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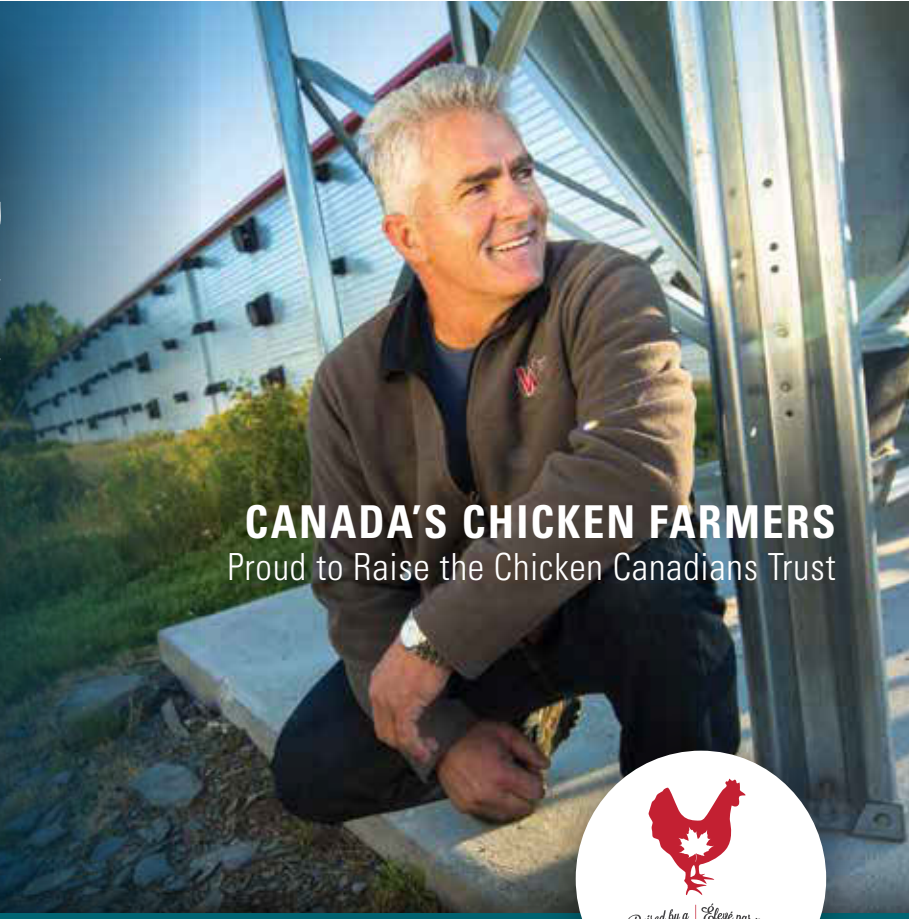
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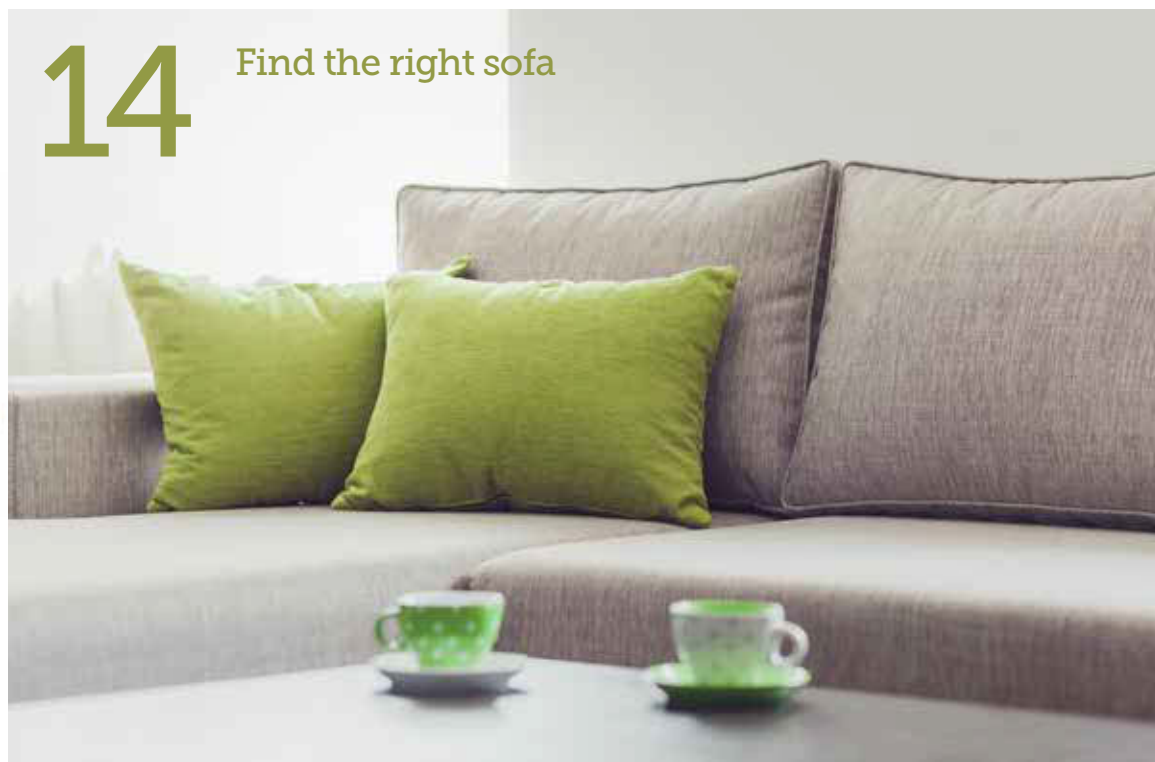
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Welcome home

