

INSPIRE

An Auckland Home Show Publication **Winter 2026**

Outdoor
Living 365
Getting Set
for Summer
& Beyond

+

Creating Your
Year-round
Outdoor Oasis
Why Winter is
the Perfect
Time to Start



To Tile or Not
to Tile?—Why That
is the Question

Colour Drenching
Soaking up the
Latest Interior Trend

INSPIRE

Welcome to the Winter 2026 edition of INSPIRE, our seasonal e-magazine created especially for Auckland Home Show subscribers

There is something about winter that changes our relationship with home. As temperatures drop and evenings grow longer, we spend more time indoors, paying closer attention to the spaces around us and how they could work better, feel warmer, or simply bring us more enjoyment.

In this edition we explore ideas, trends and conversations shaping Kiwi homes. From colour drenching and the latest tile trends to intergenerational living and more sustainable renovation choices, these stories are designed to inform, inspire and spark new possibilities.

We also look at home energy choices, examining solar power, gas and induction cooking, while our outdoor living feature shows why winter is the smartest season to start planning the backyard you'll enjoy when warmer weather returns and extending its use year-round. You'll also find ideas for creating a more comfortable bedroom retreat, along with a little winter indulgence from the kitchen.

As always, the inspiration comes from the people who know Kiwi homes best, the exhibitors of the Auckland Home Show. Their expertise, practical advice and innovative products help New Zealanders create homes they love living in.

We hope this issue gives you plenty to think about, plan for and enjoy this winter.

The Auckland Home Show Team



Cover Outdoor living all year round with this beautifully designed entertainment space featuring a log burning fire and atmospheric lighting by [Love Kitchens](#). See more on following pages

Pictured here Heat pumps like this Rinnai pro series 2 are dramatically more efficient to run than many other gas or electric options while also providing cooling See feature page 20

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COVER FEATURE

Outdoor Living 365 Getting Set for Summer & Beyond



At Inspire, we're passionate about outdoor living. That's why we see winter not as the end of the outdoor season, but as the beginning of the next one, and the smartest time for creating or upgrading your outdoor environment for summer and beyond. With the shortest day fast approaching, the time to start planning is now! Then come the warmer months, you'll already be relaxing outside enjoying the results.

Designed for year-round entertaining This outdoor living space by [Love Kitchens](#) brings together warmth, cooking and connection in one beautifully integrated setting. At its heart is a versatile Escea outdoor fireplace, paired with a Weber-centred kitchen that makes gathering with family and friends effortless. Built to withstand New Zealand's ever-changing weather, this is an outdoor retreat that can be enjoyed in every season. This spread and cover photography by Jamie Cobel.



THE BEST OUTDOOR SPACES are almost never created in summer. They are done over winter, built through a series of good decisions rather than one dramatic transformation.

The flow from indoors to outdoors. Shelter from prevailing wind. The way afternoon sun lands across the deck. Privacy from neighbours. The feeling of calm and connection that comes from a space that has been properly considered.

This is also the perfect season to address how the backyard actually functions in various conditions.

Does the deck get enough sun? Is there shelter from wind or rain? Would a pergola extend the usability of the space? Could built-in seating create better flow for entertaining? Is outdoor lighting strong enough for winter evenings, or does the space disappear entirely after dark?

Winter also happens to be one of the best times to tackle the practical work that pays off by summer. It's the season for pruning hedges back hard before spring growth begins, reshaping overgrown gardens, improving drainage while the ground is wet enough to reveal problem areas, and repairing retaining walls, paving or tired decks before entertaining season returns.

Winter exposes these problems honestly. Cold southerlies reveal where shelter is needed. Shorter days show where lighting matters. Heavy rain highlights drainage issues that often go unnoticed in summer. Instead of seeing winter as the off-season, smart homeowners are increasingly using it as a testing ground for future improvements and potential use in the colder months. >

COVER FEATURE



> There is also a growing shift happening in how outdoor areas are designed. Backyards are no longer treated as separate from the home. Increasingly, they are extensions of everyday living. Outdoor dining zones connect directly to kitchens, decking materials continue visually from inside to out, and heating, lighting and shelter help outdoor spaces remain inviting well beyond the middle of summer.

Importantly, winter planning usually means better timing and less pressure financially. Builders, landscapers and outdoor specialists are often easier to book before the spring rush begins. Materials can be ordered early, and decisions can be made carefully rather than rushed through under seasonal pressure.



Even smaller projects benefit from this approach. Refreshing outdoor furniture, re-staining timber decking, installing subtle garden lighting or improving irrigation before dry weather returns are the quieter winter jobs that dramatically improve how a home feels once long evenings and warmer temperatures arrive again.

Because ultimately, outdoor living is not really about summer itself. It's about creating a home that works better year-round.



Outdoor spaces become an extension of indoor living areas for year-round use. **Top to bottom** Decking connects visually from inside to out with full-height sliders by NZ Windows. Bespoke Louvres provide the perfect shelter for extended outdoor living. A covered deck and a hot tub extend the enjoyment of this outdoor space by Licensed Renovations. This fire pit by Design Concepts and mood lighting create an inviting outdoor area in cooler temperatures.



Pictured all kitchens by [Love Kitchens](#).

AN OUTDOOR KITCHEN can completely change the way a home connects to the garden. More than simply a place for the barbecue, it becomes a natural gathering point that brings cooking, entertaining and outdoor living together in one space. Done well, it creates a seamless transition between indoors and out, encouraging families and guests to spend more time outside throughout the year.

We asked Rhys Mellor from Love Kitchens what separates a good outdoor kitchen from a great one. His answer was simple: "space".

"People often try to fit too much into a small area," he says. "You need enough prep space to actually cook and serve comfortably. That's one of the most important things."

Mellor says practicality is often overlooked in favour of appliances. Barbecues, pizza ovens, smokers and sinks all have their place, but without enough room to prepare food and gather around, the kitchen quickly becomes difficult to use. He recommends generous bench space on either side of the barbecue to make cooking and serving easier.

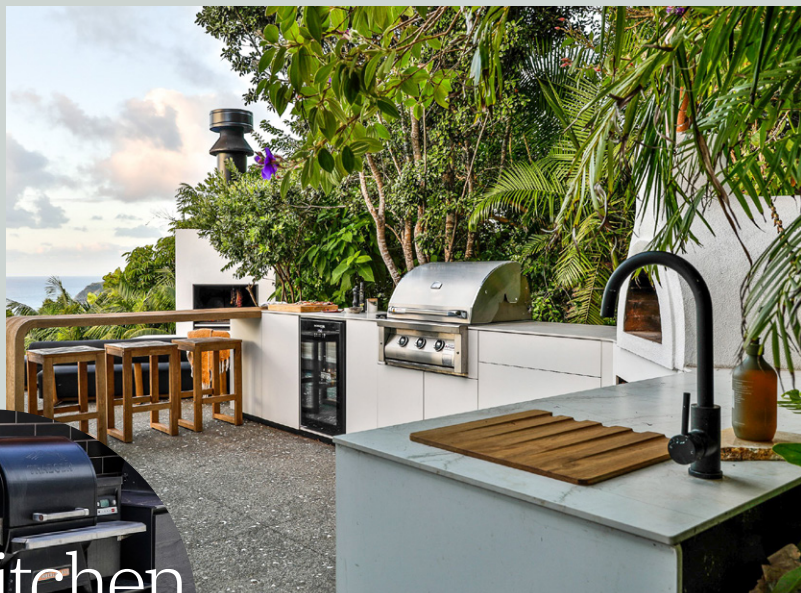
The relationship between the outdoor kitchen and the main house is equally important. If the indoor kitchen is only a few steps away, homeowners may not need extensive outdoor storage or appliances. But when the outdoor area becomes more independent, features such as sinks, refrigeration and dishwashers can make the space far more functional for entertaining.

