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Cover Photo: John
C. Smith
Art: David H. Smith



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Letter FROM TOH

The one that got away

We are a mobile society. Just a few generations ago, people bought a home, lived in it for most of their lives, paid it off, and retired in it. But those days are gone in America.

Today the typical homeowner sells every five to seven years. The average individual will move more than 11 times in his or her life. With each move, we leave behind friends, lifestyles, neighborhoods, and homes that inspired themselves on us as surely as we did on them.

I've been thinking about this for two reasons. The first is that in August of 2005, I moved for the first time in a very long time. And the second is because "The Old House" just launched its own Real Estate Network, aimed at putting our content into the hands of homeowners when they're about to sell.

I think we all have one house we think of as The One That Got Away. In my case, it was the first house I lived in after I first married. It was a single, white-clapboard farmhouse set on an acre and sited (in just north of Detroit suburbia) behind three 10 acres of undeveloped woods.

Like many aspects of the marriage, the whole thing had an unfinished quality. There were kitchen cabinets, but no cabinet doors. Good windows, but no trim or curtains to surround them. Kitchen task lighting was provided by clip-on desk lamps.

But the property? Oh, that stood an enormous maple that shed gold every autumn. The backyard held a ring of wild crabapple trees that dropped fruit all fall. From the kitchen window, while I did the dishes, I could watch a family of pheasants pick their way through the woods.

I didn't love that house enough when I lived there. After ten thank-you-ers, we sold it for something more finished in town. Then, four years after that and finally divorced, I packed up the new home and moved to New York.

I have lived many places since, but 36 years later when I can't sleep at night, that little farmhouse is the house I go back to. I think I lived there now, I would dream those cabinets and trim those windows. I would find the right material for that fireplace. But we don't get to go back—only forward. I hope that whenever you're looking for us, The Old House will be there to help.

Susan Ryan

SUSAN RYAN
editor-in-chief
sryan@theoldhouse.com



LITTLE WHITE HOUSE IN THE 1900S. A home was picked out at the house that I think I lived in, where I lived right after marrying for the first time.

PHOTO TOP: JEFFREY MAYER/ISTOCKPHOTO.COM; BOTTOM: ILLUSTRATION BY JEFFREY MAYER



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HOW DO YOU This Old House?

This Old House is everywhere you are. Find all the inspiration, information, and entertainment you love—to watch, to read, and to share with friends.



Reader mail JULY/AUG 2017



SEEING A FINISHED PROJECT. *You can't always appreciate what went into it. Maybe that's why our readers enjoy "Before" and "During," not just "After." These stages may not be pretty, but knowing the whole story makes the end result even more satisfying.*

Detroit revival

I will confess, I sometimes have to sit *This Old House* for the first few minutes but don't continue watching because the home team (anything) could afford to purchase more servants. So I'm leaving the episodes from the Detroit project! They are so inspiring, and it's wonderful to see the beautiful molding, stained-glass windows, wood flooring, and other details that make old houses so very special being restored. Wouldn't it be great if Bob encouraged rebuilding in other decaying Rust Belt cities? Maybe your shows in Detroit will make a movement. Bravo to all our job more than well done.

—GG WAZ MAIL

I very much enjoyed seeing the Detroit house come to fruition ("Ready for Prime Time," May 2017). I was a bit skeptical at first, but looking at the photos of the completed project and reading about the many people who contributed to it was inspiring.

—GARY TAYLOR COLUMBIA MO

Following the progress of the Detroit house, it was ironic to see homeowners actually picking in and helping do the work, not to mention all of the community members who got involved with the project. The *This Old House* team did a great job of it. Let's hope project that regular people could actually do.

—GREG MURRAY WAZ MAIL

We can laugh about it now

Deborah DeLellis looks back on her own "My Humble Home" (June 2017) with a laugh. "What an entertaining account of the 'Bert' and the 'Bertie'! Glad to hear she and I was didn't die in the divorce court!"

—TRACY CROSBY WEST BURLINGTON VT

Small-space solutions

I can't deny, as far as the house that is shown in the magazine, but the kitchen renovation in May 2017 was a bit of a disaster that I could use in my small gallery kitchen.

I might not have enough room for an island, and I can't take out a wall, but the way they did it in "Creating a Classic" (Before + After Kitchen) is a real inspiration.

The kitchen showing "Wild Doves" definitely is a dream kitchen, but some details like the corner window would certainly come in handy in mine in with less space for storage too.

—P. A. TRACY CROSBY

How to reach us

Send the editor a letter to: letters@thisoldhouse.com or write to: *This Old House Magazine*, 250 North Street, Shelton, CT 06484

Include your full name, address, and phone number. Published letters are edited for clarity and length.

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July/August 2017

A Sweet Spot

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Edited by Barbara Park

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Now that's a neat idea

Five kitchen space savers can top pegboard, which puts everything right where you can see and reach them. To give this once-fairly-sterile solution a fresh, polished look, pro organizer and interior designer Jeffrey Peltier uses a color that complements walls, cabinets, and, of course, pots and pans. For this New York City kitchen, he chose blue (Designer Moore's Shermans® display it in less stock.) For copper, I might choose pale blue," he says, "and pale green if the pots are cast iron." As an extra touch, Peltier likes to finish the sides with thin strips of molding. He's always strict about the need to declutter. "Pop in the right bowls—but not too many!" —DEBORAH PALOMINI



Hot-weather care for containers

Summer heat can be tough on potted plants—and vacation absences don't help. Here's how to keep container gardens from wilting during a dry spell.

MAKE SOIL WATER-SMART: Puffy options like Osmo-osmo for long slow-release. Add hydro gel polymer crystals that swell with water, then slowly release moisture back to the roots. Sprinkle 2 tablespoons into 1 gallon pot of soil. Add plants, then water thoroughly. For existing plantings, poke holes into the soil with a pencil. Add crystals, cover, and then water. Miracle-Gro Water Solving Crystals \$3.68 for a 32-oz bag. home depot.com

RETHINK WINDOW BOXES: They're charming, but often not so accessible. Thus, subject to infrequent watering. Upgrade to a self-watering window box, with a reservoir that allows soil to wick up moisture as needed. A fill tube makes adding water easy; an indicator tells you when you're running low. 25 inch Self Watering Windowbox \$30. gardeners.com

ADD IRRIGATION: A drip system designed for containers is about \$32 at home centers. Uses Weather Scheduling Method with built-in weather sensor and attached to a solenoid to slowly dispense water. Put the drip on autopilot with digital timer (from \$29.99, harscohort.com) that you set to a schedule. —SILVIA LISA



Hey, who's got my stuff?

Lending tools is part of being a good neighbor—but you do want your stuff back. Tuck a new Bluetooth-enabled device, which helps track the ladder that Bob next door never returned. Attach the 2-inch plastic disk to a tool, and when you come within 100 feet of it, a smartphone app pinpoints its location. Its replaceable battery lasts a year. \$29, mibluetoothool.com —V

Help your fridge beat a brownout

You should be able to rely on your refrigerator to serve up a frosty beer or an iced tea on the hottest, muggy humid days. But when every AC in the neighborhood is blowing, a drop in electrical power means your fridge has to toil harder than usual. One no-brainer way to keep your fridge running at peak efficiency? Don't. Daily. Your fridge is sure to lose its chill if you stand there with the door open, so remember to keep shelves tidy and well organized so you can locate and retrieve items quickly. For more advice, we asked Electrofix's Benjamin Liebert for his top tips to help a fridge keep its cool when the weather's hot—and reduce your energy bill year-round.

1. **Don't overload it.** Air can't flow evenly through a fridge if it's jam-packed. A too-full fridge makes the compressor work longer and consume more energy.
2. **Make sure the door gasket is in good shape.** Clean away any crumbs or grease staining the gasket. Use a roller (see if it fits) and replace it if it's torn.
3. **Clean the condenser coils.** Wipe down or vacuum the coils on the back (or sometimes at the top) of the fridge to remove dusty buildup.

—BENJAMIN LIEBERT



Stressed out by your remodel?

You've got 37 decisions to make, and you're way over budget—no wonder you're up all night. We found a therapist who can help.



Experts in industry management now have improved with an understandable alarm. Paraphrasing C. S. Lewis' fable, we're not really "over budget" (we're "lower budget" or "under budget") with a dose of uncertainty ("I never get this done before December"). All that worrying "is a joy affecting sleep and decision-making," says Dr. Simon Hoag, a cognitive behavioral psychologist at New York City, who offers these insights.

"Worry is useful," he says. "It's not an on-off switch." It may be a hardwired backside alarm when it kept humans out of the path of hungry lions. Unfortunately, fear of waste isn't easily translated into fear of choosing, say, the wrong showerhead. "But go ahead and explore much information, you choose. People think there's only one right choice, which makes every other choice

seem wrong." Guess what? "This can lead to conflict in interpersonal relationships."

Worrying also leads to an inflated sense of what's at stake. "People project disaster consequences if they make the wrong choice," Hoag says, or if the job is behind schedule. Sounds like a big deal, but maybe it's not.

Here's how to get a grip. Learn to tolerate uncertainty and move ahead. "Take a leap and understand that it has nothing to do with you." Get choosing about articles, "ask yourself if it's really productive to think in black and white."

And keep in mind one of the doctor's other findings: The longer you live, the less you worry. Older adults suffer less decision paralysis and even dream about for long periods of time... worrying. —O.S.



Landscaping tips to deter ticks

It's going to be a busy year for the back-legged ticks that carry Lyme disease and the up-and-coming babesiosis. Numbers of ticks fluctuate annually, and the odds of being infected are small. But the author of a tick management handbook offers some of the best ways to keep the blood suckers at bay.

Mow the lawn. Ticks can't jump, so they're traveling on grass blades and foliage, and waving their front legs in hopes of finding a ride with a host. Test of mowing? Replace a perennial lawn with a shorter garden or wildflower patch surrounded by stone or mulch.

Lay gravel paths and mow toward landscaping. Ticks hate hot, dry sandy surfaces.

Trim branches and shrubs to let in more sunlight.

Mow the swing set. Keep play equipment away from wooded areas and avoid chips or rubber mulch.

Be animal savvy. Keep pets out of the woods. Raccoons pile off the ground. Consider deer fencing.

Eliminate heavy ground cover and woodlands. Thick shady areas can be tick heaven, partly because of their lack of carrying animals like deer. Reduce tick habitat by mowing, while both in the chipmunk and overboard. —O.S.



Keep your cool outdoors

Aah, summer. If only we could air-condition the patio. Actually, we can, with an evaporative cooler. By blowing air through a water-saturated pad, these units lower outside temperatures by 15 to 25 degrees, on average. They work best when temps hit 85 degrees and humidity is below 75 percent. This new, 120-cubic Cyclone 130 cooler (\$399, partcool.com) covers up to 300 square feet and operates for just pennies per hour. —NICKI SAWER



Bonus uses for masonry "glue"

For years, landscape contractors have been using adhesive, not mortar, to build concrete block retaining walls. Flexible and water tight, these adhesives are now in the hands of mason Mark McCullough, above, along with a trowel gun to squirt them out. He shows three uses that worked for without mortar.

Missing veneer Thin stone or brick can pop off foundations and walls if water seeps into the mortar. To reattach the veneer, use masonry-grade polyurethane construction adhesive like SealGard UltraWhite. Shake about \$8 per 10-oz. tube, use ideal trowel which doesn't need bracing. Fill in around the stone with a sealant that includes eggshell, semi-lustrous finish.

Loose stair tread A concrete stairway can be left and subtle, leaving stones or bricks that cap the steps. Lift the loose brick or stone and squirt a generous amount of construction adhesive on its underside before reinstalling. Let the bond cure three to five days before using the step.

Widely chimney cap For a tapper that stays firm, bed the stainless steel cap into adhesive on top of the chimney's crown, then break it with masonry screws. If the crown and the cap is crumbling, remove, why? Use mortar and replace it first, using the sides away from the chimney. —J.V.

The 411 on artificial turf

Drought restrictions may have put the squeeze on traditional turf, but the good news is it's easier than ever to take a lush lawn. Here's the lowdown.



