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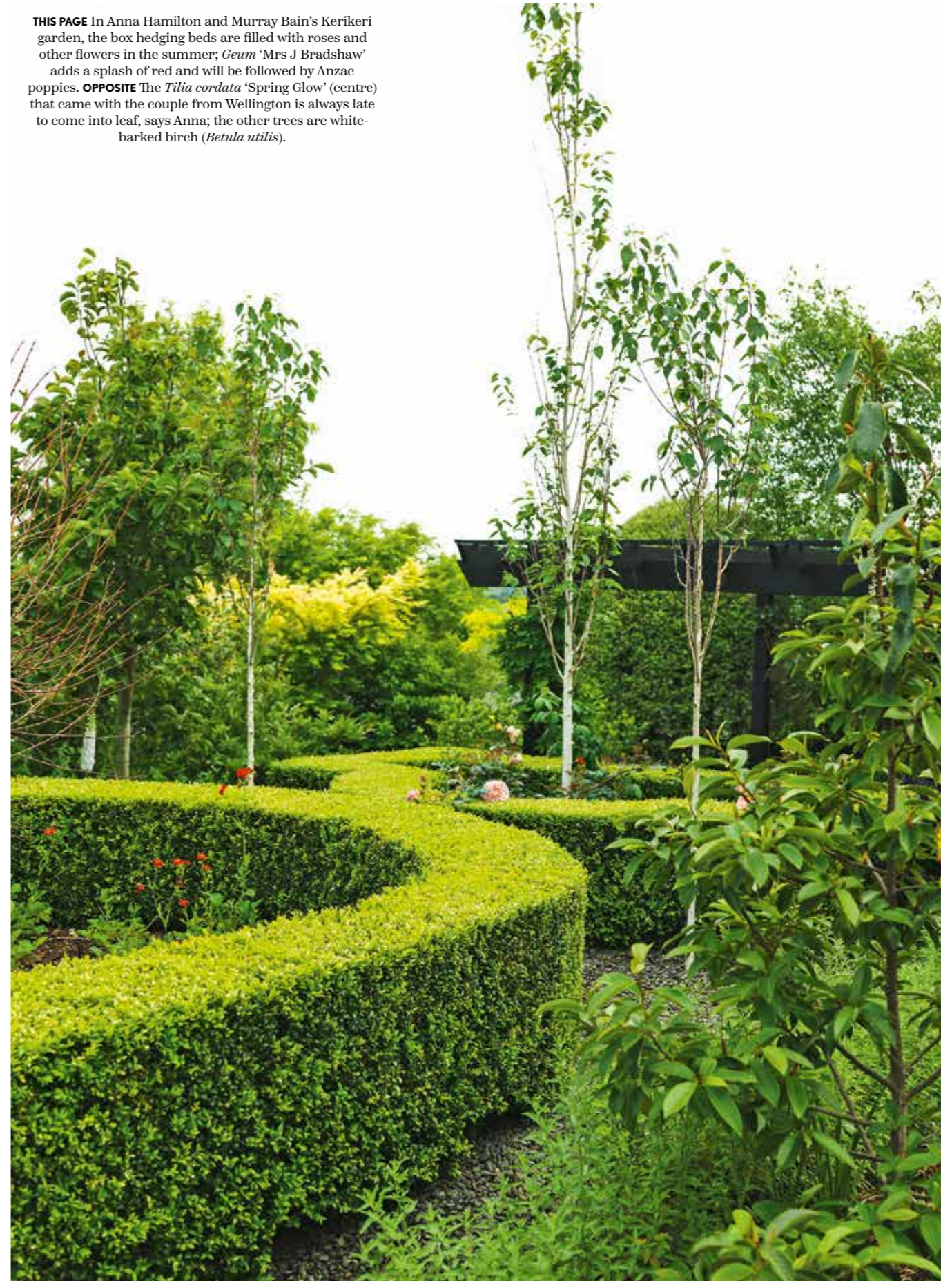
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## Moving on up

On transplanting a life and a garden from south to north

Words ROSEMARY BARRACLOUGH / Photographs JANE USSHER

**THIS PAGE** In Anna Hamilton and Murray Bain's Kerikeri garden, the box hedging beds are filled with roses and other flowers in the summer; *Geum* 'Mrs J Bradshaw' adds a splash of red and will be followed by Anzac poppies. **OPPOSITE** The *Tilia cordata* 'Spring Glow' (centre) that came with the couple from Wellington is always late to come into leaf, says Anna; the other trees are white-barked birch (*Betula utilis*).



# W

hen Anna Hamilton and Murray Bain made a bold move from the capital to Kerikeri, Northland a favourite tree made the journey with them.

In a moving truck, among couches and cushions, beds and books, came Anna's *Tilia cordata* 'Spring Glow'. She could picture its soft, lime-green, almost heart-shaped foliage in the new garden she planned to create. The 2m tall tilia was already well-travelled, having accompanied Murray and Anna to two previous Khandallah gardens.

