

VALLEY HIGH

Prioritising wellness and moving out of Brisbane delivered a beautiful eco-friendly home in the bush and a more relaxed lifestyle to boot.

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This is the life
The Stevens family have heartily embraced rural living. They love being intimately connected to nature and the nuances of the changing seasons, and still marvel at the abundant wildlife around them. Regular visitors include wallabies, many different kinds of birds and lizards, even the occasional echidna. Sometimes they spot non-venomous diamond pythons sunbaking, but are careful to leave them alone!

FRONT WALKWAY Homeowners Lee and Lee-Anne Stevens with their daughters Violet (left) and Poppy, and Lillee the pug. **BATHROOM** Sustainable and serene, the main ensuite is everything Lee-Anne dreamed of. Bath, Apaiser. Arcisan 'Axus' tapware, Harvey Norman. Mirrors, Satchells. Spotted-gum vanity with marble top. Pendant light, Creative Cables. Ironbark weatherboards wrap around the house. ▶

For much of the year, Lee and Lee-Anne Stevens have all the doors and windows of their Moreton Bay hinterland home open, making the most of its connection to the surrounding bush. Living here in the valley is pure bliss, says Lee-Anne, and a far cry from their previous pressure-cooker lifestyle in Brisbane.

In 2014, Lee-Anne was suffering poor health, which she attributed to her high-stress job and coming into contact with toxic materials while renovating a number of old properties over the years. In order to live a 'cleaner' lifestyle and hopefully restore Lee-Anne's health, the couple decided to make a tree-change in 2016, securing a vacant 2.4ha block just 20km north-west of the city.

The Stevens briefed architect Shaun Lockyer to design a "modern farmhouse" that prioritised healthy spaces and natural materials. "Lee and Lee-Anne have had an interest in all things 'green' for a long time," says Shaun. "They wanted to build a sustainable family home, but it had to be practical in terms of incorporating the eco elements. They wanted to be sensible and get value from their investment."

With a floor area of 189m², the three-bedroom house is quite modest by today's standards. But the spaces feel open and generous, thanks to the elevated ceilings and connections to the outdoors on two sides. The floor plan is arranged around a grassed courtyard: garage, entry and home office at one end; main living areas and bedrooms in the long part; and alfresco entertaining zone - including a covered outdoor room -



TOP 5 INDOOR PLANTS (TO HELP WITH AIR PURIFICATION)

- Peace lily
- Devil's ivy
- Aloe vera
- Snake plant
- English ivy

OUTDOOR PLANTS

- Seaside daisy
- Dwarf fringed wattle (*Acacia fimbriata* 'Nana')
- Philodendron* 'Congo'
- Climbing fig (*Ficus pumila*)

DINING The weather is a bit cooler here than in Brisbane so the double-sided Seguin fireplace, from Sculpt Fireplace Collection, sees plenty of use in winter. Surrounding it are recycled bricks from The Brick Pit. Antique French dining table, Wallrocks. Vintage dining chairs, Louvres, Breezway. Local hero: 'Dreamweaver' woven pendant light, \$890, Pap & Scott.

DINING The main living areas connect to the garden on two sides. "Poppy can run in and out as she pleases," says Lee-Anne. Bench seat designed by Shaun Lockyer, made by Healthy Abode. Throw, Pampa. Ironbark flooring, Queensland Timber Flooring. **KITCHEN** With an organic veggie garden just steps away, fresh produce is always on the menu. Custom stools by JD Lee Furniture. Ovens, Siemens. Benchtops in stainless steel (at right) and spotted gum (island). The joinery is made from spotted gum and E0 VJ panels. Honed-concrete flooring. Designer buy: Armanda Vicaria 'Luz' gooseneck mixer tap, \$600, Abey. **LIVING** A restrained materials palette contributes to the homely feel of this space. "It's so cosy and comfortable, I never want to leave," says Lee-Anne. Custom armchair by Healthy Abode and The Pure-Shop. Ottoman, Pop & Scott. Basket, The Dharma Door. Rug, Armadillo & Co.

THE PALETTE

Recycled brick

Spotted gum (joinery throughout)

Slate (bathroom walls)



Great escape
The decision to move to a rural area initially raised a few eyebrows, says Lee-Anne. "When we first told our friends about our plans, they told us they'd need a picnic lunch to come and visit," she says, laughing. "But now people ring us and ask if they can come out for a barbecue. They love it here as much as we do - they visibly relax from the second they arrive and start heading up our long driveway."

and chemical-free pool - opposite. "The outdoor room is one of our favourite spaces," says Lee-Anne. "Perched on the built-in day bed, taking in the house and the landscape as one, you really appreciate the greatness of Shaun's design."

Lee and Lee-Anne are seasoned renovators (they have renovated, built or project-managed 150 properties for their consultancy business, Healthy Abode), so overseeing the interiors themselves was a natural step. In line with their clean-living ethos, they specified low- or non-toxic finishes and furnishings throughout.

The home feels especially welcoming, thanks to the use of rustic materials - solid timber trusses, spotted-gum floors and recycled bricks internally; and ironbark weatherboards and textural tyrolean render outside. Inside, the materials palette is deliberately restrained so the green views can take centre stage. "Waking up to greenery every morning is a feast for the eyes and helps reduce stress; it also improves your health longevity, sleep and immune function," says Lee-Anne.

Another bonus for the Stevens is that they're entirely self-sufficient in terms of electricity, water storage and waste management. Their power is generated by a 10kW solar system,

with its inverter located in a shed well away from the house to minimise the impact of electromagnetic fields. Water from their four rainwater tanks is delivered to the home via BPA-free pipes, and waste is naturally processed with a BioCycle aerobic wastewater treatment system.

The family - now including five-year-old Poppy and baby Violet - also maintain an organic vegetable garden and keep bees for honey. "Poppy spends hours at the fence line patting and feeding our neighbours' horses or generally exploring, climbing trees and getting dirty. It's wonderful," says Lee-Anne. As dusk falls, they put the chooks to bed, then take an "adventure walk" around the property, gathering bits and pieces for Poppy's treasure collection. Later, Lee-Anne will sit in the hanging chair on the deck and read to Poppy or rock Violet to sleep.

While Lee and Lee-Anne began this journey to improve Lee-Anne's health, the move has benefited the whole family. "We can't imagine living any other way now," she says.

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MAIN BEDROOM "We installed retractable fly screens so we can open up the whole house and let fresh air in but keep the bugs out," says Lee-Anne. Bed and side table, d-Bodhi. Bed linen, Elkie & Ark. Jute mandala wall art, The Dharma Door. Outside, the gardens are by Dan Young Landscape Architect and Lush Landscape Solutions. **ENSUITE** below left and opposite "Shaun thought about every detail, right down to where you hang your towel when you shower," says Lee-Anne. Marble benchtop. Arcisan 'Axus' tapware, Harvey Norman. Bath, Apaiser. Towels, Loom Towels. Stool, The Purc-Shop. 'Black Petal on White Background' encaustic floor tiles, Teranova. **Smart buy:** 'Abyss' slate wall tiles, from \$94/m², Eco Outdoor. **GUESTROOM** There are plants in every room to help 'clean' the air. Bench, JD Lee Furniture. Peg rail, Imprint House. Baskets, The Leisa Tree. For *Where to Buy*, see page 187. H&G



THE LAYOUT

