



Above Felices such as old signs, a timber toolbox and a vintage trunk lend an authentic country character to this bush hideaway.

Right Michael Yabsley, seen with his dog Harley, is inspired by Australia's rural and industrial buildings.

Interview Megan Morton
Styling Sara Silm
Photography Michael Wee

Country road

A rustic shed has been converted into a rural retreat with acoustics fit for an orchestra.

Who lives here? Lobbyist, fundraiser and part-time lighting designer Michael Yabsley, with his wife Susie, son Edward, 20, daughter Alex, 14, and their 11-year-old English springer spaniel, Harley.

Describe your home's style. "The shed [in East Kangaloon in the NSW Southern Highlands] started life as a corrugated-iron structure and has evolved from there. We installed a recycled commercial kitchen and a table that seats 20. The whole space can be cleared out and the acoustics are perfect for an orchestra recital."

What were your priorities? "Making sure it was a large space with lots of room for

entertaining. It also needed to be robust – we wanted it to be a place where 100 teenagers could enjoy themselves without worrying about the Christoffe crystal."

How long has it taken to pull your home together? "From start to finish, about three years. There are enamel signs, the occasional dingo trap and other things that I add to the quite random selection. They give the space its character."

Where do you find inspiration? "I am inspired by the thousands of rural and industrial buildings around the Australian countryside. I wanted to create a similar feel that would be interesting and fun."

What is the best thing about living here?

"It's a hideaway in the bush – close to civilisation, but with a feeling of isolation."

What's your favourite spot? "Enjoying breakfast under the awning, looking through the birch trees towards the Nepean River."

Is there anything you and your partner disagree on? "Susie rolls her eyes when she sees a trailer-load of 'treasures', but she has become a convert after seeing what can be done with the orphan artefacts."

Any decorating advice? "I cringe when I'm told that something has been restored to its 'former glory'. Metal and wood should have blemishes that tell the story of time."



1. Springbok hide, \$195, from Pad Designer Furniture, (02) 8338 1886. 2. Slatted basket, \$55, from Orson & Blake, (02) 9326 1155. 3. Milton armchair, \$3295, from Coco Republic, 1300 785 039. 4. Penta tray, \$150, from Planet Furniture, (02) 9211 5959. 5. Stansborough throw, \$175, from Koskela, (02) 9280 0999. 6. Planet lamp, \$110, from Doug Up On Bourke, (02) 9690 0962. 7. Vintage trunk, \$450, from Doug Up On Bourke, as before. 8. Antler coat hook, \$35, from Hart & Heim, www.hartandheim.com.au. 9. Industrial lamp, \$1950, from Wombat Hollow Lamps, (02) 4888 2011.