

“Cross-ventilation was a priority ... Glenda and Robert didn’t even turn on their fans when temperatures reached 45C last Christmas”

Challenging site

Robert and Glenda’s site runs west to east so it wasn’t possible to orient the length of the house to the sun and ideal north.

Wanting to make the building as comfortable as possible and to minimise cost, Peter decided to run it along contours of the slope and positioned the living room, deck, veranda and guest bedroom to the north so they get sun in winter while being shaded by eaves in summer.

“Glenda and Robert’s bedroom is at the south end and, because it has a night-time function, it doesn’t need the sun, although it gets the morning sun from the east, which comes in under the trees,” he says.

Maximising cross-ventilation was a priority, as the house is 3km from the coast and rarely gets a strong wind. “You need to take advantage of every cooling breeze in summer,” says Peter.

The results speak for themselves – Glenda and Robert didn’t even turn on their fans when temperatures reached 45C last Christmas.

Fire precautions

Bawley Point is surrounded by national parks with abundant flora and wildlife, and Glenda and Robert were keen that their garden be appropriate to the area.

Before receiving their occupancy certificate, they needed to remove 12-15 trees, mostly old turpentines, to set a minimum clear distance between the house and the surrounding bush.


“It’s related to how far a fire can reach and the radiant heat fire fighters can take,” says Glenda, adding that certain trees, such as the spotted gums, were allowed to remain.

After receiving a landscape design as a housewarming gift from their daughter, they’ve spent the past year planting flora endemic to the area.

Evidence of their hard work can already be seen. A plethora of rain-forest plants and natives are slowly establishing themselves despite drought conditions.

“We’ve used plants recommended by the fire service, which will burn [and die] but resist fire to the bitter end and so slow down a fire and take the radiant heat off you,” explains Glenda.

“Natives, once established, are quite tough at taking dry periods and we’ve strategically positioned ferns where the sewage goes out through the Envirocycle – they’re doing marvellously.”

Envirocycle is a system that recycles domestic wastewater from the bathroom, kitchen and laundry and treats it in an underground tank. The treated water is then dispersed through irrigation lines and sprinklers back into the garden. 

MORE INFORMATION NSW Rural Fire Service, www.bushfire.nsw.gov.au
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C Despite the drought, native trees and plants are establishing themselves