



Richard Cole at the sustainable house in Avalon, on Sydney's northern beaches, that won him an Australian Timber Design Award

BRADEN FASTIER

# Green all over, without the need for fancy gadgets



MITCHELL NADIN

GREEN technology is more often than not a red herring for environmentally friendly home design, Sydney architect Richard Cole says.

The use of expensive "eco" glass, home automation systems and even solar panels should be used only as a last resort for most coastal homes, the award-winning architect says. A well-considered design will almost always trump the need for green gadgetry.

"So-called green technologies can work well if you can have fantastic systems and you're in the right climate for it, but for many people they tend to be very expensive and can be a distraction from the real issue at hand," he said.

One of his celebrated projects, a timber house in Hilltop Road in Avalon on Sydney's northern beaches, achieved a sustainable design by use of recyclable materials, orientating the home in the right direction and maintaining a smaller floor space.

Louvre windows are strategically placed to create a breeze throughout the house, while the living area and both bedrooms take full extent of the sun, warming them naturally.

The home is constructed from a hybrid of sustainable materials — mostly local blackbutt and jarrah timber — that form the clever skeletal framework.

Dark-stained jarrah used for the floors and internal cabinetry contrasts with light blackbutt used in the beams and lintels.

Sturdy but light steel piers lift

INSIDE

Four pages of Weekend Property



In Weekend A Plus, inside Review

the home off the steep site and into the surrounding canopy, which meant energy-intensive excavations were not needed.

The home, completed last year, won an Australian Timber Design Award for its extensive use of sustainable hardwoods.

With a western orientation overlooking Pittwater, Mr Cole said, the afternoon sun needed to be tamed. This was achieved with a series of horizontal window bays. The amount of light coming in from different angles, with glass above the bays, can be controlled and makes lights unnecessary until late in the evening. The house consumed "very little power", with only a small amount of heating needed on winter mornings.

For a gallery of pictures, go to [theaustralian.com.au/property](http://theaustralian.com.au/property)