

In this issue

"When you're talking about building a house, you're talking about dreams," said American architect Robert A.M. Stern.

Japanese architect Tadao Ando, a winner of the Pritzker Prize for Architecture, muses: "The most satisfying thing is when architecture can do something to make people's lives better, to inspire them."

What does that have to do with your plans for a building a new house, or modifying your existing one? Plenty. Be it ever so humble, home is a very important part of your life. A better designed home can improve your sense of well-being, feel more comfortable, cost less to run, and even, if it's energy efficient, help to save the planet.

In this issue of *at home*, we focus on the main steps required when contemplating building a new home. It's a huge undertaking, so it pays to get it right at the start.

We look at houses of the future and the trends emerging in technology and construction. We visit several houses that will last well into the future.

Next month's theme is interiors. If you know of a zappy place you believe deserves a wider audience, please get in touch.



Light and shade. Nelson architect Helen Richardson's home is built to regulate character in temperature. Lower heating costs and greater comfort are the fits of energy efficient homes.

AT HOME, OCTOBER

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Wise insulation

David Killick believes energy efficiency should be a top priority in new homes.

Gavin Lowe, of Gavin Lowe Airconditioning in Christchurch, relates

trends

Uncertainty about the future of energy continues. Will the hydro lakes be high enough? What if we

at home

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LAYOUT: Chris Whitburn



Tranquillity: Auckland architect Pete Bossley chose natural materials for this home in the Marlborough Sounds.

into reality



Efficient: architect Helen Richards' Nelson home features passive solar design.

Some designers prefer modernist, contemporary designs. Others favour a traditional look. Although the street aspect does count, how the house functions inside matters more. Develop a rapport with the designer.

❑ Choose a flexible design.

Flexibility is the key. Specify rooms that could serve as a bedroom, study, work area, home theatre or gym. Living areas should be able to be opened up for entertaining or closed for privacy. Garages should have well-lit work and hobby spaces.

Garden and outdoor living spaces should not become a burden.

❑ Emphasise energy efficiency.

With rising fuel costs and New Zealand's changeable weather, energy efficiency is common sense.

Choose a design that exceeds current standards. You will then be investing in the future. Energy-efficient measures include passive solar design, thermal mass, insulation, solar water heating and double glazing.

❑ Choose the best materials.

Insulated solid-concrete homes cope better with temperature variations, reducing energy costs and boosting comfort levels. Other cladding choices include timber, manufactured boards, Zinalume or long-run metal, brick, plaster and stone. Roofing may be concrete or terracotta tiles, metal or butanol.

❑ **Install a heating and cooling system.** Good passive solar design minimises energy usage, but heating and cooling systems should be

installed at the start. Consider underfloor or onfloor heating. Heat pumps are highly energy efficient, and provide cooling.

Christchurch firm Natures Flame has a central-heating system that burns wood pellets. The high-tech German system also works well with solar panels. Incorporating wood-pellet central heating helps to future-proof a new home, says Duncan Mackenzie, of Natures Flame.

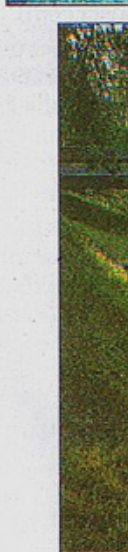
❑ **Get sensible windows.** Overseas visitors sometimes comment on the large windows in many New Zealand homes. While they can make a home light, they can also cause over-heating, and reduce wall space.

Big windows should face north and small windows south, but if there is a splendid view in that direction, fit a well-insulated picture window. Specify double glazing.

Frames include timber and aluminium or a combination of both, or low-maintenance European-style PVC joinery.

❑ **Get a good builder.** A good design depends on high-quality workmanship. Ask to see the builder's previous work. Don't opt for the cheapest tender.

❑ **Establish responsibility.** While some home-owners are confident supervising the construction themselves, others prefer to appoint someone to take responsibility for the whole project. This is often the architect. It may cost extra, but it is worth it for peace of mind.



Smart: four-si