

# AT HOME

Build your dream life

The Saturday  
Telegraph

June 4, 2022



**My best mate**  
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## Come on over

TV's Dennis Scott on the perfect garden layout for family and friends



### Locals only

Homewares from Indigenous Australian artists and makers



### The Fixer

Clever techniques to protect and preserve a water-logged garden



EDITOR'S LETTER

# Welcome,

The pandemic made spending time with friends and family difficult, if not impossible, but restrictions have been lifted and now socialising is back on the agenda. That's something our cover star **Selling Houses Australia** co-host and **At Home's** gardening guru **Dennis Scott** is excited about. Dennis loves nothing more than hosting a shindig at his Queensland home and this week he's sharing with us his garden design plans that promote connection and encourage loved ones to meet and mingle. If you fancy hosting a get-together or three, check out his tips in the coming pages. Speaking of gardening, if yours is a little on the soggy side, **The Fixer** Robyn Willis has some helpful advice. Time to get reading.

*Kelly Baker*



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Swap chemical-heavy shower gels for this gentle body wash made with olive and coconut oil. It has heavenly scents of rose, tangerine and patchouli

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**THE AUSTRALIAN** WINE

## NEWS

DESIGNER RUGS**GREG NATALE DOES IT AGAIN**

**Greg Natale's New Wave collection for Designer Rugs** reveals a number of inspirations, with post-modernism and a bold '80s sensibility at its core. The rugs come in a contemporary palette of cool blues, greens and lilacs teamed with earthy tones, and mesmerising colour gradients appear as well as stronger block colours. All seven designs can be custom coloured, shaped and sized to suit any residential or commercial space. There's even a hall runner and it's dead sexy if we do say so ourselves. Designer Rugs x Greg Natale 'New Wave' collection is on display at showrooms in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Auckland or visit [Designerrugs.com.au](http://Designerrugs.com.au)

DALI DYALGALA

Koskela has unveiled a First Nations fabric range featuring designs from five female artists including Penny Evans, Jacinta Lorenzo, Raylene Miller, Lucy Simpson, Regina Wilson and members of art centre Jilamara Arts. The new collection continues **Koskela's mission to bridge the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and the contemporary design world.** Titled dali dyalgala, a Darug phrase meaning 'to embrace', the collaboration is kicking off with a range of beautiful cushions (see below). There will also be chairs, beanbags and more. Visit [Koskela.com.au](http://Koskela.com.au)



# The power of paint

**INSTANT ADVICE FROM THE PROS – AND IT'S FREE**

Painting can transform a room or even your home, but it can feel daunting to start. Here's a quick guide to ease any fears. Start by finding a colour family you love. Next, choose three of your favourite hues. Get some samples and paint a piece of A4 paper or some plywood. This will allow you to move the samples around and see how they look, says product manager at British Paints' Carmen Jordan. One will work better than the others. That's your colour. Having the right tools for the task is an absolute essential for a successful DIY project. They will not only make the job itself easier, but they will really help to ensure that you get a professional looking result, says Carmen. **When it comes to tools, quality is better than quantity.** You'll need a quality brush, roller, painters' tape and drop cloth. You'll also need high-quality paint. Next, remove screws, nails or hooks from walls.

Give your walls a clean with water and a mild detergent such as sugar soap. Now for the fun part – painting. **If by some chance you hit a snag log on to [Britishpaints.com.au](http://Britishpaints.com.au) which now offers live chat with industry professionals.**

**IN THIS CRAZY WEATHER ...**

Finally, your walls will most likely be dirty and with our current rainy period, possibly mouldy too. Wash them down with water and a mild detergent such as sugar soap or a mix of three parts water, one part vinegar. To avoid the walls getting too wet, using a spray bottle is a great hack. Pay special attention to marks where things have been hanging or pushed up against the wall and check the corners for cobwebs. Don't worry if it isn't perfect – paint is a great cover up. Set up a fan or dehumidifier to help the walls dry completely.

# Everybody's welcome

Landscape expert Dennis Scott reveals secret garden ingredients that encourage connection

Words: Kelly Baker  
Pictures: Luke Marsden

**D**ennis Scott, former pro footy player and now co-host of Foxtel's Selling Houses Australia, is sounding wistful as he discusses his love for 'Betty'. Betty, by the way, is not his wife. She's not his daughter either.

Betty is actually a Queensland Bottle Tree and Dennis is not embarrassed to say he adores her. "I planted her myself," he says proudly.

Almost 20 years ago, Dennis was landscaping his new home in the Brisbane suburb of Ashgrove and was searching for a Bottle Tree to take pride of place in his front yard. He was about to shell out a whopping \$5000 to buy a similar tree, when he stumbled across Betty on the selling site Gumtree. Betty, a mature Bottle Tree, was flourishing where she was, but a new fence was being erected and she was directly in its path. Accordingly she was being advertised as free to anyone who could dig her up and take her away. Dennis jumped at the chance, transported Betty to his front yard and lovingly replanted her there. She's now the hero piece of the garden.

"Everyone loves Betty," declares Dennis happily. Once Betty was planted Magnolias were added along the borders of the property and under those, Dennis dug in Philodendron Xanadu. Even novice gardeners will recognise these names — they're popular throughout Australia for their waxy flowers and glossy leaves and are found in gardens everywhere. Dennis loves the way they look and the fact they're relatively easy to care for. But there's another reason he opted for these particular plants and that is that they encourage people to enter the garden and more importantly, to stay awhile.

