

This Old House

Saving History

**Our first look at
the Charleston
project**



Paint like a pro
Great garden sheds
DIY home office
Tips for a lush lawn
Neat and tidy closet storage

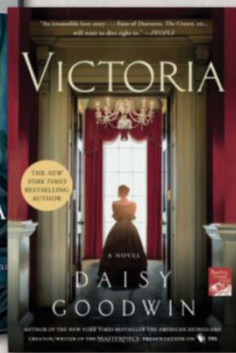
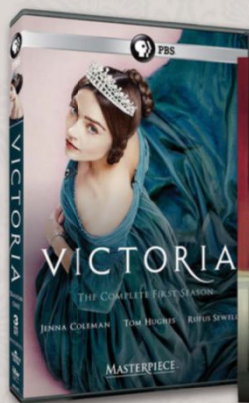
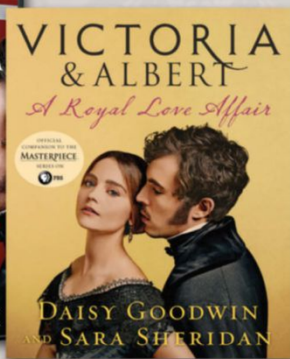


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PHOTO: ELLEN McDERMOTT



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*Based on a 10'x10' kitchen

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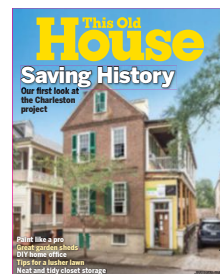


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KITCHEN

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Cover Photograph by
KATE THORNTON



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A saga of quirky closet space

I was going to give you all some time off from my ongoing series of old-house horror stories. But there I was, standing at the wall where we hang up all the layouts for the issue, and my eye settled on...“Closet Envy” (page 54). The descriptions undid me. “Walk-In” closet, “Dressing Room” closet, “Double Reach-In” closet. And I just can’t help going there.

Like many old houses, my late-Federal townhouse in lower Manhattan had very few closets. Other than the pantry between the kitchen and the dining room, there were five—one of which was a coat closet, and another a linen closet. That left three places on four stories to put clothing—prompting my husband to observe that in 1842, people must not have shopped very much.

Since I had a job that required me to dress up for work, while my husband’s style is a little more, um, casual, I claimed the decently sized closet in the bedroom and left him the dinky one. I heard a lot about this over the next 18 years.

If you were honestly describing our house, you would probably headline those five closets this way: “Two-Coats-Deep Foyer Closet.” “Home-Office/Linen-and-Media-Center Closet.” “Home-Office/Out-of-Season-Clothes Storage Closet.” “Step-In Bedroom Closet” (mine) and “Reach-In-and-Hope Single-Wide Closet” (his).

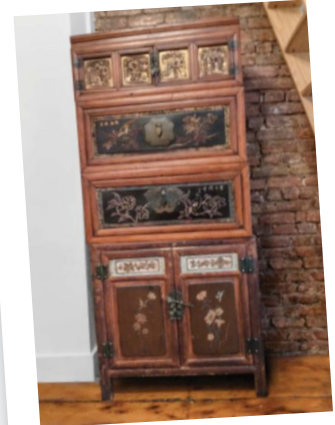
Somehow, as we all do in old houses, we made it work. We bought a four-part Chinese chest on eBay that we picked up in somebody’s garage in Flushing, Queens. We found an antique maple-veneer dresser and added it to an old cedar-log chest for more in-room storage.

And when we moved, my husband got to, as the women’s magazines say, shop his closet. He hadn’t seen some of that stuff for years.

In our new house, which is only 28 years younger than our old house, we share an actual walk-in closet. I gave him the bigger, more generous side. It was the least I could do.



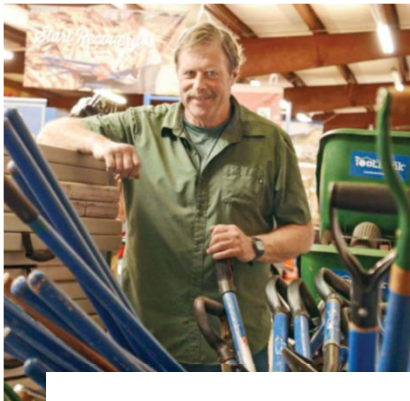
SUSAN WYLAND,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
susan@thisoldhouse.com



The four-section Chinese chest we bought on eBay and picked up in Flushing. I'm kind of sorry I gave it away when we moved.

Houston After Harvey

In a special episode, we highlight the cleanup efforts of four extraordinary nonprofits



PHOTOS: COLLEEN McQUAID

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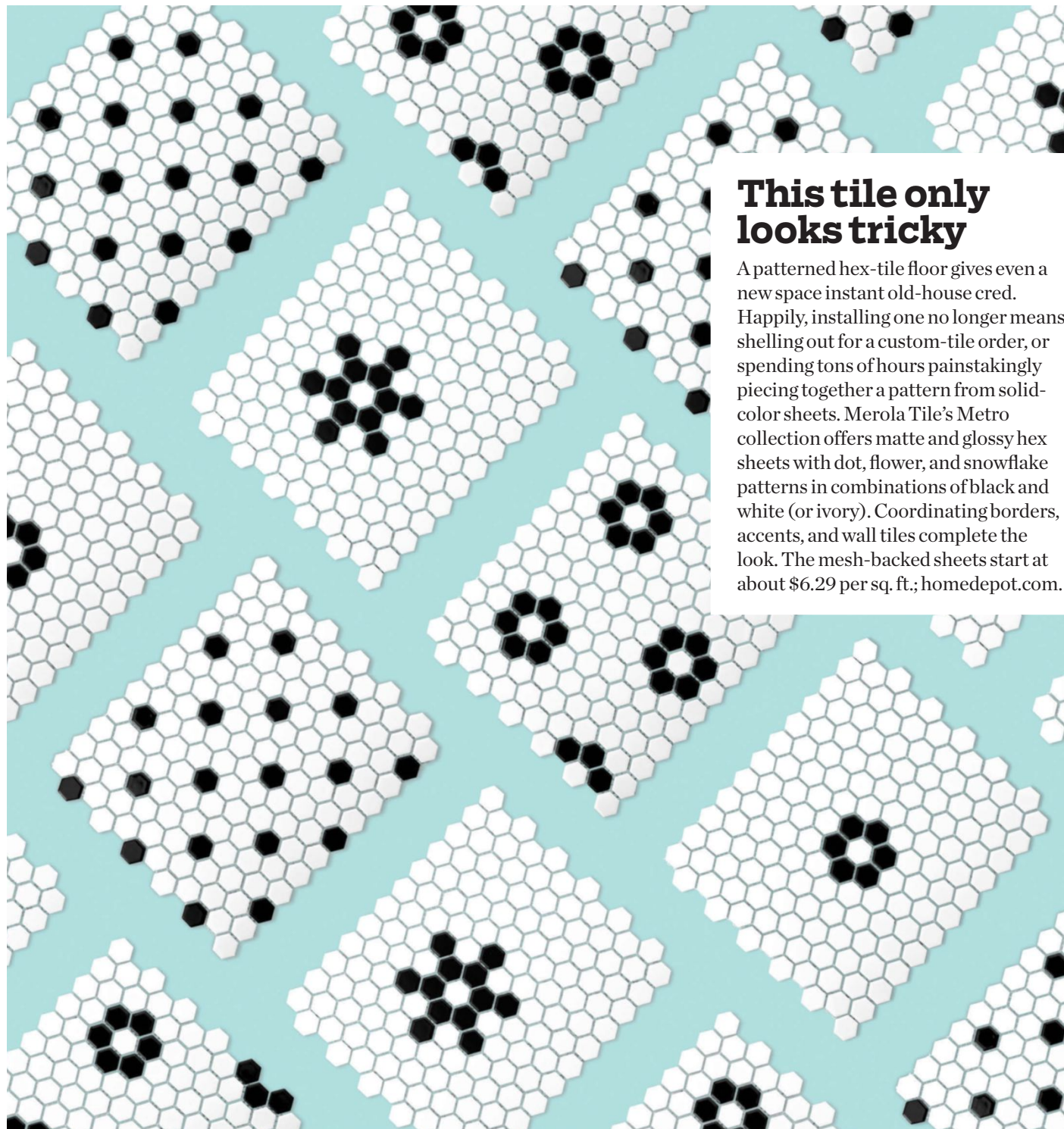
TOOL REFRESH

APPLIANCE SAFETY

MORE

This tile only looks tricky

A patterned hex-tile floor gives even a new space instant old-house cred. Happily, installing one no longer means shelling out for a custom-tile order, or spending tons of hours painstakingly piecing together a pattern from solid-color sheets. Merola Tile's Metro collection offers matte and glossy hex sheets with dot, flower, and snowflake patterns in combinations of black and white (or ivory). Coordinating borders, accents, and wall tiles complete the look. The mesh-backed sheets start at about \$6.29 per sq. ft.; homedepot.com.



Go big with container plants

On a lot that has more hardscape than planting space, container gardening is one way to indulge your green thumb. In fact, you can grow seriously sizable plants in pots—even trees. Here, three surprisingly XL options that take to an XS footprint.



FLOWERING Repeat-blooming shrubs provide maximum color while minimizing downtime. “Reblooming hydrangea can give you flowers from early summer through fall,” says Ryan McEnaney of Bailey Nurseries. These can be fast growers, though: Repot every year or two to ensure the root ball doesn’t outgrow its home. **PRO PICK:** *Endless Summer BloomStruck Hydrangea* (shown), \$25 for 2-quart pot; waysidegardens.com

EDIBLE “Plants instinctively try to keep their canopy about the same size as their root ball,” says Kate Karam of Monrovia. Many trees will grow comfortably—though more slowly—in containers for years. When water runs right out of the drainage hole, it’s time to upsize the pot or plant the tree in the ground. **PRO PICK:** *Nature Hills Nursery Gala Apple*, \$64 for 4- to 5-foot sapling; naturehills.com

EVERGREEN Conifers that are naturally slow growing readily take to containers, where they can stay for the long haul with consistent watering. But pots don’t protect against weather extremes as well as in-ground planting, so give them a sheltered spot in extreme heat and cold. **PRO PICK:** *Monrovia Dwarf Mugo Pine*, \$55 for 1.6-gallon pot; shop.monrovia.com —K.W.



Kitchen duty made easier

Amid the craze for gadgets that turn vegetables into ribbons and noodles, let’s not overlook the humble peeler. We’re fans of the revamped PalmPeeler (\$6.99; chefn.com). Worn like a ring—best on small to medium hands—it tucks into your palm. The design is easy to grip and keeps fingers away from the blade, which can dispatch even thick-skinned yams in seconds. —DEBORAH BALDWIN

TLC for garage floors

With warmer weather on the horizon, now’s the time to whisk away winter’s salt and sand—and while the floor’s clear, clean up any oil spots and rust stains, too.

Sweep the slab > The first step might be the hardest: Clear off the floor. Once it’s bare, sweep out debris with a push broom. Protect outlets and drywall by hanging plastic drop cloths over the bottom 3 feet of wall.

Wash the concrete > Mix a solution of ½ cup powdered laundry detergent, such as Tide, per gallon of hot water; the granules will act as a

mild abrasive. Working in sections, pour some solution onto the floor and scrub with a stiff bristle brush. Wait about 10 minutes for dirt to loosen, then repeat. Before the area dries, rinse using a high-pressure garden-hose nozzle. Repeat, working across the floor.

Tackle oil stains > Use a 1:1 ratio of the detergent to water to create a thick paste.

Wet the stain, then apply the paste. Let it sit for about 10 minutes, then rinse before it dries. When dry, sprinkle a few drops of water on the spot. If water beads, clean it again until water is absorbed.

Remove rust > Make a soupy paste of powdered oxalic acid and water; apply to rust spot. Let sit for 5 minutes, then rinse. Repeat if needed. —THOMAS BAKER





Rearrange your furniture with zero lifting

Using what you already own lets you refresh a room for free, but carrying the sofa to one new spot, then another, quickly loses its appeal. Luckily, apps and websites make it easy to create and preview new layouts—virtual drag-and-drop leaves no dents or damage.

HOMESTYLER With this app (shown above), you can start from scratch, use a demo project, or, if you're on a tablet or smartphone, take a photo of your room. Name-brand products and paint colors let you test-drive new decor, too. *Free from the App Store or Google Play Store, or go to homestyler.com*

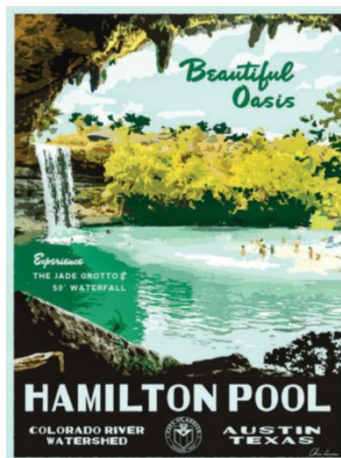
ROOMSKETCHER Generate a 2-D floor plan, then use this tablet app's camera feature to view your space in 3-D. The free version is robust enough for the average user, but paid upgrades are available. *Free from the App Store or Google Play Store, or go to roomsketcher.com*

ROOMS Only available for Apple devices, this bare-bones app has a strong upside. It's incredibly simple to use, and though the objects you can decorate with are more generic, the ability to easily customize furniture colors and sizes is a big plus. *Free from the App Store* —K.W.

Art you can afford

Put the finishing touch on your remodeled rooms—and stay on a budget—with exclusive, signed prints that have the cachet of fine art at more accessible prices. Here, five sources for quality, wallet-friendly pieces. —K.W.

> **Minted** Known for invitations and stationery, this website also boasts limited-run prints of artwork in a range of mediums. Custom-framing options are available, too. **SHOWN:** "Memphis," Kaitlin Rebesco, 14"×11", \$44; minted.com



^ **Vintage Outside** Inspired by midcentury Parks Department posters, artist Chris Camera creates limited-run prints of urban landmarks. **SHOWN:** "Hamilton Pool," Chris Camera, 18"×24", \$70; vintageoutsidestore.com



< **Tiny Showcase** Every Tuesday, this carefully curated site adds a new limited-edition print. Artists' mediums, styles, and subjects vary, but as the name implies, sizes—and prices—are small. **SHOWN:** "Get Here When You Can," Jen Corace, 7"×9½", \$25; tinyshowcase.com



< **Elizabeth Kinahan** This Colorado-based artist's original oil paintings treat humble subjects (think farm animals) with the reverence of classic portraiture. Part of the proceeds from the accessibly priced print versions of each work goes to animal rescue charities. **SHOWN:** "Mona," Elizabeth Kinahan, 12"×12", \$70; shop.elizabethkinahan.com



< **20×200** This site offers limited runs (sometimes as few as two!) of exclusive artwork; archival prints from big-name artists help support up-and-comers. **SHOWN:** "Old Push Lawn Mower," Todd McLellan, 11"×14", \$60; 20x200.com



What's that wood?

If you've bought furniture lately, you may have come across some not-so-familiar woods being used in mass-market pieces. Wondering about their origins and relative strengths? Here's a quick look at three species being used to meet consumer demand for affordable solid-wood furniture.

> **Rubberwood (*Hevea brasiliensis*)** is a by-product of the latex industry. Mainly grown in Asia, this Brazil native is harder than eastern white pine and softer than red oak. Rubberwood (above) is pale but can easily be stained, or finished with veneers.

> **Mango wood (*Mangifera indica*)** is harvested from the spent fruit trees, notably in Southeast Asia. Sturdy but less hard than red oak, it's used for flooring as well as furniture. It can feature unusual graining and sometimes kaleidoscopic colors.

> **Sheesham (*Dalbergia sissoo*)**, a.k.a. Indian rosewood, is actually harder than red oak. Plantation grown in its native India, Nepal, and Pakistan, its natural hue is a rich golden or reddish brown that is often streaked with pale sapwood for a unique look.