"I dug it out and hauled it into a pot," recalls hands-on gardener Anna. Also along for the ride were 20 other plants and shrubs, including favourite hydrangeas, a weeping silver pear, crab apple and maple.

It was a major move for the pair. With demanding

careers behind them (Murray was once assistant governor of the Reserve Bank and still sits on a few boards; Anna held communications and marketing jobs and runs her own web company) they wanted to escape the metropolitan hubbub for a new adventure. They had holidayed for 15 years in Kerikeri, and knew they'd be happy to swap chilly Wellington winds for the balmy Far North.

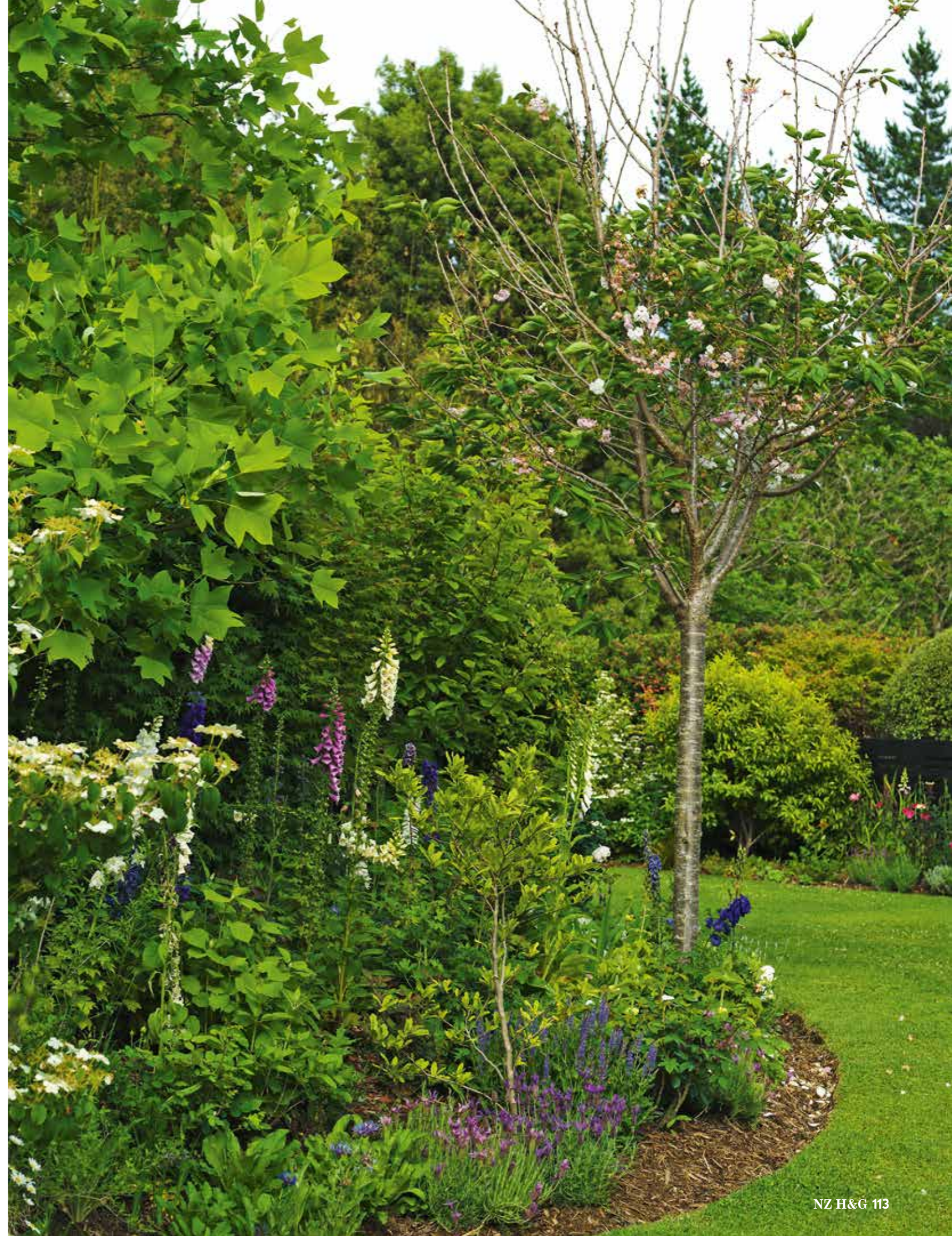
But the couple weren't about to sit still. In Kerikeri, they had bought a B&B with a small art gallery attached, and had plans to create a lodge and an English-style garden.

"It's a Christchurch English garden," says Anna, whose memories of her grandparents' Canterbury garden influence her still. Visitors expect subtropicals so are surprised by the roses and perennials that thrive here. "They say, 'I didn't know you could grow this sort of garden in Northland.'"