IT LOOKS AND FEELS MORE NATURAL

Early turfs were made from do-it-yourself weaves tufted onto mats, but today's synthetic lawns use soft strands of polypropylene or polypropylene. One leader, SYNLawn, has upped its environmental cred with polypropylene derived from sustainably grown sugarcane. And while you can opt for a putting green look, the best new turfs rely on a mix of blade lengths and shades of green—and even brown—to mimic specific varieties like fescue or Kentucky bluegrass.

IT'S A WHOLE SYSTEM Older turfs were basically carpet-like, laid out with one or two backing. Now there's a science to it. For stability, the first layer is a durable, porous landscape fabric, then the drainage material, such as gravel. Next comes the turf itself, which is woven into a permeable synthetic backing. Last comes a layer of infill—usually sand or the like—to help sink, hold the turf down and feel more natural underfoot.

IT ISN'T TOTALLY MAINTENANCE-FREE While there's no mowing, you'll still have to brush out leaves and other debris using a plastic rake. To prevent odors, pet owners



A bottom layer of porous polypropylene fibers on this turf from SYNLawn encourages the turf blades to stand up.

need polypropylene and cleaning plants with a no-mow design that attach to your garden hose. For pet-friendly slopes, the still is to improve drainage and make digging less inviting. To decrease heat absorption, ProGreen reduced the surface area of the blades in some of its turf grasses so they stay cooler.

IT PAYS FOR ITSELF After the initial outlay of around \$10–\$20 per square foot for installed turf, you'll eventually do up as big as grass, fertilizer, a mower, gas, and your landscaping water usage should plummet. With these savings, you could recoup the cost of synthetic turf in the next year—and cut out lawn care for long, staying green the whole time. —J.R. 2012

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Chef's choice

A culinary pro turns her dated cook space into a dream kitchen well equipped for recipe testing and family meals

DYNATEL HILL • PHOTOGRAPHS BY LINDA PUSLISE

ASO SO KITCHEN CAN'T CUT IT FOREVER, especially when it's an extension of your livelihood. Even so, Jennifer Auerbach and her husband, Paul Malachuk, spent six years reworking everything but the cook space in their 1918 home in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York. When the kitchen's time finally came, Jennifer, a recipe developer, professional chef, and former magazine food editor, had developed an arsenal of ideas. She dreamed of a large, open space with a big island where many different cooking projects could be going on at once, and a clean aesthetic that blended a little old with a little new. To make it happen, the couple turned to contractor Benjamin Delevoy. Their key decisions remove some of the wall that separated the kitchen from the dining room to open up the space and allow for a larger kitchen layout. Jennifer chose simple IKEA cabinets, preferring open shelves to support her as a serial cook. She compensated for lost storage with an overhead island, where the couple's two children could pull up stools and eat, help cook, or do their homework.

Now Jennifer has all the room she needs to develop recipes for her latest venture as culinary director of meal-kit delivery service Marley Spoon, as well as prepare family dinners and cook with friends. "We love hanging out in there!" Jennifer says of the new space. "It's absolutely the center of our home now."



BEFORE The vintage kitchen had been overlooked in decades and had some quarter-like character that begged cabinet space under the sink.

AFTER Taking down most of the wall between the kitchen and the dining room allowed for a big island with drawers on the long grip side and open shelves for small appliances on the side with seating. The luxe-looking brass faucet and hardware dress up gray stock cabinets. Cabinets: IKEA

Homeowner and professional chef's sister wanted her daughter-in-law's empty party-making session. The gourmet's top 100 best counter allows multiple cooks to work at the same time.



Posting in the fridge with hook cabinets and an island makes the perfect party look. Customized the top of the fridge from being a catch for clothes. Then dry erase cabinet doors look like a chalkboard. (Photo: J.D. Davis, 10/20/14)



A large three-part window above the sink area looks a lot better in the background. (Photo: J.D. Davis, 10/20/14)



The eating area was hidden in the cabinet under the sink, including 4 linear feet of space. A new, less bulky made from back into a wall panel under the sink wall, opening up cabinet space and allowing for a second appliance beyond. (Photo: J.D. Davis, 10/20/14)

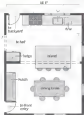
after

Removing most of the wall between the kitchen and the dining room created one bigger, brighter space functional space.

1) Upgraded to a high-top island, bar stools and a direct vent propane stove.

2) Removed a door to the hall, swapped in a back door with a glass panel for more light.

3) Moved the freestanding refrigerator with upper cabinets and side panels.



4) Installed larger three-part window to overlook the backyard and extend the sink area into it.

5) Relocated the island to the sink to a new island to the right of the sink.

6) Opened up the wall between the kitchen and the dining room which made way for the new island.

Source: J.D. Davis



Lower cabinets filled with drawers rather than shelves to provide storage space and make dishes and heavy cookware easier to access. (Photo: J.D. Davis, 10/20/14)

With most of the wall demolished, hanging the beam between the kitchen and the dining room is better than usual, providing the original plaster work.

before

Cabinets filled only one wall of the kitchen, freestanding pieces provided the rest of the storage.



Flowers in free fall

Forget measuring, marking, and making everything level. This refreshing, blossomy pattern spills across the wall with minimum fuss.

BY DEBORAH BALDWIN • PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRISTOPHER DRAKE

USE PART RANDOM. One part random, the other half wallpaper-like pattern is made possible by four different stencils in four different sizes, their floral designs scattered across the wall as if by the wind.

"It allows lots of freedom," says Annie Sloan, the British decorative painter and entrepreneur who demonstrates this project's controlled-free-for-all approach in her latest book, *Annie Sloan Paints Everything* (JACO Books). "The key thing is to restrict the colors you work with," she says. "And don't overdo the stencils—you want lightness, not density."

Sloan put down a bright-blue base coat, then stenciled on three other blues and a pale orange. She started with floral branches in dark blue, placing them at roughly equidistant intervals and at different angles, then superimposed them using the same stencil and a light blue, again clipping the stencils to face this way and that—then a third time, with an even paler shade. Pale orange blossoms in three distinct shapes and sizes dot the wall, while leafy-green hawthorn provides a hint of foliage.

The step-by-step, opposite, demonstrates how.



Dark Paint by Annie Sloan in Glossy (base coat) and Napoleonic Blue, pale Cornflower and Brecklands Orange for Stenciling. Stencils by Annie Sloan Stencils/Collection in Antella, Periwinkle, Arctic Poppy, and Flower Bling

STEP-BY-STEP



1) Roll on the first stencil. Once the base coat is dry, load a 4-inch foam roller with dark blue paint poured onto a disc and dust. Stencil on the flowering two-branch pattern at roughly equidistant spots.



2) Mix in some light blue. Add light blue paint to the dark blue on the paint mixing tray. Use a brush to blend the two colors together to create a lighter shade. It doesn't have to be homogeneous.



3) Apply the two-blue blend. With the same stencil, stencil the darker pattern along the top and bottom edges, creating a random pattern while leaving open space between the stenciled areas.



4) Mix in some lighter blue. Add more of the light blue to the paint and keep mixing enough to give yourself a pale Periwinkle. Apply as before, again leaving some space between the stenciled clusters.



5) Include three different flower details. Using other floral stencils, tape over all but the creamer and blossoms that suit the design, a coordinate to the overall scheme.



6) Add the accents. Using a clean mix and a Zinsserblender, blend the lightest blue and the orange points. Roll on the flower details at random spots, stenciling back to an where they fall. Don't worry—imperfections only add to the charm. ■

Get wood floors gleaming

They're one of the things that make your home special. Here's how to give them extra love—but not too much. BY DEBORAH BALOWEN • PHOTOGRAPH BY ALAN WATSON

THINK ABOUT all the abuse your wood floors get just because they take it lying down. Gut, dirt, mud, soap, dust, food debris, things stuck to the feet of pets—and you don't even want to think about where they've been—all get pounded into the polyurethane finish and forced between the boards. Unfortunately, the cure is sometimes worse than the grime. “Too much water, any amount of steam,” says Peter Miller, a technical expert at the National Wood Flooring Association. Other worsts: strong vinegar or baking soda solutions that can degrade polyurethane, and “glow” enhancers that sound as if they would work on your hair.

At Miller and other experts like so stress, properly cleaned floors are not hard to obtain, especially if you stay ahead of the game. Put down rough-soled shoes, park gritty boots and shoes at the door, sweep, dry-sweep, or vacuum often, and when the floor looks dull, get into all the nooks and corners with a damp mop and a neutral solution.

Floor installer Michael Detmers, who lives outside Chicago, dispatches a robot vac daily to keep an eye on his entire first floor. “Then I clean the kitchen floor weekly and the other rooms twice a month.” Of course, he has a parrot, dogs, and storage bins. For many homeowners, a nod to the following tools and techniques should suffice.



DO THIS...

Take preemptive action. If youavor guest, meditative sweat prep, choose a **soft-bristled broom angled toward into corners** and wide enough to softly do the job—moving with the grain, of course. **Vacuums** with a soft-floor nozzle: carpet beater and brush rolls can damage the finish. **Robot vacs** do the work for you; shopper and that with a vacuum that fits into a corner and will not get stuck. Anchor before stepping to recharge. Attach a dry-dry-dry AGAP with a **damp cloth** and a squirt of wood-floor cleaner, and a vigorous rub if you don't like to crouch: plant one foot on a rag, lift off dust and get hair with a **microfiber mop head**, clearly labeled with a positive electric charge so it can capture negative ion pollutants. Keep the mop head moving, again with the grain.

And when it looks dingy: Sweep mop with a **flat head mop** and **microfiber pad** or a **microfiber string mop** that has been thoroughly wrung out. Moen with the grain, and control the amount of cleaning solution using a **spray bottle**, aiming for a heavy mist or gentle squirt of about a half teaspoon per 2 square feet. No need for more. No need to buff either, but cloth driers and soft socks do work well here.

NOT THIS...

Letting it go. In most households, wood floors should be cleaned at least four times a year.

Ignoring wet or sticky spills. They won't go away on their own. Get an eraser pad (sold under the table) to get it.

Bringing in the heavy equipment. You can damage the finish by attacking with a boom meant for the garage or a floor cleaning machine designed for tough or floor.

Applying the wrong product. Experts say Murphy Oil Soap can leave a residue on polyurethane. Pests and simply makes it slippery. As for people products that claim to remove the glow (like justifying it as a "glow" remover), they can do polyurethane—put them on the grime and it will be.

Flooded the zone. Standing water and overly wet mops, shed moisture between boards and through the grain in the finish that form when wood swells and expands with the weather. Over time, moisture can damage the wood.

Steam cleaning. Never on wood. Save it for tile, brick and anything.

tool essentials

• BROOM • DUSTPAN

Regular soft sweeping does the job. Try Corbin's Wyckoff Wide Angled Broom (\$12, corbins.com) for \$12 more, you can have it. Neos Broom and Dustpan set. Or wrangle these corners skulking under the table with the long hair and a wide headboard Room Broom (\$40 with handle, neossentials.com).

• KITCHEN CLEANER

Choose one that is easy to pick up and maneuver and has a soft roller head. The Dyson V6 Absolute (\$400, dyson.com).

• MICROFIBER MOP

Look for a miter head and a fluffy reusable pad for dry mopping and a do-it-all mop for damp mopping. (Wipes should be formulated for wood floors. Eco's Science at a 12-pack \$5, ecobath.com).

legend.com). Some spray mops have replaceable heads, including the short, such as the Eureka Freedom Spray Mop (\$20, target.com). Or Cedar's Dual Action Microfiber Flip Mop (\$13, immediate.com) has pads for dry and damp mopping. Or use the one in the work book (avoid fabric softener, which can cause streaking). Or go for a microfiber string mop that can be wrung out (it just dries). The Corbin's a Spin Cycle Mop (\$60, corbins.com).

• GLEAMING SOLUTION

You want a full bottle of about 3- or 4-ounce to sure it's poly, higher is too alkaline and will be okay for an all-purpose cleaner, but not here. One example is Bona's True & Simple Hardwood Floor Cleaner (\$10, us.bona.com).