For Mellor, the real success of an outdoor kitchen is not the appliances or finishes, but the way it changes how people use their home and garden.

"You actually get to sit out there and enjoy it," he says. "You create the garden, put all that work into it, and the outdoor kitchen gives you a reason to be outside in it."

Planting also plays a major role in softening the space and creating a stronger connection to the landscape. Layers of greenery help outdoor kitchens feel integrated into the garden rather than simply added beside it. Add heating or a fireplace, and the space becomes usable well beyond summer.

The Kitchen Connection



"If there's nothing drawing you outside, you naturally stay indoors," says Mellor. "But when you create a space that's warm, practical and connected to the garden, people want to be out there. Families spend more time together, friends stay longer, and you actually get to enjoy the environment you've created."



Circular fire pit and setting by Design Concepts.

Winter Garden Wins

What to Plant Now for a Result in Summer

Winter might make gardens look dormant, but it is actually one of the best times of year to plant. Cooler temperatures and reliable rainfall allow roots to establish properly before the stress of summer heat arrives.

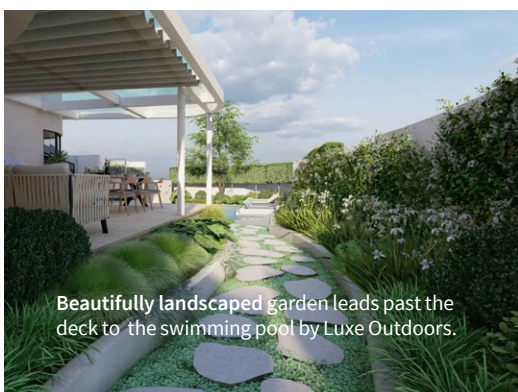
For homeowners wanting more privacy and shelter by next summer, now is the ideal time to plant hedging such as griselinia, pittosporum, camellia and even feijoa. These hardy varieties establish well through winter and quickly soften fences and boundaries.

Winter is also perfect for planting deciduous and fruit trees. Ornamental maples and flowering cherries establish well while dormant, rewarding homeowners with strong spring growth and summer shade. Fruit trees and citrus also benefit from winter planting and pruning before the growing season begins.

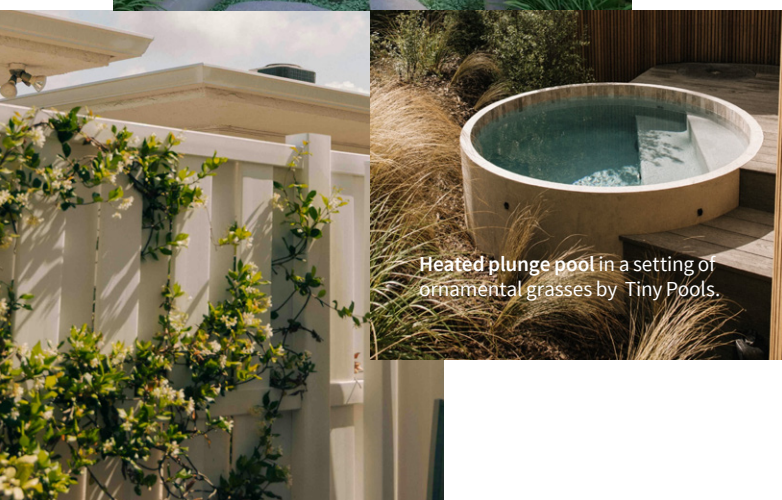
Around decks and entertaining spaces, lavender, hydrangeas, salvias, rosemary and ornamental grasses all establish beautifully through winter, creating colour, softness and fragrance by summer. Daphne is another favourite for adding beautiful scent near entrances and outdoor seating areas during the cooler months.

Climbing plants such as star jasmine are another smart investment, helping pergolas and fences green over naturally in time for outdoor entertaining season.

The best summer gardens rarely happen by accident. More often, they begin quietly in winter, one thoughtful plant at a time.



Beautifully landscaped garden leads past the deck to the swimming pool by Luxe Outdoors.



Heated plunge pool in a setting of ornamental grasses by Tiny Pools.



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COVER FEATURE

Home
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Expert

What Winter? It's not too late to transform your backyard into this resort-style spa zone by Parrot Landscaping — designed to keep you outside and under the stars all year round.

Beyond Summer

Outdoor Living 365

Summer may be when gardens naturally shine, but the best outdoor spaces are designed to feel inviting and usable all year round. According to Parrot Landscaping director David Rhodes, winter gardens are all about warmth, atmosphere and giving people reasons to stay connected to the outdoors.

Use Lighting to Create Atmosphere

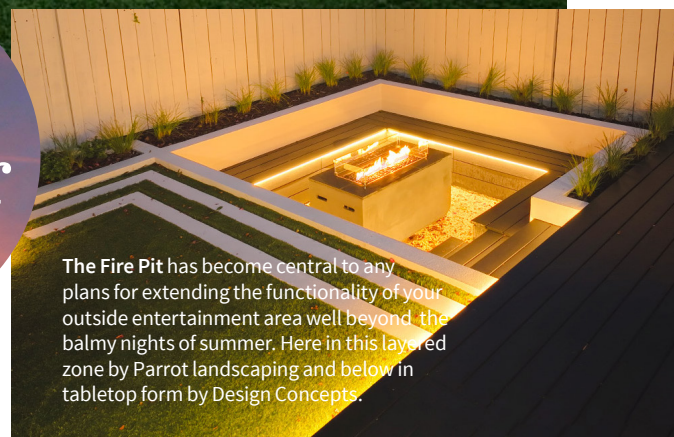
"You want to make it feel more inviting than what it is," says Rhodes. "Lighting is a really good way to enhance a darker winter day." Feature lighting can completely transform deciduous trees and sculptural planting during winter, creating mood and depth even when gardens are dormant.

Add Warmth and Shelter

Pergolas, outdoor heating and fire pits can dramatically extend how often a garden gets used during colder months. "You're creating warmth when there isn't warmth, that changes how people use the space."

Rhodes is also a fan of heated pools and spa-style outdoor spaces during winter. "Having a heated pool when there's a bit of drizzle around can actually be a really nice feeling," he says. "And the nearby plants seem to like it as well."

The transformation a heated plunge pool will make to the smallest outdoor area is life changing - coming more into its own as the days get shorter. Pools pictured from Tiny Pools.



The Fire Pit has become central to any plans for extending the functionality of your outside entertainment area well beyond the balmy nights of summer. Here in this layered zone by Parrot Landscaping and below in tabletop form by Design Concepts.



