

Good views:

Daryl Stanton's home in Wakapuaka is small but beautifully proportioned.



Heading up: Steps lead up to a loft from the dining area.

Comfortable, cosy and natural

Jude Ritchie continues her series on other people's eco-houses, visiting a small but perfectly formed abode just north of Nelson.

High on a tree-clad hillside just off the road near the Wakapuaka community hall sits a beautifully restful and truly eco-friendly home.

This house is a testament to Daryl Stanton's commitment to everything healthy, from building materials to furnishings and even everything she eats.

Daryl bought her 3.6 hectares of mostly tree-planted land three years ago, after migrating from Santa Fe in the United States.

She had built before in her homeland and ran a retail business selling healthy home-ware products and furnishings, as well as free-trade imports.

This is something she feels passionate about and it is evident throughout her small but beautifully proportioned two-bedroom-plus-loft house.

Daryl's philosophy and indeed her business, is all about healthy people and a healthy environment, so everything chosen as a building material or fixture, even down to the furnishing fabrics, is made of natural, untreated materials, without harmful glues,

preservatives, dyes or vapours. Obviously, Daryl has spent much time carefully sourcing and selecting the right materials and also incorporating them into the one space.

Clad in Colorsteel with a flat facade hiding a sloping roof for rainwater collection, the initial visual is modernist and sleek.

Built in a pole-house style to afford the best possible views, north to the Glen and west to Mt Robert, the long steel poles reflect the surrounding tall trunks of the maturing plantations of macrocarpa, lawson cypress, eucalyptus and pines.

The innovation of using steel poles not only supports Daryl's principals by not using treated timber poles, but pre-empts a renewed interest in the building industry, post-Christchurch earthquake, to build using steel.

Inside, there is extensive use of macrocarpa as a wall lining and for flooring. The timber feeling is subtle, has warmth and creates a very Zen feeling.

What also works to create this restful state are the interesting shapes of rooms, with half-walls



Cosy and comfortable: Daryl Stanton in her restful daybed and reading nook, which has an excellent view too.

breaking up spaces and giving a sense of division, while a raised office space with expansive views would inspire anyone sitting there to write a bestselling novel.

Off the main living space, an inviting ladder leads up to a secret hiding place, a loft space which would be every child's fantasy or adult's secret retreat.

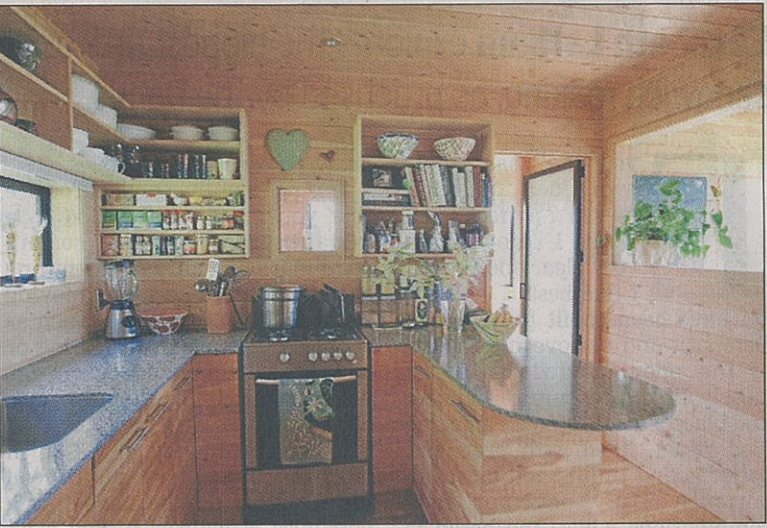
If that is occupied, there is also a restful reading bed in the second bedroom, with views out towards the mountain ranges.

The house is not on the power grid, with all electricity generated by the solar panels and supported by a backup generator.

Daryl often has guests and has had no problem with keeping her

power supplied by solar only, although she says it takes a certain amount of awareness to adapt to a house that is not connected to the grid.

Lights are turned off when they are not needed, as are computers and the TV. All lights are LED, with the cabling wrapped and master switches in each bedroom



Wooden wonder: Daryl Stanton's kitchen area is lined with macrocarpa.

and the loft to reduce electro-magnetic fields within the house.

There is a composting toilet, with waste going periodically into a worm farm. All taps and the shower nozzle have low-flow systems to reduce water usage.

The water is all harvested from the roof and flows into a 25,000-litre tank, with another 10,000-litre tank further up the hillside. The multi-star washing machine feeds the used water into a grey-water waste system, as well as all other household water.

Once settled and filtered, this goes into a reticulated system for use on the land.

Contrary to most advice given when building a solar-passive house, Daryl does not have an obvious solar mass, such as a concrete floor or mud-brick walls. With double glazing, wool-block

insulation and a small 100-square-metre space oriented to the north with large windows to maximise the sun, and a Studio wood burner, she says the house is incredibly warm.

It certainly was very cosy on the day I visited, even though it was wet and dull outside.

Daryl is adamant that size is a deciding factor when thinking eco-friendly and warmth. She says she could even go smaller, and misses the days when she lived in a 10sqm sleepout quite happily.

Many people could build eco-friendly houses if they could forget that large is better, she says.

■ Eco-home owner and champion Jude Ritchie is writing a monthly series, visiting the homes of Nelson people who have been guided by principles of sustainability in designing and building.