

Natural wonder

By Vanessa Johnson
Photography Lindsay Keats

Native flora and fauna thrive *inside* this home

Inspired by the plant and animal life on their rural property, this bedroom celebrates family ties; both to the surrounding landscape as well as to the people who helped bring the design to life.

Shirley Simmonds, Steve Kenny and their baby son Tamihana, seven months, live on two and a half hectares of rural land just south of Levin. Both Shirley and Steve work in Wellington and Steve also has five daughters, so finding time for DIY projects was an exercise in logistics.

"We usually leave at seven and get home at about seven [at night], so it's a long day," explains Shirley. "Winning meant we had to project manage the design, co-ordinating everyone who helped us; family, friends and even my friend's father from England."

Shirley's design included a totara tree and all the bird life the family sees on their property. However, the actual starting point was to paint the walls in Resene Groovy (green) and Resene Picton Blue.

When it came time to sketch out the trees, Shirley devised a clever method of drawing the outline.

"I used Blu-Tack and dotted the outlines then connected up the dots with pencil. We painted in the trees using Resene Irish Coffee," she says.

Two painted kereru (wood pigeons), one owl and a fabric tuatara now inhabit the tree. To give the mural another dimension, the team made leaves out of t-shirt fabric in different shades of green and brown that they stuffed with fibre filling before sticking them to the wall.

"We used PVA glue to stick the leaves onto a cardboard backing and then we used Blu-Tack to stick them onto the wall. That way we could move them around without damaging the paintwork," explains Shirley.

Birds are everywhere. Above the beanbag hovers a flock of fantails made from a template drawn by Shirley's niece Tiria and painted by another niece, Jayda.

Three kakariki parrots made from 3mm MDF perch on the picture rail and two more are suspended mid-flight. A lone tui is painted so that he appears to be sitting on an actual flax flower tucked in behind the cot and a troupe of pukeko made from MDF will keep Tamihana company at floor level.

Shirley also sewed more t-shirt fabric leaves onto the brown beanbag (from Briscoes) to keep it in theme. Hooking the rag rug was the most time-consuming job but Shirley says the \$20 she spent on t-shirt fabric for the leaves and rag rug was her best buy. Her favourite element in the room is the flax toy box she wove using flax grown on the family's land.

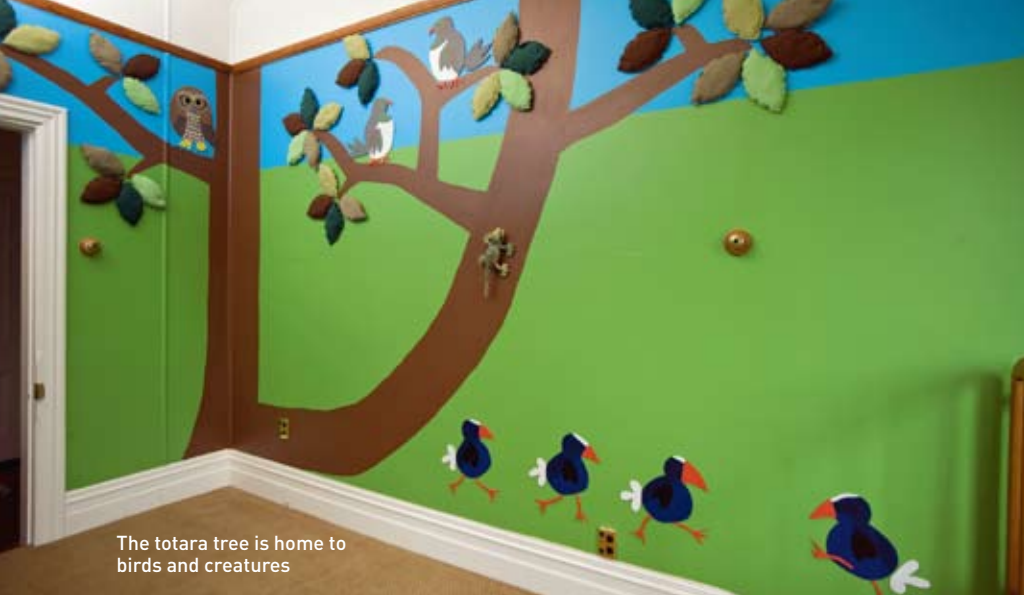
"I'd never woven anything so I needed help from Steve's mum and I used our wood basket to copy the shape. It turned out to be the most personally satisfying part of the whole project."

Steve's niece T'yara wove flax tie-backs for the curtains which Shirley made from 12 metres of thermal-backed fabric. These were hung on manuka rods, found on the

Tamihana's room is full of nature he can marvel at it while he drops off to sleep or plays on the floor

Tamihana and Shirley with the new beanbag





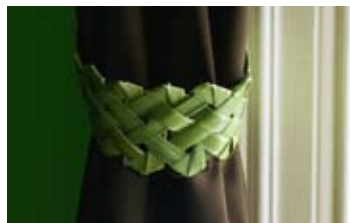
The totara tree is home to birds and creatures



Tamihana is connected to Kapiti Island through his Ngati Toa tupuna (ancestors)



Te reo phrases, woven flax toy box and a cabbage tree with tuatara



There's plenty to look at in this totara tree

land, that were stripped and sanded.

The couple already owned the cot and an MDF wardrobe, which they updated with two coats of Resene Magnetic Magic and then a topcoat of Resene Parsley. Their next job was to make a selection of magnets featuring te reo phrases.

"We chose words and phrases that have connections to Tamihana and printed them out, stuck them onto card, cut them out and laminated them before sticking on an

adhesive magnetic backing," says Shirley.

Sadly, the final stages of the makeover were made more difficult when the family suffered two devastating bereavements. To complete the project, it took an amazing whanau working bee and everyone turned up on a Saturday to muck in.

The next day also happened to be Steve's birthday so, with the wood-fired pizza oven stoked up and glasses charged, everyone gathered to celebrate a job well done. 🍷



Front row; Shirley, Tamihana, Malachi Kenny-Collins and Steve with (back row, from left) Clare Aspinall, T'yara Kenny-Collins, Rihia Kenny, and Courtney Kenny

Resene colours used:

- ROOM** Groovy (green); Picton Blue **TOTARA TREE** Irish Coffee
- CABBAGE TREE** Dallas (brown); Green Leaf; Palm Leaf **ISLANDS** Black
- BIRDS:** *Kakariki* Wham (bright green); Salem (dark green)
- Gorse (yellow); White; Whizz Bang (red)
- Pukeko* Aviator (blue/purple); Whizz Bang; White; Black
- Owl* Brown Bramble; Dallas; Friar Grey; Gorse; Black
- Kereru* Friar Grey; Salem; Whizz Bang; White
- Fantail* Friar Grey; Surrender (light grey); Dallas
- Tui* Black; White; Salem



Manuka curtain rod

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

Resene KidzColour