You can learn more about these and other exotic woods at wood-database.com. —D.B.

Revive rusty pruners

Inadvertently leave a pair of shears outside all winter (as one of our editors did) and, come spring, you'll uncover a rust-encrusted mess. But all is not lost! With just five straightforward steps, months of neglect can be undone by the next day.

1. DISASSEMBLE. With less-pricey pruners, you can skip this step, but quality shears (like these Felcos) are made to come apart. Loosen the center screw, turn the nut counterclockwise, then pop off the spring.

2. SOAK. Bathe loose parts overnight in WD-40 Specialist Rust Remover Soak (\$25 for one gallon; truevalue.com). It will take away the corrosion but won't harm plastic handles.

3. SCRUB. Use an extra-fine sanding block dipped in lubricant to remove residue and restore the color.

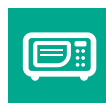
4. SHARPEN. Hone the blade over a lubricated stone, holding it at an angle that matches the blade's bevel. Flatten the other side on the stone.

5. REASSEMBLE AND WIPE CLEAN. Rub the metal with a soft cloth, and you're good to go. —T.B.



Be smart about appliance fires

Poorly designed dishwashers, refrigerators, and the like have caught flak for sparking fires. But consumers can often head off trouble with a little preventive maintenance, says Doug Rogers, president of Mr. Appliance. His tips:



MICROWAVES > Problem: "People don't realize how much grease accumulates around the wave guides"—those little holes in the microwave's ceiling. **Solution:** Keep it clean! Regularly wipe down the interior with hot soapy water (ammonia can damage fan covers). You can also heat a bowl of water mixed with lemon juice, which gets rid of icky odors, too.



CLOTHES DRYERS > Problem: Lint buildup, which can happen for a number of reasons. "If the seal around the drum fails, the blower blows inside the drum instead of into the duct. DIYers may use flexible ducts, which sag, or they may not realize that elbows in metal ducts can affect blower performance." Lint can also build up on screens meant to keep critters out of the exhaust outlet. **Solution:** Regularly check for and remove lint inside, behind,

under, and around the dryer. Hire a pro to install metal ducting, and make sure the outlet has a flap that's light enough to fly open under pressure but heavy enough to fall closed when the dryer isn't operating.



REFRIGERATORS > Problem: "If you pull out the fridge to clean behind it, then shove it back without looking, you can run over—and fray—the power cord," creating an obvious hazard. **Solution:** Tie a piece of string to the cord and attach the string to an elevated ring magnet on the back of the fridge to keep it out of the way.



GAS RANGES > Problem: "Soot that builds up and settles next to the igniter can cause blockages—and be flammable." **Solution:** Any time you smell the slightest whiff of gas, you should call a pro immediately. —D.B.



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PHOTOS: (TOP LEFT AND BOTTOM RIGHT) HARRY TAYLOR; (TOP RIGHT AND BOTTOM LEFT) KEVIN O'CONNOR





Beauty on a budget

A design-savvy couple update their cook space using cabinets and appliances from a big-box store, and durable vinyl tile

BY DEBRA JUDGE SILBER • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELLEN McDERMOTT

➔ **A SUCCESSFUL REMODELING** project requires vision. Lucky for Kim and Jeff Shake, both graphic designers, being able to visualize an idea—in this case a spiffy new kitchen—is part of what they do.

When the couple bought their custom 1957 ranch in Trumbull, CT, they were wowed by the built-ins and oversize windows. The kitchen was another matter. Wood-trimmed laminate cabinets were holdovers from the 1980s, and a peninsula with cabinets hanging over it cut the kitchen off from the dining room. The small side-by-side refrigerator and 24-inch wall oven were no match for the family of four, either.

It took nearly four years of planning before the Shakes raised sledgehammers to the old cabinets. They replaced them with units bought at and installed by IKEA, which they figure saved them \$3,000. Impressed with the quality, they bought most of their appliances there, too, applying the savings toward a large French-door fridge. Jeff helped with plumbing and electrical hookups.

But the scene-stealer is the floor. Kim pored over many plaid patterns to devise one using four colors of vinyl composition tile, which she bought online. When she and Jeff laid the tiles, she says she knew her vision was 20/20. “We were like, this is fantastic!”



BEFORE

BEFORE The kitchen had 1980s oak-trimmed laminate cabinets and an awkward peninsula with cabinets suspended above it.

AFTER Cool-gray raised-panel cabinets strike just the right balance between traditional and trendy. An island offers a gathering place that doesn't cut the kitchen off from the dining room. Cabinets, sink, cooktop, ovens: IKEA. Floor tile: Armstrong



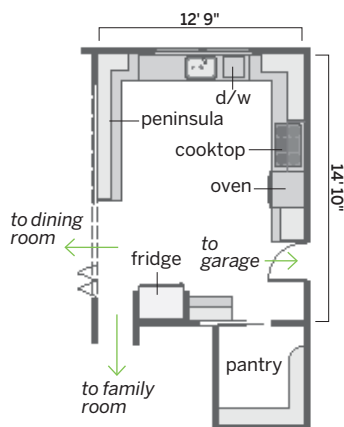
With the old cabinets out of the picture, the Shakes' kitchen is now bright, welcoming, and fully open to the adjacent dining room.

after

Removing the peninsula and the cabinets above it opened up the space for better flow; an island provides a place to gather

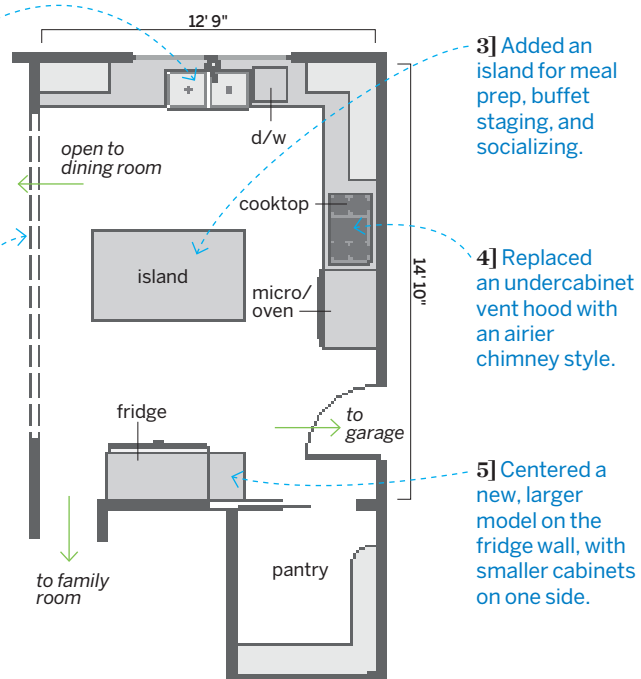
before

The sink and appliance layout worked, but a peninsula isolated the cook



1] Kept the original sliding pocket windows, but swapped in an extra-deep double-bowl farmhouse sink.

2] Connected the kitchen to the dining room by removing the peninsula and the cabinets hanging above it.



"They had a blast," Kim says of sons Kyle, 8 (foreground), and Luke, 10, who helped with the kitchen demolition. Handy Jeff is holding the family beagle, Pixie.



A message board near the fridge serves as a family information hub, where school forms waiting to be filled out share space with prized artwork and aced tests. *Fridge: GE Monogram*

The home's large, original windows—including these pocket windows over the sink—were a big draw. The sink location stayed the same, but the existing stainless-steel model was ditched for a hefty farmhouse style. *Faucet: Kohler. Sink: IKEA*

Office makeover for \$619

An unused bedroom becomes a stylish, storage-packed work zone with a DIY desk and custom-built shelving **BY KATELIN HILL**



BEFORE

BEFORE The cluttered fourth bedroom had a small desk, but without room to spread out, the homeowners ended up working all over the house.

AFTER Now, with a larger work surface and a place for craft supplies, the office is more conducive to the homeowners' small-scale DIY projects.



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spindle chairs

THE PROJECT TALLY

Painted the walls light gray and the trim white, using leftover paint **\$0**

Lined one wall with plywood strips, stained them to look like rustic planking, then installed four pine shelves and an MDF face frame, painted white **\$165**

Built a desk using pine 2x10s for the top and apron, and 4x4s for the legs **\$85**

Bought three chairs for seating on either side of the table **\$212**

Added overhead task lighting by hanging a new pendant **\$80**

Kept the rug that was there, sewed curtains to go with it, and added decorative storage accessories **\$77**

TOTAL \$619

➔ **WHEN YOU HAVE** square footage to spare, clutter just spreads unless there's an organizational system in place. When Jodie and Matt Itami moved into their 1979 home in Rochester Hills, MI, they found they rarely used the small desk they shared in their office, an extra bedroom that quickly became a messy catchall. To lend the room some much-needed function, Jodie began by clearing it out and giving it a fresh coat of paint, using what she had on hand. The couple decided to do away with a typical desk—too small for sharing or spreading out their DIY projects—and built a scaled-down version of a

farmhouse table instead. To add readily accessible storage (the room's closet holds bulky items), they covered a wall that had an existing recess with built-in shelves for office and project supplies. They nailed up strips of ¼-inch plywood, sold as flooring underlayment, and stained them to look like rustic planks, then added four long shelves and a face frame. For finishing touches, Jodie sewed curtains to go with the existing rug and hung an industrial-style pendant. Jodie and Matt love the refreshed, customized space. Says Jodie, "We don't close the door when company comes over now!" ■

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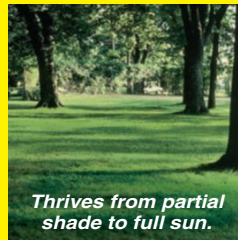
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PHOTOS: KATE THORNTON

Towel rings

Add an element of style to any bath with an accessory that takes up minimal space while allowing you to hang a hand towel right where you need it

BY KATE WOOD • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW McCAUL

➔ **PUT THE FINISHING TOUCH** on a powder room or change up the design of a bath large or small with a standout towel ring (or two). It's a decorative accessory that definitely earns its keep, placing a towel close at hand. While towel bars still do the heavy lifting, holding bath sheets and the like, rings allow for a bit more creativity: Today's designs go beyond basic circles, with squares, rectangles, and hook-like open-sided shapes. Styles ranging from Colonial to contemporary offer a wide array of finishes, too, from deep bronze and black to warm brass and gold to silvery chrome and pewter. Stay in the same finish family as your other bath fittings if you want to play it safe, or go for bold and choose a contrasting tone.

Here, 13 towel rings we think are tops.



1 > **past present**

ACORN

Made of: Lacquered iron

Size: 7 $\frac{5}{8}$ "H x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ "W x 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ "D

Highlights: This forged ring takes its design cues from spear-tipped strap hinges of the colonial era. \$45; houseofantiquehardware.com

PUT A RING ON IT

See six more editors' picks at thisoldhouse.com/towel-rings



2 > mix master

SIGNATURE HARDWARE

Made of: Brass and porcelain

Size: 9½"H × 7¾"W × 2¾"D

Highlights: White accents make this bronze-finish ring a standout. \$29; signaturehardware.com

3 > right angle

FRANKLIN BRASS

Made of: Die-cast zinc
Size: 6½"H × 6½"W × 3¾"D

Highlights: A brushed-nickel finish lets the beveled backplate on this open-sided ring really shine. \$19; homedepot.com

4 > big help

IKEA

Made of: Stainless steel and zinc
Size: 9¼"H × 8½"W × 2½"D

Highlights: This sizable chrome-plated open ring could easily handle a bath towel. \$13; ikea.com

5 > fab frame

ATLAS HOMEWARES

Made of: Brass
Size: 5½"H × 7⅞"W × 2⅞"D

Highlights: A glossy gold finish and an eye-catching silhouette give this ring a luxe look. \$104; atlashomewares.com

6 > Tuscan style

TOP KNOBS

Made of: Zinc alloy
Size: 8"H × 7⅞"W × 3½"D

Highlights: This open ring has an antiqued-bronze finish that draws attention to its details. \$71; topknoobs.com

7 > gilded age

AMEROCK

Made of: Zinc
Size: 5⅞"H × 6⅞"W × 2⅞"D

Highlights: Sized just right for a hand towel, this brushed-gold ring makes a bold statement. \$41; amerock.com



8 > subtle hint

MOEN

Made of: Stainless-steel-plated zinc alloy
Size: 8³/₁₆"H × 6"W × 3¹/₄"D

Highlights: Lively coppery glints shine through this model's oil-rubbed bronze finish. \$31; moen.com

9 > high shine

BRIZO

Made of: Zinc, brass, and steel
Size: 6"H × 6"W × 3"D

Highlights: This sleek, open square has a neat, tailored look that can go either traditional or modern. \$116; brizo.com

10 > shape up

DELTA

Made of: Zinc
Size: 7³/₄"H × 7¹/₁₆"W × 3"D

Highlights: Unmatched finials on the ends distinguish this Victorian-inspired open ring. \$55; deltafaucet.com

11 > heavy metal

RESTORATION
HARDWARE

Made of: Brass
Size: 8¹/₂"H × 7¹/₂"W × 3¹/₂"D

Highlights: A chrome finish enhances this 1930s-influenced style. \$75; restorationhardware.com

12 > on edge

PFISTER

Made of: Zinc
Size: 4¹⁵/₁₆"H × 7¹⁹/₃₂"W × 3¹/₈"D

Highlights: A gleaming distressed finish plays up this oil-rubbed bronze hook's wide, curving arm. \$44; pfisterfaucets.com

13 > fine detail

ATLAS HOMEWARES

Made of: Brass and zinc alloy
Size: 7¹/₁₆"H × 6¹/₈"W × 2¹/₄"D

Highlights: Brushed nickel shows off the backplate's basket-weave design. \$70; atlashomewares.com ■

Winning the turf wars

Start growing a lusher, healthier, less-weedy lawn with these smart strategies

BY SAL VAGLICA

→ IT HAPPENS EVERY YEAR:

Spring's warmer temperatures inspire homeowners to get outside wanting to whip their lawns into shape. With grass-seed bags piled high at local nurseries, and home centers rolling out the latest in lawn mowers, it's easy to get swept up in the excitement of the new season.

But without a plan in place, it's also easy to fall into last year's routine, which is likely to leave you with last year's lawn problems—vigorous weeds, struggling turf, and thin, weak patches. Growing grass isn't rocket science, but there are some tricks that can help you enjoy the lawn of your dreams with less effort. And speaking of effort, a well-maintained lawn is worth it: Realtors report that healthy-looking turf can add as much as 20 percent to a home's value.

Here, six tips that are sure to up your grass game this year.

1. TEST FIRST

A soil test is the first step in understanding what the support system below those blades needs.

Soil tests check the amounts of essential minerals in your soil, then provide recommendations for how much you should add to create an ideal turf-growing environment.

A soil test assesses the levels of phosphorus (P), necessary to grow strong roots; potassium (K), for optimal grass growth and resistance to disease and drought; calcium (Ca), for strong cell walls; and magnesium (Mg), which helps turf grass produce chlorophyll. Soil pH, which determines how easily these nutrients pass to the roots, is also an important part of the test.

Run a soil test in early spring—as



PHOTOS: HOWARD RICE/GAP PHOTOS (2)

soon as the ground thaws in zones that freeze—and before adding any amendments. Ask the extension office of your state's land-grant university if it tests soil, or purchase a kit (\$25 for one with a prepaid envelope; unibestinc.com) and mail your sample to a lab.

2. AMEND IN STAGES

With soil-test results in hand, address magnesium deficiencies by spreading dolomitic lime, and adjust calcium levels by adding agricultural lime (never masonry lime) and wood ash, both of which will also raise the soil's pH. "Unless you have a very new lawn with poor soil, chances are you're not going to need so much of these that you can't apply them all at once," says Tony Koski, extension specialist at Colorado State University.

