

Explore architect-designed builds, clever retrofits, all-electric upgrades, efficient apartments and climate-resilient homes.

Presented by **renew.**



Sustainable House Day



From the CEO

For more than two decades, Sustainable House Day has invited people across Australia to open their doors and share what they have learned about creating homes that are comfortable, efficient and ready for a changing climate. It has always been a simple idea with a powerful impact. Neighbours inspiring neighbours. Real people sharing real solutions.

Sustainable House Day is run by Renew, a national not-for-profit organisation that has supported people to live sustainably since 1980. Through our magazines *Renew* and *Sanctuary*, our events, advice and advocacy, we help households make practical changes that reduce energy use, cut bills and improve comfort. This event is part of that mission. It is powered by a small team, a passionate community and the generosity of those who open their homes each year.

What makes Sustainable House Day unique is what researchers call the neighbourhood effect. When we see what is possible in a home like ours, in a street like ours, change suddenly feels achievable. It can shift us from thinking about taking action to actually taking it. Every year we hear from people who have visited a home, been inspired and then gone on to make changes of their own.

Right now, households are facing rising energy costs, increasing climate impacts and what can seem like confusing information about what to do next. Yet our homes are one of the most powerful places we can take action to improve both the livability of our homes, and our beautiful planet. The choices we make about materials and design, energy systems and upgrades, shape not only our own comfort and bills, but also our collective future.

On Sustainable House Day we turn inspiration into action. We share knowledge, build confidence and strengthen communities. We recognise that the path to a more sustainable future is already being built, one conversation at a time, and one home at a time.

Thank you for being part of it.

Helen Oakey
Renew CEO

renew.

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FRONT COVER: *The Earthen Retreat. Architect: Thais Pupio*
Photo credit: Michael Nicholson

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Sustainable House Day

Presented by **renew.**

Every Sustainable House Day starts the same way. Someone opens the door and says, “Come on in, I’ll show you what we did.” It began in 1994 as Solar House Day, showcasing early solar homes. Today, it’s coordinated by Renew and supported by councils and community groups who help activate the event in local areas across the country.

Step inside architect-designed builds, clever retrofits, all-electric upgrades and efficient apartments. Talk directly with the people who’ve done it. What it cost. What worked. What they’d do differently. Because this is how change happens. Neighbour to neighbour. Sustainable House Day is made possible by the generosity of our donors, sponsors, council partners, community partners, our small staff team, and, of course, all the home tour hosts who generously donate their time.

Check out all the 2026 homes (and previous years!) at www.sustainablehouseday.com

Renew acknowledges First Nations people as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live and work, and recognises their deep and continuing connection to the land, sea and culture, and their rich contribution to society. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present, and acknowledge that Sovereignty of these lands was never ceded.

Rebuilding with Purpose: *A Bushfire-Resilient, Low-Impact Home in the Adelaide Hills*



PHOTO CREDIT: Ciao Bella Photography

AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES BIVEN – MYLOR BUSH RETREAT

Where is the home, and what’s the backstory?

Our home is in Mylor in the Adelaide Hills. The house was built in 1986 after the original stone house was destroyed in the Ash Wednesday bushfires, and a two-room extension was added in 2010. We purchased the property in 2016 and recently completed a passive solar extension which won a Master Builders award in 2025 in the renovation category.

What are the key sustainability features of the home?

Our house is mudbrick with a passive solar reverse brick veneer extension. The majority of the structural framing in the house is reclaimed hardwood. We are on rainwater only, have no AC units, and use a combustion fire with a heat pump-powered underfloor hydronic system in winter. We have a 5kW solar system (about to be 15kW) along with a couple of batteries. Our carpets are made from seaweed, we have locally made terracotta tiles, we used reclaimed bricks and timber, and our paint is a breathable natural paint. We have chickens, bees, and many fruit trees along with wicking beds for veggie gardens.

How does the home feel now compared to before?

The extension is fantastic and performs extremely well in all seasons. We also changed our high-level windows in the original house to double-glazed, which has made a huge difference in the heat retained in winter.

What did you learn along the way?