WHY BOTTLED IS BEST

Old-fashioned remedies involving vinegar or dish detergent can't do the same job as today's multifunctioning solutions and can actually damage or dull polyurethane. (One way to check for residue is to spray a bit of solution on glass and see what it leaves behind.) Here are the key components of ready-made solutions engineered specifically for wood floors.

SOLVENTS

Speed the drying process, reducing exposure to moisture and making the job go faster. They also minimize streaking and filmy buildup. Method's Quart & Map Wood Floor Cleaner contains two solvents.

one derived from carboxylic acid, the other, a light water-soluble and snow-white salts.

SURFACTANTS

break down dirt and contaminants with alkaline ingredients to help achieve a neutral pH.

CITRIC ACID

breaks up dirt and contaminants with alkaline ingredients to help achieve a neutral pH.

CHLORIDES

increase hydrophobic properties to built-up dirt, leaving a protective film and are in many strength solutions like Bona's PowerFin (\$12, us.bona.com).

Cheery laundry for \$232

A wash-and-fold space goes from blank slate to seriously stylish with the help of some inexpensive materials. BY KATELIN HILL



BEFORE While the laundry room cabinet with the previous owner's washer and dryer was in fine shape, the paint colors didn't suit the new owner's taste, and the room was a sterile white.

AFTER A fabric-covered screen wall warms up the space. Painting cabinets gave whole new look, thanks to a fresh paint adhesive. Pegboard provides customizable storage for other necessities.

THE PROJECT TALLY

With existing appliances installed, painted the cabinets white and the walls white. Added on the inside using a new deep-chalky finish paint and sealing no primer needed, added type hardware from elsewhere ...

\$97

Created a focal point by adhering discounted fabric to one wall. Using two half-gallon bottles of liquid starch ...

\$43

Hung a big in look when a pegboard on a frame of lath and wire and gave the assembly a coat of bathroom white paint ...

\$47

Improved storage with two bins and baskets per detergent and canvas bags for sorting laundry. (Applied vinyl decal [stencils at home] stickers only on hand plants and artwork for color ...)

\$75

Spray-painted the storage board and some other items with space paint for a cohesive look ...

\$50

TOTAL \$232

• **STARK WHITE WALLS** sure can give a homeowner the blues. When Sara Davis decided she didn't want to log one more minute in the lifeless laundry room of her 1997 Penthouse, D.C., home, she knew it was finally time to give it a face lift. First she overhauled the cabinets, removing a few doors to put supplies within easy reach, then painting the cabinets inside and out. She covered the wall behind them using 410 yards of fabric and liquid starch to adhere it, a trick she picked up from Pinterest and had already tested in another room. Because the wash-and-fold area allows the fabric to pull off

easily without leaving any residue, it served as a perfect no-regrets way to introduce color and texture—for a fraction of the cost of wallpaper. Her final addition was a large pegboard, which easily holds her drying rack, ironing board, and three laundry bags, plus a few bins to hold odds and ends. The new storage system helps keep piles of laundry off the floor and off other surfaces. Sara, who blogs at sincerelysara.com, can't believe how much design bang she got for her buck. "The new look and flow has made doing laundry a little less cumbersome," she says. "It's just a happier space." ■

A GREAT DAY STARTS ON A GREAT MATTRESS...

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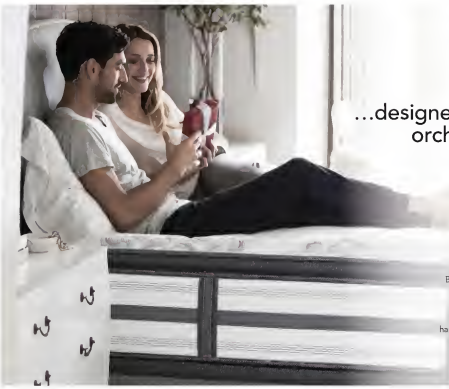
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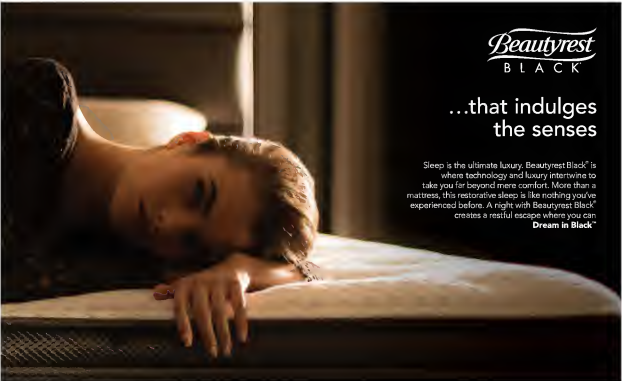
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Outdoor dining chairs

Whether you're hosting a cookout or bringing home takeout, dining chairs designed for decks and patios let you pull up a seat in style

BY KATE WOOD • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW MCGILL

BACKYARD DINING feels like a throwback to simpler times, but it's a relatively new phenomenon. Hosting family and guests on our back only dates to the 1940s, when porches and decks became common features of new suburban construction. Before then, socializing usually took place out front, on benches or stoops. Not having to play host to just anybody who happened by let homeowners maintain an air of mystery, so it's no surprise the backyard barbecue became an American staple around the same time.

When you're eating alfresco, seating that's easy to clean and made to handle the elements is a must-have. Luckily, outdoor dining chairs that make the grade come in a wide range of materials, styles, and colors. Here, nine of our favorite finds



by gray matter
Tudorville
Made of resin slats
Size: 22 1/2" W x 30" D x 33 1/2" H
by gray matter
Emphasizes these chairs
screen feature: \$200 per
pair. graymatter.com

2> green light
GRACIOSO.COM
Made of polycarbonate
Size: 20 1/2"W x 29"D x 32"H
Highlights: The key design
of this stacking side chair
is extra easy to clean. \$247
per piece. themodern.com



3> on the dot
SUN 30.COM
Made of flax, with
synthetic wicker
Size: 19"W x 22 1/2"D x 25"H
Highlights: A classic bistro
chair gets a new look. \$135
each. venetian.com



6> forward bend
OFFICE STAR
Made of powder-coated
steel
Size: 17 1/2"W x 27 1/2"D x 35 1/4"H
Highlights: A cheery citrus
color gives the bar stool
look a new twist. \$163 per
piece. themodern.com



7> comfort zone
HOMEDJ.COM
Made of powder-coated
steel
Size: 24 1/2"W x 25 1/2"D x 36"H
Highlights: Its ample size
invites to relax. \$445 each.
homedj.com



4> true blue
FLAMINGO FURNITURE
Made of powder-coated
metal
Size: 18"W x 20 1/2"D x 30 1/2"H
Highlights: Color and shine
punch up this 30s design.
\$72 each. flamingofurniture.com



5> touch wood
POTTERY BARN
Made of teak
Size: 23 1/2"W x 25 1/2"D x 36 1/2"H
Highlights: A clear coat
finish helps maintain the
honey-colored teak. \$437
each. potterybarn.com



8> fancy this
GRANDIN ROAD
Made of painted steel
Size: 18 1/2"W x 28 1/2"D x 40 1/2"H
Highlights: The vintage-
style side chair sports an
on-trend paint job. \$159
each. grandinroad.com



9> orange crush
FLAMINGO FURNITURE
Made of powder-coated
steel
Size: 23 1/2"W x 24 1/2"D x 32"H
Highlights: A lively color
makes this chair stand out.
\$64 each. wayfair.com

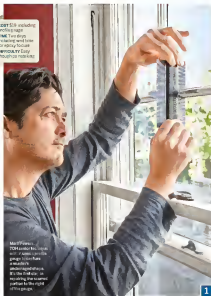


Repair a window muntin

When an errant sash lock mangles a wood window, here's how to make the damage disappear

BY THOMAS BUKET • PHOTOGRAPH BY WENDELL T. VIERBER

COST \$18, including profile and epoxy
TIME Two days
3+ hours and time for epoxy to cure
DIFFICULTY Easy
Household maintenance



1

TOOLBOX

- profile grasper/wall grasper
- plastic putty knife set
- coping saw
- triangular steel taper file
- slow setting epoxy
- plastic sheet and stir stick
- talcum powder
- marker's tape
- white vinegar and rag
- fine-grit sanding sponge
- devcon (flexible) wood seal
- primer and paint
- 1/2-inch drill bit



MIX IT UP

The secret to making this kind of repair is to use slow setting epoxy and wait long enough (up to 30 minutes or more). That gives you the opportunity to sculpt the epoxy and match the existing muntin profile before the epoxy turns rock hard and becomes tough to sand.

Most epoxies are too runny for this kind of repair; they need to be thickened with fine powder, such as talc (above). Blend in the powder until the two epoxy components are thoroughly mixed. Then keep adding and blending until the compound reaches a firm consistency like chunky peanut butter. Now you're prepared for the fix.



2



3



4



5



6



7

STEP-BY-STEP

1) Expose the profile Press a profile grasper against an intact muntin section on the glass, as shown. The grasper will move aside to create a positive and a negative replica of the muntin's profile, which can then be used to make a molding template.

2) Trace the profile Place the side of the grasper with the positive profile on a plastic scraper. Line up the edge of the scraper blade with the lines that extend against the glass and trace the profile onto the blade face, as shown. Note: If the damage is confined to only one side of the muntin, trace a partial profile in a corner of the scraper blade.

3) Cut out the scraper Use a coping saw to cut away most of the waste plastic outside the traced line. Fine-tune the edges with a triangular steel taper file and check your work by placing the cutout over a muntin that hasn't been damaged.

4) Mix the epoxy Squeeze the epoxy's two components into a bowl and mix them into a plastic sheet and blend them with a stick for at least 2 minutes. Next, stir talcum powder into the epoxy until it becomes stiff enough to hold its shape.

5) Shape the epoxy Protect the glass on both sides of the muntin with strips of painter's tape. Using an intact scraper, apply the epoxy to the damage. Then place the custom scraper over the muntin and, holding the scraper square to the glass, slowly drag it through the epoxy. You may need to make a few such passes and add more epoxy to get a clean profile. After each pass, remove any excess epoxy from the scraper and wipe it clean with a rag dampened with white vinegar.

6) Sand When the epoxy hardens, use a fine-grit sanding sponge to smooth it flush with the undamaged profile.

7) Paint The next day, wipe the muntin and surrounding sash with denatured alcohol and white rag. Brush on an oil-based primer, followed by a topcoat or two. Remove the tape before the last coat dries completely. ■

Supper on a stick

Thread meat, vegetables, or virtually any food onto a skewer, lay it across a grill grate, and you can enjoy a meal in no time

BY DENNICK RICHES AND SARIKA BAKSH • PHOTOGRAPH BY MICHAEL PLATZ

AT THE BEGINNING of just about every grill-bag cookbook is a short little story about how humans first learned to make fire, how they then discovered they could cook food over the fire, and how what we call grilling today is a direct descendant of these ancient discoveries. It's an excellent story fire is great. What the stories usually leave out is the first cooking around our ancestors built the stick. The stick holds the food out of the fire. It allows for temperature control, easy handling, flavor, and the ability of the chef. The stick, or as we now refer to it, the skewer, gives us the kabob, and kebabs are the perfect food.

The kabob is truly the universal dish. Every culture has some variation of them, and they can be found in the finest restaurants or served hot from a street corner food cart. As a meal, a snack, an appetizer, a dessert, or a side dish, the kabob is as versatile as pizza and as common as the hamburger. Thread meat, vegetables, fruit, or virtually any type of food onto a skewer, throw it over an open flame, and you will be having supper within minutes. Alas, a kabob version of a very popular food combination exists in the West,



EXCERPTED FROM *Mastering the Grill*, by Dennick Riches and Sarika Baksh (Harvard Common Press, an imprint of The Quarto Group) Copyright © 2012

THE RECIPE

Steak and Potato Kebabs

MAKES 10 TO 12 SERVINGS

Parboil the potatoes before placing them on skewers—this way, the steak and the potatoes cook evenly and at the same rate. Look for key potatoes or new potatoes.

