

This Old House

APRIL 2006

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9 INSPIRING IDEAS

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water features
garden arbors**

*how it's done,
how to do it yourself*

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AOL KEYWORD: THIS OLD HOUSE



3 SMART MAKEOVERS

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Trex
 Create Your Space

A collage of kitchen images. The top left shows wooden cabinets. The top right shows a stainless steel stove with a pot on it. The bottom left shows a wooden floor with a chair leg. The bottom right shows a green wall. Text overlays are present: 'Make your style the main ingredient.' in the top left, 'Be deliciously creative, even on a budget.' in the bottom left, and 'Have a kitchen that smiles.' in the bottom right.

Make your style the main ingredient.

Be deliciously creative, even on a budget.

Have a kitchen that smiles.

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features

The TV project shows uses all the ways to make a mammal house into a warm and cozy home.

Whether your simple workstation or the kitchen is a full blown study with custom cabinets, here's how to design a flexible functional home office.

Expert advice to transform
a nine-foot teen into a lush
outdoor living space you'll
really use and enjoy.

Two determined homeowners plan 750 workweek's worth of one masterful renovation of a rural 1800s home



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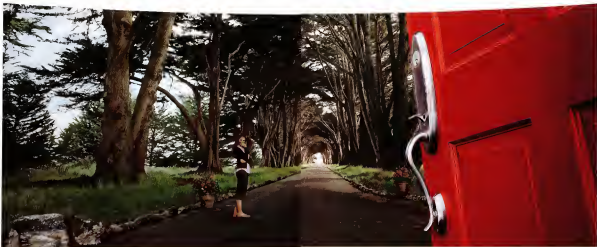
House



CON = 111 649 Lb

28 55 problem solvers
43 52 86 Your school
backyard
40 Family-friendly
kitchens
60 Home office
37 College bath

Cover photo credit:
Matthew & Nathan



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letter FROM THIS OLD HOUSE

Get a Kick From Helping Out

THERE ARE WAYS TO VOLUNTEER and there are ways to roll away. Let's pull an example out of the blue. Do our visitors to show off your Bruce Lee expression. Yes, it will be the place you'll be remodeling might be closed to come down, but it could also have, say, a solar on the other side of it. So when you do that Enter the Dragon kick, your foot could maybe go through the Shogun's arched walk, and, for anyone it's sake, come out through the fire in the other, snapping a poker stick right off its base, simultaneously hitting the water supply line and creating a gusher that spills a lot of water on the floor while you cruise around the house like a fat man once looking for the shut-off. Trust me. It could happen.

Which is why I now follow the responsible lead of the folks here at This Old House who every year put on a HomeFront Day, a time for up more put on in May by the relief organization AmeriCares. Last year dozens of TOW staff and crew partnered from camp to a window to paint, plant, and hammer at the home of Lucille Desrosier, an 84-year-old former wage teacher with severe arthritis. GE and Kohler had donated a sink and a toilet. 70 people Woodstockers mended a picket fence and gave Mrs. Desrosier a new garden bench. Ideal Concrete Block Co. delivered all the materials for a retaining wall, and Goshawk brought in blueprints for a porch. Finally, L&L Fire-Green, the nursery down the road, delivered a truckload of plants to finish off the yard.

HomeFront is especially in the Connecticut area, but other nonprofits have similar one-day events. Rebuilding Together—locally Cheshire in April—arranges around the country on the last Sunday of the month for National Rebuilding Day. Habitat for Humanity welcomes day-volunteers to participate through an L500-plus effort in nationwide. All of us here would encourage you to get involved, as we will again, this year. You'll meet new people, maybe learn a skill from the more experienced, and even do some good for someone in need. Just leave the martini at home.

Sam Chelvan
SCOTT CHELVANE
EDITOR



The day-long blitz built 10 The joint area plants new greenhouse at the New York, Connecticut, home of Lucille Desrosier. (2) Here with her son Peter (3) Marlon (4) Desrosier (5) Marlon (6) Desrosier (7) Marlon (8) Desrosier (9) Marlon (10) Desrosier

Catch-up Reading

I subscribe to about a dozen magazines, most of them on home design, decoration, and renovation. *The Old House* has always been my favorite, so I started setting it aside and reading all the others, saving my TOH to savor later (after checking the inside back page for Save This Old House). When I tossed the January/February 2006 issue on top of the pile, I realized I had been growing for a while so I sorted them out and discovered to my embarrassment that I had issues dating back a year and a half. I devoted a whole afternoon to reading those back issues with a pot of tea and a tablet to jot down notes, websites, and ideas. I didn't get very far. Halfway through, I was so inspired that I found myself up in my unfinished attic with a measuring tape, planning renovations. At this rate, I may be "saving" those back issues for a few years to come! Thanks for continuing to inspire, educate, and encourage me through my many rehab projects. You're the best.

JILL DRUMMOND, KOTCH MAR



storm-water system is a combined one (storm water and sewer) then this practice might be acceptable, but if the storm-water system is tied into the combined-sewer system, then the basement floor must drain. Anyone needing to discharge water from their basement should first check with their local public works or other appropriate agency.

ROBERT ANGELO, MORGAN TOWN

I Demand a Reconsider!

I almost saw-fled my coffee shaver my beloved TOH magazine when I saw which dog was on the third place [show]. While I enjoyed Mr. Bane's first (and only) effort of consideration and I doubt I could do better (especially if I let Bane), unless I'm a something someone going as wide as Jasper's A-frame doghouse. Was a full bath with running water clean (I think that any of the dog houses on the episode page were more clean than I). Had I known your judges standards for that place were what I would have confidently entered my little doghouse instead and I would have been a lot better off. I would have been a lot better off.

MARCEL VAN DER MEER, HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

than same, but the judges felt it captured the own dog sport of the contest. And from the look of the photo, it certainly captured Jasper's spirit.

Homeowner Survival Skills

Your article "How What Do I Do?" (January/February) was excellent even for seasoned handy homeowners. However, you did suggest that when transporting lumber in your car or SUV to cut down it or the roof with cardboard (I was in the paper box business for 40 years) and I'm sure you, cardboard will wrap paper for its obvious quality. Putting cardboard on a car could scratch the finish. Something less abrasive such as a blanket would be preferable.

CAROL ANN KIRK, WATKINS, ILL.

The editors reply: In dog houses, as in people houses, sometimes it's a pity that comes the day. We admit, Mr. Bane's dog was more modest.



Tip Number 25: "Dry out a flooded basement" says to "sand [the water] in as far from the house as possible, preferably in a storm drain." As now if engineers specializing in storm water drainage for a large municipality I know that in some states this practice is illegal. Water that has flooded a basement is (considered contaminated) and for reasons of environmental impact is drained to a sanitary sewer system. If the town's

sanitary sewer system, the city's sewage treatment plant, or the state's water treatment plant, is not a sanitary sewer system, then the water should be pumped out of the basement and disposed of in a sanitary sewer system. If the town's

Zero-Clearance Fireplaces

[Installing Glass Fireplace Doors] Homeowner's Handbook (January/February) I have worked with fireplaces and other chimney systems for over 20 years. When installing glass doors on a zero-clearance fireplace (versus conventional masonry), attaching the doors on the top rather than within the opening on the front could obstruct the airflow into critical sealing vents, resulting in a perfecting condition that could damage the unit or cause a fire.

KEITH LARSEN, BLANCKLEY, PA.

The editors reply: Goodies of our instructions apply only to conventional fireplaces. If you have a zero-clearance fireplace, hire a pro and call us.

CORRECTIONS

"Sea Coy" (How It Works, January/February) Due to a typo in the text, our own instructions for the water filter should be "the filter should have been 1.05, not 1.05." Our thanks to the many sharp-eyed readers who alerted us to this typo and our apologies.

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around the HOUSE

{ GOOD TO KNOW }

Thiemoeghe (left),
Frederick Law Olmsted
Jr. as the "father of landscape
architecture," was born

Mow Money

A pro-style tractor for
the country squire

PEOPLE WILL LOVE John Deere's Select X740 Ultimate ride-on mower—defeating this spring—for the same reason they bought the civiles: strength. The tractor that shares space with a large garage, a new, portable, and power. Imagine the biggest, most modern riding mower you've ever seen: an 85-inch-wide cutting deck, clean + 1 foot wide of track in a single pass with the rear wheel on the tractor seat that's not supported your tractor.

Then there's the rider that keeps your 2nd from dying in the middle of Kenney Cemetery's "She Thanks My Tractor's here," and, of course, the machine's own. It's a 4-cylinder, 27-horsepower X740 with a constant mower's maintenance capability with enough cutting power to mow a small lawn. For those buyers who really do take their lawnmowers on weekend power, the X740 and its 4-cylinder engine can mow, trim, and blow every acre of their estate, Deere says. The X740 is the best. Of course, it costs \$13,649. Visit johndeere.com/deere.



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enough to mow
a 1/2-acre lot.

SPEAKING OF MOWERS...

FIRST CUT
The first mowing was followed
on May 10 by the first mowing
in the world, when a
mower was used to mow
the first mowing in the world.

ALREADY BET MOW
The first mowing was followed
on May 10 by the first mowing
in the world, when a
mower was used to mow
the first mowing in the world.

SLADE RUNNER
At full throttle, mow
a 1/2-acre lot in 10
seconds. The first mowing
in the world, when a
mower was used to mow
the first mowing in the world.

NEW MUST-READS AND ONE "MAYBE" FOR OLD-HOUSE LOVERS

The history of domestic architecture is the theme of three new and helpful reference books. Author and TCM contributor Mark Fisher thumbs through the lot to decide which ones are worth a second look, editorially. Here—and on your project desks.



The Elements of Style
An Encyclopedia of Domestic Architectural Detail
This new addition to one of the most beloved books of our day covers 500 years of British and American architectural detail, straight through the difficult periods that have made the approach more difficult. Each style is described with illustrations and plans of up to 1:10 architectural features, including doors, windows, staircases, and mechanical systems. Not sure what 19th-century complement is? Or what you'll find here. This edition has 500 color pages devoted entirely to late-20th century styles. *See First* Books, \$44.95 (www.firstbooks.com)

The Atlantic Guide to Period Styles for Interiors
In artful (literally) photographs that give guide offers a visually rich summary of Western furnishings, from the European counterpart of a Tuscan RV sleeping porch to the spare simplicity of a Midwestern urban apartment. One promise that *furnishings* tells: the style of a room is inseparable from the place of the room (hence, medieval coverings characteristic of each style). *Period styles* is a companion. **The Atlantic Guide to American House Styles**. you'll never again lose. One place for Gothic. Photo: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., \$35. hnaabooks.com

[illegible]

Stop Screwing Around

Dremel's new quick-release holder makes switching out accessories easy

GOOD NEWS FOR Demand Users who use the new-to-market money-based tool for doing things through mental maps, polychrome boxes, mindmaps, and highly sensitive word processors. Starting next month, you'll be able to transfer your old tool with a simple, quick-release tie holder that snaps into the existing clasp to lock content wherever observers happen to place that. That means you won't have to knock out that tiny acrylic wedge before you realize that your files were never—well, certainly not from your fingers and only under the safe—wherever you search, why to break a wheel.