With other amendments, *TOH* landscape contractor Roger Cook prefers to space them out over the growing season. He adjusts the soil's pH, adding lime to raise it or sulfur to lower it, over three or four feedings. He treats nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium—the big three combined in a balanced fertilizer—the same way.

Spread fertilizer from mid-April to early September for warm-season grasses, with doses every six to eight weeks. For cool-season grasses, the feeding schedule is typically from May to mid-November on the same six-week schedule. **Portioning out fertilizer over a few applications means less chance that a heavy rain will wash chemicals into the municipal water supply.** If you only feed once a year, Roger relies on a fall dose of fertilizer to build strong roots heading into winter dormancy.

3. WATER SMARTER

Spring's rain and warm temperatures get grass growing on autopilot, but come summer supplemental watering is what keeps lawns green. Programmable in-ground sprinklers are convenient but they can also be

wasteful—we've all seen them running while it's raining outside.

Smart irrigation controllers, like the Rachio Smart Sprinkler Controller (from \$200; rachio.com), are an easy DIY upgrade that uses your existing system's low-voltage wiring. Once you sync it to your home's wireless network, you can run the system from a smartphone or a computer with a user-friendly dashboard. The Spruce (\$300 for controller and one sensor; spruceirrigation.com) uses wireless moisture sensors you stick around the yard to address specific locations, like a shady garden bed.

Smart controllers receive local weather updates, so they won't water if rain is on the way and will run longer during dry spells—using up to 60 percent less water overall than traditional controllers.

Don't have an in-ground system? Add some smarts to your hose-end sprinkler with the Zilker (available in March/April, \$125; zilker.co) and an iOS device. This two-piece system has a base that monitors the weather from inside the house, then controls a valve connected to your hose bibb, watering anything you can reach with a garden hose.

4. MOW MINDFULLY

Making a habit of zipping across the lawn on Saturday morning is a trap we all fall into, but there are two keys to turning that time and effort into a better-looking, healthier lawn.

First, make sure to keep mower blades sharp. Mowing with a dull blade rips the tips of the grass off, leaving a jagged cut that heals slowly, increasing the opportunity for disease to set in. A sharp blade leaves a neater-looking cut that heals faster.

Sharpen your mower blade at least twice a season, at the beginning and midway through. Have a second sharpened blade on standby to reduce downtime while mowing. Extend the life of the blade's edge by removing sticks and

rocks before you cut the grass. In conjunction with a grinder, the Yellow Hornet Mower Blade Sharpener (\$149; yellowhornetmfg.com) lets you put a new edge, at a consistent 30-degree angle, on straight mower blades in a few passes. There are drill/driver and rotary-tool accessories designed to sharpen mower blades, but none do a great job of handling the wavy design of a mulching blade. A better bet: Tune up a mulching blade's dull edge using a few strokes with a metal file along its contours.

Second, know the right height. The rule of thumb when it comes to mowing is to never remove more than $\frac{1}{3}$ of the grass blade's height in one pass. Removing more than that greatly reduces the rate of photosynthesis and forces grass to spend energy rejuvenating the blades instead of growing deeper roots, creating a weaker plant overall.

While most mowers have numbers by the height-adjustment levers near

As the mercury climbs, turf needs regular watering to stay green. But too much H₂O can literally drown its roots and encourages fungal disease. Smart controllers, available for both in-ground and hose-end sprinklers, can sync watering sessions with the weather.



the wheels, those don't necessarily correlate to height off the ground. To measure the distance between the cutting blade and the soil, move the mower onto a hard surface like the driveway. Disconnect the spark plug wire, then set the mower deck to the lowest position. Open the side discharge chute so you can see the blade, and stick a small ruler through the opening so the end touches the ground. Note the distance between the ground and the mower blade. Repeat, measuring the height of the rest of the settings; using a permanent marker, write the heights right on the mower deck for easy reference.

5. SPOT-TREAT WEEDS

If you've been following old advice, you're probably going about preventing perennial weeds all wrong. Most homeowners treat for perennial weeds like dandelions and clover in spring, when a combination of fertilizer and herbicide, or "weed and feed" granules, arrives in stores, but that's not the best approach.

Roger prefers to feed lawns with fertilizer only, then follow up with a liquid herbicide that targets weeds individually when they appear: **"Spreading fertilizer with an herbicide that comes along for the ride means spreading more chemicals than you need, like on areas of the lawn that are in shade and less prone to weeds."**

Scott Guiser, a retired Penn State extension educator, agrees. "If you have to use a weed-and-feed-type product, spread it in fall so it targets weeds that are in the lawn," Guiser says. "The following spring, if you have a weed here and there, use a weed-killing spray."

Sprays are also easier to control than a spreader full of granules, especially where lawns border planting beds. "If you spread a weed-and-feed product along the edges of the lawn and accidentally fling some into flower and shrub beds, it may stress, injure, or kill the landscape plants," says Joey Williamson, a Clemson University extension agent.



6. NEATEN THE EDGES

Everyone strives for uniformly green grass, but what really sets your turf apart are well-kept edges. Whether straight or curving, crisp edges keep grass contained and give the lawn a cared-for look. Here are three no-fail ways to tidy up a lawn's outline.

Like a natural-looking free-form edge? Hand-cut the lawn's border. Garden beds need a physical barrier to prevent grass from encroaching. Hand-cutting a flowing organic shape with a half-moon edger creates an air space that stops grass roots cold. To establish your line, lay a garden hose on the lawn in front of the planting bed, adjusting it till you like the shape. Follow the line with a sharp half-moon edger, pushing straight down, then pulling the handle toward you and kicking the cut turf up in front of you. Work along the hose, removing the strip of sod to a tarp or a wheelbarrow.

If you prefer the idea of decorative edging, try tightly packed bricks or cobblestones. Whether installed in straight lines or with sweeping

curves, masonry edging is a great-looking, long-lasting addition that you'll want to show off. To install it, dig a flat-bottomed trench between the lawn and a garden bed, about 6 inches deep. Add a few inches of bagged paver base, then polymeric sand. Place bricks or cobblestones on end, so they sit a few inches above grade. To make stones stay put, backfill with a few inches of concrete. **For a wide border, lay bricks or cobblestones flat, at grade level; they give mower wheels a hard surface to ride along.**

If you prefer straight, uniform lines that you don't have to keep renewing, you can install stiff, barely-there metal edging strips. Rigid metal edging, which usually comes in 4-inch-tall strips that are 8 feet long, is secured with long stakes and won't heave as easily as plastic edging during the freeze-thaw cycle in northern climes. Available in a few earth-toned colors, metal edging almost disappears, and is ideal for keeping a path of gravel or mulch contained when bordered by a swath of emerald-green lawn. ■

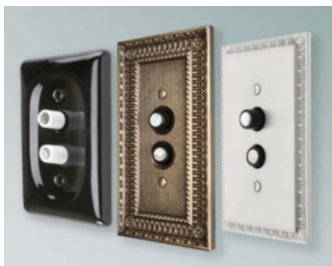
Where lawn meets deep garden beds, clean-cut edges that follow a flowing organic line have a naturalistic look. This can be achieved by cutting the lawn's outline with a half-moon edger or by installing thin metal edging strips.

MORE TIPS FOR BETTER TURF
Find additional strategies for a lush green lawn at thisoldhouse.com/turf-wars

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How to paint a room like a pro

Just about anyone who's handy can paint, but are the results up to snuff? Here's how to take your painting skills to the next level

BY THOMAS BAKER • PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY TIEULI

SEE HOW IT'S DONE

Watch as Henrique and homeowner Rebecca Brown repaint this room at thisoldhouse.com/paint-project



Painting contractor Mauro Henrique rolls on the final coat of paint in this room, which also served as a classroom for him to teach proper prep and application techniques on a recent Ask TOH TV episode.



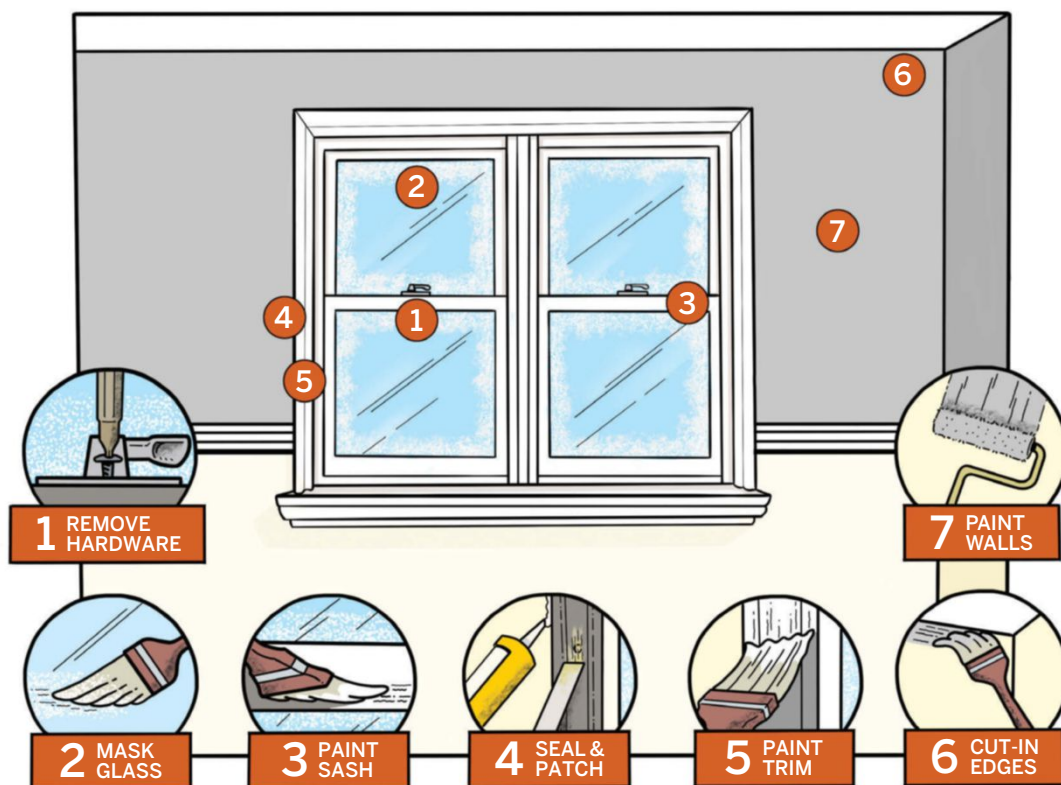
➔ **AFTER GETTING MARRIED** and buying a home last year, Rebecca Brown figured her high-school summers painting houses would make her new DIY project a piece of cake. She finished some ceilings, but a few days—and a whole lot of blue tape—later, she realized that she needed help with the walls. “Back when I was painting, we used off-white on everything,” Rebecca says. “I had no experience choosing or working with different colors and sheens.”

So she wrote to Ask This Old House. That's how Mauro Henrique, who has been the painting contractor on about a dozen *This Old House* TV projects, ended up at her house, coaching her through the steps of refreshing her dining room.

Henrique and Rebecca went over everything that needs to happen before painting starts, including how to pick the right sheen, and the best way to mask window glass. Then he showed her some nifty tricks of the trade for brushing and rolling that help the work go faster, look better, and last longer. Coming up on the following pages: Henrique demonstrates what goes into a first-class paint job.

ABOVE: Mauro Henrique was working on a construction crew, hoping to become a carpenter, when one day in 1991 the painter didn't show up. “The contractor looked at me and said, ‘Can you paint?’ I shrugged, picked up a brush—and found my trade.” For Henrique, the big appeal of painting is how fast he and his crew can transform a client's house. “I get to make people happy every day.”

Seven steps to success: *Save time by working in a logical sequence*



TOOLS

- > screwdriver
- > drop cloths and wiping rags
- > HEPA vacuum
- > nylon/polyester-blend brushes: sash and flat trim
- > paint bucket and tray
- > taping knife
- > caulk gun
- > putty knife
- > roller frame with extension pole
- > stepladder
- > utility knife

MATERIALS

- > painter's tape
- > rosin paper
- > 220-grit sandpaper
- > masking liquid
- > interior acrylic latex paints, semigloss and eggshell
- > siliconized acrylic latex sealant
- > wood filler, water-based and fast-setting
- > latex paint additive
- > 3/4-inch microfiber roller cover

What to look for when buying paint



Go top-of-the-line: Regardless of what paint brand you buy, Henrique says to choose the most expensive product in the line. That adds a few dollars per gallon, but better paint makes the job easier, yields better-looking results, and creates a longer-lasting finish.

Get the right sheen: A coating's ability to reflect light ranges from high gloss, the shiniest and most washable, to flat or matte, which has no luster and is tough to clean. *High gloss* is unforgiving to apply—every brushstroke is visible—so Henrique uses *semigloss* for trim, windows, and doors. *Satin* has

a bit less luster and plenty of durability, making it a great choice for cabinetry. Low-sheen *eggshell* is Henrique's pick for walls. *Flats* and *matte*s, while great at hiding imperfections, are more easily stained, scratched, and dinged; they're best on ceilings.

Check the VOCs: The volatile organic compounds in paint can cause headaches and respiratory irritation, and are known carcinogens. Paints off-gas most during application, and continue off-gassing for weeks afterward. That's why Henrique prefers paints with zero or low VOCs—50 grams per liter or less.

TURN THE PAGE
FOR STEP-
BY-STEP →

STEP-BY-STEP Prep talk



1] Take off hardware Remove and set aside window hardware, door strikes, electrical cover plates, and light fixtures. As each piece comes off, Henrique tapes on its screws, writes its location on the tape, and puts everything in a bucket in the same room.



2] Protect floors, and sand Apply painter's tape to the floor alongside the baseboard, then tape sheets of rosin paper to this strip. Cover the paper with drop cloths. To ensure good paint adhesion, lightly scuff-sand the trim and windows with 220-grit paper. Remove the dust with a HEPA vacuum, then a damp rag. Do not sand paint that's more than 40 years old without first testing it for lead.

TIPS



When to use a paint additive

This liquid ingredient allows paint to be thinned without altering its opacity or viscosity. Here are three ways it comes in handy.

- If a sash or door needs two coats to hide a dark color, paint straight from the can may cause a buildup that will chip or make it harder to operate. Two additive-thinned coats can avoid those issues.

- When paint is drying too fast as it's applied, an additive will extend working time, so that brushstrokes blend better and paint dries to a smoother, more uniform film.

- Treating a brush's bristles with an additive helps to keep paint from drying on them.

STEP-BY-STEP Painting windows



1] Guard the glass Using a 2-inch flat (square-tipped) trim brush, apply two coats of glass-masking liquid. This takes less time than tape and forms a clear, no-bleed barrier. If a little liquid gets on the sash, just wait for it to dry and paint over it.



2] Top sash Open the sash slightly and paint the edges next to the glass with a 1½-inch angled sash brush. Don't touch the lower rail yet. Now coat the sash's top and side faces. A tapping knife, shown, keeps paint off jambs and window trim.



3] Bottom sash As in Step 2, open the sash slightly and paint the inside edges, then the sash face. Now raise it fully and lower the top sash. Paint its bottom rail and any missed parts. Leave both sashes open for at least 90 minutes so the paint can dry.





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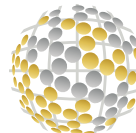
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STEP-BY-STEP Painting trim



1] Caulk seams and corners

The fewer open seams there are, the better your wall will look. Cut a caulk tube close to the tip to get a small bead. Squeeze the caulk-gun trigger just enough to maintain a continuous flow of sealant as you pull the tip over the seam. Smooth the bead with a finger wrapped in a damp rag.



2] Fill defects Using a light held at a low angle to the surface, look for dings and small holes. Fill them with two coats of water-based wood filler applied with a flexible putty knife. After each coat dries, smooth with 220-grit sandpaper. Fill large, deep holes with a fast-setting, two-part wood filler, and sand before painting.



