



NATURAL TOUCH: The Greenspace team, from left, Amanda Beatson, co-owner Annie Perkins, Robyn Lee and co-owner Dave Campbell in the eco-friendly business venue. PICTURE: Mark Taylor

Feijoas right touch for clients

By **Wayne Timmo**

Annie Perkins says clients at The Greenspace meeting venue like the natural touch of homegrown feijoas on the table and hearing rain on the roof. But for the Hamilton consultant they are also reminders that her environmental values have found a place in her business.

Ms Perkins is the founder and managing director of Groundwork Associates, a consultancy working in facilitation, communication and sustainable management employing herself and four full and part-time staff.

The business began in a friend's shed and later moved to her home, but a lack of space proved the motivator in creating The Greenspace, a

Claudlands bungalow renovated with eco-friendly values into a business meeting and function venue.

"Our gut feeling was why don't we add a room we can use for meetings with our clients and thought maybe there's a market for that," said Ms Perkins.

"We have got a lot of value for the environment and it's a core value for our business and many of the clients we work with... so we thought let's see how environmentally friendly we can make it."

The Greenspace, which opened in Te Aroha St in January after a year's renovation, was the result.

The former two-bedroom home has offices for Ground-



works and other tenants plus two meeting rooms and a large board room with nearby kitchen and views of a deck to the garden. Features include energy efficient lighting, insulation and double-glazing, use of recycled materials and low toxin paints.

Even timber from the original house has been reworked into furniture, while a tank retains rainwater for toilet cisterns and gardens and a swale minimises stormwater run-off.

The gardens are planted with native species to encourage biodiversity, while the first organic feijoas grown on-site has made it to a bowl on the conference table.

It's a small start, but one

that Ms Perkins hopes will be the first of many links between vista and venue as everything from guava to salad greens become available as the gardens mature.

"Doing it environmentally-friendly is not an easy thing to do," said Ms Perkins.

"Some support came from the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority and Hamilton City Council, but this was largely generic."

The venue is already booked two days a week by clients including Environment Waikato, IRD and Perry Group, solely through word of mouth.

Some of the most rewarding moments have been finding clients chatting in the kitchen or enjoying wandering in the garden as if at their own home, said Ms Perkins.