



SELF-SUFFICIENCY
THE GOOD LIFE



WHO: Bob & Ann Phillips

WHERE: Nelson

WHY: to enjoy working and living off our property

LAND: 4371m² (1 acre)

BOB and Ann's seaside block is small but they still have a 'fruit salad' garden of vegetables, herbs, flowers, vines and bushes, and over 200 food-producing trees.

Bob is a former president of the NZ Tree Crops Association. Since 2003, he and Ann have trialed macadamia and almond cultivars, to see what works – and what doesn't – in Nelson's climate. Their findings have been passed on to local nurseries.

The key to running such a large number of plants and trees is organisation.

"Use plastic garden edging for lawns," says Bob. "Cut it, circle your trees and use cable ties to join. You can spray or mulch inside it and weed eat right up to it. It's brilliant, simple and cheap. We also use it in our greenhouse for our tomato plants."



Sheryn's tip

Having an edge between the lawn and garden saves you a lot of time on weeding.

It also protects tree trunks. No matter how careful you are, sooner or later you will hit a precious tree with the lawnmower or weed eater and instantly damage (or kill) years of growth.



WHO: Eric & Annette Cairns

WHERE: Mangaroa Valley, Upper Hutt

WHY: To live in the country, but still work in town

LAND: 8ha (20 acres) of steep hill country, planted in mixed forest and orchards

ERIC Cairns is a legend in the NZ Tree Crops Association for his work in forestry and fig-growing.

"I'm nearly 70, but (our block) is still my pilot plant, my sandpit and my research project."

One of the couple's ambitions was a woodlot to help with retirement income. This evolved into a study of Continuous Cover Forestry (CCF), where individual trees can be harvested as they mature, instead of taking out a large stand all at once.

"(CCF) is designed to mimic natural systems and retain species diversity (mixed age and mixed species all in the same stands)."

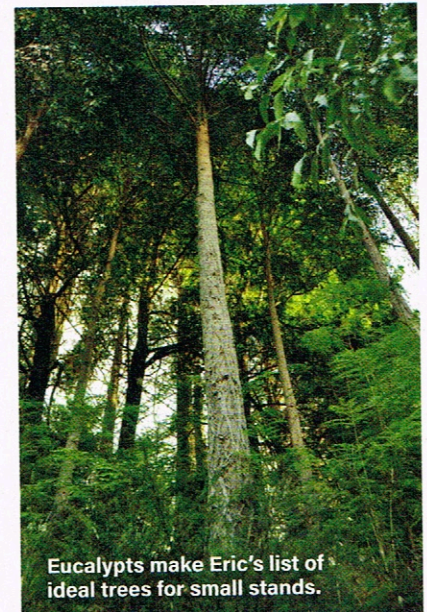
The problem with growing trees is it's slow work.

"I wanted to harvest timber within my lifetime, so I experimented with mixtures of Australian and North American species which can mature in less than 40 years.

"My forests have good numbers of pruned kauri, totara, puriri, rewarewa, rimu, and even beech tucked into gullies and forest edges."

The pine species are now ready to harvest but finding someone to do the work on the Cairns' steep block, without damaging other trees, is a problem.

"It is simply not feasible to find a contractor to selectively harvest the larger stems and allow the rest to grow on. Some pines and gums are up to 80-90cm diameter



Eucalypts make Eric's list of ideal trees for small stands.

and big trees need more space to fell.

"This intensive, small-scale, mixed age, mixed species operation on steeper land is not practical to selectively harvest. There are high setup costs, and you need heavy machinery to cope with logs that weigh several tons. To make any profit, we must carry out a one-hit harvest to recover as much heavy timber as possible."

Eric has learned what works, and what doesn't, for his block.

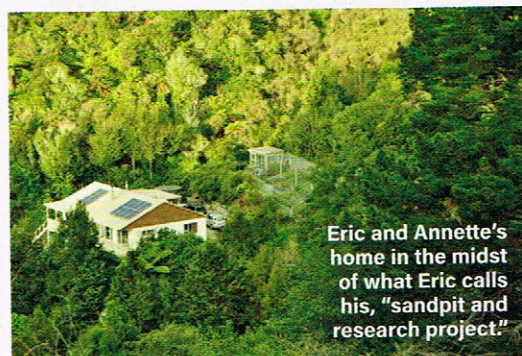
"From a purely economic sense, it's hard to go past radiata pine, but this is not what I plan to replant."

Eric's shortlist of ideal trees for small stands that suit his steep site:

- durable stringybark eucalypts (*E. microcorys*, *E. muelleriana*, and others)
- native species, including totara
- host trees for edible mushrooms like suillus and bolete species under pine nuts, oak, larch, Douglas fir and birches

He also loves oaks, but the perfect oak – one with heavy yields of large edible acorns, fast-growing, good milling timber, autumn colour, resistance to browsing animals and puriri moth – doesn't exist. Eric says he'll plant a mix instead.

"Perhaps *Quercus robur* hybrids for timber and acorns; *Q. ilex/rotundifolia* for acorns; *Q. rubra* or *Q. shumardii* for autumn colour and timber; and *Q. imbricaria* and some fast-growing Mexican oaks for timber."



Eric and Annette's home in the midst of what Eric calls his, "sandpit and research project."