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**Before
You
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Cover photograph by JARED KUZIA

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EDITOR'S LETTER

A season for fresh starts

After a winter of pondering, planning, dreaming up—or waffling about—your home-improvement wish list, hints of warm weather and the new growth it brings make spring feel like the real start of the new year. Happily, this issue offers plenty of inspiration to move your projects forward in 2020.

How about brightening your outlook with a little unexpected color? If the chartreuse mudroom on our cover (and on page 22) is too energetic for you, you can still step out of neutral and add a shade of something familiar—like a soothing blue—on shelving or cubbies. We love the way it can transform the look of window trim and wainscoting (page 12) or even a slightly more daring accent wall (page 10).



Paint is one sure way to put your personal stamp on a space. Another is to combine cherished old things in your home with some more-modern finishes for an eclectic, one-of-a-kind interior, like the Reed family's (page 42). Or maybe you're ready to make something from scratch—like our simple garden bench (page 57)—so you can customize the size, type of wood, or stain color to your liking.

If you're anxious to get outside—and who isn't at this time of year—we've got loads of ideas to spruce up your yard, including summer flowers that are a cinch to grow from bulb-like beginnings—just dig a small hole and drop one in (page 11). Or try one of the robust new plants we've featured (page 16), all bred to produce impressive blooms. Struggling to grow a lush green lawn? Pelletized compost and Microclover seed (page 50) could solve your turf troubles.

It's a truism that spring is a time of renewal, but for homeowners it's also a call to action. And there's no more moving expression of that than the stories of Paradise, CA, residents determined to rebuild their town post-wildfire, no matter the hurdles (page 26).

Like them, we know there's no place like home. And there's no time like the present to make yours what you've always wanted it to be.

KATHRYN KELLER,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
kathryn@thisoldhouse.com

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toolkit

Useful stuff for homeowners to know

THROW YARDWORK A CURVE

The Japanese sickle

This light, one-handed tool makes quick work of cutting down the dead stalks of spring and tall weeds of summer. BY THOMAS BAKER

The backstory

The sickle is an ancient, curved cutting tool that has been used to harvest grain (and keep weeds at bay) since the dawn of agriculture. While the Western sickle is big, weighty, with a crescent-shaped blade—and a familiar icon when crossed with a hammer—the ones used to harvest rice in Japan are lighter and have shorter blades. The Japanese *noko gama* sickle shown here refines that tradition by adding a run of sharp teeth along the edge of its no-rust, 6½-inch stainless-steel blade. Originally exported to the U.S. for harvesting lavender, this sickle slips easily into tight spaces and does its job without harming neighboring plants.

Where to use it

This sickle has a place in every gardener's tool caddy. Here's why:

- Trimming plants with one motion is faster and easier than using pruning shears.
- The serrated steel blade cuts ornamental grasses cleaner than a string trimmer.
- Its light weight makes removing overhead vines less of a chore.
- The slim blade reaches into tangled stands of thorny raspberries and blackberries with ease.
- It makes quick cuts when harvesting summer fruits and vegetables.



How to use it

Unlike scythes, sickles are not meant to be swung. They cut with a pull stroke.

1. With your free hand, grab the plant about 6 to 8 inches above the place you want to cut.
2. Reach around to position the teeth nearest to the handle against the material to be cut; keep the teeth a safe distance from your fingers.
3. Pull the sickle toward you in one controlled stroke.

The blade's 78 angled teeth ensure a clean, fast cut in a single stroke.

Sickle care

After each use, brush debris out of the teeth. Scrub off sap with a bristle brush and hand sanitizer. Dry the blade (if wet) before storing.

Preserve the uncoated wood handle with boiled linseed oil to protect it without making it slippery.

During use, keep the blade out of the soil, which can dull the teeth.

Keep it sharp. Hold the tool in your left hand, teeth pointing away from you, and a triangular file in your right hand. Push the file's narrow edge at a low angle into the gap between each set of teeth two or three times.

Shown: Stainless-steel, Serrated-blade Hand Sickle, \$19; gardentoolcompany.com



THE KINDEST CUT

Ornamental grass tune-up

They're low maintenance, sure, but that doesn't mean they don't need any attention.

Cut them back

Now's the time to clear away debris that could rot the crown, and remove old stalks and leaves to make room for new growth. Cool-season grasses—including feather reed grass, blue oat grass, and blue fescue—bloom in early summer and should be cut back from late February to early April, depending on your local climate. Leave at least one-third of the plant in place; over-trimming can stunt or kill it. Warm-season grasses, which include the big grasses like maiden silvergrass, pampas grass, and fountain grass, bloom in late summer. Trimming these can wait until late April to early June. Cut them to within 6 to 8 inches of the ground, taking care not to nick or remove any green growth in the crown.

Divide and transplant

If you notice that grasses of either type have dead patches in the center, or if they produced fewer plumes in the past season, they'll benefit from being divided into smaller clumps after their spring trim. Using a spade, dig around the portion of the plant that you want to divide—it's OK to come in close to the main root mass—then cut vertically through the crown using the spade, an axe, or a reciprocating saw fitted with a long pruning blade. Transplant the division into a hole at least 1 foot wider than the root mass, and sprinkle a little starter fertilizer in the hole to encourage new root growth. Take care to leave enough room for the mature grass to spread its leaves and not shade out its neighbors.

TIP Ornamental grasses are very efficient at making use of available soil nutrients and, unless potted, should not be fertilized. Doing so may cause them to flop over.



A floor that's hard to beat

There's nothing like a bulletproof brick entry surface when spring mud is at its gloppiest—and creating one doesn't require advanced masonry skills if you use one of the thin-brick products on the market, which go down like tile. Just follow these tips for an authentic-looking job.

Choose real brick made of shale or clay and kiln-fired for durability, rather than a concrete substitute. Don't just rely on photos; order a sample. **Ensure a stiff substrate** by layering quarter-inch cement board over your existing subfloor. **Test-drive your design** by arranging your bricks in the pattern of your choice before setting them with thinset. Work from several lots simultaneously to balance colors. Running bond is a simple choice for beginners. If you're going for an antique look, Pine Hall Brick's Preston Steele advises **using off-white sanded grout** and not fussing about making the joints perfect. **Use a grout bag** to avoid trapping excess grout on the face of the bricks.

Similar to shown: "The Original" paver tiles, \$6.45 per square foot; pinehallbrick.com

Trash your trash wisely

Sprucing up this spring? Waste-disposal rules and recycling options vary in every community, so check first with your local transfer station to see what types of debris, and how much, it accepts per household. You might also consider these alternatives:



Furniture and fixtures

You can rent a dumpster, but donating your old-but-still-useful cabinets, fixtures, and furniture saves money and could get you a tax deduction. If your local Habitat for Humanity ReStore (habitat.org/restores) offers pickup or deconstruction services, it can also save you effort.



Building materials

Scrap lumber, metal, concrete, drywall, and shingles can often be recycled. Use the "Find a Recycler" tool at cdrecycling.org for a site in your state. For asphalt shingles specifically, visit shinglerecycling.org. Most recyclers welcome homeowners, but call first to be sure.



Batteries

Rechargeable batteries (such as lithium ion, nickel metal hydride, and nickel cadmium) are considered hazardous waste in many states. Call2recycle.org lists mail-in programs as well as thousands of drop-off sites that include Home Depot, Lowe's, and other locations.



Fluorescent lightbulbs

These contain toxic mercury and should not be tossed in the trash; some states restrict their disposal. You can drop off unbroken CFLs at Home Depot and Lowe's stores; collection sites for fluorescent tubes can be found in the "Where to Recycle" database on earth911.com.



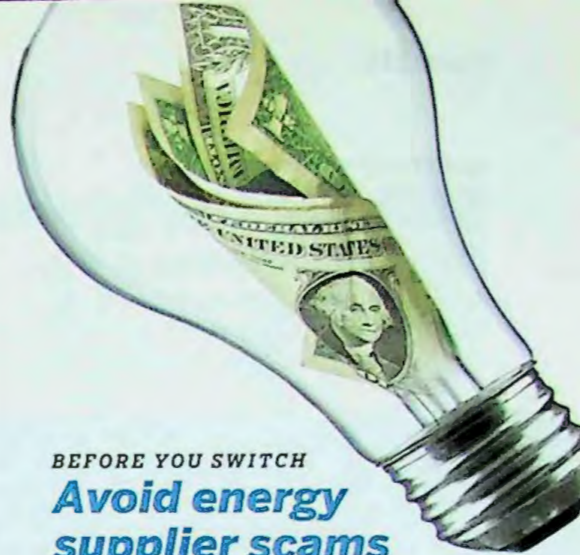
Paint

Water-based paints can be thrown out once dried. Oil-based coatings are considered hazardous waste, but they too can be put in the trash when dry, except in California. Paintcare.org funds recycling programs in 11 states and lists drop-off sites for both oil- and water-based paints.



Appliances

The EPA's Responsible Appliance Disposal (RAD) program partners with manufacturers and others to recycle large appliances; find a partner at epa.gov/rad. Disposal through your local electric utility, municipal trash pickup, or scrap metal recycler are also options.



BEFORE YOU SWITCH

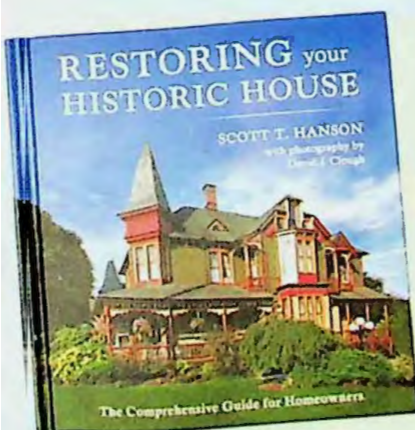
Avoid energy supplier scams

If you live in one of the 14 states that allow consumers to choose their electric supplier, you've probably gotten flyers in the mail or phone messages promising big savings if you switch. But beware: Deceptive tactics and overcharging by suppliers has led several states to put the brakes on electric choice. In Massachusetts alone, a three-year study revealed that those who switched suppliers paid \$253 million more than they would have on their utility's basic plan. If you do decide to shop for a new energy supplier, make sure you:

- Understand what you're paying currently—the rate per kilowatt hour (kWh) and whether it's a flat or variable rate—so you can compare.
- Consult your state's utility regulatory agency to learn the rules, including certain disclosures, that suppliers must comply with.
- Review any new plan carefully, including the length of the contract, early termination fees, what your rate is based on, and if it will change, including when your contract ends.
- Don't show your energy bill to solicitors or share your account number until you're actually ready to sign up. "Slamming"—signing consumers up for service without their consent—is a common tactic.
- Don't let sign-on perks distract you from the terms of the contract. That \$100 gift card can end up costing you big bucks down the road.

For old-house lovers

What draws us to period homes? In *Restoring Your Historic House: The Comprehensive Guide for Homeowners* (\$35; amazon.com), preservationist and old-house owner Scott T. Hanson explores that question, and offers a thorough guide to celebrating historical homes by diving deep into the details of how to repair and revive them. The book isn't about turning old houses into new ones, nor is it about restoration in the strictest sense of the word. It's really about rehabilitation; that is, establishing a friendly balance between what we love about old houses and what we need to change so we can love living in them.



PAINT IDEA: EASY OMBRÉ

Making the gradient

Who doesn't love a blue bedroom? The choice is inherently soothing, bringing open skies indoors. This three-tone treatment turns up the drama just a bit. Picking colors from the same paint-chip strip simplifies the process—but avoid the very darkest shade to keep the mood light. A paint-and-primer-in-one helps ensure even coverage. Just divide the wall into thirds, apply the colors lightest to deepest, then blend, using the tips at right.



Dreamy blues,
from soft to
seaworthy:



Sherwin-Williams's
Honest Blue



Sherwin-Williams's
Sporty Blue



Sherwin-Williams's
Commodore



Block out each color. After applying the lightest color to the whole wall, roll the middle third with the mid-tone shade, and the lower third with the deepest one.



Re-create a wet edge. Using a separate 4-inch brush for each color, repaint both edges of adjacent color bands, working in small sections. This allows you to blend the paint before it dries.



Dry brush to blend. Using a fresh brush held at a 45-degree angle, blend neighboring colors with a series of X-shaped strokes. Continue working the colors until evenly blended.

FOUNDATION FIX

A look at basement cracks

Not every crack in a foundation wall—either concrete block or poured concrete—is cause for concern or needs to be fixed. Structural engineer Jim Graham follows these guidelines when assessing which ones need attention and which don't.

How wide are they?

On a poured foundation, a web of hairline cracks or widely spaced vertical cracks less than 1/8 inch wide generally mean the concrete shrank a bit too much as it cured. Unless they grow wider or leak water, these can usually be left alone. Cracks 1/8 inch wide or wider deserve a closer look.

What's their orientation?

Horizontal cracks indicate that the soil is exerting enough pressure on the wall to make it bulge inward. They're often accompanied by diagonal cracks in poured foundations, or stair-step cracks in block foundations. Diagonal or stair-step cracks without horizontal fissures may mean that the top of the foundation is bowing inward because it's not properly connected to the house framing, or that the footings are settling unevenly. Any of these cracks could signal the need for major structural repairs; call in a structural engineer to determine their cause and prescribe a professional fix.



▲ **Is water getting in?** Graham recommends sealing stable but leaky cracks in poured foundations with epoxy (shown), then injecting a polyurethane foam along the crack's entire length. For block walls, he goes outside, excavates the existing soil, adds crushed stone to improve drainage, and slopes the grade away from the foundation for at least 10 feet. Both approaches should be handled by a pro who specializes in basement waterproofing.



INSURANCE MUST-DO

Take stock of your stuff

That table saw you splurged on. The pro-style range you saved for. Your new, high-tech home theater setup. When it comes to your homeowners insurance, creating an inventory of your home's contents can save time and money in the event you need to submit a claim. Only about half of homeowners report having one, despite statistics that say one in 20 insured homes will file a claim each year. It can feel like a big job, says the Insurance Information Institute's Scott Holeman, who offers some helpful tips to help you get the job done.

Start with pen and paper. Ask your insurance agent what information your policy requires; you may need an item's make, model, purchase price, purchase year, and serial number. Some pieces may lack this information, like your handcrafted dining table or antique armoire; you may want to have them appraised. Don't forget items in off-site storage units and your garage workshop.

Use an app. Apps can speed up the job by letting you scan bar codes or serial numbers and then auto-filling additional information. Your insurance company might offer its own home-inventory app; if not, you can try out Magic Home Inventory (for Android) or Home Contents (for iOS) for free.

Take photos and video. These support your claim if your policy requires proof of possession. If you're taking video, create a new file for each room and describe each item out loud while you're recording. For photos, be sure to take close-ups of identifying info and store images in folders labeled by room.

Store your home inventory elsewhere. Save copies of your list, photos, and videos in the cloud, and keep a physical copy in a safe location away from your home.

Second-chance bulbs

Green with envy at your neighbor's daffodils and tulips? Try summer-blooming bulbs for bold results.

Oriental

Asiatic Lily

Lilium 'Kaveri' (left) combines the color and big blooms of Asiatic lilies with the stature of Orientals. Flame-colored flowers have a spicy scent. Grows to 4 feet tall. Prefers full or partial sun and well-drained soil. Zones 4–9.

longfield-gardens.com

Peacock Orchid

Not your grandma's gladiola. *Gladiolus callianthus* 'Murielae' has fragrant, star-shaped, single white blooms with a surprising purple center. It's a late-blooming hero in the summer garden. Prefers full sun. Zones 7–10.

tulipworld.com

Pineapple Lily

Long, strappy leaves give *Eucomis comosa* 'Sparkling Burgundy' a tropical vibe. In late summer, a nearly 2-foot-tall spike covered in tiny bicolored purple blooms earns it its common name. Prefers full sun. Zones 6–9.

plantdelights.com

NOT TRUE BULBS These plants actually grow from tubers, rhizomes, and corms, which don't need a winter's cooling to bloom. But they may need to be dug up and stored in fall in cooler climates. Or just treat them as annuals.

A semi-open cook space

Annexing a utility area and adding cased openings creates airiness without sacrificing vintage charm. BY NINA MALKIN • PHOTOGRAPHS BY LAURA MOSS



BEFORE

BEFORE With the stove and sink at one end, opposite a freestanding fridge, the kitchen had just 2 feet of working countertop. Vinyl flooring and cheap brown cabinets were decidedly dreary.

AFTER Now open all the way to the back door, the kitchen is amply and logically set up for food prep and casual dining. New wider windows and a cottage-style door lavish the room with natural light. Countertops: Caesarstone

→ **WHILE OPEN-PLAN KITCHENS** may be popular, they're not for everyone. Take Kevin and Kaly Sullivan, owners of a 1901 twin home (one of two houses that share a common wall) in Narberth, PA. "We needed more storage and workstations, but hoped to have the kitchen respect the architecture of the house," Kevin says. And, as Kaly puts it: "We didn't want to be looking at the sink while sitting on the couch!"

With a laundry and toilet closet hogging adjacent square footage, the Sullivans sought out designer Sean Lewis of Airy Kitchens to reconfigure the space rather than bump into the dining room. Lewis replaced the laundry

wall with a peninsula and enclosed a stacked washer/dryer and a toilet in the back corner. This allowed the sink, range, and fridge some breathing room in the remaining U-shaped cook space, along with two runs of cabinets. Lewis increased counter space to 13 feet, gave food storage a boost with a pantry cupboard, and put in two new openings to the dining room to improve flow. Black and pale blue cabinets and a colorful patterned floor combine for a traditional look with a modern twist. "We're grounded people with a nostalgic, quirky side," Kaly says. "The new layout really works for us, and the look captures our personalities perfectly."

