



At home with nature

Love for the land inspires a house for a growing family

with
MADLINE HEALY

Designing a home for your own family takes on a whole new meaning when you're an architect. Not only are you acutely aware of your own budget, but you are also very aware of the needs of the clients – your own family.

For architects Chris Bligh and Sonia Graham, of Bligh Graham Architects, these challenges were part of their desire to create a family property outside of Brisbane in Cedar Creek. They left behind their inner-city lifestyle about nine years ago and embarked on a journey to create their ideal country retreat.

They found their property, about 40 minutes from the city, close to the Samford Valley Steiner School where they wanted to send their children (Jonathon 11, Emily, 8, and Thea, 4), and with enough space for their own business.

It wasn't just about living in the country, it was about returning to a much simpler lifestyle.

"We liked the idea of being out here and growing as much food as we could," Chris says. "We're really into the outdoors and are both pretty green; we always have been and we've taken custodianship of the land out here and have planted more the 3000 trees – a lot of them indigenous to the area."

The 2ha property now houses three buildings (the pool villa, the studio and the family's home) – in essence, simple fibro boxes that have been designed to have a presence in the landscape.

The studio is at the front of the property and has work spaces for about four staff. The idea was to separate the house from the road, and to create space between work and home via a herb garden. The floor of the office is the roof of a 68,000-litre water tank and there are views out to the south of Mount Glorious.

The space is designed to be adaptable and could be converted into a teenagers' retreat at a later date. Areas where loft sleeping areas could be created are currently storage spaces.

There is an Asian theme throughout the three buildings, with a clever use of screens and boxes around the windows that also add depth to the buildings.

"We have used things like plywood boxes on the outside of the fibro house, so that the lines of the house are extended, and from the inside, they create a sense of thickness in the walls," Chris says.

He's also created large protective roofs that echo the surrounding ridgelines, and the colour scheme picks up the colour of the granite boulders and the rainforest on the property.

Rocks have been used extensively around the site, many of which are still in their original positions. Others have been carted to their current spots, such as the rocks used as steps up to the house.

"This kind of creates a feeling that the house



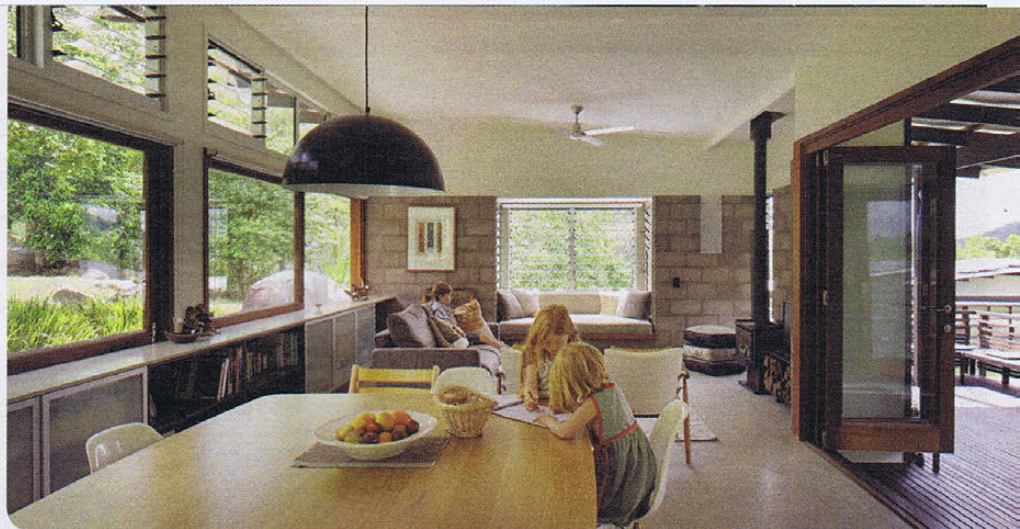
is floating rather than being tied down to the ground," Chris says.

The five-bedroom house itself is compact, but the decking and outdoor areas surrounding it add to the spacious feel. All the living areas are connected to one another, whether through the courtyard or the kitchen.

In the lounge area, a reversed veneer wall, made from solid concrete blocks, gives thermal mass to the house so it stays cool in summer and warm in winter.

Bay window bench seats have storage space under, and custom-made light fittings give the house its character. High-level louvres allow the hot air to escape and custom-made bookcases are a mix of hardwood and cheaper Ikea furniture.

The children's bathroom offers views of the



pool area and the Mount Glorious bushland. "Jonathan often watches the storms coming through when he's sitting in the bath," Chris says. "It's a lovely way to grow up – to have that interaction with the landscape, rather than being inside in air-conditioning all the time."

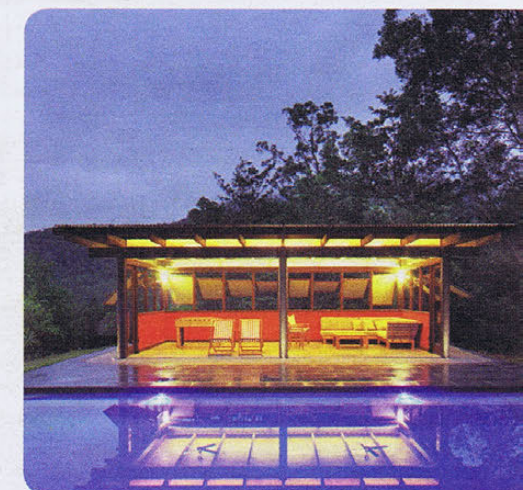
The adults can also enjoy views from their bathroom which opens via bifold doors to the elements.

"It's about four degrees cooler out here and we get a fantastic breeze up the valley in summer," Chris says.

The highlight for the children is the three-level cubbyhouse that has been painstakingly built by the family. With its sandpit, lounge area and viewing deck, it's the icing on the cake.

ARCHITECT • Bligh Graham, ph: 3289 4566.

BUILDERS • JC Build Pty Ltd, ph: 3880 0549, and Garry Collier Builder, ph: 3289 4313.



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