Working with people who are passionate about sustainability helps drive innovation and brings an energy that rubs off on everything we did. We learnt about breathable facades and their benefits from our builder (SustainaBuilding), who has a huge amount of knowledge in this area. Using lots of recycled and reclaimed material in the build is more time-consuming than many off the shelf products, but the environmental benefits are massive.



Start Where You Are: *A Suburban Home Built for Regenerative Living*

AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD TELFORD – ABDALLAH HOUSE

Tell us about your home.

Our home is in Taungurung country in Seymour, Victoria. It’s a small 3-bedroom owner-built house, made primarily from the original building that was deconstructed, as well as locally sourced recycled materials – maybe 50/50 new/recycled. The vision was to showcase low-cost permaculture design and build self/community reliance.

What sparked the decision to build sustainably?

While limited funds and the desire for our own home were key, I’ve always been passionate about reducing waste. I wanted to put my ideas into practice and build our home with people I respect, learning valuable skills on the journey. Alongside that was the arrival of our first son in 2007, and our second son, who was born at home just 10 days after moving in.

What role does renewable energy play in the home?

Solar passive design helps heat our home, alongside a wood stove that is only used during the coolest months of the year. Wood is primarily sourced locally from fallen trees across the road and from tree maintenance. The wetback in the stove works in combination with a solar hot water system. We added a 1.5kW grid interactive solar system in 2012, an induction cooker to replace gas in 2024, and upgraded our solar by another 1.9kW with a 16kW battery this year. If we think of renewable energy as cycling resources, then we do that too, with no biomass leaving the site, and our house using 100% rainwater from our 30,000lt rainwater tanks. And we have produced 500kg+ of fresh food per year on a suburban block of 580m2.

What is one idea people can take from your home?

You can learn how to do many things yourself. Become a designer and figure out how you can make your home better day by day. A sustainable home is not a destination; it’s an ongoing process with continual opportunities for improvement – especially by integrating with the environment using plants.



Slopes of Kunanyi

INTERVIEW WITH LOUISE GILFEDDER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY UTA GREEN



What were you hoping to achieve with this home, and how did that shape the design?

This home was my downsizing option – staying within my local neighbourhood and community. I subdivided and moved to the far side of what had been an old cattle paddock. I lost the grand kunanyi mountain views, but gained a house site immersed in green – blackwoods, gums and native grasses. A habitat for both me and local wildlife. Approaching seventy, the brief was clear: simple, single-level, accessible and designed for ageing. Warm, sustainable, low bills, low-maintenance, compact and unfussy.

You've used some interesting ideas for thermal mass, like water-filled walls. What inspired that, and how has it worked in practice?

Thermal mass is fundamental to maintaining a stable, comfortable indoor climate. The intention was to replace materials of high embodied energy (concrete/brick) with cost neutral recycled materials. Green Design Architects have developed a method that uses water-filled recycled glass vessels in the internal stud walls for effective thermal mass. Water has five times the specific heat of brick, and a comparable

thermal capacity of a brick wall – without the embodied energy of either the brick or the necessary substructure. The house stays within a narrow comfortable temperature range (18–24°C).

With a relatively small footprint and a strong focus on low embodied energy and reuse, what lessons from this project would you apply to future compact, climate-responsive homes?

A smaller footprint clarified every decision. The key lesson is to prioritise passive solar design from the outset, so the building performs naturally. Low embodied energy is essential: simple, carefully chosen materials can be durable, efficient and full of character. I'd keep the design compact, single-level and easy to live in, supporting ageing in place while reducing maintenance.

Climate responsiveness should be simple and adaptable, with good ventilation, shading and some manual control. I'd also increase the use of reclaimed materials, and recommend future builders include a cooler "retreat" space, and plan a sheltered outdoor area. The architectural beauty and emotional appeal of our homes and cities is important, as those are the places we will want to sustain.

From Off-Grid Experiment to Pocket Passiv: *A Smarter Way to Build*

BY EMMA SCRAGG

“Sustainable design is an amorphous thing,” says Simon Anderson, architect and owner of FZ Off-Grid House, which is opening for Sustainable House Day 2026.

He has watched the idea evolve over time, from basic passive solar design and water efficiency to homes designed for resilience in the face of flood, heat and fire. Today, the conversation has expanded again, taking in zero carbon, carbon-positive design and the growing influence of the Passivhaus movement.