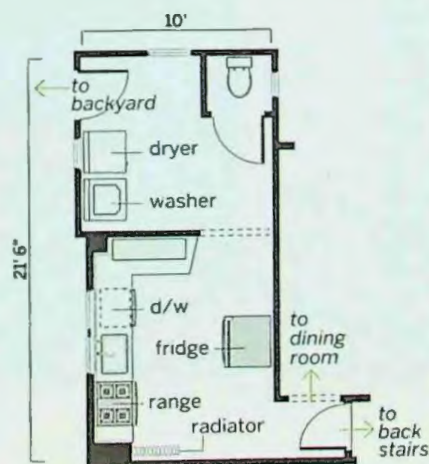
RIGHT: The stove was relocated to a short, formerly vacant adjacent wall and flanked with cabinetry. Glass-front uppers house dishware, while deep drawers below hold cumbersome cookware.

BELOW: Cabinet storage was tailored to the way the Sullivans cook and eat. This coffee/tea station was designed for two pots with a roll-out insert to hold a selection of beverage supplies. Cabinets: Airy Kitchens



BEFORE

The storage-starved 125-square-foot kitchen had one bare wall and no place to sit



AFTER

Now 184 square feet, with better storage and prep space, a spot for snacking, and more open access to the dining room, the kitchen boasts improved function and flow

1. Replaced all the windows with wider units; relocated the radiator, formerly near the stove.
2. Removed the laundry partition wall and added a peninsula with seating.
3. Centered the sink under new windows, with a paneled dishwasher to the left; relocated the range and flanked it with cabinets.



4. Built a closet for the toilet and a stacked washer/dryer, removing one of the windows; added a utility sink outside the door.

5. Added cased openings to the dining room on either side of the pantry and the relocated fridge.

6. Closed up the corner where dining room access had been to allow for more cabinets and countertops.

BEFORE + AFTER KITCHEN



ABOVE: The geometric pattern of the painted-wood floor tiles adds visual impact. "More than one person has asked if they're original to the house," says Kaly. "They're just weird enough to make you wonder, and I love that!" Floor tile: Mirth Studio

RIGHT: The pantry cupboard was custom-built in cherry; when the house was built, kitchens would have been outfitted with furniture pieces. Stocked with food and a microwave, it's handily located near the peninsula, "where a lot of snacking and meals-on-the-go happen," Kaly says.

A cook space with period-appropriate style was important to homeowners Kevin and Kaly Sullivan. "We didn't want a showroom kitchen," Kaly says. "We wanted something that felt true to the bones and the soul of the house." Colorfully painted trim and tall beadboard wainscoting help amplify the room's upbeat modern sensibility.



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Up-and-comers

Add some serious flower power to your yard and garden with these robust new bloomers

BY MICHELLE GERVAIS

→ **SPRING BRINGS** with it fresh possibilities for the upcoming growing season—among them a host of new and exciting plants to enliven flower beds and container gardens. Many of these improved varieties promise bigger, longer-lasting, and more profuse blooms, as well as better disease resistance. And while some may be showing up for the first time at local retailers, all have been extensively trialed and tested—some for up to 10 years—before making their debut, says Angela Treadwell-Palmer of Plants Nouveau. It's anyone's guess which ones will attain plant-world superstardom (think of those ever-popular Knock Out roses), but you can be sure that even those that remain under the radar will be standouts in your home garden.

With that in mind—and with an eye toward high-impact, profuse bloomers—we're highlighting some rising stars that show exceptional promise for the coming season. Try them out in your yard, and by fall we bet you'll be recommending them, too.

'SUMMER CRUSH' BIGLEAF HYDRANGEA

Hydrangea macrophylla
'Summer Crush'

The latest entry in the Endless Summer series of rebloomers boasts the most vibrant flowers you'll find on any hydrangea: vivid raspberry-red in alkaline soils and deep purple in acidic soils.

HOW IT GROWS: Prefers morning sun and afternoon shade. Grows up to 3 feet tall and wide in zones 4–9. Its tidy habit requires little pruning.

FIND IT: springhillnursery.com



PHOTO: COURTESY OF ENDLESS SUMMER HYDRANGEAS

Whatever size property,
there is a zero-turn mower
that will make it yours.



The New Z200

Gas powered

42" to 54" cutting widths



Zero-turn agility. Zero compromise. One perfectly cut lawn.
This is the surprisingly quick, surprisingly affordable, new Kubota
Z200 mower. It's built for comfort and for speed. And it's ready
to turn your lawn into something more.

Together we do more.

KubotaUSA.com

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You can never have too
much land, or a too
comfortable mower.



ZD

Diesel powered

48" to 72" cutting widths



There are acres of reasons why the Kubota ZD is the #1 selling diesel mower.* ACS deck technology for improved cutting performance. Hands-free deck lift. Deluxe suspension seat. Together it provides the durability and comfort you need for the biggest lawns.

Together we do more.

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*Claim is based on Outdoor Power Equipment Institute market statistics from 2019 unit shipments.

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'BLUE CHIFFON' ROSE OF SHARON

Hibiscus syriacus 'Blue Chiffon'

These old-fashioned favorites have wonderful summer flowers, but the shrubs can be rangy and unrefined, and tend to seed themselves everywhere. 'Blue Chiffon' addresses those concerns with a rounded, dense habit, few to no seeds, and frothy blue blooms.

HOW IT GROWS: Thrives in almost any type of soil in full sun to part shade. Grows up to 12 feet tall and 6 feet wide in zones 5–8.

FIND IT: waysidegardens.com



'PURE PINK' WEIGELA

Weigela florida 'Pure Pink'

The Sonic Bloom series of weigelas flower in late spring, and after a brief rest, burst back into bloom until fall. 'Pure Pink' is the latest addition and the strongest rebloomer yet, with profuse trumpet-shaped flowers that attract hummingbirds but not deer.

HOW IT GROWS: Prefers full sun, well-drained soil; pruning may be done after spring bloom. Grows up to 5 feet tall and wide in zones 4–8.

FIND IT: provenwinners.com



'TRES AMIGOS' CONEFLOWER

Echinacea 'Tres Amigos'

This member of the splashy Sombrero series has blossoms that open peachy rose, then age to pink and finally burgundy. Unlike some new coneflowers, it's hardy in colder climates.

HOW IT GROWS: Tidy and well behaved, with deadheading it will keep flowering into fall. Prefers full sun and fertile, well-drained soil. Grows up to 20 inches tall and 24 inches wide in zones 4–9.

FIND IT: gardencrossings.com



'AT LAST' ROSE

Rosa x 'At Last'

This new low-maintenance, disease-resistant shrub rose has all the charm of a hybrid tea without the hassle. It blooms from late spring to fall without deadheading, producing lush, sweetly fragrant, peachy-orange flowers amid glossy green leaves.

HOW IT GROWS: Prefers full sun, well-drained soil, and pruning in early spring. Grows up to 3 feet tall and wide in zones 5–9.

FIND IT: greatgardenplants.com



'GEORGIA PEACH PIE' PINKS

Dianthus allwoodii 'Georgia Peach Pie'

The blooms on the American Pie series of pinks are larger than most—up to 2 inches wide—and borne on strong stems that won't flop. 'Georgia Peach Pie' is especially striking, with blue-green foliage and single, pale pink flowers adorned with a vivid coral ring.

HOW IT GROWS: Prefers full sun and well-drained, almost sandy soil. Grows up to 12 inches tall and wide in zones 5–9.

FIND IT: bluestoneperennials.com



'CAT'S PAJAMAS' CATMINT

Nepeta 'Cat's Pajamas'

Valued for their deer-resistant mounds of aromatic, blue-green foliage and spires of purple-blue flowers, catmints can get overgrown by late summer. 'Cat's Pajamas,' a compact hybrid, blooms early and stays neat.

HOW IT GROWS: Prefers full sun and average, well-drained soil; shearing after flowering will produce more blooms. Grows up to 14 inches tall and 20 inches wide in zones 3–8.

FIND IT: whiteflowerfarm.com

High-energy drop spot

Relocating a too-steep stairway opens the door to an everyday entry into the house

BY DEBRA JUDGE SILBER • PHOTOGRAPHS BY JARED KUZIA

➔ **IT'S A BEAUTIFUL THING** when you set out to fix one problem and end up solving two. When adding a new kitchen and family room to this family of four's 1920s home in Arlington, MA, architect Aimee Bentley knew she'd also need to rebuild its dangerously steep stairs. Relocating them to the new addition serendipitously freed up room for a much-needed mudroom and side entry. Bentley extended the available space by 11 feet, adding an exterior door for driveway access. Then she designed a built-in with benches, rows of hooks, closed overhead cabinets, and 16 catch-all cubbies. Tapping into the homeowner's love of vivid color, interior designer Kristina Crestin painted the unit a lively chartreuse. Finding a home for the wallpaper her client loved wasn't as easy. With storage on one wall and durable shiplap on the other, only the ceiling remained. Considering the paper's cloud-and-bird theme, that proved an inspired choice.

BEFORE Relocating the old stairway left a 6-foot-wide area around the corner from the powder room. Situated on the driveway side of the house, it was a perfect location for expansion as a side-entry mudroom.

AFTER With a durable slate floor, the nearly 20-foot-long mudroom offers functional storage for the family of four and their guests. Paint (built-in); Benjamin Moore's Chartreuse



BEFORE





pro advice
KRISTINA CRESTIN,
BOSTON

"I always select storage bins before designing cubbies—or even a bench with bins below for shoes—so I know everything will fit!"

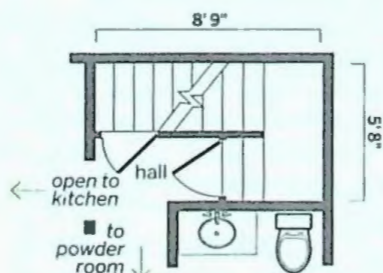


ABOVE: Two rows of glass-tipped coat hooks hung on white shiplap stand ready for guests' outerwear. The home's original front door—stripped and fitted with sliding barn-door hardware—opens onto a new playroom. *Wallpaper: Hygge & West*

LEFT: The storage unit's 16 cubbies were designed to fit baskets chosen by the homeowner. Its playful paint color is repeated on woodwork in the new kitchen, located around the corner. *Baskets: IKEA Canvas utility bag: Forestbound*

BEFORE

Dangerously steep, narrow stairs with a wide landing led up from a short hallway off the old kitchen

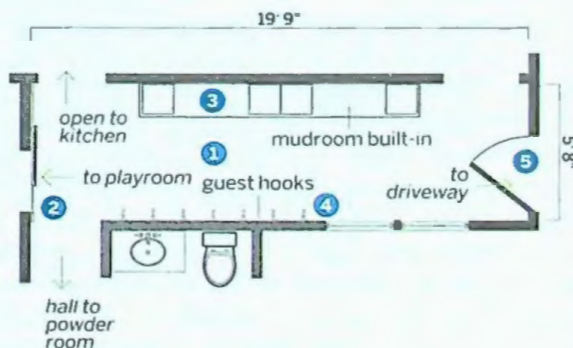


AFTER

As part of a larger renovation, the stairs were relocated to an addition, and the resulting space extended by 11 feet to create a storage-packed mudroom and a side entry

1. Removed the old stairs and extended the remaining space to almost 20 feet.

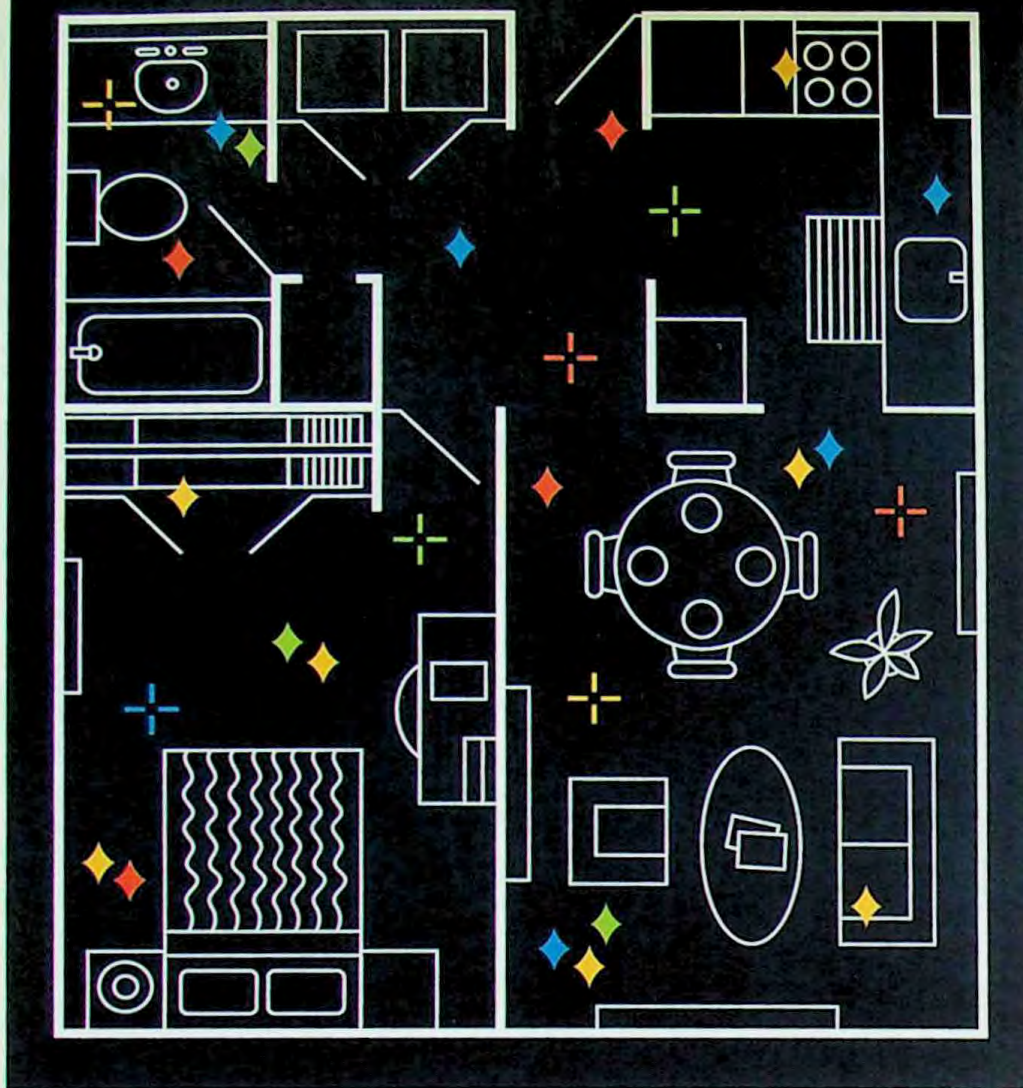
2. Reused the original front door as a barn-style slider to close off the former kitchen, now a playroom.



3. Added an 11-foot-long, 16-inch-deep built-in with a mix of open and closed storage, with space under the bench for shoes.

4. Lined the opposite wall with 1x6 poplar shiplap and two rows of hooks to stand up to visitors' wet coats.

5. Put in a new side door that leads to a deck with steps down to the driveway.



LIVING AREAS

Even if you clean on the regular, dust and dirt have a way of redepositing themselves. Now's the time to wash or dry-clean window coverings and fabric upholstery, following care labels. Then tackle surfaces you usually bypass, starting at the highest spot in the room, and working your way down.

CEILINGS Sweep over them with a telescoping microfiber wand, making sure to get into cobwebby corners.

LIGHT FIXTURES For pendants and chandeliers, turn off fixtures and spray a 1-to-4 solution of isopropyl alcohol and distilled water on a lint-free cloth. Wipe down, and follow with a dry cloth.

CEILING FANS Slip an old pillowcase over each blade to trap dust as you wipe it with a microfiber cloth sprayed with a dust repellent like Endust.

HEATERS "If heat registers are filthy, pop them out and run them through the dishwasher," says American Janitor Service owner Keith Goldstein. For radiators, he suggests vacuuming with a radiator-brush attachment, then using a microfiber dusting wand.

WALLS Dust from ceiling to base molding with a microfiber cloth or Swiffer duster; tackle scuffs with a Magic Eraser. Then gently go over walls with a Swiffer wet mop. To fight grease, first dip the mop in warm water mixed with a few drops of mild detergent.

CARPETS Vacuum well, then spot-treat stains with a 1-to-5 solution of 3% hydrogen peroxide and distilled water with a few drops of plain dish soap (spot-test first). Got pets? Order a black-light flashlight—its UV wavelengths cause the phosphorus molecules in old urine stains to glow in the dark; treat with an enzyme cleaner like Nature's Miracle. Steam clean or call in a pro if carpets still look dingy.

WOOD FLOORS Avoid dousing them with water. Rely on a microfiber mop and a cleaning spray with a pH level of 7, like Bona Hardwood Floor Cleaner. Goldstein recommends a coat of paste wax every few years to create a water-resistant finish, so liquids bead up.

Secrets of the deep clean

'Tis the season to go beyond the weekly dust-swipe-and-sweep and gear up for what pros call a "deep cleaning." Here's how

BY MICHELLE BRUNNER • ILLUSTRATIONS BY JENICE KIM

➔ **AH, SPRING. ITS LONGER DAYS** bring abundant sunshine...the better to highlight all the dust and dirt that's been accumulating in your home all winter. It's no wonder that in a recent national survey by the American Cleaning Institute, most folks—77 percent of respondents—said they do some form of spring cleaning. Yet most say they don't feel they're necessarily doing it right, or doing enough. Some 56 percent admit they've either never cleaned their washing machine or can't recall doing so, and 41 percent don't remember the last time they gave the inside of their refrigerator a good wipe-down. Kitchen garbage and recycling bins didn't get much love either: Only 13 percent of those surveyed said they pay special attention to the germ-ridden receptacles. Such overlooked spots can harbor months, even years, of bacteria, requiring a much more thorough cleaning than the usual swab-down.

