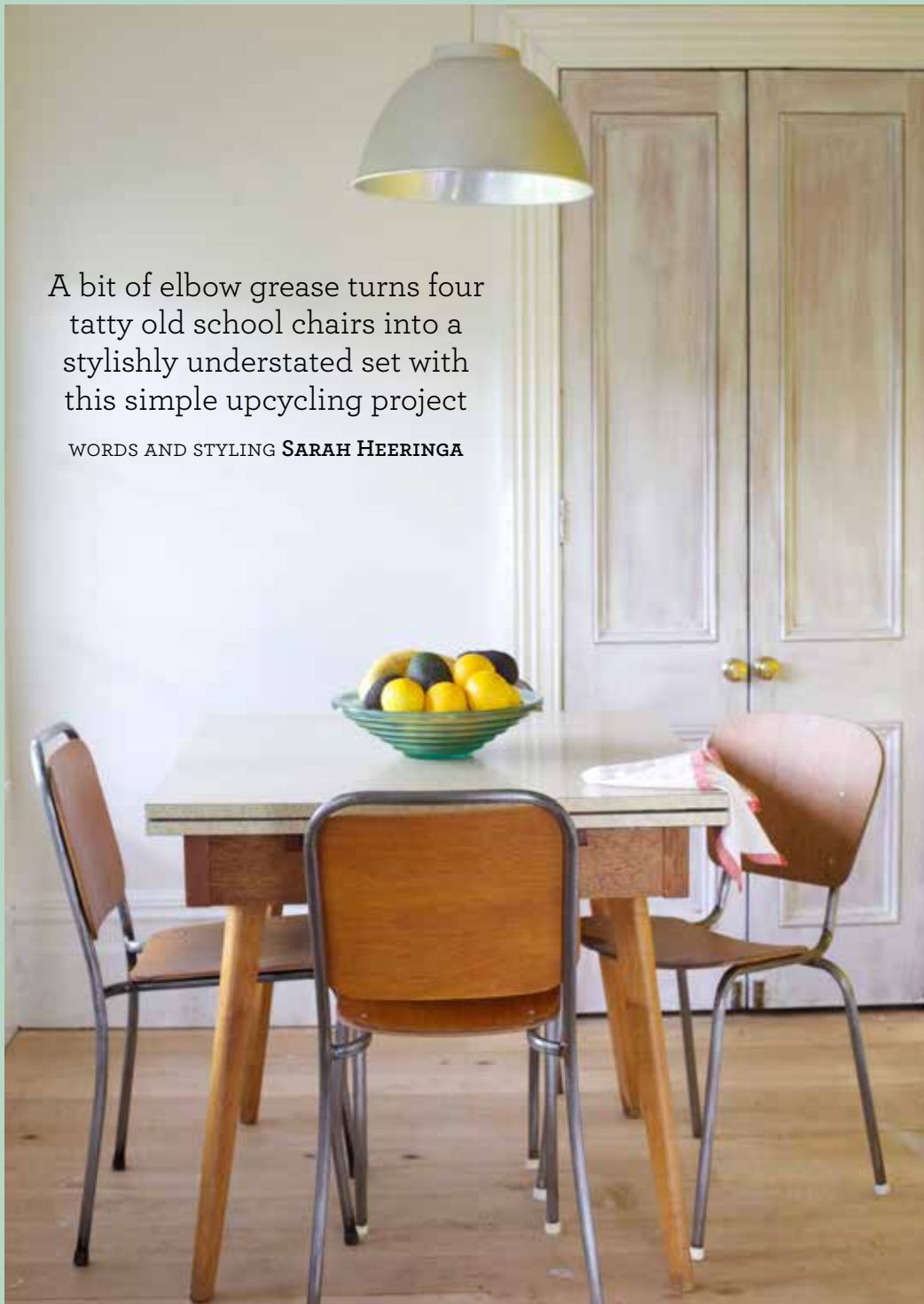


When less is more

A bit of elbow grease turns four tatty old school chairs into a stylishly understated set with this simple upcycling project

WORDS AND STYLING **SARAH HEERINGA**



See more projects
at www.facebook.com/reclaimthat

Add drama to your dining table with an oversized industrial light fitting. Check your local demolition yards or second hand dealers to see what ex-factory shades you can discover



A keen upcycler, Sarah keeps an eye out for discarded objects that might see a second life

Completing the upcycled look

Give repurposed cupboard doors a fresh white washed look. See www.good.net.nz/its-a-whitewash for more

The secret to most successful furniture upcycling projects is in looking for items made with quality materials and of classic design. Try to see past an item's current shabby state. Imagine combining it with other pieces to give it a new look. Just because something is being thrown away doesn't necessarily mean it's a piece of junk. What is the object's best feature? Sometimes it is what you remove rather than what you add that makes the difference.

