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20 Sunday November 14, 2021 RELAX | COVER STORY

Three Birds team turns street's ugly duckling into a dream home

Bonnie Hindmarsh, Erin Cayless, Lana Taylor

When we put out a call asking if anyone in Sydney wanted us to renovate their home, we never imagined that our inbox would be overflowing with messages from over 800 people submitting their homes for consideration. We were blown away! Especially because there was a bit of a catch: they'd need to hand over their keys, their budget and full creative control to us.

After days of deliberating and comparing all of the submissions, we found our diamond in the historic town of Windsor.

This dated little cottage on a busy main road with a flight path overhead was a true renovator's delight. She was the right size, shape and location, and was in dire need of some TLC.

Even better, the reno timeline meant that we'd be able to wedge this project into our already jam-packed schedule (hence our affectionate nickname for her: our "Windsor Wedgie").

Modern mums Sarah and Cath, along with their two sons Chaise and Addison, gave us their keys, their budget and their blessing, and off we went.

DON'T FRET THE FRETWORK

Decorative fretwork can be beautiful. Sometimes you need to keep it, and the end result can be amazing. At other times, it pays to be ruthless and fully committed to your vision board. On this house, the fretwork was dating the cottage and keeping it rooted in the past while we were trying to lead it towards a cleaner, more contemporary future. The fretwork had to go for the greater good.

CLAD UP FOR CONTEMPORARY

One of the MOST important design decisions when it came to modernising this cottage was changing the direction of the cladding. Running the cladding vertically rather than horizontally helps to update period cottages in a way that looks fresh and new without sacrificing character.

CHUNK UP WINDOW TRIMS

If you aren't changing the windows, consider updating their trims. It's easy, it freshens up the facade, and it gives your windows real presence. We gave these babies a thick fibre-cement trim that's easy to attach around existing window frames. It makes the windows POP and has the added benefit of being a hard-wearing and low-maintenance material.

GO FOR GOLD

It's the cherry on top of the pretty icing on that delicious cake. Gold fixtures are definitely not a must-have, but there's no doubt that it takes the look up a few notches. Best of all, it's not expensive! We bought it from the local hardware store.

SAY HELLO TO SEXY NEW TILES

There's no better way to pretty up an entry than with some drop-dead gorgeous tiles. They can really take a boring concrete porch to next-level amazing. The decision to tile the vertical front face of the porch was made at the last minute, but we've got to say that we think it totally makes the entire porch!

THE POWER OF THREE

One of our fave outdoor styling tricks is



Then and now: the team totally transformed this dated Windsor cottage. Pictures: Supplied



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Above: Lana Taylor, Bonnie Hindmarsh and Erin Cayles from Three Birds Renovations. Left: Adding bulky surrounds to the existing windows really made them pop. Below: The new book by Bonnie Hindmarsh, Erin Cayles and Lana Taylor is full of game-changing tips and tricks.



grouping three pots together with a variety of green, non-flowering plants. It never lets us down. For this house, rather than choosing plants with glossy, bright green leaves (such as banana palms, which we adore), we went for plants with a muted, grey-green colour to tie in with the hue of the house.

LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL

The back of this house was stuck in a dark place. The deck was wobbly and rotten, the grass was struggling to find light, and the yard was constantly muddy. Now it's light, bright and low maintenance. The zones we created all connect to each other in a way that feels inviting and quirky. It's a magnet for good times.

FOREVER FLAWLESS

Fake turf has come a very long way since the scratchy, plasticky stuff you'd find

on playgrounds back in the day. Today's artificial grass re-creates the feeling of soft, natural grass and looks perfect from day one. This backyard gets a lot of shade, and we didn't want to risk mud and grass being trampled through the house. Enter this gorgeous green lawn, which feels great on the tootsies and requires little to no maintenance.

SAND AHOY!

We were thrilled with the home's new sandy-coloured deck. We love how the black strips in HardieDeck make it look like a boat deck. #instantcoastalvibes

TIMBER AND FRESH AIR WERE MADE FOR EACH OTHER

When it comes to outdoor furniture, timber is (literally!) made for the great outdoors. It links back to nature, brings warmth and

texture to the space, and silvers beautifully when left in the elements.

RE-USE YOUR BRICK PAVERS

If you're pulling up brick pavers in your backyard, don't toss them. They make fantastic garden borders, like the one we created around the crushed white pebbles on the driveway.

BLOCK PARTY

Breeze (aka hesser) blocks are patterned concrete blocks best known from 1950s Palm Springs architecture. They're an inexpensive way to bring a happy holiday feeling to the most suburban of spaces.

USE CUSHIONS TO CREATE CONNECTION

Pretty outdoor cushions have to be one of the easiest ways to create that all-important

connection between the indoor and outdoor spaces. Simply look at the colours and patterns you've used inside the house, then buy outdoor cushions in those same tones and patterns (in a weather-resistant fabric with mould-resistant filling, of course).

FROM HUMBLE TO HELL YEAH!

Who needs a place to store a whipper snipper when you can enjoy a gin and tonic party with friends? If you're a social animal who likes to entertain at home, a "spritz shed" might be just what's missing from your life. Alternatively, a cute yoga studio or a creative space with an easel and paints could be equally as gorgeous. Garden sheds are little rooms with big potential.

■ This is an extract from *Three Birds Renovations: Dream Home How-To*, by Bonnie Hindmarsh, Erin Cayles and Lana Taylor. Murdoch Books. \$39.99