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A city couple bought a 60-hectare property in Victoria and embraced a new life of farming and horticulture

the 10-year plan



WORDS JOANNE HAWKINS PHOTOGRAPHY MARNIE HAWSON STYLING BELLE HEMMING

cheat sheet

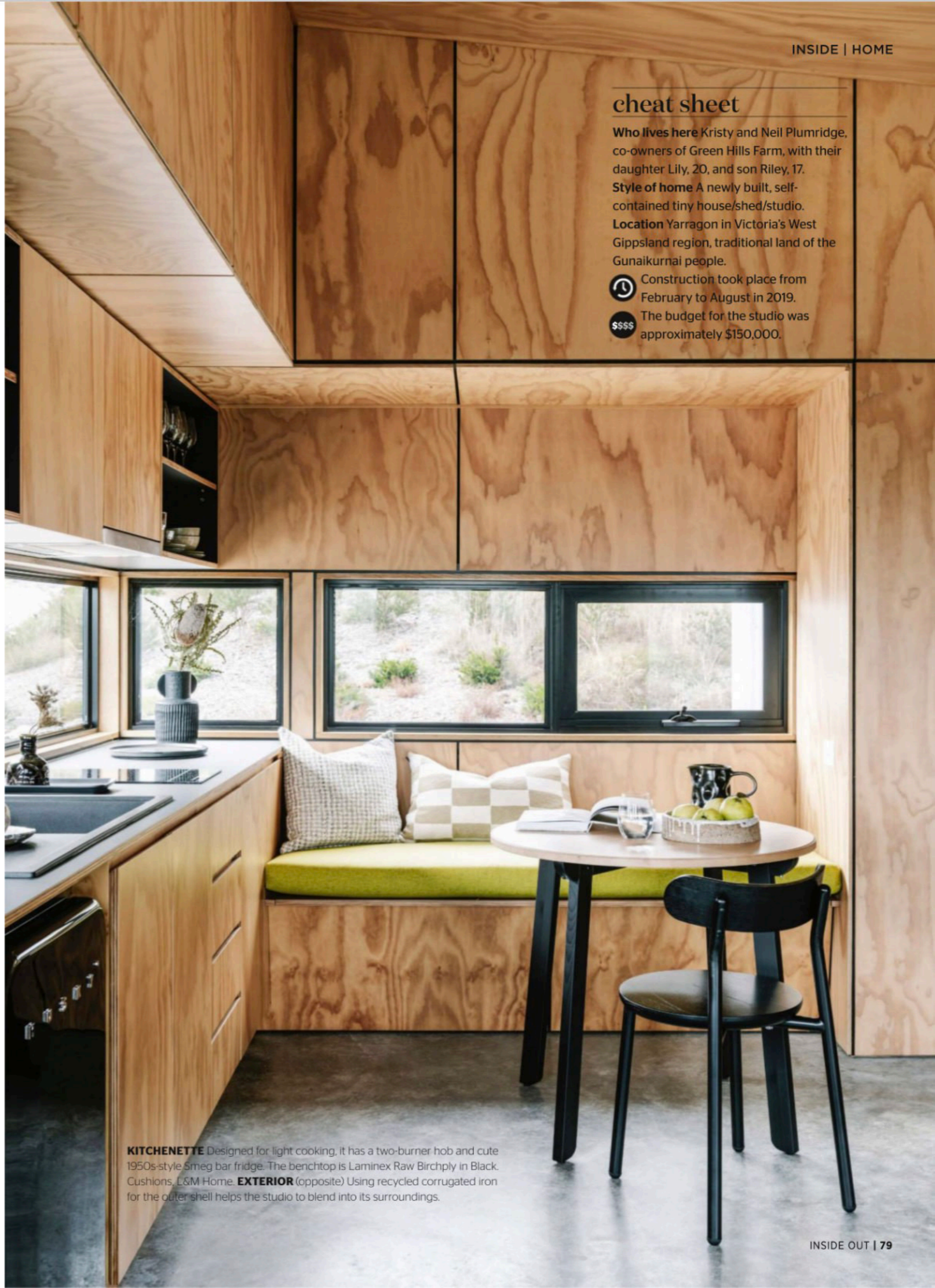
Who lives here Kristy and Neil Plumridge, co-owners of Green Hills Farm, with their daughter Lily, 20, and son Riley, 17.

Style of home A newly built, self-contained tiny house/shed/studio.

Location Yarragon in Victoria's West Gippsland region, traditional land of the Gunaikurnai people.

🕒 Construction took place from February to August in 2019.

💰 The budget for the studio was approximately \$150,000.



KITCHENETTE Designed for light cooking, it has a two-burner hob and cute 1950s-style Smeg bar fridge. The benchtop is Laminex Raw Birchply in Black. Cushions, L&M Home. **EXTERIOR** (opposite) Using recycled corrugated iron for the outer shell helps the studio to blend into its surroundings.