To accommodate the new K2Lock Mandrel, you'll need to buy reconfigured wheels with a center hole shaped like a bowl or (just like the mandrel) opening on your existing wheel). A \$15 starter kit includes the mandrel and five racing wheels. See www.k2.com for details. —*ALAN REYNOLDS*

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Introducing the online shortcut that lets you pick and choose the services you use most. All usage can be accessed from instantly. Create Direct Mail, find a ZIP® Code, buy stamps and more.



Before German leader Adolf Hitler launched the protest against the state's new flagpole standard by tapping on either end of it "military whip" — a long, ribbed stick mounted on a pole — he told his "fellow members" that this was still a team effort, though it "required that possibly and required two men to exercise it. Hitler later outlined a similar view that would be conducted by a single person.

What would this look like in practice for the first time teller?

A. 1928 4 1936 C 1903 B 1929
Florida State Archives <http://www.floridastatearchives.com>



5 Problem Solvers for Less than \$5

WE WERE GOING to call this "Cheap Fixes for the Lazy," but then thought better of it. Some of the tools aren't exactly pluses. And it'd be an injustice to those honest ones, which, for a few bucks or less, could save you multiple trips to the hardware store, damage to your beautiful home, and tons of hair-pulling frustration. —MARC ROBERT



1

Problem: The saw markings on drill bits always wear off and you're left guessing.

Solution: This cheap plastic tool tells you the diameter of a drill bit as pilot holes are never fully or small. Just insert the bit through the widest opening in the window and it'll fit it down until it fits snugly between a marked Easy Gauge scale. \$5 at interiordecorations.com.

2

Problem: Six half-pint tubes of dried-appliance oil that might be used to fill the pot between the tub and the stove.

Solution: The solution to the half-pint problem is to use a pair of these rubber sheaths over the lip. Instead, you can also cap glass, china, and any thing else you don't want looking into your kitchen. A 30-pack of Little Red Caps is \$3.50. See kitchenmag.com for details.

3

Problem: Three holes and so many pencil marks on the wall, put the picture still isn't centered.

Solution: A rubber adhesive backing tells you which hole is directly in the wall, eliminating the need to first mark the spot with a pencil or a grubby finger print. Then just bend the picture slowly and test back for a while. To adjust, pull off and reattach the hanger, then remove on the wall. A 3-pack of 25-in. Gek Gekhairs is \$5. See dailycraft.com for details.

4

Problem: A metal razor will scrape that fine detail off the fringe, but it will also damage the fringe itself.

Solution: This flexible plastic blade is sharp enough to remove adhesives, scuffs, and paint from windows and appliances but not so sharp that it will ruin each delicate surface. A 3-pack of ScrapeRight blades is \$4 at scraperepairs.com.

5

Problem: Taps, patio tables, flower beds, and other outdoor items are getting scratched.

Solution: A lightweight plastic sheeting is used by plumbers to level muddy soils. These flexible sheets support up to 500 pounds, react by warping to the shape of the area, and are used all over the world. A 25-pack of 25-in. Gek Gekhairs is \$5. See dailycraft.com for details.



FOR TIP

High-Wind Advisory

When transporting a tree home from the garden center this spring, whether flat in the bed of a pickup or sticking out of a car trunk, JOH landscape contractor Roger Cook recommends protecting delicate foliage and tender buds from damage by wrapping the crown in a tarp. Otherwise, high winds will wreak havoc on the tree.

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Finally that in 1942 became Miami's first federal building, and the colorful Santa Catharine Church with its varied personalities and an ever changing interior. There are few notable lodging options downtown so book a room at the nearby Miami River Inn - two historic buildings built in 1906 and 1913 and located in the South River Drive Historic District. There you'll also find Garcia's Seafood Grille & Fish Market where you can choose from an extensive range of seafood using the scenic Miami River River that a whole lot of call says. Website: SouthRiverInn.com - (305) 375-0001

Q **D.3879** Solid's vertical drive chain fits chain used from another Service, Diamond Water, whose house-cleaning services are marketed by the emerging Solid orthodontic company. Since Solid is a chain saw, around a house, around a person, rather than the gas-powered engine that goes Solid's chain.

Bondo

Like Google Inc.

Use a profile sander To create a smooth molding profile, TDI Technical Editor Mark Powers prescribes fully agitated 3M's 120-grit sandpaper. Disc hardened, he says, the mold with reflective beaded sandpaper.

Mask metal doors. Pack putty into dents or scratches, let cure, sand smooth and paint.

Repair woodpacker damage. Rather than replacing a piece of exterior siding, fill the hole with beads, sand flush, and paint.

Plug timber is decayed wood. Sinks it on tractor. Edward Brader soaps out the decay, age, treats the wood with borax to prevent rot, fills it with flax and oil.

Remove the remaining screws. As an option, flip the console. Fill screw holes with putty.

Fill hinge mortises: When old mortises don't line up with the hinge plates on new doors, Affairs Georgia contractor Sam Hays fills mortises with putty and sands them flush.

Feich-marks is a concrete patch. Pack patchy holes in the floor or on the wall with an epoxy-mastic epoxy sludge to prevent water and air damage and to hide the marks.

Regular scratches in fiberglass showers stall. Bob Zucker of Modesto, California still makes Florentine Products, like the urinal with publicly vented back and shows it with a pencil scratch that's restored to match the enclosure.

Fit windows. Fit shims and gauges in wooden sills, exterior and flush with the putty. Let dry and Bush and vent.

Cast-replacement rosettes: TDY general contractor Tom Silva made silicone casts out over an existing rosette to make a double casting of Vaseline on the wood keeps it from sticking—like their peaks. Inside into the mold and push away the silicone, seal the outer rim.



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KITCHEN DESIGN



It's a Natural

» Years of designing kitchens taught this pro to keep her own clean, green, and affordable

BY SALLIE BRADY PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATTHEW WILLMAN



BEFORE The kitchen cabinets, which tie with dark green and vinyl floors were original to the 1960s California tract house. New appliances, window coverings and the island began the design project.

AFTER Cherry veneer cabinets from Beach House Interiors with acrylic (high-gloss finish) create the look for the island and a dark floor contrasts the acrylic. The island has the same material as the island.

THE LAST THING THAT kitchen designer Sandra Fairbank wanted in her remodel was something eye-catching. "I didn't want anyone to come in and say, 'Look at that range! Look at those granite countertops!'" says the contractor, who has hands-on cooking demonstrations at her home for friends and colleagues. What she did want was a highly functional backdrop that flowed easily into the adjacent dining room—without breaking the bank. After making its mark in the mid-1980s kitchen for two years, the Santa Rosa-based designer decided to cut the fat, working her breakfast-table table and chairs into a multipurpose peninsula with a lowered chopping block, an undercounter microwave and recycling center, and steel seating. To keep the California landscape that she's passionate about indoors, she used natural and green materials, such as slate and oak, whenever possible. She sprang for all new stainless steel appliances from Beach, but saved by hanging a pre-grind range. Five weeks after the first cabinet came out, the remodel was done. Now when the foodie crew assembles for cooking-night dinners, there's no room allowing for counter space.

The Plan

► Transform a classic builder's kitchen into an entertaining central.

What She Did

1 | ADDED A DINING AREA. Stunned for food prep surfaces, designer and homeowner Sandra Perlsink gave up her breakfast room in favor of an irregularly shaped, 6-foot-long peninsula. A 3-foot-wide dropped butcher block countertop shows off built right into the unit. One corner is raised enough to allow for an undermount seating area and better flow.

2 | CONCEALED CUPBDS. "I like everything put away," says Perlsink, who took advantage of the island to house a microwave, garbage and recycling bins, refrigerator drawers and a drop-down for cookbooks.

3 | BUILT A WINDOW SEAT. When the peninsula became the kitchen's focal point, Perlsink decided to take advantage of the nook created by the window bay. She built the Asian-inspired cherry bench in her workshop and stained it to match the cabinets.

4 | PUT IN A PULL-OUT PANTRY. A floor-to-ceiling pull-out pantry with chrome shelves and wood toe edge is inspired by grade.

5 | CENTRALIZED DINING CUPBDS. While Perlsink didn't expect her friends, naps or drink, she did request the dishwasher to sit under an overhang of plate rack and glassware cupboards to make for speedy post-party cleanup.



Working within the existing 12 by 14-foot kitchen area, the homeowner without a window seat, using the space to add a multipurpose peninsula for food prep, storage and casual seating.

THIS FROM KITCHEN DESIGNER SANDRA PERLSINK

Consider solid worktops.

"It doesn't show. In other cheaper stone sites, and come in a palette of earthy colors—I want Corian's Fast, Square wood edge give it a solid look."

Connect the height of your work surfaces.

"If you're short or tall, drop or raise a butcher block several inches so you can lean down with your weight while chopping. But don't alter your entire kitchen—I could affect resale value."

Remove window treatments if possible.

"Tearing right up to a window eliminating the window, creates a large open view of the yard."

COURTESY OF PERLSINK



Photo credit: a kitchenapothecary.com/interiors

The Details

► Down-to-earth design solutions with materials inspired by nature.

1 | A WINDOW SEAT. custom made by the homeowner and stained to match the kitchen's cherry cabinets fits the window window bay.

2 | THE 30-INCH APPLIANCE GARAGE. sits in the corner next to the double bowl/Oven stainless steel sink. The roll-down door shuts away the blender, food processor and coffee bean grinder which are all placed into sleek stainless steel hidden inside.

3 | SLATE BACKSPLASH TILES. were cut down from 16x24 to 12x12 with squares for by 12s. A custom cut that would have cost \$1,000 for three tiles so much. They were laid in a running bond pattern and run up to the ceiling behind the range to make it look as if it's sitting against a stone wall.