Pictured top to bottom Well considered paving designed for fast water run-off by Parrot Landscaping. SmartGrass provide the perfect solution for impossible to maintain lawns. Layered outdoor entertainment zones provide flexible options for all conditions throughout the year in this project by Viridian Glass.

Winter lawn care

Lawns need a different maintenance approach once growth slows down. "You don't want to cut it too short," Rhodes explains. "You need to change your maintenance programme through winter." And good drainage becomes especially important through winter. "Doing drainage right is important," Rhodes says. "You have to be clever about the way you approach it."

Think pathways and surfaces

Winter can quickly expose poor paving and landscape planning. "Planning your heights and grades properly helps keep pathways clear of moss and water," says Rhodes.

Artificial or natural lawn?

Rhodes believes both options can work well depending on the homeowner's lifestyle. "Artificial grass has come a long way, but I'm equally a fan of a really beautiful natural lawn," he says.

Plant for year-round interest

Rhodes personally favours subtropical-style planting for its structure and year-round visual appeal. "I like that resort-style feel that looks good all year round." Plants such as clivias, gardenias, frangipanis, ornamental grasses and lush subtropical foliage help maintain colour, texture and softness through the colder months. Layered greenery and evergreen planting also help gardens continue to feel alive and inviting even in winter.

Create Layers and Zones

The best gardens feel immersive rather than flat and open. "We create different zones and ideas throughout the landscape," Rhodes says. "There are so many different elements you can add."

Encourage Nature

For Rhodes, a successful winter garden should still feel active and alive. "Having a nice tui in the background is beautiful," he says. "That's what nature's all about."

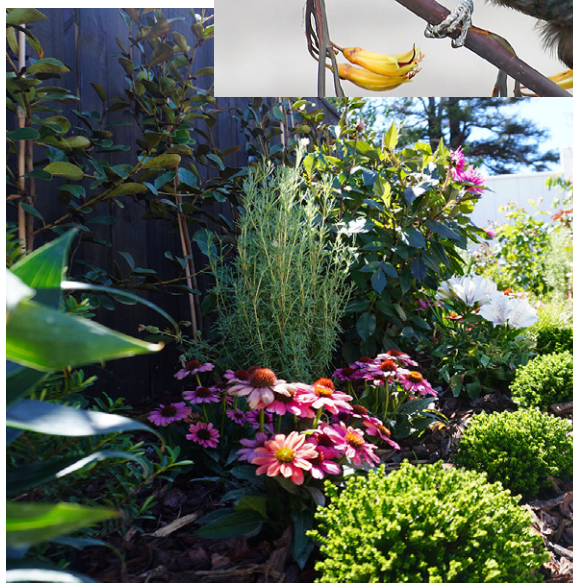
Choose Plants that Bloom in Winter

Choosing plants that bloom in the winter will add a sense of aliveness when the other plants are not as vibrant. It's about a balance.

David Rhodes from **Parrot Landscaping** is one of the Auckland Home Show Experts. Meet him live at the upcoming show.



Nature beckons A welcome visitor to any winter garden. Tui picture by Bernard Spragg via Wikimedia Commons. **Winter blooms** brighten up the garden pictured below by Parrot Landscaping.



Textures from wood grain floors and wall battens add interest and impact in this cosy, sophisticated living room. Walls in Resene Twilight Zone, floor stained in Resene Colorwood Crowshead.

Colour Drenching

Using a Minimal
Palette for
Maximum Effect

Colour drenching has moved from niche design statement to one of the most influential trends shaping contemporary homes.

Despite the name, it isn't necessarily loud, overwhelming or theatrical. In many cases, it does the opposite: softening a room, removing visual clutter and creating a sense of cohesion that feels surprisingly calm.

Hot Trend

At its core, colour drenching means using one colour across multiple surfaces within a room. Walls, trims, ceilings, doors, shelving and sometimes even furniture are painted in closely related tones or the exact same shade. Rather than breaking up a space with contrast, the eye moves more fluidly through it. The result is immersive, atmospheric and often far more sophisticated than traditional feature-wall approaches.

For homeowners increasingly looking to create spaces that feel restful, enveloping and emotionally connected, it is easy to see why the trend has gained momentum.

The End of the Feature Wall?

For years, the feature wall dominated interior decorating. One bold wall. Three neutral ones. But colour drenching shifts the thinking completely. Instead of creating contrast, it embraces consistency.

Painting trims and ceilings the same colour as the walls removes visual interruptions and allows the architecture, furniture and textures within the room to become more prominent. Rooms often feel larger, softer and more intentional as a result.

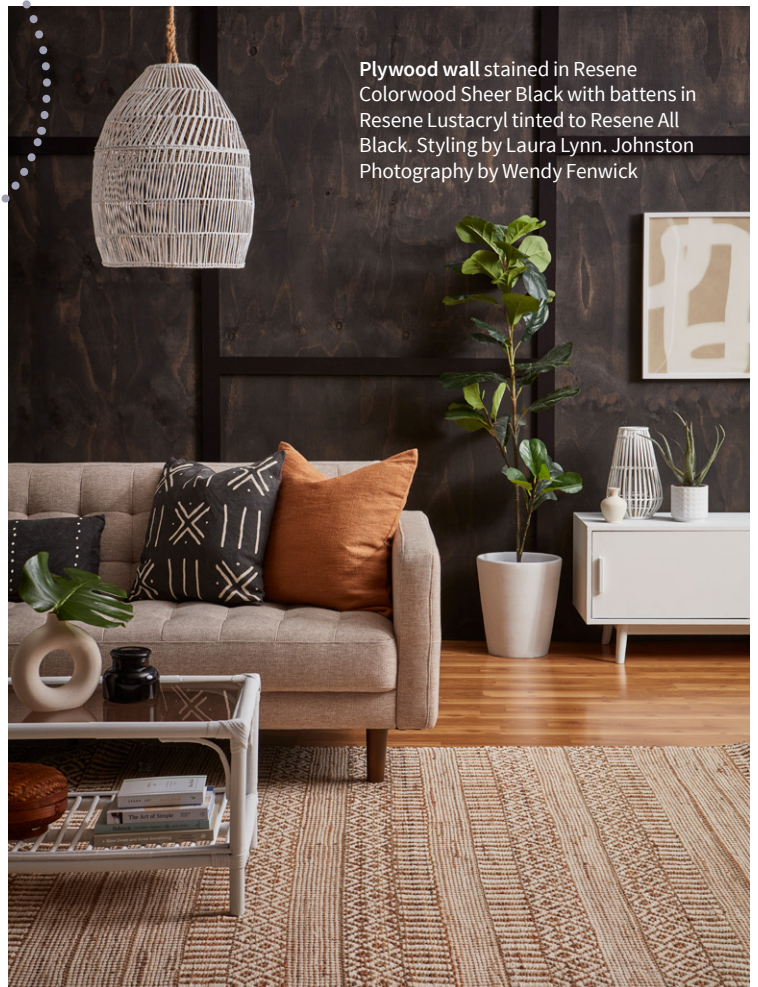
Rather than the eye constantly stopping at white skirting boards or sharp ceiling lines, colour drenching allows surfaces to visually blend together, creating a cocooning effect that feels especially effective in bedrooms, lounges and media rooms.

