



Blooming delight: Moya Terris is fond of floral colour in the garden.

Photos: SAM SCANNELL/FAIRFAX NZ

Deck the rooms for a jolly good cause

Moya Terris opened the doors to her historic home and garden last week and the crowds poured in for the Women's Refuge Deck the Rooms fundraiser. She took **Sarah Foy** on a tour.

It's genteel – no doubt about it. It comes with historical stories – it's nestled in a sweeping garden with an enviable location.

But when Moya Terris first spotted the New Plymouth home she shares with husband Alan, she wasn't smitten.

Up until midway through last year the couple was living in Auckland. A move south was imminent and her sister drew her attention to the fact the Carrington Rd house was for sale.

"I didn't know where it was. I never knew it existed." Seems odd now. Moya was born in New Plymouth and frequently visited her grandmother who lived nearby. But she'd never noticed the two-storey wooden home, built in the late 1860s, and couldn't quite picture where it was. Despite being inner-city, it's set just below the road with substantial gardens wrapped around it, like a giant green apron.

It took a few whirls around the home before the ambivalence melted.

"The attraction of course is the section, the garden, the proximity to town, to Pukekura Park, the way it sits in the garden and it's sunny, beautifully so – and it has lots of character."

Character in bucketloads. The first owner was Captain Davidson, local mayor and chairman of everything. He killed himself with a newly bought gun. The paper reported it as a 'melancholy suicide'. Who knew there was

anything other than a melancholy suicide.

Several owners passed through the house before an English doctor, Dr Gibb, and his Kiwi wife bought it in the 1940s. "It was in a pretty sad state. It was even advertised with the possibility of breaking it up into two flats."

Presumably the couple relished the challenge, changing the floor plan, adding 'English' features such as a bay window and accommodating space for his

surgery. The next owners were Alex and Margareite Brodie. (Mr Brodie was the brother of Mary Matthews, who with her husband founded Tupare gardens).

Then the Johansens bought it, raising their family and remaining residents for 38 years. The property featured in the region's Powerco Taranaki Garden Spectacular three times over a six-year period.

In May last year the Terris family moved in: in June they started renovations. Moya wallpapered, painted and sewed curtains.

A new kitchen was added and a wall pulled down to open the space up and create natural flow between inside and out. A timber

ceiling with rib-like detail was handmade by builder Graham Wey to match an existing one in the kitchen space.

These days the interior is glamorous and rich in detail with dramatic wallpapers and thick carpets. Gleaming timber is still evident but Moya has painted some surfaces white to modernise and lighten.

The plushness tallies with a Christmas theme quite nicely.

Moya knew nothing about the Refuge fundraiser when approached to take part.

"What a good idea, she thought. 'The house lends itself to a festive occasion and also I think people enjoy going into others' houses to

Heritage setting: Trees and flowers frame the historic New Plymouth home of Alan and Moya Terris. Previous owners added the bay window after World War II.

see what they've created."

The lounge has grape-coloured wallpaper; the formal dining room boasts a silver pattern on the walls – thus purple and silver became drivers of the festive look.

The tree was hung with silver and purple baubles, gifts were garnished with ribbons in purple tones, and the colours carried through to a formal table-setting in napkins, candles, china, cutlery and Christmas crackers.

"I knew I would have a lot of flowers in the garden so I wanted to make the most of what's available."

She sourced pink peonies from a friend, otherwise the floral arrangements were from her own garden. A jug of flowers on the table's centre bursts with a selection: hydrangeas, sweetpeas, foxgloves, carpet roses and ornithogalum.

While the inside has consumed much of the Terris's time, the garden wasn't neglected.

"The garden was an important part of the purchase. I love the physicality of gardening, I love the satisfaction of it, I love everything about it."

The Johansens had built

Continued page 14



All White: A Christmas wreath constructed by Moya hangs on the front door.

GARDENING



SARAH FOY

about the Refuge fundraiser when approached to take part.