Spring 2018



Photo: Bruce Murray/VisionFire

I hope we're settling in to spring in Atlantic Canada by the time you read this. As I sit at my desk, I can see bits of grass and other plants in my backyard peeking through the snow of an early thaw.

Recently, I moved into a house with a long-neglected garden, and spent the winter thinking about the possibilities, mapping and remapping the beds in my head.

When I last had space for a garden, I dedicated most of my beds to vegetables. Growing your own food is immensely satisfying. Tomato plants are my favourite, partly because you can see the progress individual tomatoes make each day, and because a fresh, flavourful home-grown tomato tastes so much better than one from the grocery store.

This time around maybe I'll try something new, inspired by the book excerpt from Niki Jabbour's *Veggie Garden Remix*, which you'll find later in this issue.

Jabbour is a Halifax-based gardening blogger, radio host, and author. Her newest book highlights unusual vegetables you might not think to grow in Atlantic

Canada, like tomatillos, romanesco (a member of the broccoli family that looks like a pointy, green cauliflower), and the tiny cucamelon. Learn to grow your own on page 30.

While satisfying and delicious, vegetable gardening involves a lot of hands-on, day-to-day work, so the idea of planting flowers appeals to me too.

My past flower experiences have all been transplants in large planters, so this might be my year to start from scratch. Luckily, I have plenty of advice from Carol Matthews, our gardening columnist, in our free archives at eastcoastliving.ca.

On page 46, you'll find Carol's latest column, offering handy tips for those of us who wish we had planted bulbs last fall. It's not too late. There are many varieties best planted in spring that flower throughout the summer. Canna Tropicana and angel wings bulbs can add a splash of colour to the yard of even the most novice gardener, like me.

If it's still chilly in your part of Atlantic Canada as you read this issue, I hope you'll find spring warmth here.

In this issue we meet the owners of a modern home in Lockeport, N.S. that uses energy efficient options to lower its eco-footprint (page 22), learn to host an afternoon tea (with recipes and tea suggestions on page 40), and find advice on what to watch for when buying a cottage (page 34).

As always, we love hearing your feedback and story suggestions for future issues of *East Coast Living*. Connect with us on Facebook and Twitter, or email me directly.