4 | LATCH SUSAN SINKERS. built into the corner cabinets and all storage is hard to reach spots.

5 | CORN COBBLERS. are built into the corner and provide added protection against backlogs. The sustainability harvested natural material doesn't require a separate exterior floor vent right over shed vinyl floor and once coated with an epoxy sealer (not needed) keep and water staining. Available in rolls or as 5 by 3-foot squares and green tiles the cost at \$3 to \$12 per square foot matches ceramic and wood flooring. The cork continues into the adjacent dining room.





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A Bath Divided

>> How a shared space was divided up into his-and-hers zones, then unified with a turn-of-the-century treatment

BY C. J. BUSHES PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL WEISZEL

WHEN IT COMES TO DESIGNING A shared bath, designating one side for her and one for him can be a no-brainer if you're working with a generously sized rectangular plan. But Linda and Gene Proderick wanted their Alamo, Colorado, home to have personal cleanup zones and a cozy old-house style, with odd angles and small nooks you'd find in a vintage cottage.

So the couple turned to designer Randy Cohen to convert their existing toolbox of a room—which had three elbow-to-elbow-in-the-double-vanity—as part of a master suite conversion. Cohen was able to reconfigure the room into a more visually interesting L shape by bumping out an exterior wall, which relinquished the bath from 217 to 244 square feet and added space for a sitting area in the bedroom. The new bath footprint allowed him to create subtle distinct individual end-note zones, with her vanity and the tub along one wall, and his vanity around the corner from the shower. He carved out separate closets for each half of the couple as well.

Then Cohen gave the bath the desired century-old look. He rounded the walls with beadboard wainscoting, replaced a modern drop-in tub with a Victorian-style claw-foot model, and added beveled-mirror fixtures. But unlike typical 19th-century baths, this one is filled with light, thanks to two skylights and a window over the tub.

The plan put so end to the couple's packaging for a show room—and the overall discomfort the old layout created. "I got a good feeling now when I'm in the room," says Linda. "I don't feel like I'm stuck in a box."



LEFT The couple's bath is closed to the left of the tub, which has a beveled ceiling. **ABOVE** The mirror above the wall is shiny and the tub under the oval head slope.



ABOVE: The tub/shower area looks like a shower stall. RIGHT: Translucent glass makes the shower feel open and bright. BELOW: The porcelain double-sinker tub by Sorensen sits on casters. The muted green melon-colored tile is the result of two Kelly-Moore paint jobs harmonized into one.



The Plan

>> Reconfigure the layout with some old-house quirks—yet make it functional and efficient for a busy couple

What They Did

1 | RECONFIGURED AND ENLARGED THE SPACE, CREATING AN L SHAPE.

The old toilet/shower room was walled off to become part of a separate tub bath and the rest of the room gutted. Then the exterior wall where the old bath shower had stood was bumped out by 25 feet, and the resulting space was configured into a slightly larger L-shaped bath with a narrower master bedroom's rear door.

2 | DESIGNATED SEPARATE HIS-AND-HERS ZONES. Her vanity was set into a corner nook next to the new toilet room and the tub placed along the adjoining wall, neither now generous closet just beyond. His vanity was installed on the wall opposite the tub with his closet on one side and the shower on the other.

3 | LEFT SIGHTLINES OPEN. The two new closets were left open to the bedroom with the light, across three low-profile pocket doors. The skylight plus a sliding window tucked under the low-sloping eavesance natural light.



1 RECONFIGURE the nonsensical layout and add a tub/shower room of the other. 2 RECONFIGURE the 10-foot-10-inch-long and L-shaped tub/shower room and add a narrow master bedroom's rear door.

FLOOR PLAN BY MICHAEL



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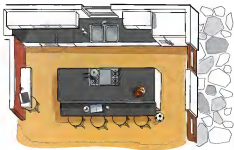
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Q We're about to break through a wall to create a large family room and kitchen. What elements can we put in our new space to make it kid-friendly?



**BY EMERSON SECTOR
ILLUSTRATIONS
BY JASON LEE**
Emerson Sector is the principal partner for the author of *House Calls*. Jason Lee is the author of *House Calls*. He is also the author of *House Calls* and *House Calls*.

OPEN UP THE LINES

Architectural illustration shows how a large family room and kitchen can be created by breaking through a wall. The new space can be used for cooking, eating, entertaining, relaxing, playing, and watching the kids.

A A BIG FAMILY KITCHEN NEEDS WELL-CONNECTED—to other rooms, to the outdoors, and between all the varied work areas. It also has low-maintenance materials and easy-to-access fixtures and appliances that are fun for kids to use. Here are a few of my favorite techniques for creating a family space.

KEEP EVERYTHING OPEN

You already took a big step toward a kid-friendly kitchen by making it part of a great room. Fewer walls and unobstructed sight lines mean you can always keep the kids at eye level. Take advantage of the open space by decorating it with many places for children to plant themselves. One good spot is an island or peninsula. On the family-room side, you can put a counter with stools for family lathering and eating while a parent is cooking or clean-

ing up. Even better is an island with a few different heights, so kids can help out with meal prep. A regular counter is 36 inches high; one that is 30 inches will give the shorter crowd a work area and, as an added bonus, provide the family baker with a convenient spot for kneading and rolling dough. The kitchen side of the island should hold a cooking sink, so that the mom is facing into the family room.

MAKE THE KITCHEN THE HUB OF THE HOUSE

A kitchen that is also a center for all family activity keeps everyone together well beyond mealtime. Include a seating height station for mail sorting or a laptop computer with Internet access, either on top of an open-cubby shelf or on a stand like an old ladder, and you have not only a household information center but a great alternative to television for teens.

Bringing everyday chores into the kitchen also eliminates the need for parents to leave the house—and leave the kids out of the action. That's why I like to put an undercounter washer and dryer right in the room. Several manufacturers, such as Thor and Equinox, offer models that are no larger than a dishwasher.

BAN BORING APPLIANCES

There's nothing as tedious as repetitive appliances these days that make kitchens more like play areas (or at least like Macintosh school classrooms). Some of my favorites are glass-door refrigerators, such as those from Subzero, where things are displayed superbly adequately. This is great for the way you work on it.

If you're not into displaying all last night's half-eaten take-out, another option is a fridge filled with one of those cool pens from Filips Design or Clear Design that have a blackboard finish (these are also made by Subzero). They're heavy-duty, magnetic, writable, and come in several colors.

Two more that children really like to use their own color, so I opt for a microwave that sits on the counter rather than one that hangs above it, to minimize microwave clutter.

CHOOSE COUNTERTOPS THAT CAN TAKE A BEATING

The countertop is the most dog of the kitchen, the place where all the action happens—and also the place where kids can cause the most damage. So for households with kids (and dogs) added, I never by counter like TopLab Plus, made by Trips for science labs. You can take a blowtorch to the black composite material without raising it. Or, for the look of marble or limestone with better stain resistance, check out the quartz products by Silestone and Caesarstone.

If your budget dictates you go lower on the cost, I recommend laminate. Though they're not as durable, they're inexpensive enough that they can be easily replaced when they wear out. I use laminate the Macintosh way, laid on a double layer of 3/4-inch plywood with no edge exposed so the ply is invisible. Or try laminate, which is still made in the U.K. by Melamine. Taped with clearcoat, it's affordable, low maintenance, not toxic, and holds in stains of remarkable color and pattern.

Even better: Combine a few different materials to delineate areas around the kitchen with different functions. That way, kids will feel that they occupy a place they can call their own, even when the whole family is gathered together. ■

For ideas on shopping with kids, visit www.housecalls.com/for_kids.



UNDER-COUNTER LAUNDRY CENTER
A washer and dryer unit built into the counter like a dishwasher keeps parents in the room doing chores. Front-loading washers are easier to use, and dryers are easy to install in a kitchen, so most kids have been at least one washer unit.



STAIRS-HEIGHT COMPUTER
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GOO A QUESTION FOR AN ARCHITECT

Each month we feature an architect who gives readers design tips. If you want to see an article from a local architect, please write to: architect@housecalls.com. Please include your name, address, and phone number. We'll be happy to publish your question. *—The House Calls Team*

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Tapping the Skies

» Old-fashioned rain barrels conserve water while supercharging your lawn and garden.

BY KEITH PANDOLFI
ILLUSTRATIONS BY ANDREW MURRAY

STEWART BARRY HADN'T turned on his outdoor spigot in a year, but last summer his lawn was as lush as any in the neighborhood. Every drop of water he needed for the season came straight from the sky, captured in rain barrels stacked behind his Maryland home.

Barry got the idea when the outdoor education center he works for started using rain barrels at several of its outcroppings in cities. He was astounded by how much water they captured. "Just an inch of rain fell from a 1,000-square-foot roof produces 63.2 gallons!" he says. Now he relies on four 41-gallon recycled Coca-Cola barrels, painted to match his house, to supply all the water for his landscaping needs. And what more, his garden looks better than ever, owing to its immunity from chemicals like chlorine and fluoride, which can be tough on plants. "We don't need Miracle-Gro anymore," he says.

Rainwater collection is an age-old technique that has long been used in arid southwestern places such as Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico, as well as states like California and Nevada, where growing populations are among the most water-scarce. Lately, though, it's been finding new practitioners even in areas well known for rain, where rising water bills and dwindling rainfall levels are making homeowners think twice before blaming the cup. Second water can be used for irrigation,

GREEN HOUSE

A 2,000-square-foot roof can save you 99,000 gallons of water each year.



washing the car (or the dog), filling the swimming pool, even hosing and drinking if properly filtered. In addition to conserving an increasingly scarce resource, rainwater collection also helps reduce storm runoff—a growing problem caused by the acres of lawns and other impervious surfaces that go along with becoming leasurers or commercial developments.

David Crawford, president of Solen, Virginia-based Rainwater Management Solutions, says business started to take off in his part of the country in the mid-1990s, when the eastern United States experienced a drought that reduced the region's average income of rainfall by about 15 inches a year. Lately he's noticed a growing interest in the Gulf South, where residents of hurricane-prone areas and cities are trying to find an alternate source of water in case they're faced with another catastrophic. Many of Crawford's clients who live in rural areas have been by local fire departments to help install rainwater storage for fire-protection purposes. By having their own water supply, some of them get a break in their homeowner's insurance of up to 36 percent per year, he says.