Up ahead: pro-tested-and-approved solutions for tackling some of the areas in your home that often go ignored, or just require a little extra attention, to take your grime-busting to the next level.



KITCHEN

Extend regular surface cleaning to cabinets with a 1-to-1 solution of distilled white vinegar and water. Freshen up the garbage disposer by running it with 2 tablespoons of rock salt, a handful of ice cubes, and some lemon peel. Scrub garbage bins with hot, soapy water, starting on the outside; once dry, spritz with a deodorizer, such as Zero Odor Multi-Purpose spray. Then clean appliances inside and out—they'll work better and last longer, says Repair Clinic pro Chris Zeisler.

OVEN Tough, baked-on spills?

These may require commercial oven cleaner. Or try this GE tip to loosen crusty residue: Place ½ cup of ammonia in a shallow glass pan and let sit in a cold oven overnight.

COOKTOP Zeisler likes tackling greasy gunk on burners, caps, and grates with hot, soapy water or a degreaser like Fantastik, and a nylon scrubber. To clean glass cooktops, Goldstein swears by non-gel toothpaste and a Dobie pad.

VENT-HOOD FILTER Fill a bucket with a gallon of hot water and add a scoop of OxiClean laundry powder. Soak filter for 10 minutes; rinse.

REFRIGERATOR Wipe down the inside, door, and gasket with hot, soapy water mixed with a tablespoon of baking soda. To keep gaskets from sticking (and ripping prematurely), Zeisler suggests coating them lightly with petroleum jelly. Dust coils with a long, flexible appliance-cleaning brush or a universal vacuum-brush attachment designed for the task.

DISHWASHER Clear the drain of debris, wipe the gasket channels with hot, soapy water, then run a hot cycle—Zeisler likes Affresh Dishwasher Cleaner tablets.



BATHROOMS

Stubborn stains from limescale, rust, mold, and mildew require a targeted approach.

FAUCETS For mineral deposits, Goldstein swears by a squeeze of lemon juice. "In most cases it dissolves the stains right away."

SHOWER DOORS To clear away cloudiness, spray on undiluted white vinegar; follow with a sponge dampened with water and a few drops of dish soap.

SHOWERHEADS To descale these, fill a plastic bag with white vinegar; secure it to the showerhead with a rubber band so the head is submerged overnight. Remove and flush with hot water. Tackle stuck-on buildup with a toothbrush or toothpick.

DRAINS Over time, hair and product residue can cause a black slime that makes drains sluggish. Sprinkle in 4 tablespoons of baking soda and follow with 2 cups white vinegar. Once the bubbling stops, flush with boiling water. Or try a biodegradable enzyme drain cleaner like Green Gobbler Dissolve.

GROUT TOH's Tom Silva brightens dingy grout this way: Pour vinegar directly on grout lines; use a stiff grout brush to scrub with a mix of baking soda, water, and a few drops of dish detergent. Let sit for 5 minutes, then brush again. Wipe up with a damp sponge and rinse. Follow up with a grout sealer.

TOILET To nix rust stains, pour 2 cups of white vinegar in the bowl, wait 30 minutes, then scrub. Avoid chlorine bleach, which can set rust stains.



LAUNDRY

Just because a washing machine circulates sudsy water doesn't mean it's free of dirt or potentially dangerous bacteria, including *E. coli* and MRSA—especially if you generally opt for the energy- and fabric-saving cold cycle. Dryer vents that see a lot of action should be deep cleaned once a season, say the pros, to get rid of flammable lint buildup.

WASHING MACHINE To sanitize the drum, pour in a quart of white vinegar with a cup of baking soda, and scrub with a stiff nylon brush, then run a heavy-duty cycle at the hottest setting. Use a toothbrush and vinegar to scrub detergent compartments, or toss removable ones in the dishwasher. Use hot, soapy water to deslime the door gasket, then dry. Zeisler also likes Affresh Machine Cleaning Wipes.

DRYER Clean the lint trap with a crevice vacuum attachment, then wipe down the drum with a 1-to-1 solution of diluted white vinegar. To rid the exhaust of lint buildup, unplug the machine and remove the duct at the back of the dryer. Use a rotary brush to pull out lint and debris, then vacuum up any remaining fibers. Be sure to remove and clean the exterior vent, too. A specialized kit, such as the Gardus LintEater Rotary Dryer Vent Cleaning System, which includes a spinning auger-brush drill attachment, flexible extension rods, a lint brush, and a wet/dry vacuum attachment, makes the job easier.

TIPS FOR WINDOWS

Tackle window cleaning on an overcast day, as direct sun can dry cleaning solutions too quickly, causing streaks.

1 Wipe down glass with ammoniated window cleaner and a microfiber towel.

2 Tilt in sashes. To remove mineral deposits on the outside, spray with white vinegar, then follow with water mixed with a few drops of dish detergent, like Dawn. Wipe each side in a different direction so if there's a streak, you'll know which side it's on. (If windows don't tilt in, cleaning hard-to-access ones is best left to a pro.)

3 Pop out screens. Use a stiff brush to remove loose debris; wash with warm water and a mild dishwashing liquid. Knock out debris from tracks with a stiff-bristle brush followed by a hand vac. 🏠

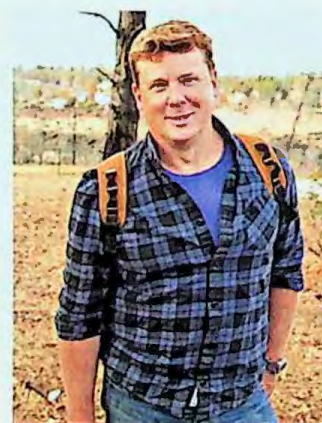
Paradise Rising

More than a year after the town was nearly leveled by the most devastating wildfire in California's history, a special TOH TV series takes a look at how the residents of Paradise are rebuilding their homes—and community. Here are some of their stories

BY BRUCE IRVING / PHOTOGRAPHS BY EMILY NATHAN

“The most off-base calls we get from journalists are the ones about ‘Paradise Lost,’ ” says Colette Curtis, now assistant to the town manager. “I get it, it’s a catchy story line, but the truth is so much more interesting and exciting.” She’s talking after her lunch hour, one of the rare ones she gets these days. “We all used to take them every day before the fire,” she says with a laugh. “Now we’re almost too busy to eat.”

The Camp Fire started on November 8, 2018, and lasted for more than two weeks, killing 85, destroying more than 18,000 structures, and traumatizing tens of thousands of people. “Everybody was panicking,” Melanie Heilderberger told the *Guardian* newspaper, recalling what it



“The third time we drove up to town, it struck me: The way I feel when I pull onto my street, how relaxed and right everything is with me...that’s why folks are rebuilding. Home is a very powerful thing.”

—KEVIN O’CONNOR



NOVEMBER 8, 2018

TOP: With his family moved to safety, Paradise native Luke Bellefeuille stayed behind for a few more hours on the day of the Camp Fire, to see if he could save their home. He captured this photo of their house, which they'd moved into less than a year earlier, before it was engulfed in flames.



NOVEMBER 9, 2018

MIDDLE: The following day, Luke returned to see only piles of twisted metal and a blanket of ash.

BOTTOM: The family's new house—rebuilt by the same contractor from the same plans—almost exactly a year later.



NOVEMBER 7, 2019

SEE MORE

For additional photos of the rebuilding efforts in Paradise, CA, go to thisoldhouse.com/rebuilding-paradise



Their roots run deep

CRYSTAL HUTCHISON and Luke Bellefeuille are both born-and-raised Paradiseans. They had moved into their newly constructed dream home just 11 months before the Camp Fire burned it to the ground. "We called our contractor, Dave Anderson, the very next day and asked him to build it again," says Luke. "He was all set to retire before the fire. Now he's got at least a dozen new houses under way."

While the house was being rebuilt, they lived with 10-year-old Trenton in a one-bedroom, 38-foot travel trailer bought with insurance loss-of-use monies, first in a nearby town and later in their old neighborhood, using electricity from a neighbor's house. (Jaycee, 20, lives about 15 miles away.) "We had to really minimize the way we bought food, showered, stored clothing, and had company," says Crystal. "It was cozy." One bright spot: Thanks to a "You know you grew up in Paradise CA when" Facebook group, she learned more about her family history. "I found out my great-uncle was the pastor of Paradise Bible Holiness Church. My grandmother was the lunch lady at Paradise High School."

At the time of the fire, Luke was working for PG&E, the local utility; last August, he quit to join his childhood friend's engineering company, clearing debris from burned properties and helping the town rebuild. "We all went through a lot," he says. "I wanted to be part of the communal effort."

ABOVE: Luke Bellefeuille and Crystal Hutchison with kids Jaycee, now 20, and Trenton, 10. With approved house plans and a willing contractor at the ready, the family was able to move in last October, 11 months after the fire. Fully finished in December, the home is a replica of what was there before, with the addition of a 100-foot "defensible space" around it.

was like to be trapped in one of the traffic jams that formed as people fled. "You can't imagine how many different types of panic there are with each person."

"It was apocalyptic," firefighter Calin Moldovan tells *TOH* host Kevin O'Connor at the start of the series, *Rebuilding Paradise*. "I didn't know if the rest of the world was ending, but this world that involved Paradise was ending at that time."

Many survivors report that they gauge time as "before the fire" and "after the fire." In the days that followed, the pronouncements were dire—the town was "wiped off the map," it would "take 100 years to rebuild"—and many were wrong. "We thought it would be three years till we could provide drinkable water," says Curtis. It turns out that Paradise Lake, the town's water source, emerged relatively unscathed; as inspectors tested the supply to each of the 1,100 remaining homes, they discovered contamination was not as universal as they'd expected, and what they did find could be fixed. Nowadays, every permit the building department issues is accompanied by a notice to the water department, which makes sure the lateral supply line will be clean and ready for use when the house is finished. Step by step, action by action, the people of Paradise are working together to solve problems, and the horrific memories of 2018 are being countered by hope and progress.

The three families *This Old House* TV followed as they rebuilt their homes embody that spirit. They feel like they're part of an informal club, says José Guevara, a flooring and tile contractor, husband of Anna, and father of two teenage boys. "Everybody in town is friendly, but when they find out you're rebuilding, they say, 'You're my brother, you're my sister now.'" Like the other couples—Luke Bellefeuille and Crystal Hutchison and Joe and Avonlea Aurentz—José and Anna decided within hours of the fire that they'd re-establish their lives in Paradise. "When someone asks me, 'How can you rebuild?,' " says Crystal, "my answer is plain and simple: It's home. I feel like we're on a mission."

Like most missions, this one has had its challenges, especially when the practicalities are so daunting. Crystal and Luke report that living in a trailer gets tired pretty quickly. Sewage needs pumping every three or four days, and refilling the rented 2,500-gallon water tank cost \$300. Laundry gets done at the laundromat, and meals are mostly take-out or prepared food—expenses their insurance

thankfully covers. Getting that money wasn't easy though, as four different adjusters, none of them from the area, have come through and recalculated their coverage over the past year, "with all the arguing and backtracking you'd expect," says Crystal.

In addition to the slow process of bringing municipal water and consistent power back on line, the schools were out of commission until recently. Paradise lost two elementary schools, and the high school suffered extensive smoke damage. The number of returning students is about half the prefire enrollment; many kids commute from temporary homes.

For everyone, debris removal has been a titanic undertaking: Curtis reports that crews have removed twice as much material as in the World Trade Center disaster, and in half the time—3.66 million tons in nine months, all of it collected, sorted, and trucked to landfills. And although the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the California Office of Emergency Services (CALOES) were set up to help pay for that, they weren't prepared for the trees: an estimated 300,000 of them, burned, dead or dying, and all likely to fall within five years. At \$2,000 to \$5,000 a tree to remove, homeowners face a real dilemma. Prodded by town officials, FEMA, whose disaster models are mostly based on hurricanes (where trees are felled), and CALOES, which had never seen such a widespread wildland-urban event, eventually put in place a payment program to help with the removal of trees likely to fall on roads and other public spaces. The town is currently applying for state and federal funding to aid citizens with the trees that still stand on their lots but don't present a public hazard.

Another surprising cost of the disaster is the wear and tear done to roads by all the truck traffic. Fortunately, town engineer Marc Mattox foresaw the issue



The long road back

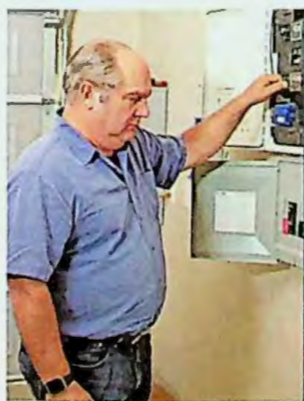
ANNA GUEVARA, who works for the California Department of Water Resources, was at a training session in Sacramento, about an hour and a half from Paradise by car, when a neighbor called to say that a fire had been reported several miles east of town. Fifteen minutes later, she called again: "It's Armageddon—get home!" "That drive back took me a lot less than an hour and a half," Anna says with a laugh. Twelve hours after they'd packed up and fled their burning town, someone sent her and her husband, José, a photo of the smoldering spot where their house had stood. José took a deep breath and said, "Well, I want to rebuild—what about you?" For Anna, a lifelong Paradisean, the answer was an easy yes.

Thus began a very long journey, which saw the couple and their two teenage boys, one with special needs, living in a succession of hotels, trailers, and rented apartments—six locations in two years. Along the way, depression caught up with Anna. "The little things started to get to me," she recalls. "Our fridge broke once, and all I could do was lie down on the couch. The to-do list since the fire is impossible to finish, and I couldn't deal with it." Now that their new house is almost done, she's doing better. "The people who have reached out, the love we've been shown," she says, "it's what keeps us going."

TOP: Anna and José Guevara with (from left) sons Talon, 14, and Mateo, 16, in their newly framed house.

ABOVE LEFT: The couple, in ash-protective gear, arrived to inspect the home's remains after it was destroyed by wildfire in November 2018.

ABOVE RIGHT: Their partially rebuilt house as it looked a year after the Camp Fire.



"I think there's some skepticism about trusting government and the utilities after the fire. 'Give me a generator and a well, and I can protect my house'—there's a Western spirit of independence among the people here."

—RICHARD TRETHEWEY



Looking forward

JOE AURENTZ, a stone-countertop fabricator and installer, was at work in Chico, normally a 20-minute drive south of Paradise, when he saw the smoke. "It was like a mushroom cloud," he says. "But I kept working. The next thing I knew Avonlea was on the phone saying she was evacuating." His wife had picked up their four-year-old daughter, Talen, from day care and was planning to wait it out, until she realized how bad things were. She called Joe to say that there was fire on both sides of the road; when she called again she had to leave a tearful voice mail. "I told him I loved him, and said good-bye just in case." In the end they reunited in a Chico parking lot.

The family—three people, two dogs, and a cat—has been living in a two-bedroom apartment in Chico since before Thanksgiving 2018, waiting for their new house to be finished. Talen really misses Brutus, their other cat, who didn't survive the fire. Joe, born and raised in Paradise, loves spotting people he grew up with around town and shouting out, "Hey! You stayed!"

"We see the strength in the community of Paradise coming back together," says Avonlea. "We're very excited and feel very lucky to have our new home to create new memories. And we've grown to appreciate the smaller things." One of those small things is the ultimate sign of hope: They're expecting a baby boy sometime this spring.



TOP: Joe and Avonlea Aurentz, here with their daughter, Talen, were among the first to break ground on a new house after the fire.

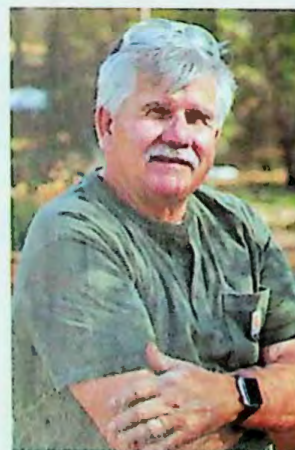
ABOVE: Their rebuilt home gets its finishing touches, including stone-veneer-clad post piers. Manufactured stone veneer: Eldorado Stone

and, right after the fire, did a laser survey of every road in town, providing a "before" to the "after" he did post-cleanup. The data will form a basis for "hazard mitigation" repair funding through FEMA.

On the job sites TOH documented, the couples are remarkably upbeat. There have been frustrations for sure—concrete subcontractors are working flat out and have been hard to schedule; getting the necessary debris cleanup certificate (which requires submitting soil samples to the town for contamination testing) added a couple of months to Joe and Avonlea's job. But compared with what one often hears from folks going through building projects, these people are nearly angelic in their lack of complaint. "Everyone in town has more patience for everything," says Luke. "We all went through something together, and we feel like we're strong people to do what we're doing."

Despite their hassles with their insurance companies, all three couples are happy with what they've been able to build—Luke and Crystal, whose brand-new house burned down, replicated it, while Joe and Avonlea and José and Anna have put up larger homes, using all the insurance money received for both the house and their belongings. "We have the same floor plan," says José, "but it's half again as spacious. It's more open and friendlier, and we gained a laundry room."