Simon’s home in the Blue Mountains was his first flame-zone design, and he fully immersed himself in learning about designing for bushfire, including by volunteering for the local rural fire service.

Five years later, he is now second in charge of the brigade and, much the wiser, says, “There is a lot of knowledge gained from actually being in bushfires.” Simon says his house was a real experiment that only architects’ own homes can be, not only in bushfire resilience but also in energy efficiency.

He discovered firsthand that his 8.2-Star Off-Grid House was not as comfortable as expected. Extended cloudy periods meant the concrete slab took days to warm up, and the bedrooms dropped below 15 °C in winter.

“That’s where I had an epiphany and decided there’s got to be a better way of modelling.” One of the students in his office was learning about Passivhaus, and Simon, a lover of energy modelling tools, was sold on the concept.

“We’ve changed the way that the practice operates because of that house.” In Sydney’s Glebe, Anderson Architecture squeezed Australia’s smallest Passivhaus (Plus standard) into a tiny backyard patch opening directly onto the street, aptly named Pocket Passiv. Its 27 sqm footprint experiences only 0.5 air changes an hour, compared to a typical home of 15-20. Not only does this make a massive difference to energy consumption for heating and cooling, when needed, it also means the air is filtered from pollution, smoke haze and pollen outside and removes condensation, off-gassing and particle pollution inside for a healthy indoor environment.

Simon believes that architects have a sustainability role to promote smaller houses as the smarter way of doing things – a sensibly-sized home at a lower cost.



PHOTO CREDIT: Wolter Peeters



PHOTO CREDIT: Justina Aaron

Designing What Matters: *Jo Bastian’s ‘Just Enough’ Approach*

BY EMMA SCRAGG

Jo Bastian studied at the University of Newcastle during a time when the school was at the forefront of sustainable architectural design, and her work still reflects that influence. Her playful approach sees each home carefully respond to and open up to its surroundings.

When Jo established her own practice, Bastian Architecture, in 2014, she applied the principles learnt; designing renovations of terrace houses in Sydney’s inner west, where she learned how to milk every square metre of their compact footprints.

Jo relishes challenging current house size ideals as part of her contribution to sustainability, aiming to compress each client’s brief to the most efficient footprint possible, with every space working hard to justify its existence and using old-school, low-tech principles of passive solar design.

Jo whittles away wasted space, describing her work as “efficient architecture”. She says, “The more you build, the more you’re using; whether it’s scale, time, energy or materials.” With escalating building and living costs, removing superfluous floor area can have a huge impact both on the hip pocket and the environment.

Wherever possible, Jo aims to retain existing buildings and reimagine them. Re-Wild, a home to be featured for Sustainable House Day, was once an unassuming weatherboard beach shack but now embraces its new landscape and the local seaside climate.

Designed without air conditioning, “It was a site which allowed the sun/wind do the heating/cooling,” says Jo. An extension for living to the south, separated by garden and an existing seam of sandstone, allows the sun to penetrate at the right time of year and celebrate the natural features of the site. The house is now more about the spaces outside, and it opens up to them, making internal spaces feel larger. The infloor heating and fireplace are infrequently used because the passive solar design is spot on.

Scale is Jo’s mantra for good design, the art of ‘just enough’. In these times of high building costs, she emphasises, “The focus is to sort out which functions coexist because if you do that, then you reduce the scale, reduce costs. It’s a flow-on effect.”



Built by Hand: Markeeta Culley's Off-Grid Natural Building Journey

AN INTERVIEW WITH MARKEETA CULLEY – THE SHED

You've built something pretty extraordinary here - what first sparked the idea?

Over the years, as my business progressed (Forest Garden Soaps), it rapidly took over our home. I knew I needed a dedicated space to work in, so what began with the idea of one or two small 3m x 4m sheds from Bunnings developed into a much larger dream. So with grid paper, a scale ruler, free building design software, and plenty of new knowledge, I drew up my plans, and things began to move forward.

This wasn't a simple build. What tested you the most, and how did you push through it?