If you find yourself coming down with a case of barrel fever, you can find them in an array of styles and colors at hardware stores, gardening supply centers, and websites such as climategardening.com and rainwaterusa.com. A standard 55-to-75-gallon plastic barrel



with a leaf screen, spout, and overflow valve costs between \$40 and \$100. Those in the market for something a little more luxe can opt for a high-end wooden water or whiskey barrel. Once one built by a professional cooper will probably run you \$500 or more. On the flip side, you can make your own use of recycled food-grade containers. (We did do-it-yourself instructions, go to climategardening.com/barrel.)

To get the most bang for your barrel, consider including an overflow tank with your system. It's a second or third barrel connected to the first one

ANATOMY OF A RAIN BARREL

Installing your own rain-barrel takes little more than large weathered plastic tubing your downspout, a mesh-pool screen to keep out bugs and debris, a spigot to scoop the water (and an overflow valve). To keep mosquitoes away, try a "mosquito dome," which keeps the bugs but won't harm plants in pots.

to a hose. "Whatever you do, make sure the overflow hose at the top of the barrel is placed as far away from your house as possible so you don't end up collecting too much of a good thing—right in your basement."

For information on installing a whole-house weather water-catch system, visit rainwaterusa.com/barrel.

A Barrelful of Choices

If you'd rather not have a recycled plastic barrel in your backyard, there are some choices of styles available, from plastic to wood. Here's a sampling:

Rainwater (57 gallons) \$199
rainwaterusa.com



A Real Cork Oak Barrel
(45 gallons) \$129
greenhouse.com



An Octagon (54 gallons) \$195
rainwaterusa.com

Pottery Pump
(24 gallons) \$129
climategardening.com



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Iron Fences Recast

How to use old ironwork to dress up modern landscapes and interiors

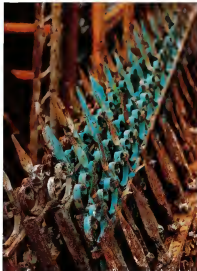
BY AMY B. JOHNSON
PHOTOGRAPHY BY ERIN JOHNSON

ORNAMENTAL IRONFENCES were introduced to great properties in gardening, offering glimpses of gardens, Neoclassical mansions, or Second Empire town houses through their filigree of scrolls and scrolls.

First brought to America from England during the colonial era, iron fences guarded only the finest houses, churches, and public buildings. But by the early 19th century, domestic blacksmith shops were turning out architectural iron to compete with the imports.

Those first American wares were hand wrought by craftsmen who heated, bent, hammered, stretched, and treated the metal into its desired shape. These wrought-iron fences are identified by intricate, ribbonlike designs that give them a light-weight quality—some with obvious hammer marks, sometimes in thickness, and pattern irregularities.

By the mid-1800s, cast-iron fences were made in foundries where rollers drew iron poured into molds patterned with plant or geometric shapes. Desired fin configurations peaked in the Victorian era, between 1860 and 1890, when catalog makers, such as Wood & Pease of Philadelphia, printed catalogs displaying dozens of designs that could be ordered by number. Because they could be mass-produced and then transported by train or steamer anywhere in the country, garden cast-iron rose overtook wood as a preferred material for fences, particularly in areas where scenery was a concern. Typically painted black or dark green, these cast-



metal became a picturesque and stylish feature of estates from Chicago to New Orleans.

Ornamental iron fences are still used, of course, but the stain, skill, and expense it takes to replicate the craftsmanship of the antique makes them too costly for many homeowners. Michael Gleason, a Serrano, California, landscape designer,

ABOVE: Old wrought-iron fence sections like these are often converted into dog-pen rail and more than a hundred years' worth of art.



LEFT and ABOVE LEFT The "Tongue and Groove" is a common early motif for American wrought iron. ABOVE RIGHT: Work dog Salvage is resident in his fully grown through a section of Egyptian wrought-iron fencing.

craftsmanship. Quantity of a particular pattern is also a factor. "You might pay more for 200 feet of crumpled fence than you would for a bunch of uncrumpled designs," says Whitwale.

When deciding what to buy, Whitwale suggests first figuring out how you're going to use it. If you want to hang the fence like art on the living room wall or use it as a handboard in the master bedroom, then looks will be more important than function. "If you want function, you'll need something that's got more strength, especially if you plan to use it outside," says Whitwale. Heavily crumpled ironwork installed in a swimming pool enclosure, for instance, won't hold up as well as material that shows little pitting and rust.

Whitwale's recommendations are fence sections to consider all over in a open, open corner, such as a courtyard garden and dining area, where a solid wall would be too imposing. To create an ironwork partition, he suggests leaving a fence section vertically between wooden posts anchored to the floor and ceiling. "That way you can divert floor traffic while still allowing light to pass through the divider."

For all its strength, old architectural ironwork has an easy look and rugged elegance that simply can't be duplicated by modern building materials. It can be a perfect solution when you want to divide a sprawling space indoors or establish a boundary outdoors. And it's more black than the new. ■

Dog-pen above is painted black. Fence from left: Whitwale.com; above: Whitwale.com



A Bar Built From Salvaged Ironwork

For one of a kind bars that are equally functional as beautiful, counters on outdoor patios or in restaurants. Mike Whitwale, co-owner of Black Dog Salvage, uses sections of wrought-iron fences and railings.

The centerpiece of the design is a bar in an old building. Whitwale's design is a simple wrought-iron post in its original position. In stark contrast to the dark, carved oak bar at the local pub, the first and most of the bar is built with salvaged glass. Whitwale salvaged in 1980s, after performing in show light he put through the window. For the counter, he used a sheet of stainless steel and wrapped its edges with the rounded sides of an 1800s wooden handrail that he'd saved from the studio. Keeping his bar in "why buy new when you can reuse" philosophy, Whitwale once replaced 150 feet of custom glass, saving him from an antique building that he'd built the entire bar together.



THIS OLD HOUSE GOES TO WASHINGTON



(BEFORE)



(HOST KEVIN O'CONNOR AND MASTER CARPENTER, ROBIN ABRAM)



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TOOLBOX



Claw Hammers

Here's a look at what's new with the world's oldest tool

BY HARRY SANFORD
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOHN LANTON

IN ITS SINGLE OFFICE, which the claw has over millions of uses, the claw hammer has two opposing purposes: the ability to drive a nail into wood (or, when necessary, to lever it out). The Romans were the first to let upon this infinite combination, and a couple of millennia later it remains an indispensable tool.

As you might expect with something this old, there are many variations on the claw hammer, but they all fall into one of two general kinds: clawing. Most homeowners can get along quite well with a heavy-duty claw hammer, distinguished by its smooth face, lighter head than its 20-ounce, short handle (less than 16 inches), and curved claw for nail removal. For the more casual work of nailing lumber, a finishing claw, or claw hammer is the way to go. It has a handle up to 18 inches long, a straight claw for prying open pieces of wood, a flat wing, 16 ounces or more, and a rolled face to grip a nailhead.

When these two designs, the heavy hammer is the one that looks right to you. Just ask Tom Silva, *2014* grand champion. He's used them all, but he always goes back to the workhorse design with a heavy 16-ounce claw and a nail head.

Despite the competitive from cordless screwdrivers and pneumatic nail guns, hammer sales are still going on. Just pick one up and feel that old power. It can hold anything, clench it or lever it 10 years old, off or put up a new house. Then go back to work.



35 feet per second

How fast a pro can swing a hammer



TIP

Power strikes the head of a hammer with another hammer. The collision can cause tiny shards of metal sharp enough to split nail and cause flying at you.

ARMY PICK

A "long hook" in the handle of this 20-inch model dissipates impact shocks and vibrations, which can harm joints, muscles, and nerves and strain the back, even if you're not hammering all day long. The rubber grip has a diamond-patterned texture and a "kick-a-foot" bump at the end to resist slippage. 14 1/2 oz. out of a case of 12, \$4 each/handle \$35. stanleytools.com

LOWE MODE

Slam and lightweight Japanese-style hammers have a chevron well suited to do-it-yourself work. Their elongated heads keep shoulders clear of the work, and sharply pointed, deeply tapered sides resist rebounding nails to one inch. 20-oz. pick in the side. 14 1/2 oz. out of a case of 12, \$4 each/handle \$35. stanleytools.com

NAIL-POINTER

The Denker's uniquely sculpted 22-ounce head is permanently textured in its flexpoint handle with epoxy resin, which makes every 5,000 impacts of polished form board handle an additional about 250 impacts that means you can pound nail-driven nails into the wall and again without the problem of the head is magnetic and holds the one-handed nail during 22-inch handle. \$12. stanleytools.com

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One Pull or Two?

A line that goes back sharply toward its handle (A) can cut out longer cuts with ease. Hoses with straight jaws (B, C) are better suited for jacking up a bottomed ladder. Side wedges (D) apply the greatest leverage and help contractors in cases too tight for a jaw to reach.

7203, 80403. *doi:10.1093/nar/gkx1098* and more: **Genes & Wikidata**, p.112

TWO-FACE
Thunberg isn't cheap, but if you're growing a bouquet of tails, you'll appreciate that it's about 60 percent lighter and 20 times faster at clearing wind than the high carbon-absorbed summer heat is made of. The 15-ounce Thunberg features long-handled stainless steel, uncoated and one-piece, 18 inch x 1/2 inch x 1/2 inch.

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square base for selling
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since the early 2000s.
100% bonus move. 0.03
0.03

PULSE BUYER'S NOTE
This 20-ounce hamster has a wiry, rat-like gait—the V-shaped switch is the tail—so maximum leverage is made for the front paws to protect the hind legs. Hamster and a diagnostic tool holder for one hamster starting at \$10 in all a full featured, low-cost, balanced tool for a more stable price. 30-inch hamster, \$48.
diagnostictools.com

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Lead Warning

Do not paint doors more than 30 years old. It's best to remove the paint—lead paint is harmful to you and your kids—and take the necessary precautions.

WET DOWN THE PAINT: A quick spray of water and a bucket of hot water will keep down lead dust.

PROTECT THE FLOOR: Plastic sheeting underneath the door will catch any falling bits of paint.

CLEAN UP THOROUGHLY: When the work is done, wipe down the door with a liquid household cleaner like Formula 409. Then, carefully wrap up and dispose of the cloth in the street; drop any carpeted floors in the vicinity, and wash hands thoroughly. Or carpeted floors, use a vacuum with HEPA filter.



Take It Off

1 | OUT THE PAINT: Protect the surrounding wall from damage by carefully scoring the perimeter of each metal-plate with a utility knife. Loosen the set screw holding the knob to its spindle inside out the pieces.