It is also incredibly versatile. While deep charcoals, forest greens and rich burgundies are often associated with the trend, colour drenching works equally well with soft neutrals, muted greens, earthy clays and warm whites.

Mood Through Colour

One of the reasons colour drenching has resonated so strongly is its emotional impact. Colour influences how a room feels just as much as how it looks.

Soft olive greens create calm and connection to nature. Warm terracottas feel grounding and intimate. Deep blues add richness and retreat-like comfort. Dusty pinks soften harsh light and create warmth. Even warm off-whites can create a beautifully layered drenching effect when carried consistently across walls, trims and ceilings.



Plywood wall stained in Resene Colorwood Sheer Black with battens in Resene Lustacryl tinted to Resene All Black. Styling by Laura Lynn. Johnston
Photography by Wendy Fenwick



Notes of contrast colour are a great way to take the principles of colour drenching and personalise them to your taste. Wall in Resene Half Hairy Heath, floor washed in Resene Colorwood Bark.



Wall and fireplace in Resene Midnight Moss. Floor in Resene Half Fossil. Styling Laura Lynn Johnston. Photography Wendy Fenwick.

Rather than treating colour as decoration, colour drenching uses it as atmosphere.

This becomes particularly powerful in New Zealand homes, where changing natural light dramatically affects interiors throughout the day. Morning sun, overcast afternoons and warm evening light all interact differently with painted surfaces. Drenching a room in one tone allows those shifts in light to become part of the experience rather than fighting against competing contrasts.

Small Rooms, Big Impact

Interestingly, some of the best spaces for colour drenching are actually smaller rooms.

Powder rooms, home offices, reading nooks and bedrooms often benefit most from the immersive nature of the approach. Instead of feeling boxed in, darker colours can blur edges and create depth, making spaces feel more intimate rather than smaller.

Libraries, studies and media rooms are increasingly being drenched in darker tones to create warmth and retreat-like comfort, while softer neutrals are proving popular in open-plan living spaces where homeowners want continuity without sterility.

Designers also note that colour drenching works exceptionally well in rooms with interesting architectural details. Panelling, shelving, archways and mouldings become more sculptural when unified in one colour rather than highlighted through contrast.



Natural textures and materials, and a neutral floor add freshness to the layers of deep blue in this bedroom. Walls in Resene Shark, window and floor in Resene Bubble White.

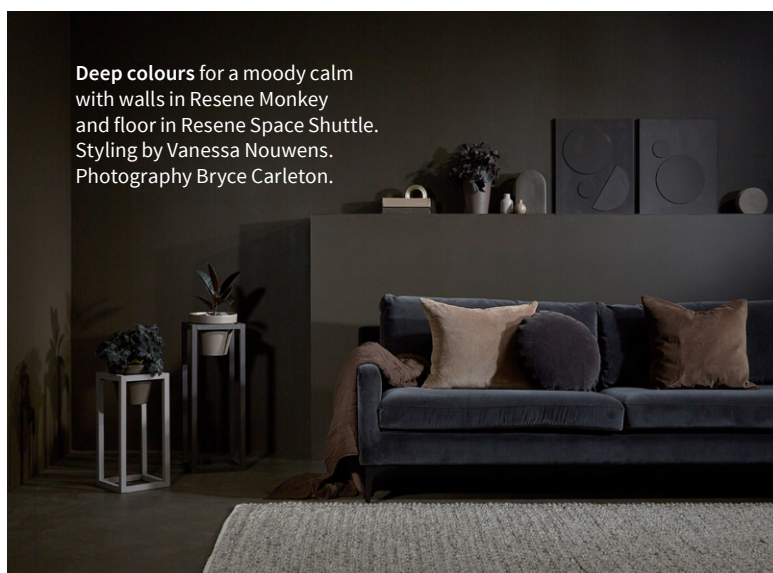
Texture Gains Importance

When contrast is reduced, texture takes centre stage.

Timber grain, stone, linen, boucle, brushed metals and natural fibres suddenly become more noticeable within a colour-drenched space. This is why many of the most successful examples feel layered rather than flat.

A room drenched in forest green may combine matte painted walls, velvet upholstery, painted furniture and timber flooring. A warm neutral room may rely on limewash textures, linen curtains and soft wool furnishings to build depth without introducing new colours.

The result feels quieter but often richer.



Deep colours for a moody calm with walls in Resene Monkey and floor in Resene Space Shuttle. Styling by Vanessa Nouwens. Photography Bryce Carleton.



Greens envelope this dining space, creating warmth and luxury. Walls and skirting in Resene Stromboli.

Getting It Right

While the concept sounds simple, successful colour drenching relies heavily on tone selection and lighting.

Undertones matter enormously. A grey-green can suddenly appear cold in a south-facing room. A beige may become pink under warm lighting. Testing large samples throughout the day is essential before committing.

Finish selection also changes the final effect. Matte finishes create softness and absorb light, while low-sheen or satin finishes reflect more light and add subtle variation across surfaces.

For those nervous about fully committing, designers often recommend beginning with a smaller space or starting with softer tones rather than highly saturated colours.

Importantly, colour drenching does not mean every object in the room must match. Furniture, artwork and textiles still provide contrast and personality. The painted surfaces simply become a unified backdrop that allows those elements to sit together more cohesively.

Why It Works Now

Part of the appeal of colour drenching may be a reaction to years of ultra-white minimalism. Homes are increasingly being viewed as places of retreat, comfort and emotional connection rather than purely visual statements.

There is also a growing desire for interiors that feel more personal and less formulaic. Colour drenching creates mood in a way that feels considered rather than trend-driven.

And perhaps most importantly, it encourages confidence with colour. Rather than treating bold colour as something to use cautiously on a single wall, it embraces the idea that colour can shape the entire feeling of a room.

Done well, colour drenching does not feel busy or overpowering. It feels calm, immersive and quietly confident.

Sometimes the boldest design move is simply committing fully to one idea.

*Thanks to **Resene** for the colour trends and images.*

A Family Affair

The Rise of Intergenerational Homes

For decades, the New Zealand dream centred around independence. A home of your own, space for the family, and eventually a place to retire quietly once the children had moved out. But that picture is beginning to shift.

ACROSS NEW ZEALAND and internationally, more families are choosing to live together across generations. Parents, adult children, grandparents and young families are increasingly pooling resources, sharing homes and planning properties around long-term family living rather than separation.

For some, the decision is financial. Rising house prices, construction costs and interest rates have made buying and maintaining homes more difficult, particularly for younger families. Shared living can make larger homes, land purchases or renovations more achievable.



But the shift is not purely economic.

Many families are also rediscovering the practical and emotional benefits of living closer together. Grandparents helping with childcare. Adult children supporting ageing parents. Shared meals, shared maintenance and more day-to-day connection between generations.

What once may have been viewed as temporary or unconventional is increasingly becoming a deliberate long-term lifestyle choice.

Designing for that kind of living, however, requires careful planning.