3] Brush the trim A brush follows molding contours and leaves a smoother finish than a roller. Ideally, it is wide enough to span the trim's face in one pass, without lapping over the edges. Paint the face, then the edges. When the first coat is dry—in about 90 minutes—apply a second coat.

TIPS



Brush advice

• Dip the bristles no more than the width of two fingers into the paint, then wipe them against the inside of the pail. These steps prevent drips and keep paint from getting in the ferrule—the metal sleeve on the handle—and ruining the brush.

• When setting a brush down for less than 5 minutes, load it with paint to keep it from drying. For longer breaks, dunk the bristles—only up to the paint line—into a bucket of warm water and swish the brush around until it's clean. To dry it, spin the handle between your palms inside a deep bucket.

• Don't carry around a heavy can. Use a paint pail, and keep it about half full.

STEP-BY-STEP Painting walls



1] Cut-in around trim and at corners Along the perimeter of a wall, where it meets the trim, the ceiling, and other walls, brush on a 1½- to 2-inch-wide stripe of the wall color. Painting that stripe, a process called cutting-in, puts paint in areas that a roller can't easily reach. Next to trim and the ceiling, cutting-in also forms



a crisp paint line that would be impossible with a roller alone. To get the best results, use long, steady strokes and a brush that isn't overloaded with paint. Henrique prefers to cut-in with a 2½-inch-wide angled sash brush. For maximum control, he grips it at the ferrule, with his fingers as close to the bristles as possible.

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STEP-BY-STEP Painting walls (continued)



2] Apply, then fill Pour some paint into the reservoir of a paint tray, dip the roller cover in, then distribute the paint evenly by rolling the cover over the ridged part of the tray. Bring the roller up to the wall, and using modest speed and a controlled motion, roll on a W shape to quickly get paint off the roller and onto the wall **(A)**. Fill in the gaps and spread the paint film evenly over the entire 3- to 4-square-foot area **(B)**, before going back to the pan

for more paint. Repeat the process as you move across the wall, overlapping each section 30 to 40 percent over the previous area **(C)**. Work from the top of the wall downward, to flatten any drips that occur. Don't apply too much pressure—that will cause ridges of paint to form at the ends of the roller—and don't worry if you can see through the first coat. "Focus on getting it smooth and even," Henrique says, "and don't try to stretch the paint."

TIPS



Get the most out of rolling

• On most interior paint jobs, Henrique uses microfiber roller covers with a $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch nap. "They're lint-free and leave a smooth finish," he says.

• As you work, keep the tray close by to minimize the distance to the wall and extra steps between the two.

• "If your roller is covered with paint, you have enough," says Henrique. "If it's dripping, there's too much." Roll some off on the tray before moving to the wall.



3] Roll the perimeter To hide the texture of the brushstrokes made during cutting-in, run a lightly loaded roller as close as possible to corners or the edges of the trim. At the top of the wall, you'll have to climb a stepladder to do this. When this first coat is dry, in about 90 minutes, repeat the wall-painting sequence, including the cutting-in, and cover the entire wall with a second and, if necessary, a third coat.



4] Clean up After the paint has dried for at least 5 to 6 hours—or, ideally, overnight—use a utility knife to score around the edges of each pane, then pull off the rubbery masking membrane, as shown. Next, shut the windows, and reattach the window hardware, light fixtures, and electrical covers. Now remove the painter's tape, rosin paper, and drop cloths. Latex paints don't fully cure for one to two weeks, so clean the room slowly to avoid raising dust, and don't rub or scrub the finish during that time. ■

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ask ^{This Old} House

Q A previous owner painted some of our bungalow's fumed oak trim. Can I restore it?

—RONALD STARBUCK,
KANSAS CITY, KS

A You can certainly strip off the paint, but staining the trim with ammonia fumes would not be practical or safe. Instead, try an iron acetate stain, another finish often used in the era when bungalows were popular. To make this stain, simply soak some steel wool or rusty steel parts (like those shown here) in white vinegar for a couple of days. Pour the liquid through a coffee filter, then brush it on. Iron acetate reacts chemically with the tannins in the wood; one coat is all it takes to give oak a dark cast. Sand the trim until it's the shade you want, then apply a protective coat or two of shellac or water-based polyurethane.

—THE EDITORS

53

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

PHOTOGRAPH BY LEVI BROWN

Our cast of veteran experts



TOM SILVA
General Contractor



NORM ABRAM
Master Carpenter



RICHARD TRETHEWEY
Plumbing and Heating Expert



ROGER COOK
Landscape Contractor



KEVIN O'CONNOR
Host



How should I remove old flooring so it can be reused in a different house?

—JACOBO HERNANDEZ, DIXON, CA

TOM SILVA REPLIES: If the flooring is in good shape, and hasn't been sanded too thin, then salvaging the strips can be worthwhile.

How flooring is removed depends on the type you have. If it has visible face nails, then it's probably $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch-thick, square-edged veneer strips, like the ones I'm removing above. But if you can't see any nails, then you have $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch-thick, tongue-and-groove (T&G) flooring, by far the most common type.

Tom Silva uses a pry bar to salvage quartersawn white oak flooring from a room in the TOH TV project house in Belmont, MA. Unlike most floors, which are held in place with hidden nails, this one is face-nailed, making the removal process much faster.

When salvaging T&G flooring, it's important not to damage either the tongue on one edge or the flap of wood just above the groove on the edge opposite the tongue. The tongues fit into the grooves, locking the floor together, and provide a seat for the nails that hold the strips tight to the floor and to their neighbors.

T&G flooring is installed by lining the first course along one wall with the grooves facing the wall. The nails are then driven through the tongues at a 45-degree angle every 16 inches or so, course after course, until almost reaching the opposite wall. At that point, when there isn't enough room to swing a hammer and drive a nail at an angle, the installer face-nailed the last few courses in place.

You want to follow this process in reverse, starting with those face-nailed strips. If you can't find them, or a hole that shows a cross-section of the flooring, a few whacks on a chisel next to an inconspicuous seam will quickly reveal which direction the tongues are pointing.

Go to the wall they're pointing toward and remove the strips alongside the wall. Taking off the baseboard might give you enough

DIY SMARTS



To stop a crabgrass invasion, Roger Cook applies a pre-emergent herbicide in the early spring using a broadcast spreader.

room to slip a pry bar underneath. If that's not possible, split the strip with a chisel. Once a tongue is exposed, tap a pry bar under that side of the strip, at a spot where there aren't any nails, and then lever the strip up. Continue along the length of the strip until it's free. Repeat, course after course, until you reach the wall opposite from where you started.

Many nails will remain in the strips as they come up. Just pull them out from the back side of the strip with a pair of nippers. Don't hammer a nail out; its head can splinter the wood's face and ruin the strip.

Once the nails are out, use a scraper to clean the dirt and old finish off the strips' tongue side. Also, check the thickness of wood above the groove. Discard any sections that are less than $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick; they're likely to crack under foot traffic. Even if the strips are thick enough, it's a good idea to treat them gently by removing the finish before they're installed, and by sanding with a buffer fitted with a fine-grit sanding screen. A standard floor sander would be too aggressive.

Veneer-strip flooring doesn't have tongues or grooves, so you can start removing it from either side of the room. As with T&G flooring, split the first course or two next to the wall with a chisel, and once one edge is exposed, pop it loose with a pry bar. Pull out the nails the same way, and scrape the edges clean.

To reinstall this flooring, face-nail the strips to the subfloor through the same nail holes, using slightly larger nails. Tap each head below the surface with a nailset, then hide the head with colored putty. Again, sand using a buffer with a fine-grit screen; it will remove the old finish, but very little wood.

Q How to halt crabgrass

I first noticed crabgrass sprouting in my front lawn in July. By September, it had overrun the entire yard. What should I do so that this problem won't occur next year?

—STEPHEN ROBINSON, GAINESVILLE, VA

ROGER COOK REPLIES: Complaints about crabgrass invading lawns always reach a crescendo in late summer and early fall. But the problem really starts much earlier, in the spring, when crabgrass seeds begin to germinate. Crabgrass is an annual—it dies in the winter and only grows from seeds—so the best way to stop it is with a pre-emergent herbicide, such as Halts Crabgrass and Grassy Weed Preventer (scotts.com). Pre-emergents form a chemical barrier on top of the soil that temporarily inhibits a seed's root growth without affecting established plants.

Timing the application is critical. Spread it too early, and it will lose effectiveness. Spread it too late, and the barrier won't stop germination. I use forsythia as my signal to spread: As soon as its flower buds show, down goes the pre-emergent.

To ensure even coverage, I set the broadcast spreader at half the recommended application rate and go over each spot in the lawn with two passes at 90 degrees to each other. I don't bother applying it in shady spots because crabgrass only grows where it's sunny. Then, if no rain is forecast, I'll thoroughly wet the stuff down.

That stops the evil weed in established lawns. But if you're planting a new lawn in the spring, only use a crabgrass preventer with Tupersan (a.k.a. Siduron) on top of the new grass seed. Unlike other pre-emergents, Tupersan lets turf grass sprout, but not crabgrass. (To simplify things, all of Scott's crabgrass preventers contain it.) Just remember, its effectiveness depends on a reapplication four to six weeks later.

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Roger shows how to make a lawn thick and crabgrass resistant at thisoldhouse.com/fall-lawn-care

PHOTO: SARAH CHASSE





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Q Drainpipe clog
My shower drain was clogged from a buildup of mineral scale, and I paid \$200 to have a pro come and ream it out. He suggested an occasional flush of the p-trap and the connecting PVC pipes with commercial drain cleaners, but I'm reluctant to use harsh toxic chemicals that might damage the pipes as they "eat away" the clog. Are there any alternatives that don't require hiring a pro?

—WILLIAM SCOTT, TALLAHASSEE, FL

RICHARD TRETHEWEY REPLIES: I'm not aware of any drain cleaners that will harm PVC, yet I applaud your reluctance to pour toxic chemicals down the drain because of the harm they can cause plumbers as well as

What is it?

- A** Label remover
- B** Tape cutter
- C** Wood scarifier
- D** AC fin comb

FOR THE ANSWER, SEE PAGE 44



the environment. Perhaps an occasional dose of vinegar would be enough to keep the scale at bay. It's inexpensive and safe.

But I'm not so sure that scale is the culprit here. PVC is such a slippery material, it's hard to imagine how the buildup could be so severe. Maybe the pitch is too low—less than ¼ inch per foot—and water isn't flowing as fast as it should. Or maybe your water's

hardness is off the charts and a mineral residue coats your sinks, faucets, and toilets. If that's the case, then the best solution would be a whole-house water softener, like the salt-free system made by NuvoH₂O (nuvoh2o.com).

Or maybe something else is affecting your drain. A thorough inspection with a camera inserted into the pipe just might find another cause for the clogging.

PHOTO: LEVI BROWN

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Q Wobbly patio stones

Our stone patio, which is set in mortar, has a few loose stones here and there, but our main concern is about two pieces near the edge that tend to tip when stepped on. We've had a hard time finding someone to repair them, so we'd like to try fixing this problem ourselves. Is there some way to "glue" them down?

—MARY ALICE BELLARDINI, HOMER, NY

MARK McCULLOUGH REPLIES: Yes, there is. And that's exactly what I'd recommend that you do, using a cement-compatible polyurethane construction adhesive such as PL 500 (loctiteproducts.com). Unlike mortar, polyurethane doesn't mind being applied in below-freezing

temperatures, and it doesn't add much, if any, thickness. The loose stones on your patio should be able to fit back into their original spots flush with the other stones.

Before you start, check the stones that are tipping to make sure they don't hang over the edge more than an inch or so. A longer overhang would be a tripping hazard, and could provide enough leverage for someone to break either the stone or the adhesive bond. If the stones do need to be trimmed back, use an angle grinder fitted with a diamond blade or a hand sledgehammer and a masonry chisel.

Now set aside these edge stones and clean their undersides as well as the old mortar substrate. A small power-washer is the best

tool for that job because it's fast and flushes out every crevice; a scrub brush and water also work well at removing loose debris.

You don't have to wait for everything to dry—polyurethanes bond well to damp surfaces. Just blot up any standing water, then run a continuous $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch bead of the adhesive in a zigzag pattern over the old mortar substrate. Set the stones back in place and immediately wipe away any drips with mineral spirits. Stay off the stones for at least two days. That's how long it takes for this polyurethane to cure sufficiently.

Mark McCullough, the owner of MJM Masonry in Arlington, MA, has been the masonry contractor on 12 This Old House TV projects.

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Q Spray marks on sidewalks

Before starting our project last summer, the landscaping contractor called 811, and the Dig Safe people came and sprayed marks on the sidewalk in front of our house. I assumed they'd wear away, but so far, no luck. What can I do to get rid of them?

—ELIZABETH PELL, MERRIMAC, MA

ROGER COOK REPLIES: Actually, the Dig Safe folks are just intermediaries. They call the local utilities, and each of them sends a crew to mark the location of buried gas, water, sewer, and electrical lines. Those marks may not be very attractive, but they help ensure that your home's utilities, and anyone who's digging on your property, stays safe as the work proceeds.

On hard surfaces like roads and sidewalks, the marks are made with spray paint. On lawns and garden beds, small flags are often used, but not always. If you're concerned about spray paint being



Spray markings indicate the location of buried pipes and electrical lines while landscaping and construction projects are under way, but how to get rid of those marks when the work is done?

What is it?

B Tape cutter The Tadpole, which attaches to tape rolls by means of an elastic cord, stops tape ends from getting lost, and ensures a square cut every time. Available in three sizes to fit different roll widths. Starting at \$5.99; tadpoletape.com



applied in those spots, specify that when you make the call.

Errant spray marks on the ground can be removed with a garden trowel; spray paint on asphalt, concrete, or stone requires a graffiti remover. Bio-Solv (greenacetone.com) makes a plant-based, environmentally safe solvent that's designed to get rid of spray-paint markings.

Wearing rubber gloves and eye protection, pour the solvent into a high-density polyethylene (HDPE) spray bottle and give the marks a good soaking. Let it sit for about 5 minutes, then wash it off using a power-washer fitted with a fan tip. If you don't have a power-washer, scrub the area with a stiff bristle brush, then wash off the dissolved paint with a hose and a sprayhead set on "jet." Water immediately neutralizes this cleaner.

Try it in an inconspicuous spot first. If you like the results, you can now put an end to the defaced surfaces at your house.

Q Mosaic tile repair

When we took the old 1926 radiators out of our bathroom, two holes were left in the mosaic

tile floor. Is there a way to replace the tile and cover up the holes?

—JEREMY SOLDEVILLA, DORCHESTER, MA

MARK FERRANTE REPLIES: Because those holes are off to the side and won't get a lot of foot traffic, the fix is simple.

First, squirt some spray foam into the hole. When it hardens, cut away the excess down to the level of the old mortar. Now cover the foam with a piece of fiberglass mesh tape, spread some latex-modified thinset over the tape, and lay the replacement tiles in the thinset. When the thinset hardens, fill the joints around the tiles with grout, and the job will be done.

Mark Ferrante, owner of Ferrante Tile in Woburn, MA, has laid tile in dozens of TOH TV projects.

Ask THIS OLD HOUSE

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Include a complete address and daytime phone number. Published questions will be edited for clarity and length and may be used in other media. We regret that, because of the volume of mail received, we're unable to reply to unpublished questions.



Norm's tricks of the trade

Q Some wood trim needs to be replaced on my shed. Should I prime and paint the new pieces on all four sides, or just the exposed side, to let the back side “breathe”?