That's true. Physically, it has been extremely demanding, which I don't mind, but it has pushed me to my limits. Just getting the materials up to the site was an ongoing challenge. It was a fair way from the delivery point, and every single item had to be carried by hand up a hill, over uneven ground.

You've clearly learned a huge amount along the way. What's one thing you know now that completely changed how you think about building?

It's been a huge learning curve. I initially didn't have the confidence or think that physically being one person, I could build this myself. People (particularly women) might also think this is outside their scope of capabilities, but if you have the determination, drive, and resolve, anything is possible.

For someone dreaming of building or retrofitting their own place, what's your best piece of honest advice before they begin?

Go to the library, find reputable content on YouTube, join Facebook groups, go directly to the material suppliers and build relationships with the experts there. I have met so many people who are more than happy to provide helpful advice and want to share their knowledge. Trust yourself and get started.

From Hotbox to Haven: *How a 1960s Brunswick West Apartment Was Transformed into a Cosy, Low-Energy Home*



PHOTO CREDIT: Matto Lucas

AN INTERVIEW WITH SHAUN TOMPKINS – 380 ALBERT

Tell us about your home.

The apartment is located within an old 60s 6-pack in Brunswick West in Melbourne.

What first sparked the shift toward a more sustainable home?

At the time I purchased the apartment, I had worked as a sustainability consultant and ESD advisor for four to five years, so I had to put my money where my mouth was.

What are the key sustainability features of the home?

Because the apartment is on the top level and north-west facing it was a (deadly) hotbox! So the main intervention was removing the plaster ceiling and installing R3.5 pinkbatts in the ceiling and then using the K17 rigid insulation panels for the internal north and west-facing walls.

Luckily for me, the apartment already had a little electric HWS, so I didn't have to replace that. As I only had limited electrical capacity and live alone (although I love to cook), I opted for a 2-burner induction top, which has been perfectly fine for my needs and heats water quicker than my kettle!

Almost all of the furniture (except the couch) was second-hand, including the wardrobe units and the kitchen benchtop, which was purchased from Urban Salvage in Spotswood. I also installed cork flooring throughout due to its thermal and acoustic benefits, and the fact that it's a renewable product. I also rented almost all of the tools I used from the Brunswick Tool Library (highly recommend!).

How does the home feel now compared to before?

When I moved in, it had the landlord special – grey carpet and bright white paint. By introducing the warmer tones and splash of colour with the kitchen cabinets, it feels like a home. It's super cosy, and gets a unique little view of Brunswick West from the third level – including sunsets over Flemington and Moonee Ponds.

What did you learn along the way?

I learnt almost everything on the fly! Between YouTube, having a good friend cheering me on and a beer or two, it was all super manageable! My biggest learning curve was probably the waterproofing and tiling in the bathroom (which I reeled my dad in for).

The Earthen Retreat



PHOTO CREDIT: Michael Nicholson

INTERVIEW WITH THAIS PUPIO

This home leans into natural building materials and a strong connection to place. What was the core idea or philosophy that shaped the design from the beginning?

One of the core desires embedded in all my projects is the dialogue between architecture and nature, as a way of reconnecting people to the natural world. I believe the disconnection from nature is at the root of many human struggles, relational, emotional, behavioural, environmental. So wherever I can, that reconnection is something I actively pursue through design. This project was no different, and honestly particularly joyful. The client is passionate about his gardens and that alignment made the conversation between the house and the land feel alive from the very start. Although every project asks for its own process, connection to place is foundational and non-negotiable for me. Here it is expressed through rammed earth, site-responsive design, and a strong dialogue between indoor and outdoor. Passive solar principles, natural ventilation, and conscious material choices were all woven in from the very beginning. The idea was that sustainability, beauty, and human experience converge. A house harmonious with its environment, its

materials, its users, and its cultural context. And ultimately, something that people love, because for me the most sustainable building is one that is loved. What is loved is cared for, and what is cared for endures. **Earthen homes often challenge conventional building approaches. What were the biggest design or construction hurdles—and how did you work through them?**

One of the design hurdles initially was that we were limited to the footprint of the existing house on site to avoid triggering issues with Council. We worked through that and ended up with a much better internal layout than what was there before. With construction it was a learning process in understanding the most efficient ways to work with rammed earth within a design that had its complexities, with angled walls and connections between materials like recycled timber and steel. Rammed earth sits outside the standard building code pathway, so there is always an education process with certifiers, engineers, and sometimes clients. You need builders who genuinely understand the material, and what made it work was building a tight trusted team early and staying closely involved throughout.