- 2 pounds sirloin or tri-tip steaks
- 20 to 22 big potatoes, 1 to 2 1/2 inches around
- 8 to 12 skewers
- Oil or oil
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 2 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 1/4 teaspoon dried marjoram

1. Parboil the potatoes for 10 to 15 minutes depending on their size. The potatoes should be tender but not mushy. They will finish cooking on the grill. When the potatoes have reached the desired doneness, remove them from the pot and place them into a bowl filled with cold water and ice for 5 minutes to stop the cooking process. Remove the potatoes when the ice bath is just half-melted. Set aside.

2. Cut the steaks into 1 1/2-inch cubes.

3. Preheat the grill to medium-high. When the grill is ready, arrange the grill grates right before putting on the kebabs. Using long-handled tongs, dip some folded paper towels in a high-smoke-point cooking oil and wipe down the grill grates, making at least three good passes to create a nonstick surface.

4. Thread the beef cubes onto the skewers alternating with the parboiled potatoes. Brush the kebabs with oil and mix together the black pepper, salt, and dried marjoram. Season the kebabs well with the mixture.

5. Place the kebabs on the grill. Cook for 4 minutes, gently turn, and cook for 10 minutes more, or until the meat has reached the desired doneness and the potatoes are cooked all the way through.

6. Remove the kebabs from the grill and serve.

NOTE: For a vegetarian or vegan option, use mushrooms or sautéed slices of beef. Reduce the cooking time by half. ■

DISCOVER
MAYNARD



BACONQUER ANY MEAL

Now before the Baconquers, the one who brought the Bacon that crushed it on burger night.



NATURALLY HARDWOOD SMOKE BACON

Co

Adding farmhouse appeal

Scale and symmetry fixes turn a lackluster Cape into a looker

BY KATE WOOD • ILLUSTRATION BY DRIVAGATE PNG



CAPE COD is a classic house style, but Rand and Tanya Kishner's home doesn't read the books. The garage overwhelms the house, the first-floor windows don't line up, and an odd planter leads to the entry. So we asked Tim Hawton of Better Architects how to right these wrongs. His major remedy: add a proportionate front porch with classic detailing that ties back and demarcates the garage while making the entry a focal point, plus larger, matching windows centered beneath the dormers.

Hawton also proposes elements that turn up the charm, including a metal porch roof, carriage-style garage doors, and Virginia on the gable ends. New single siding nods to the Cape Cod style, though the overall impression is of a modern farmhouse. "This is awesome!" Brad says. "The porch really completes the house, and the new entry is beautiful." ■

finishing touches

Handsome details that combine classic and country suit the house's setting—and new style



shutters

Painted wood shutters stand to fit the modern side in dots of color. Slat color: 20 by 48 inch/10/10 Split Shutter Panel Shutters with Coconut Teak. \$18.6 per pair. kinderhome.com



sconces

Wall mount barn lights with a personalized finish enhance the new mood. MIT's iron shank is large gold dominates the garage. Rustic Wall Sconces. \$120 each. lucylightdecor.com



porch skirt

Square tiles around the base of the porch complement the shiplap and the exterior wall settings. 4-Sq-Ft. Tiles. Trex Solid Trex Deck Privacy HD Lattice. Item #43. www.trexproducts.com



siding

Five colors of shingles meet the shiplap. The new mood. Weather Guard Siding Shingles. 4-Sq-Ft. Panel in Light Wood. From \$3.29 per square (uninstalled). jennichill.com

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The apprentices

Meet the talented young people who will work alongside our pros on the TOH TV project house this summer. BY JILL CONNORS AND LAURA TESTINO



MICHAEL BARRETT



GUSZT FORRESTER



NATHAN GILCHRIST



KIRSTEN POULAR



ALEC QUAIL



BAILEY NEES



DACE GRAFTON



AUSTIN WILSON

IT'S LONG BEEN THE NATURAL ORDER of things in the building trades: seasoned pros working side by side with the next generation in order to grow a fresh crop of skilled workers. As This Old House doubles down on our commitment to encourage more young men and women to pursue a hands-on career, we've selected eight apprentices—their chosen from our nationwide casting call, plus five hometown residents from the Boston area—to work with the TOH TV crew on the Newton, MA, project house, where construction is under way. Get to know these workers here, and watch our Facebook and Twitter feeds for a sneak peek of them on the job site success. As TOH planning and housing expert Richard Trethewey points out, they're part of a time-honored tradition. "All the years my father and I worked at Trethewey Brothers, we earned apprentices," he says. "My dad always believed in 'adopting one kid.' It was good for the kid and good for us." We couldn't agree more.

MEET MORE UP AND COMING
Find out about other young people who are training for the trades, and find out how you can support them at thisoldhouse.com/gennext



Corey Forester, 20
Burlington, MA
APPRENTICE TO R & R TREE AND LANDSCAPE

As Corey Forester sees it, his apprenticeship under The Old Haven Landscapes contractor Roger Cooke is a rare opportunity. "It's learning from the best, and being paid to learn—it doesn't get any better than that," says Corey, who also serves inside Marine Corps Reserve. His annual play-out of high school was to combine Marine Corps service with a four-year college degree; he completed his boot training the summer after graduation. But during his first year of college, he realized the classroom wasn't for him. "I like to do something that keeps me moving," Corey says. He connected with Roger through a family friend, and he has already put in a year at R & R Tree and Landscape as Roger's apprentice. "I started as a laborer, mowing, cleaning, putting down mulch, doing what ever I could," he says. Little by little, he is advancing to tasks with more responsibility.

"It's very rewarding to see how Corey has progressed," says Roger. "I can't teach someone to be a landscaper, but I can teach someone to be a machine operator. I could see Corey's potential, and when I had the chance to hire him, I just wanted to start because he kept calling me. So, as a result of his military background, he joins. All the New Haven house. Roger expects Corey's help digging out the roses and trees and putting them in their new location during construction, put up fencing to protect the property's perimeter and Japanese reemphasize and build a retaining wall along the back of the property."

"It's learning really good skills here," Corey says. "We know where it will go, why it will be a landscape tomorrow, and I'll be able to do it. This is exactly what I want to be doing." —J.C.



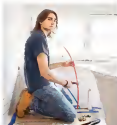
Krysten Poulin, 22
Tyngsborough, MA
APPRENTICE TO MJM MASONRY

As an apprentice at MJM Masonry since July 2018, Krysten Poulin has been pursuing a trade that first caught her interest as a student at Greater Lowell Technical High School in Tyngsborough, MA. "This masonry program taught us a bit of everything, from laying back to setting blocks," says Krysten. "I found that I really liked the challenge of laying bricks correctly. It's an art. It takes time, but it's very gratifying to see what you have built."

Through a friend, Krysten connected with MJM Masonry. Mark McCullough's company, Makas, an educator for apprenticeships and employers, he has as many as 20 apprentices (out of a staff of 50) working for him at any one time. He sees the technical high schools as a good source for apprentice. "The technical school students already have a skill by the time they come to us. Krysten already knew how to use a trowel, and she knows how to lay bricks," he says.

Krysten has family members in the building trades, including an uncle who was a master carpenter, and the apprenticeship building that is a square. "I started as a laborer, getting materials and stock for the walls. I've been doing that," says Krysten, who has progressed to working alongside masons in the brick brick. At the New Haven project house this summer, Mark expects to see her help out with chimney demolition and foundation work among other projects.

One of the first things we have apprentices do is work behind the mason, ensuring the bricks before laying them to the mason, making sure the bricks are in the right position and in the right color range. Mark says, "Krysten is a good fit." —J.C.



Zack Grayton, 17
Peabody, MA
APPRENTICE TO BLO PLUMBING & HEATING

With his dad as electrician and two of his uncles, engineers, Zack Grayton took an interest in the trades early on and headed to the Essex Technical High School in Hethersham, MA, as a freshman. Now a junior, he alternates between one week of school and one week as an apprentice at Blo Plumbing & Heating, the subcontractor in the TDH TV project house in Newbury. The apprenticeship is part of the Essex Tech program, which includes classroom, laboratory and off-campus work, and also students on their way toward earning a journeyman plumbing license.

"I've been doing rough plumbing for new construction and also finish work on some bath remodels," says Zack, who particularly likes finish work. "It's great to learn on the job, and I really like working with my hands much more than sitting at a desk somewhere."

Blo Plumbing & Heating has found that technical high schools are a good source for potential apprentices. "There's so much work out there and there's not enough help, so we're having an apprentice for every journeyman," says Brian Blo, who heads up the company. The journey in the tech high schools already know theory, filling, and tools, so they have some experience even before they start work.

At the New Haven house, Blo expects that Zack—and the second Blo apprentice, Alex Quashy, at night—will help with all the plumbing rough-ins and finish work as well as the heating system. Says Brian, whose family business was founded in 1975: "It's been difficult to get people to convert to the trade line, but if they get the skills and do quality work, they will have jobs." —J.C.



Alex Quashy, 17
Middleton, MA
APPRENTICE TO BLO PLUMBING & HEATING

When it came time for Alex Quashy to choose a high school, there was no question it was Alex's technical school. "It's a way better than reading all day, and I can work with my hands," says Alex, now a junior at Essex Technical High School in Hethersham, MA.

Alex says the plumbing program has taught him the basics, including working with safety equipment and power tools, and doing tasks such as the reading paper—all things he is putting into practice as an apprentice with Blo Plumbing & Heating. Essex Tech students can either find apprenticeships on their own through friends and family or they can be placed with a company seeking apprentices through the school. "My first day on the job, I had a gas leak, cut into walls and ceilings, and I'm pretty sure I'm learning so much because they use all the most advanced tools and techniques, such as using a ProPress gun to connect pipes instead of soldering," says Alex. One other trade thing that has been helpful is taking a gas heating. "I don't care how long things take—you can see the end result, and it looks awesome!"

From company president Brian Blo's point of view, apprentices like Alex are a reminder of how important it is to the future of the plumbing trade line how long it's been in the trade. "Our goal is to get apprentices who will become journeymen," says Brian. "It will take a few years, but it's our future, and it's good work, it pays off."

For Alex, the fun is in making a growing new thing. "There's a lot to learn from day to day, I never get bored of it. On a day when this house, every day it's something different. I think that's the trade. I would like to stay with it." —J.C. ■

Add undercabinet LED lighting

Help make meal prep easier and add mood lighting with peel-and-stick tape lined with LEDs.

BY SA. YAGLOVA • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ADAM SMITH



COST About \$200
TIME Two days
DIFFICULTY Easy You control the system with a wireless touch panel, but you might have to add an outlet to supply power.

THERE WAS A TIME when installing under-cabinet lighting meant picking between clunky, flickering fluorescent tubes or burning hot halogens. But with low-voltage wiring, long-lasting LEDs and a few more LED-based tape is plain, and soft-white lights will beam down and show off your countertop and backsplash. Because the system daisy-chains light strips together, it's customizable to any kitchen configuration, including one L-shaped layout with wall cabinets of varying heights. The wiring is thin enough to hide behind the cabinet face frames, so you'll never see it, and a wireless dimmer switch puts the control where you want it without putting holes in your walls. Follow along as *The Old Farmer* senior technical editor Mark Powers shows you how to be in the warm light.

Warm-white LED tape lighting, about \$5 per foot, has 10 LEDs per foot. LED lighting power supply (not shown) 140 LED driver (not shown) 270 Wireless dimmer switch (not shown) All by Ambiance Lighting from homebase.com

TOOLS

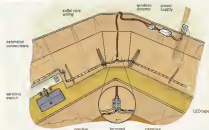
- voltage tester
- multi-bit screwdriver
- drywall saw
- fish tape
- screwless pliers or wire clippers
- electric wall tape
- tape measure
- scissors
- utility knife
- metal-shielded wire cutters
- 1/8-inch phillips bit
- drill/driver
- staple

MATERIALS

- 14-gauge flat enough to add in under-cabinet wiring
- wire nuts Get one and low-voltage wire
- remodeling box
- power supply
- dimmer switch
- 16-gauge pure wiring Get a small roll
- thermal
- LED tape Get enough to span the run of cabinets
- dimmer switch
- extension connectors
- wireless switch
- staple

DAY-TO-DAY TIMELINE

SATURDAY Add the new outlet and power supply (Steps 1-3)
SUNDAY Run wiring for the lights (Steps 4-5)



1 Add an outlet

A) Feed up the fish tape To power the lights, we installed a remodeler's trick: low-voltage wiring is not installed in the wall. Instead, we installed a dedicated circuit, powered the microwave. Start by flipping off the breaker to the existing outlet, then check with a tester that the electricity is off. Pull out the old outlet and, with a screwdriver, bang one of the metal knockouts in the box. Use a drywall saw to cut a hole for the remodeling box in the wall above the cabinet. Feed the fish tape up through the knockout, as shown, and out of the new hole in the drywall.

