shades of green

Renter-friendly summer shading using plants

WORDS Millie Ross





A collection of potted plants on a repurposed bookshelf or planter frame can quickly green up your rental garden. Image: Shawna Coronado, from *Grow A Living Wall* published by Cool Springs Press

Green curtains of trailing plants are an integral part of the design of this home by Vietnamese architects MIA Design Studio; a similar shading effect could easily be created with greenery cascading from a row of pots along the edge of a balcony. Image: Trieu Chien



## MILLIE'S BRICK-AND-STICK METHOD

Millie's design for a temporary structure uses recycled and found materials, can be built in half a day and is easy to dismantle and move. The weight of the rubble in the bins stabilises the posts, which can be used to create a temporary shelter like a pergola or a small potting shed. Here's how:

- Drill drainage holes in galvanised rubbish bins or similarly large and weatherproof vessels
- Create a solid and level surface for each bin using a large paver, bricks or compacted gravel
- Position the bin on the level surface and insert a weatherproof vertical post – hardwood works well
- Hold the post vertically and stabilise with large stones or bricks
- Once the post is secure, backfill with smaller rubble or gravel, wiggling the post a little to ensure the smallest gravel fills all of the gaps
- The posts can be further secured by the addition of cross bracing, or by fixing to a stable point.



## **GROW THE MICROCLIMATE**

Plants are the original shade sail, and they do it better than any manufactured material. Not only do they offer their own evaporative cooling through transpiration, but research has demonstrated that watering foliage in the heat of the day can have an immediate and marked impact on the surrounding air temperature.

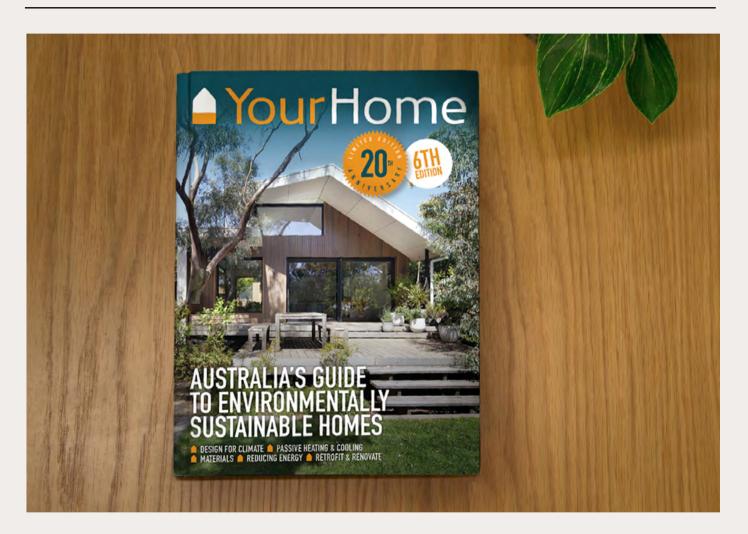
When it comes to selecting the best plants for your purpose, it is important to consider their suitability locally. Always check what's designated as a weed in your area and remember, the faster a plant grows the sooner you must control it. Deciduous vines like grapes (*Vitis* sp.) can easily be propagated and taken from one house to the next, providing a versatile and productive option for shade. Planted in spring and autumn, tube stock of fast-growing evergreen climbers, such as bower vine (*Pandorea* sp.) or various native peas (*Kennedia* sp. or *Hardenbergia* sp.), are inexpensive and can cover a frame in a couple of years.

In the short term, many annual vegetables and flowers also

## YOUR HOME:

Australia's go-to guide for homes that don't cost the earth

WORDS Caitlin McGee and Dick Clarke



In October 2021, Australia's award-winning guide to sustainable housing celebrated its 20th anniversary with the launch of a new edition. Since its release in 2001, Your Home has become the go-to for designers, builders, tradespeople and the public alike, transforming the way Australian homes are designed and built. We asked long-time contributors Dick Clarke and Caitlin McGee to take us on a tour of the guide, how it came about, and what's new in the 6th edition.

Your Home is Australia's most trusted guide to sustainable housing, attracting over 1.1 million visits (and growing) to the website and selling upwards of 1,200 copies of the printed guide each year. After 20 years and six editions, its central message remains the same: environmentally sustainable design is synonymous with good design.

Today this message resonates more than ever. We have just experienced the hottest decade on record and, in 2019-2020, one of the worst fire seasons Australia has ever seen. The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change underscores the importance of making deep cuts to carbon emissions this decade, and housing has a significant role to play.



one of 24 Residential Efficiency Scorecard assessments for your home, valued at \$40 assessments for your home, valued at \$400

Subscribe to Sanctuary or join Renew by 5pm AEDT on 15 April 2022 and go into the draw to win. Open to Australian residents. Terms and conditions apply. For full details visit renew.org.au/prize

## WHAT IS SCORECARD?

The Residential Efficiency Scorecard is a unique, Australia-first program that provides an energy star rating for your home. In the same way as a fridge has a star rating, a Scorecard rating shows how much energy is used throughout your home. Assessments and information are tailored specifically for your home and are delivered by government approved assessors.

A skilled Scorecard assessor will help you to compare your home's energy use with other similar homes and find the best options to reduce your energy bill, protect your comfort and health in summer and winter and reduce carbon emissions.



renew.