## GARDEN WITH BENEFITS

Dennis may be a relative newcomer to the small screen, but he's well known in Australia, particularly throughout sporting communities having played first grade in the National Rugby League for an impressive 14 years. What is less known is that between seasons Dennis discovered a love of working with his hands and gained a carpentry qualification. He also gained a formal landscape design certification. He loved working with plants, but he missed the social side of playing footy. Joining SHA helped. Suddenly Dennis had two best mates in co-



*Provide designated areas where guests will naturally gather*

hosts property expert Andrew Winter and interiors guru Wendy Moore, plus a cast and crew to work and spend time with. But when the series wasn't filming Dennis again felt the pang of solitude. It was during these periods that he was delighted he'd had the forethought to plan, plant and grow a garden that not only encouraged friends, but neighbours and even the occasional stranger to drop by. Cue 'Betty', the Magnolias, the Philodendron and more. You see, Dennis planted everything to be inviting not only for his immediate family, but anyone else who fancied a visit. "You have to give people a reason to drop in and then stay," says Dennis, of his design and botanical choices. "Whatever you plant it needs to feel

welcoming ... that means it should be soft," he says. "People need to feel as if they can pass through the garden. Soft foliage is always attractive whereas cactus or plants that have spiky leaves and a contemporary feel will create a less welcoming vibe."

Dennis, a legendary entertainer in his local neighbourhood, suggests you also provide your guests with designated areas to gather. These should include seating or at the very least, a railing on which to lean. "A paved area is great," he says. "A general seating space, a firepit or a barbecue is a great place to gather too. Everyone can enjoy a beer and a chat and one another's company. A soft lawn is perfect for kids to run around also."

*how to*

## Grow a garden for privacy

### Can gardens reduce noise?

Absolutely. The best results come via hedges. Screening plants such as Syzygiums, Murrayas and Camellias are perfect. For quick results, buy mature trees and plant close together.

### What about kids and small animals?

Obviously a fence is needed but hedging will add security. You can create borders and define boundaries using grasses, lower hedges or tropical species such as Philodendron Xanadu. Planted closely these will guide both pets and little ones in the right way.

### What to grow to block a road view?

Camellias are a brilliant option. They come in many varieties, sizes and colours too. The denser you plant something the more it will block out the street view and the noise too.

### Will a garden ease pollution?

Plants can absorb pollution and they improve air quality. They absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen via photosynthesis. It is important though to help your plants thrive. Hosing them down regularly will wash off excess dust allowing the plant to breathe. Love your plants and you'll be rewarded with bright flowers and rich glossy growth.

## TAKE THE PRESSURE DOWN

Another benefit of a friendly garden? It will keep folk out of your house meaning less cleaning up (hurrah) and that your guests get the mental and physical health benefits of hours spent in green space. Those benefits are distinct by the way. Researchers at Princeton University have found that gardening at home has a similar effect on emotional well-being (or happiness) as biking, walking or dining out. And it costs less, another bonus.

"A great garden encourages the entire neighbourhood to get together, which I love," says Dennis. "There's nothing better than getting together with people you love and in a green space."



Selling Houses Australia's Dennis Scott with daughters Poppy, 14, Matilda, 17, and wife Mia, plus Frankie the kelpie in their welcoming garden.

# The Fixer

It can take a while for a soggy lawn and garden to bounce back to life, but in the meantime here's how to help it

**G**iven the amount of rain that has fallen in the past few months, it's hard to believe that it was only a few years ago that we were being advised to install irrigation systems to save our gardens from drought. Instead, many home gardeners are now dealing with a range of water related problems, from sooty mould on leaves to root rot. If you're struggling to keep your garden from drowning, Yates horticulturalist Angie Thomas says there are some steps you can take to keep it going before — and after — the sun comes out.

with  
Robyn  
Willis



## 1.

**OUR GARDEN IS USUALLY FREE DRAINING BUT IT IS SO WATERLOGGED THAT THE PLANTS ARE STARTING TO DIE. IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO SAVE THEM?**

The biggest problem, says Angie, is that waterlogged soil contains very little oxygen, which roots need to breathe. Often they can manage for a week or so in such conditions but when it is sustained, as it has been in the eastern states, the damage is more long lasting. When the sun comes out, that can mean that plants can continue to look poorly.

"One of the first signs of unhappy plants during wet conditions is, confusingly, wilting due to the root damage," she says. "Their root systems have been damaged

so that with any stress, such as a warm day, the plants can't cope."

She says you can treat the root on plants, like natives, citrus and avocado trees by spraying with a systemic fungicide. Spray the foliage and it will travel down to the roots.



If you're not sure whether your plants have turned up their toes, Angie says the easiest way to tell is to scrape away a little bit of bark with a knife, or even your fingernail.

"If there's green, there's hope," she says.

## 2.

**WHAT ABOUT OUR LAWN WHICH IS SQUELCHY WITH MUD? IS IT OK TO WALK ON?**



Lawns take a beating at the best of times but, with all this rain, some are starting to resemble swamp lands rather than the sun-filled picnic spots many of us are used to in autumn. Angie says it's best to avoid walking on sodden grass if you can avoid it.