The most successful intergenerational homes balance togetherness with independence. Shared living areas matter, but so does privacy. Separate bathrooms, additional living rooms, flexible entrances and quieter retreat spaces all help households function more comfortably over time.

This is one reason self-contained zones and minor dwellings are becoming more popular. Sleepouts, granny flats, converted garages and secondary living areas allow families to remain connected while still maintaining personal space and independence.

Intergenerational living is no longer simply about affordability. For many families, it is about creating a home that supports everyone more effectively.



Flexible layouts and secondary living zones are helping families create homes that balance shared living with privacy and independence.

There is also a cultural aspect to the shift. Multigenerational living has long been common across many cultures, where extended family households are viewed as normal and valuable rather than temporary. Increasingly, wider sections of society are beginning to embrace similar ideas around shared living, support and connection.

Importantly, the success of these homes often comes down to design rather than simply size. Even modest homes can work well when spaces are planned carefully and daily routines are considered early.

Living Across Generations

Communication is equally important. Expectations around finances, routines, childcare, cooking and shared responsibilities all need to be discussed openly before moving in together. Families who approach the arrangement thoughtfully tend to adapt more successfully than those who assume things will naturally fall into place.

There are practical considerations too. Parking, storage, sound separation and future accessibility become increasingly important when more generations are sharing one property. A home that works for a young family today may also need to support older occupants comfortably in years to come.

Homes Are Adapting

As housing needs change, homes are evolving alongside them. Flexibility, adaptability and shared living are becoming increasingly important considerations in how families think about housing for the future.

Intergenerational living is unlikely to suit every household. But as affordability pressures, childcare demands and ageing populations continue to shape modern life, more families are recognising the value of living together in ways that feel practical, supportive and sustainable for the long term.

Why it Works

Can reduce financial pressure while strengthening day-to-day family support and connection.

Trend Watch

Homes with flexible layouts, secondary living zones & adaptable spaces are increasingly attractive

Design Tip

Think privacy: Separate bathrooms, quiet retreat spaces & flexible living areas often matter more than house size

To Tile or Not to Tile?

That is the question

Walk into almost any new build, architectural home or recently renovated bathroom and one thing becomes immediately clear. New Zealanders still love tiles. But come renovation time, there are now more practical alternatives for homeowners to consider if wanting something simpler.

TILES, IN FACT, have never been more popular. Finger tiles continue to dominate feature walls and splashbacks. Large-format porcelain tiles are creating seamless, hotel-inspired bathrooms. Floor-to-ceiling tiling has become a hallmark of premium design, while natural stone-look finishes are bringing warmth, texture and luxury into everyday homes.

Bathrooms have evolved far beyond purely functional spaces. Increasingly, they are being designed as personal retreats, places to relax, unwind and escape the pace of daily life. Tiles play a major role in creating that feeling.

The appeal is easy to understand. Tiles are durable, practical and available in an enormous range of colours, textures and finishes. Whether your style leans towards contemporary minimalism, coastal calm or European-inspired luxury, there is almost certainly a tile to suit.

Tile Space The unmistakable texture of tiles in a stunning wet room.

The Reality Behind the Trend

As beautiful as tiled bathrooms can be, many homeowners discover that installing them is often more involved than expected.

Modern tiled showers rely on sophisticated waterproofing systems hidden beneath the finished surface. Those waterproof membranes are critical for protecting the structure of the home from moisture damage and ensuring long-term performance.

For homeowners undertaking a full bathroom renovation, this is usually part of the process. However, for those looking for a faster, simpler or more DIY-friendly project, the installation requirements can sometimes influence the design decisions they make.

New Generation Surfaces

The days of plain white shower linings are largely behind us.

Manufacturers now offer large-format waterproof panels that replicate marble, stone, terrazzo, concrete and even timber finishes with remarkable realism.

Because they are produced as large sheets, they can create a sleek, uninterrupted appearance with very few joints. The result is a clean, contemporary aesthetic that aligns closely with current bathroom trends.

With fewer joints and little or no grout, cleaning and maintenance can be considerably easier than traditional tiled surfaces.

Mixing Materials

One of the more interesting trends emerging in bathroom design is the combination of different surface treatments within the same space.

Rather than choosing between tiles or panels, many homeowners are using both. A vanity wall might feature decorative finger tiles, while shower walls use large-format waterproof panels. A tiled floor may be paired with stone-look wall linings. It is a practical compromise that is proving increasingly popular.

The Best Choice is the One That Fits Your Project

Tiles remain one of the most desirable finishes available for bathrooms, kitchens and living spaces. They offer longevity, timeless appeal and almost unlimited design flexibility.

Whether you choose tiles, panels or a combination of both, there has never been more choice available to New Zealand homeowners.



Top Bold green subway tiles and brushed gold. **Centre** Tile Space pairs freestanding soaking tub with tiled wet area. **Bottom** Large-format wall panels from Beyond Tiles.



Building Sustainably Spending Wisely

Sustainable building is no longer viewed as a niche idea reserved for architect-designed homes or ambitious new builds. Increasingly, homeowners are asking a more practical question. Where should we spend money to create a home that performs better, costs less to run and feels healthier to live in over time?

The modernist look of floor to ceiling windows and sliding doors has become the standard in any backyard renovation as Kiwis embrace the abundant natural light and intimate connection with the outdoors it provides. Double glazing is now mandatory with the latest options providing your home with even more energy efficiency than before. This sophisticated home combines simplicity and beauty with stained cedar and Low E Max Double Glazed Architectural Series sliders by NZ Windows.

Warmth That Lasts

Winter has a way of exposing the weaknesses in a home. Floors feel colder underfoot, condensation gathers on windows overnight and rooms that seemed perfectly comfortable in summer suddenly become difficult to heat.

Across Auckland and New Zealand, many older homes still struggle with poor insulation, draughts, condensation and dampness – particularly houses built before modern insulation standards were introduced, forcing homeowners to spend heavily on heating while never quite achieving real comfort.

It is one of the reasons insulation continues to be one of the smartest long-term investments homeowners can make during a renovation with most major insulation brands carrying performance warranties of 50 to 70 years. While kitchens, bathrooms and finishes often take centre stage, builders say the upgrades hidden behind the walls are often the ones that most dramatically improve everyday living.

A well-insulated home simply feels different in winter. Rooms hold their warmth longer, surfaces stay drier,

draughts reduce and heating systems no longer need to work as hard just to maintain comfort. Modern insulation products can significantly improve thermal performance in ceilings, walls and underfloors, helping create healthier interiors while reducing ongoing energy use at the same time

The Upgrades You Don't See

Builder and Auckland Home Show expert Russell Clark from Licensed Renovations says homeowners often underestimate the long-term value of investing in the structure of the home itself.

"People like to spend money on the glamour looking things, but your structure is what's going to be there forever," he says.

Clark believes insulation is one of the most cost-effective upgrades people can make while renovating, particularly because much of the labour is already being done once walls or ceilings are opened up.

"If you upgrade it, it doesn't cost you that much more and the labour's the same," he explains.

He says many homeowners renovate in stages, but piecemeal upgrades can sometimes limit the long-term performance of the house. Installing a new double-glazed window beside an older single-glazed one, or upgrading only part of a roof or wall system, can leave older weaknesses untouched and reduce the overall thermal benefit.