B) Pull down the wire With pliers, strip the insulation off the length of 14-gauge. Hook the ground to the fish tape and cover the connection with a hot/cold tape, as shown. Pull the fish tape through the knockout until about 10 inches of wire is exposed. Then trace the fish tape. Cut the first knockout hole for the pigtail, and use a utility knife to cut the three individual wires from the yellow sheathing. Strip at the ends of the pigtail and the ends of the 14-gauge. Grab all three wires, and use the existing outlet's wire nut. Repeat the process for the black and ground wires. Rewire the existing outlet, push all the wiring into the box, and screw the outlet back into place.



TIP Plan to use an accessible but hidden outlet to run the LED power supply, like one above or inside a cabinet. If you're adding an outlet, locating the new one in the same stud bay as an existing outlet makes using the fish tape easier.

2 Install dimmer switch

A) Add dimmer. At the opening for the outlet, cut the 3/4-in. and thread it through a remodeling box. Install the box in the wall, strip the wires, and attach them to the new outlet. Screw the outlet in place and secure the trim plate. Add the power supply's red and black wires to the slots on the wireless dimmer, red to positive. Mark the white to negative as shown. Complete the connection by twisting the set screw.

B) Plug in the power supply. Place the power supply into the dimmer and plug all the upper cabinets. Plug the power supply into the new outlet. Cut a length of 3/4-in. cold-conduit—sold at hardware stores—so it is long enough to reach from the dimmer down the back of and under the corner cabinet. Drive the wiring along the cabinets as shown.



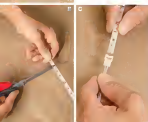
TIP Let the system's wiring hang free until all the LED tape is in place, then go back and secure wires and terminals to the cabinets with staples and screws.

3 Power up the lights

A) Wire up the terminal. Cut the red and black wires so that it reaches the corner under the 3-in. corner cold rail. Add the red wire to one end of the terminal and tighten the set screw. Repeat the process for the white or black wire. From here, you'll continue to branch in two directions to cover both walls of the L-shaped kitchen.

B) Cut the tape. From the middle of the corner cabinet, measure the length of tape needed to cover the cabinets along one wall. Use scissors to cut the LED tape across the center of the copper contacts as shown. Repeat the process for the other wall of cabinets.

C) Wire up the LEDs. Use LED tape light extension connectors to join the terminal into a splitter, sending power to both walls. These 4-foot extensions have two wires: white for positive and black with a black stripe for negative, with a clamp on one end that grips onto the LED tape. Join the tape to the extension by peeling away the adhesive backing under the copper contacts. Slide the tape into the connector with the tape facing up, as shown. Make sure to align the polarity of the extension to the markings on the tape. Binge the tape in so it seats completely. Flip the connector over and snap the lock closed with a slotted screwdriver. Repeat this process for the LED tape running under the other wall of cabinets. Tighten together the positive ends of the extensions and fit them into the terminal access from the red wire. Tighten the set screws and add both negative wires to the terminal on the same way.



4 Adjust the light

A) Tweak the beam. Rotate the power of the panel. Hold the tape to the underside of the cabinet and adjust the light's coverage. Repeat this step 1 to 2 inches back from the face frame to distribute the LED degree of light evenly across the backsplash and countertop, as shown. If you have a dark countertop, install the tape against the back of the face frame, with the LEDs pointing toward the backsplash to eliminate bright spots.

B) Create passageways. Once you determine the light's location—about 6 inches away from the face frame—drill a 1/8-inch wide hole with a paddle bit through the sides of the upper cabinets at that spot, as shown. This allows the LED tape to travel underneath the cabinets. To install the LED, run the tape from the back of the cabinet sides with an oscillating tool. Don't press the tape in place yet.



5 Transition over the sink

A) Get inside a cabinet. Drill three holes underneath the cabinets to allow for wiring to pass through. Include one where the wall cabinet's change height, sufficient to clear the one above a sink. Run the wire through the adjacent taller cabinet. Clamp plywood across the hole at the cabinet to prevent tear out. The drill bit is only wide hole with the paddle bit in the corner, as shown. Add a second hole 90 degrees to the first one, through the cabinet wall and into the wall under the side of the taller cabinet above the sink.

B) Press the tape in place. Wiggle the ends of the cable into the hole and then slide the tape into the hole properly. Peel the backing off the LED tape and press it in place under the straight cut of cabinets. The tape on the far end closest to the shorter cabinet above the sink should overlap with the hole, as shown.

C) Wire inside the cabinet. Align the polarity of the free end of the tape and an extension, and clamp down the connection. Join the wire up through the hole and into the corner of the cabinet. Make sure all installed extensions are enough LED tape to cover the underside of the cabinet above the sink. Push the wires through the hole in the taller cabinet. Twist together the two strung positive wires and secure them with low-voltage wiring nuts. Repeat the process for the negative wires, as shown. Tuck the wires into the corner of the cabinet's face frame.

D) Add the switch. Press and stick the LEDs to the underside of the cabinet above the sink. Screw the wiring to touch pad a bracket to the wall and install the switch and cover plate. Disconnect the power. Use a plug, the power back in the touch pad should glow with the wireless dimmer. Now screw the terminal to the underside of the cabinet. ■

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ask This Old House

Q A red maple limb is about to grow into my deck railing. When is it safe to prune the tree back?

—DEBBIE BULLDARY, DICKSON

A The best time to prune maple trees is the summer—right now. Avoid pruning in the spring, when cuts will bleed sap profusely. Use a pair of sharp bypass loppers, like the ones at left, or a saw 1 inch in diameter or less. For larger limbs, use a pruning saw and the three-cut technique (see video link left). Never apply paint or tar to a cut; they retard the healing process.

—DAVID A. JOHNSON

BEST PRUNING TECHNIQUE
Roger Cook shows the right way to pruning. It should leave a smooth cut.



35

tips, tricks, and answers to your home-improvement questions

PHOTOGRAPH BY ANDREW NECHES

THE OLD HOUSE SOURCEBOOK 47

Our core
of referees
expects



I'd like to install a rain barrel to get around our local outdoor-watering restrictions. But how do I connect it to the downspout?

—DANIELA BOWEN, BA

TOM SILVA REPLIES: It's pretty simple, actually. All you need is a diverter to channel rainwater from the downspout to your barrel. What I like about downspout diverters is that when the barrel is full, the downspout can still function normally, sending water away from the house. When a downspout feeds water directly into a barrel, it's more likely to overflow and spill water onto the siding and soak the ground next to the foundation.

For the rain barrel I installed on a third-story deck (left), I used the Diverter/Pre-rinse sprayer diverter (above) made by Fishers (fishers.com). It has an integral filter to prevent leaves and other debris from going into the barrel or down the spout, and a clear plastic float that can lock it away to conserve and



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clean the filter. To attach the diverter, I used a hacksaw to cut out a section of the downspout, inserted the diverter, and fastened it in place with aluminum sheet-metal screws that won't rust. Then, using a 3-inch hole saw, I drilled a hole in the top of the barrel for the fitting that connects to the downspout. That fitting needs to be water-tight so it won't leak when the barrel is full. Once I connected the fill tube to the diverter, the job was done.

If you live in a climate with cold winters, take care in the fall to drain the barrel and disconnect the fill tube from the diverter. You don't want leftover water to freeze inside the barrel and crack it.

 Beveled subway tile done right

We are having a heck of a time figuring out how to install beveled edge subway tile on our kitchen backsplash. Because the center of the tile is so much thicker than its edges, every cut at a corner or at the ends of the backsplash looks uneven. Will grout cover up the unevenness? Or are we just asking for too much?

—12138 中国 Lanthanide 系 PA

MARK PERRANTE REPLIES: Obnoxious chair pile layout is never a bad thing. How the details are handled at corners and edges makes the difference between an innovative thing job and a mess. You can't depend on grout to hide a pile problem.

As the owners, there are two

Tileset contractor Mark Ferrante owns Ferrante Tile in Woburn, MA and has worked on dozens of *That Old House* TV projects.

crucial to making tight joints with beveled-edge tiles. The first is to insert the cushion on either side of a corner. That way, the different thicknesses along the tile's cut edge are matched by those in the adjacent mosaic tile.

The second secret: Install the tiles in the corners before tiling the field. That gives you the freedom to make small adjustments to the cut tiles on both sides of the corner and minimize the thickness of the grout joint. With practice, you can get joints so tight that the tile looks like it's been there since day one.

After the tiles have set and the mortar hardens, the matted tiles on the outside corners require one extra step. These cruse-sharp edges have to be rounded off with a finger tile rubbing stone. Then you can start moseying.

Finally, to cover the tile cuts at the ends of the backsplash, use a pencil edge or some other ceramic trim piece to create a border, like the one in the photo below. Just make sure the trim is thicker than the tile. Do this job right and you'll be admiring your backsplash for years to come.

Exfoliation in polyurethane

After I stripped, sanded, and stained my solid-oak kitchen table, I brushed three coats of polyurethane on the underside. It came out great. The first coat on the top looked good too. But large bubbles formed in the second coat about 10 minutes after I applied it. I didn't shake the can, and the brushside I have any bubbles behind. So I sanded three out and brushed on a new coat. Some problem? What's going on? What should I do differently?

—WELSH CASPER CAMPBELL/SPORTS

KYVIN O'CONNOR REPLIKS: Let me introduce you to professional wood finisher Wayne Towle of Master Finishing and Restoration in Needham, MA. He's helped with many This Old House TV projects over the years. Here's what he had to say about your problem:

"Sorry to hear about your uncooperative pail. Nobody wants to do all the work of refinishing and end up with handles in the finish."

The recent economic crises for bubbles are shaking the case and

What is it?

- ➊ Drain declogger
- ➋ Ground anchor
- ➌ Ladder-rung hanger
- ➍ Hose guide

When installing
any new safety
feature, the owner
must be
informed and the
owner should be
put in place
before the rest of
the vehicle is



emerge from prep—you don't rock a branch into the finish without first sealing the branch on material spurs, for oil-based polys, or in water, for water-based polys. By the way, water-based polys are less likely to have bubbles than oil polys because each coat is much thinner.

"Because you didn't make either of those mistakes, and because the poly didn't bubble on the underside of the table, I suspect the top surface is contaminated with a silicone- or wax-based polish. That causes the finish to become picky and hold much less critical—called 'fish eyes'—that are easily mistaken for bubbles."

"The only way to correct this is to sand to strip the finish down to bare wood, wipe it thoroughly with denatured alcohol, and restain."

What is it?

Ground anchor

Tweated Lolo said the Gargo Screw provides a secure hold down for terps, tents and leashed animals. Resists pull-out forces of up to 600 pounds. Starting at \$7, www.gargoscrew.com



Now, brush on a couple of coats of deviated shellac, such as Zinsser's SealCoat (water-based coat). Shellac has the unique ability to block troublesome wood-entombed insects and still be compatible with any finish applied over it.

"I know that's a lot of extra work, but in the end you'll get the results you're looking for."

How to prune roots

I have a tree in my front yard with a large surface root that's encroaching on and beginning to crack the driveway. Can the root be cut without killing the tree? If so, how close to the tree can the cut be made?

—DAVID, COHASSETT, MASSACHUSETTS

KEVIN O'CONNOR REPLIES: I sent your question to Tibbitts Andersen, a Certified Master Arborist with the Tree Care Industry Association. Here's what he had to say:

"From the point of view of the tree, the best solution would be to leave the root and move the driveway. But if that's not possible, and the tree is healthy and not leaning significantly, here are some basic guidelines for how to go about pruning roots.