There's some good dark humor among the rebuilders. People joke about it being a safe place to live now that everything's burned, and Luke cites a favorite crack that trades on the fact that most folks lost nearly all of their possessions: "Nice jacket—that new?" And there's pride in beating the predictions: "Friends told me I was crazy, that it would take five years before we could get anything done,"



"The lessons are clear: Make the outside of the house as noncombustible as possible. What caught my attention is the importance of tempered glass. Windows are the weak point of the envelope, and it protects against failure in the heat."

—TOM SILVA

says José. “And here we are, on track to move in a little over a year after the fire.” Town administrator Curtis reports that officials originally figured that if all went well, 200 building permits would be issued by the end of 2019. The actual number: 700.

One prediction that is likely not to come true was made by President Trump after his visit to Paradise in the wake of the Camp Fire: “I think hopefully this will be the last of these.” Fifteen of the 20 largest wildfires in state history have occurred since 2000; there are an estimated 129 million standing dead trees in the state, raising the danger. The state’s fire season is lasting longer, as spring snowmelt happens earlier and dry seasons become hotter and longer lasting. Climate change is considered a key driver of this trend.

Those who are reclaiming their lives in Paradise are well aware of these facts and, learning from what happened, are building new homes to withstand fire. And they are not abandoning their hometown. “We feel called to this work,” says Curtis. “It’s a higher purpose.” ■

RIGHT: The roof of the Guevara house is prepped for fireproof asphalt shingles. With fire-blocking OSB sheathing in place, stacks of engineered wood siding await installation. *Roofing: GAF Timberline HD Reflector Series. Sheathing and siding: LP FlameBlock and LP SmartSide*

BELOW: At Luke and Crystal’s house, *TOH* landscape contractor Jenn Nawada hears about fire-resistant planting strategies from Derek Onstein of Green Ridge Landscaping. Carpet roses, daylilies, and other plants will be spaced out in the wide bed, which will be covered with a noncombustible mulch of black crushed rock.



Rebuilding to fight fire

CALIFORNIA BUILDING codes dating from the early 2000s apply to the “wildland-urban interface” (WUI) that Paradise exemplifies, addressing the dangers posed by fire’s flames, radiating heat, and flying embers, which can travel as far as a mile. The building-product categories that are covered range from adhesives to roofing, siding to skylights—more than 300 in all.

Among the most important, roofs must be “Class A rated,” meaning fire cannot pass through, and include metal, tile, and asphalt shingles that pass tests limiting flame spread. Approved sidings range from fiber cement to specially treated wood, bamboo, and vinyl, and may require a fire-block underlayment. Stick-built houses must be sprinklered.

Some of the most innovative products come from Vulcan Vents. While a house’s vents—at the foundation, soffits, and eaves—provide needed airflow, they are entry points for fire, heat, and embers, too. These vents use a honeycomb mesh that allows normal airflow but has an intumescent coating that expands in high heat, closing the vents to keep fire outside.

Paradise’s town council considered 20 new rules for buildings and lots, ranging from a mandated minimum roof pitch of 4/12 (not passed) to prohibiting railroad ties for retaining walls (passed). A proposed ban on gutters—since they hold plant debris that can burn—was modified to allow only those made from noncombustible material. The council affirmed the enforcement of the state’s WUI code requiring a 100-foot “defensible space” around a house—which means managing vegetation and fuel sources and providing safer conditions for firefighters—and went further, prohibiting combustible materials, like non-pressure-treated wood fences, which acted like wicks during the fire, within 5 feet of any structure.



ask This Old House ▶

I am planning to buy a nailer for cabinetry and furniture projects, and to install shoe molding and other interior trim. Should I get a brad nailer or a finish nailer?

—GEORGE VINCENT, BOWIE, MD

TOH GENERAL CONTRACTOR TOM SILVA:

For the work you're describing, you definitely want a brad nailer. The thin, 18-gauge nails that brad nailers shoot have less chance of splitting or marring the wood surface than the thicker 15- or 16-gauge nails that finish nailers use, and brads leave a much smaller hole to fill. That can be a real advantage when installing small or delicate trim pieces like shoe or crown molding. Brads come as short as $\frac{5}{8}$ inch for detail work, and as long as 2 inches. They don't have the holding power of finish nails, but that usually doesn't matter, because the pieces are typically glued before being nailed.

When no glue is needed, as with baseboards or crown molding, use a finish nailer.

Tom Silva's brad nailer gets a workout installing glued strips of barn wood to a headboard frame.



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

For years, nailers have been pneumatic—powered by compressed air—making them lightweight and able to recover instantly after firing. But if you don't own a compressor, a cordless nailer may be the way to go; the ones I've used are pretty nice. While they're heavier, bulkier, and more expensive than pneumatic nailers, you don't have to lug around an air hose and compressor when using them.

How to remove wallpaper

The wallpaper in our 1901 farmhouse is in good condition, but it's too formal for our taste. What's the best way to remove it without damaging the plaster walls?

—KELLY CYRUS, APPOMATTOX, VA

TOH PAINTER MAURO HENRIQUE:

You're lucky the wallpaper is stuck to plaster. Stripping wallpaper off dry-wall hardly ever goes well, because the drywall's paper facing usually comes off with the wallpaper.

The smart way to start this job is with a little detective work. Find an edge where the paper meets the baseboard molding, or a seam between two sheets, and pry a small section of wallpaper loose with a utility knife. The goal here is to determine how many layers of wallpaper you'll be removing, and how easily the paper peels free. If there's just one layer, you probably won't need any chemicals to get it off. But if there are multiple layers, a wallpaper-stripper like DIF (rustoleum.com) will likely be required to soften the wallpaper adhesive.

Protect your floor with a large plastic drop cloth, taped against the top edge of the baseboard with some exterior-grade painter's tape. Also, tape over electrical outlets and switches, and cut around their cover

SEE HOW IT'S DONE
Watch Mauro's technique for removing wallpaper from plaster at thisoldhouse.com/strip-wallpaper-stripping

Pro Tip



Pucks that score

Wallpaper scoring tools have sharp-toothed wheels that rotate and spin like a merry-go-round. That makes it easy to run the tool in circles, and ensures lots of penetrations in the paper. The tool is a must when stripping vinyl or foil papers, which otherwise would shrug off a remover.



plates with a utility knife.

Starting at the seams, try to dry-scrape any loose wallpaper with a 2-inch putty knife. If its blade has sharp corners, round them slightly with a mill file or coarse sharpening stone so they won't gouge the wall.

Continue scraping and pulling off as much paper as you can. When you're done, you'll probably have some leftover patches. Perforate them with a scoring tool like the Chomp (chompsolutions.com), shown at left. Spray the paper with a 50-50 solution of warm water and distilled vinegar. Let the solution soak in for about 5 minutes before scraping the paper off with the putty knife.

When you have multiple layers of paper, or a paper made with vinyl or foil, run the scoring tool in tight circles over the wall, then spray on the wall-

Wielding a 2-inch scraper, Mauro Henrique attacks the wallpaper on a plaster wall, working from the seams toward the center. He puts wallpaper remover on patches that dry-scraping can't remove.

paper remover. Wait a few minutes for it to dissolve the adhesive before you start scraping. Don't wet down all the walls in a room at once; you don't want the paper to dry before you start to scrape. Instead, treat an area no more than 10 feet wide. Stubborn sections may need rewetting.

After all the paper is scraped off, dampen a sponge in the vinegar solution to remove any adhesive residue from the walls. Finally, wipe the walls one last time with warm water to neutralize the vinegar.

When the walls are clear, clean,



Fix for a wobbly newel

I have a loose newel post on the bottom step of my indoor staircase. How can I tighten it up? —JOHN MCNEMAR, LEWES, DE

TOH CARPENTER NATHAN GILBERT: That's a pretty common complaint. We want newel posts to remain rigid and upright, and then we grab onto and swing around them. That kind of treatment can eventually loosen almost any newel, particularly ones that were originally nailed in place. Because there are many different types of newels and ways of installing them, there's no one way to stabilize these posts. Here's how I went about tightening up this turned, solid-wood post that rests against a lower stair riser.

The secret to any newel post repair is to find solid framing—structure—and then anchor the post base to it with structural screws, like those made by GRK (grkfasteners.com). In this case, that structure is the stringer that supports the stair. First, I braced a 2×4 between the wall and the post to hold the post plumb, then drilled two holes with a 3/4-inch Forstner bit (1). The holes should be at least 3/8 inch deep, but I'll go deeper if necessary to embed the screws solidly in the stringer.

Next, using a 3/16-inch, 18-inch-long bell hanger bit, I drilled a pilot hole through the center of each Forstner-bit hole. To make sure you don't drill farther than the length of the screw, wrap blue painter's tape on the bit as a depth guide. And to make sure the bit goes in straight, ask a helper to hold a rafter square against the newel as you start to drill (see Pro Tip, right). A 5/16-by-6-inch structural screw driven into each hole restores the newel's stiffness.

To cover the screwheads, I smeared wood glue on the last inch of two 3/4-inch dowels and hammered them into the recesses made by the Forstner bit (2). Then I sawed them off flush with a Japanese trim saw (3). It's easy to hide the exposed dowel ends: Sand them with 220-grit sandpaper, and brush on some stain, or primer and paint.



DIY SMARTS

DIY SMARTS ONLINE

Find more information about this topic—and others—at thisoldhouse.com/DIY-smarts

and dry, pull the tape off the outlets and switches, then unscrew each cover plate and scrape away any small strips of wallpaper that remain around the electrical boxes. Your walls will now be ready for primer.

Correcting recessed electrical boxes

I put up a tile backsplash in my kitchen, and now the outlet boxes are recessed below the tile surface. Can I just reattach the receptacles using long screws?

—AUDREY ATHEY, PLEASANT VIEW, UT

MASTER ELECTRICIAN HEATH EASTMAN:

Receptacles that sit part-way out of their boxes aren't safe. That's why the National Electric Code requires electrical boxes to be no more than 1/4 inch from the finished wall surface.

But it's easy to make recessed boxes code compliant: Just add box extenders. These rigid plastic sleeves are sold at hardware stores and home centers in single-, double-, and triple-gang sizes. There's no need to hire an electrician; you can install them yourself as long as you make sure the power is off as you're working.

Unscrew the receptacle from the existing box, pull it out, and tilt it up slightly. You don't have to disconnect the wires. Then slide the extender over the receptacle and inside the box. Two long #6-32 screws hold everything together. (If these screws aren't packaged with your extender, you can buy them separately.) Fit a screw through each tab on the receptacle, each hole in the extender, and into each hole on the existing box, then tighten them so the tabs on the receptacle and extender rest against the surface of your tile. The cover plate will hide everything.

This same technique can be used to bring light-switch boxes up to code.

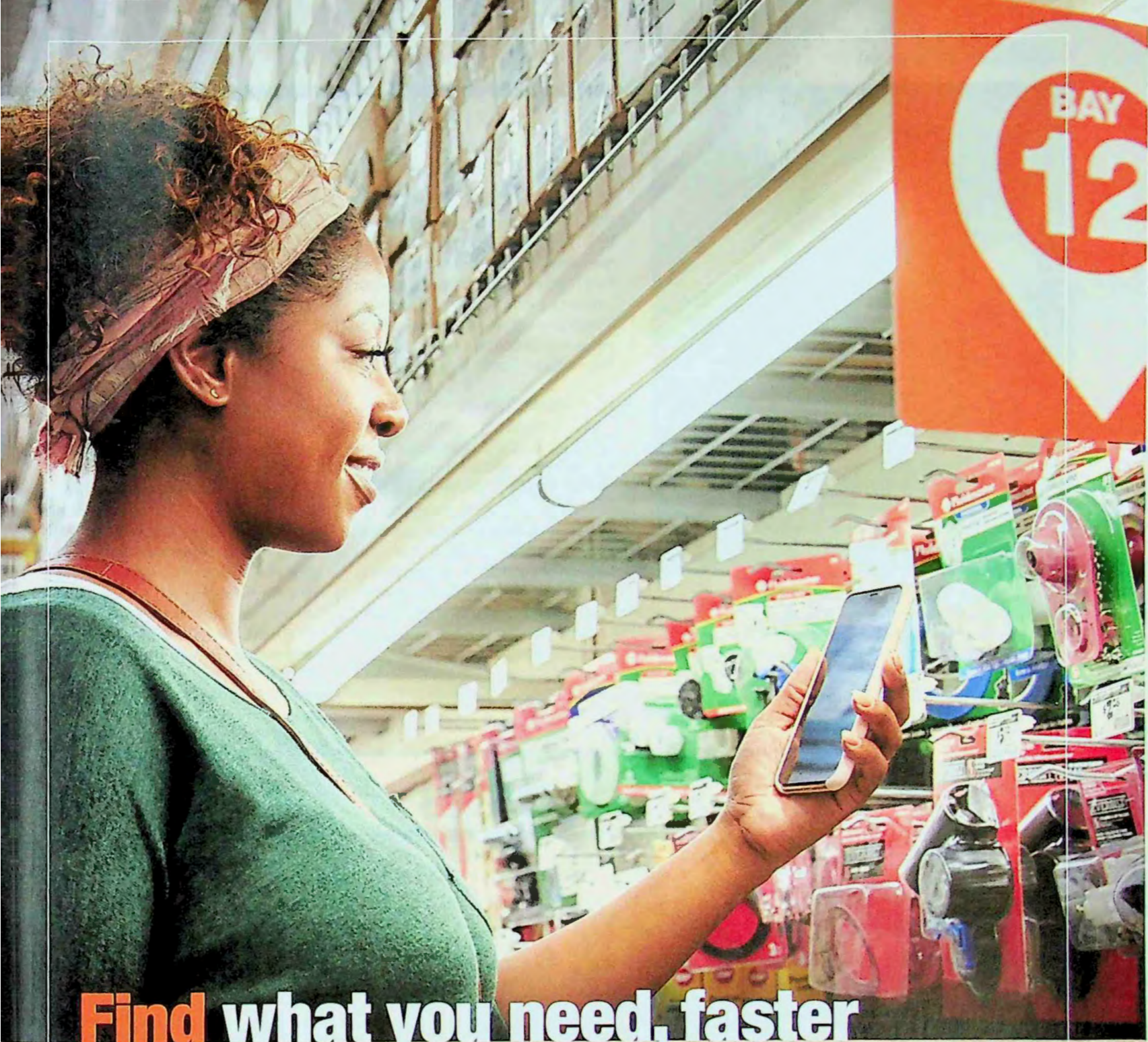
Master electrician Heath Eastman has worked on a number of This Old House and Ask This Old House projects.

Pro Tip



Good guide for drilling

Bell hanger bits are skinny and long, and liable to wander and miss their target if you're not careful. So when you begin drilling, have a helper hold a rafter square against the post, pointed end out. It will give you a reference to help make sure the bit goes in straight and true.



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To avoid tearing up walls to vent a sink drain, Richard Trethewey mounts an AAV (air-admittance valve) to a sanitary tee on the drain line downstream from the P-trap. An AAV has to sit at least 4 inches above the drain's horizontal run.

Vents for drains

While rebuilding my house after a fire, I installed the kitchen sink but neglected to vent the drain line before fitting it through the floor. Can I vent the drain further down the line at a lower point, or do I have to get back under the sink and vent from there? —CODY NASH, VIDOR, TX

TOH PLUMBING AND HEATING EXPERT RICHARD TRETHEWEY:

I'm glad you realized your mistake. Vented drain lines are critical to the proper functioning of a plumbing system. Without a vent to keep the pressures in the drain in balance, flushing a toilet or emptying a sinkful of water can suck water out of the traps beneath all plumbing fixtures and allow noxious sewer gas to come into the house. These vents also ensure that water drains quickly without gurgling.

Typically, all the drains in a house connect to a vent stack that extends vertically through the roof. If that stack is near your sink, you can insert a sanitary-tee fitting in the stack and connect its curved leg to the sink's horizontal drain, downstream of the P-trap. (Make sure the tee's curved leg sweeps down, into the stack.)

But if there's no easy access to the stack, all is not lost; you may be able to install an air-admittance valve (AAV) under the sink. Mounted on a sanitary tee on the sink drain, also downstream of the P-trap, this valve allows air to enter the drain when water surges down it, then shuts tight to keep out sewer gas. In short, it performs the same job as a vent stack without all the extra pipe connections of an actual stack.

These innovative vents are a god-send in kitchen renovations, particu-



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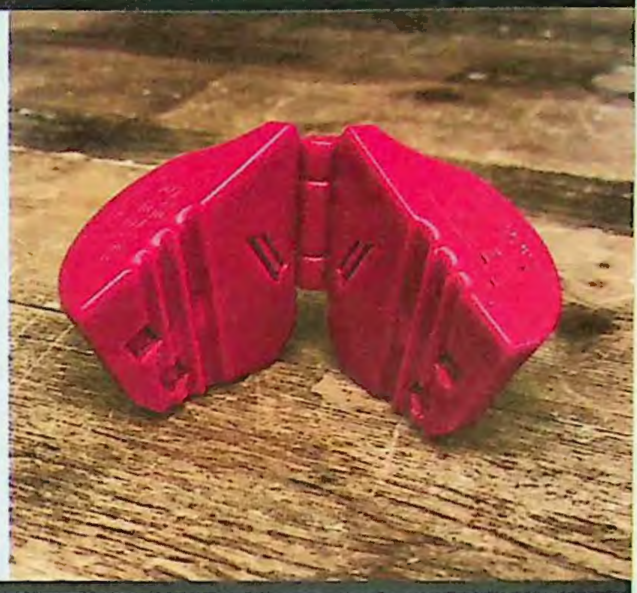
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- A Conduit grip
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- D Deadheading tool

FOR THE ANSWER, SEE PAGE 38



larly for sinks installed in kitchen islands. But they're not permitted by some local codes. Be sure to check with your town's building officials before installing one under your sink.

