

the *sanctuary*

A landscape designer has found
her peace in the gentle green space
between bush and sea.



It's impossible to count the many different shades of green that appear in Claire Talbot's garden. It's a kaleidoscope, the likes of which appear only on Resene colour charts. Painters looking to capture its essence would take their pick of Resene Breeze, Resene Flax, Resene Paddock and Resene Seaweed – with a peek-a-boo of Resene Smashing coming from the vibrant leucadendrons.

Claire's love of small surprises of colour flows from the outdoors in at 'The Black Box', her home located in The Sanctuary, an (aptly named) gated community five minutes from Mangawhai. Claire and her family have been visiting the area from Auckland for a decade. The Talbots spent four summers sharing a bach with friends, but after that, and with growing children (now 15, 13 and 10), it was time to find their own space.

"I knew when I first saw the land that it was right. It was a bare grassy patch, but the hills behind felt like a protective embrace." It was the perfect blank canvas for landscape designer Claire, but first, she needed to choose a fellow artist to help her create her masterpiece. "Luckily, my friend Gerrad Hall is an architect. We didn't want the home to be a blot on the landscape. We wanted to take the time to make sure the angles and the aspects were right."

The exterior of The Black Box is board and batten, stained with Resene Woodsman Pitch Black. "Black makes the greens pop, and merges seamlessly with the landscape, which was my key goal. I sat down with the house plans and drew lines off the home to create a grid. From there, it was about creating spaces and working within the rules of the golden ratio [a geometric equation that creates an 'aesthetically pleasing' shape]. I wanted something simple and low-maintenance with a small lawnmowing bill and room to hide the inevitable summer tents."

The garden's softness contrasts with the surrounding spiky mānuka- and kanuka-covered hills. Grasses drift in the often-prevalent wind, offering a soundtrack not unlike that of the nearby surf. It's been a labour of love, with a fair amount of physical labour thrown in for good measure. Claire estimates she's planted upwards of 500 plants in the past four years, at an estimated cost of between \$20,000 to \$30,000.

Pops of colour peep through the grasses. Hardy South African plants such as proteas and leucadendrons add splashes of red, contrasting with the silvers and greens of reeds and grasses such as oi oi and a lomandra called 'Lime Tuff'. Claire's favourite is gaura, a hardy plant with small pink or white flowers that bloom for five to six months. "I'm not a purist. I love natives, but they can lack colour and diversity. I like to add some 'wow'." ➤

Opposite: Claire's Mangawhai home was designed by Gerrad Hall and the exterior is stained in Resene Woodsman Pitch Black. The dark colour allows the home to blend into the deep green landscape, without distracting the eye. Claire used a Resene CoolColour variant, which allows the dark colour to stay cooler even in summer.

Above left: Claire came across this old door at a consignment shop and painted it herself using Resene Lumbersider tinted to Resene Geronimo. "The wisteria looks stunning against the bright Resene Geronimo paint," says Claire. The door frame is Resene Woodsman Pitch Black.

Above top: Claire has a background in management psychology, but studied landscape design after she had children. She turned her hobby into a career launching Sculpt Gardens in 2016.

Above: Creating usable entertaining spaces is key to making the most of your outdoor living. The Cape Cod chairs in Resene Double Spanish White are a perfect place for a morning coffee (or evening wine).

- Resene Smashing
- Resene Breeze
- Resene Woodsman Pitch Black
- Resene Geronimo
- Resene Double Spanish White



Above: The door that divides the teenagers' wing from the main living space is painted with Resene Ming which contrasts with the Resene Double Spanish White walls and ceiling in Resene Half Spanish White. The timber ceiling panel is designed to soften the echo from the large open plan living, dining and kitchen. Add a rich timber colour to ceilings with Resene Colorwood Matai and Resene Aquaclear.

Below right: Plants clockwise from left – the scarlet red flowers of *Canna iridiflora*, breaks up the green and is a great option for breezy properties. Though it has delicate looking white flowers, *Escallonia* is another hardy plant which tolerates harsh weather conditions. Proteas are very tolerant of salty coastal soil, this variety 'Pink Ice' picks up the red accents in the garden including the Resene Geronimo gate door. There are touches of purple around the garden including Lavender and Geranium 'Rozanne' (in the background).

Resene Half Spanish White
 Resene Colorwood Matai

Cheerful surprises aren't limited to the garden. Architect Gerrad's trademark is bright doors, so vivid Resene Ming adorns the interior doors, including the one that divides the teenagers' rooms from the rest of the home. "Their own soundproof space was a must," says Claire. The bright doors continue into the garden. Claire painted a second-hand door in Resene Geronimo to separate the practical boat parking and outdoor shower from the whimsical outdoor bath and cottage-style garden with lavender and roses.

She engaged interior designer Peta Tearle as a colour consultant during the design process, and together they created a Resene palette. "We started with Resene Ming for the doors and built from there." Gentle neutrals allow the splashes of colour to take centre stage; Resene Double Spanish White adorns the walls and trims, with Resene Half Spanish White on the ceiling.

There's also a colour choice with a charmingly personal touch. Claire's son was one of many who discovered hobby beekeeping during the lockdowns, and his mānuka-honey-producing hives have grown from one to three in the past year. "When he was young, he created a song called 'The Caper Song' and sang it at our wedding. We couldn't resist painting the hives in Resene Caper!"