Instead, Clark encourages homeowners to think about the overall thermal envelope of the home. Insulation, glazing, moisture barriers, ventilation and thermal curtains all work together to create warmer, drier interiors that are easier and cheaper to heat through winter.

Many older New Zealand homes still suffer from rising damp, poor underfloor insulation and inadequate ventilation. Clark says addressing moisture at the same time as insulation upgrades can make a major difference to both comfort and long-term durability, particularly in older villas and bungalows.

He also believes homeowners should think beyond warmth alone and consider how renovations affect the overall feel of the home. Sound insulation is becoming increasingly popular, particularly in family homes where quieter interiors can noticeably improve comfort and liveability.

"Insulation is one of those things you don't really see once it's done, but you feel it every single day," says Clark.

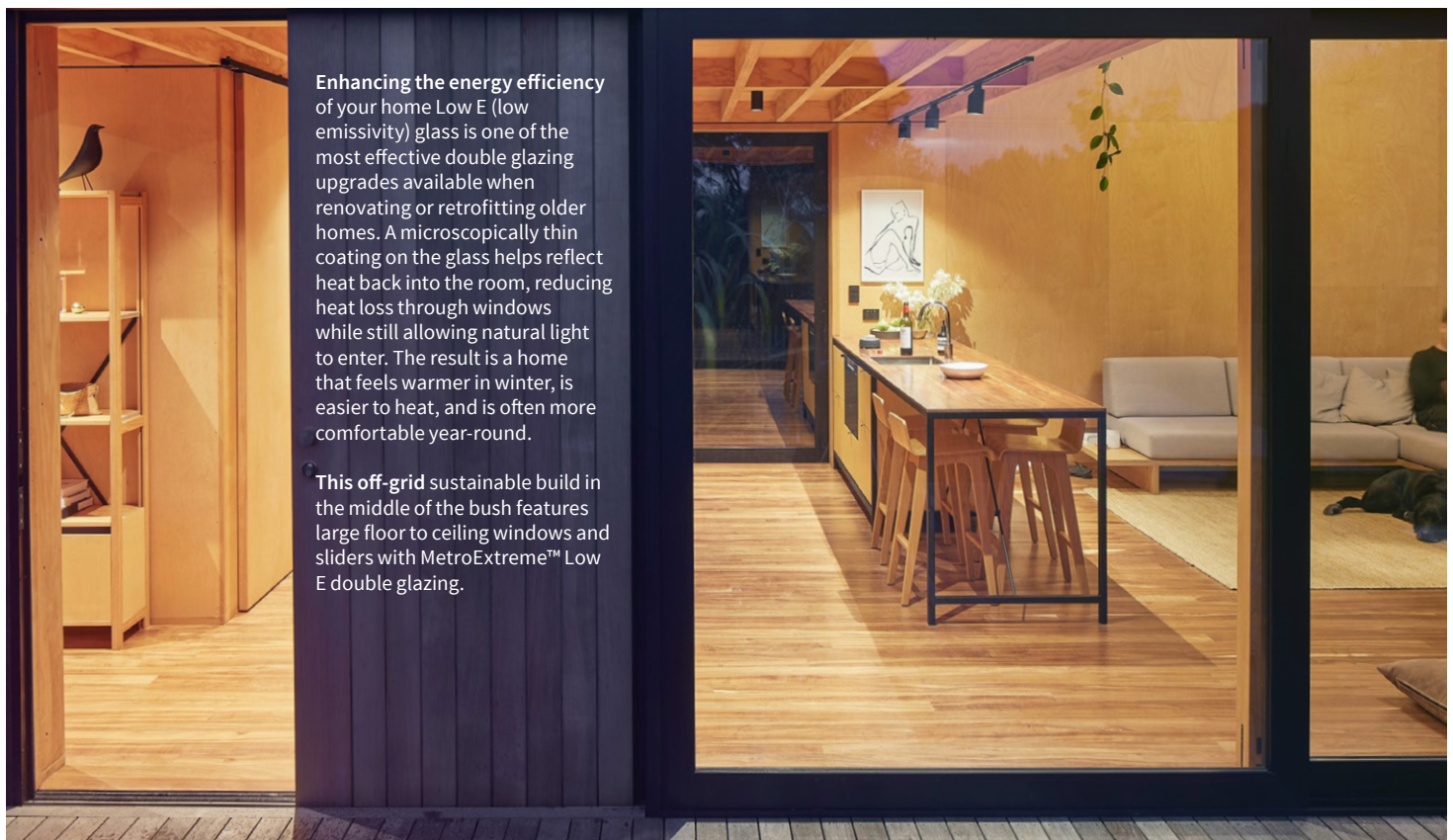


Some of the best renovation investments are the least visible. Better insulation, upgraded glazing and underfloor moisture barriers all make a noticeable difference.

As energy prices continue to rise and homeowners focus more on comfort, health and efficiency, many are beginning to prioritise the parts of renovation that deliver long-term value rather than short-term visual impact. The result is homes that not only look better, but feel warmer, quieter and more comfortable to live in for years to come.

"For me, the best renovations are the ones that still make a difference 10 or 20 years later," says Clark. "You might forget what tapware you chose or what colour you painted the walls, but you never forget a home that feels warm, dry and comfortable to live in."

Catch Russell Clark from ***Licensed Renovations*** speaking as one of the upcoming Auckland Home Show experts.



Enhancing the energy efficiency of your home Low E (low emissivity) glass is one of the most effective double glazing upgrades available when renovating or retrofitting older homes. A microscopically thin coating on the glass helps reflect heat back into the room, reducing heat loss through windows while still allowing natural light to enter. The result is a home that feels warmer in winter, is easier to heat, and is often more comfortable year-round.

This off-grid sustainable build in the middle of the bush features large floor to ceiling windows and sliders with MetroExtreme™ Low E double glazing.



Gas Or Electric

What Makes Sense for Your Home Now?

The energy landscape is shifting fast, and Kiwi homeowners are rethinking what they've always assumed about gas.

For years, gas was seen as the premium choice. Instant hot water, responsive cooking and powerful heating made it a go-to for new builds and renovations alike. But the equation is changing quickly. Rising gas prices, higher daily connection fees and major improvements in electric technology are causing many homeowners to rethink how they heat, cook and power their homes.

Today, the conversation is no longer simply gas versus electricity. It's about which systems deliver the best comfort, efficiency and long-term value.

One of the biggest shifts has come from heat pumps. Modern heat pump heating systems now deliver far more heat for the energy they use than traditional electric heaters or gas heating. Unlike older electric resistance heaters, heat pumps move warmth rather than generate it directly, making them dramatically more efficient to run while also providing cooling through summer.

That same technology is now reshaping hot water systems.

Hot water typically accounts for around 30 percent of household energy use, making it one of the largest contributors to power bills. Heat pump hot water systems extract warmth from the surrounding air instead of heating water directly through an element.

The upfront investment is higher. A standard electric hot water cylinder may cost around \$3,000–\$4,000 installed, while heat pump hot water systems often sit between \$6,000–\$9,000 installed depending on the home and setup. But the running costs can be significantly lower.