"It adversely affects the soil structure — the soil particles will be compressed — and create lumps and bumps," she says. In some areas, though, you may well need to walk on

the grass regularly, to get to the clothesline (when the sun finally appears), the garage or even the chook shed. In these cases, Angie says laying a plank of wood over the lawn will help minimise the damage (and reduce the mud you track into the house). Just be sure to move it around so that the grass doesn't completely die underneath. When the soil dries out, you can fill holes with top dressing to help the lawn recover.

## 3.



**WHAT SHOULD I DO IN THE LONGER TERM, REGARDING PLANT CHOICES? SHOULD I GO WITH SOMETHING ELSE OR STICK WITH WHAT WAS THERE BEFORE?**

This is a tricky one given our wildly fluctuating climate, says Angie.

"It's a challenge when the weather swings wildly from years of drought to years of wet — it makes it very hard to plan a garden," she says. "My recommendation is to plant something different."

Use the recent weather to observe where the wettest spots are in your garden and look for plants that do well in damp

conditions. She suggests plants such as bottle brush, casuarina and paperbark, as well as New Zealand flax, day lilies, hosta and canna lily for areas where damp soil is an issue. Alternatively, Angie says you could go one step further with a bog garden or even a pond.

The other option is to improve drainage in that part of the garden or create a raised garden to sit above the waterlogged soil.

There's more At Home inspiration at [dailytelegraph.com.au/athome](http://dailytelegraph.com.au/athome)

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## INSPIRATION

# Taking centre stage

A theatre couple's starring role

Words: Catherine Nikas-Boulos Pictures: Simon Whitbread



Margie McCrae enjoys some downtime in her banquette seating in the dining/kitchen.

**C**reative folk famously suffer for their craft, but surely that can't be an open-ended arrangement? Tell that to actors Andrew James and Margie McCrae, a couple in their 60s who had dedicated their entire adult life to ensuring the continued success of playhouse productions, and in turn had plainly forsaken their own home comforts for the longest time.

In fact, when architect Daniel Stukel Beasley first viewed their narrow inner-city home, he was surprised by what he saw.

"It looked like they were living in an art share house. It was a very humble and run down semi-detached home," says Daniel.

"They are people who have worked very hard. They were both actors who had dedicated their life to the arts world, and they got to a stage later in their life where they had some money, and basically they deserved to live in a house that wasn't falling down around them. There were holes in the

wall you could put your hands through and the place was leaky and draughty."

Margie had bought the circa 1900s home in Sydney's inner-west in 1988 and while some minor work had been done to the property, including adding bi-fold doors to the rear of the property and a deck that still stands, it needed a whole lot of TLC.

### SELL OR STAY?

"One option was to move, but we didn't want to sell the house in the state it was – it just wasn't saleable," says Andrew. "So, if we were going to pay good money to fix it, we might as well stay."

By committing to a renovation that went out and up, the couple could also tackle their other great bugbear in the semi – a distinct lack of natural light. "Daniel came up with the idea of a double height void where the dining table used to be, which is such a great idea in a small house. It actually made our house feel so much bigger," says Andrew.



Maintaining a period streetscape, the facade of 1900s period home remained untouched with architect Daniel Stukel designing a modern extension.



"The bespoke steel staircase was actually our idea ... the air and light floats through it beautifully. It's a feature."

### WHITE SPACE

The upstairs addition consists of a new generously-sized bedroom with an ensuite and a balcony that is tucked into the existing roofline. "If we were younger and had kids we would have had to split that space and put another bedroom up there, but we could have one really large space just for us, which is exquisite."

The two other original bedrooms remained on the ground floor. Further, Andrew says pre-renovation, the couple's home consisted of multiple colourful walls, but they agreed the remodelled version would be sleek and classy.

"We wanted white walls. Some walls were even purple – it was so hotchpotch that it was important to us to have white walls this time."

One of Margie's priorities was to connect the indoor/outdoor spaces.

"We have a large Manchurian pear tree in our backyard. So the double height void with the big louvre windows and the clerestory window in the kitchen bring the tree right inside at several levels and looks spectacular, especially in autumn. Much of Daniel's colour palette inside with the dark browns and green of the banquette (in the combined dining/kitchen) reflect the outside colours of nature." Even though the footprint was kept the same on the ground level, there were some interesting design elements that gave the couple extra space and storage. Daniel designed bookshelves to sit within the walls and the laundry is found under the staircase.

"It's designed in such a way to look like a bar or an extension of the kitchen. There is even a coffee machine there; it's a really well-disguised and elegant part of the home, instead of having a bog-standard laundry cupboard," says Daniel.





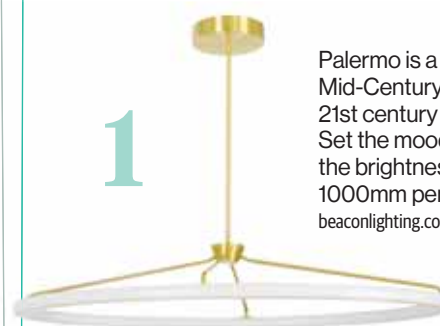
A void above the kitchen floods the space with natural light.