Fit baseboard over bullnose corners

We want to install baseboard molding, but the walls in our house have rounded outside corners. How do I go about covering them?

—JOE EVANGELISTA, DEL HAVEN, NJ

TOH MASTER CARPENTER NORM ABRAM:

Your walls have what are known as bullnose corners, which you can cover by adding a narrow section of baseboard molding between two longer sections. Instead of cutting a pair of 45-degree miters, as you would to make a standard outside corner, you'll need to make 22½-degree bevel cuts on the sides of the narrow piece, and on the ends of the longer pieces.

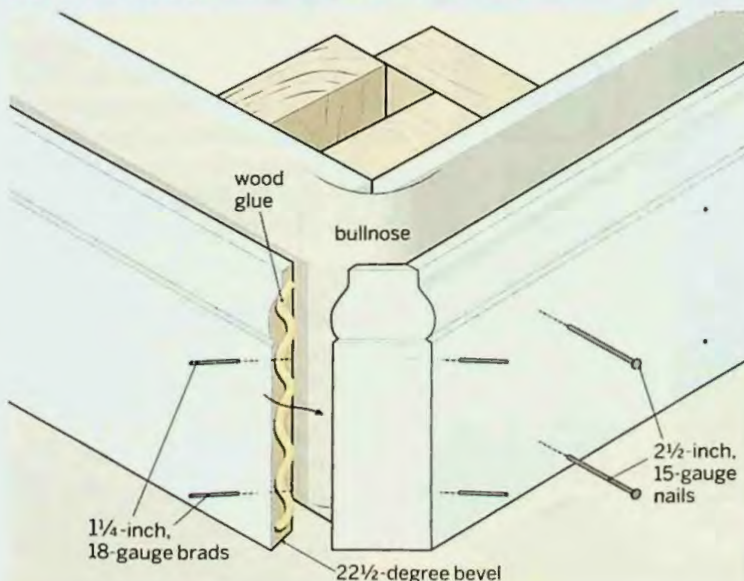
For these fussy trim-carpentry tasks, I like to make one or more sample corners out of the baseboard stock, and then fine-tune the fit. To start, cut a 22½-degree bevel into one

end of a baseboard piece that's at least 12 inches long (to keep your fingers safe). Trim it down to 6 inches. Cut an opposing bevel of the same angle into another long piece and cut it down to 6 inches, too. Position them on either side of the wall corner, then measure the distance between their outside edges. That distance is the outside width of the narrow piece. Cut 22½-degree bevels on both sides of that piece. (For safety, always cut this second bevel from stock at least 12 inches long.)

Dry-fit your sample corner to see how it wraps around the wall. You want the joints to fit tightly together when the long pieces lie flat against the wall. The two small, symmetrical gaps between the narrow piece and the corner can be filled with caulk later. It may take several tries before you get the best fit, but never trim a narrow piece that's already been cut. When the fit is right, assemble the three pieces with wood glue and 1¼-inch, 18-gauge brad nails.

Your sample joint comes in handy when measuring the long runs of molding between corners. Just hold it in place, measure to the edge of your sample, and add 6 inches to this measurement to get the finished length of the moldings, after the 22½-degree bevel is cut. If the sample joint shows the walls are out of square, increase or decrease the angles of the narrow piece by half a degree or so until it fits tight with the long pieces. Then finish gluing and fastening the corner piece as you did with the sample.

How to wrap baseboard molding around a bullnose corner



Put a stop to leaks in stone foundations

When it rains, our old stone foundation leaks from random spots. What can we do to fix it?

—NATE BURNETT, DOVER, NH

TOH MASON MARK McCULLOUGH:

It's not unusual for stone foundations to leak, as the stones can shift slightly

and the mortar can crack and fall out. But before you get to work on the masonry, go outside and determine why water is coming into the basement. For instance, if the ground is pitched toward the foundation, then you'll have to regrade the ground to slope away from the house by at least ¼ inch per foot. If you're on a hillside, a surface drain may be needed to intercept and divert the water before it reaches the foundation. Are there trees or large shrubs close to the house? You may have to remove them because their root systems can channel water toward the foundation and work their way between the stones.

Also make sure your gutters are clear, and that downspouts direct water away from the house. Splash plates under the downspouts can help, but the best practice is to connect downspouts to an underground pipe that carries water to a dry well at least 10 feet from the house (see Pro Tip). Once the exterior fixes are done, then work can proceed in the basement.

When faced with making repairs to

What is it?

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an entire foundation, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Just focus on one area at a time, particularly those places with loose stones and cracked or crumbling mortar.

To begin, spritz the repair area with water to keep the dust down, then use a small pickaxe or a cold chisel and engineer's hammer to remove any loose mortar or stone material. Save the small stones that

SEE HOW IT'S DONE

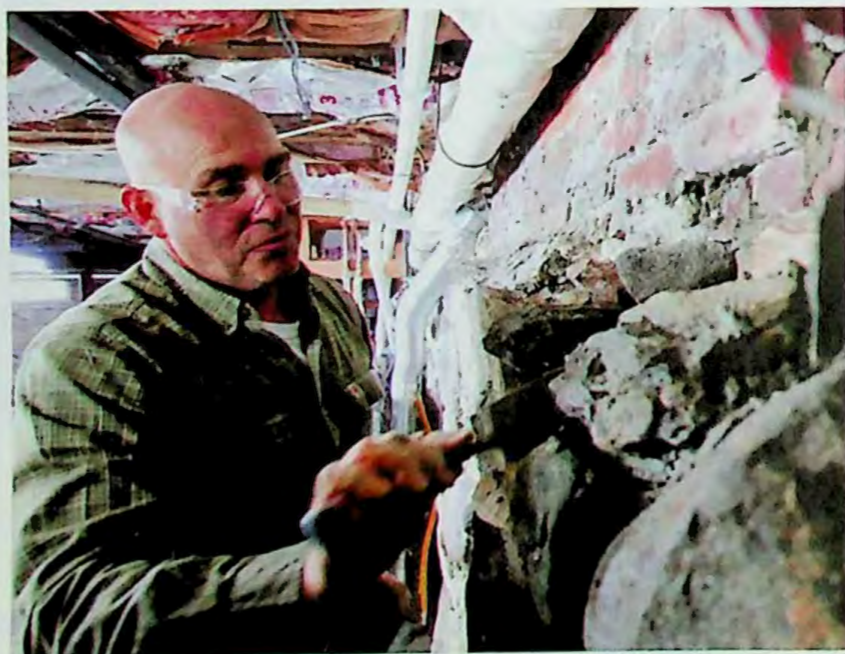
Watch Mark repoint a leaking stone foundation at thisoldhouse.com/stone-repoint

Pro Tip



Lead roof runoff to a dry well

Surrounded by crushed stone and landscape fabric, these buried, perforated barrels capture rainwater from downspouts and let it percolate back into the soil.



To repair water damage on the inside of this fieldstone foundation, Mark McCullough fills in between the stones with a Type N mortar mix, which is more forgiving of movement than harder Type S mortars.

come out, but leave the big ones in place. Clean away the loose dust from between stones with a wet brush.

Now blend a stiff mix of Type N mortar with water and a splash of concrete bonding agent such as Sika-Latex R (retail.usa.sika.com). Type N mortar is softer than Type S, so slight movements of the stone won't crack it. The bonding agent helps the mortar adhere to the stone.

When packing mortar into the open joints between the stones, I find it easiest to load some mortar on a flat, rectangular trowel, and use a margin trowel or a pointed trowel to push the mortar deep into the joints. Insert any smaller stones that came out earlier, and bed them securely in fresh mortar. Once the joints are filled, go over all of them with a damp brush to smooth out irregularities and fill in any small gaps.

You can use these same basic repointing techniques anywhere else the mortar is in bad shape.

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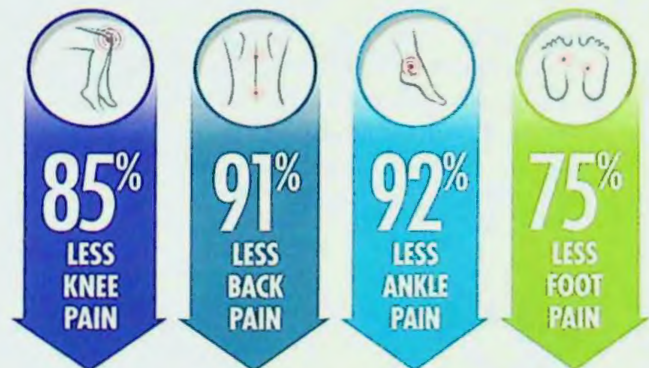
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Our granite-fieldstone fireplace is gorgeous; all it needs is a thick, wood mantel shelf. But the people who can make the shelf don't want to drill into the stone. What now?

—ELLEN LOWRANCE, HIGGANUM, CT

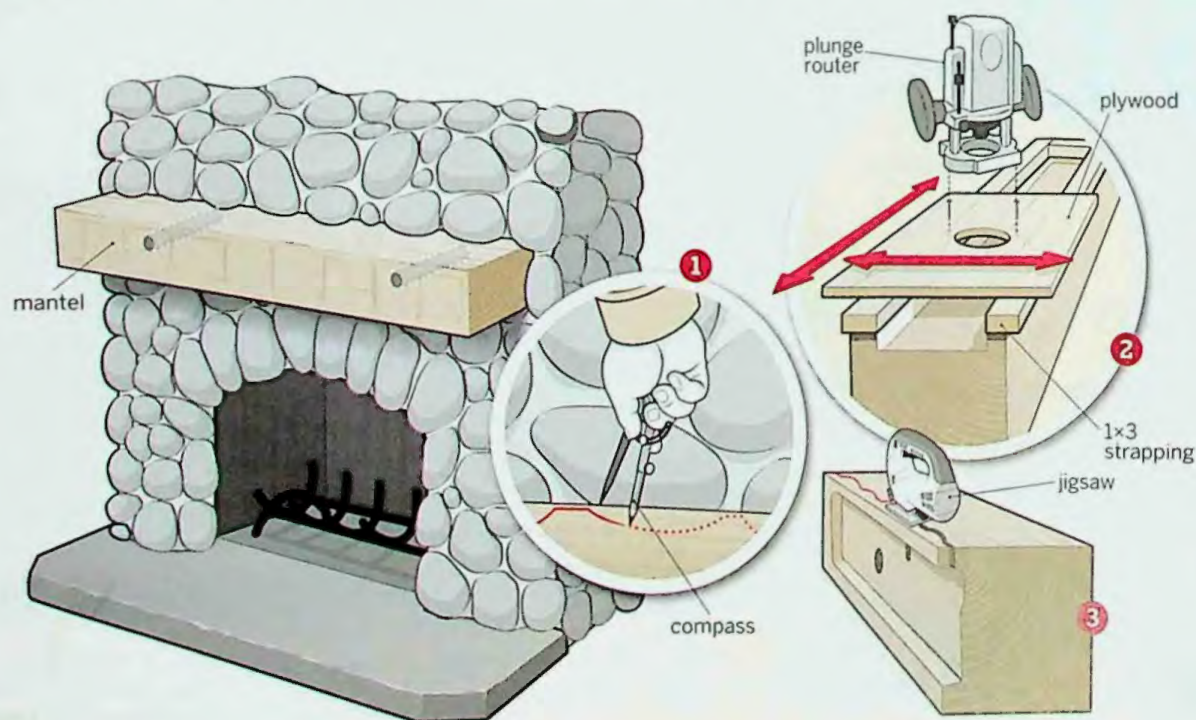
TOH MASTER CARPENTER NORM ABRAM: Hire a mason with a heavy-duty drill and diamond bits to bore horizontal holes in the stone for $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch steel pipes. The holes should be level with each other and high enough above the top of the firebox to keep the mantel safe from the heat: 1 foot plus 1 inch for every inch it projects into the room. Anchor the pipes in epoxy, drill matching mounting holes in the mantel's back side, and slide it into place on the pipes. But the job isn't finished yet. The mantel still needs to be scribed and trimmed to follow the contours of the stone. Here's how it's done.

Push the mantel up against the chimney and set the legs of a compass to span the largest gap between the stonework and the wood shelf. Hold the compass's steel point against the stone and its pencil point on the mantel's top face, with

both points at the same level and perpendicular to the mantel face. Now drag the compass along the chimney's irregular surface so the compass draws a scribe line on the wood that matches the contours of the stone. Do the same thing on the mantel's bottom and ends.

Take the mantel down, place it facedown on a worktable, and mark a line all around its back face 1 inch from the edge. Next, carve out the portion of the back face inside the 1-inch boundary. A plunge router with a bearing-over template bit will do the job quickly; just attach it to a plywood base wide enough to run back and forth over the area that needs to be hogged out (shown). Strapping tack-nailed along the line keeps the bit in bounds. You can also work freehand using an angle grinder fitted with a wood-carving attachment or a chisel. Continue removing wood to a depth at least $\frac{1}{4}$ inch greater than the distance of the compass setting.

Finally, trim along the scribe lines with a jigsaw. Set the saw's shoe so that the blade bevels inward slightly; that makes it easier to fine-tune the cut to get a perfect, no-gap fit. When you're happy with the fit, spread some polyurethane glue on the pipes (wear gloves!) and slide the mantel back onto them one last time. ▀



1. Scribe: Use a compass to draw the contours of the stones onto the mantel's top, bottom, and sides.

2. Rout: Remove the excess material from the back of the mantel using a template bit chucked into a plunge router. The router mounts on a plywood base that slides over 1x3 strapping, which keeps the bit in bounds.

3. Trim: Cut along the scribe lines with a jigsaw.



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THE DELIGHT IS IN

A tiny 1937 cottage grows into a unique family home, thanks to a couple's passion for preserving and building upon its homespun appeal



When reviving an old house, little things matter. Because it's only when you add up the little things that you can appreciate the bigger story.

When Amy and Billy Reed came upon a modest 1937 cottage in Mill Valley, California, it was the small, everyday details that convinced them the 1,036-square-foot house was not a teardown. And so they felt compelled to safeguard the home's humble charms as they set about adapting it as a home for themselves and their

ABOVE: The homeowners chose to preserve the little house's street-friendly facade with its original windows and front door.

RIGHT: Bumping out the back of the house 10 feet allowed for an eat-in kitchen and added space to the family room.

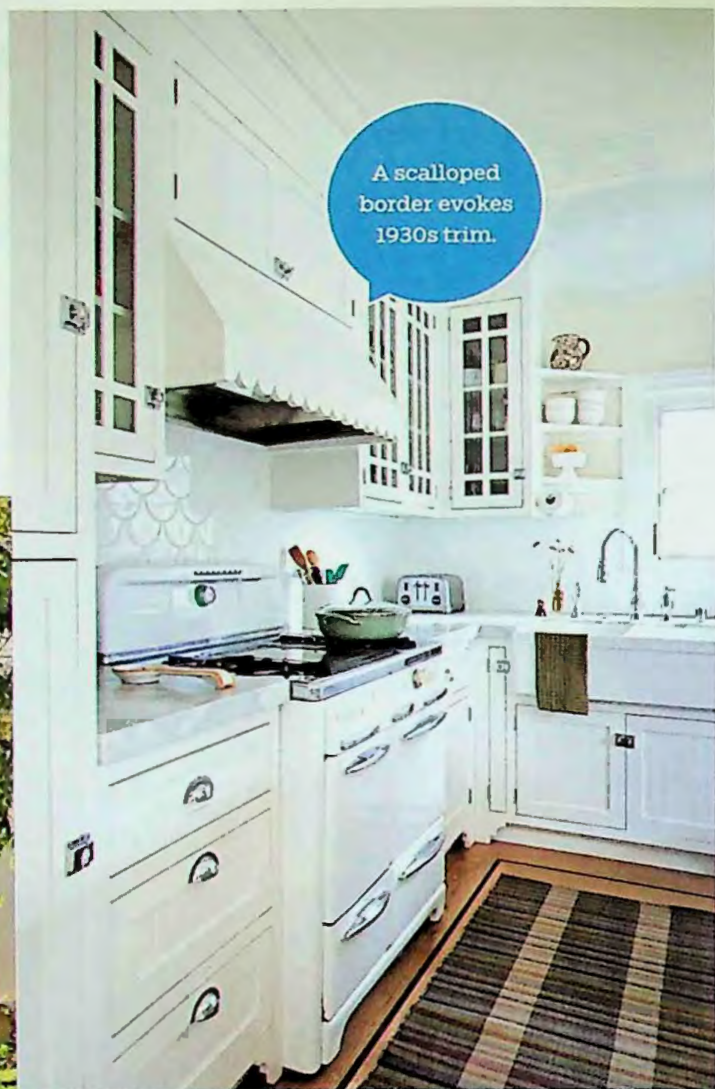


THE DETAILS



Repro
hinges give a
paneled fridge
vintage cred.

By Debra Judge Silber
Photographs by Paul Dyer
Produced by Nicole Esposito-Polly
Styling by Sarah Alba



two children, Margaret and Townsend.