The couple are practised renovators and garden



**THIS PAGE** The path leads from the cottages to the couple's home, so guests can wander up to the deck and have a wine, or picnic on the lawn; the biggest tree is the liriiodendron, which has flowered for the first time this year. **OPPOSITE** Anna loves the liriiodendron's foliage; a cherry tree is just coming into blossom; it's surrounded by an 'Annabelle' hydrangea, foxgloves, delphiniums, salvia and lavender; later in the season yellow geum flowers here.





**On tour**

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**THIS PAGE** (clockwise from top left) Murray Bain and Anna Hamilton in a shady area. The sculpture is by Rustic Charm Garden Art in Whangarei, bought at The Old Packhouse Market in Kerikeri. White wisteria 'Snow Showers' grows over the pergola – they've watered the wisteria generously and been rewarded with rapid growth. Murray says large decks bring the outdoors in, so the couple added about 100sqm of deck, wrapping around two sides of the house and leading directly into the garden and paths. **OPPOSITE** Steps lead from the lawn to the house; a maple grows on the right and an array of perennials thrive here, including lamb's ear (*Stachys byzantina*), lady's mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*), lilies and foxgloves.

**THIS PAGE** The dining area and sunroom open out onto the deck; the outdoor table is the perfect spot for breakfast as it catches the morning sun; a scented port wine magnolia hedge grows at right. **OPPOSITE** Jars of picked flowers bring the outdoors in. Foxgloves add height and colour.



## Q&A

### Least favourite task:

Weeding. I have this enormous fear of pulling out a weed that turns out to be the only example of a particular, highly valuable plant. (Murray)

### Favourite colours:

White, blue and soft yellow. *Viburnum plicatum* 'Mariesii' with delphiniums and foxgloves and yellow geum. That's a lovely combo. (Anna)

### I'd been waiting for:

Our liriiodendron to flower. It has the most beautiful shaped leaves and conical shape. They say it takes five years to flower, so I was thrilled to see it in bloom this year. (Anna)

**We tell our guests:** It's only 20 minutes drive to Puketi Forest where you can see kauri nearly as big as Tāne Mahuta. (Anna)

*Anna Hamilton and Murray Bain*

rescuers, having done up several homes in their 20 years together.

They arrived in April 2015 and opened Treggan Lodge at Labour Weekend that same year, following a hectic period building three self-contained cottages, landscaping and starting their new garden.

Garden design is "a little bit like painting with plants" says Anna, who paints abstracts and makes jewellery in her spare time. Although she drew a garden plan, it was "really just the basics, then I see it in my head".

"I've done a lot of reading – Penelope Hobhouse, Rosemary Verey, Gertrude Jekyll, Christopher Lloyd. I've been influenced by them to aim for a formal framework with plantings within that," says Anna.

Existing box hedging and a port wine magnolia hedge were handy for framing the new garden and then the couple added extra structural planting. "We tend to plan where the main shrubs or trees are going to be and then build the garden around those," says Anna.

Anna loves the loose look of perennials and roses, but structure makes it work, she says. "Otherwise it

could look just like a tangle of planting. Even with the borders I've introduced some kind of formality... There'll be a grouping of *Nepeta* 'Six Hills Giant' catmint, groupings of Jerusalem sage."

The garden has an established look after only four years. Using large-specimen shrubs and trees helped, as did planting roses and perennials generously. "But the climate has something to do with it. Things grow very quickly here," says Anna.

Both Anna and Murray love the perfume of David Austin roses and the looser style of old English roses, which need very little spraying. Anna feeds the silvereyes, who return the favour by cleaning up the aphids.

Running the lodge and gallery means life is busy, and they couldn't do it without two staff members – one of them enjoys gardening as much as Anna does. "One of the pleasures is being able to pick up a trowel and secateurs and gloves and just go and meander whenever you feel like it."

Anna has watched the garden evolve and look just as she'd imagined, although not everything has gone to plan. One of the weeping silver pears (*Pyrus*

*salicifolia* 'Pendula') refused point blank to weep. "It sent new growth to the sky and nowhere else. After trimming and tying to no avail we gave up and moved it into our gully where it continues to grow skywards," says Anna.

Because the couple had holidayed in the north and Murray is a mad keen golfer, they've found it easy to make friends. The gallery and Anna's involvement in the Kerikeri Open Art Studios Trail (KOAST), which runs every Labour Weekend, has opened up a whole new social circle. "We probably know more people than we knew in Wellington," says Anna.

Anna and Murray have transplanted well then – as have their favourite plants. "You might say it's a bit of a risk, especially the move from Wellington to the much warmer climate of the Bay of Islands, but most trees and plants seem to thrive on at least some challenging treatment as well as pampering," says Anna, whose favourite tree, the *Tilia* 'Spring Glow' is doing well.

There's something brave about how it's followed the couple through several gardens and now thrives here, says Anna. "It does tug at my heart a little." ■

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