Kristy Plumridge admits that friends thought she and her husband Neil were slightly mad when they bought a 60-hectare farm in Victoria's west Gippsland region. "We are both city folk from corporate life who have zero farming background," says Kristy. "But we immediately fell in love with the rolling green hills and the lushness of the landscape."

As inexperienced as they were, they didn't buy the land on a whim back in 2015. In fact, it was the start of a 10-year plan to move from Melbourne and set up a farming business, which would form the next stage of their lives after their children Lily and Riley, now 20 and 17 respectively, had flown the nest.

They focused on farms within a 90-minute drive from Melbourne and bought one of the first they saw. "It was big, but that suited us as we planned to develop a working family farm as opposed to a small hobby farm," says Kristy, adding with a laugh, "but we thought we couldn't buy the *first* farm we saw, so we probably saw about 20 more before returning to this one!"

Although there was a small farmhouse "with no redeeming features", Kristy and Neil decided to demolish it to build a modern, barn-style home in a spot previously occupied by some stables. "It's nestled into the valley with an amazing view of the Strzelecki Ranges," she explains. The couple also decided to build a self-contained tiny house at the side of their new home, inspired by the tin sheds commonly seen on farming land. This would serve a variety of functions, from guest accommodation for friends and family to office space for Neil and Kristy, or even somewhere to hold farm workshops. "I also see it as a creative space, a place to read, write and draw away from the pull of chores in the main house," says Kristy.

Wanting to use a Gippsland-based architect who understood the sensibilities of building in a rural location, Len Chapman from Slap Architects in Bairnsdale was chosen to draw up designs for the main house and its sibling. As the tiny house wouldn't be full-time accommodation, Kristy and Neil wanted it to have a sense of fun. "We also didn't want it to be outrageous in price," she says.


According to Len, the studio's exterior was designed to echo shacks found throughout rural Australia. Externally, it's clad in recycled corrugated iron, with contrasting dark flashings added to play old off against the new. Inside, the 47-square-metre space has one main room housing a kitchen, living/dining area and a cordoned-off bedroom with a separate bathroom. The bedroom area also has a lower ceiling to delineate the space. "When you're thinking about building a tiny home, the minute you start putting in internal walls, you start decreasing the sense of space,"



LIVING AREA "It's so beautiful to be inside on a cold, rainy day when you've got the fire going and are feeling snug — you just watch the weather roll by," says Kristy. Traditional-looking Danish-designed wood heater, Morsø.

"When you build a tiny house, you don't want to feel hemmed in — the strip of windows is vital because it opens up the space to what's happening outside"

KRISTY PLUMRIDGE, HOMEOWNER

 good news

Kristy and Nell's cabin uses sustainable plywood on the walls and has a burnished concrete floor for thermal mass. The exterior is clad in recycled corrugated iron.



LIVING AREA "In addition to the plywood, we used linen, leather and felt cushioning as well as the natural fibres in our plaited Braid rug from Armadillo," says Kristy. The curtains in Mokum 'Satori Stonewash' linen from James Dunlop Textiles reflects the lush outside environment and creates "a beautifully cosy room." Cushions on the armchairs, The Upholstery House.



“As with our main house, we kept the interiors fairly simple because you don’t want to compete with the view, which is spectacular” KRISTY

There are also myriad windows around the cabin to take in the views and ever-changing weather. “The large doors and windows on one side face north-west, so you get the most beautiful sunsets at night,” points out Kristy.

Those jaw-dropping views are also the reason the interior is relatively pared-back, with walls clad in marine ply. Chosen for its sustainable qualities and the fact that it can be put up quickly, the ply’s distinctive watermarks were a happy accident and the result of budgetary pressures. “We went with a lower-grade ply because the A-grade product that we originally looked at was quite expensive,” says Kristy. “But I love that the watermarks give it texture and warmth.”