CLARIFICATION: The story "Avoid renovation disasters" (Winter 2017) left some readers unclear about Ryan McAllister's role. He provided insight as a local roofing expert and did not work on Denise Auffrey's house. See the revised story at eastcoastliving.ca/2017/12/reno-disasters. East Coast Living regrets any confusion.

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On our cover:

Teri Appleby and Keith Dwyer built their beach house amid the trees to maintain the natural landscape.

Photo by Janet Kimber

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Artist Kimberley Eddy groups complimentary pieces together to express her personal style. From top: *Joyful*, mixed media on wood by Kimberley Eddy; wire sculpture Nova Scotia map on driftwood by Susan Mills; *Billowed*, limited edition print by Gord MacDonald; *Blue Harmony*, lithograph by Bermudian artist Lisa-Anne Rego; wooden iguana sculpture hand-crafted in Cuba. The plant and beach rocks add a natural element that flows with the outdoor subject mater.



discover your personal style through art

— BY HEATHER WHITE —

Your décor speaks volumes about you. Make sure it's saying the right things

Kimberley Eddy, a Bedford, N.S., artist and former interior decorator, says seascapes nourish her soul. “I have sand collections, shell collections, sea glass collections gathered at different beaches throughout the years,” she says. “Generally, we collect these things not just because they look pretty, but because we feel a connection to them. They help to define us and to ground us.”

The coast also inspires Eddy's art; most of her work conveys coastal themes. Just as the ocean can seem to have a transient temperament, say brooding, calm, angry, spirited, Eddy hopes to convey an energy in her art, evoking a memory or an emotional response.

Decorating your home is an opportunity to express your personal style and create a space that feels comfortable. Having a connection to the art that surrounds you reflects “who you are and tells part of your story,” says Eddy.

Damien Packwood, an interior designer and owner of Damien Morris Designs in Charlottetown, says he mounted oars on his son's bedroom wall to remind him of their Newfoundland roots. “That's part of our story,” he notes.

Packwood is attentive to how people describe individual style. Sometimes they know what they don't like, he says, but aren't sure what they like. “I go in with fresh eyes,” he says. “I may see patterns they don't see over time.” Plus, he notes, your style can evolve over time.

Once he has some details, Packwood uses virtual-reality glasses to expand on styles and ideas, bringing them to life. “If I have measurements and images of a space, I can create the whole environment for you to see beforehand, looking through the VR glasses,” he says.

In some instances, a singular piece of art can overpower a space. Packwood says a client recently asked him to reconfigure her blue sunroom. “I ask, what's the function of the room, what do you want the feel to be, is there anything that's staying here that I need to work with,” he says.

She wanted to keep a 75-cm-by-150-cm painting featuring blacks, reds, and yellows. Each colour represented an aspect of native spirituality from the artist's past. Packwood had to make it work.

“We have to think about light, blinds, temperature, these types of things... but also colour, since this piece is quite dramatic,” Packwood says.

Still, there's room for a measured, eclectic approach. “I want things to tie in, but I don't want the room to look too matchy matchy, like I've totally based its colours around that one painting. Then it looks staged.”

One of the room's walls was white; the painting now resides on its centre, buffeted by lots of space. “Some of its colours are repeated in throw cushions, so there's some cohesion throughout the room,” says Packwood.

Likewise, Eddy says that overly colour coordinated rooms tend to resemble a showroom.

“Ideally it would look more like you've collected décor items and art over time, where each piece has a story, instead of the story being that this room goes together.”

“Art can be freeing in as much as it can give people license to do what makes them happy, what they connect with or what they feel they need,” says Eddy.

She suggests homeowners pick three words to describe how they want to feel when they walk into a room. Calm, sanctuary, and safe suggest an emphasis on whites and blues, colours known to lower your heart rate. She suggests accessorizing with soothing images, a cozy comforter, and plush pillows.

Local art adds a dimension, too, Eddy notes. The draw is that it's original, it has soul, depth, and meaning. “As artists we create works out of passion and love for where we live, translating that into expressions of style and culture, history and connectedness.”