Visitors welcome: The outside 'shed' was an old hut rejuvenated with windows, a new roof and a striking paint scheme.

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Deck the halls for a good cause

Continued from page 13

and nurtured the existing structure, centred on the flat northwest-facing lawn and a series of towering trees – among them a ginkgo, copper beech, golden elm and gleditsia.

Established camellias, rhododendrons, maples, magnolias, hydrangeas and other perennials give the property a fullness and sense of permanence.

But as with all gardens, ongoing work was needed. Many rhododendrons sported silver leaves, infected by thrips. Some have been hacked right back and their much smaller size bears healthy new growth.

The garden is broken up into different areas. Directly out from the house is the vegé garden and – adjacent to that – a flower patch bursting with self-sown goodies and shrubs.

"I've dug it up and they all come back again," says Moya of the self-sown area. The main reason I leave it there is because it's full of raspberries." Tucked in amongst a tapestry of colour are apple and plum trees; on a fence nearby flourishes the pinky old-fashioned rose, Souvenir De Madame Leonie Viennot.

Separated from the self-sown flower patch is a more formal garden. Here, a selection of roses with yellow, apricot and red flowers is set into a square border. Around the edges are more fruit trees, a low-growing lonicera hedge and a range of shrubs. Moya has plans to tidy the space, as it's got a bit unruly for her liking.

Steps lead down to a citrus grove, sitting low near the banks of the Huatoki Stream.

Back up on the flat, a white trellis frames a corner dubbed the Arbour. Lilac roses clamber across the fence next to a giant plum-coloured clematis.

From here the garden fans out onto the lawn. A pair of Robinia mop top trees – tightly clipped with ramrod straight trunks – stand guard at the bottom of stairs leading from the verandah. Another Robinia sits in a circular paving area.

Wide borders curve around with layers of planting. A green fringe of



Rich decoration: The lushness of the interiors shine through in the lounge drapes, carpets, upholstery and Christmas features.



Formal feast:

The festive table set with family silver, china, glassware, candles and linen.

hellebores to filmy ferns and tractor-seat-shaped *Ligularia reniformis*. There are also many azaleas, nestled in dappled shade beneath the trees, says Moya.

Round a bend she points to an orange and green-themed corner. *Vireya* rhododendrons, abutilon and burgundy-leaved canna lilies sit above a collar of hostas and liriopé.

Immediately adjacent to the house is a narrow garden stocked with salmon and apricot-coloured tropical *vireya*. Their soft tones are a counterpoint to the brilliant reds of a *bougavillea* that tumbles down one side of the house.

Back on the driveway, at the home's entrance, Moya points to the copper beech. It towers above a tall, beefy garden of hydrangeas, rhododendrons, agapanthus and *Acanthus mollis* (or Bear's Breeches).

Some things in this property haven't changed – the layout and stateliness of the garden remain intact. Other interior features have received a Terris twist that combines bold wall patterns and colour with white timber and a modern sparkle. Despite the makeover Moya is conscious of its heritage. "You do feel an obligation to look after and protect it, hence it's important to marry the past with the present and connect the house with the garden."

liriopé at ground level, backed by hostas, dahlias, alstromeria, abutilon, borage and all sorts of floral delights such as self-seeded poppies.

In some parts there is openness where rhododendrons were tartly trimmed, in other parts it is a pretty tumble of cottage garden. For example, Moya planted three pink-coloured lavatera that now flourish in great tall drifts. Other flowers thrown into the mix such as cornflowers, statice and Canterbury Bells didn't appear.

"I've planted all sorts of things to make it cottagey but many haven't

popped up."

In time they may. The beauty of inheriting an established garden is it takes several seasons for detail to be revealed.

Heading up the lawn the old trees become more dominant, arching over a woodland area. Clumps of clivia edge one side while parallel to Carrington Rd, paths meander through curved gardens. *Daphne* shrubs are a feature in one corner, making this a fragrant spot in winter.

Underneath the trees is a wide choice of bold foliage, everything from Japanese anemones and