*You can still have the house you want later in life. A new home is not just for the young*

# Ageing gracefully

Sleek replaces arty chic in Andrew and Margie's home

1



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3

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4

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## A BOLD CHANGE

While the revamped home with metal cladding and a dark interior is a world away from the original dated structure, Daniel says the young at heart couple, who are still working in a full-time capacity in the arts, were pleasantly surprised with the bold look.

"Old tastes change and what I designed is contemporary and angular and black, and not typically their style when we started. What they have now is something slick, which is more appropriate with their stage in life," he says.

"Not everyone is going to be successful in their 30s, you can still have the house you want later in life – a new home is not just for the young." Andrew couldn't agree more.

"I love that we are still in the same house but it has been modernised so brilliantly. I'm so surprised that it's changed the way we live, it's a nice place to come home to. I didn't realise what a significant boost it would make to our lives."

TRY THIS ...

# Passion project

## Kickstart an art collection

If you love the idea of art but aren't sure where to start, this handy guide will help

Words: Kelly Baker

**H**anging artwork which speaks to your heart is the perfect way to create an environment that feels like 'you'. One piece (or several); over the bed, in the hall, the kitchen or all of the above. The placement is irrelevant. All that matters is that it sparks joy for you.

But how to know which piece, or pieces, will do that and further, where to find them and how much to shell out when you do track down the artwork you simply cannot live without? We weren't entirely sure of the answers to these questions and so we turned to the people who do – art experts.

**I want to invest in art, but have no idea how or where to start**

To begin, you should have an idea of what style you would like to invest in, says gallery director and curator Kerry-Anne Blanket.

"I recommend spending some time looking at images and artworks online or face-to-face in galleries," says Kerry-Anne, of KAB Gallery.

"This is the best way to develop your own personal taste." Once you know what you like, it's time to think about where you might like to hang your art or where you want to place the art.

If that sounds overwhelming, consider visiting a gallery to discuss your ideas with the experts.

According to Kerry-Anne, they'll be able to make

suggestions that are within your price range.

They'll also know which artists are up and coming and which works are likely to increase in value over time. You can also work with a gallerist to help you choose an artwork for a particular room or place that you have in mind, says Kerry-Anne. You'll need to be patient though, she adds.

"Sometimes the process is fast and the perfect piece will be right there waiting for you. Other times it might take a while. Don't get discouraged."

Remember, hunting down your work of art (or several) will be worth it in the long run. "Art is a catalyst for joy, happiness, memories and nostalgia," says fine art lecturer and director at Belle Epoque Fine Art, Leigh Capel, when explaining why it's of so much value to include it in your life. It is completely subjective; an artwork can have completely different meaning, personal significance and sentimentality depending on the viewer, he adds, but it will always prompt emotions.

**Are there types of art I ought to be buying or just what I like?**

Art is to be enjoyed, but it can provide financial benefits too, says Kerry-Anne. You will need to consider a few things however.

"If you're investing in a quirky piece of art, for example, you need to ask yourself 'how will it be received in another one, five or even 50 years?'," says Kerry-Anne.

Who would be interested to buy it then? If it sold at auction, would there be lots of bidders willing to fight it out? Is the work versatile enough to suit various hanging spaces and positions?

"That said, I truly believe though that the most important thing about choosing an artwork is that



This piece is Interior with Fish Bowl, Pineapple Lamp and Newspaper, by Jacki Fewtrell-Gobert.

**Are there types of galleries I should try first?**

This depends on what you are looking to purchase, says Kerry-Anne, who adds that galleries focus on different segments of the art market.

For example, some galleries will specialise in works on paper, others in sculpture or primarily with conceptual installations, while others specialise in modern and contemporary Australian art. Bottom line: it's important to seek a gallery that exhibits art you feel you can connect with and enjoy.

"Some people enjoy visiting galleries run by an artist who exhibits and sells their own work, and while this can be a great way to connect with a particular style or painting by talking directly with the artist, it does limit you to a very specific type and style of painting," says Kerry-Anne. In my opinion, it's better to work with a professional gallerist who represents many different artists and styles of work so you can pick and choose what feels right for you."



*Art needs to speak to you, give a strong reaction...*

you love it and will enjoy looking at it for years to come," she adds.

Belle Epoque's Leigh Capel agrees. "The most important thing about engaging with art is to keep an open mind, and go with your heart," says Leigh.

"Art needs to speak to you, give a strong reaction (good or bad), make you think, create conversation, pinch a nerve and have a timeless appeal; this is what you should be taking into account. As your education broadens and your tastes refine, your awareness and justification of what you like will become clearer."

Consider also the long-term popularity of the artist and ensure they have a developed career and sales history, recommends Kerry-Anne. Buy originals only as the originality of art is one of its most precious qualities.

"My advice is to keep to a one-of-a-kind when investing in art, rather than prints or limited-edition reproductions," says Kerry-Anne. "Look for quality materials and question the long-term conservation quality of the piece."

"Again, if this feels overwhelming, your best bet is to work with an expert at a gallery who can help guide you through this process based on their years of experience." But what if your budget is modest and, importantly, you have no room to move on it? Would you still be welcome at a gallery? "It's a common misconception that galleries are only for the wealthy," says Kerry-Anne. "In reality, it's our job to source artists and artworks that we feel will attract buyers, and in turn, work with the buyer to

find an artwork that they love and meets their criteria – whether that's to suit a particular look and feel, to operate as an investment, or both."

