



VITAL FORCE

GEORGINA LANGDALE'S BACK TO NATURE BUSINESS, ARCHEUS MEANS 'VITAL FORCE' AND THAT'S WHAT SHE IS TOO.

WORDS VIVIENNE HALDANE PHOTOGRAPHS TESSA CHRISP





One of Georgina's paintings - with bold letters spelling out places she's lived previously - Raukawa, London, Pimlico, Bloomsbury and West Kensington - hangs here too. She's travelled and worked all over the world, but the 2.5-hectare property near Napier, where she lives with her husband Al Morrison is truly, madly, deeply, her home.

GEORGINA LANGDALE'S DAILY commute is easy peasy. It takes only 112 footsteps from her house to the Archeus Apothecary where white sage and bright blue salvia grow beside the door. Once inside, she pauses to savour lingering fragrances such as sandalwood, geranium, frankincense and chamomile.

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In her wildest dreams, she could never have imagined returning to Hawkes Bay where she grew up on a farm, but to pinch a famous quote, 'life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans.'

When Georgina worked for the United Nations in Bonn, she preferred to cycle the 9-kilometre round trip on a cycle path beside the Rhine River. She biked through each season until, in winter, when the snow proved too much, she took the U-Bahn and waited for winter to release its grip.

Her job as Global Communications manager for a UN environmental study called TEEB (The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity) meant she travelled frequently to the European Commission in Brussels, and many other countries including Uruguay, to speak at the Global Environment Facility Congress, Japan for the Convention on Biological Diversity 10th Conference of Parties, as well as the United Kingdom and New York.

And although her high-flying career satisfied her, in many ways it didn't. "At the UN, the very thing we were working so hard to help support (the natural environment) was, ironically the thing I felt less and less connected to. We spent way too much time in suits and going from one meeting to another," she says.

Being able to get out on her bike and grow flowers and vegetables on the rooftop garden of her apartment in central Bonn helped Georgina to feel grounded, but deep down she yearned to do more than just talk about protecting the environment. She wanted to bury her hands in the soil, get dirt under her fingernails and feel the earth beneath her feet.

In her heart there was only one place she could imagine that dream coming true - "the region that nurtured me as a child."

So in 2011, spurred on by the fact that her parents, Jane and Philip were unwell, she returned to Hawke's Bay and in 2013, set up a natural skin care business she called Archeus (Ah-kee-us).

In hindsight, she'd been preparing for this moment for about 20 years. Alongside her busy career (In London, she ran a cultural communications agency and was Corporate Engagement manager, at the Royal Botanic Gardens of Kew) she'd always managed to make time for studying her "private passions," - environmental science, massage, reiki and herbal medicine.

"When I lived in London I often felt very disconnected from the natural world and I'd have paid anything for a pot of cream that melted into my skin and carried the essence and energy of nature into my soul."



Heading

Georgina's experiences of helping others deal with ill health, including her mother Jane (who passed away in 2014) and caring for her father as his health declines, has required her to pull on every inner resource she can muster. "It's been incredibly testing but I've learned some valuable lessons."

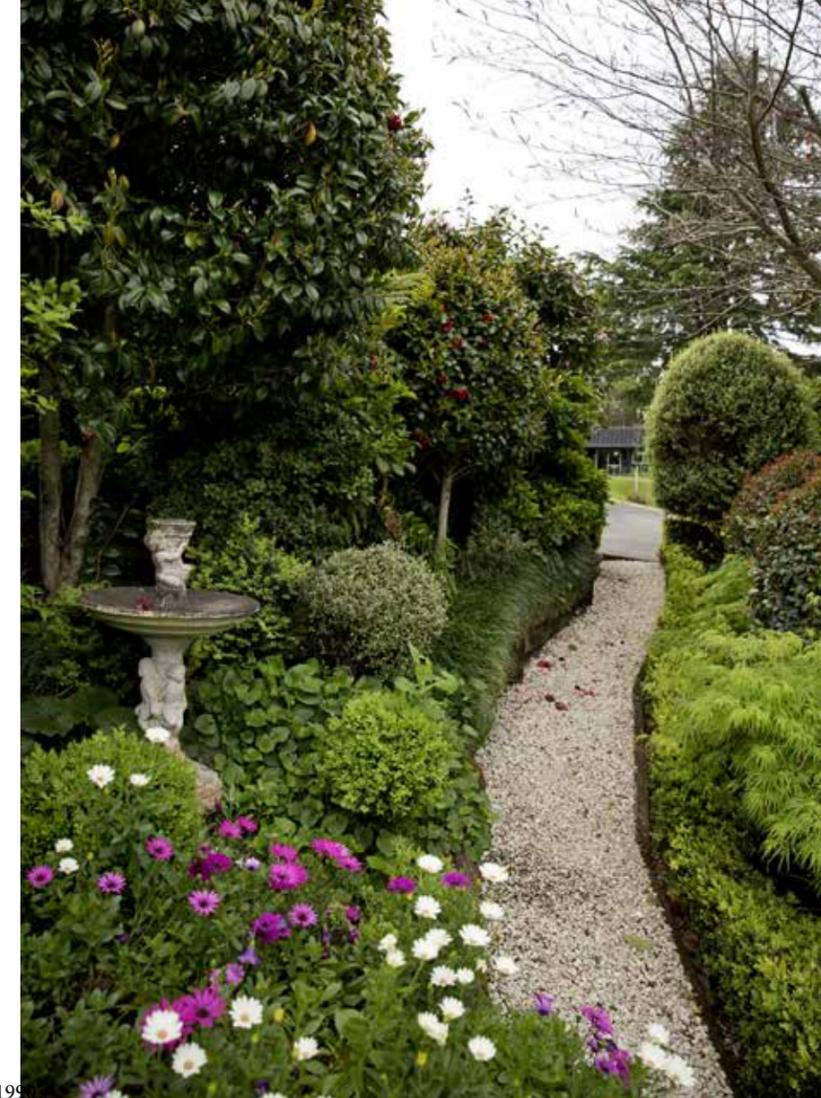
"I've observed that people are often uneasy about talking about grief or death, but it's part of the natural cycle of life and feels like a very sacred and valuable part of what I do. When people kept coming and asking if I could help them with grief, and I looked back over my own experiences, I began to focus on what I could create to help with dying in a state of grace."