—JEAN HEATON, BURLINGTON, NJ

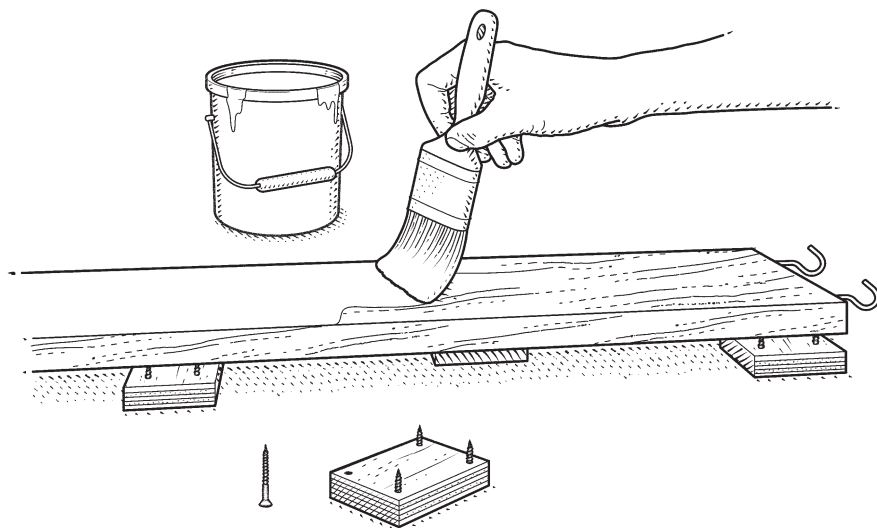
A You should definitely prime all six sides of wood trim used outside—including the ends. It's an inexpensive way to add extra life to the wood. Even so, many people don't bother priming the back side because of the time it takes to dry.

With these homemade paint stands, however, there's no waiting. Just prime one face, then set that face down on the stands. Wet primer won't stick to the tips of the 1-inch drywall screws that project through 3/4-inch-thick

scraps; you have plenty of time to apply primer to the opposite face, as well as the sides and ends.

To avoid touching the primer before it dries, put a couple of screw hooks into each end of the board. They make good handles for moving the board or, if you want, hanging it up to dry.

These stands also come in handy when painting just one side. Because they elevate the board, you can brush the sides and ends without getting paint on your workbench. ■



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By **Deborah Baldwin**

Photographs by **Ellen McDermott**

Produced by **Nicole Esposito-Polly**

Styling by **Anna Molvik**

Sprucing up a plain-Jane room—or a plain Jane, for that matter—should be a minor challenge for Philip Leeming and Leong Ong, two fashion-industry pros with an eye for interesting fabrics and a flea-market habit that probably deserves its own TV show. But getting their fetching little farmhouse from just-okay to drop-dead charming was something of a trial. You’ve heard about man versus nature. How about man versus rain, tropical storms, ice, frozen pipes, ravenous deer—and fellow man? After blithely writing out a check for a weekend getaway in tiny Accord, New York, the two rural wannabes must have wondered more than once why they ever forsook the relative peace and quiet of their Manhattan apartment.



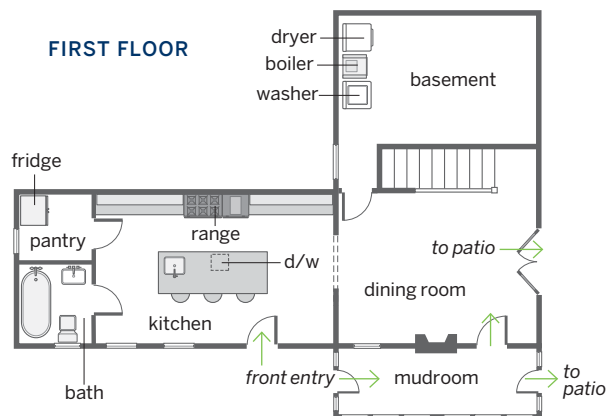


THIS PAGE: Vintage fabrics and furniture warm up a living room that survived burst pipes and tropical storms. The homeowners craved clean lines, but their out-of-plumb 1850s house resisted. Paint (walls): Benjamin Moore's Moonshine. Rug: West Elm. Artwork over fireplace: Gary Hume (left) and Georgie Hopton

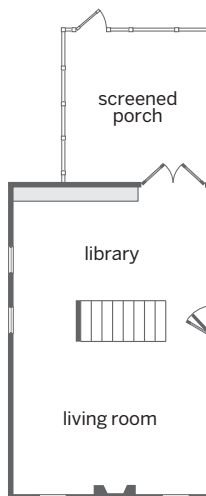


FLOOR PLAN

Built into a hillside, the two-bedroom, two-bath farmhouse, believed to date to the 1850s, was added onto over the years. The most recent renovation did not alter its layout or size—it's still just 1,522 square feet, not including the basement and screened porch. The reno rebuilt the kitchen and baths and added a patio in back. A barn and stable across the street contain workspace (not shown).



SECOND FLOOR



THIRD FLOOR



scale
5'

The city may even be an easier place to park. “We’re on a county road, a busy one for upstate, and we’re on a hill,” says Philip, recalling challenges their general contractor faced during one phase of a drawn-out renovation that cost way more than anyone thought possible. The house is also on a blind curve, with only a narrow, grassy drive. “He had to load materials on a crane and lift them over a fence—it was really tough.”

The whole experience was tough. “Our GC is a character,” Philip says, musing over the culture gap that can open between country cats and city mice. “We weren’t *exactly* in tune aesthetically. For example, he wanted to put in a patio with irregular-shaped stones. We were like, ‘No, no, we want straight lines.’”

“When it came to the house, we just wanted everything very clean. And that was a challenge—to get straight lines inside an old house.”

Very old and apparently not built with future

ABOVE: The sunny mudroom, added by a previous owner, serves as the main entry and welcome mat.

OPPOSITE: The new kitchen’s warm-gray cabinets, walnut and maple countertops, and ebony-stained floorboards make it a magnetic gathering spot. Among the few holdovers: an old Garland range with a separate broiler-grill, its oven doors powder coated to blend in.

Paint: Benjamin Moore’s White Water (cabinets) and Iced Cube Silver (walls). Faucet: Kohler





ABOVE: A medley of vintage chairs, including a 1970s Italian ladder-back, pull up to a 1950s blond-wood table under exposed beams and a '70s pendant fixture nabbed at a flea market in Italy—call the dining room decor vintage-rustic-modern-eclectic. Rug: IKEA. Flooring: Fairley Hardwood Flooring

centuries in mind. The core of the quirky two-bed, two-bath house is said to date to the 1850s, when this neck of the Hudson Valley was noted for its rich soil, hilly uplands, and hamlets with colorful names—Hurley, Olive, Marbletown, Kerhonkson—that still dot the landscape. The house, for reasons known only to its original owner, is pushed into a damp slope. This means the “basement” is on the first floor but is also underground—in the hill.

Like many an odd farmhouse, this one sustained repeated improvements over the years. In 1890, when tax assessors started keeping records, a porch was enclosed, and a barn raised on the nice flat part of the property, across the street. Previous owners, perhaps in the '50s, tacked one-story additions onto the facade of the main house, which make the front look like the side.

Still, there is something charming about the way the glassy mudroom perches over the road, as if keeping an eye on the horses. Leong recalls falling for it during a blissfully innocent period when he and friends rented a no-sweat weekend place

nearby. “We passed the house a million times and I’d say, ‘I really like the look of it.’”

But it was Philip, by then his partner and fellow country convert, who made the snap decision to buy. “We love to cook,” he says, “and when I went to see the house the first time, I said, ‘I love this kitchen, look at the stove.’” A commercial model, it bore the scars of decades’ worth of bacon and pancakes and yet managed to upstage a massive stone fireplace in the next room.

The house was in decent shape, with a functioning boiler and a finished attic. And this was 16 years ago, when mortgages were easy to come by and climate change (read: water issues) still a fuzzy notion.

With streamlining in mind, the couple tweaked the kitchen, plucking the fridge off a wall where it protruded between two doors and hiding it in the pantry. “It’s hard to get a good-looking fridge without spending a whole load of money,” Leong notes.

They also replaced two small exterior doors in the dining room with a set of French doors, and rebuilt some flooring that was collapsing from dry rot.



PHOTO: (BOTTOM) OLIVA MAZZETTI

ABOVE: Back-to-back sofas, made in the '50s and reupholstered in vintage fabrics, flank open stairs that await a code-compliant railing. The accent pillows are custom. Built-in bookshelves on one side and ample seating on the other help create distinct spaces.

LEFT: Homeowners Leong Ong, left, and Philip Leeming enjoy one of two matching sofas upholstered in a textured, honeyed blend. *Artwork: photograph at left, John Arsenault; paintings at right, Gary Hume*

Compared with more recent events, Philip recalls with a sigh, “all that was easy.”

For a spell the house remained a low-maintenance friend, allowing the couple to spend most of their time at home there, when work didn’t require them to be in the city or on the road. Philip currently is an executive at a Korean clothing company that works with well-known brands; Leong supplies fashion designs to other designers and upcycles vintage pieces as one-offs.

Ten years passed before the roof called out for an update. Another lull followed—then Hurricane Irene hit, chased a year later by Sandy. Water was suddenly everywhere, cutting fresh channels down the hill and swamping the basement.

The busy homeowners found themselves having to hire crews to replace the roof, muck out the yard, yank out trees, and dig French drains.

Then they went back to their real jobs.

In retrospect, they probably should have sent someone over to check on the house during the Big Freeze of 2014.



Cut to the aforementioned GC, John La Torre, who was charged with repairs after pipes froze, burst, and flooded the house—this time from the inside. He arrived to find a soggy mess. “If people were smart they would put in a high-water alarm, or a system to let you know when the heat goes down—it’s cheap insurance,” he says wearily. “If the house is left unattended for a long time, things can go south pretty quickly.” He didn’t even mention the squirrels: Dead space over the downstairs bath looked like living space to them.

La Torre, allowing that he is more accustomed to big, high-end remodels, found himself caught between the homeowners and their penny-pinching insurer. When he peeled up the floor in the kitchen, he was surprised to find it sitting on raw earth; he would have to pour a foundation to meet the demands of the nitpicking building inspector who had been dispatched to keep watch. The entire first

ABOVE LEFT: The downstairs bath features vintage wallpaper and a 1940s ceramic sconce with a milk-glass shade scored at the Brimfield Antique Show. Wall paint: Benjamin Moore’s Gossamer Blue. Wallpaper: Hannah’s Treasures. Tub and sink: Cheviot. Faucet: Signature Hardware. Mirror: Kohler

ABOVE RIGHT: The new master bath mixes contemporary cement tile with a vintage sconce and period-style fixtures and beadboard. Floor tile: Amethyst Artisan. Sink: Cheviot. Faucet: Signature Hardware. Mirror: Kohler

and second floors needed gutting—that’s how the squirrels were fingered, and a decision made to vault the ceiling over the bath—and once walls are open, “it doesn’t pay not to replace plumbing and wiring,” says La Torre, adding, “The budget did not allow for plaster, so we had to use drywall.”

With their savings already strained, the couple realized they’d also have to replace the windows. “They had been put in in the 1980s,” Philip says, “and were charming, but—” Something about the gale-force drafts made them want to install double panes and “insulate to the max.” It also made them want radiant floor heating. “We had to move out for six months,” Philip says, nodding to a friend who not only put them up but also reminded them that a nearby architect, Kurt Sutherland, could take care of the endless details. “We’ve been together almost 20 years, but when you are renovating a whole house and have to decide on so



many things, it can be a challenge,” Philip says.

With that in mind, they were happy to have another third-party SWAT team help with the kitchen. After studying the couple’s cooking and entertaining habits, says Suzanne Walton, of Rowan Woodwork, the team took apart an existing island, salvaging its walnut top and rebuilding the piece with nifty storage and legroom for guests. “They must do a lot of baking; they have a lot of trays,” she recalls appreciatively.

As for the rusty old fire-breathing range, it was packed off for reconditioning and powder coating, so it could blend with the color scheme and presumably avoid the fate of the fridge.

The woodworkers also left their mark in the spacious living room, where a wall of bookshelves sets off an area devoted to reading and watching TV. A staircase separates it from social space finished with artwork, furniture, and vintage fabrics

ABOVE: The master bedroom sits up high with a view of the barn across the street. A stable behind the barn now holds design-studio workspace.

*Wall paint: Benjamin Moore’s Winter White.
Rug: West Elm*

SEE MORE

Find additional photos of the house, inside and out, at thisoldhouse.com/farmhouse

gleaned by Leong during his travels; when the couple’s favorite local upholsterer recently retired, they nearly went into mourning.

All the big stuff might have moved more quickly if it hadn’t been for that building inspector, who not only caviled about the kitchen floor but also ordered a redo of the new wiring. Certain jobs, like adding a stair railing, are still up for discussion.

Call it a victory for local forces—but in a larger sense, a victory for the homeowners. With biblical rain behind them, they reached an understanding with La Torre about the patio, installed a smart thermostat, and planted fencing to keep deer out of the flower beds when no one’s home.

“We have a social life up here,” Philip says, alluding to friends who enjoy visiting the storied house, atop a blind turn on a historic county road with a basement built into a hill. “It’s quite unusual,” adds Leong, “and that’s why we fell in love with it.” ■



Closet Envy

Neat and tidy shelves, bins, and boxes all in a row... If only every wardrobe were so orderly and calm. They can be! Read on for ways to carve out closet storage that tames the chaos

BY MARY KATE HOGAN

CLOSET CATEGORY WALK-IN

Great for sharing, these roomy closets have enough space to hold everything at once—so you can avoid the hassle of switching out clothing seasonally—but they need to be organized or you risk winding up with a new clutter zone.

• **MAKING SPACE** To add a walk-in closet, homeowners often annex an extra bedroom, or part of it. To create the one at left, DIYers Michelle and Erik Dagenhart of Charlotte, North Carolina, converted an existing bedroom in their 1922 Craftsman into a master bath and walk-in closet, with a small hallway between the two. The his-and-hers closet, which is 19½ feet long and 6½ feet deep, features the cabinet at left at its center, on display through the cased opening. Michelle's side holds four sections of four drawers, topped with a counter and open shelves, and 10 feet of hanging space; Erik's side holds half as much.

• **BUILT-IN LOOK** That focal-point cabinet was salvaged during a friend's renovation; Erik customized it with metal screening left over from

their own kitchen reno, and built two smaller side cabinets to match. The screened "windows" let them see at a glance what's where, while the closed doors keep things feeling neat and contained. Labeled linen-covered boxes up top house Michelle's dress shoes and special-occasion gear.

• **SEPARATE PEACE** Sharing obviously doesn't have to mean dividing the space equally. Take stock of each partner's possessions first: folded items (T-shirts and sweaters, no more than five to a stack), long hanging clothing (dresses, coats, long skirts), and short hanging (jackets, skirts, trousers folded in half). Designate a drawer for any item you have a lot of, such as tank tops or jeans. In addition, pro organizer Barbara Reich likes to set up a "Marriage Saver" drawer or cabinet, in which husband or wife has permission to be messy (picture crumpled receipts, loose change, pocket tools, and other flotsam that might clutter the top of a dresser). "Make it small and something that closes, so you don't have to look at it," she says. "Then you've put a limit on how much is appropriate to store."



CLOSET CATEGORY

DRESSING ROOM

For those who like to take their time getting ready, a dressing closet with seating and a dresser is ideal. Joe and Shelley Pelliccione of Savannah created the closet above—14 feet long and 7 feet 8 inches wide—between their bedroom and bathroom, as part of a first-floor expansion.

• **FIT AND TRIM** Joe, a contractor, had the closet built in sections, which were bridged with 2½-inch-wide stained-wood trim that matches what's in the rest of their 1943 cottage. It's an idea anyone can borrow using off-the-shelf closet components from stores like The Home Depot and IKEA. "The trim makes it look a lot more expensive than it is," Shelley says.

• **TAKE A SEAT** The center of this dressing room is geared for lounging. "It's designed with space to let me relax," says Shelley. The 5-foot-long window seat has become a favorite spot for her to enjoy morning coffee. As a practical plus, its large drawers hold totes, beach towels, and yoga mats.

