



Elenne Ford at her Mango Hill Farm at Peachester

paradise at peachester



IT WOULD BE A BOLD UNDERSTATEMENT TO CALL THIS OLD PEACHESTER FARMHOUSE A "RENOVATOR'S DREAM", AS **TOBY WALKER** DISCOVERS.

THAT DREAM had died years before Brisbane-based barrister Elenne Ford decided on Christmas Day that she wanted to get her hands dirty growing vegetables on the picturesque but overgrown property.

Of course, there were the previous tenants of the dilapidated home to contend with when she moved in on New Year's Eve, 2002.

A fat green frog was quite happy to sit on the kitchen bench and bask in the daylight shining through the cottage's cracked walls while a family of bush rats could be heard contentedly gnawing on macadamia nuts in the bathroom.

Meanwhile, her less-than-impressed husband Peter, not easily taken with rural charms, fell through rotten floorboards battling with mud-filled water pipes, leaving them to ring in 2003 without running water, electricity and buckets filled with earth for toilets.

Such chaos would have been enough to send even the most misty-eyed treechanger fleeing back to their keep-left land of surprise-free suburbia.

But not Elenne, who is the proud product of a farming family who had worked the land for

generations at Mount Adrah, near Gundagai in southern NSW.

The 47-year-old went straight to work cleaning up the property and establishing a processing facility for the mangoes that fell from 1250 trees dotted over the 12-acre block.

"Mangoes alone weren't enough to keep the farm going."

Elenne quickly assembled a small team of workers from in and around Peachester to help with her "fun job" transforming the forlorn farm into a viable organic food business while she returned to her day job in courts around the country.

As it would turn out, Mango Hill Farm's situation lent itself to growing ginger better than mangoes, and in 2004 Elenne had 1000 mango trees removed to make way for her new crops.

The old cottage, which local builder John Clarke later surmised was beyond saving, had disappeared by that stage too, replaced by a

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