How does the house actually perform day-to-day in terms of comfort, temperature and energy use?

With rammed earth combined with great cross ventilation, the thermal mass does exactly what it promises. The walls absorb heat through the day and release it slowly at night, which in the Byron Bay climate means the interior stays remarkably stable without mechanical intervention. But what I find most meaningful is how people describe being inside it. There is a steadiness, a quiet. People often comment that they feel grounded and calm, and I think that is the earthen mass doing its work. Performance you feel more than you measure.

What do you hope people take away from visiting this home?

A different sense of what is possible maybe. I hope it sharpens people's perception of how a house made with earth can genuinely support our wellbeing, that comfort can come from the intelligence of the building itself, from its relationship with the sun, the breeze, the natural world. That sustainability does not need to be complicated. If someone walks out feeling that architecture can restore our connection to nature, I am very happy already.

Making the Home of the Future

Handy tips from Australia’s leading home electrification expert and Renew member Tim Forcey

DESPITE NOW DEDICATING HIS LIFE TO GETTING AUSTRALIANS TO REDUCE THEIR ENERGY USE AND GET OFF GAS, TIM FORCEY ACTUALLY STARTED HIS CAREER AS A CHEMICAL ENGINEER WORKING IN FOSSIL FUELS.

“I moved to Australia from the U.S.A to work in the gas industry,” says Tim Forcey. “The climate emergency is my driving force, but the reality is gas is a fossil fuel that we can’t be relying on in the future.”

The challenging reality is that five million existing Australian households still rely on gas connections. Switching to electricity can be cheaper, good for the planet and better for your health. What is the first step to having a more energy-efficient and electric home?

THE FIRST (AND BIGGEST) STEP TO AN ENERGY-EFFICIENT HOME

“The number one thing I tell people is to heat your home with a reverse-cycle air conditioner,” says Tim. “It can be a third of the cost of gas, or a fifth the cost of using an electric heater – a no-brainer.” As Tim explains, a reverse-cycle air conditioner is a heat pump. “It uses a refrigerant system to actually get free heat out of the air, even on the coldest days in winter, it will collect enough to warm your home.” There is one catch, though: “You need to clean the filter!” says Tim, who points out that people sometimes don’t think their system is working, when all it needs is a clean. Importantly, this can also be a viable option for renters and apartment owners who may have more limited options available.

MORE SIMPLE STEPS

INSULATION! INSULATION! INSULATION!

“The number two recommendation I make to nearly everyone is about roof space insulation. Not only is just having it critical to staying warm in winter and cold in summer, it’s also really important to have a nice, thick, perfect layer there,” Tim says. By this, he means uninterrupted insulation. “Often what I find when I inspect roof spaces is that the insulation has been strewn around – maybe somebody went up there to fix a water leak or change a light bulb, or put in the NBN and the insulation has been shoved around and not fixed.” Tim likens the effect to going to bed with only half a doona covering you; even the smallest disruption can undo the desired result.

BLOCK THOSE DRAFTS

“Our homes are very leaky,” Tim explains. In older places, this is often because of outdated historical design flaws. “I go into a lot of homes that might have old unused

fireplaces, and they have these very common wall vents, which were originally used to feed air into the fire but for years have just been letting air in for no reason.” Plugging up these spaces can be really helpful, alongside simple things like using draft stoppers. The caveat here is that you will need to ventilate the home by opening windows from time-to-time. “But you're better off doing that by managing it with opening windows rather than just having a hole in the wall,” he points out.

ADVICE FOR RENTERS WANTING AN ENERGY-EFFICIENT HOME

Roughly 30% of Australian households are rentals. Things like the reverse-cycle air conditioner is often a good option, as various rebates make it more appealing for landlords to decommission old gas-based systems and replace them. But there are also small, practical steps renters can take to make their homes more comfortable in winter and lower their dependency on gas. “Heaps of condensation can build up on windows and be quite uncomfortable, so I often recommend putting up bubble wrap on windows – it can actually work as effectively as double glazing,” Tim says.