2 | REMOVE THE PLATES: Gently ease out the thick buildup of paint in the screw slots with the point of the knife. Back out the screws, taking care not to apply a lot of pressure; you also want the screws to slip and grasp the metal. Once the screws are out, pry off the metal plates.

3 | HEAT AND SOAK: Place the hardware in the crockpot. Cover with water, add a couple of tablespoons of liquid laundry detergent, and turn the heat to medium. Put on the lid and let the contents of the pot cook all night. The next day, the paint will be soft and ready to fall off the metal.



4 | SCRAPE: Remove the hardware from the crockpot with tongs and immediately pull off any remaining paint with a toothbrush or nylon bristle brush. (A wire brush can scratch the surface.) The paint hardens quickly once it's out of the pot, so the pieces back in the hot water to loosen any remaining particles.

5 | WAX: Protect the metal with a coat of beeswax polish rubbed out with a soft cloth. (You can spray on a lacquer finish instead, but it'll wear chips or wears off the metal will have to be chemically stripped.)

6 | REINSTALL: Reinsert both plates, insert the knob and spindle through the latch hole, and slip on the opposite knob. Tighten the set screw and you're done. Apply a new coat of wax polish about every six months.



Tip: Don't forget to properly dispose of any lead paint.

What About Chemicals?

While hot water is a relatively effective at removing paint from metal, it needs some time to work. But if time is something you're running short on, then a chemical stripper like the one above will speed the process. Just follow the directions on the label to use it. It's best to use a chemical stripper in a well-ventilated area, and wear gloves and eye protection. Also, be sure to protect skin and eyes from splashes and always work outdoors when there's a plenty of fresh air.

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HOMEOWNER'S HANDBOOK WEEKEND PROJECT SERIES



Installing a Beadboard Porch Ceiling

By Jeff Gurnsey for the Home Depot Knowledge Center

COST
\$100 to \$150 per square foot

TIME
1-2 days

DIFFICULTY
Medium to a little hard. While with your hand saw and nail gun, you'll be able to install the ceiling, but the work is a bit tedious.

ADDING BEADBOARD CEILING IS AN ATTRACTIVE, LOW-COST, OR HIGH-COST upgrade, depending on how much you're willing to spend. This is the only major project that you can do yourself and there is no regular job of it.

When it comes to installing a beadboard ceiling, you can do it yourself or hire a professional. If you're looking for a cheap, easy way to add a new look to your porch, this is a great project. You can do it yourself, but you'll need to plan your work carefully.

Installing the underside of your porch roof is a great way to add a new look to your porch. It's a way to add a new look to your porch, and it's a way to add a new look to your porch. It's a way to add a new look to your porch, and it's a way to add a new look to your porch. It's a way to add a new look to your porch, and it's a way to add a new look to your porch.

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TOOLS FOR THIS PROJECT

TAPE
MEASURE



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MOISTURE
AND POSSIBLY
THE NEXT
ICE AGE.**



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Stone Gray



Bald Cypress



Dark Walnut



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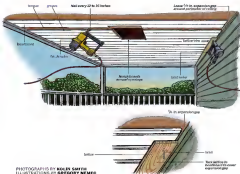
{ overview }

MOST PORCHES, DECKS ARE COVERED at the least, with plywood—which is the perfect substrate for a high-grade trim (or flat headboard). However, if for some reason the joists of your porch/deck are exposed, don't fret, you can either put up sheets of plywood first or, if your joists run parallel to the house, tack the headboard right to them.

Here, carpenter John Fitzpatrick of Stone Ridge, New York, shows how to install the broadband cabling quickly. The process doesn't require a lot of complicated engineering, but you do want to be very careful with your measurements, so the boards look neat and even.

One thing you really want to consider is renting a couple of sail guns and a compressor, if you don't already have them. Sure, you can sand them all day hammering tiny little finish nails over your head. But you'll be in the yourself-injury time over if you spring for the pneumatic guns—barners will go in quickly, straight, and without splitting the wood. And you won't be left with hammer dent and a bunch of nailheads that need setting and filling before you consult the carline.

Using a pressure-treated board as a sillotment your labor on this project. If you want to be extra vigilant, you can take a page out of *This Old House* master carpenter Norm Abram's book and also plane the ends of the boards after you cut them. This seals the wood against weep and rot—a good idea in a water-saturated application. Then, once your ceiling is nailed up in place, add a few coats of paint on everything—for the Victorian-era look, make it sky blue—and your classic porch is done.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDRE GAZDAR
ILLUSTRATIONS BY GARY GARY NEWMAN

step by step

1

Cut the headboard to length 20

Measure the depth of the porch front to back at the end where you will start installing the headboard. Subtract $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from the measurement to account for the $\frac{1}{2}$ inch gap you want to leave around the perimeter of the ceiling to allow the wood to expand. Using a miter saw, cut a piece of headboard to this measurement (RIGHT).

When using a roller saw, call the rated horsepower in minutes clipping. 7



1



4c. **Trim the first board.**

Before you put up the first piece, calculate how many boards it will take to cover the ceiling. Measure the actual width of several pieces of hardwood and average these out to get the true width of the wood after shrinkage. Divide the width of the porch ceiling by the true width of the hardwood to get the number of whole boards that will cover the ceiling.

If the last board will end up being less than 2 inches, then you will need to trim down both the first and last boards so the ending look evenly spaced. To do this, add the width of the last board to the width of a full board. Subtract 1/4 inch to account for the expansion gap. Then divide by two. The final figure is the width of each end board. Use a square to trim the first board to the width (L/2 + 1/4). Cut from the inside side of the board.

the last board will end up wider than
2 inches. start with a full board

TIP When using a figure, you can prevent shipping wrinkles by placing the laundry first, then by your call line, with a utility belt or two, rolling on the back side.

3

Face nail the first board. 19

Position the first board on the ceiling, grooved side (or the side you just marked) the wall. Walk in away from it.

Using a pressure gun and 2 1/2 inch finish nails, secure the board to the plywood underlayment every 12 to 18 inches (B&B/T).

Realize that each 1/4 inch to 3/4 inch from the outer edge of the board should be covered by the covered board for the full 100 years.

To keep the beadboard looking smooth across the ceiling, don't put nails too close together or the wood will contract to gaps in the plywood. Instead, keep nails at least a foot apart to let the weight of the board pull down over time.



T



4

BUILD YOUR SKILL
Focus on doing it right
Rebuilding, p.108

4 Tonnail the rest of the boards

All the boards, including the first one, should be spaced every 32 to 36 inches through the tongue for the most secure assembly. Push the power nailer against the back edge of the board's tongue, then angle it away from the tongue itself on one side. This will keep the nail from pulling out and from blocking the tongue when you fit the piece of the next board over it.

Measure for and cut the next board. Slide its groove over the tongue of the previous board. It's necessary to lightly tap a piece with a hammer on a woodblock. Nail it through the tongue (LEFT) on the other end. Continue installing headboards in this manner.

TIP > Use a scrap of headboard as your woodblock as you nail fit the groove over the tongue and keep the tongue from overdriving when you hammer it.

Cut openings for fixtures

If you come to a light fixture or speaker you'll need to cut an opening in the headboard.

For a square opening, measure the distance from the edge of the last board just installing the tongue to the edge of the opening. Then lay it in place of headboard's place, letting it overlap the hole. Mark the headboard where it covers the opening's sides. Also mark the distance between the last board and the edge of the hole onto the face of the board.

Take the board down. Use a square to align your marks to meet each other. Hatch out the board with a jigsaw.

If the opening is big enough, install cut boards butted against the sides of the hole, then finish with another retainer board (RIGHT).

For a circular opening, dry fit and square ends closely and notch into the hole with a circular saw to the shape of the opening on the back of the board.



6

6 Tack up the trim

Pre-drill and affix headboard to cover the siding. Trim the first board if necessary from the tongue side.

Install bottom trim board on the perimeter of the ceiling, tight against the siding to cover the expansion gap. Cut the piece of trim with a miter saw if you go.

Using a Brad nailer, tack the pieces to the headboard about 1/4 inch in from the wall (LEFT). Again, nail the trim every 12 to 36 inches, and make sure to only nail into the headboard, not the wall, so that the trim will expand and contract with the rest of the wood.

Once all the trim is in place, paint the whole ceiling. Because board nails are so small, the paint will cover their holes in the trim.

Photo by permission of the author. Photo by permission of the author.

buying guide

Because a porch ceiling isn't going to see a lot of wear and tear, there are a number of ways to build one without that solid-core and still look great. Here are a few ideas.

HEADBOARD

Headboard is sold as 1-inch-thick tongue-and-groove boards, offered with different widths between the heads. Which one you choose is a matter of personal taste; you can even mix them together to create a pattern. You can also get less expensive plywood headboard, which comes in 4 by 8 feet sheets and can be nailed right to the joists. These headboards are made from cellular PVC, which is more stable than wood in an outdoor setting.

White pine 3/4-inch headboard: \$2.00 per ft. (from The Home Depot)
2x4-inch headboard: \$3.00 per ft. (from The Home Depot)
2x6-inch headboard: \$4.00 per ft. (from The Home Depot)
Plywood headboard: \$2.00 per sheet (from The Home Depot)

SOLIDCORE

For a classic profile, install tongue-and-groove flooring on your porch ceiling. Then paint or stain it. Or choose a flooring made from a wood that stands up to the weather, such as cedar or cedar, and either get it prefinished or leave it unfinished for a more rustic look. Because the flooring won't be walked on, you can get away with boards as thin as 1/2 inch. Try to order long pieces to avoid seams.

Red oak flooring: about \$2.50 a bundle (20 sq. ft.) from The Home Depot
Pine flooring: \$2.00 a bundle (20 sq. ft.) from The Home Depot
Vertical grain cedar: \$1.25 per board ft. (to find a distributor go to www.cedar.org)
Unfinished 1/2-inch Redwood flooring: \$2.40 per sq. ft. from Lumber Liquidators.



COMPOSITE

For an exotic wood ceiling without the cost or weight of solid boards, use engineered flooring, which combines a fabric-reinforced wood core with a layer of plywood. You may, however, be stuck with seams in your ceiling, as engineered flooring is often sold in bundles of varying lengths. Because some companies don't guarantee their products for outdoor use, they're best used on a covered porch.