"Root sealant/sealer: When a tree is sealed out, it has more energy to regenerate new roots than it will in colder months.

"Water thoroughly, before and after pruning. A good soaking of all the roots a day or two before and a day or two after helps reduce

stress and speed recovery.

"Confine cuts to roots 1 inch in diameter or smaller. Roots of that size will seal out new, smaller roots that will help sustain the tree and be less likely to cause problems in the future. Severe larger roots may lead to extensive wood decay, which can stress or kill older trees.

"Make cuts no closer to the trunk than are known to diameter. For example, on a trunk that's 12 inches across at 4 feet 3 inches above the ground, spare any roots within 72 inches of the trunk. Pruning any closer could affect the tree's health and stability.

"Cut perpendicular to the root axis. If possible, go back to a licensed root lock, and take care not to scar the root's thin outer sheath.

"Use sharp, clean tools. A pruning saw, reciprocating saw, or loppers will work fine.

"If you have to cut more than one or two roots, or violate the root-cut and trunk distance guidelines, consult an arborist to assess the tree's condition. You can find a qualified tree-care expert in your area through www.treecare.org."

Ask THIS OLD HOUSE

Call TERRY TRIMMER at 800/551-7674 or write to Ask This Old House, This Old House magazine, 242 Harbor Drive, Stamford, CT 06902.

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PROJECT OF THE WEEK

HOW TO BUILD BACKYARD GAMES



Figure 1

To turn your backyard into a fun family gathering place, fill it with games of skill and strategy suitable for all ages and abilities.

With expert tips from landscape contractor Roger Cook, you can easily build classic favorites like boccie, horseshoes, and croquet in time for your next backyard bash.

You'll find all the tools and supplies necessary for this—and any—home project at The Home Depot nearest you.

For step-by-step instructions, go to thinkhouse.com/project



Norm's tricks of the trade

The drawer knobs I bought online came with screws too short to go all the way through the drawer faces. Is there any way around this, besides buying longer screws?

—MEXICO CITY SOUTH HAVEN M

A These days, most drawers have a separate front piece attached to the drawer box. That extra thickness means the screws or bolts sold with the hardware aren't long enough. One way around that is to drill a recess, called a counterbore, that puts the screwhead closer to the knob or handle. Here's how to go about it.

First if the drain is already in place in the location you want it to be, drill a hole slightly wider than the screen hole all the way through the downer base and tap. For the counterbase, select a spade bit slightly wider than the screenhead and chuck it into a drill. But before you start the drill, measure how deep the counterbase needs to be. Transfer that measurement to the spade, just off the bit, marking a line with a felt tip marker. Then line up the key, know when to stop the drill so that the counterbase doesn't end up becoming a through hole.

To make the counterbore, position the bit a center point at the inside end of the hole in the drawer box. Hold the bit square to the box side and begin boring. Stop when the line marked on the bit lines up with the back side of the drawer box. Now you have your counterbore, and those ice-cream screws can do their job. ■



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STUDYING THE EFFECTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD

Bigger Buttons

"My friends all hate their cell phones... I love mine!"

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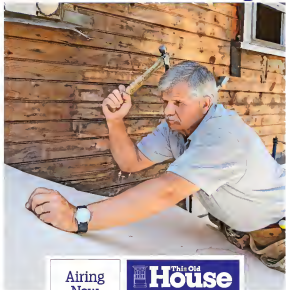
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SET IN A WELL-PRESERVED 19TH-CENTURY RESORT VILLAGE, A ONCE WORN-OUT LITTLE HOUSE BECOMES A SOULFUL SECOND HOME

by David Masello • photographs by Erienne Williams
produced by Nicole Esposito-Polly • styling by Andrea Caughey

A CENTURY AGO A SEAMSTRESS LIVED AND WORKED HERE hemming dresses and sewing drapery in one of the front bedrooms. Today, a pair of lifelong friends share this restored circa-1917 cottage, set on the periphery of the carefully preserved village of Pearlmont, North Carolina. The town was laid out in the 1890s as a planned resort community, and good homes passed and small still line its picturesque curving streets, as well as more modest dwellings, such as this one. "One part of the village was for the resort workers, with horse stables, blacksmith shops, and single homes where employees lived and worked, like this one," says Marilyn Barrett of the house she and Catherine Yehdyak own and share.

ABOVE: Restored columns and red brick line dress up the rear porch; a broken window marks where a second story had been. The house's interiors are true to the style, and hardwoods are original.

OPPOSITE: The roof structure was exposed, adding lots of character and insulation installed on top of the original sheathing to maximize heating/cooling. Paint (white) Pittsburgh People's Choice® paint.





Because the cottage had been used as a live-work space, where possessions were stored and goods stored, it had devolved into what Cindy, a Chicago-based lawyer who spends about three months a year there, calls "a patchwork of rooms." Floorboards in some rooms ran north to south and in others east to west, and the closets enclosed spaces in the bedrooms, screened porches had been tacked on here and there, and low ceilings darkened the interior. Together with architect Christine Davidson, a kind to renovate and conserve the house, the two women agreed that the inside needed to be opened to the outside.

"I didn't even start drawing my plans until the interior had been fully demolished," Davidson says. "It makes my life as an architect so much easier if I can see completely and exactly what I'm up against right from the start."

Upgraded plumbing, wiring, insulation, and windows were given. The original floors were salvaged in all but a couple of places. But the decision with the most dramatic result was to remove the ceilings, except for a soffit over the two bedrooms, which became the floor of a sleeping loft. Doing this revealed the underside of the steeply pitched roof, with its original rafters and 2x6 roof decking. To increase the feeling of openness in the little house, Davidson raised the ceiling collar on the little house. "After

consulting with the structural engineers," she says, "we shifted them up for even greater effect."

"The exposed roof structure and vaulted ceilings are among the fine things that drew people into our house," says Maryna. "The roofline raises your eye upward as soon as you come inside and makes the small, looped-in feel much bigger."

The roof had been leaking, badly, and for some time. The contractor on the job, Ron Davidson, an avid snow skier, while replacing damaged sections of sheathing and adding boards as needed to reinforce the structure, he rubbed coffee grounds on the new wood to help it blend in with the old.

To enable the clean exposure within, Davidson and Davidson collaborated to add needed insulation on the outside of the roof structure. Self-adhesive

ROOFING INSULATION Maryna Barnett (left) and Catherine Davidson (right) and their dog, Scarlett, in one of the property's back-porch paths.

RIGHT: In the kitchen, a farmhouse-style sink sits on a rustic support in a curved shutter. Out to the east, a small balcony connects the storage space below.

RIGHT: The wall between the kitchen and the living area has been a continuous wall. In the living area, the storage space below the vintage work lights operate as a display.



All the exterior doors are painted red, including the one in the living area. A small, red-painted wooden porch is a welcome touch. A small, red-painted wooden porch is a welcome touch. A small, red-painted wooden porch is a welcome touch.

the plan

The two bedrooms stayed in place. But elsewhere walls came down to allow for open living and kitchen, dining spaces. The half bath was added, and the master bath enlarged. The sitting room is new.



were grafted onto the new down directly on the existing roof deck, two 4-inch layers of rigid foam were tacked on top, then plywood sheathing was screwed down before being covered with standard underlayment and shingles. Wide 3x12 fascia boards along the gables and eaves, with 4-inch trim along the top, finish the edges of the leak-up roof.

The effect made it such that some visitors think the house is suited only for summertime use, as it appears unseasoned, though the cottage functions as a year-round retreat. While the exterior is largely intact, with the addition of a sitting room that turns the former kitchen pad into a no-man's-land, the interior layout is nearly new. In devising it, Dandensen chose to use her favorite material: sunlight. "One of my obsessions is to bring in as much light as I can. I'm always looking for ways to foster views outside. This simple strategy makes a small house feel much more spacious." Skylights in the kitchen and in the hall also bring in light and air—but only on the sun-facing portion of the roof, in keeping with preservation rules inside the village's historic district.

The front entry remains where it has always been, but a new makes an architectural statement from the street. Parents the renovation, custom-crafted inside the house via two doors from a screened entry porch—one door led into the house, the other to the former owner's workshop. Dandensen is closed up most of the latter opening, slipping in a constant window, now above the bed in the master bedroom.

With exterior walls reduced in number and reconfigured and doors removed, the owners knew the new layout to an oval track. "Now you walk in and can go straight back to the kitchen or into the new sitting room, from which you can access the two bedrooms, which remain private," Marilyn says. "The entry of the house now flows in a circular pattern, where it once felt like a maze."

While most of the original heart pine floors were intact, some needed replacing. "The floor in the bathroom was rotted, and when we grafted it out we



TOP RIGHT: The sitting room addition to the kitchen is lit with windows to fill the interior with natural light. The wood for the new ceiling was rubbed with olive grounds to give it a warm, rustic, and rustic feel. An oval coffee table serves as a coffee table.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Marilyn has set a rustic writing studio in a former shed, lit with natural light and windows. The space is composed of the main house's heart pine floor and a heart of heart pine floor, with heart pine beams hanging on the walls overhead.



ABOVE: A left sleeping area large enough to hold two beds sits above the only portion of existing bedroom not removed. The entrance to the original bedroom is now. It is accessed via a ladder and serves as storage space as well as a guest quarters.

needed to fill in," Dandensen says. "Normally in an old house like this, you can fill over the existing wood floor, but in the case it was too far gone."

To patch an area between the living room and kitchen, Carly took her sister Kate up on her offer of salvaged oak flooring stored in her Chicago garage, loading the boards in her truck and driving them to Parkhurst. "Then we put on dust masks and started nailing them down to align with the existing floors," Marilyn says. "No matter that they're not a perfect match. 'We like the patchwork quality of the different woods and shades,'" says Carly, "since they represent the different ages of the house."

Because she's able to spend seven months a year at the cottage, Marilyn, a retired advertising and marketing writer who's at work on a book, wanted to turn an existing shed on the property into a writing retreat. What had originally been a detritus wood shed building is now filled with natural light

streaming through four windows salvaged from the house during the renovation. Relocated as it's just steps from the main house, the shed shares the same view of the driveway and ocean from the porch.

With the 1,100-square-foot cottage complete, the women agree that they more than accomplished their goal. "After the work was finished, one of the original owner's descendants came inside and put her into tears," Marilyn says. "She saw that we'd put her back into the house. Her response validated her in everything we felt about our work here and justified the time and money we put into it."

But even as the women live of preserving the cottage, they're just as thrilled to call it home. "When I work in, I feel like I can catch all the bad stuff in the world," Marilyn says. She likes the house to be the Spanish apartment. "It refers to a place you keep returning to, where you feel the most comfortable at life. For me, this is that place." ■

PRACTICAL MAGIC

A COUPLE OF PLANT PROS COAX A PATCH OF BARE SOIL INTO A SERIES OF GARDENS BRIMMING WITH BLOOMS—A FEW EVEN FIT FOR A PIXIE

BY NINA MALKIN
PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK LEHMAN
PRODUCED BY NICOLE ESPINOZA-POLLY
STYLING BY SUNDY HENDRICKSON

ONCE UPON A TIME, a young couple gazed out upon their property and saw... nothing, almost nothing. Indeed, when Dan and Kathie Wicksen bought their newly built Craftsman-style home in Rancho Santa Margarita, California, it sat on an empty lot of stony clay loam. Yet today that 7,000-square-foot trapezoid is a woodland, one without five-star vineyard prices to its side. "Um, is this a log cabin?" often followed by "What's in there?" At which Dan and Kathie gaze at each other and reply that it's a storage shed, despite the upstart little structure's appeal as a potential home for woodland gnomes.

While their yard unfolds in plot after fanciful garden plot, magic has never been slow. Rather, it's the result of 30 years' planning, plotting, digging, and building, as well as an owner's serious horticulture chops. Dan, an agricultural contractor, tree/fir/shrub all manner of grower's problems, from party blooms to native perennials,

The north garden shed (K) is tucked between an arbutus and a ficus, with a good feeder post closest to creeping fig vine in front. The porch nocker was salvaged from a neighbor's house and turned into a planter.