“Ultimately, I put my heart and soul out there on the canvas. When people are standing in front of my work, looking at the waves, I hope they actually feel something visceral; that they can imagine how the waves sound lapping on the shore.” ❄️



5 WAYS TO HONE YOUR PERSONAL STYLE

- Mix and match textures, sizes, and heights to provide depth and personality.
- Declutter after the holidays. “When I store my Christmas decorations in January, I put back the regular stuff slowly,” Packwood says. “The empty spaces can afford clarity and inspiration.”
- Create the art you want. “I recently saw a navy painting with gold geometric patterns that I fell in love with, but there was no way it was coming home with me,” says Packwood. “So I recreated it on a wall in my office.”
- Rotate art on a regular basis. To reconfigure her sideboard art display, Eddy says she'll take everything away, then start from scratch, tweaking and adding pieces as she goes.
- Browse art school and amateur galleries to learn what kind of art appeals to you (and find a deal on a brilliant, unknown artist's work).

pick the right sofa for your space

The average life span of a sofa is 10 to 15 years—choose wisely



— BY KATIE INGRAM —

Whether you call it a couch or a sofa, it's often the largest and longest-lasting investment in your living room, so it's important to think about more than just how comfortable the cushions are.

"The overall aesthetic of the room or house, the client's personal taste, and use of the sofa should dictate the style of the sofa," says Susan Snow of Moving Designz Home and Cottage in Charlottetown.

Size is a good starting point in the sofa selection process.

"Before we get into styles, colours, and fabric even, it's more like what size sofa will fit in your space," says Suzanne Saul, co-owner of Attica Furnishings Ltd. in Halifax.

Beyond the size of the sofa itself, consider factors such as the room's traffic flow, size of the living space, and how many other pieces of furniture are in the room.

Moya O'Neill of Moya O'Neill Design in St. John's, Nfld. says a house, condo, or apartment's architecture plays a large role in sofa purchasing. Depending on its age, some buildings have layouts that don't accommodate certain types of furniture.

"[Consider] the hallway for sure, especially in heritage homes," says O'Neill. "Older homes come with narrow staircases, but also consider this for apartments."

Do some simple math to ensure the sofa you want will fit through your front door. Measure the door's height, width, and clearance (the space you have to enter the door before encountering a wall). Measure the length of the sofa from arm to arm and the diagonal depth (see next page). To fit through the door, your sofa's length must be less than the height of the door and clearance area; the width and diagonal depth must be less than that of the door.

In addition to getting the sofa into your home, consider how its size suits the room. “For nine-foot and 10-foot ceilings, you could consider a taller sofa so as not to dwarf its size,” says O’Neill. “For an eight-foot ceiling, you should consider a low sofa as this will give the illusion of a taller ceiling.”

When it comes to design, Snow suggests modern spaces should take a more “tailored approach,” with square arms and no piping, or fabric trim. A cottage sofa should be accented with armrests and slipcovers for a casual relaxed look, while a more traditional space goes well with button tufting on the seats, she says.

Colour is equally important. In Snow’s experience, a neutral colour is a safe bet for any space. “Neutral does not mean boring,” she says. “You can add interest through fabric textures or details, such as button tufting and



nail heads.” A neutral sofa colour allows you to add and change accent colours and patterns easily with cushions or throws.

“The sofa is a very large structural piece, so I like to keep it simple,” Saul says. “I don’t look to the sofa to be overly complicated because I think there’s more opportunity in other aspects of the room, either in the occasional seating, artwork or cabinets... there are other places where embellishments can be made.”

Don’t run from colour, but be sure it complements your room.





“A sofa in a great bold colour, such as a deep navy or emerald green, can really anchor a room,” says Snow. “My design advice is to either go neutral on the sofa with colour on the walls or colour on the sofa with neutral walls.”

When choosing fabric, pick something you like, but also think about the furniture’s use. O’Neill suggests starting at the base by making sure your sofa is made of a hardwood that will stand the test of time and avoid sagging,

“Leather still seems to be the most durable,” says O’Neill. “It is tough, easy to wipe and very practical for kids and adults.” Cotton and cotton blends are very resistant to wear and fading, but stain easily.” Clothing dyes transfer easily to cottons.