Juliusen Composite: \$2.00 per sq. ft. (from The Home Depot)
TimberTech Composite: \$3.00 per sq. ft. (from The Home Depot)
Harding Hickory: \$4.00 per sq. ft. (from The Home Depot)

PHOTOGRAPHS BY
TODD HARTMAN



An ode and a throwback to the mid-century modern era, the Toh TV show project house is a library space where the ending seems to live. In fact, Ball claims it shows a vision of a modern and a vision of a modern from the past, by which means defines the history space with a modern twist. George Ball says he will use every day. "I like the house," he says. "But I think I need the room gathering that the rest of the time."

FROM THE TOH TV JOB SITE

TOH TV TAKES THE CHILL OFF MODERN

How to use natural materials, well-crafted details, and open-plan spaces to make a minimalist house warm and inviting
BY MARA ALEXANDER PHOTOGRAPHY BY KELLER & KELLER

One might be forgiven for assuming that a 2000 Modern house will be unwelcoming—all chilly steel, concrete, and glass. But take a walk down the front steps of George Ball's newly renovated house, and those preconceptions start to unravel. There, chocolate-colored redwood siding and thin slices of rustic stacked stone surround an entryway made even more welcoming by the soothing sound of a nearby fountain. The effect is so serene, one feels like the stone structure, and any visitor would be hard-pressed to say the style holds no charm.

The story of the house—the current Toh TV show project—is largely the work of Todd Tseng, an architectural designer who designated the materials, finishes, and details, working from plans by architect Will Ruhl. Tseng's choices may be 21st-century, but the house still belongs in the class of high-style mid-20th-century Modern, with its floating staircase, streamlined fixtures, and lighting, open-plan first floor, and wall of glass along the back that makes inside and outside a matter of opinion. There's an emphasis on informal living—key for George, who likes to entertain—that hews to the philosophy of Modern design. Combined with traditional, even antique materials—from recycled wood to handmade tiles to farmhouse-style counters—the house betrays the notion that Modern homes are cold and soulless.

That opinion is best expressed in the words of one particularly relaxed guest, Toh House architect Tom Silva, who executed the transformation. "This house gave me a new approach for Modern homes," says Tom. "I've worked on them for decades—going way back with my dad—and I'd always thought there to be some cold sterility. But this one has real charm."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KELLER & KELLER



A photograph of a dining room. In the foreground, a wooden dining table with a light-colored top and dark legs is surrounded by wooden chairs with vertical slats. Behind the table is a large, dark wood bookshelf filled with books and decorative items. To the right, a large window or glass door looks out onto a dark area where a sailboat is visible. The room has a patterned rug and a modern chandelier hanging from the ceiling.

ABOVE: The dining room, where a large table fills the seating area, has a range of cozy nooks where George can relax alone or with guests. Dark-stained wood shelves provide a dramatic backdrop for his art and antique collection.

[illegible]



WRIGHT Natural materials define the Wee House. Wright suspended the right from the curb with exterior cladding that mixes a stone finish and stone veneer, and the stone retains a reddish-brown hue inside the house. Plaster is also that color, but even so, stone is a cooling color. But the house is so inspiring that it's a good idea to use a similar color palette. Wright's house is a "first" in American modern design.



KEEP The look of the house is the key. The first step is to find a house that is a few years old and has a few years on the market. Because the house is the key, the design will take advantage of Modern style elements. The exterior is a mix of stone, wood, and white plaster.

PHOTO COURTESY: KIMBLE & CO.

WHAT WAS ONCE NEW IS OLD

Modern houses—now aged enough to need renovating—come with their own set of unique issues.

Modern is a misleading word. As its American house style, it first appeared in the 1920s, and the bulk of Modern houses are at least a half-century old—which means they're eligible to be part of the National Register of Historic Places. It also means they're old enough to be ripe for renovation.

But renovating a Modern house presents special challenges. Some of the most experimental building techniques have not always held up well. In Phoenix, Glavin, preservationists at Lusheng Mire van der Kolk's 1931 Farmstead House are trying to deal with rot on the house's 80-foot high steel window frames, which can cause them to distort and fracture the glass panes. David Hollman, president of the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois, says that because of the house's historic importance, replacing the frames with modern aluminum isn't an option. The question he'd like to see how to repair them. At the same time, Hollman's group is addressing problems caused by previous renovations, including a "flat" roof that has been repaired so many times that its slope toward a drain in the center of the house has diminished, causing leaks and water damage.

Modern-house owners also struggle with original finish materials, such as lacquered cabinets and vinyl flooring, that were the wonder products of their time but are today considered low-budget. Los Angeles architect Frank Gehry, who recently designed an addition to a 1930s house in the Hollywood Hills, says he's using vintage materials, as long as the new products respect Modern's spare aesthetic. His favorite substitutes include solid-surface cabinets and laminated flooring, though he doesn't reuse old lacquer, which has evolved in recent years.

The good news about taking on a Modern house renovation is that the plans may still be in the hands of the original owner. "Those drawings can tell you an awful lot about the logic of the house's construction," says Hollman. But even without the plans, owners and crews work up the style, often with a close relationship to Modern's increasingly available. In large cities like Los Angeles, where the L.A. Conservancy keeps track of dozens of historic 20th-century buildings, house-tourists are an invaluable source for ideas on how to preserve a house while updating its style. ■

ABOVE: The TV project has a history through restoration. One challenge was replacing its flat roof to be budget-friendly.

By Sallie
Brady

desk set

Sometimes, a laptop on the kitchen table just doesn't cut it. Here's what you need to know to design, build, and boot up your own home office.

NEVER BEFORE HAS A LUXURY SO QUICKLY TRANSFERRED to a merely functional people today would consider remodeling a house without a wing over for a home office. And it isn't just the towers and book-lined dens of early 20th-century houses that are making a comeback. Twenty-first-century computer nooks and wood-paneled study nooks are finding their place in more floor plans, too. Award-winning "the American Institute of Architects designated the home office the most-requested "special feature room" in the house. Chalk it up to the triple it pay! home time, working, after hours e-mailing, and an effort being the Internet out of suitrooms. After all, it's where we now do it all the kitchen or a full-blown study with custom cabinetry, multiple work surfaces, and sometimes file storage, bookshelves just can't do without a flexible functional work station. As Harvard Medical researchers have noted just in "Our home office might only be 7 to 10 feet wide and 10 feet deep but it's probably the most productive in the house."



It's easy to get lost in the details of a perfect home office. This is a perfect example of a home office that is both functional and beautiful. The desk is made of solid wood and has a built-in desk lamp. The chair is made of leather and has a built-in lumbar support. The bookshelves are made of wood and have a built-in ladder. The window is made of wood and has a built-in blind.

1

1

10

100

100

6

1

100
200
300



100

100

100



BEFORE Outdoor furniture was planted close against the right side of the French doors living the back of the house.

AFTER The doors now open onto a beautiful terrace that overlooks the rest of the property where This Old House landscape contractor Peter Cook has carved out pathways and planting beds that fit snugly a mix of shade and sunbaked.



backyard from scratch

BY KATHRYN HULL
PHOTOGRAPHS BY VITO GRAYVO

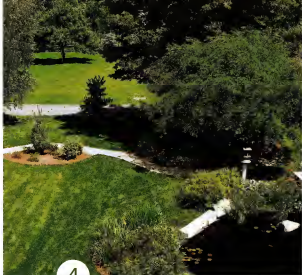
7 features that will
transform a plain
stretch of lawn into a
lush landscape you'll
really use
and enjoy

Waterfalls, streams, fountains, and fish ponds bring wildlife and soothing sound to your door.

[illegible]

The Goodies' clever new light to the Finnish design is made using low-wattage and cool-toned LEDs, and, and of the other to a Russian-made blue-tinted power-stroke-like handle—imagine it as the frame of a pair of skis. The water features can be switched on over downstairs areas of the house, and heard even from the second-story bedrooms. Water flows through hand sprays, and birds come through all winter long. "The great thing has been how the machine can be so accurately to nature, and is the changing season," says Boris.

Though water elements are commonly made from their form, the Goodies' water features are made from plastic. The Goodies' is constructed like a garden swimming pool, with the tiles around ground (and seen) and from vinyl pipes are built in to surround the water.



Curving walks slow down the pace and highlight points along the way.

It's easy to make a informal path and parking beds or woodlark by clearing a swath of land and putting down a layer of mulch, pine needles, or loose stone. This kind of casual paving blends into the surroundings, providing just enough definition to show off the plant material on either side and hide any ruts or holes. Keep in mind, though, that a wetting rock surface materials seriously deteriorate and erode, so you'll have to refresh them periodically.

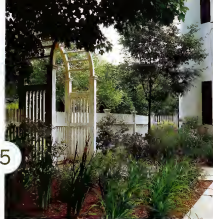
a garden arbor

Vertical architectural elements tie the landscape to the house and offset a yard's horizontal lines.

Arches and arbors can be used to dress up a patio, flower vines, support climbing plants, or even as entryways as the vine-covered trellis does. Garden gates with an arched roof feel relaxing and protected, marking the transition from a parking lot to another place where you're going to hang out.

The design lines of this arch echo those of the house and the symmetrical picket fence. The curved line offers a break from the rectangular geometry of the surrounding structures, putting even more of a spotlight on it. Opt for 10 feet in general, a good height for a garden arch. And if it is to hold a flower gate, as this one does, it should be at least 6 feet wide for a generous entry that could accommodate two people walking side by side.

5



Arbor Building Know-how

A garden arbor or trellis arch is fairly low maintenance. But if you want to be a step white (or weathered) step ahead, arborists will tell you that. Solid steel takes a lot of time without bending and rotting, making for much less of an unpleasant surprise later.

Stick to simplicity. You put them at the front of the garden center, where you will find that the ground there might be a bit rough, so you will want a trellis arch that is easy to install and doesn't require a lot of digging. To take that last step, you can use a 2x4 or 2x6 for the main support. The frame is made of galvanized steel tubing, which is a good choice for its strength and its ability to hold up a lot of weight. When you are ready to use it, you can use a 2x4 or 2x6 for the main support. The frame is made of galvanized steel tubing, which is a good choice for its strength and its ability to hold up a lot of weight.

Draw the gate. Draw a well-built gate made of high-quality steel or hardwood to hold the pull of gravity. Think of it as a gate. Install a diagonal brace that runs from the upper left corner to the lower right corner to stiffen it. Or if a gate is already starting to sag, attach a diagonal brace along the opposite side that allows you to tighten the gate to bring up the corner that's sinking toward the ground.



a place to play

Let the grasses begin: Built-in sport courts just turf areas to good use.