• **ADD A DRESSER** A chest of drawers makes a closet feel fully furnished and offers a chance to give it some style. The dresser above—4 feet wide and only 16 inches deep—was salvaged from a store Shelley owned; Joe built it in and topped it with a piece of salvaged marble, installing a mirror and a shelf above it. It even has a countertop spot sectioned off for Shelley's coffeemaker. In closets where space is limited, a lingerie chest works well.

• **SPECIALTY STORAGE** Set up a tower for whatever item you have in multiples. "My husband is a prolific T-shirt collector," says Shelley. "And if I can't get rid of them, at least I can make them look pretty." Their clothing storage bays—4½ to 5 feet wide and 2 feet deep on both sides of the window seat and dresser—include a pair of tall, narrow shelving units amid the mix of hanging space, wider shelves, and drawers. His is filled with T-shirts; hers holds purses, dress shoes, and accessories.

CLOSETS BY THE NUMBERS

24"

MINIMUM DEPTH FOR HANGER SPACE

6"–7"

Vertical space between shoe shelves

12"

VERTICAL SPACE BETWEEN CLOTHING SHELVES

5–6

Average number of dresser drawers needed per adult

42"

ABOVE THE FLOOR FOR THE LOWER ROD IN DOUBLE-HANGING SPACE

14"–16"

Ideal depth for clothing shelves

84"

ABOVE THE FLOOR FOR THE UPPER ROD IN DOUBLE-HANGING SPACE

CLOSET CATEGORY

OPEN WARDROBE

In older homes that are shy of closet space, open clothing storage along a bedroom wall or under a sloped ceiling can fill the bill.

- **CLOTHES ENCOUNTER** When everything's on display, you need a system that's attractive. The Elfa line (containerstore.com) offers modular pieces with wood-veneer shelves that suit a bedroom. Or imitate the one at right using pipes, shelves, and Speed-Rail fittings (hollaender.com).

- **TAKE COVER** Stow out-of-season pieces in garment bags on rolling wardrobe racks in the attic or in under-the-bed boxes.

- **SHOE SMARTS** “Store shoes you wear often out in the open, where you can grab them,” says Sarah Buckwalter of Organizing Boston. “Shoes you wear occasionally should go in clear plastic bins.”

- **SPACE SAVERS** Short on hanging room? Put pants on .ORG Friction 4-Tier Swing Arm Trouser Racks (bedbathandbeyond.com), which hold four pairs in the same vertical space as a single hanger. Clear-acrylic file sorters made for office use are perfect for storing small purses in a tidy, accessible way.



CLOSET CATEGORY

DOUBLE REACH-IN

“Double-door reach-in closets give you access to everything, and that's an optimal closet to me,” says Houston organizing pro Ellen Delap. Because they're just one hanger deep, nothing gets hidden in back. An ideal setup has shelves and drawers in the center, with long hanging clothes on one side and two rods for short hanging on the other.

- **GO MODULAR** Look for affordable closet components from companies such as ClosetMaid, which outfitted the closet at left. Be sure to account for baseboards and outlets in the final design.

- **HANG TIME** Use a single type of hanger to get rid of visual “noise.” Slim velvet-covered hangers can take up 30 percent less space than other types.

- **COMPARTMENTALIZE** Use drawers to stash small items like lingerie, socks, and swimsuits. Corral them neatly with adjustable drawer dividers, and add visual appeal with stylish liner paper.





CLOSET CATEGORY

CRAFT

Many types of hobby closets require storage solutions for small parts and pieces.

• **TIMES TWO** Swing-out double doors let you view everything at once. Sarah Buckwalter likes clear containers and lots of narrow shelves for beads or paints. Ellen Delap suggests curtains to hide craft supplies: “It’s a softer look, and they make it easy to get into the closet.” They’re also a good solution where bypass or bifold doors hinder full access.

• **MOBILE SOLUTION** The trunk-on-wheels above doubles as storage for rolls of ribbon—slid onto rods mounted inside the lid—and a movable workspace; magazine butlers hold stacks of fabric remnants. Pair a shallow closet like this one with a table or desk outside the closet for project work.

• **THINK SMALL** Pros love Rubbermaid’s Bento Collection, with adjustable compartments, nesting containers, and flip-over tops that act as trays.

CLOSET CATEGORY

UTILITY

An everything-in-its-place approach to household and cleaning supplies can be a major time-saver. The tall, slim closet below was custom-built by TransFORM, but you can get similar functionality with a few additions to a more basic setup.

• **ON A ROLL** Consider adding some pull-out drawers on glides where shelves are deeper than 12 inches, so you can reach tall or heavy items near the back.

• **GET HOOKED** Hang up mops and brooms to get them out of the way; many pros like Casabella’s The Grook Utility Holder, which stores multiple cleaning tools in a narrow space.

• **HOLD EVERYTHING** A sliding chrome basket can stash dirty dish towels and cleaning cloths until laundry time. Topmost shelves house extra towels, pillows, and other bulky items. Tuck in a folding step stool to make them easier to access.





CLOSET CATEGORY LINEN/BATHROOM

Depending on your home's layout, a linen closet may be used by all members of your family, which means it can get a lot messier a lot more quickly. Take stock of sheets, towels, and other items that need a home here; be sure you're not holding on to old "backup" towels and pillowcases that you never really use.

- **GROUP LIKE ITEMS** Allocate shelves for towels and bedding, grouping sheet sets by bed size, and, ideally, label each shelf category. Rolling towels makes them easier to grab without messing up the whole stack. Add a towel bar to the back of a swing-out door to hold an extra set at the ready.

- **DIVIDE AND CONQUER (CLUTTER)** If your linen closet has wide shelves, instead of divided ones

like the closet above, add dividers such as those from dreamproducts.com to keep stacks upright. Or swap some for slide-out wire bins, as shown.

- **BE STRATEGIC** Put toiletries in baskets or clear boxes, and place them at eye level. High shelves are just the right perch for all those rolls of toilet paper and boxes of tissues you stock up on at the warehouse store. A tilt-out hamper below holds used towels until you have time to do the laundry.

- **LABEL IT** Let everyone know what's kept where. Be specific when grouping products, with labels such as Hair, Teeth, Soap, Lotion, and Sunblock. Stacked clear bins maximize storage space. Use a small lazy Susan to store little jars and bottles so they don't end up in a jumble.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Pro organizers and closet designers try every product out there. Here, four items they consider indispensable.

→ **Over-the-door shoe organizer** In a coat or entry closet, use one with clear plastic pockets to hold sunscreen, bug repellent, mittens, and scarves. In a craft room, it's great for scrapbooking accessories and the like. In a small linen closet, it can hold shampoo and conditioner, body wash, a hair dryer, etc.

→ **Slat wall system** Popular in garages, these panels work wonders in shallow closets, too. If you can only fit hanging space on one side of the closet, mount a slat wall on the other, and use hooks to hang purses, scarves, and jewelry. It's easy-to-see storage that takes up very little space.

→ **Drop-front shoe boxes** The Container Store sells fabric-covered shoe boxes with a see-through end panel that drops down for easy access. The window lets you pinpoint the shoes you're after; opening the flap means you don't have to rearrange any boxes to remove them.

→ **Valet rod** Attach one to a vertical support in your closet for instant extra hanging space. It's especially useful when packing for a trip, to hang dry cleaning still in the plastic, and to hold items waiting to be ironed. ■





The Charleston Single House

Built to Last

This Old House lends a hand on the renovation of an 1840s “single house” in Charleston, South Carolina, with the goal of preserving its unique character while creating a comfortable family home

By Jefferson Kolle
Photographs by Kate Thornton



LEFT: As is typical of Charleston single houses, this 1840s example is one room wide, with first- and second-floor side porches, or piazzas, that run the full length of the house. The front entry awaits new lap-board siding.

ABOVE: Homeowners Scott and Kathleen Edwards, shown here with their 15-year-old son, searched for two years to find the perfect unrestored house to make their own.



There's no shortage of old houses to fix up in Charleston, South Carolina, but it can feel like a Goldilocks search trying to find one that's "just right."

Scott and Kathleen Edwards hunted for almost two years before they came across exactly what they were looking for: a house in the Ansonborough neighborhood, with its lively restaurants and shopping, that hadn't been recently modernized.

They first moved to the city from Michigan almost 25 years ago, then raised their children in the suburbs. Three years ago, they rehabbed a house downtown as a long-term rental, and found themselves bitten by the renovation bug. With their then 18-year-old daughter off at college and their son not far behind, they liked the idea of moving back to the city, to a house with history.

After losing one place to another bidder, they bought a for-sale-by-owner property from an estate. The house had been in the same family for 80 years. "It was just what we were looking for," says Scott. "Not much, if any, work had been done in a long time."

The house's lines were a draw too. "The moldings and trim are simple and clean, almost minimalist," Kathleen says. "But there's also an elegance that

ABOVE: The kitchen house, a smaller, once-detached building at the rear of the property originally used for food prep and laundry, will become the dining room, with guest sleeping quarters and a bath above. On the first-floor piazza, temporary supports stand in for the original wood columns, which were removed for restoration. All the exterior brick walls required repointing.

attracted us." Being chosen by *This Old House* for its 39th television season made it more perfect still.

The couple knew all along that they wanted a brick house—something Ansonborough is known for, with many built after the fire of 1838. According to a local newspaper report at the time, the fire leveled "at least one-fourth of the centre of our beautiful and flourishing city." Afterward, the state's general assembly gave construction loans for fire-resistant masonry buildings.

The Edwardses' 1840s home is known as a single house, an indigenous Charleston style built to fit the city's long, narrow lots, with the gable end facing the street. The 1,925-square-foot main house's floor plan is typical: one room wide with two rooms on each floor and a central staircase. On the first floor, a parlor fronted the street with a dining room to the rear; at some point, a powder room was added behind the stairs. Two bedrooms occupied the second floor, with a garret on the third. "We wanted a single house," Scott says, "mainly for its manageable size."

Charleston single houses have two-story open-air porches, known as piazzas, which run the full length of the house, and are built on the south or west side to take advantage of prevailing breezes. Another nod to Charleston's



Spiffed up and polished

A computer rendering shows the renovated house with its exterior restored. Alterations to the interior floor plan and a remodeled connector that opens directly into the old kitchen house will yield a three-bedroom, three-and-a-half-bath home with 2,737 square feet of living space.



hot, humid summers is high ceilings—10 feet on the first and second floors of the Edwards house.

In most 19th-century Charleston households, cooking was relegated to a detached building, or kitchen house, behind the main residence. Kathleen and Scott's kitchen house retains its two fireplaces, one originally used for food preparation and the other for laundry.

Some time prior to 1884, a two-story brick connector was built to join the main and kitchen houses. When the Edwardses bought the property, there was an outdated kitchen downstairs in the connector, and the house's only full bath was upstairs in a lap-sided bumpout. There was no interior door to the kitchen house.

For their design work, the Edwardses turned to architect Bill Huey, who has been practicing in Charleston since 1987. He knows about the city's fortunes and also its not-so-fortunate times. "Charlestonians have always cared about their old homes," Huey says. "As the saying goes: 'People might have been too poor to paint their front door, but too proud not to polish the brass hardware.'" Huey also knows his way around a renovation in a historic district; he serves on the city's Board of Architectural Review (BAR), which has to approve any changes that will be visible from the street.

Work on the Edwardses' house started with repointing all the brick and restoring the windows. On the third floor,

TOP LEFT: Standing at the front of the first-floor piazza, TOH general contractor Tom Silva and TOH host Kevin O'Connor strapped on their tool aprons to help get the job done.

TOP RIGHT: The door from the second-floor piazza opens onto the original staircase. The full-length porches on the first and second stories were designed to catch breezes during Charleston's humid summers.

some double-hungs had to be replaced with casements to provide egress for the planned bedroom, as required by code. “It’s a balancing act between the BAR and the building department,” Huey says. “Both sides understand that occupant safety is critical.”

The biggest changes will take place inside the house. Charleston contractor Mark Regalbuto has worked on many historical homes, several with Huey. “We always have to make room for bathrooms and closets,” Regalbuto says. “Along with that comes the challenge of updating the floor plan for a contemporary family.”

Huey’s design calls for altering the interior spaces within the existing footprint, with the original dining room becoming the new centrally located kitchen. The kitchen house in back, located six steps below the main house’s floor level, will become the dining room, with a built-in wet bar and wine storage. “We’ve always eaten our dinners in a dining room,” says Kathleen. “But breakfast and lunch happen in the kitchen.”

The new kitchen will have an island large enough to accommodate everyone—Scott, Kathleen, their son,

BELOW LEFT: Tom Silva and local carpenter Mike Collins reuse some of the house’s original wood paneling to build a false beam to hide new plumbing pipes for the second floor.

BELOW RIGHT: Removing the plaster and lath exposed the interior brick walls. This street-side second-floor bedroom will become a library with new wainscot and built-in cabinetry and bookshelves.

and their daughter when she’s home from school. There is lots of pantry storage and a built-in coffee machine. To maximize space in the room, the range will slide into the original fireplace alcove.

The second-floor street-facing bedroom will become a library/office with bookcases, wainscoting, a media cabinet, and Scott’s desk. Down the hall, the master bedroom will lead to a new walk-in closet and master bath.

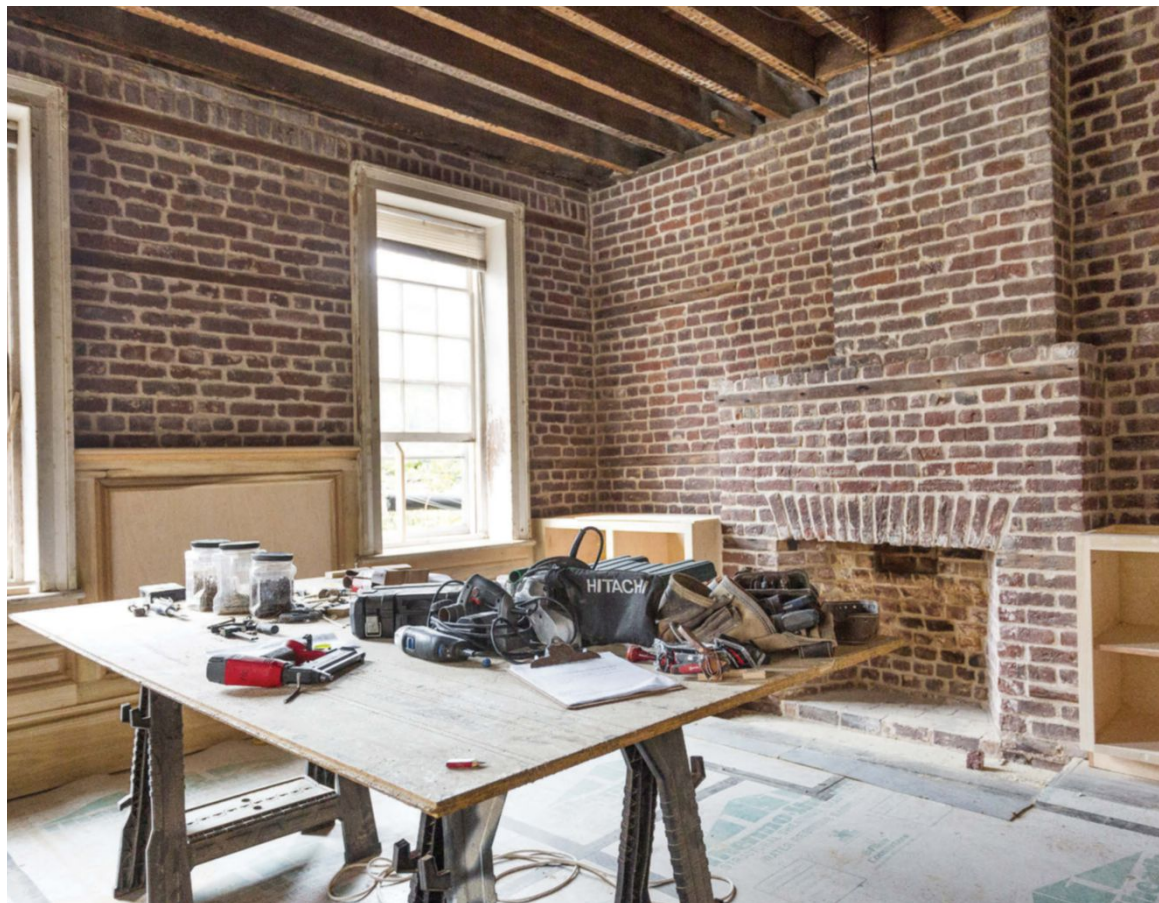
The Edwardses’ son will get the third floor virtually to himself. On the street side, his new bedroom will have a built-in full-size bed, lots of shelving, and a large closet in the hall. In the rear will be a full bath with more built-ins. He’ll share the space with HVAC air handlers that will be tucked behind knee walls and utility-closet doors.