He also says there are basic draft-proofing measures renters can take, like filling in gaps around the architraves. “And a great idea is to buy a water-saving showerhead and take that from rental to rental with you so you can cap your water flow and save there,” he adds.

WHAT ABOUT KEEPING YOUR HOUSE COOL IN SUMMER?

“External shading is absolutely critical,” Tim says. Tim has about 10 different ways he shades his own house in the summer, including external roller blinds, pull-down awnings, umbrellas, and shading plants. “The bubble wrap also works in the heat,” he says, “but another product I often recommend to renters is RenShade, which is a kind of removable perforated foil designed to reflect the sun. It’s very effective and can be reused.”

HOW DO I ELECTRIFY MY HOME?

Once you’ve addressed the energy efficiency of your home and taken these small steps to make it more comfortable, there are three major swaps you can make to get off gas.

1. Replace gas heating with reverse cycle air-conditioning
“As I mentioned earlier, this is the number one message I tell everyone whose homes I assess – it's the easiest and biggest shift we can make in Australia.”
2. Replace the gas hot water system with a hot water heat pump

An electric hot water heat pump uses the same technology as a reverse cycle air-conditioner, in that it moves hot air from one place to another. “These are the way to go and can potentially heat your hot water for a third the cost of gas, and a fifth the cost of an electric resistive system,” says Tim.

While people often, understandably, worry about the cost, Tim points out that if your hot water system is already 10 years old, it’s time to look at replacing it anyway. “You're probably going to be out of pocket \$1000 or \$2000 to get a hot water heat pump installed,” he says. “But then there are things you can look at like federal renewable energy credits to reduce the price, plus various states have different incentives and programmes, some of which are means-tested, which bring the price down again.”

3. Replace the gas cooktop with an induction cooktop
“If you were to electrify your heating and your hot water, but you’re using gas cooking, you’d likely still get a sizable gas bill, because in Australia you probably pay \$1 to \$2 a day just to be connected to the gas grid,” says Tim.

When Tim visits homes, he says people are often most reluctant to talk about swapping out their gas cooktops. “Once I point out that gas cooking can contribute to childhood asthma, you should see how quickly replacing the cooktop goes right



up the priority list.” Plus, as Tim points out, not all electric cooktops are made equally – and the newer technology provides instantaneous heat.

“While they might look the same as the old electric cooktops, electric induction cooktops have a big magnet hiding underneath the glass surface,” Tim explains. “It operates like gas or maybe even a bit faster – when you turn it on, it immediately heats the pot.” How does it work? “It creates a magnetic induction current or field that stimulates the pot and actually turns the pot into the cooking element. So, they heat very quickly, and you can remove the pot from the surface and touch the glass, and you're probably not going to burn yourself. The cooktop will be warm but not hot.”

NEED SOME MORE HELP?

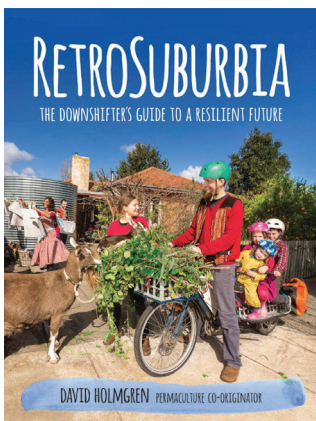
If you’re ready to take the next step, Renew offers trusted, independent advice, practical guides and workshops to help you plan your upgrade. Head to the Renew website to explore resources, learn from experts via our workshops and find the support you need to make your home more comfortable, efficient and all-electric.

For Bank Australia customers, there are also home loan options that can help ease the financial costs of getting off gas. If you're buying or building a new green home, the Clean Energy Home Loan offers a reduced variable or fixed rate. If you already have a Bank Australia home loan, the Eco Pause lets you take a break from repayments to redirect funds toward eco upgrades like solar panels, batteries and water tanks.

Interested in going all-electric? Bank Australia customers can learn more about how to make the switch on our Electrify Your Home Hub.