"I particularly like working in transitional spaces that many others feel uncomfortable with such as menopause, the journey from illness to wellness or from life into death. These transitions have now become the key focus of my business."

With this in mind, she's recently launched a sister company called Archeus Natural Transitions (archeus.co.nz)

A percentage of each Archeus sale goes to the Archeus Conservation fund for plant conservation projects in Hawke's Bay.





A few of Georgina and Al's favourite things

Weekend pastime:
We love being in the garden. There is always work to do but somehow it doesn't (for the most part) seem like a chore! (Georgina and Al)

Places to eat in Hawke's Bay:

The local country pub - the Puketapu, Blackbarn Winery is always good and Hunger Monger on Marine Parade in Napier is great no fuss, delicious dining. (Georgina)

Balm or cream you like to use when feeling stressed?

I reach for one of the Archeus Plant Essences or Elixir blends when I am stressed – they are like a hug in a bottle. (Georgina)

Is there anything you miss about your previous life, Georgina?
I miss my friends and galleries and walking along the Thames on a weekend. An urban environment has its own beauty especially in places like London with so much history at every turn.

What books or people help get you through life's challenges?
I find awareness of connections and cycles in Nature can help bring wisdom and perspective to get through most challenges. One of my teachers, Sandra Ingerman has written some lovely books on ways to get through the tough stuff.



Around the time Georgina launched Archeus, she made a healing balm for her mother. "Because mum was very ill, her skin became itchy from some of her medications. To help, I used soothing and cooling herbs, including chickweed. The fact that it gave her some relief confirmed I was on the right path."

Most mornings, Georgina goes walkabout with Puffie the Labradoodle and Nemo the black cat (who relocated from Germany with her), following closely behind.

She heads up the steps and past raised beds (part of Al's beloved vegetable empire) of towering broad beans with fat pods ready to be picked, crunchy lettuces and muscular bouquets of parsley, candy pink geraniums and drifts of lavender.

Sometimes she follows a curved path lined with camellias, magnolias, maples and weeping cherry; or past hawthorn trees, whose creamy flowers appear each spring, to the pond where ducks, Flossie, Daisy and Mathilda live. Spotty Ears and Budge the sheep join in on the morning greeting as well. With names like these they can be assured of a long life spent munching on grass beside the pond.

Many of the plants she sees on her morning walk are used in her products, including many so-called weeds. "Violets, chickweed, nettle and even cleavers (biddy bid) are all powerful healers, and I love acknowledging their place in the garden and the benefits they bring to the things I make. Once you learn about their uses in herbal medicine, it's hard to think of them as a weed ever again."

Al, who is a former Director General of the Department of Conservation, is not as fond of weeds as Georgina, but the day he had a nasty fall in the garden, a particular weed proved very helpful. "I was bleeding like a stuck pig and yelled out to Georgina who immediately raced off to pick a handful of yarrow before chewing it up and plastering it on my leg. I kid you not:

within seconds the bleeding stopped."

Al and Georgina have known each other professionally since the 1990s (they first met when he was chief reporter for the (then) Evening Post and she was promoting an arts festival) but it was only when Georgina returned home that love blossomed. They were married in 2017.

Away from his work as Deputy Commissioner for the State Services Commission, Al is usually found pottering around the garden. "I get lost here for hours without a clue what time of day it is. I absolutely love it, especially my veggie plot - there's nothing nicer than growing your own. I also like the fact that the garden is attached to George's business, so it has some purpose other than recreation and sheer pleasure."

The apothecary (formerly a barn she and Al converted) is used for consultations and wellness sessions, as well as for processing herbs, dying textiles and running workshops so Georgina can share her knowledge. "People tell me they see recipes, but don't have the confidence to do it themselves. When they walk away with bags filled with what they've made, it's so satisfying," she says.

Georgina confesses she "loves big projects" and is always coming up with new ideas. "When a friend of mine was unwell, I wanted to wrap her up in goodness. So I experimented with dying natural fibres with medicinal herbs such as gentle lavender and calendula. She told me it was like lying on a bed of herbs."

Georgina now collaborates with Ayurvedic doctors in India as well as traditional handloom weavers who produce certified organic cotton fabric for bedding and clothing. She's excited about her latest development - a range of burial shrouds dyed with blends of traditional Indian and western medicinal herbs.

Georgina no longer works in boardrooms or wears a suit, but she remains influential in a different way. "I run my business on principles