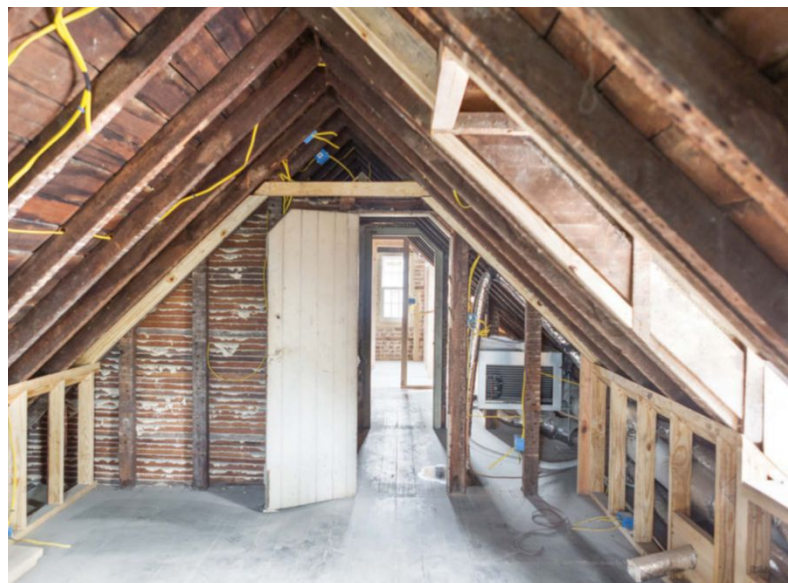
In another nod to contemporary living, the connector between the main house and the kitchen house will hold a stacked washer and dryer behind double doors, a clothes-drying rack, and a built-in desk.

With Charleston’s mild winters and notoriously sticky summers, heating is not much of a concern, but air-conditioning is. *TOH* plumbing and heating expert



SEE MORE!
Follow this *TOH* TV project’s progress at thisoldhouse.com/watch-charleston-single-house





TOP: Kevin O'Connor and Charleston carpenter Ishmael Medina install flooring in the kitchen house's upstairs guest room. The hefty 1½-inch-thick heart-pine boards, butt-jointed and screwed in place, are laid without a subfloor, as is typical in 19th-century Charleston houses.

ABOVE: HVAC ducts and other utilities will be hidden behind newly framed knee walls in this third-floor bedroom and in the bathroom on the other side of the stairwell.

Richard Trethewey spent considerable time engineering three separate systems for the house, one for the first floor, another for the second and third floors, and a third for the kitchen house, which will have a sleeping loft with a bath upstairs. “When you look at this house in this climate,” Richard says, “what you’ve got is basically a big brick oven that needs cooling.”

With construction under way, hiding HVAC ductwork and other utilities on the first and second floors has been cause for some head scratching, because the plans call for removing the plaster and lath on the perimeter interior walls to uncover the original brick. “Usually we run wires and plumbing behind the plaster,” says *TOH*’s Tom Silva. “With the bare brick, we are having to look for alternate routes for almost every wire and pipe.”

Removing the plaster and lath also leaves a 2-inch gap between the back of the casings and the brick. “We’ve tackled this in other Charleston houses,” Regalbuto says. “We scribe wood fill-in pieces to fit between the back of the casings and the brick walls.” The key is not to get them too loose or too tight, to accommodate the wood’s movement with changes in the humidity.

As the project progresses, the vision for the house is starting to take shape. The exterior restoration is nearly complete, while inside, the finish work continues. It’s not too fancy but not too plain; there’s a simple elegance about the rooms. “For the Edwards family,” says architect Bill Huey, “it’s going to be just right.” ■

ALL
ABOUT

Garden Sheds

These diminutive structures not only house the tools and supplies that nurture a landscape, they also offer gardeners a cozy workspace and a retreat in which to contemplate their handiwork **BY THOMAS BAKER**

AS ANY GARDENER KNOWS, it takes a host of specialized tools and gear—spades, trowels, shears, gloves, and the like—to do the cultivating, weeding, transplanting, and pruning that plants require. A garden shed offers a dedicated place to keep it all, plus lawn-care equipment and supplies, away from the unrelated clutter in most garages.

But a shed can be much more than a mere storage locker. It can serve as a focal point on your property, adding a defining element to your garden. It offers a pleasant space for potting and starting seeds, propagating cuttings, and dividing plants to share with friends. And it can be a snug, peaceful escape from the demands of a schedule-crammed life, and a place to commune with the outdoors.

In order to function at its full potential, no matter its size, a garden shed needs a few key features: at least one window—operable, ideally—to let in light and views and fresh air; enough floor space and headroom to allow you to stand up and walk around; and a worktable of some kind, for tinkering with plants or doing garden-tool maintenance.

Beyond providing for those basics, let your imagination be your guide. As you'll see in the following pages, these houses-in-miniature inspire outsize creative expression. "Sheds are truly intimate spaces," says designer Ken Smith, owner of Gardensheds.com. "That's why we see people going to great lengths to personalize them, trick them out, and make them suit their individual needs."

Read on for our guide to all things garden shed, from choosing the right size to picking the best place to put it.



Set amid a riot of summer blooms, this garden shed sports a pyramidal bonnet roof, a type of hip roof that changes pitch near the eaves. Shown: 8-by-8-foot prefab Zenith Garden Tower, from \$7,000; homesteadstructures.com

VITALS

HOW MUCH? Plastic resin sheds start at about \$500 for a 4-by-7-footer. You can get a basic 8-by-10-foot, all-wood kit for around \$1,800. Prices escalate rapidly from there with bigger sizes and added features. Custom-designed-and-built sheds run the gamut from \$50 to \$200 (and more) per square foot.



DIY OR HIRE A PRO?

Unless you have a prefab trucked in fully assembled, your shed will have to be built from a kit or from scratch. A seasoned DIYer could handle either, given enough time, though extra hands are a big help. A crew from a home center or manufacturer can erect a kit shed in a day or two. It's your responsibility to prepare the shed's base.

WHERE TO BUY ONE?

Home centers and lumberyards sell kits in a range of styles, materials, and sizes. Or go online to explore a wider world of kit- and prefab-shed-makers. Some ship anywhere; others deliver only within their region.

PERMITS REQUIRED?

Regulations vary; consult your town's building and zoning departments before you buy. A small shed, around 100 square feet, may not need a building permit, but could require one for zoning.



PHOTOS: (LEFT) WWW.HOMESTEADSTRUCTURES.COM; (RIGHT) SANDRA HEATH/ALAMY

Choose how it's built

What's best depends on your available time, budget, patience—and level of building skill



KITS

Parts are cut and partially assembled in a factory for easy delivery on a flatbed truck. Shed kits come in many sizes, styles, and materials, including wood, composite lumber, and steel-framed plastic (shown).

PROS Kits speed assembly compared with building from scratch. Their purchase prices and transportation costs tend to be lower than those for prefab sheds of similar size.

CONS Assembling a kit does take time, tools, and basic DIY know-how. If you're lacking any of those, you'll want to hire a crew from the manufacturer or home center supplying the kit to build it on-site, adding to the cost.



PREFAB

Sheds built in a factory benefit from a level of consistency and quality control that's hard to achieve in the field. Just make sure there's a clear path for a forklift to carry the shed from truck to base (as shown).

PROS There's next to no wait time. As soon as the shed is placed, you can start using it.

CONS Fewer companies offer this option. Transportation costs can be substantial, depending on the size of the shed and how many miles it has to be trucked. A shed that's more than 8½ feet wide will qualify as an oversize load. Anything wider than 12 feet may require escort vehicles.



PLANS

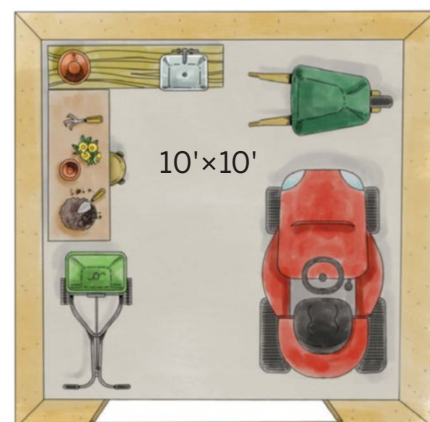
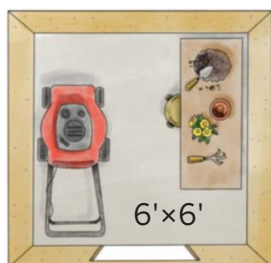
Building a shed from scratch (as shown) gives you control over the design, offering the chance to create a custom structure that stands out from the rest.

PROS It feels good to say "I built that," and doing the work yourself is a good way to save money and improve your skills. You can create a shed that echoes your house, and outfit the inside to your exact specs.

CONS Without the requisite tools and acumen, it can be hard to get this DIY project off the ground—or finish it. The cost of a custom-designed, pro-built shed can easily soar past the price of a kit or prefab.

HOW BIG?

Sheds come in so many sizes, it can be hard to know which one will meet your needs. Use the tip and sketches at right to figure out which footprint will work best. Also factor in wall and roof heights: Six-foot walls are typical, but taller ones are also available. Having more headroom helps a small space feel less confining and adds to its storage capacity. Don't dismiss sizes that seem bigger than necessary. Interiors have a way of shrinking as stuff accumulates.



TIP

To see what will fit inside, lay out a footprint using four stakes and string a mason line between them. Adjust the stakes as needed to accommodate your items. Don't forget to account for the door, and leave at least 24 to 36 inches in front of a potting bench and beside equipment for you to move around comfortably.

Top it off

A shed's roof shape defines its style—and interior volume

1 > GABLE This simple, familiar style is formed by two equal roof planes sloping down on either side of a straight ridge. High-peaked roofs, like this one, offer more headroom and the possibility of extra overhead storage. Shown: 8'x12' Quivett Cape kit, starting at \$3,700; pineharbor.com

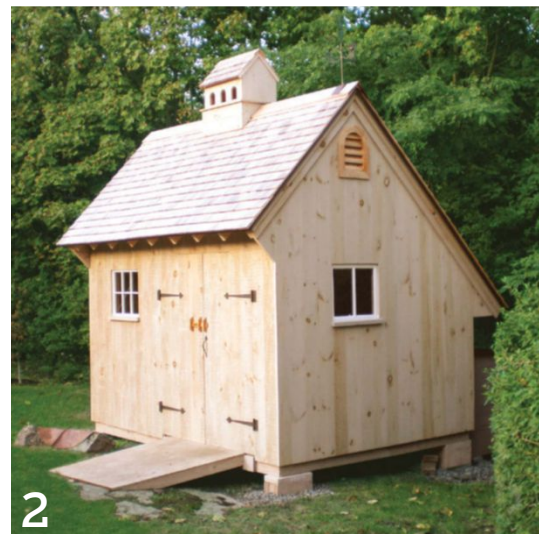
2 > CATSLIDE A defining feature of colonial-era saltboxes in New England, the back side of this roof slopes down to within a few feet of the ground. This design offers more floor space than a gable roof of the same height, but not the headroom to go with it. Shown: 9'x12' custom shed, about \$6,000; normshomework.com

3 > SHED ROOF A single plane sloped toward the front leaves a high back side that begs to be nestled against a taller wall, forming a lean-to. This simplest of shed designs is well suited to storing lots of garden gear within a compact footprint. Shown: 6'x12' Cuttyhunk kit (no windows), \$2,700; walpolewoodworkers.com

4 > GAMBREL Hips on both sides of a gable roof form the classic barn-roof profile that adds lots of volume up top—often enough for a storage loft—without the need for a taller building. Shown: 12'x16' Pro Series Tall Barn kit, \$6,166; tuffshed.com

5 > FLAT A roof with little or no pitch, set over four rectilinear walls, is the hallmark of a modern shed and a good way to maximize interior headroom. Here, the clerestory windows leave uninterrupted wall space inside for workbenches and storage. Shown: 10'x12' custom design, about \$25,000; buchanancustombuilders.com

6 > HIP Four triangular planes, extending from the peak to each wall, form a pyramidal cap that's stronger and more wind resistant than other roof types. Its low profile also means less room for overhead storage. A cupola, like this dove-cote design, offers a stylish way to vent hot air. Shown: 10'x10' Williamsburg Classic kit, \$13,150; gardensheds.com



Site it right

Before you plunk a shed down on your property, keep these practical concerns in mind

1 | SETBACKS

Most towns limit how close a shed can be to property lines, your house, wetlands, and so on. Its height may be restricted too. Check with your local zoning department.

2 | COVERAGE

If the shed's footprint pushes the total square footage of all structures on your lot above a certain percent of the lot size, you may have to seek a zoning variance.

3 | UTILITIES

Call 811 to ensure that no buried water, gas, or electrical lines lie in the shed's vicinity. If you're on a well, stay clear of its head and supply pipe.

4 | SEPTIC

Make sure your shed won't be in the way during system maintenance.



SEEING DOUBLE

Consider placing your shed in view of passersby, who will appreciate such a thoughtful, small-scale addition to the neighborhood. The shed shown above, while not an exact copy of the house, echoes its gambrel roof and paint palette. It also incorporates materials, such as original windows, that were removed from the house when it was remodeled.

Solid support

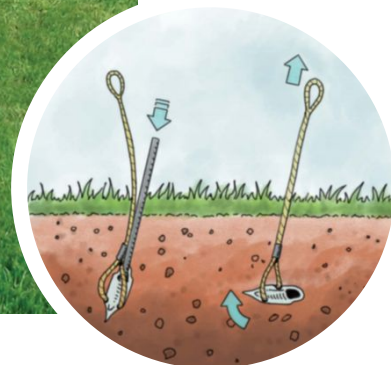
A shed needs to rest on a level, stable surface that won't shift under its weight or in freezing weather. An on-grade wood deck or a patio can serve as the base, but most sheds are shored up by one of the following:

CRUSHED STONE Well-tamped, crushed-stone pads 6 to 8 inches thick can support smaller sheds—those less than 144 square feet—and protect against frost heaves. Space the pads evenly, about 2 feet on center, then top with solid-concrete blocks to elevate the shed's base (shown at right). Or build a raised bed of treated beams resting on a thick layer of crushed stone, then fill the frame with more stone. (See Prefab photo, p. 68.) A shed sitting on crushed stone can shift or topple in high winds or floods. To prevent that, sink a ground anchor (inset), like those from American Earth Anchors (americanearthanchors.com), at each corner and bolt them to the shed's base.

CONCRETE Larger sheds should be bolted to a reinforced-concrete slab or to concrete piers. Ground anchors aren't needed, but in cold climates, slabs must be frost-protected, and piers must rest on wide footings dug below the frost line.



An arrowhead-style anchor, driven into firm soil with a rod and sledgehammer, can resist more than a ton of tension. Pull its cable taut to set the metal anchor, then bolt the cable's eye to the shed's framing.