EECA estimates a standard electric cylinder costs roughly \$480 per year to run, compared with around \$180 for a heat pump hot water system. For larger families with high hot water use, the additional installation cost can often be recovered within four to seven years through lower power bills alone.

Gas vs electric For new builds and major renovations, the economics increasingly favour electric systems. **Top left** Sleek and seamless, Bosch induction hob. **Top right** Heat pumps like this Rinnai pro series 2 are dramatically more efficient to run than many other gas or electric options while also providing cooling through summer. **Centre** Mitsubishi Black Diamond Pro Series 2 high wall energy efficient heat pump inside and out. **Bottom** Rinnai Hydra Heat integrated hot water heap pump can save up to 75% on your water heating costs.

That marks a major shift from just a few years ago, when gas continuous-flow systems were often considered the most economical long-term option.

Cooking is evolving too. Gas hobs have long been prized for their instant flame control, but induction cooking is rapidly becoming mainstream in New Zealand kitchens. Unlike traditional electric cooktops, induction uses magnetic technology to heat the pot itself rather than the surrounding surface.

The result is faster boiling times, rapid temperature control and improved energy efficiency. Many homeowners also appreciate the easier cleaning and cooler cooking surface, particularly in family homes.

That doesn't mean gas no longer has a place. For homes with existing gas infrastructure already installed, replacing functioning systems purely for savings may not always make immediate financial sense. Some homeowners still prefer gas cooking, while continuous-flow gas hot water systems remain popular in larger households with high demand.

But for new builds and major renovations, the economics increasingly favour electric systems, especially when heating, hot water, insulation and solar are considered together as part of a complete home energy strategy.

New Zealand's largely renewable electricity grid is also changing how homeowners think about future energy costs. As appliance technology improves and gas supply pressures continue to affect pricing, many experts believe the fully electric home will become increasingly common over the next decade.

For homeowners weighing up their next renovation or appliance replacement, the smartest move may not be switching everything overnight, but gradually electrifying the home over time as older systems reach the end of their life.

Recent New Zealand guidance from EECa and Consumer NZ has increasingly highlighted the long-term efficiency advantages of heat pump heating and hot water systems for many households.



Empowering the People

Kiwis are taking their power back and saving with Solar

Apollo Energy Flux panels on rooftop.

Winter has always been the season when New Zealand homes feel the pressure of energy costs most. Heat pumps work harder, dryers run longer, lights come on earlier and as temperatures drop, power bills climb. For many households, that winter spike has become the catalyst for solar suddenly making sense.

Not long ago, solar was often seen as a niche option for environmentally minded homeowners. Today, rising electricity prices, improving technology and better battery storage have pushed it firmly into the mainstream.

And despite common assumptions, solar panels continue to generate useful power throughout New Zealand winters.

The New Economics of Power

Electricity prices in New Zealand have risen steadily over the past decade, with many households now paying between 30 and 40 cents per kWh once daily charges and peak rates are factored in. Winter evenings are often the most expensive period, exactly when homes need the most energy.

That is where solar starts becoming compelling.

A well-designed solar system can significantly reduce daytime reliance on the grid, particularly for homes running heat pumps, hot water systems, home offices or EV chargers. Even on cloudy days, modern panels continue generating meaningful amounts of electricity.

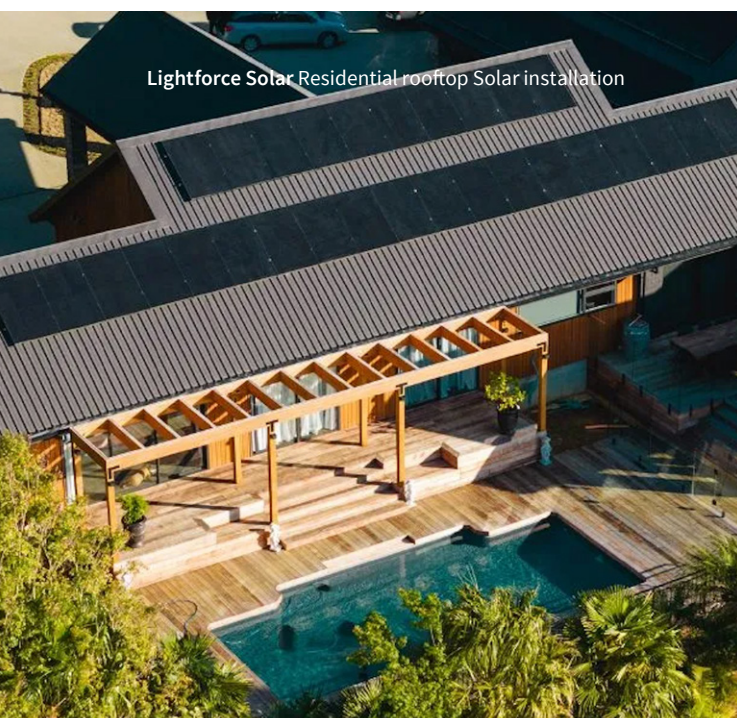
For many homeowners, the savings are no longer theoretical. They are visible month by month on the power bill.

What Does Solar Actually Cost?

A typical residential solar installation generally ranges from around \$8,000 to \$14,000 for a smaller system, while medium-sized family systems commonly sit between \$14,000 and \$22,000 installed. Larger systems with battery storage can exceed \$25,000.

While the upfront investment is significant, many systems are expected to operate efficiently for 25 years or more. Unlike fuel, gas or grid electricity, sunlight does not become more expensive over time.

Lightforce Solar Residential rooftop Solar installation



Winter Is a Good Time to Start

Many solar specialists believe winter is the ideal time to begin the conversation.

Homeowners are paying closer attention to their energy bills, heating demand reveals how much electricity a household really uses, and installation schedules can be more flexible outside the summer rush.

Solar is also no longer just about panels. Modern systems can integrate with batteries, EV chargers and smart monitoring platforms that help homeowners understand exactly where energy is being used. And, for many New Zealanders, the appeal extends beyond reducing power bills.

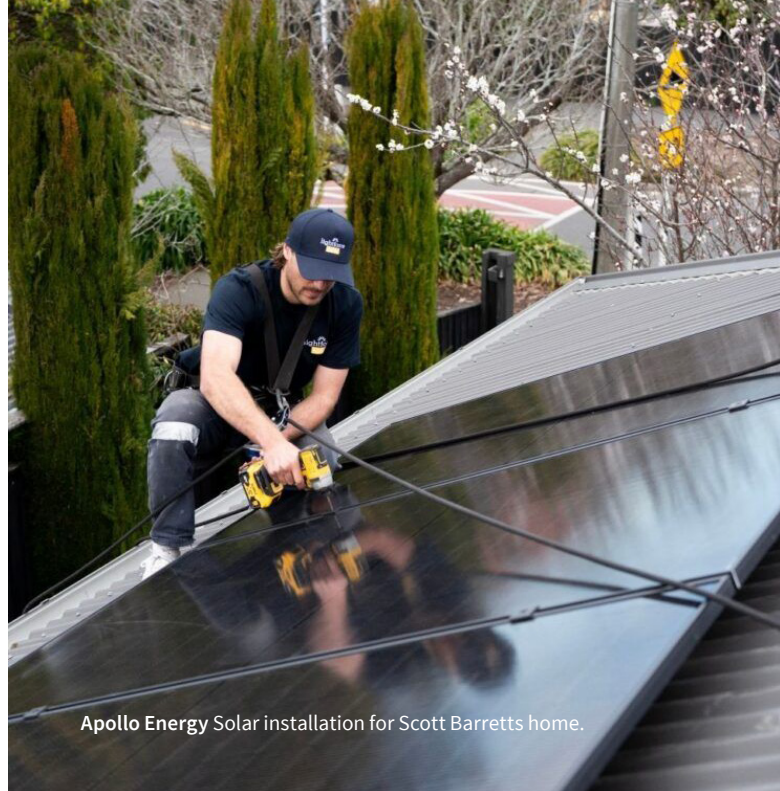
Generating your own electricity provides greater confidence as concerns about energy costs, resilience and weather-related disruptions continue to grow. Battery systems add another layer of security, allowing excess daytime generation to be stored for evening use or backup power during outages.