Karloe has been gardening since childhood. "My parents gave me a choice: Wood or dirt or the furnace," she says. "Guess which one I picked?" She became a nursery professional and floral designer, working in garden centers and doing wedding flowers on the side. To this pair of green thumbs, "A black slug means not having to tend someone else's garden," Karloe says.

Having moved from a manse home on a spick of land, the Wickhams were eager to make the large space count alive. Then married nine years, with a 4-year-old daughter, Jessica, they envisioned a garden that would grow with their family and feature multiple planting areas radiating from the house. The plan was to reflect the local landscape while giving it their own quirky spin. As Karloe puts it, "We've both Southern California natives and except for those palm trees you see everywhere, we like many of the plants found here. We just didn't want a cookie-cutter garden."

No worries there. The duo considered different zones, with succulents, ferns, and variegated agaves on the shady north side, blue mess on the sunny

south and east sides, and flowers, flowers everywhere—in rock-rimmed beds, in traditional pots, and in an assortment of innovative planters. First, however, "we had to figure out how to work with what we got," says Dan. "The lot was flat, so elevations changes weren't plausible. Not while the rocky aggregate soil would be difficult to dig, from an ergonomic standpoint it was pretty good."

So the Wickhams got down to come an array planting. For groundcover, they chose a mix of baby's tears, pink clover, ornamental snowberry, and a variety of sedums, such as *Hebe* and *Hebe* full fronds. Trees include a weeping paperbark (*Ulmus laevis*), a weeping hornbeam (*Euonymus alatus*), and a weeping hornbeam for the bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds they beckon for shade, they selected traditional hedges, planting a low-lying bamboo and *Banksia* trees, "a common houseplant that's more interesting in a garden as an multiple trunks and sweeping form take shape," Dan says.

When it came to leaping in flowers, the Wickhams limited their annuals to under 10 percent, but they count on a lot. "We have perennials that

bloom every year, but the annuals we did really give the yard a punch," Karloe says. "We just buy many pinks that fill in quickly for great color."

She makes it sound easy. "With full-time jobs, children, yadda yadda yadda, it was a challenge to get out in the yard," Karloe admits. The duo was a home remodeler, including the addition of a second floor bedroom and deck over their patio. To satisfy earthquake code, they had to sink long metal supports deep into the ground, then were boxed out and mounded before Dan clad them with a series of boulders.

But they did find time to garden, and the typically lovely SoCal weather worked in their favor—for the most part. "We lost a weeping willow to the Santa Ana winds in 1999, planned another in the same spot, and lost it the same way, seven years later," Karloe says. Now they know that watering deeply will encourage the tree's typically shallow roots to delve deeper, and they took No. 3 every year in early fall to thin out its canopy.

The Wickhams's sheltered yard with the drought-tolerant plants the region for much of the last several

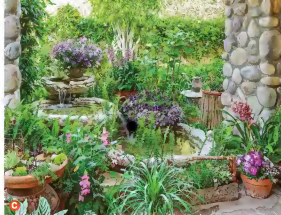


PHOTOGRAPH BY JESSICA



THE PLAN

Cedar fencing borders the trapezoid-shaped lot and DIRT cobblestone paths connect the various planting zones. Curved beds lined with boulders and a log-cubed storage shed add to the rustic feel.



OPPOSITE: Kathie uses sandstone, leather, and other garden elements that she says "are so popular they'll go fast!" The secret to her plants that will stay small, she says, is the Scotch moss, Irish moss, and ficus grass in display in the four gardens here. Large succulents make these gardens look like a desert, says Kathie, who suggests adding objects with personal meaning.

ABOVE: The garden (C) recalls the three F's: Fountains, Flowers, and Ficus. Kathie's first house, including such details as a fireplace, is a nod to the garden.

years, trading sprinklers and bubblers for a drip irrigation system to conserve water.

The division of labor has always been equal. "We work together, with me doing most of the heavy lifting and Kathie most of the design," Dan says, though Kathie counters, "Dan does more design than he's admitting to. But I do love the colorful, creative stuff—the containers and moss gardens—and I make the miniature gardens every year."

Walk through the Wickham's yard and you'll find the little charmers tucked in here and there. Kathie made her first one about a decade ago, and it was such a hit on the charity garden tour the Wickhams take part in each spring, she's now peddling two right to 10 a year now.

While each miniature has become steadily re-created—marked as fairy gardens, with the makings sold at yard—Kathie assembles hers from scratch, inspired by things she and Dan enjoy together. "We've owned old lighthouses on vacation—most recently the one in San Simeon, near Pismo Beach—so we've got a lighthouse garden," she says. "And I

always do one with a toy truck, since we love to camp, taking our full-size Airstream up to the red woods or out to the beach."

Their freedom for the great outdoors is apparent in their own little slice of nature. "We live in a tract house we've hidden from the neighbors with foliage, and right beyond our back wall is a wilderness park—all tall pines and no buildings—so it gives the illusion of living in the woods," Kathie says. So that fog cabin actually makes perfect sense! "It does to us," Kathie says, chuckling. "The house was built to look like an Arts and Crafts-style bungalow and our style is pretty rustic, with lots of wood, sort of lodge chic, so it fits."

The Wickhams built the 12 by 4-foot storage shed built on the southwest corner of the property, added on the porch themselves, and devoted the site to gardening supplies. The shed replaced an old gazebo—and that's not the only change the yard has undergone in three decades. They got in a vegetable garden, then had to fence it off after adopting two desert raccoons, Weenie and Little Gail. "There's no



in such vegetation here, we don't have to feed them," Kathie says. "But Mama, he's about 13 inches long, he'll grow himself an apple, and it will be huge!"

The couple's new garden is children's Eden. Son Nolan was born seven years after James also had an official Eden's revolution. Their daughter's obsession with the fairy tale books is, for instance. "We have a passion vine that attracts them," Kathie says, "and when James was little, she loved watching the caterpillars eat that vine down to the roots. We periodically let them decorate the plant!"

The worst phase ended, and when the young Wickham started taking their own wings, their play sets and wading pools went the way of all things. "That's when the yard really came into its own," Dan says.

Today, a cornucopia keeps the couple busy. "Up keep is never-ending," Kathie says. "There's always something to prune (like roses in January), man back plants that have died an August heat wave, and replace (and with perennials, in with perennials). And did I mention weeding?"

So R, they have acres (and enthusiasm) for their

garden, and it's not all toil. The Wickhams embrace outdoors after—both back and beyond. "We've had a friend's wedding and a 21st anniversary party here," Kathie says. "Only a few plants struggled and some really great memories." And if an actual bee falls are present, there are plenty of beds—among them morning glories, verbena, cosmos, fuchsias, and the occasional Cooper's truck.

Now, while they look forward to the day when their first grandbaby, Michael, born in November, can explore their creative accomplishments, the Wickhams savor their outside. Dan has a favorite spot under the fig tree, while Kathie prefers pulling up a chair on the patio and gazing out at the greenery. "The garden has really filled in over the years," she says. "It looks better than ever now."

"We've created a peaceful, quiet space away from urban Orange County," Dan says. "We don't mind the real world, but we do enjoy the isolation of our garden, and that's great satisfaction in having created it ourselves."

Talk about a happily-ever-after story—nobody else needed. ■

ADJACENT LEFT: The vegetable garden (D) is fenced in so the couple's cat (Mama) can't bother the plants. (E) is a garden for the couple's son Nolan, who is a fan of the fairy tale books.

ADJACENT RIGHT: Kathie and Dan's garden is a peaceful, quiet space away from urban Orange County. (F) is a garden for the couple's son Nolan, who is a fan of the fairy tale books.



Grown-up Getaway

Two empty nesters turn their vacation retreat into a year-round magnet for friends and family

By Deborah Baldwin
Photographs by Mark Lohman
Produced by Nicole Esposito-Polly
Styling by Sunday Hendrickson

Since when is an empty nest really empty? Cast an eye around and you are likely to hear stories about how all these interesting things came to be there, from the dresser handed down by Great-Grandma Susan to the painting the homeowners purchased in Paris, back when they couldn't rub two UKAs together. These nests aren't empty—they are crisscrossed with associations.

Now what if you paint the same couple with a second nest, one they can renovate and furnish from scratch? Then you get a fresh idea of what matters, because people who have lived out different settings over time have a pretty sharp sense of what will

work. At the top of the homeowners' wish list was a retro-style fridge in a bright blue, along with a side-spin and vintage-style toasters like we're cooking. (Some paintable floor plates and a used-and-ran provide the discrete space to gather. Coffered ceilings add a feeling of loftiness; the design built from borrowed dead space in the attic to make the peaked eadline. Painted walls. Open shelves. A vintage beach. An open-air view. Minimalist. Caring for. Charming. Seaside. Aesthetically. Hardware. Coffee table. Lovers' Furniture.





leveled broadband users—"a simple concept that added a lot of detail," Jacobs-Bennett says.

Before getting to that point, his crew pretty much crapped down the house to its listing. "The timbers were in perfect shape," says Jacobs-Bennett. "There was a lot of life left, even though it's a stone's throw from the ocean." For one, "Douglas fir, which

Still, one wall got bumped out 4 feet to accommodate a sliding glass door system opening onto a side courtyard. And here's where the owner required a second burst of financing. To save living space and crossed sight lines, the team chose floor-to-ceiling panels in planks for both the interior and the entrance canopy. "To have seamless life, the entire floor-to-

ABOVE LEFT: A leggy
cousin-in-law adds vintage
flair to a new powder room
tucked behind the dining
room. (Photo by)
Down Edwards & Mount
Sterling Salt Preservation.
Faint: Newport Brass
Salt Water Mirror
sources. Jewel Box
and glass shelf. Puttery
Ellen. Clear knob. Ornela
Inc. Cabinet.

ing to be raised above the level of the foundation," Jacobs-Bennett explains. "That's supposed to be a no-no in the building world because you want the foundation to be higher so water can't get in."

His crew solved the problem by wrapping the foundation with a metal barrier and sloping the interior slabs ever so slightly, allowing the race Coreslade downriver into a perimeter channel down.

Inside, along with building a new kitchen and powder room, he even added the master and shared baths. The house may have been no grandiose, but in the end the only unsatisfied item, Jacobs-Sorensen says, was the client's.

After joining the horn cowboys in hot pursuit of the confederate—cavaliers, since—Thurs fastened



LIFT Living space extends to a side courtyard with porcelain floor planks and a small outdoor kitchen (not shown). A cedar wall encloses the courtyard and contributes to its identity as a bonus room. The surface is a reminder of the beach nearby—as if they needed one. Outdoor furniture, Janinet De French-door systems
Sara Pacific Windows

the vintage look, with a kitchen island whose fat turned legs suggest a farmhouse table. The dining room has a curved wooden bench behind a glass-fronted island with a wooden top and a wooden base. The island has a wooden top and a wooden base. The island has a wooden top and a wooden base.

"We searched for things that felt old but had all the perks of new," Sharp says. "So, for instance, the cushions have nice soft-close hinges inside and beautiful suitcase hinges just there for the look." The point where balusters warm-and-cool, with suggestions of a sandy beach on a rainy day.

Nine months after the work began, there were 14

Mike says he and Nancy couldn't be happier. "We love to sit on the back porch," he says, "and when we have guests we move into the courtyard." He adds, "You can sit there and see the game on the TV in the living room, at all kind of times together."

But if there's one thing that makes the couple happiest it's the grassy old-fashioned way the house now greets guests and passersby alike. "The first thing I do is open the Dutch door and put the flag out," Mike says of their constant ritual. "It's just a lovely place—or makes us feel so proud."