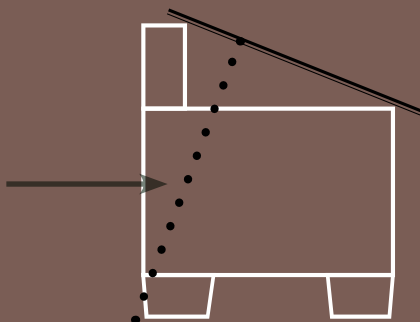
Picking out a sofa isn’t easy, but it is important. “Take your time, shop around, look at different styles and do some research,” says Snow. “Purchasing a sofa is usually a big investment that you want to last for a long time.” ✨

FEEDBACK

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DIAGONAL DEPTH

To find diagonal depth: run a straight edge from the top of the back of the sofa to the front of the arm; measure from the rear corner of the sofa to the straight edge. To fit, your sofa’s length must be less than the height of the door and clearance area, and the width and diagonal depth must be less than that of the door.



PICKING YOUR BEST SOFA

- Pick a fabric that suits the furniture’s function and the room’s use. For example, leather is more durable, but cotton is more resistant to wear.
- Neutral colours are always a safe bet, but if a room is filled with neutral colours a colourful sofa can accent the space.
- Pillows and throws add a splash of colour to a neutral coloured sofa or space. Plus they’re easy to change.
- Large scale patterns don’t always work in small spaces, as they tend to take up more room.
- Size is a big factor and this extends to more than the sofa itself. Take into account the dimensions of the room, including the ceilings, hallways, and doorways.
- Layout is also key. After measuring your room, draw up a floor plan and potential room designs.



DIY Rain Collector

Take advantage of spring showers
to keep your garden green

— BY CHRIS MUISE —

Collecting rainwater for use in the garden, toilet, and washing machine can lower your water bill, and decrease your ecological footprint.

Benjamin Morrison is a national sales representative and technologist for Cleanflo Water Technologies, based in Regina, Saskatchewan. He helps homeowners design water collection systems to suit their needs.

“We’re using that water, that otherwise would be discharged either to the ground or into a storm system, to reuse on the property,” says Morrison. You can use the collected rainwater for gardening, irrigation, and in toilets and washing machines.

For potable water, you’ll need a professional to ensure proper filtration. “There’s going to be debris

from all sorts of things in the rain water,” says Morrison. “That debris itself is both what carries the bacteria and the nutrients that feed the bacteria.”

But for outdoor use, he says a do-it-yourself approach is an affordable option.

Check your municipality’s rainwater collection rules before starting this project.

Morrison advises drawing a diagram of your system first, before anything is purchased or installed, to reduce excess costs and unforeseen hiccups.

If you’re smart and thrifty, Morrison says an effective and efficient rainwater collection system is within the reach of those with even the tightest budgets.

1.



Gather supplies

You will need a rain barrel with lid, plumbing hardware, downspout elbows, and several sheets of screening. Most hardware or do-it-yourself stores will have everything you need for about \$50.

2.



Roof drainage

Your roof is the first point of contact for your rainwater, and that's where you should collect it. Rainwater that hits the ground becomes storm water and is no longer useful.

"Your first and most important thing is your roof and your piping, collecting that water and transferring it to a specific point," says Morrison.

Build your collection system on your existing eaves trough system.

3.



UV Light

It's important to minimize the amount of sunlight entering the tank, because it encourages contaminants like algae to grow.

"If you put your head in there and it's bright as day, that's UV," says Morrison. "You want to eliminate that UV light."

On a small-scale system like this, you won't completely eliminate all light. But by using an elbow with a bend in it at the top where the water enters, or a pre-filter designed with light reduction in mind, you can minimize UV light.

4.



Your tank

Tanks come in many shapes and sizes, can be above or below ground, and if you're willing to spend enough money, come with a lot of bells and whistles, such as high-end filtration systems.