6



There's nothing left to be said, but play areas for young kids have found a place in suburban yards as long as there have been subdivisions. But at home recreation areas don't have to be limited to children's use or to costly space-hogging tennis courts and swimming pools. Croquet lawns, putting greens, horseshoe pits, and the like are popping up in backyards as homeowners strive to build a sense of family and friends to have fun in their home turf.

The Goodwin family had been putting in the lawn for years for the benefit of their grown sons who live nearby. But we got there at the time with guests too," says Don. A single bocce court, such as the one shown here, can be assembled in a couple of weekends for about \$1,500. All it takes is enough 2x4s and wooden planks to make a 12 by 10-foot frame, several tons of gravel for a well-drained base, and enough stone dust for a 1/2-inch playing surface. Bocce balls not included.

a quiet destination

Shopping points encourage rest and relaxation.

No landscape should be without a bench shaded under the canopy of a tree. But in the creek of a wooded walk or trail at the end of the yard, it's a view back to the house with all its beauty and beauty. After all, the point of landscaping your surroundings is to spend time outdoors enjoying the feel of the earth and the beauty of the house. The house is the heart of the landscape, the heart of all grass and the heart of the house. The house is the heart of the landscape, the heart of all grass and the heart of the house.

In choosing a bench, consider how you will be to the house, the closer it is, the more it should reflect your house's style. An arched bench might suit a house with a curved roofline, whereas a simple white-painted wood bench will look right outside a modern or cottage. Further away from the house, though, natural-looking materials blend best with the landscape. Simple stone sets that will grow moss or weather with nature are the best. And if you're looking for a bench, consider how you will be to the house, the closer it is, the more it should reflect your house's style.

7



Discover the history of the small house and its spirit. The homeowners' unexpected discovery, all based on a pair of paintings, was a 19th-century house with a 19th-century identity.

2 determined homeowners + 780 weekends = 1 masterful renovation



We were instantly taken with Ulster County when we visited friends there one weekend in 1990. Just two hours north of our apartment in New York City, it was still small, scenic, and quiet. So Mark and I started looking for a weekend getaway. Houses were so much to be had. Could we afford to buy? We earned every week and looked at about 25 houses. The end came again was very recent.

Finally we pulled up to a little house that had been abandoned for three years. The last owner, a woman who lived in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, had spent summers there for 15 years. It was dark and dusty inside, and there was mold everywhere. An enormous catpaw tree, just two feet from the front of the house, watered over it, blocking out the sun.

The listing said the place was more than 100 years old. There had been some renovations, but nobody had designed or built them. I could see there was a lot of work to do—we couldn't put more in. In 1991, we bought the house and the surrounding acre for \$120,000.

To start, there were major things that needed to be addressed. We removing the catpaw tree, and to begin the general cleanup we did on weekends. A lot of it was cleanup, and I know I could deal with it. There's a lot of work to do.

BY PHILIP KIRZNER, HOMEOWNER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAURANNE



new 100-hour cabinet and countertop with paint and new laminate countertops, were blue risk paint highlighting the slope of the ceiling, says "The new kitchen better couldn't look like the challenge of a new kitchen," says 100-hour, who built historically correct window into the living room, rather than a general way to the kitchen.

architectural designer, construction project manager, and cabinetmaker all in one. Then ago I learned that very specialized skill called shop drawing, which means making blueprints used for building, it would be crucial to our restoration. But because of our full-time city job, we were realized we couldn't do it all ourselves.

Among the first things we did was have new oil and water tanks, a boiler, insulation, and a new well pump and filtration system put in. I also found a contractor, Neil Minna, who did previous work. He turned out to be

a great person. Many of the double-hung windows needed restoring, so my brother and I pulled off all the siding around them to get them ready for Neil. In just two months of that first year, our joint efforts resulted in removing and replacing the house's 1930s prefabricated cedar shingles—which sat on top of a layer of a splintered shingles—each beveled cedar shingles, peering up a cedar shingle roof, excavating the crawl space; replacing the chimney, regarding around the foundation; and mending the lawn.

Then we started on the inside. The basement (the house wasn't finished, so we stepped with our own basement. Minna was caught with the plumber "I want New York City basement heat, where you have to throw open the windows to cool off."

Much of the interior had been subjected to "Colonial" style I wanted to remove those layers and put things back in they might have been. But that was the question: How old was the house? The first owner suggested it was a lot older than the listing said. There's a full basement

"The house is a lot older than the listing suggested—part is hand-hewn post-and-beam. It may have belonged to a quarry worker, circa 1790."

—TRACY RESIDENT, NEW BEDFORD



space. Throughout the house, sufficient was replaced with original hand-painted, seen here in the dining room. (see also: Homeowners, Matt Lopez and Philip Rioser, with Lutz.

remains a while the rest of the house has only a small space, and the house is hand-hewn post-and-beam, not well-known. First down below I could see that there were also original wide-plank floorboards, so I pulled up the oak strip flooring on top. Later we found an 1835 mixed-wedged timber staircase.



What We Did

Returned a 200-year-old house to its roots.

remodeling cost: \$42,000

over three 17 years and counting where we moved, including the new heater. He signed a two-year lease of agreement with the homeowners to get the house in working order.

where we moved. The new cedar shingles and what we would do differently. For example, in the south side of the house, no shingles that side to show the house's original state and maintain it in the summer.

Major challenge: Deciding on the exterior design and getting the house "finished."

How we solved it: By building a much up of the new water out of the house. And being the fact that the house will never be "finished."

Floor Plans

Over time, the homeowners widened the front bay with a new six-story kitchen. They moved walls to create a hallway to the guest bedroom and a bedroom in the master bedroom.





Plotting space with a cassette garage that could be converted into a workshop was a priority. To power it, the homeowner dug a road from the house to an abandoned creek.

vehicle outside the downstairs bath, and I ripped out the wall over. In its place were a small apartment refrigerator that fit right into the cabinet space. I think it cost \$15. We did spring on a Meliinox and GE cooking bar saved with laminate countertops. Maria focused on restoring the walls of the house to their early roots. Her secret weapon was milk paint in vibrant, hand-painted colors.

I think this sometimes you have to live in a place for a good while before you make major decisions. Just pretend as if you're a tourist. That was my approach to some of the wood-work fixtures that needed redoing in the house.

My shop-drawing skills turned out to be seriously missing for the carpentry projects that were to come. I believe in very careful planning and drawing before I ever touch a piece of wood. That's what I did when I decided to straddle one of the "manipulators" that remain the soul of the house. (See "The Evolution of a Mantelpiece," right.)

Another challenge was the staircase. It was dark and scary, with doors at the top and stairs on both sides. Clipping rid of it was easy, but finding one that fit the period of the

house was not. Old staircases have high rises and short treads—they're basically lethal. I decided to build a drainage, staircase, and dormer—crouched. We lived with a ladder. I drew multiple versions, built a plywood mock-up and stared at that for awhile before I finally took the leap. The shop-drawing here comes to this page. The first one is dated 1992. The last, 1997. Poor Maria.

There's always another project. Right now, I'm finishing the upstairs bathroom. For a long time the to-do list would stay at six, and I couldn't relax. Now I can let a go because I realized it's not going anywhere. Maria hasn't said where we sleep, but that, after all, is our home. ■

tell us your story

Dedee invites you to take an episode of the work period TV so we can tell about your project. Please send copies of before and after photos or floor plans or cannot afford any materials and a brief description of the work you did to:

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the evolution of a mantelpiece

After eleven generations of sleep

drawings, the homeowner finally found the simple Dutch Colonial design that, years ago, a carpenter might have made with a few simple tools.

It seemed simple enough when I started. Remove the existing fireplace with its 1950s precast metal firebox and conversion jacket, and all the unattractive surrounding it, and build a new one. But what should the new one look like? That's where my troubles began. I started drawing. My initial impulses were to go over the top with raised paneling and really fancy hardware (I did it, I realized I had before myself) even explicitly with a simple home like this. Then I saw a Dutch Colonial house that had a sense above the fireplace, so I did a version with that and some moldings I'd seen in a home from that period. An 1850 wood plank corner cabinet that we found in an antique shop for the dining room was another inspiration (2). It had beautiful hand-planed molding that inspired. So I started doing about a dozen drawings, I realized I was into a series (2).

Then it was time to build it. I got some old brick and native bluestone—there were lots of quarries in this area—to use for the top part. Then I let the workshop, where I just followed my shop-drawings. I wanted a glass door for the side cabinet so I took a reproduction shop at New York University Institute of Technology. The window level was a pair of matching cast pieces. Inside the door's frame using only hand tools and put in restoration glass. Maria finished it with milk paint layering green under blue with a cracked top layer to reveal bits of the undercolor (4). Start to finish, it only took five years! —PK.

Homeowner Philip K. Korman strips a molding profile with an old-fashioned hand plane.



Left: Removal of old mantel. Right: The old mantel removed.



ADVERTISEMENT

handrails

Housewife's homeowner Loretta Flint needed handrails in his hallway, but was pained by how to put them in. He visited *Ask This Old House*, and Tom Silva showed up to lend an expert hand.



irrigation

Outside of Las Vegas, Roger Cook and specialist Bob Gilbreth help homeowner Sherry Austin restore water to her plot of high desert.



sinks

Homesite homeowner Anna McCandless tried to fix her noisy bathroom sink stopper with a poppers stick. Instead, Tom Silva provided a more professional solution.



closets

Californians couple Gordon and Marlene Goodrich's clothing closet doors were stuck. They visited *Ask This Old House*, and before long, Tom Silva put them back on track.



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Outside one should, perhaps, never be for getting around holes in walls, roofs, or gutters. The first edition, also known as *Old House* or *Old House*, was published. The book was written by Tom Silva, a resident of a historic house.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK WILSON

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To keep from splitting the tops of painted balusters, Tom Silva says, "Drill into the ends of the balusters the entire side of the handrail. Shallow notches between drill-off parts help reduce splitting."

such recently glued joints while working on adjacent ones. (For Tom's mobility-scooter past fix, see Update, November 2006.)

Drinking Squirrels

We've been having a real squirrel problem over the last couple of years. They dig up every bulb we plant and spread dirt all over our deck. We tried a couple of pepper-based chemical deterrents. They didn't work. What now?

GAIL ANDREY CAMPBELL, WICHITA, KANSAS

Loose Railing Repair

While remodeling my 1830s house, I took apart the staircase, refinished it, and then put it back together. Unfortunately, the handrail now wobbles. What can I do to make it more secure?

BURGESS W. LOBBE, JR.