As for this year's garden competition, you won't be surprised to hear that the little ranch with the charming front porch did pretty well: First Place and a blue ribbon for best on the block. ■

READ
THIS
BEFORE
YOU

INSTALL CENTRAL AC

Sweltering through another summer parked in front of a window AC unit? Here's what you need to know before investing in a whole-house system

BY THOMAS BAKER, ILLUSTRATIONS BY LARRY POPE

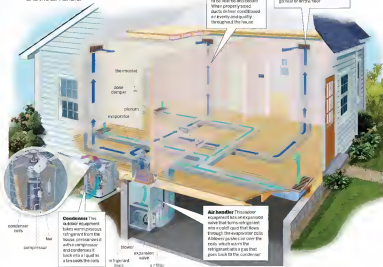
More than any other technology, air conditioning has transformed how we live and work—and where we live and work. Yet as recently as 1993, only 64 percent of houses in the United States had some cooling equipment, either window air conditioners or central AC systems. Now, more than 87 percent of houses are so equipped. While the number with window AC units has shrunk overall, these appliances are still cooling significant numbers of homes, particularly in the Northeast, despite being noisy and obtrusive, and having limited efficiency and cooling capacity. Not to mention the two-yearly struggle of putting them in and taking them out.

By comparison, central AC is a game changer in convenience, quietness, and, most of all, comfort. Properly sized and installed, a split system—one with indoor and outdoor equipment—can keep an entire house nicely chilled on the hottest days, and do so far more efficiently than a battalion of window units.

On the following pages, we walk you through the factors that affect how these systems function. So whether you're planning to drop in a window AC and install central air from scratch, or you're retrofitting an HVAC upgrade, you'll find loads of useful information to help you make smart decisions.

How it works

Simply put, split cooling systems pull heat out of a house with refrigerant that circulates between the condenser and the air handler.



The basics

Answers to frequently asked questions

WHO

DOES THE INSTALL?

You need a pro familiar with these complicated systems. Get quotes from at least three local HVAC contractors with good reputations and stellar online reviews. The company you choose could very well be maintaining your system for years to come. Affiliation with the Air Conditioning Contractors of America is a plus, an ACCA certificate in residential HVAC design is even better. Also make sure you're satisfied with the equipment a contractor sells; most have affiliations with particular manufacturers.

WHAT

DOES IT COST?

Many variables affect the system price, including the local climate, existing insulation, labor costs, and equipment size and efficiency. Here's a rough estimate of the cost to upgrade a 3-ton residential system in Des Moines, IA, to one with an Energy Star certification and a SEER 15 efficiency rating: \$5,000 including installation.

HOW

LONG DOES IT LAST?

Typical equipment warranties last for 10 years. If properly maintained, these systems should function for about 15 years before needing replacement.

WHEN

IS IT TIME TO REPLACE?

If a system is about 10 years old when an expensive component, like an evaporator coil or a compressor, fails, it's probably time for new equipment indoors and out. Replacing one but not the other will likely hobble system performance.

BETTER EFFICIENCY & GREATER COMFORT

Recent advances in compressor- and blower-motor technology have achieved unprecedented improvements in whole-house comfort.

ECM blower

A blower with an electronically commutated motor (ECM) gradually ramps up to speed, reducing strain on the motor and consuming less power. In zoned systems, it also back-airs flow to eliminate warmers about frozen coils or a buildup of static pressure in the ducts. When paired with an inverter-controlled compressor (below), it helps to smooth out temperature fluctuations and reduce humidity.

Inverter-controlled compressor

Not so long ago, all AC compressors operated at one speed, no matter how much cooling was needed. The result: high operating costs, big temperature swings, and clammy indoor air due to poor humidity control. Two-speed compressors did a better job, but the real performance breakthrough came with the arrival of the inverter-controlled compressor, which varies its speed to meet the changing demand for cooling. The temperature stays closer to the thermostat setting, and the system brings more humidity out of the air.



COLD + HEAT

Despite its name, a heat pump is able to cool houses as well as warm them up. The equipment looks like a straight AC system and works the same way in summer. In winter, the refrigerant flow reverses and carries heat indoors. Heat pumps are best suited to climates with both summers and cold (not frigid) winters. Highly efficient, they can slash annual heating and cooling costs dramatically.



Potential yearly savings:
UP TO 50%

The secret of heat pump efficiency is a reversing valve, which changes the direction of refrigerant flow with the seasons.

KNOW THE LINGO

SEER

The Seasonal Energy Efficiency ratio indicates how much a system converts electricity (watts) into cooling (Btu) during a typical cooling season. The higher the number, the better the efficiency. New units sold since 2006 have a minimum SEER of 13, or 13 Btu/Watt-hr. Currently, the top SEER for a split system is 26.



EER

The Energy Efficiency Ratio is the amount of cooling a system delivers for each watt of power it uses. In hot, dry climates, 12.2 is the minimum SEER for units of 3 tons or smaller.

Energy Star

Indicates equipment with a SEER rating of 15 or higher. The designation is an incentive for a system to qualify for tax and utility rebates.

Tons

Measures a system's cooling capacity: the number of British thermal units (BTU) it takes a ton of water melting in a day. Most residential units are rated for 3 tons.

MERV

The Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value rates how effectively a filter captures dust, pollen, and other particles. The higher the number, the more airborne particles a filter can remove.

In the zone

Zoned systems channel cool air to individual rooms and floors, offering greater comfort and efficiency than a single-zone system can deliver.



IN MOST HOMES, one thermostat controls the temperature everywhere in the house. But such single-zone systems, as they're called, can't respond if different rooms are heating hot, freezing cold, or not occupied. These problems arise because by creating separate zones in which additional thermostats work with mechanical dampers to direct air where it's needed most. Doing right zoning provides uniform cooled rooms by room (comfort) and can reduce electricity bills by as much as 30 percent. Doing wrong, it can lead to whiffing neighbors, frozen evaporator coils, shorter equipment life, and higher electricity use. Using specialized pieces of equipment like the ones below helps to avoid those problems.



In-duct damper Or combined from a thermostat, a motor opens and closes a metal flap—fully or partway—to control how much air goes into a zone. A central hub monitors airflow throughout the system to prevent a buildup of static pressure, stale air, or leaks.



In-room retrofit The battery-powered register opens and closes in response to a smartphone-enabled sensor that set the temperature in each room. The sensors and registers work together to maintain optimum room air flow. www.zonesystems.com

GET SMART ABOUT THERMOSTATS

These little control modules play a crucial role in ensuring that HVAC equipment performs at its best.



(NOT SO) SMART Programmable thermostats automatically turn the temperature up or down at preset times. Setbacks of 10 degrees for 8 hours can save savings of up to 10 percent. Good for households with predictable schedules, but many people don't bother programming them anyway. Shown: Ecobee3 (\$100, \$499) www.ecobee.com



SMART Thanks to energy rebates and growing features that track air savings and justify them, smart thermostats are becoming a must-have. They're smart enough to automatically saving up to 20 percent when cooling. They're smart enough to let you monitor and adjust them remotely. Shown: Nest Learning Thermostat (\$139) www.nest.com



ULTRASMART They have many of the features of smart thermostats, but these proprietary devices also communicate with accompanying equipment to maximize humidity, remove air quality, and improve efficiency. Links that run at the millisecond level can't be faked. Shown: UltraSmart (\$199) www.ultrasmart.com

NEED NEW DUCTS?

Adding AC to a house that already has ducts is relatively straightforward. But when you need new ducts, you have three types to choose from.

**GOOD: DUCT BOARD**

These 10-foot-long, foil-wrapped fiberglass panels are cut, fitted and taped to form four-sided ducts.

PROS Needs no added insulation. Lightweight and doesn't sag. Quiet.

CONS Requires an interior liner to stop bits of fiberglass from coming loose during cleaning, or air filters break down. Even so, the liners trap dust and allow microbes and moisture into the fiberglass. Costs more than flex duct. MMA than sheet metal.

**BETTER: FLEX DUCT**

The big version of a dryer duct has a vinyl elast supported by a spiral wire. Available in 25-foot lengths.

PROS Denser and stiffer. Comes insulated up to R-8. The only joints are at the ends, so installation is fast. Connectors are made with zip ties and duct solvent. Inexpensive.

CONS Kinks and sags easily, blocking off airflow if not installed properly. Thermostat made by the wire slow and draft airflow. Ducts should be confined to 10 feet or less.

**BEST: SHEET METAL**

Galvanized steel, bent and fastened into its final shape, is the gold standard of ducting. Comes in 5-foot lengths.

PROS Its smooth, rigid walls won't sag and don't interfere with airflow. Will last as long as the house remains standing. Easy to clean.

CONS A good installation depends on skilled sheet metal workers, who are in short supply. All runs have to be wrapped in insulation to minimize condensation and heat gain. Expensive.

INSTALLATION ISSUES

Leaking ducts, or ones in the wrong place, rob you of comfort, clean air and optimal system performance.



An average house loses 25 percent of its conditioned air through duct leaks. Take these steps to get rid of them.

1. Pressure-test Hire an HVAC technician to blank a pressure-managing blower to your ducts. The blower can locate the point where the leaks are.

2. Seal Apply a thick coat of mastic over the joint. (It'll reemulate a duct with fiberglass mesh tape. Foil-backed butyl tape is a less messy option.) (Despite its name, duct tape should never be used on ducts.) For hard-to-reach leaks, there's a remote (on a cord). This tool shoots blow a polymer sealant into the ducts; the polymer clogs around small gaps and holes, plugging the trap.

3. Test again A leakage rate of 10 percent is acceptable. If higher than that, go back to Step 1.

PRO ADVICE
Keep 'em inside

"When ducts run through an uninsulated attic or crawl space, all that expensive conditioned air inside their network up and the likelihood of condensation collecting on the duct walls after vents." —Richard Trethewey



Retrofit options

Snaking big ducts into a house that doesn't have them can be a mess. Here are two ways to minimize the disruption.



MINI DUCTS

Flexible, 3/4-inch-diameter tubes slip easily through stud and/or joist bays, delivering high-velocity air through undisturbed 2-inch openings. The spiral air handler that generates this high-velocity air dehumidifies and mass rooms as effectively there's no need for return ducts in every room: a single centrally located return is sufficient. Yet the system can't be zoned. amcsystems.com



DUCTLESS

There's no central air handler with these systems (also known as mini splits). Instead, refrigerant travels from an outdoor unit through bundles of skinny tubing to an indoor room unit, like the one above. Each unit has an air filter, a condenser coil and a fan. Split systems can be zoned. Some have SEER ratings as high as 21. airductless.com

CLEAN AIR AS IT'S COOLED

Inefficient filters won't catch much, but too high an efficiency can choke airflow and strain the blower. If you upgrade, make sure the new one is system-compatible.



► 5-INCH FILTER Standard fiberglass filters stop little more than dust bunnies. Filters with pleated fabric, left, do a better job: up to MERV 13. Replace every three to six weeks. PAF-31, perfolairfilter.com



► DEEP-PLEATED MEDIA FILTER Ranging from 4 to 5 inches thick, they have MERV ratings from 8 to 16. They prefer surface area and release more air to pass and reduce replacement frequency. Looking to meet the ASHRAE 62.2-2006 hvacsystems.com



► ELECTRONIC AIR CLEANER They give particles an electrical charge, then trap them on a plate with the opposite charge. Just vacuum around the plate twice a year. This one's made of stainless steel, a long-smell. Look for ones below the RCA condenser-coil-cleaning at 50 cents per filter. Shaw's CleanTech.com



► PHOTOCATALYTIC AIR CLEANER A deep-pleated media filter captures particles, while a UV light shining on a titanium-dioxide-coated plate kills mold, viruses, and bacteria and VOCs. Replace both the filter and light once a year. Shaw's CleanTech.com



Maintenance check

To get optimal AC performance and longevity, have an HVAC technician inspect the following once a year.

- Refrigerant lines** A pressure test will indicate whether more refrigerant needs to be added. If so, it means there's a leak, which will have to be plugged first.
- Condensate pan and drain** They have to be cleaned and blown out to prevent clogs and spills.
- Condenser** To ensure enough airflow to cool the coils the fins should be vacuumed and shrubs or trees closer than 3 feet away should be trimmed back. ■

FILM/VIDEO 2017

PHOTOGRAPH VIDEO Adding a greenhouse is a good idea. (4) Thanks to Tim Fordem, Brian Architects, New York. E-mail: brian@brianarchitects.com.

[illegible]

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