

SOLAR WHIZ PERFECT FOR HOT CEILINGS

Earth Garden editor Alan Gray describes his recent experience with a solar-powered ceiling exhaust fan.

THE SOLAR Whiz is a remarkably clever and simple device. It radically improves on the old whirly-bird exhaust fan that relies on outside wind to drive the unit. Instead, the Solar Whiz relies on a small solar panel to drive its fan motor. So anytime the sun's shining, your Solar Whiz is ready to extract hot air from your ceiling space or rooms. But what if the sun's just come up, your house is still cold from overnight, and you don't want the air extracted?

Again, the Solar Whiz is clever and simple: it has a thermostat fitted, so the fan motor will only start extracting air when it gets to a pre-set temperature.

I recently had a Solar Whiz installed on the roof above our hot and stuffy pantry. The pantry is one of the few design faults in our house: it's fully enclosed and is one of the few spaces in the house that has a low plaster ceiling above it, instead of being open to the sea breezes that cool the rest of the house. In the warm weather the pantry just gets hotter and hotter. Compounding the problem is that two of our rooftop solar inverters are installed in the pantry, right above the fuse box. Guess what we didn't realise when we agreed to the pantry location for the inverters: they release heaps of heat.

Finally, the fridge backs onto the pantry, and ... you guessed it: the heat from the rear of the fridge flows into the pantry, which is feeling more and more like a sauna and less and less like a pantry.

The Solar Whiz came to our rescue one late December morning when a friendly local roofing contractor, Nick Stone, came and installed the unit. Nick was quite excited about the Solar Whiz because although he'd never installed one before, like me he'd vaguely heard of them and thought they seemed like a good idea.

But good ideas can sometimes be great in theory and miserable in practice. In fact, the Solar Whiz was very



Nick Stone installs the Grays' Solar Whiz in December 2010.

easy to install and Nick was gone in less than an hour.

So how does it perform? Superbly. In the close-to 12 months since we've had the Solar Whiz fitted it's worked perfectly and entirely solved our

pantry problem. Now when I go into the pantry, instead of thinking: "Bugger! I have to solve this heat problem!" I don't think anything at all because the pantry's the same temperature as the rest of the house. We entirely forget the Solar Whiz — that's my favourite kind of household device.

Judith says the only thing we need to do is disconnect the thermostat (which I promise I'll do straight after writing this ...). That's because in warm climates like Broome we don't need to keep any warm morning air in the house — we want it expelled as soon as the sun rises.

The Solar Whiz is totally silent and it's hard to imagine anything going wrong with it. It's capable of expelling hot air from entire ceiling spaces. It's also a great way to avoid the temptation of air-conditioning, so it would pay for itself in just a few years.

• For more information about the Solar Whiz, visit www.solarwhiz.com.au or phone 1300 655 118 (within Australia) or +61 3 9808 1555.