Art is universal, agrees Leigh. "Anyone can appreciate, own, create and enjoy art, no matter your cultural, political or socio-economic background," he explains. "Yes, art can be 'pretty' and can 'complete a room', but it deserves a much deeper understanding that transcends the aesthetic."

**I feel a little self-conscious about art galleries – what should I do when I walk into one?**

It's a misnomer that galleries are intimidating places, says Leigh.

For the most part, they're warm, welcoming places with owners and managers who love nothing more than talking about their passion – art.

"Contrary to popular belief, art is not, and should not be, intimidating," he says.

"You do not need to know a lot about art history to visit galleries, and you do not need a degree to know what you like."

"From my experience, those newly interested in art generally cannot accurately identify 'why' they like something, and that is OK."

Leigh adds that clarity around art comes with time, mistakes and experience. It's important, however, to know that there is no wrong answer when it comes to art, he adds.

**Above, Australia Day Beach Bondi by Sally West; and below, KAB Gallery director Kerry-Anne Blanket encourages buyers to visit galleries to find out what style and type of art they prefer.**



**Does the saying 'The more expensive it is, the better it is' hold true for art?**

A little of column A and a little of column B, says Kerry-Anne.

"Typically you'll get what you pay for," she says. "An original artwork created with premium conservation-grade materials by a professional artist will scream quality but come with the relevant price tag."

Prints and lower grade artworks will be cheaper. However, there are always the one-off pieces that a good gallerist will spot from the studio and make available. These pieces may be smaller or could have simply not worked within the curatorial perimeters of a past exhibition. It doesn't discredit them in any way so you can, on occasion, nab a great piece at a lower price point, says Kerry-Anne. The art market is a market like any other. This means a range of factors such as the artist's fame and prior reputation, the supply and demand of pieces available to the market, and the current economic conditions all have a part to play in the value of an artwork and how it is priced, says Kerry-Anne.

**Is there a type of art or artists you would like to see supported?**

I'd like to see more support for original art genres," says Kerry-Anne.

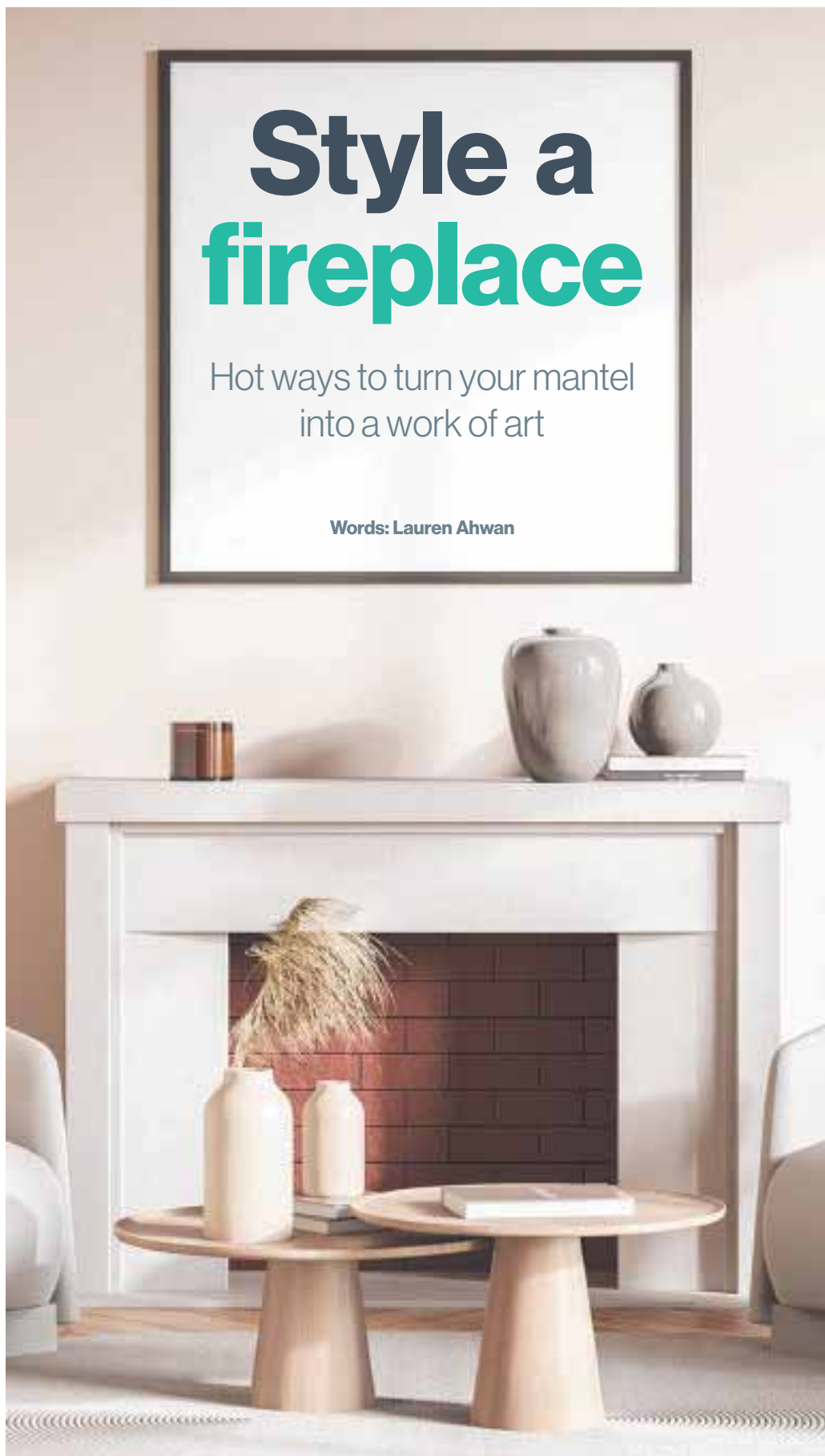
"If only more buyers could see the value in supporting Australian creatives who are really capturing the essence of life as we know it in their beautiful mediums," she adds.