For a small-scale system, nearly any storage container can work.

"Find a tank that you like," says Morrison, who says even a simple blue barrel from a hardware store will do. "Find something that's going to be safe to use, and within your budget."

Ensure the tank doesn't touch your home because it could damage your foundation. Place your tank 15 to 40 centimetres away from any building.

Cut a hole in the tank top that is large enough to accommodate the water from your downspout.

5.



Overflow

Install an overflow run off to prevent your tank from getting too heavy. It should be the same diameter or slightly wider than the point where the water enters the tank.

"From a safety perspective, you want an overflow on the tank, near the top," says Morrison. It should drain off somewhere safe, preferably near where your gutter runoff would deposit. A few elbow pipes and some hose should suffice.

6.



Pre-filtering

This is the most critical part of rain harvesting. The pre-filter will also aerate and oxygenate the water, which reduces the bacteria.

There are many items on the market that can do this, costing between \$15 and \$500. Several layers of simple window screening will help reduce the potential for contaminant growth in your tank.

Place the screen over the spout that directs water into your tank.

7.





Fill it up



The water enters the tank from the eaves trough, which should end just above your collection tank. Direct water into the tank using the downspout elbow. From there, the water will pour into the tank through the screen filter. ✨



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quick fix: kids' rooms

Simple do-it-yourself ideas from the experts to transform your space without emptying your wallet

— BY HEATHER FEGAN —





MODERN LIGHTING

For a quick fix and a modern update, Suzanne Saul, co-owner of Attica Furnishings Ltd. in Halifax suggests overhead lighting. “A lot of times homes come with standard flush mounts that aren’t very attractive,” says Saul. “Pick something fresh and modern and bold for overhead lighting in a children’s room.”

COST: \$135+

TIME: An afternoon shopping and installation

PLAY WITH COLOUR

A big way to refresh all rooms but especially kids’ rooms is fresh paint. “It goes such a long way,” says Kelly Anderson, design coach and owner of Refreshed Designs in Fredericton. “It can change the look and feel of the whole room.” Use your child’s favourite colour or something more sophisticated like a soothing neutral or pastel that grows with your child.

“There are so many different looks you can achieve, but work with a colour palette,” says Saul. “Something not so multi-coloured, something a little more restrained to create visual interest.” Saul explains how 10 different colours can be overwhelming and a colour palette is more cohesive. She recommends using one primary, one secondary, and one tertiary colour.

Saul also suggests an interesting wallpaper with a fun print, maybe on the wall the bed is on. “I look for a clean-looking wall,” says Saul. “One with not a lot going on, without doors and windows.”

Anderson suggests adding a vertical stripe, an accent wall, or creating a chalkboard paint wall and let kids draw to their hearts’ content. “It’s one of the most inexpensive ways to change a room,” says Anderson. For standard paint, choose an eggshell or satin finish. It offers enough protection to wipe down when kids put their hands and feet all over it.

COST: \$30–\$75 depending on size of room and quality of paint

TIME: One day



GET COMFY COZY

Pay attention to floors and beds and incorporate different textures and textiles. “People have told me, they do these great rooms up and kids don’t stay in them,” says Anderson. Layer pillows, rugs, and throw mats around to make it really comfortable so kids get down on the floor to play or read. “Flooring stores have remnant pieces of rugs in different sizes, shapes, colours and textures,” she adds. “They will cut and stitch them for you at a very low cost.”

When it comes to an area rug, Saul says to choose something a little more sophisticated but still youthful. “It doesn’t have to scream ‘I’m in a kids’ room!’ It can be colourful or neutral but it doesn’t have to be purchased from a kids’ section.” She says there are so many other possibilities that will transition as your children grow. “A persian-style rug that works with the colour palette in a kids room has youthful energy and sophistication.”

COST: Remnant pieces \$100, depending on size and quality chosen.