These basic steel and laminated wood school chairs came my way after friends cleaned out a church hall basement. Of classic design and solid construction, they were still sturdy despite many years of use. The chairs were similar but not all the same design - so my aim was to tidy them up as well as give them a treatment that would help them look more of a cohesive set. Rather than paint the chairs, I decided to strip the metal back and coat it with a clear sealer to prevent it from rusting back up again. Once sanded back the wood panels revealed their lovely grain and a coat of sealer further enhanced their pleasing warm tones.

In all this project took some hours (there was at least 1 hour spent sanding per chair), but I was very happy with the end result we achieved. Anyway, I figure there are far worse ways to while away the time than with a few hours spent sanding - if at the same time you happen to be sitting in the sun and listening to fascinating history podcasts. Appropriately, working on these old school chairs was a history lesson and reclaiming project in one!

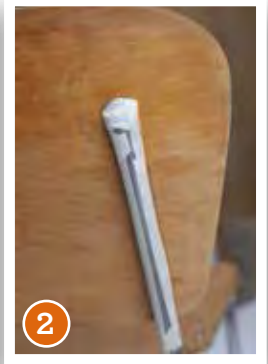
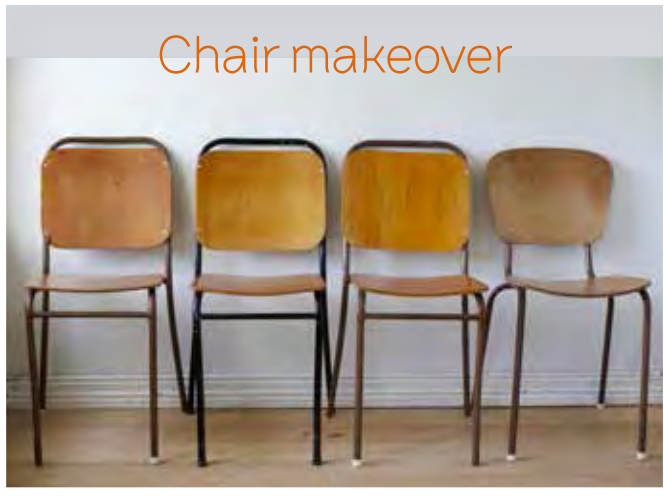
These chairs may be basic, but they make comfortable dining chairs and go well with this retro wood and formica table that I found and restored

You can use a rug to better define your dining area. A rug with a pattern is going to be easier to maintain. A woolen rug adds colour and cosiness and its natural fibres will be more forgiving of any accidental spills than synthetic alternatives.

Mix and match your chairs. Keep an eye out for similar-yet-different classically styled chairs to add in around the table



Chair makeover



One of the four chairs had a damaged seat which I sanded back to a smooth surface using a small electric sander before a hand sand using light grade paper and a coat of sealer



YOU WILL NEED

- Old metal and wood chairs
- medium and light grade sandpaper
- Resene Aquaclear Waterborne Urethane Varnish in a satin finish
- Resene Uracryl 403 urethane acrylic in a gloss finish, 2 parts
- medium-sized paint brush
- clean, lint-free cloth
- small electric sander (optional)
- mineral turpentine



For more great makeover projects, go to www.good.net.nz/athome



TIP: Don't use a solvent-based clear sealer unless you really need to. Resene Aquaclear Waterborne Urethane Varnish satin is an Environmental Choice-approved waterborne alternative. It's easy to apply and dries clear for a smooth, sealed surface

STEP 1 Sand the entire surface of the chairs and metalwork. Start with medium grade sandpaper and switch to light grade until you have achieved a smooth surface you are happy with. Take care to sand in the direction of the wood grain. Wipe off any dust using a lint-free, slightly damp cloth.

STEP 2 Use masking tape to cover the metal parts where they come in contact with wood parts of the chair

STEP 3 Cover all wooden surfaces with a light, even coat of Resene Aquaclear Waterborne Urethane Varnish. Allow to dry completely before applying a second and third coat to achieve the finish you are after. Once dry, remove masking tape.

STEP 4 Mix together the two parts of the Resene Uracryl 403 urethane acrylic. In a well ventilated area, apply a coat to the metal work. Allow to completely dry. Clean your brush using mineral turpentine (or turps).

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