Getting the System Right

Like any major home investment, solar works best when properly planned.

Roof orientation, shading, household usage patterns and future energy needs all matter. A system designed around actual living habits will generally outperform one designed simply around panel count.

For some homes, the best return may come from a smaller system focused on daytime efficiency.



Apollo Energy Solar installation for Scott Barretts home.

Others may benefit from larger arrays or battery integration designed around EV charging or heavy winter heating loads.

The key is not necessarily installing the biggest system. It is installing the right one.

A Smarter Long-Term Upgrade

Solar may not be as visible as a renovation, but it can fundamentally change how a home performs and what it costs to run. As winter power bills continue arriving, more homeowners are realising that some of the cheapest energy available may already be falling on their roof.

*Learn more about residential solar solutions from **Lightforce Solar** at the next Auckland Home Show.*



The Sigenergy SigenStor Battery is a powerful and flexible energy storage solution from Lightforce Solar.



Bedroom setup by IKEA

Making the Most of Your Winter Bedroom

Winter changes the way we live in our homes. We spend more time indoors, mornings become slower, evenings arrive earlier, and the bedroom becomes more important than ever, shifting from simply a place to sleep into somewhere we genuinely retreat to.

The most inviting winter bedrooms are rarely the most complicated. Often they rely on a simple combination of warmth, softness and comfort done well. Natural textures, thoughtful lighting and a bed that genuinely supports rest.

All pictured this row by IKEA.



Electric blanket from Harvey Norman



All pictured by IKEA

Lighting also plays an important role in shaping the atmosphere of the room. Warm bedside lighting creates a softer transition into the evening, while dimmable lamps and textured shades help reduce the harsher feel that overhead lighting can create during darker months.



Layered bedding and a supportive mattress help transform the bedroom into a true winter retreat, creating warmth and comfort long after the temperature drops outside.

Row above all by IKEA
This row all Harvey Norman



Bedroom Comfort

It is often during the colder months that we notice what is working in the bedroom and what is not.

A room that felt acceptable through warmer months can suddenly feel cold, uncomfortable or lacking in coziness once winter settles in. Lighting feels harsher, bedding feels thinner. And perhaps most noticeable of all, an ageing mattress becomes impossible to ignore.

That is why winter is often the ideal time to rethink bedroom comfort.

For many homeowners, improving the bedroom begins with atmosphere. Heavier bedding, softer lighting and layered textures all help create a warmer and more inviting environment. Curtains become more important. Rugs soften cold floors. Upholstered headboards, wool throws and natural materials help bedrooms feel quieter and more settled during the colder months.

But while styling helps shape the mood of a room, comfort begins with the bed itself.

"A bedroom can look beautiful, but if the mattress is no longer supporting good sleep, the space never truly feels restful."

Mattresses are one of the most heavily used items in the home, yet they are often kept far beyond their best years. Over time, support weakens, pressure points increase, and movement becomes more noticeable through the night. Many people adapt gradually to declining comfort without realising how much it affects sleep quality.

Winter tends to amplify those issues. Colder temperatures can make stiffness and poor support feel more obvious, particularly around the back, shoulders and hips. At the same time, spending more time in bed naturally makes comfort more noticeable overall.



Winter Changes the Way We Rest

During colder months, the bedroom becomes more than a place to sleep. It becomes somewhere to slow down, recharge and retreat from the pace of the day. Small improvements in comfort can have a surprisingly large effect on how the entire home feels through winter.

As winter settles in, comfort becomes less of a luxury and more of a daily necessity. Creating a bedroom that supports warmth, rest and better sleep is one of the simplest ways to improve how home feels during the colder season.

Why it Works

Warmer lighting & layered bedding help create a bedroom that feels calmer, softer and more restorative.

Good to Know

Most sleep experts recommend replacing mattresses every 7–10 years, depending on wear and support.

Design Tip

Focus on comfort first. A supportive mattress and quality bedding will have the biggest impact on the room's feel

Sealy Posturepedic mattress and all items pictured from **Harvey Norman**.



Sleepyhead mattress and all items pictured from **BedsRus**.



All pictured by **IKEA**.



Bed Comfort

Modern mattresses have evolved significantly in recent years. Materials designed to improve airflow, minimise partner movement and better support natural body alignment are helping create more stable and restful sleep environments. Memory foams, hybrid systems and advanced spring technologies now offer a much broader range of comfort levels and support options than many homeowners realise.

Benefits Beyond Sleep

The benefits extend well beyond sleep itself. A supportive mattress can improve posture, reduce pressure discomfort and help support deeper, less interrupted sleep. Better sleep quality influences energy levels, concentration and overall wellbeing throughout the day. In winter especially, when shorter days can already affect mood and energy, a more restful sleep environment becomes even more valuable.

ENTERTAINING

Winter Warmer

Slow Cooker Mulled Wine



A soul-warming spiced wine with a bright citrus twist, perfect for slow afternoons and gathering around the table with the people you love.

Makes approximately 2 litres

INGREDIENTS

10 whole cloves
2 whole star anise
2 whole cinnamon quills
2 whole bay leaves
1 orange, thinly sliced
2 cups apple juice
1/2 cup caster sugar
1 teaspoons vanilla extract
red wine, 2 x 750ml bottles
1/2 cup orange liqueur (optional)

METHOD

Put all the ingredients (except the slices of orange) into slow cooker on low for 1 1/2 - 2hrs until hot.

Ladle into heatproof glasses and serve with slices of orange.

Use the 'keep warm' setting (if your slow-cooker has one) this will ensure the mulled wine stays hot during the party.

NOTES

Wine Choice

A mid-range fruity red works well here. No need to reach for the top shelf.

Make It Ahead

This is perfect for entertaining. Set it going a few hours before guests arrive and your home will smell incredible.

Alcohol free

Use grape juice instead of wine and leave out the orange liqueur. A delicious warming drink for children and non-drinkers.

Feeding a crowd

Simply double all ingredients to make around 4 litres, enough for 16 generous servings. You will need a 6 litre crockpot or larger.

Leftovers

Store in the fridge for up to a day and reheat gently on Low. Best enjoyed fresh.





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