Smaller throw mats to layer, \$20–\$50

TIME: Several hours shopping



REPURPOSE AND REUSE

Anderson is a big fan of repurposing furniture. “You can change it up as they grow, and you don’t have to buy expensive new pieces every time,” she says. Try thrift stores, garage sales, and on Kijiji to find vintage dressers, chairs, and side tables. But only, Anderson says, “if you are willing to put some work into fixing them up, to sand and paint them.”

She suggests letting the kids choose colours, and making something bright and fun. “Take a dining chair, paint it and use as a bedside table,” says Anderson. “Take a coffee table or end table, use chalk-style paint and it becomes an art table where they can sit on the floor and make crafts.”

Refreshing their room is not something young children can do for themselves so give some overall direction for the space. “You don’t want a hodge-podge but a flow that’s visually engaging as well,” says Saul. “I don’t tend to go too heavy on themes for decorating in case they fall out of favour when interests change. Definitely it’s great to incorporate a few favourite things.”

Saul suggests storage solutions to minimize clutter are also important. “Use creative storage, be it trundle beds with space underneath or bookcases with baskets.” Anderson suggests painting and securing old milk crates to the wall with screws to become storage for toys and books.

COST: \$20 and up

TIME: 2–3 hours of thrift shopping ✳

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A photograph of a modern beach house with a large, light-colored wooden deck. On the deck, there are four bright yellow Adirondack chairs arranged in a row. The house has large glass windows and a dark brown, textured ceiling. The background shows a dense forest of trees.

an unusual beach house

— BY SANDRA PHINNEY —
PHOTOS BY JANET KIMBER

This tree-framed cottage treads light on the land using time-honoured eco-friendly building techniques

It's mid-afternoon on a balmy day. Teri Appleby and her husband, Keith Dwyer, march through a hectare of woodland near Lockeport, Nova Scotia. They're on a scouting mission to decide if they want to buy the property. Determined to reach the beach, the couple bushwhacks their way through the trees.

"And there it was," Appleby says. "A beautiful mile-long crescent beach with silver white sand. We couldn't speak for a few minutes. It was even better than the pictures we saw online."

Six years ago, they were in the market for a Nova Scotia cottage with water frontage within two hours or less from Halifax, where they live with sons Jaeger and Casey.

Appleby and Dwyer had both spent time in nearby Mahone Bay and Brule Beach, so that's where they focused their search. This property was love at first sight, but there was no cottage; they would have to build.

Normally, most people who purchase a beach-front property decide to build with a view of the beach and ocean. Not so in this case. Appleby says, "We wanted to protect the trees and recreate that moment of wonder every time we stepped through the trail onto the beach."

Privacy and unobtrusiveness were also considerations. "Locals use the beach regularly for daily walks and quahog digging," Appleby says, "and we didn't want to change the landscape of what they were used to seeing. We just wanted to tuck into the trees and be hidden away."

Once they purchased the property, the couple contacted long-time friend and architect, Nova Tayona of Nova Tayona Architects. Although Tayona lives in Toronto, she was born in Halifax, and studied at Dalhousie University's School of Architecture.

Tayona says her clients' desire to maintain as many of the trees as possible initially felt very counter-intuitive to what you should do when you have an ocean site. "But when I visited it for the first time it was obvious how contained and special it felt—this forest room beside the ocean," she says.

Once the location of the beach house was settled, several other challenges arose.

A 19-metre long deck fronts nearly 15 metres of windows that take full advantage of passive solar in all seasons. The Adirondack chairs are made from recycled plastic.



Although it's adjacent to the dining and living area, the kitchen's drop ceiling and wrap around Corian countertop give a sense of separation. Recessed lighting and subdued knobs and handles on cupboards ensure clean lines and an uncluttered look.



Water was the first challenge. "We drilled a test well but it was brackish," Appleby says. "We could opt to drill a proper well and desalinate the water using a reverse-osmosis process, but were uncertain how stable the water source would be. There was also a possibility that the water would run out."

The solution was a home design that harvests rain. The asymmetrical gabled roof funnels rainwater into three 6,700-litre cisterns. They filter and UV treat the water for all household needs including drinking water.