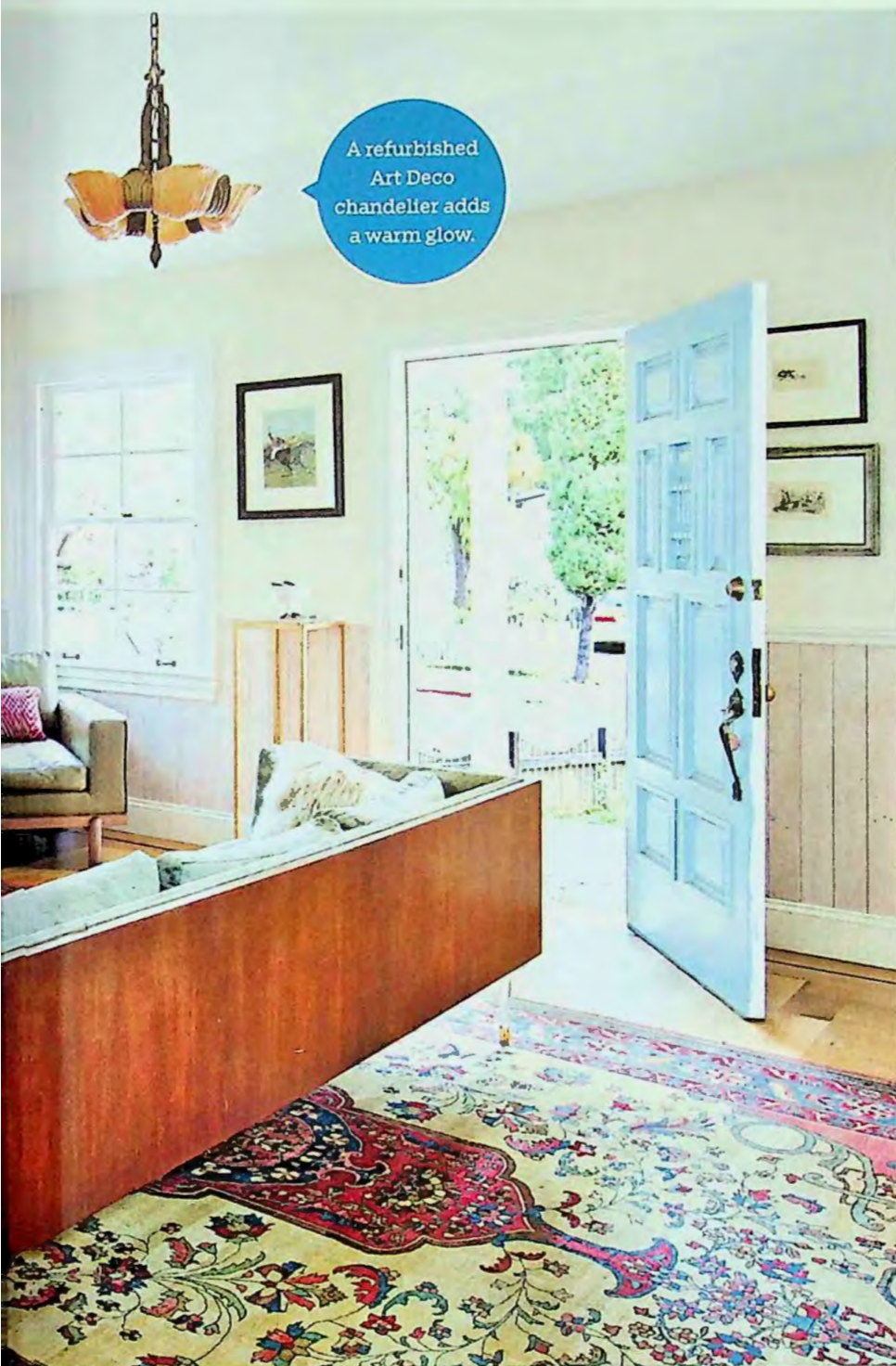
Like many Mill Valley homes built in the waning years of the Great Depression, the cottage was a bit of a hodgepodge. “Sweet, historical, and worth preserving” is how project architect Whitney Schrauth describes it. But in addition to necessary updates like new wiring and plumbing, the family of four would need more space. Given the confines of the 50-by-140-foot lot, there was only one way to go: up.

Billy was sold on the home’s sturdy construction and its inviting front porch, a refreshing alternative to the houses he’d seen with facades dominated by monolithic garage doors. Amy loved its funky, homespun details. “I’m a sucker for old buildings,” she says, although she had hoped to find a house that didn’t need quite so much work. “I wasn’t that excited about that part of it,” she admits. While both she and her husband are fearless entrepreneurs, and Billy has some building experience, they called on Schrauth to guide them on the design, and contractor Michael White to tackle the construction.



ABOVE LEFT: Scalloped backsplash tile echoes the vent-hood detail. The 1950s-era Wedgewood stove that came with the house was refurbished by a local repair shop. Vent liner: Vent-A-Hood

Schrauth began her work by calculating how much the little structure might be allowed to grow under local ordinances that limit square footage based on lot size. She discovered that tearing down a dilapidated, 858-square-foot accessory cottage on the property would enable the Reeds to more than double the living area of the house to 2,131 square feet—and still leave 335 square feet to build a new mini casita for guests in the backyard. Then Schrauth dove into the home’s original blueprints



A refurbished Art Deco chandelier adds a warm glow.

to plan the redesign. "When I say 'original blueprints,' I mean blue," she says. "Twenty-four by thirty-six inches, with gobs of information. A floor plan and four exterior elevations, hand-drawn but accurate enough to provide exactly what the builders needed to know."

But building in Mill Valley had changed significantly since those blueprints were drawn. For one thing, seismic codes now require a moment frame—a steel reinforcement—to be embedded in the walls

ABOVE: Douglas fir roof sheathing and rafters were de-nailed, re-milled, and turned into wainscoting on the first floor, then given a coat of semitransparent gray stain. Original windows were restored. With a gas insert, the old fireplace meets California's environmental codes.



RENOVATION RECAP

THE HOMEOWNERS: Amy and Billy Reed and their children, Margaret, 8, and Townsend, 7, shown above.

THE HOUSE: An existing 1,036-square-foot, one-story cottage built in 1937 on an approximately 50-by-140-foot lot in a close-knit community.

WHY THEY CHOSE IT: They were charmed by its surviving period details and the walkable neighborhood.

THE PLAN: Add a second floor with additional bedrooms to suit a family of four; bump out 10 feet in back for a larger, more modern kitchen; maintain and enhance the house's charm by reusing lumber, refurbishing existing light fixtures, and adding period-appropriate details.

TIMELINE: About a year of house hunting; three years planning and getting zoning approval; 15 months from start of demolition to finished house.

WHAT HAD TO STAY: Art Deco slip-shade chandeliers in the living room and dining room, which they had cleaned and rewired.

WHAT HAD TO GO: A decrepit 858-square-foot cottage in the rear yard; removing it allowed the family to add that square footage to the house.

BIGGEST CHALLENGE: Gaining approval for the remodel from local zoning authorities concerned with overdevelopment.

BEST SURPRISE: The tons of great light that pour into the house thanks to the placement of new windows and interior walls.

BUDGET BUSTER: Repurposing roof lumber as wainscoting cost more than expected.

GUIDING PHILOSOPHY: "We wanted a house in a walkable neighborhood," says Billy. "It only made sense to keep the history and make use of the well-built bones of the original house."



A nostalgic walnut inlay frames the oak flooring.



ABOVE: A dry bar and the stairway to the new second floor take the place of the original galley kitchen. An archway to the new kitchen appears at right. *Flooring: Amber Flooring*

LEFT: Scallop details reappear on the first-floor bath's console sink and fan-pattern wallpaper. The mirrored medicine cabinet is original to the space. *Sink and faucet: Signature Hardware. Sconces: Shades of Light*

to reinforce the house in the event of an earthquake. But even that would prove less of a challenge than obtaining approval for a second story from local zoning authorities. A few years of runaway development had led to a clampdown on applications in an effort to preserve Mill Valley's hometown character. It would take patience, intense lobbying, and some design tweaks for the renovation plans to finally get approved.

Such hurdles might have led other buyers to give up, tear down the house, and build new. But the Reeds never considered demolishing the little house. In fact, Amy says, "The further along we got in the process, the more I wanted the home to be preserved in honor of the era in which it was built."

While the Reeds knew the year the house was constructed, its style was harder to put a finger on. It's easier to say what it's not than what it is. Schrauth ticks off a few familiar historical styles before concluding, "It's a Mill Valley cottage. It's a wonderful hodgepodge of different details put together in random ways that comes off as appealing."

To maintain that appeal, Schrauth paid close attention to the "massing"—architect-speak for a



structure's collection of shapes—that made up the original house. “You need to make sure the massing is appropriate to homes of the era,” she says, and to keep or replicate the details that make the house what it is. For the Reeds’ home, that meant a modest second floor whose roof barely clears a small tree in the front yard. It also meant preserving the existing front porch and its light fixtures, the paneled front door, the front-facing four-over-four windows, and matching the wood siding with nearly identical, fire-resistant boards.

Homeowner Amy Reed’s flair for the eclectic comes alive in the first-floor office/guest room, with its high-energy mix of antiques, boldly colored walls, and wallpapered ceiling. *Paint (walls): Benjamin Moore’s Kelly Green. Wallpaper: York Wallcoverings’ Bamboo Trellis*

FLOOR PLANS

The existing cottage was tight, at just 1,036 square feet. To accommodate their family of four, the Reeds pushed out the back of the house 10 feet and added a second story, for a total of 2,131 square feet of living space with three bedrooms and three baths.

FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR





The modern claw-foot tub is old-school cast iron.

The new second floor's master suite and two additional bedrooms are accessed via a spacious landing at the top of the stairs. "One of my pet peeves is being dumped into a hallway," Schrauth says. She placed the new staircase where the original kitchen had been and, by bumping out the back of the house 10 feet, created enough room for a new open-plan kitchen, dining area, and family room.

The rest of the first floor remains unchanged save for some cosmetic improvements, and a few sleights of hand to disguise mechanical updates. To accommodate waste lines from the second-floor bathrooms, for example, White widened the frame around the living room's tray ceiling. To disguise a return for the home's new HVAC system, he hid it inside a built-in bench on the stair landing.

Challenges like this, White says, keep his work interesting and his clients engaged. As is his practice,

ABOVE LEFT: The second-floor master bath departs from the first floor's 1930s style with arabesque-shaped mirrors and elaborate tilework that recall the couple's engagement trip to Turkey. Vanity and mirrors: Ballard Designs. Pendants: Shades of Light

ABOVE RIGHT: Beside the bath's tile "rug" sits a curvy soaking tub with eye-catching claw feet. Tub: Signature Hardware. Tile: Daltile

he took Amy and Billy for a walk-through once the framing was in place. "It's a great time to walk around and talk about the options or changes that may need to come about," he says. "A building project is a three-legged stool—there's the architect, the homeowner, and the contractor, so you want to keep that line of communication open," says White. He's learned, he adds, that it's easier for people to communicate about a project when they're standing in the middle of it.

While Billy weighed in on the construction, Amy focused her attention on the home's interior, channeling period design details into the remodel. In the kitchen, she had Schrauth add vintage-style scalloped detailing on the vent hood above an existing 1950s Wedgewood range; the motif is repeated in the backsplash tile and again on the corners of a new built-in banquette.



Two-over-two windows have true divided lights.

Amy and Billy also accepted guardianship of an antique mirror left in the original bathroom, Depression-era slip-shade chandeliers in the two front rooms, and the home's original interior doors, all of which they refurbished. In a bold move—one Billy isn't sure he'd do again—they had Douglas fir rafters and sheathing from the original roof de-nailed and re-milled as wainscoting throughout the first floor. A gray semitransparent stain gives it a whitewashed look. "We kept everything that could possibly be kept," said Schrauth. "It gave me a lot of respect for them. They could have just gone with a 'modern farmhouse' look, but it wouldn't have the same soul or authenticity."

The new second floor, though, permits some nods to Amy and Billy's own history. "I really wanted to keep the '30s vibe going downstairs, but we saw the upstairs as an opportunity to do something differ-

ABOVE: In the master bedroom, a bank of planned windows above the bed were converted to display niches to satisfy zoning requirements. Double-hungs with two-over-two divided lights respect the originals, but allow a better view out the back of the house.
Windows: Milgard

ent," Amy says. The arabesque-shaped mirrors and tiles in the master bathroom are a reminder of a trip the couple took to Turkey, where they got engaged. Meanwhile, the children's bath returns to the 1930s with its schoolhouse-style lighting, wall-hung sink, and subway-tile walls.

Those Depression-era details recall a simpler time in which the unassuming house—and its new family—still seem to reside. The town center is a short walk away, as is Townsend's and Margaret's school. As it did four generations ago, the small front porch sits close enough to the sidewalk to allow the family to easily exchange greetings with a steady stream of neighbors passing by. "There are not a lot of places like it," says Amy. "Neither one of us grew up that way, never having to leave our neighborhood." Now that they've made this sweet historical house their own, there's little reason for them to ever want to. 🏡



your best yard yet

As every homeowner knows, spring waits for no one.

Procrastinate your mulching or planting for one too many warm weekends, and the once-barren winter landscape changes to a thicket of fresh foliage. "Always work a season ahead," advises horticulturist Gail Read, who has spent decades tending the public gardens at Blithewold Mansion in Bristol, Rhode Island. "The prep work done in spring sets us up for a successful summer." So dig in and clear away dried leaves, prune out winter damage, and bring in fresh compost and

plants, ideally before weed seeds catch on that there's bare ground to spare. Acting early is the difference between enjoying the seasonal rituals of planting, weeding, and deadheading—and falling behind and making the whole thing feel like drudgery.

So do a walk-through of your yard and look carefully at the plantings. Check on last year's transplants and pinpoint problem areas. If you're unsure whether a tree or shrub survived the winter, gently scrape away a little outer bark with your thumbnail to reveal a layer of either green (live tissue) or brown (dead wood). Keep an eye out for places that seem especially soggy. Spring rains can help flag poorly draining soil, perhaps explaining why areas of turf grass and shallow-rooted plants such as rhododendrons aren't thriving.

Making the time for such observations can go a long way toward taking the mystery out of growing a healthy lawn and garden, and can give you an edge when it comes to troubleshooting through the season—as will the advice in this guide.

» BY ANN E. STRATTON

PREP SOIL FOR GREENER LAWN AND MORE FLOWERS

» **If you really want healthy plants,** reach for a high-quality compost over commercial plant food. At Blithewold, Read always keeps a ready supply for mixing into planting holes and top-dressing. Scratching in a 1-inch layer—keeping 6 inches away from the crowns of plants—is enough to reap compost's many benefits, including healthier soil biology and better water retention. "The process doesn't happen overnight," Read says. "But adding compost builds up the soil, little by little."

» **Its advantages apply to turf, too.** Pelletized organic compost, applied roughly 40 pounds per 1,000 square feet, makes a good alternative to granular fertilizer, especially where organic matter is lacking. Alec McClennan, founder of Cleveland-based Good Nature Organic Lawn Care, also suggests a spring application of liquid aeration, such as Aerify Plus or Biological Dethatcher (about \$20 each; natureslawn.com), for battling soil compaction. And remember, working wet soil compacts it, so avoid tromping or digging until the ground dries out.

Clean up and trim back for healthier plants

Timing is everything. Wait to shape plants that bloom on new growth—such as lilacs and mophead hydrangeas—until just after they've bloomed; otherwise you risk snipping off flower buds.

1

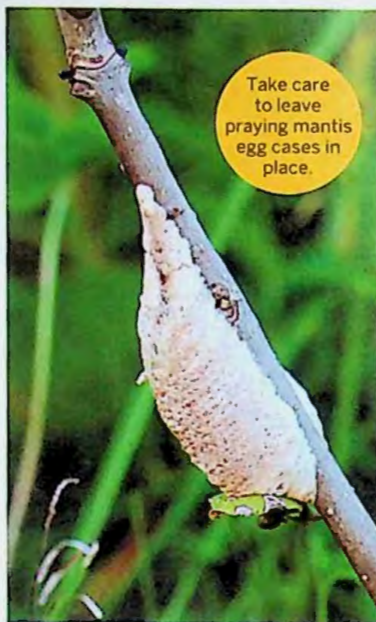
Prune soft-stemmed herbaceous perennials to a few inches above ground level and rake away dead foliage, fallen branches, and leaf litter, which can harbor overwintering fungal diseases and pests.

2

Remove all damaged and diseased branches on woody shrubs, as well as any crossing branches, keeping in mind that you should avoid pruning more than a third of any plant in a single growing season.

3

Consider leaving an area undisturbed for a few weeks of 70°F weather, giving beneficial insects like praying mantises time to hatch, and hibernating pollinators and ladybugs a chance to stir.



MAKE A BETTER FIRST IMPRESSION

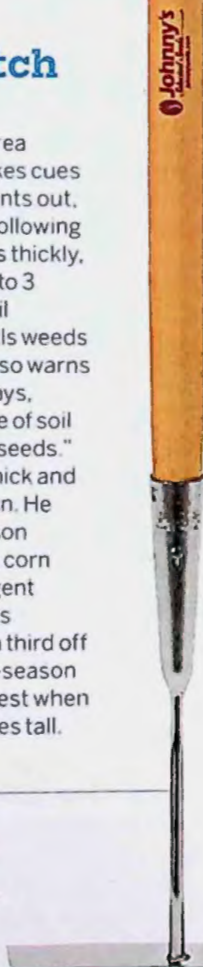
◆ Just as an updated front door instantly boosts curb appeal, so can a new garden gate dress up a yard. A fresh coat of paint might be all yours needs to welcome visitors in style. Or consider replacing your gate with (or adding for the first time) one that's set in an arbor, enlivened by fragrant flowering vines.

Crowd out weeds—or catch them early

» To beat weeds, Seattle-area designer Robin Haglund takes cues from nature, where, she points out, "you never find bare soil." Following suit, she plants garden beds thickly, mulches generously with 2 to 3 inches of arborist chips until groundcovers fill in, and pulls weeds before they self-sow. She also warns against tilling, which, she says, "interrupts the natural cycle of soil building, and stirs up weed seeds."