This article originally appeared on the Bank Australia website and has been slightly updated.

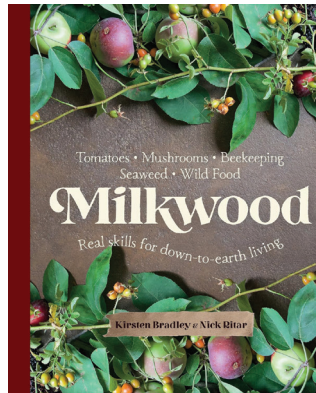
OUR TOP TEN: BOOKS



Retrosuburbia

by David Holmgren

If you want a big-picture rethink of suburban life, this is it. More manual than book, it explores food, energy, community and culture through a permaculture lens. It's ambitious and occasionally dense, but grounded in practical pathways that make transformation feel possible, not theoretical. A foundational guide for deeper change.



reconnect with making food yourself. **Milkwood: Real Skills for Down-to-Earth Living**

by Kirsten Bradley

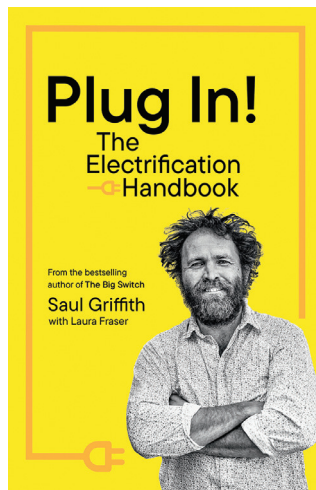
A generous, practical handbook for hands-on living, covering food growing, preserving, natural building and soil care. Grounded in real experience, it builds confidence through doing. Perfect for anyone wanting to move beyond theory and develop the skills needed for a more resilient, self-sufficient life.



My Efficient Electric Home Handbook

by Tim Forcey

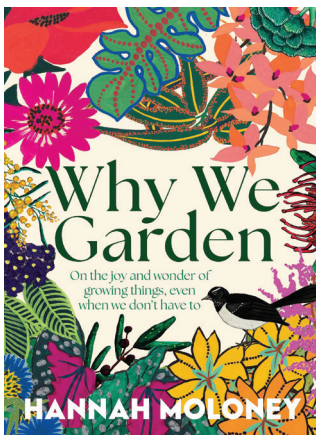
Clear, practical and jargon-free, this is the go-to guide for electrifying your home without overwhelm. It explains what to switch, when and why, helping reduce bills and emissions. Perfect for beginners, it pairs well with the *My Efficient Electric Home Handbook* community, where thousands share advice and real-world experience.



Plug In! The Electrification Handbook

by Saul Griffith

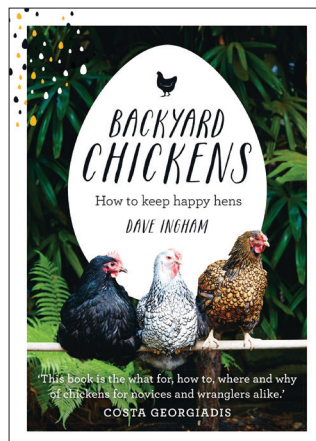
Part manifesto, part practical guide, this book makes the case for going all-electric. Saul Griffith translates climate action into everyday household choices, from cars to cooktops. Data-driven yet optimistic, it shows how change is not only necessary, but achievable, starting right at home.



Why We Garden

by Hannah Moloney

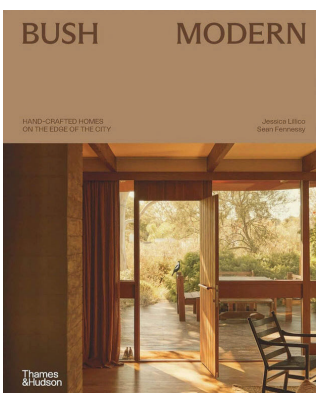
Rather than focusing on how to garden, this book explores why we feel called to grow things at all. Through reflections and conversations, it reveals gardening as connection, care and meaning. Thoughtful and personal, it invites you to slow down, get your hands in the soil and reconnect.