PHOTOS: (TOP) ROB CARDILLO; (BOTTOM) WWW.ACREATIVEMOMMA.BLOGSPOT.COM; (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP, LEFT TO RIGHT) WRIGHT'S SHEDS; SUMMERWOOD; PINE HARBOR; (NO. 1) SAXON HOLT; (NO. 2) WWW.EMPRESSOFDIRT.NET; (NO. 3) WWW.CAFEDSIGNUS/IN-THE-GARDEN

Getting in and out



DOORS: Whether single or double, sliding doors (left) cover a wide opening, while rolling to the side with ease. Hinge-hung swinging doors (right) are lighter, fit tighter, and don't need as much wall space, but you'll have to shovel when snow builds up in front of them. While most lawn equipment can fit through a 3-foot-wide doorway, allow 4 to 6 feet for a lawn tractor.

TRANSITIONS: Like houses, sheds have elevated doorways, requiring either entry steps or ramps. A ramp (above) is a must for wheeling heavy equipment in and out. A separate entry door with steps allows you to segregate bulky equipment at the ramp end.

ADD PLANTS

Increase a shed's appeal by integrating it into the landscape

1 > RUSTIC SIMPLICITY Sited between a stand of bamboo and a magnolia, this shed's weathered shingles help it blend into its deckside location. Potted plants soften the transition and nestle the building into its verdant backdrop.

2 > COTTAGE LOOK Window boxes filled with pelargonium and petunias spill into shrub-based foundation plantings, connecting this clapboard structure—painted a garden-friendly blue-green—to the beds that surround it.

3 > SEMIFORMAL With fencing anchored to it at either end, a crisp-white shed becomes part of the framework for this manicured garden. Lady's mantle, boxwood, and hydrangea grow tidily up close, with more riotous blooms farther out. An apple-tree espalier covers one of the shed's gable ends, which provides the backbone for the tree's supports.

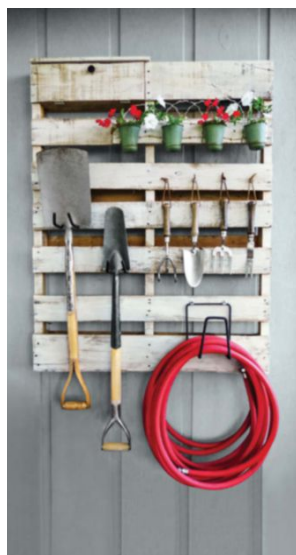


Find a place for everything

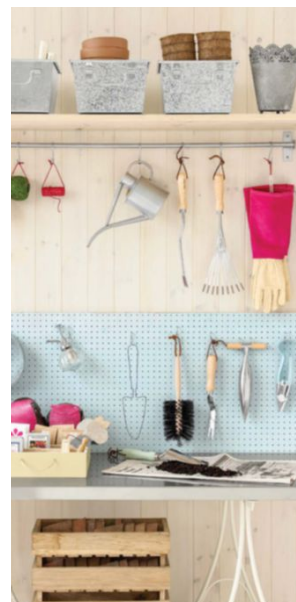
A shed's floor space is quickly claimed by large equipment and a workbench. So look up—walls, rafters, even ceilings offer opportunities for accessible, organized storage

REPURPOSED RACK

A discarded pallet hung on an interior—or exterior—wall can provide a convenient and inexpensive surface for hanging essential gardening tools and accessories.



NEATNESS COUNTS Long-handled tools can hang from hooks or stand up in metal tubs, while short-handled ones cluster in wall-hung bins or baskets. Here, a wire rack corrals colorful seed packets, and the swing arms of a dish-towel rack hold bundles of drying herbs. High on the wall, shelves keep fragile pots safe; extra baskets swing from hooks screwed to the ridge beam.



HANG-UPS A rod made for kitchen utensils holds gear on repositionable S-hooks. Outlines on pegboard identify what hand tools go where.

Creature comforts

Supplying your shed with water and electricity multiplies the ways you can make use of it—and the amount of time you'll spend there. Hire licensed pros to do the work and obtain the necessary permits.

► **ELECTRICITY** Lights allow you to use your shed into the evening and make it easier to find and put away your tools. Outlets provide juice for power tools and recharging batteries. For safety's sake, every outlet has to be GFCI protected, and the electrical cable coming from the house must run through a PVC conduit buried at least 18 inches deep.

► **HEATING/COOLING** Once a shed has electricity, adding heat or air-conditioning is not a big step. A small ductless heat-pump system with an indoor unit mounted on one wall will keep the interior warm in cold months and cool in the hot ones.

► **WATER** With a sink in your shed, you can give potted plants a drink and clean dirty hands and tools; no wrestling with a hose or running back and forth to the house. A supply pipe set in a shallow trench—at least 18 inches deep—should have a compressed-air fitting so you can blow out the water before winter arrives. But in a heated shed where water is used all winter, that pipe must be buried well below the frost line. Run the sink's drain to a dry well. For hot water, get a small electric water heater, like the kind used in RVs.



Custom touches

There's no limit to the inventive ways of shed owners and designers



HIP TO BE SQUARE The gutters on this hip-roofed, 10-by-10-foot shed feed rain into a cistern under its slab that's used for supplemental watering. Awning windows in the cupola bring light to the interior and can be opened via remote to ventilate it. Wide eaves shelter a bench seat and potting table.



GREEN ROOF Tousled sedums keep this shed's interior cool and minimize runoff. A roof of this sort has to be structurally reinforced to handle the weight of soil and plants, and then covered with layers of waterproofing membrane to keep the wood structure dry before planting.



COLORFUL CHARACTER Bold hues brighten this plywood-sided shed and the shady backyard corner where it's located. Clever add-ons include an outdoor shelf for pots and a lattice-fence panel that hides it as well as the wheelbarrow stored below. An old trowel serves as the door handle.



RECYCLED AND REUSED The wood siding and metal roof on this scratch-built shed once covered an old barn, and the windows and door were found at a Habitat for Humanity Restore. Leftover paint collected from around the neighborhood created the random color scheme.



GREENHOUSE HYBRID Marrying a greenhouse with a shed allows you to extend the gardening season into winter. In sunny climates, position the glass roof toward the east or north to avoid extreme heat buildup, and provide plenty of ventilation to prevent your plants from being cooked.



FAIRY-TALE CHARM This 9-by-12-foot potting shed, meant to evoke traditional outbuildings in the Irish countryside, has a Dutch door, cordwood walls—log rounds embedded in mortar—and a thick thatched roof. The thatched lean-to, woven from willow switches, serves as a rabbit hutch. ■

directory

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COVER See the listing for "Built to Last."

HOME SOLUTIONS (pp. 11–14) TLC for garage floors > *Thanks to* Shea Walker; allgaragefloors.com. What's that wood? > *Thanks to* Eric Meier; wood-database.com. Laura Oglethorpe; thestatedhome.com. Jeff Frank; simplicitysofas.com. Grace Jeffers; gracejeffers.com. Be smart about appliance fires > *Thanks to* Doug Rogers; mrappliance.com. Peter Duncanson; servicemasterrestore.com.

BEFORE + AFTER: KITCHEN Beauty on a budget (pp. 17–19) **Paint:** Cottage White (walls) and Pear (pantry); behr.com. **Countertops:** Lattice; pentaltquartz.com. **Tile backsplash:** homedepot.com. **Light fixtures and drawer pulls:** potterybarn.com. **Dining table:** crateandbarrel.com. **Yellow chairs:** wayfair.com.

BUDGET REDO Office makeover for \$619 (p. 20) **Homeowner's website and blog:** sypsie.com.

SHOPPING Towel rings (pp. 23–25) **Sink and fittings:** Veer Pedestal Sink, Artifacts Bell Bathroom Sink Spout and Lever Handles; kohler.com. **Toilet tissue holder:** Franklin Brass Futura; homedepot.com. **Towel:** Karla Copper Hand Towel; cb2.com.

ASK THIS OLD HOUSE (pp. 38–45) Wobbly patio stones > *Thanks to* Mark McCullough, MJM Masonry, Inc., Arlington, MA; mjmmasonry.com. Mosaic tile repair > *Thanks to* Mark Ferrante, Ferrante Tile, Woburn, MA; ferrantetile.com.

WELCOME TO THE COUNTRY (pp. 46–53) **Architect:** Kurt Sutherland, High Falls, NY; kwsarchitecture.com. **General contractor:** La Torre Construction Co., Kingston, NY; latorreconstructioninc.com. **Exterior > Paint:** White Diamond; benjaminmoore.com. **Windows:** Integrity Wood-Ultrex Casement; marvin.com. **Kitchen > Cabinets, island, and countertops:** Rowan Woodwork, Kingston, NY; rowanwoodwork.com. **Pendant lights:** deboraherlich.com. **Cabinet lights:** lumens.com. **Dining room > Paint:** Iced Cube Silver; benjaminmoore.com. **Living room > Built-in shelving:** rowanwoodwork.com. **First-floor bath > Shower hardware:** signaturehardware.com. **Master bath > Shower tile:** marbleonline.com. **Shower hardware:** signaturehardware.com.

CLOSET ENVY (pp. 54–59) *Thanks to* Sarah Baldwin, Faire Évoluer, New York City; faireevoluer.com. Sarah Buckwalter, Organizing Boston, Belmont, MA; organizingboston.com. Ellen Delap, Kingwood, TX; professional-organizer.com. Samantha Hochman, transFORM, New Rochelle, NY; transformhome.com. Barbara Reich; resourcefulconsultants.com. Scott Davis; closetmaid.com.

BUILT TO LAST (pp. 60–65) **Architect:** Bill Huey, Bill Huey + Associates, Johns Island, SC; hueyarchitect.com. **General contractor:** Mark Regalbuto, Renew Urban Charleston, Charleston, SC; renewurban.net.

ALL ABOUT GARDEN SHEDS (pp. 66–73) *Thanks to* Ken Smith, Gardensheds; gardensheds.com. Jamie

McGrath, Pine Harbor Wood Products; pineharbor.com. William P. Cahill; roofthatch.com. Choose how it's built > **Kit shed:** Oakland 759; keter.com. **Prefab shed:** Classic Workshop Shed; shedsunlimited.net. Getting in and out > **Sliding door:** Custom 12x16 Orchard Shed, Wright's Shed Co.; wrightsheds.com. **Swinging doors:** 10x10 Telluride workshop, Summerwood Products; summerwood.com. **Ramp:** 12x16 Cape Codder; pineharbor.com. Add plants > **Semiformal:** Landscape design by Craig Bergmann, Craig Bergmann Landscape Design, Lake Forest, IL; craigbergmann.com. Creature comforts > **Custom carpentry:** Paul Johnson, Portland, OR; pauljohnsoncarpentry.com. Custom touches > **Hip to Be Square:** Design by Campaigne Kestner Architects, Guilford, CT; ck-architects.com. **Colorful Character:** DIY makeover by Debbie Gonville Miller; debbiemillerpainting.com. **Recycled and Reused:** DIY project by Amber Lee Garrison; lifeincolorphoto.com.

SAVE THIS OLD HOUSE (p. 84) *Thanks to* Michael Bedenbaugh, executive director, Preservation South Carolina, Prosperity, SC; preservesc.org. ■

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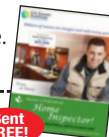
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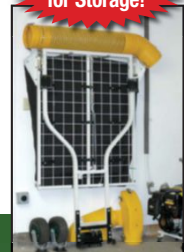


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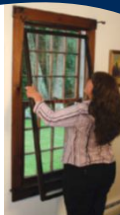
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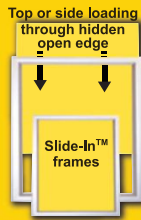
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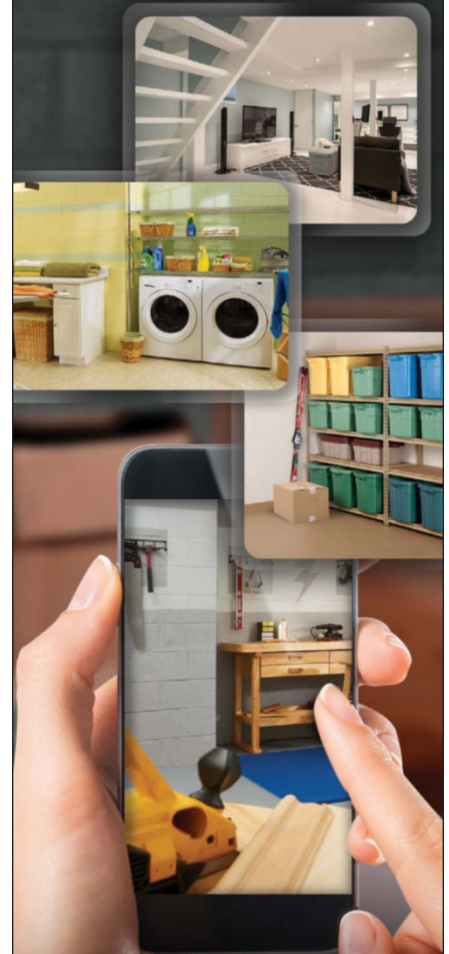
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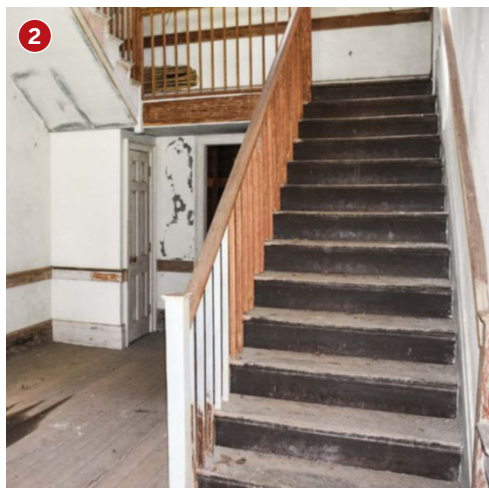
CONTACT Amy Fluette;
info@preservesc.org

THE HISTORY The Coker family arguably put the “society” in the town of Society Hill. The first Cokers came to South Carolina from Virginia in 1740, and when Caleb Coker built this Georgian house around 1832, he was well established as a prosperous businessman and farmer. It’s in no small part due to his own efforts that this antebellum structure still stands. During General Sherman’s 1865 Carolinas Campaign, Union troops ransacked many businesses and residences in the area. Coker managed to successfully defend the family home.

WHY SAVE IT? It’s uncommon to find a Colonial-style home built this late—and this far south—and the Caleb Coker house still feels like the stately manor it once must have been. Set amid 6.4 acres of rolling land with mature trees, the house retains all its original nine-over-nine windows as well as its louvered shutters, which are stored inside. The clapboard facade is crowned with an unusual diamond-and-sawtooth cornice, and the brick-pier foundation has been stabilized.

WHAT IT NEEDS The three-bedroom house has never had plumbing or electricity, so all mechanicals must be added. Its large rooms are in varying states of repair: Some of the plaster walls are stripped to the studs; a few have been patched. The metal roof is watertight, and the porch has been rebuilt. Protective covenants govern the remaining restoration work and stipulate a timeline for repairs. A 2-hour drive from both Charlotte, NC, and Myrtle Beach, SC, the house could be a country getaway, or return to its roots as a family home. It just needs another owner who won’t give up the fight. —KATE WOOD

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1. The 2,800-square-foot house is sited on a slope and rests atop a visible brick-pier foundation.
2. The house has the symmetrical form typical of the Georgian style, with a central stair leading to the second floor.
3. Two wood mantels remain in place, though a previous owner removed the fireplaces.
4. Bands of decorative molding form an ornamental cornice beneath the eaves.



GOT A HOUSE?

If you know of an old house for sale that should be saved, write to savethisoldhouse@thisoldhouse.com or This Old House, 262 Harbor Drive, Stamford, CT 06902.

PHOTOS: JIM LYLES



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