As for the lawn, "keep it thick and mow it tall," says McClennan. He recommends an early-season application of nitrogen-rich corn gluten, a natural pre-emergent weed preventer, and advises against cutting more than a third off your turf at one time—cool-season grasses shade out weeds best when kept at least 3½ to 4½ inches tall.

A stand-up weeder lessens back strain. This hoe's wide, narrow blade easily removes small surface weeds from moist soil. Standard collinear hoe with 7-inch blade, \$50; johnnyseeds.com



Extend peak bloom...the easy way

» Designing a standout perennial border that blooms all season takes practice, plus deadheading to keep it going. Get a similar effect—without the upkeep—with a shrub-based design heavily reliant on ornamental grasses and flowering woodies. Koreanspice viburnum, oakleaf hydrangea, ninebark, and seven-son flower are all easy-care shrubs with three-season interest that stand tall at the back of a border; lower growers of equal merit include 'Longwood Blue' bluebeard, 'Ogon' spirea, and tender salvias. For grasses, mix in silvery 'Morning Light' miscanthus, tall 'Karl Foerster' feather reed grass, or groundcovers of carex. These strong performers need just one off-season pruning.



OAKLEAF HYDRANGEA

Summer-long flowers, bright fall foliage, and showy winter bark make this native a year-round stunner.



CAREX

This grassy-textured group is mostly shade loving. Try varieties in the Evercolor series for reliably evergreen foliage.



KOREANSPICE VIBURNUM

Intensely fragrant spring blooms are this shrub's claim to fame, followed by its red-to-black summer fruit.



'KARL FOERSTER' FEATHER REED GRASS

Its upright habit offers a long-lasting vertical accent, from May through late winter.



'LONGWOOD BLUE' BLUEBEARD

Fragrant blue flower spikes grace this 4-foot-tall shrub from midsummer to fall.



'MORNING LIGHT' MISCANTHUS

Wispy variegated leaves and a soft vase shape contrast with bold blooms and dense foliage.



NINEBARK

Blooms white in spring. For dramatic foliage, try bronzy 'Coppertina' or burgundy-leaved 'Summer Wine.'



'OGON' SPIREA

White flowers appear in spring, then chartreuse foliage unfurls, which lasts all summer and turns brilliant orange in fall.

DESIGN TIP:
SHRUB-BASED
BORDERS MAY
REQUIRE
WIDER BEDS.
ALLOW A DEPTH
OF AT LEAST
8 FEET FOR
A LAYERED
PLANTING.



WEAN OFF CHEMICAL-DEPENDENT LAWN

♦ Nitrogen-fixing clover makes a good companion for turf—if you can stop seeing it as a weed. And now Microclover is making that easier to do. This dainty version boasts smaller leaves and fewer flowers, while still pulling nitrogen from the air into the ground. It's available as a sod mix (sodco.net) or seed (seedranch.com). To overseed in early spring, broadcast 1 to 3 pounds of the tiny coated seeds for every 1,000 square feet of established lawn. It's quick to take hold and, depending on your turf variety, may eliminate the need for fertilizer altogether.

Support floppy plants before they nod

When it comes to staking, Read says, "the first rule is to do it before plants need it, and the second is to stake so you can't see it." Place grow-through supports in early spring, when peonies, salvias, and similar perennials are a foot tall. A technique called "pinching" can eliminate the need to stake at all. For summer and fall bloomers like New England asters, phlox, cosmos, and monarda, Read cuts them back by a third in mid-May to encourage more flowers and stronger, shorter stems.



SKIP SUN-SCORCHED CONTAINERS

◆ When you think about the perks of drip-irrigating container plantings—from the time saved hand watering to the money saved replacing the plants you forgot to water—it's surprising everyone doesn't do it. To eliminate the guesswork of buying parts, consider getting a starter kit marketed for containers at the nursery or home center, and pick up a digital faucet timer so you can automate daily waterings.

Drip tubing is least visible when run up through the drainage holes of containers, so hold off potting up your spring designs until you've gathered the right irrigation supplies. You'll need one dripper for 10- to 12-inch-diameter pots, two drippers for ones measuring 14 to 20 inches, and at least three drippers for containers spanning more than 24 inches. Finding the right timer setting takes trial and error, but in general, you'll want to water planters for 45 to 60 minutes every day. Regularly monitor soil moisture, and adjust the length of your waterings as temperatures rise in summer and cool down in fall.



Make deadheading easier

Not only are mass plantings more aesthetically pleasing, they can be easier to maintain—giving you the option of quickly deadheading planted groupings with hedge shears. "I use them for almost everything—heliopsis, echinacea, veronicas, rudbeckias, boltonias, anything I grow en masse," says garden designer Tracy DiSabato-Aust, referring to her razor-sharp, Japanese-made Okatsune shears (\$63, as shown; amazon.com). You can also scale back deadheading with plant selection. For Haglund, that means growing perennials with seed heads—including nigella, goldenrod, wild roses, and coneflowers—that she leaves through winter, offering texture to the landscape and food for birds.

Get a flowery, full look for cheap

» No need to spend a fortune on bedding plants. In the Blithewold gardens, Read grows tulips in these planting gaps, then swaps in summer-blooming annuals. To get the most plants at the best price, start sun-loving "cut-and-come-again" annuals such as these from seed.



ZINNIAS

Direct sow or start early indoors; 3–5 days to sprout, 75–90 days to flower.



COSMOS

Direct sow or start early indoors; 7–10 days to sprout, 75–90 days to flower.



MARIGOLDS

Direct sow or start early indoors; 4–7 days to sprout, 70–90 days to flower.



COCKSCOMB

Direct sow or start early indoors; 8–14 days to sprout, 90–95 days to flower.



CALENDULA

Direct sowing recommended; 7–14 days to sprout, 50–55 days to flower.



GLOBE AMARANTH

Direct sow 2 weeks before last frost or start early indoors; 8–14 days to sprout, 90–105 days to flower.

Design a stimulating outdoor space

To take your patio or deck to the next level, really home in on all five senses. Comfortable seating and a pretty setting are a given. But what about sound, fragrance, something to snack on? When designing outdoor spaces, Haglund emphasizes grazeable edibles—berry-filled patio pots are a favorite—and plants with fragrance, such as lavender, 'David' phlox, and apricot-scented 'Gilt Edge' silverberry. In suburban settings, it's important to include elements that distract from the noise, she says, like a simple water feature or plants that attract songbirds.



EMBRACE YOUR SHADE

◆ Where sun-loving lawn won't grow, plenty of shade plants will. When choosing a palette, Haglund suggests seeking out "whites, silvers, and golds," which, she says, "all seem to glow in shade." For a no-fail combo, try a grouping of 'Little Honey' oakleaf hydrangea, white-flowering bleeding heart, and blue hostas, edged with variegated 'Jack Frost' brunnera (above). Add a comfy bench, and come summer's heat, that shady spot might just become your new favorite retreat.



Give high-traffic zones extra TLC

» If kids and pets won't quit cutting through the yard, take the hint: You need a path. Flagstone stepping-stones become a landscape feature when surrounded by lush green turf. Laid among tough groundcovers, such as Scotch moss, blue star creeper, or 'Chocolate Chip' ajuga, they provide an easy option for an impromptu passage through planting beds. And they offer something extra, too, drawing the eye deeper into the landscape, and enticing you to explore what's just out of view. ■

EASY DIY

Striking Outdoor Accents

(that anyone can build!)

Forget the birdhouses and birch boxes of woodshop class. We've assembled three projects from **Jennifer Largesse**, editor of TOH's **House One**, that show that even the greenest of do-it-yourselfers can create something stunning using entry-level tools, basic cuts, and inexpensive home-center supplies.

By **Katelin Hill**



To Jennifer Largesse, even the most impressive projects she designs for *This Old House*'s House One (www.house.one) aren't hard—they just have more steps and use bigger pieces of lumber. "When you look at something that seems complex, it's not necessarily more difficult," Jenn says. "You're just building upon the same basic techniques."

Every project Jenn designs relies on a starter set of tools most people should have in their kit, including a miter saw, a circular saw, a jigsaw, and a drill/driver. The price of materials is important to Jenn, too: she knows that beginners will be more comfortable risking mistakes with a \$20 piece of pine than with a \$200 slab of walnut. All of the supplies in her materials lists are easy to find at the local home center or hardware store.

Here, Jenn shares three projects to enhance your outdoor space. Despite the sophisticated results, they're designed for DIYers of every level to tackle.

PROJECT #1

Rustic Garden Bench

Inspired by a French antique, this colorful bench has a modern simplicity—and easily seats two. Solid stain gives the stock pine lumber an added layer of protection from the elements. Its soft green blends in with verdant surroundings, but you could also go bolder with red or yellow to add contrast.



1. Cut the parts to length. Download the cut list from www.houseone.com. Using a miter saw, cut the seat, stringer, and legs. Then cut the seat's two trim pieces.



2. Mark a decorative notch in each leg. Draw a centerline $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches up from the bottom, and mark 4 inches in from each side. Connect the lines for a triangle cutout.



3. Cut out the leg notches. With the pencil lines as a guide, use a jigsaw to cut out the decorative notch in each of the leg pieces.



4. Prep the stretcher. Using a circular saw, rip $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches from the width of the 2×12 stretcher board. Spread wood glue on each end.



5. Assemble the base. Place the stretcher on edge and center it between the legs, cut edge flush with the work surface and the tops of the legs. Make two pilot holes in the face of each leg and drive 3-inch deck screws through them to secure the stretcher.



6. Prep the seat trim pieces. Measure and mark each end of both trim pieces $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches down from the top edge. Using these marks as a guide, clip the four bottom corners at a 45-degree angle using the miter saw.



7. Add the seat and trim. Spread wood glue on the tops of the legs and center the seat on top. Glue on the front and back trim pieces flush with the top of the seat. Distribute three pilot holes along the length of each trim piece; fasten with 2-inch deck screws.



8. Apply the finish. Fill the screw holes with exterior-grade wood filler. Sand the assembly smooth. Apply one coat of exterior solid stain, let dry, and repeat. Place the finished bench amid greenery, and prepare to take a seat.



WATCH AND LEARN!
See the video tutorials at www.house.one

PROJECT #2

DIY Solar Lantern

Outdoor solar lights can create some major ambience without the cost and hassle of hard-wiring low-voltage landscape lighting. Plus, since they're portable, you can change up how you use them—to line a walkway, brighten porch steps, or add soft lighting for alfresco dinners. Finishing just three of the four sides with hardware cloth allows you to easily swap out the solar bulb over time as needed.



1. Cut the parts to size. Download the cut list from www.house.one and prep the parts, using a hole saw to drill a hole in the center of the lantern top for the solar bulb.



2. Assemble the lantern frame. Drill pilot holes through the top and bottom pieces and into the square dowels. Secure the dowels with wood glue and screws.



3. Size the hardware cloth. Use a permanent marker to trace the inside opening of the assembled frame onto the hardware cloth. Using wire cutters, cut three panels from the hardware cloth.



4. Sand the parts and apply your finish. Wipe on a coat of stain and let set for 2 to 3 minutes. Wipe away excess stain, let dry, then seal with a coat of polyurethane. Spray the hardware cloth with two coats of flat black spray paint.



5. Assemble and attach the hardware cloth panels. Using a staple gun, secure the top and bottom of the hardware cloth panels to the filler strips. Then nail the panels inside the lantern frame.



6. Attach the solar lightbulb. Insert a lightbulb that has a built-in solar cell into the hole in the top of the lantern. Secure with weather-resistant hot glue.

PROJECT #3

Tall, Tapered Planter

Like many of Jenn's projects, these sleek containers came about when she challenged herself to create a budget-friendly version of a store-bought item. She got to sketching and found she could make each one from two 10-foot boards at a cost of less than \$25. To mimic her resin inspiration piece, she devised a textured finish that also helps hide any imperfections.



1. Cut the boards to size. Download the cut list from www.house.one. Using a miter saw, cut the pieces to length. Each wall of the planter will consist of five pieces that decrease in length to create the tapered shape.



2. Drill the pocket holes. Line up the boards for each wall, from longest to shortest. Using a pocket hole jig, drill two pocket holes a few inches in from each end on one side of the four longest boards for each wall of the planter.



3. Join the boards. With the bottom board clamped to your worktable, glue the boards' adjoining edges to create the four walls. Then use a drill/driver and 2½-inch pocket hole screws to attach the boards for each wall.



4. Draw cutlines. On the front and back walls, mark the width of the bottom boards at 9 inches (centered), then draw a line to the top corners. Mark the side pieces 7 inches wide at the bottom and 2 inches narrower at the top (centered) to fit inside the front and back walls.



5. Trim and join the walls. Following cutlines, trim the walls with a circular saw. Lay down a back wall and run glue along the long edges; add two side walls on edge. Glue a front wall on top. Drill pilot holes on the front and back wall edges; secure with 2½-inch screws.



6. Create a pot ledge. To allow you to set a plastic nursery pot in the planter, mark its depth on the inside. Measure between the front and back walls at the mark; cut two scrap blocks to that length and bevel both ends. Wedge in the blocks, tapered side down.



7. Skim-coat the walls. Apply flexible spackling to the exterior of the walls using a wide putty knife. Then pull a notched putty knife across the surface to create a ribbed texture, wiping the blade off after each pass and dipping it in water.



8. Paint the planter. After the textured coating has dried completely, apply several light coats of spray paint. Add a potted plant and place the planter in a protected area, like a front entry porch. 🏡

Best Face Forward

Relocating the garage and adding a new front porch helps restore an 1891 home's signature Shingle style

BY JEFFERSON KOLLE | PHOTOGRAPHS BY WEBB CHAPPELL | ILLUSTRATION BY MICHAEL SVIRSKY



BEFORE

ABOVE: A computer rendering shows the changes planned for the 1891 Shingle-style house, including a new front porch with sweeping stone entry steps. With the existing garage removed, a new one will be built farther back, on the side of the house.

BEFORE: A 1970s garage addition obstructed the home's facade, and the garage interior was moldy and damp.



THERE WAS A LOT TO LOVE about the first—and only—house that the couple looked at in Manchester-by-the-Sea, a 17th-century fishing village-turned-summer community on Cape Ann, MA. John was captivated mostly by the 1891 Shingle-style home's elegance. "We walked through the front door and were taken back in time by the leaded glass, intricately carved balusters on the staircase, and dark hardwood floors," he says. It was the coziness of the well-laid-out rooms, on the other hand, that attracted his wife, Molly. "The way the house is positioned, warm light just pours in," she says.

But there was one glaring problem with the house, the latest project being documented as part of *TOH*'s 41st television season. The garage, a 1970s addition, jutted out at an angle from the front of the house, obscuring the home's gracious architectural character. "That double-wide garage door just overwhelmed the whole house," says John.

Not to mention its impracticality. "I kept thinking about carrying in groceries," says Molly. "To get to the kitchen from the garage, you had to go outside, up thirteen steps, then down the long front hall. That wasn't going to work for us, especially with our three-year-old, Caroline."

But while walking the property with a Realtor, John discovered a curb cut along the road and an old driveway that ran to the back of the house. "We



TOP: Four arched windows, including this one facing the back of the property, will fill the breakfast room with light. Here, Charlie Silva (left), Tom Silva (center), and Kevin O'Connor join forces to lift the large unit into place.

ABOVE: Tom and Charlie apply a self-sealing waterproof membrane to form a weathertight pan before installing the breakfast room window.

Project Overview

THE HOMEOWNERS

John and Molly and their daughter, Caroline, 3.

THE HOUSE

An 1891, 4,628-square-foot Shingle style in Manchester-by-the-Sea, MA, on a 1½-acre lot.

WHY THEY CHOSE IT

The couple were charmed by the home and the town, which is close enough for both to commute to their jobs in Boston.

THE RENO PLAN

Create a formal drive-up entry by adding a new front porch and stone steps; build a new garage with direct access to a side mudroom; move the kitchen to a more central location and modernize it; reconfigure four second-floor bedrooms into three, each with a dedicated bath and walk-in closet; alter roof framing for more third-floor head space; add a modern HVAC system with heat pumps for heating and cooling, radiant floor heat, and a high-efficiency boiler.

TIMELINE

Purchased May 2018; work begun July 2019; move-in expected June 2020.

SCOPE OF WORK

Strip off old shingles and install new with decorative diamond accents; demo existing front-facing garage and porch and build new; refresh gravel on front driveway and create a new one on the side of the house; level floors; reconfigure and rebuild interior walls; perform lead and asbestos abatement on second floor; install new baths and remodel existing.

quickly envisioned it as the new driveway, leading to a new garage," he says.

Relocating the garage would be the most visible part of a renovation that would include a new, more centrally located kitchen and a rearranged second floor with more bathrooms, as well as new HVAC systems and improved insulation, siding, doors, and windows.

Demolishing the old garage and relocating the new one to the side of the property not only unmasked the home's Shingle-style facade, but changed the traffic flow into the house. "For a modern New England family, coming into the center of a house through a garage has huge advantages, especially in the winter," says project architect Tobin Shulman. The new garage will connect to the house via a tile-floored mudroom with benches and cubbies. Meanwhile, the house's formal front entry will be dressed up with a grand bluestone-and-granite stair leading from a new circular drive to the rebuilt front porch.

The other major change to the first floor will be to relocate the kitchen, which had been sequestered in a back corner—a vestige of an earlier time when a hired cook toiled behind the scenes—to a more central location. "The idea is to get the kitchen involved in the heart of the home," Shulman says. The plan positions the new kitchen between the family room on one side and a breakfast room on the other.