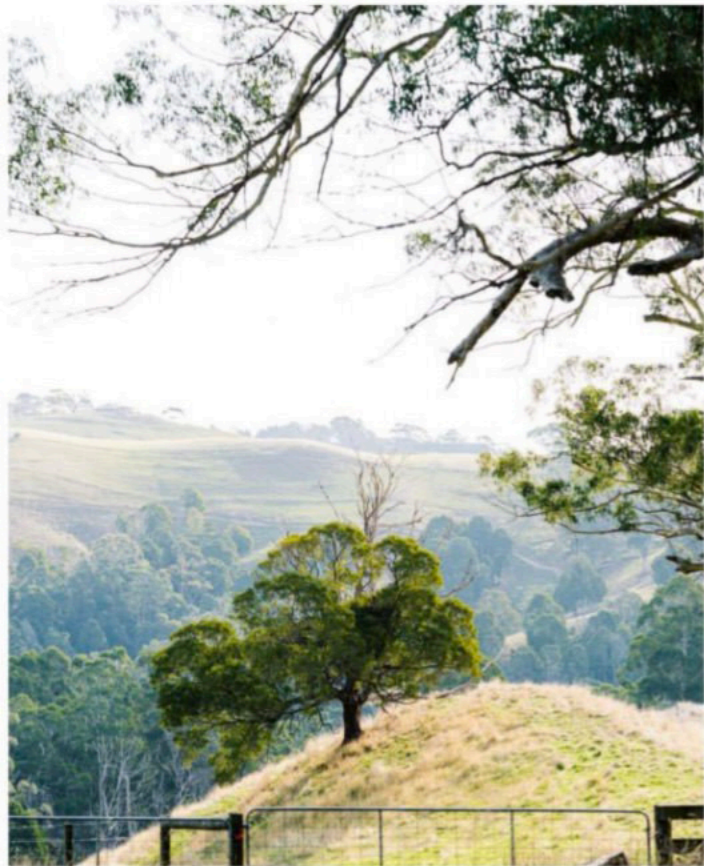
Kristy and Neil, who combines his involvement at Green Hills Farm with his role as a senior partner at PwC Australia, are thrilled with their decision to build the shed – and their friends no longer have concerns about their sanity, either. “The shed is simple and functional and doesn’t jar with the environment,” says Kristy. “Instead, it nestles into the landscape and looks like it’s always been there.”

Green Hills Farm is at greenhillsfarm.com.au and [@greenhills_farm](https://www.instagram.com/greenhills_farm). Slap Architects is at slaparchitects.com.au

explains Kristy. “Having two ceiling heights creates the effect of two rooms without closing it off.” A floor-to-ceiling curtain offers some privacy, and the bed reverts to a sofa when not needed (the bedding is stored in floating wall storage).

Other space-savvy tricks include high ceilings, a built-in bench seat – with more storage underneath – and not cramming the main room with too much ‘stuff’. “We thought about what we would be using the space for,” says Kristy. “Because it wasn’t going to be a permanent living space, there’s no laundry, for example – and the kitchenette doesn’t have an oven, but there’s a two-burner hob to cook basic things.”

BATHROOM (above) Quirky design extends to an oval bathroom that looks like a water tank from the outside. Kristy added luxe Brodware tapware in brushed brass so “it didn’t feel like you were showering in a corrugated shed”.
EXTERIOR (below, right and opposite) When she can pull herself away from the views, Kristy loves getting her hands dirty on the working farm. In addition to raising grass-fed beef, Green Hills Farm grows spray-free garlic.



GREAT FINDS



1 Mette Diltner 'Duet' shower curtain in Light Grey, \$82, Royal Design. **2** Finley brushed shower rail set, \$599.90, ABI Interiors. **3** Bulb orb vase in Black Frost, \$39, Zakkia. **4** Ferm Living 'Flow' jug, \$110, Smallable. **5** Sentinel four-light bar spotlight, \$239, Beacon Lighting. **6** Poet's Dream salad bowl, \$79.95, Robert Gordon. **7** Sanderson 'Icaria' fabric in Evergreen, POA, Domestic Textile Corporation. **8** Toru Hattta 'Kohiki' Sobachoko cup, \$85, The DEA Store. **9** Decortex 'Strand 2046' fabric, POA, Domestic Textile Corporation. **10** Icon + Lever knurled wall mixer set, \$1050, Astra Walker. **11** Braid wool rug in Charcoal, from \$1000, Armadillo. **12** Zone INU metal basket, \$140, Papaya. **13** Norr 2.0 Gra natural matt tile, \$119.95 per sq m, National Tiles. **14** French industrial chair in Black, \$299, Vorsen. **15** Unico 'Harbour' dining table in Oak/Black, \$1199, RJ Living. **16** Restore Grace gingham cushion cover in Beige, \$89.90, Hardtofind. **17** Harper cushion in Latte, \$154, L&M Home. **18** Tobago accent chair, \$599, Lounge Lovers. **19** NJP table light, \$1270, Cult Design. **20** Tree stump stool/side table, \$259, Salt & Sand.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCT SOURCING: NONCI NYONI

BATHROOM The burnished concrete slab seen throughout links the bathroom to the open-plan living area via a walkway lined with essential storage space. Tapware, Brodware.



lessons learnt
"Don't forget the practicalities"

KRISTY PLUMRIDGE, HOMEOWNER
"We chose corrugated iron to line the shower and bathroom. It looks great and has that rustic feel – but I realised afterwards that you couldn't attach towel rails, hooks, a toilet-paper holder or soap holders to it. We needed to think out of the box to come up with solutions, such as using an old rail spike in the wooden sink bench as a hand-towel rail."