"An original piece of art offers so much for a home. From visual interest and joy to interior depth and luxury."

# Style a fireplace

Hot ways to turn your mantel into a work of art

Words: Lauren Ahwan



**F**ireplaces are a focal point in any home, especially at this time of year, so it's important to style them with the love and care they deserve. Unless your home embraces an ultra-minimalist vibe, a bare fireplace mantel can leave a room feeling unfinished. At the other extreme, crowding a mantel with too many decorator pieces, or mounting a TV screen that is

disproportionate to the fireplace and its surrounds, can also detract from the look of your home.

Maddy and Richard Ellis, the duo behind Richard Ellis Design, a specialist supplier of hand-carved marble and limestone fireplaces and fireplace surrounds, say a mirror hung above a fireplace, paired with a floral arrangement or a vase of greenery on the mantel, is a beautiful but simple styling method that works in any home.



## Looks to love

### BE BOLD

For those looking to make an impression, Maddy suggests a dramatic artwork, vase or statue. Anything can work, so long as it is at least two-thirds the width of the mantel. "If you opt for a smaller design piece, it will be lost compared to the mantel itself," she says. When it comes to placement, Maddy says sometimes the unexpected has the best effect. "More often than not, placing the piece off to the side, rather than smack-bang in the middle, works best or grouping it with other small to medium objects," she says.

### ADD LAYERS

Once you've selected your main piece, Richard advises layering smaller, decorative items, such as picture frames and other knick-knacks, in front to avoid the main object becoming too dominant. Playing with various height levels, using candlesticks of different sizes or books, can also create stunning results.

### GO ASYMMETRIC

If perfectly neat is not your thing embrace asymmetry instead. "Arranging pieces of various shapes and sizes creates a sense of movement – for

example, one side of the shelf could have a tall candlestick and the other a short, plump ornament," says Richard. "However, it's important to achieve a sense of balance."

### MAKE IT PERSONAL

Regardless of the accessories you choose, interior decorator Jacqui Dunn says it's important they're meaningful to you and 'feel like home'. "At the moment on my mantel, I have a bird's nest found on a recent walk, a family photo and my favourite scented candle," she says. Having an odd number of items in groups works best, says Jacqui, who also suggests less is more, to keep the focus on the fire itself.

### MODERN SIMPLICITY

Fireplaces in modern homes tend not to have a mantel but, if they do, Jacqui says decorating should be kept simple. "I often use a large, thin-framed mirror and place a vase with lush greenery on the side," she says. "Modern homes often have a bench seat next to the fireplace which is a great place to store the firewood and can be softened with cushions and your favourite books."

# *Something To Talk About*

*with Samantha Armytage*

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# Hot houses in bloom

Forget the cold weather and create a micro-climate so you can grow year round

**Words: Avril Treasure**

**G**reenhouse sales are on the rise and the reasons why may surprise you. Yes, gardening is experiencing a boom thanks to extra hours spent at home due to the pandemic, says Chelsea Maybury, of Sproutwell Greenhouses.

But also, it turns out huge numbers of us are taking gardening one step further and growing our own food in order to be self-sufficient and keep costs down. Put those two drivers together and you're looking at a hothouse boom, says Chelsea.

Fancy giving the greenhouse trend a red hot go yourself? Read on.

## WHAT'S A GREENHOUSE AND WHY DO I NEED ONE?

An enclosed structure, greenhouses are designed to create a warm, humid and regulated environment in which plants can thrive and extend their growing season without having to worry about the weather outdoors.

Randy Sing, nursery supervisor at the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney, says greenhouses mean growers can extend

their growing season and even grow a more diverse collection of plants. And there's more.

"Greenhouses will also protect your plants from bad weather such as heavy rain and hail, strong winds and storms, and especially rain through the winter months," says Randy.

"If sub-tropical and tropical plants are constantly wet in cold temperatures, they

will not look their best and may not even survive." A greenhouse will resolve those issues. Or at least it should.

Chelsea says that the temperature in a greenhouse can be regulated by using a range of items such as a misting kit, shading system, ventilation and also heating. That way you can create the perfect mini environment for the exact plants you're trying to raise.

Climate sorted. Oh, and hothouses also offer protection from pests, Chelsea adds.

Randy claims another benefit.

"Being able to potter around your greenhouse on a cold winter's day and seeing your plants happy and healthy is very rewarding and relaxing," he says.

## WHICH PLANTS WILL FLOURISH IN A HOTHOUSE

From an edible garden filled with juicy tomatoes, sweet strawberries, hot chillies and fresh herbs to a lush jungle of foliage and house plants, a beautiful display of flowers or cacti and succulents, the sky's the limit in terms of hothouse-suitable plants.