The second floor will also get an update. "The house was built with four large bedrooms, small closets, and a minimum number of bathrooms," says Shulman. The new plan reduces the number of second-floor bedrooms by one but gives each of the remaining three its own bath and a large closet. The master suite includes a walk-in closet with built-in storage. There's also an office for John and a laundry room.

After almost 130 years, the house's wood floors have sagged in some areas, and the walls are uneven and not as true as they once had been. That's part of an old house's charm, of course, but the imperfect surfaces are less than ideal for hanging doors and setting cabinets.

To correct them, TOH home builder Charlie Silva takes a tried-and-true approach. "If the floors are all over the place, you have to pick a reference point—a place to begin—and work from there." The front-door threshold is usually a good starting point, he says. "It's a given that can't be easily changed."

Charlie and crew are adding posts in the basement and sistering joists to strengthen and even out the floors as well as make them less bouncy. Perfectly level is not always possible, so perfectly flat is the goal, which is of more concern in some areas than others.



ABOVE: TOH host Kevin O'Connor, master electrician Heath Eastman (on the right), and George Lane of Eaton & Eastman Electric pull cable from spools for the house's electrical service. The cables will be buried in a trench from the house to the street hookup.

LEFT: TOH mason Mark McCullough works with his crew on the front entry stairs. Granite risers and treads will complement the more rustic stone around it.

"Ideally, the kitchen floor has to be level," Charlie says. "It's important for setting base cabinets and counters and installing appliances."

Some of the house's exterior walls will need to be reframed with new studs, headers, and jacks fastened alongside the existing lumber. "Furring out an original 2x4 wall with new 2x6s allows for an extra two inches of insulation," says TOH general contractor Tom Silva. "Plus, the new wider framing makes a wall that is flatter, straighter, and stronger."

THESE PAGES
WINDOWS: Marvin
ROOFING: GAF
TRIM: AZEK
ELECTRICAL PANEL: Schneider Electric



Once the walls and ceilings are covered with blueboard and plaster, none of the new reinforced framing will be visible, which sometimes makes the extra expense a hard sell to clients.

"I always tell people to pay attention to and spend more on what they don't see—framing, insulation, heating, etc.," says Tom. "That way, what they do see—the finished surfaces—will last longer and perform better." It means floors that don't creak, nails that don't pop, and doors that swing freely and don't bind in their jambs or scrape the floor in a couple of years. "Pay now or pay later," is how Tom puts it.

Also hidden from sight are the smart practices being put to work in the home's up-to-date plumbing and heating systems. These include the use of sound-deadening cast-iron waste lines, instead of PVC pipe, to lessen the noise from flushing toilets and draining tubs, as well as the addition of radiant tubes to the mudroom ceiling to ensure adequate heat despite the large number of windows. The entire HVAC system—including heat pumps and air handlers to cool the home, and a gas-fired condensing boiler to make hot water for the radiant heat—is highly efficient, says TOH plumbing and heating expert Richard Trethewey. Each room will have its own zone that adjusts based on the number of windows, solar gain, insulation levels, and even the type of flooring. What this means is that the house will be consistently comfortable, while saving a lot of energy. "There's a best way to do things," Richard says, "and that's what we're giving John and Molly." ■

The TOH team—host Kevin O'Connor, landscape contractor Jenn Nawada, master carpenter Norm Abram, general contractor Tom Silva, and plumbing and heating expert Richard Trethewey—bring their expertise to the project.

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Problem-solvers, project helpers, and home-remodeling advances we're excited about **BY THOMAS BAKER**

1. One-handed cutting

COMPACT CUTOFF TOOLKIT

Spinning at a blistering 20,000 rpm, this 1½-pound cordless tool glides through tile, sheet metal, and cement board up to ½ inch thick. The kit includes three 3-inch blades, and a blade shroud with a vacuum attachment to whisk away dust. \$199; milwaukeetool.com

2. Built-in screens

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Open the sash from the top or the bottom, and a built-in screen unfurls to cover the opening and keep bugs out. Hidden brushes on the sash prevent flies from zigzagging past the screens. Close the sash and the screen retracts, leaving nothing to darken the view. \$200 upgrade to Pella Architect Series Reserve windows; pella.com

3. Leak stopper

T-REX WATERPROOF TAPE

The supersticky butyl-based adhesive on this tape adheres to most any surface—wet or dry—and even underwater. Wrapped around a burst pipe, its flexible backing stretches up to seven times its original length, ensuring a watertight seal. \$13 for a 4-inch-by-5-foot roll; trestape.com

4. Intelligent turf care

LANDROID ROBOTIC MOWER

After you walk your lawn's perimeter with the Landroid smartphone app, it automatically calculates lawn size and creates an efficient mowing schedule for the mower. Shown: Landroid M WR140 covers ¼ acre, \$1,000 (the larger Landroid L WR150 has a bigger battery and can trim ½-acre plots, \$1,300); worx.com

5. Built-in smart speaker

INSTINCT LIGHT SWITCH

It has all the features of a smart speaker—it responds to questions and commands, plays music or audiobooks, serves as a one-way intercom—but also works as a manual switch. \$100; store.idevicesinc.com

6. One handle, 6 tools

QUIKFIT INTERCHANGEABLE TOOL SYSTEM

Like quick-connect garden hoses, the Quikfit's six heads—including garden rake, broom, cultivator, and hoe—click onto an aluminum handle. \$18 apiece for the handle and four of the heads; leaf-rake head, \$20; shrub-rake head, \$15; fiskars.com



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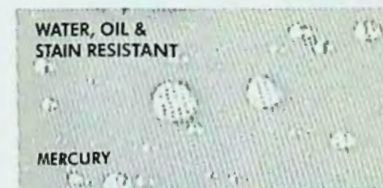


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EDITORS' PICKS

7



8



7. No-tape measuring CUBIT

The device's two lasers calculate horizontal and vertical distances (up to 100 feet), and its rolling wheel precisely measures items of any shape and size. Uploaded to a smartphone, this information lets you create manipulable floor plans or virtual-reality room scenes. Then Cubit's screen guides you to exactly where to position pictures and cabinets on the wall. \$95, letsplott.com

8. Good-bye, darkness RECHARGEABLE AREA LIGHT

This portable LED light, which runs on both 120-volt and battery power, has five brightness settings, from 600 lumens to a blinding 3,000 lumens. At the lowest setting, the lithium-ion battery keeps the light shining for 10 flicker-free hours. \$136, gearwrench.com

9. Waterproof walls HARDIEBACKER WITH HYDRODEFENSE TECHNOLOGY

Moisture doesn't affect cement-based backer boards for tile, but it can still pass through them. This fiber-cement backer board actually is waterproof, saving installers from

having to apply an extra layer of waterproofing over shower stalls, tub surrounds, and steam showers. Only seams and fastener holes need to be sealed. \$1.33 per square foot; jameshardie.com

10. Quick blade sharpening

FASTTRACK SHARPENER MK2

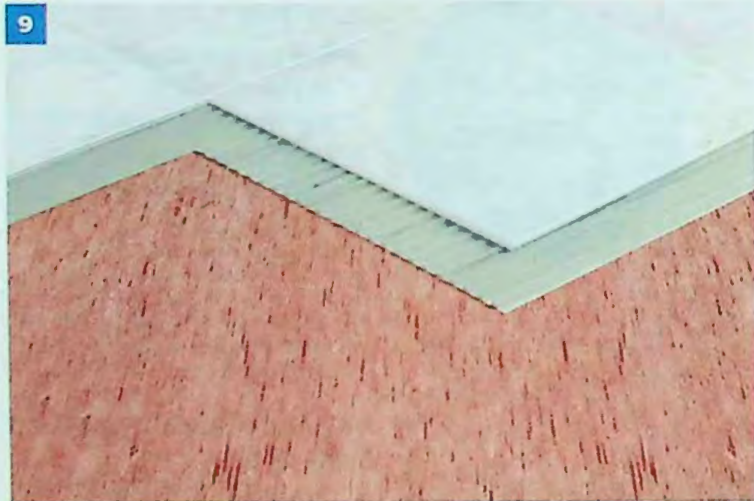
This handy tool takes the guesswork out of putting a sharp edge on chisels and planes. Just slip the blade in and slide the carriage back and forth across the edge at your chosen angle. Diamond-encrusted stones remove the metal. From \$90, m-powertools.com

11. Going green underfoot

AMORIM WISE CORK FLOORING

This waterproof, PVC-free alternative to luxury vinyl planks provides a quiet, comfortable, and durable floor anywhere in the house, including baths, kitchens, and laundry rooms. The click-in-place cork planks, protected by a factory-applied polyurethane finish, are nearly 7½ inches wide and come in 10 colors. \$5.49 per square foot; ghsproducts.com

9



10



11





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COVER: See the listing for *Before + After: Mudroom*.

TOOLKIT (pp. 7–11) The Japanese sickle > *Thanks to* Tim Zylstra, Terrebonne Limited, terrebonnelimited.com. Ornamental grass tune-up > *Thanks to* Shannon Currey, marketing director, Hoffman Nursery; hoffmannursery.com. Trash your trash wisely > *Thanks to* William Turley, executive director, Construction & Demolition Recycling Association; cdrecycling.org. John Thomas, president, R&B Debris; rdbdebris.com. Avoid energy supplier scams > *Thanks to* Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General; mass.gov. A look at basement cracks > *Thanks to* Jim Graham, PE, Schaefer; schaefer-inc.com. Take stock of your stuff > *Thanks to* Scott Holeman, director of media relations, Insurance Information Institute; iii.org.

BEFORE + AFTER: KITCHEN A semi-open cook space (pp. 12–14) **Designer:** Sean Lewis, Airy Kitchens, Philadelphia; airykitchens.com. **Custom cabinets:** airykitchens.com. **Paint:** Alabaster (walls), Copen Blue (upper cabinets), Domino (lower cabinets); sherwin-williams.com. **Countertops:** caesarstone.com. **Wall tile:** tileshop.com. **Kitchen sink:** kitchen-source.com. **Kitchen faucet:** brizo.com. **Utility sink, pantry knobs:** rejuvenation.com. **Refrigerator:** lg.com. **Cabinet pulls, shelf brackets:** houseofantiquehardware.com. **Range:** thorkitchen.com. **Range hood:** broan.com. **Dishwasher:** Bosch; bosch-home.com. **Flooring:** mirthstudio.com. **Pendants:** barnlight.com.

BEFORE + AFTER: MUDROOM High-energy drop spot (pp. 22–23) **Architect:** Aimee S. Bentley, AIA, LEED AP, ASB Architecture LLC, West Newbury, MA; aimee@asbarchitecture.com. **Interior designer:** Kristina Crestin, Kristina Crestin Design,

Manchester-by-the-Sea, MA; kristinacrestindesign.com. **Custom cabinetry:** Newbury Cabinetry Inc., Newbury, MA; newburycabinetry.com. **General carpentry:** Fishlin Construction, Woburn, MA; fishlinconstruction.com. **Paint:** Chartreuse (storage unit), Super White (trim and wall); benjaminmoore.com. **Wallpaper:** Daydream (Green); hyggeandwest.com. **Hooks (built-in):** rejuvenation.com. **Door pulls (built-in):** restorationhardware.com. **Glass-tipped wall hooks:** anthropologie.com (discontinued). **Pendants:** schoolhouse.com. **Flooring:** Montauk Black Slate; msurfaces.com. **Baskets:** ikea.com. **"Escape" canvas utility bag:** forestbound.com.

PARADISE RISING (pp. 26–31) *Thanks to* Bret Wayland, Wayland Construction, Inc.; info@waylandconstruction.net. Jason Onstein, Green Ridge Landscaping, Paradise, CA. **Guevara house builder:** Integrity Builders, integrityparadise.com. **Asphalt roofing:** gaf.com. **Fire-blocking underlayment and engineered wood siding:** LP FlameBlock and LP SmartSide; lpcorp.com. **Manufactured stone veneer:** eldoradostone.com. **Fire-blocking vents:** Vulcan Vents; newcalmetals.com. **Sod:** zamorasodfarm.com. **Trees:** Fast Growing Trees; fast-growing-trees.com.

THE DELIGHT IS IN THE DETAILS (pp. 42–49) **Architect:** Whitney Schrauth, Schrauth Architecture & Consulting, Mill Valley, CA; saandc.com. **General contractor:** Michael White, M/W General Contracting, Mill Valley, CA; mwgc.com. **Painting:** Hamill Painting, Mill Valley, CA; 415-383-8311. **Plumbing/HVAC:** Dokes's Plumbing, Inc., San Rafael, CA; dokesplumbinginc.com. **Electrical contractor:** OFD Electric, Petaluma, CA; ofdelectric.com. **Flooring contractor:** Amber Flooring, Oakland, CA; amberflooring.com. **Stucco**

contractor: One Stop Plastering, San Rafael, CA; onestopplastering.com. **Siding:** HardiePlank in Woodland Cream; jameshardie.com. **Paint:** Slate Blue (front door); benjaminmoore.com. **Kitchen > Wallpaper:** Hicks' Hexagon, cole-and-son.com. **Wall tile:** Ceramic Tile Design, San Rafael, CA; ceramictile-design.net. **Refrigerator:** thermador.com. **Sink:** ikea.com. **Lighting:** westelm.com. **Cabinet hardware:** jsharones.com. **Faucet:** americanstandard-us.com. **Living room > Windows (flanking fireplace):** milgard.com. **Light fixture:** original. **Paint:** Dover White (walls); benjaminmoore.com. **First-floor (guest) bath > Wallpaper:** Feather Fan; cole-and-son.com. **Floor tile:** Carrara marble hexagon mosaic; daltile.com. **Sink and faucet:** signaturehardware.com. **Toilet:** Toto; tolousa.com. **Office/guest room > Ceiling wallpaper:** Bamboo Trellis; yorkwallcoverings.com. **Ceiling fixture:** original. **Paint:** Kelly Green (walls); benjaminmoore.com. **Master bath > Floor tile:** Honed Carrara Marble M701 (field) and Exhibition series (border); daltile.com. **Vanity and mirrors:** ballarddesigns.com. **Pendants:** shadesoflight.com. **Faucet:** Kohler; us.kohler.com. **Master bedroom > Windows:** milgard.com. **Lighting:** westelm.com. **Paint:** Silver Lake (walls); benjaminmoore.com.

BEST FACE FORWARD (pp. 60–63) **Architect:** Tobin Shulman, AIA, SV Design, Beverly, MA; svdesign.com. **Builder:** Silva Brothers Construction; silvabrothers.com. **Masonry:** MJM Masonry Inc., Arlington, MA; mjmmasonry.com. **Asbestos abatement:** Alpine Environmental Inc., Chelmsford, MA; alpine-environmental.com. **Roof shingles, integrated solar panels:** gaf.com. **Housewrap:** benjaminobdyke.com. **Windows:** marvin.com. **Blown-in insulation:** icynene.com. **Electrical contractor:** Eaton & Eastman Electric, Kingston, NH; eatonandeastmanelectric.com. **Electrical panel and wiring:** Schneider Electric; se.com. **Landscape contractor:** K&R Landscape, Burlington, MA; kandrandscape.com. **Trim:** azek.com. **Generator:** Kohler; us.kohler.com. **Central AC:** lg.com. **Boiler:** Viessmann; viessmann-us.com.

SAVE THIS OLD HOUSE (p. 76) *Thanks to* Lobin Frizzell, 603 Property Group, Meredith, NH; 603propertygroup.com. Bruce W. Woodruff, interim town planner, Town of Moultonborough, NH; moultonboroughnh.gov. Cristina Ashjian, Moultonborough Heritage Commission, Moultonborough, NH; moultonboroughnh.gov/heritage-commission. ■

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THE HISTORY This spacious Greek Revival was built around 1840 as a simpler, one-and-a-half-story structure, not far from the shores of Lake Winnepesaukee. In 1871, it became home to prominent businessman and town official James E. French, who owned the Old Country Store, still a local landmark. In 1900, French added a full second story to expand the house, and lived there until his death, in 1919. The building was bought by Adele Blanchard and remained in her family; the town's longest-serving librarian, Adele Taylor, was the most recent resident. Vacant since 2006, it is now owned by the town, which is looking for someone to restore it.

WHY SAVE IT? The French-Taylor House retains original woodwork throughout, including beadboard wainscoting and ceilings, an elaborate staircase, and paneled doors. Wood clapboards have been replaced or covered by asbestos cement siding, but character-defining features are still visible, such as wide corner boards, eaves trim, and gable end cornices.

WHAT IT NEEDS The flagstone foundation must be shored up to get the framing back into square. The roof needs repairs and the chimneys repointing. Wood siding must be repaired or replaced. A new boiler and heating and electrical systems are needed; the attached barn must be stabilized. Tax credits are available. The restored house could be a lovely home for outdoor enthusiasts or, with a bit of French's entrepreneurial spirit, a live-in bed-and-breakfast. —KATELIN HILL

Rambling
Greek Revival
in a Lakes
Region
town!



1. The sprawling 2,900-square-foot house holds six bedrooms and one bath. With the gable end facing the street, it is considered an important example of a broad-gabled Greek Revival.
2. A large 14-by-27-foot screened-in porch with a painted beadboard ceiling is located on the north side.
3. Many of the main floor's doors and casings are original to 1840; the staircase was installed during the renovation that took place in 1900, when the roof was lifted and a full-height second floor was added.
4. A wallpapered upstairs bedroom retains its stained-wood trim, doors, and floors.



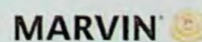
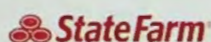
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