Tom Silva replies: A stair railing won't move if all dimensions are spot. That means each baluster has to be solidly connected to the handrail and to its stud, and the handrail has to be solidly connected to several posts bolted or screwed securely to the floor joists. When you put all the pieces in place, the railing will gradually get loose.

Start by methodically inspecting every joint and fastener. Look for joints that open and close as you wiggle the rail. These parts should probably be disassembled, secured with polyurethane glue, and refinished whenever a won't batten the stain's appearance. Work quickly and systematically so you don't dis-

Roger Cook replies: Digging isn't the only problem with squirrels. One year they ate all the flower buds off my dogwood tree. I've had some success using products that combine small repellents and taste repellents, such as Mute-Away or Secret Squirrel. Another thing to try is fox and coyote scent. But most of these products have to be reapplied after every rain and after an area has been worked.

I find baiting works best. I put cuts of dried corn in the very back portion of my yard in the spring and again in the fall. This keeps the squirrels fed as they're less hungry for my flowering bulbs.

Whatever you do, don't use dried blood or bone meal as fertilizer at your garden. These are like camp for squirrels—I've seen them dig up bulbs and push them aside or feed on bone meal. When planting bulbs, try a super phosphate fertilizer instead.

New Parts for an Old Toilet

I have a 1950s-era one-piece toilet that leaks and doesn't flush properly.



CHRISTOPHER LORAN



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Several plumbers have told me parts are no longer available and I'll have to replace the toilet. But its turquoise color matches the bathtub and I don't want to replace them both. What should I do?

JOHN MARGALL, EASTPORT, ME

Richard Anthony replies: Cast-iron-piece toilets are considered by some to be among the loose toilet ever made, so you have a good reason to repair it, if you don't mind that it's going to lose more water per flush than modern toilets.

Even though your color is the last available model from a company that stopped building toilets in the early '50s, you should be able to get what you want through a good plumbing parts store. If you can't find such a shop, try the Internet. It only took me a few minutes to locate a supplier who carries an inventory of cast-iron parts. One—plumbingsupply.com—even lists a history of the brand and photos of all the Cast models ever made. They stock repair parts as well as replacement seats and bowls in each bid.

But just because you can get parts doesn't mean you should install them yourself. It takes skill and some luck to get really old toilet parts out and the new ones in. For this "Cast," I have a plumber order the parts and install them for you.

Flux Trice on Steel Studs

I'd like to add some crown molding and other trimwork around our house, which is framed with metal instead of wood. But crown isn't nailed into the studs; how will I attach the trim?

BOB WILKE, WESTON, FLA.

Norm Abram replies: The method of attachment depends on the type of trim you want to install. For most wood molding, such as window and door casings or baseboards, use self-tapping, square-drive, trim-head screws. The points of these screws are designed to run through a typical metal stud without penetrating, and the small heads can be countersunk and filed.

For wood crown molding, screw a 1/4-inch plywood backing strip to the wall or ceiling first, so you can nail the molding into the strip. Back and heads run across to hit these trim screws. Whenever you can't screw into the framing, use a high-strength, quick-dry construction adhesive like Loctite's Power Grab.

Your other choice is to skip wood altogether and use feather-weight foam moldings. A quick-grabbing adhesive is all you need to hold them up. Just be sure it's compatible, since adhesives will dissolve foam moldings.

Chains for the Rain

I'm thinking about installing rain chains on my house, but none of my local building material suppliers know anything about them. Do you?

FLORENCE HONER, STAFF CENTER, IOWA

Kate O'Connor replies: I didn't know much about them either, and I did some research after reading your letter. Instead of the chains and downspouts of a standard rainwater-gutter system, rainwater-haul water from gutters to a catch basin or a dry well at ground level. For this reason, large the water is confined to the chain, which means practicing work later and makes a pleasant sound whenever the weather rain over. They've been used for cen-

turies on traditional Japanese buildings. Rain chains are usually made of copper, but I also found stainless steel chains on some. Copper chains weigh about 1 pound per foot, which is well designed for most storms on the roof of a house, but in a cold climate the pour the added weight of ice may require an extra support strap for the chain.

You might be able to purchase rain chains from a local landscape supplier. But like almost any other product these days, it turns out that a wide selection of chains and mounting accessories are available by mail order through the Web. ■

To send a question to Ask This Old House, go to www.thisoldhouse.com/askthisoldhouse or write to:

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Include a daytime address and daytime phone number. Responses in this column will appear as quickly as possible and may be edited to make space. We cannot guarantee that every question will be answered, but we will do our best to help you solve your problem.



In lieu of a downspout, a rain chain guides water from the gutter directly to the ground and allows down to flow in a more appealing way.

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Norm's Notebook

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Drive That Nail

Developing a hammer stroke is one of those skills I learned early on while working alongside my father. So many times I watch someone struggling to drive a nail. I remember how badly it stinks to get the bang of hammering. Whether you're hanging a picture or building a house, keep these basic rules in mind:

- 1 Always grip a hammer near the middle of the handle (see detail, right). Gripping the middle of the handle (the right) minimizes strain on your wrist and reduces both the power and the accuracy of your swing.



- 2 After a secure grip, wrap your fingers and thumb around the handle on the thumb side. The thumb overlaps the side of your forefinger. In some cases, on when tapping a nail, placing your thumb on top of the handle helps with accuracy. But most of the time, it pulls strain across your forearm.



- 3 Position your body so you can use the full weight of your body when swinging. Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart. The more power you want, the more you should lean forward. If you're using a claw hammer, you'll want to lean back a bit after a lot of hammering. You're not swinging enough from your shoulder.

Keeping Studs in Line

Here's a trick my father taught me for setting studs together so their edges line up perfectly when corners or bunsy when framing out doors and window openings. Stack the two pieces on top of each other, face to face, then face nail them to gether side by side. At the end of the studs, each corner—code calls for at least a 300 every 24 inches—keep an eye on the studs' edges. If they're not all aligned, drive the nail down through the corner of the top piece and into the bottom piece. The force of the blow pushes the top back in line; the nail holds them in place.



Getting a Grip on Small Nails

When you have to drive fast nails in awkward locations and can't get a decent grip with your fingers, stick the nail in a notch of a piece of cardboard, then pull the cardboard free once the nail is set. Friends used joints that work.

"A comfortable handle is as important as the hammer's weight. A handle that's too big around—with more than a finger's width of space between the tips of the fingers and the base of the thumb—is worse than one that's too small."

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10. SCHLAGE Schlage Assure™ Collection is the latest line of decorative door hardware, providing a limitless design and decorating possibilities.

FINANCIAL SERVICES

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11. A.G. EDWARDS A.G. Edwards and Sons, serving for over 100 years, is now first in class with a commitment to provide objective financial advice.

12. RE/MAX Outstanding Agents. Outstanding Results.® Nobody in the world sells more real estate than Re/Max.

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14. LAMBER LIQUIDATORS Lambs Liquidators is the leading retailer of quality hardwood flooring at the lowest prices. They offer a variety of breeds including Italianwood. Over 80 locations nationwide.

15. FORMO MARMOLEUM Marmoleum Click natural, healthy way to dress flooring available in 18 colors in both panels and squares for an easy, seamless installation.

16. TREX Tree sliding and rolling. It's creating what you can dream up when you're not busy seeing an attorney.

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17. KAMBER DIVERS Diverse materials, superior materials, quality craftsmanship and classic design. Kamber offers affordable luxury and style for every kitchen.

18. THE HOME DEPOT The Home Depot is more than a store. It's where you'll find the hardware to get your home improvement projects done right.

LAWN, GARDEN, POOL/SPA & POND

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19. BAYER Guided by Bayer separately, Bayer Advanced has a complete lineup of specialized products to help beautify and protect your lawn, garden and home.

20. JOHN DEERE The John Deere Marketplace Commercial & Consumer Equipment Division manufacturers and distributes a full line of lawn care products for residential and commercial applications.

LIGHTING

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21. LITSON ELECTRONICS Litson Electronics is the leading manufacturer of dimmers for single-light, two-way and whole-house applications.

PAINT/STAIN

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22. GRACO These are the Graco-Magnum of the paint world to find out how you can win a \$2,000 gift certificate to The Home Depot.

23. ICI PAINTS The ICI House material paint can be used to 220 rich colors and provides true beautification with lasting protection for years to come.

24. KROH KUTTER GOT KROH? GET KROH-KUTTER! No other single product removes dirt, latex paint and other really tough stuff so quickly and effectively. Water-based, nontoxic. KrohKut.com.

PERRINO FLOORING & BATH ACCESSORIES

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25. KOSHER Kosher bath and kitchen ideas under a complete set of full color product catalogs showing bath and kitchen, showers, bathtubs, tile and tiles, bathtubs and window treatments, doors and accessories. (312)

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26. MOEN Moen, Inc. offers a complete line of stylish, reliable kitchen, bath and bathroom fixtures, kitchen and bathroom accessories.

WINDOWS, DOORS, ETC.

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37. ANDERSON WINDOWS & DOORS (FBI) The "Long Live The Home" idea took form Anderson® Windows. Get more ideas, inspiration and more.

38. MARVIN WINDOWS AND DOORS Marvin Windows and Doors offers proven wood and clad wood windows and doors for new construction and remodeling. Made for You.®

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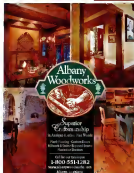
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Rubenson bought it in the late 1920s, just before being elected president of the Massachusetts Senate. To make his new digs worthy of a senator and state politician, he added an elegant square columned off extension to the front of the house at 100 South. The addition's entrance living room features floor-to-ceiling windows with triangular pediments, wide-plank pine floors and a pine fireplace mantel—a perfect look, Rubenson thought, for entertaining his distinguished gentleman colleagues. Upstairs was one enormous bedroom as well as a half bath, master mind a state senator.

In the early 1900s, Robinson's grandsons split the water into a dugout, filled a storage barn on the property with a worldwide of 40 plus cows, and installed the Robinson Dairy Farm Scales, a feature the 2000s left the barnyard.

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ABOVE: In the early 1900s, third-floor dormered bedrooms were added to the original portion of this house (info, which was built in the 1860s). A servant porch was tucked on in the 1940s. **LEFT:** The 1900s adobe addition features simple Crafts-style square columns and floor-to-ceiling windows on the first floor. **BOTTOM LEFT:** American brick fireplace in the study of the 1900s. **BELOW:** Abundant pine timbering creates warmth and aching thrill.

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