While the original plan was for The Black Box to be the family's summer retreat, the past two years' events have seen them spend many months in Mangawhai. With bees needing attention and her husband able to work remotely, the family relocated when it was safe to do so.

Claire's landscaping business, Sculpt Gardens, is based in Takapuna and has grown from a single neighbourhood flyer drop to a thriving business with 15 employees. "When I had my children, my garden became my sanctuary and safe space. It kept me grounded and helped my mental health. I had come from a career in management psychology, which taught me that when you're relaxed and engaged, creativity flows, so you need to find a career that allows you to get lost in that happy space. Gardening became that for me, so I studied landscape design, then dropped flyers along my street." Claire's business ethos includes providing opportunities for women looking to balance work with family. "There were few options for mothers that were well-paid and flexible. I found like-minded women at Playcentre and through social media, and it grew from there." H

landscape designer Claire Talbot, Sculpt Gardens www.sculptgardens.co.nz

architectural specifier Gerrad Hall, Gerrad Hall Architects www.gha.nz

interior designer Peta Tearle www.petatearle.com

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→ *turn the page for an alternative look for this garden...*

Claire's garden design tips

- When building a house, landscaping is generally left until last. As a consequence, there's often little money in the budget. Starting early is much more seamless and can save money in the long run. Think of it like this – if gardens are a cupcake, the plants are sprinkles. The actual substance lies beneath; your layout should seamlessly accommodate the washing line, rubbish bins or boat parking by creating distinct areas for different activities.
- Select plants that have great cover – it will help fill your space, stop weeds sneaking through and keep the budget in check. Grevillea is an excellent choice as it has a large spread of up to four to five metres.
- Consider the potential size of your plants and remember they will grow. Also, don't plant just one or two. Limit your palette and purchase multiple (think 10 to 100) of the same plant to create a garden that allows your eye to relax.
- Consider how you use your garden – do you need room for children to run, or should that space be used for decking?
- If building a new home, and planting a new garden give young plants a height boost, by planting them in small raised mounds of earth – this will make your garden look more established. Garden banks can also help with drainage.
- You should design your garden based on your goals – is this your forever home or will you be selling within a few years? Plant accordingly; dream homes require planning, while short-term properties need to look good quickly.



Resene Geronimo

Right: Claire's foresight and design allow her to spend time with her family, rather than elbow-deep in dirt. "Everything is generally low maintenance. I wait until a plant looks tired, then get in there and tidy." The flax is *Phormium tenax Purpureum*.

Below: The outdoor bath is from Wanaka company Stoked Stainless. "It's designed to be wood-fired, but waiting hours for the water to warm takes away the romance. I've had a hot water tap installed outside and run a hose to the bath - I should have got it plumbed." It blends in with the brown, red and greens in the garden and the house exterior which is stained with Resene Woodsman Pitch Black.

 Resene Caper



paint it right

Choose the right Resene colours and paints for the job.

hive mind

Resene Lumbersider is a durable Environmental Choice-approved exterior paint suitable for beehives.

Claire's son painted his beehives in Resene Caper and Resene Half Spanish White. Paint contrast areas in Resene Fog for a lilac touch.





that's cool

If painting or staining your home's exterior in a dark colour, opt for a Resene CoolColour which includes special heat-reflective technology. It not only keeps your home's exterior surface cooler in hot weather compared to the standard colour, but it also helps protect the substrate from damage caused by overheating.



wax lyrical

Protect concrete flooring with Resene Concrete Wax, a waterborne clear satin finish which is ideal for concrete surfaces with lots of foot traffic. Claire's concrete floor pairs well with the Resene Colorwood Pitch Black used on an internal wall panel and the ceiling in Resene Half Spanish White.

 Resene Double Spanish White
 Resene Pitch Black

 Resene Fog
 Resene Ming






Above: Nature is the hero of Bayley's outdoor living space and by using three different colours of wood stains: Resene Woodsman Tiri on the deck, Resene Woodsman Uluru on the timber feature wall and Resene Waterborne Woodsman Pickled Blue on the pergola, it creates colourful softness. Log offcuts are used for a separate outdoor seating area around the fire pit by Sharp Engineering. Rug by Target Furniture, vase on table by Città, glasses, jute placemats and plates from Stevens, cutlery and napkin from EziBuy, Three King's Climber from The Plant Company.


top tip

Resene Woodsman wood stain enhances and rejuvenates the colour of outdoor timber, allowing the natural wood grain to show through. It also protects the substrate from damage from UV light. It's also available in Resene CoolColour which contains heat-reflective technology to make dark colours cooler to touch.

before



Resene Woodsman
Tiri 

Resene
Orchid White 


an elegant outdoor entertaining space



Landscape designer **Bayley LuuTomes** suggests an alternative scheme:

To maximise outdoor living I've created an extra room for al fresco dining with an open-framed wall which allows nature to come in. By painting the two walls in Resene Orchid White, it ties the space to the interior and by wrapping it around one corner it creates an illusion of more space allowing extra light into the covered areas. I've highlighted the natural grain of the timber feature wall with warm Resene Woodsman Uluru and contrasted this with the deck stained in the darker colour, Resene Woodsman Tiri. The pergola is stained in Resene Waterborne Woodsman Pickled Bluewood to pick up the blue of the sky, this will also create a great support for the Three King's Climber (*Tecomanthe speciosa*). This is the ideal place for this striking native plant as they love to have their roots in a cool spot and to bathe their leaves in the sun.


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