Backyard Chickens: How to Keep Happy Hens

by Dave Ingham

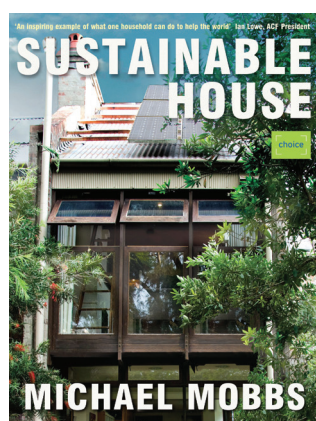
A practical, down-to-earth guide to keeping backyard chickens, covering coops, feeding, health and behaviour. Written with warmth and humour, it makes the idea accessible for beginners and seasoned keepers alike. More than a how-to, it reconnects you with food, waste cycles and daily life.



Bush Modern

by Jessica Lillico & Sean Fennessy

A visual exploration of an Australian architectural movement built on mud brick, recycled materials and DIY ingenuity. Through 23 homes, it reveals a design approach shaped by landscape and necessity. Both nostalgic and relevant, it shows sustainable building traditions that still resonate today.



Sustainable House

by Michael Mobbs

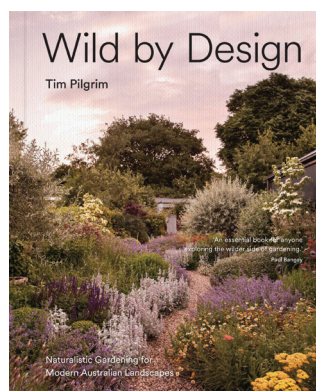
A classic Australian sustainability story, this book documents the retrofit of Michael Mobbs' inner-city Sydney home. Honest and detailed, it shares lessons on water, energy and waste. It shows how even conventional homes can be transformed, offering practical insights alongside inspiration.



Real Food Projects

by Kate Walsh

Part cookbook, part hands-on manual, this book builds essential kitchen skills from bread and butter to fermentation and preserving. Designed for real life, it breaks processes into clear, achievable steps. Drawing on expert knowledge, it helps you cook from scratch and



Wild by Design

by Tim Pilgrim

An invitation to embrace naturalistic gardening, this book explores landscapes that evolve over time. It encourages working with nature rather than controlling it, supporting biodiversity and resilience. Grounded in the Australian context, it blends design insight with a mindset shift toward more relaxed, living gardens.

Coburg Comfort Upgrade House

BY KATY DAILY



PHOTO CREDIT: Zero Carbon Merri-bek

Our home is a typical suburban California Bungalow built in 1930 and renovated in 2010. Since purchasing the home in Feb 2021, we’ve improved the thermal performance by draughtproofing, replacing the downlights then insulating the ceiling and retrofitting double glazing in all windows and doors. We swapped both shower heads with ultra-low-flow shower heads and use tank water to water the garden. We’ve planted a native garden in the front yard and fully landscaped the backyard re-using the concrete as pavers.

In 2021 we converted the house to be fully electric by adding solar, switching to a heat pump hot water service, modifying the existing gas stove/electric oven with an induction stovetop, augmented the ducted RCAC with a split system and Big Ass fan for the back half of the house, installed a 13.5kWh battery and purchased an EV as our one car.

Before insulating we removed the gas ducted heating system to improve our insulation coverage and hope to reclaim the space where the decommissioned gas fireplace resides soon. Our next sustainability projects are to add honeycomb blinds to improve the thermal performance of our house in winter and replace the ducted RCAC with multi-head split systems. This will greatly improve the comfort in the older, front half of the house.

Since adding our battery we have net -\$1,050 in energy bills, including powering our EV almost exclusively with solar, and have virtually eliminated the need to import energy from the grid. We are part of a VPP and hope to trial V2H or V2G in the near future.

Our house shows it is possible to continually improve older homes for comfort and to future-proof by reducing or eliminating running costs. Visitors can see how we created a unique induction stovetop retrofit utilising our existing oven, what it looks like to use Thermawood to retrofit double glazing in both new and heritage wood windows, see a creative reuse for a slab of concrete and hear the steps we’ve taken to take our home and transport off-gas.

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The Sustainable House Day Word Search

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