Sanjiv Jassal, plant expert at Bunnings, says that greenhouses

are also ideal for propagating plants both from seed or cuttings.

"Most plants can be propagated in greenhouses from vegetables, herbs, flowers through to ornamental plants."

While most plants will do well in a greenhouse, not all plants need exactly the same conditions – so the kind of climate you create will depend on what you plan to grow in your greenhouse.

Sanjiv says that one of the keys to success when using a greenhouse is getting the temperature and watering regime right for the types of plants you are growing.

"If plants with similar growing conditions are used throughout the greenhouse it will be much easier to correctly regulate water and temperature requirements to suit."

Be sure to find out what are the most suitable environmental conditions of the plants you would like to grow, such as humidity, light, ventilation, and water requirements, says Randy.

"As an example, many tropical plants come from monsoon regions and grow better if the soil can dry out between watering if the humidity is adequate."

He continues, "You can grow a huge range of sub-tropical foliage and flowering plants, and if you can provide a simple





## What to grow in your greenhouse according to the experts

### Tomatoes

Tomatoes are one of the easiest plants to grow year round. Enjoy plump and ripe tomatoes in salads, on sandwiches or make a chutney from them.



### Herbs

Basil, marjoram, rosemary, basil, thyme, oregano, parsley, chives and mint will all flourish in your greenhouse.



### Cacti and succulents

Cacti and succulents look striking in greenhouses – though they must have periods of dry conditions to be their best.



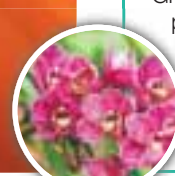
### Strawberries

Sweet and delicious, strawberries can be grown year-round in warm, climate-controlled conditions.



### Orchids

Greenhouses are the ideal place for growing orchids as you can control the environment so that it resembles its natural warm habitat.



heating source, you will also be able to grow many tropical plant species as well.”

If you're just starting out, Chelsea says you can't go wrong with tomatoes which can be grown year-round in your greenhouse.

To keep tomato plants healthy, she recommends keeping the compost moist and feeding your tomatoes weekly with fertiliser.

### WHAT TO CONSIDER BEFORE BUYING A GREENHOUSE

Beginner, intermediate and experienced gardeners will all benefit from having a greenhouse. The main difference between beginner and experienced greenhouses will be the size, technology and quality of materials used, says Sanjiv.

First things first, before you buy a greenhouse you will need to decide what plants you ideally would like to grow as this will help you factor in what you need in inside, such as heating, cooling, light requirements, humidity, and airflow, says Randy.

“Heating through winter will only be necessary if you want to grow tropical orchids for example, but cooling can be achieved with good ventilation and humidity.

“Another vital factor is finding the right position in your garden for example, as it's more important getting sun in winter rather than afternoon sun in summer.”

Now to the practical elements. Sanjiv says that you'll need to consider the space of your garden as the size of your greenhouse will depend on how much outdoor area you have to utilise.

You ideally would like your greenhouse to be placed in an open spot in your outdoor space to allow it to get plenty of light.

And finally, you will need to factor in budget. There's a wide variety of greenhouses to choose from with prices starting at as little as \$20 for a small-scale portable option to a permanent larger scale aluminium frame style that can range from hundreds to thousands of dollars.

If you're starting out, Chelsea recommends doing plenty of research to find the perfect greenhouse to suit your needs especially if the plan is to grow year round.

Randy adds, “Although glass is beautiful, polycarbonate is much more practical as it blocks out UV rays that can burn your plants on hot days and helps maintain temperature much better than glass.”

And don't worry about making a mistake, as even the experts don't always get it right.

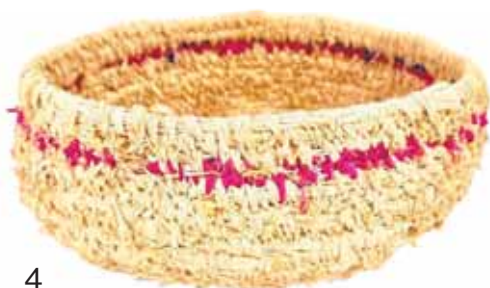
“It is a bit of a balancing act but with a bit of trial and error you can achieve amazing results with a greenhouse.” says Randy.

Now all that's left is to start growing beautiful healthy plants in your greenhouse. Your bank balance and even the planet will love you for it.



With fruit and veggie prices skyrocketing, a greenhouse could save on grocery bills.

## LOVE IT, SHOP IT



# First Nation vibes

Pay tribute with traditionally-made pieces designed by talented indigenous artisans

### 1 Music maker

Also called bilma, this traditional percussion instrument creates the rhythm for song and dances. These clapsticks, made in blackwood and in the River design, are by Taungwurrung Kulin artist Mick Harding. They are \$120.

[Ngargawarendj.com](http://Ngargawarendj.com)

### 2 Tea time

Based on an artwork by Warlukurlangu artist Judy Napangardi Watson, this fine bone china teapot, \$69.95, will be a standout piece on the kitchen table. And it's the perfect size to make tea for two.

[Welcometocountry.com.au](http://Welcometocountry.com.au)

### 3 Desert creatures

Crafted by Aboriginal artisan

Roshanna Elizabeth Yinga Williamson, this delightful echidna sculpture, called a Tjilkamarta, is made of natural grass, acrylic wool and raffia. It's \$231.

[Tjanpi.com.au](http://Tjanpi.com.au)

### 4 Weaving magic

This raffia basket has been handmade by Upia Long, one of the women in the Tjanpi Desert Weavers, of the Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yakunytjatjara lands. It is \$198.

[Tjanpi.com.au](http://Tjanpi.com.au)

### 5 Message sticks

Representing communication between people, this piece by Wiradjuri woman Maria Watson-Trudgett is both inspiring and beautiful. Message Sticks pink

canvas wall art from Alcove Studio, comes in various sizes, priced from \$469 to \$1199.

[Templeandwebster.com.au](http://Templeandwebster.com.au)

### 6 Conversation piece

Bring personality and passion to a room with this striking woven mat by Janet Guyula Garkunyalawuy. It's both a work of art and a conversation piece and retails for \$1149.

[Artark.com.au](http://Artark.com.au)

### 7 Spiritual practice

Combine indigenous art and yoga when you take your practice to this mat detailed with artwork by Glenda McCulloch, \$129. Made from recycled and natural materials, it's 100 per cent biodegradable.

[Yogat.com.au](http://Yogat.com.au)

### 8 Native flora

Featuring gum leaf artwork by artist Mick Harding, the Alperstein Designs Dancing Wombat sugar bowl, \$26.95, is made of porcelain and bamboo.

[Fairtradestore.com.au](http://Fairtradestore.com.au)

### 9 Bush beauty

Cynthia Burke is a highly skilled indigenous artist. Her snugly Better World Arts cotton baby blanket is \$60.

[Aboriginalbushtraders.com](http://Aboriginalbushtraders.com)

### 10 Floor art

This bright and colourful Emro Designs rug, \$399, showcases a design by talented Bundjalung artist Zoey Hart. It tells a story of Indigenous kids and their bright futures.

[Emrodesigns.com.au](http://Emrodesigns.com.au)



AT HOME WITH

# Dave Graham

Big Brother's Farmer Dave is back on screens with a message of hope



**Who** David Graham, aka Farmer Dave, contestant on Big Brother and founder of RuffTrack Ltd, a farm-based youth charity. **Where** I live at RuffTrack Farm, caring for the menagerie of animals. **Favourite part of the property** The Gunya. Like many parts of the farm it was built by the kids and it's where we do daily Circle Work, which teaches communication and resilience skills. **Inspiration** It's all about the basics. **Home is** That elusive dream that I want to make a reality for teens in trouble.

**I**t's been 16 years since a youthful Dave Graham, known as Farmer Dave, came out on national television, changing perceptions of what a farmer – and a gay man was.

The Big Brother 2006 contestant with the heart of gold and charismatic smile, is back on the small screen starring on Big Brother Royalty vs New Contenders and he has one goal in mind.

“(I want to) buy a forever farm for RuffTrack, here in western Sydney, so we can support more teens in need of safe, secure housing and learning environment,” he says, of the youth charity he founded to help troubled teens get back on track.

The farm-based program currently operating out of a rental property near the Hawkesbury, connects teens with dogs to help them learn responsibility and to

empower and skill them up for a secure future. Dave, 42, who grew up on a cattle and sheep station in Queensland and is the youngest of 11, is also a dad to four children, after being a sperm donor for female friends.

He says he would love to have kids of his own one day. “I love kids. I just love the idea that you can shape a good human,” he says.

The qualified dog training expert and MC lives with numerous animals who help the kids in RuffTrack's program, “including a horse named Penny, 50 sheep and goats, Jimmy, my little four-legged bed buddy (pictured), another 30 kelpies, several teens in my care, a lot of covies (guinea pigs) and a rabbit named Noah. I wanted to show the kids I work with that you can give anything a crack ... you just need to take a deep breath, feel the fear and do it anyway.”

Words: Trudy Oram Pictures: Darren Leigh Roberts



**JIMMY CHOO  
SOFT TOY**

I don't like to go anywhere without my dog Jimmy Choo (see left), but that's not always possible so I had stuffed toys of him made. That way he can travel the world with me and when people ask if there is another Jimmy Choo soft toy I can give them one.



**MIRROR BALL**

My great friend says rather than bad luck from a broken mirror, get the pieces back together and shine bright like a discoball.



**RUFFTRACK KIDS PHOTO**

This is RuffTrack kids and their dogs at a recent performance in Queensland, sent to us by an impressed photographer. The kids and I have done hundreds of performances across the country, building their confidence and social skills as well as spreading the message about our life transforming programs.



**MY SADDLE**

I had it hand made when I was 18. Other than my horse, it was my biggest investment. It gave me a sense of total freedom. I have so many memories of mustering and droving across the Outback in this saddle.



**MY CORDLESS MIC**

I feel alive as an MC and performer sharing joy with an audience and moving them emotionally.



**AUSTRALIAN  
PASSPORT**

I've visited more than 80 countries in my youth and my appreciation for our country and its people keeps growing. I have immense pride in Australia.



**TOWN BOOTS**

I'm usually in work boots and gum boots every day but occasionally I get to pull on my town boots and meet up with mates.



**FATHER'S DAY CARD**

This is a handmade Father's Day card from one of my donor kids Bonnie.