The second major challenge was the possibility of severe storm surges flooding the cottage. To avoid this, they built the home on stilt-like piles. "The system used was a screw pile as opposed to a standard pile you would pound into the ground," Dwyer says. "This is faster, newer technology that is more suited to sandy areas where there is little soil to work with." Should a surge occur, the water will flow under the structure instead of into it.

Another challenge was the need to remove more trees than they had hoped for the septic field. "But a beautiful thing happened," Appleby says. "A small field of Nova Scotia wildflowers spontaneously grew in this open area directly in front of the cottage and we now share our yard with Monarch butterflies, honey bees, and hummingbirds."

This build embodies how a home can respond to its natural surroundings by emphasizing sustainable approaches to living on the coast.



The beach house is oriented along an east-west axis and capitalizes on passive heating and cooling. Additional heating comes from thermal mass in-floor radiant heat and there is high solar reflectance from a Galvalume roof—a sheet steel roof coated with an Aluminum-Zinc alloy that reflects solar heat.

Ninety per cent of all occupied areas of the beach house are within seven metres of a window that opens. Using wood for framing, structural elements, and finishing materials took advantage of local craft and building methods. As well, all plumbing fixtures are low-flow and the appliances are rated Energy Star (the mark of high energy-efficient products in Canada.)

In an email interview, Tayona described the exterior of the house as being skinned in semi-transparent black-stained eastern-white cedar. “The result gives the appearance of the house receding against the forest backdrop, and contradicts its bright colour,” she says “At 10 feet deep, the 48-foot-wide (three metres by 14.6 metres) cantilevered roof provides the perfect amount of shade in the summer, and allows the low winter sun to warm the concrete floors in the cold season.”

The low ceilings and walls in the entry, bedrooms, and private areas are clad in Douglas fir plywood giving a feeling of intimacy, and provides a spatial relationship to the forest outside, bringing the outside in. Higher ceilings in the living area give a sense of unlimited

BELOW: The fireplace is a self-contained, precast unit that doesn't need a screen. Not only does it hold the heat but it also has a strong draught to prevent smoke from billowing back into the room.

LEFT, FROM TOP: Main entrance; The master bedroom features full-width windows with unobtrusive blinds; Part of the “screen room” at the end of the beach house, where the family stores sports gear and accessories for quick access to beach.





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FROM LEFT: Jaeger, Casey, Keith, and Teri enjoy the sun on the deck; The boys love playing in the surf just beyond the tree line of their summer home; A good stash of wood is conveniently located close to the entrance of the beach house.



space and lightness. The ceilings are clad in fir plywood and birch ply, exuding warmth in contrast to the concrete floor.

Tayona says she loves it when clients come to her with a curiosity and love for design as well as being open minded to the overall vision for a project. This project she says was particularly satisfying.


"Its light footprint just feels right. All of the passive moves that were used are common-sense moves that people have employed for generations, but we've strayed far from this collective knowledge when we build today." The house won numerous awards, including the 2017 Canadian Green Building Awards and the 2017 American Architecture Prize for Architectural Design/ Green Architecture.

From the homeowner's point of view, Appleby's top tip is to find an architect who shares your aesthetic. "Look at photographs of their past projects and make sure you love the architect's work," she says. "If you are considering a project that is special, different, or challenging in some way, be sure to research contractors and chose one who is open to, and has experience with, working on projects that may seem outside the box."

It's also important to believe in the finished product and stick with it, Appleby says. The area faced a long stretch of foul winter weather in 2014. "We endured a very long, very complicated building project. Sometimes we wondered if it was going to be worth it all in the end... but it turned out more beautiful than we could ever have imagined." ❁

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get growing with cucamelons





In this excerpt from her new book, *Veggie Garden Remix*, award-winning Atlantic Canadian gardening writer Niki Jabbour introduces readers to the tiny but versatile cucamelon

Our family loves trying different kinds of cucumbers. Each summer, our cucumber beds are planted with at least a dozen species and varieties, but few look like “traditional” cucumbers. As you walk the pathways between the beds, you might notice the slender twisted fruits of ‘Painted Serpent’ hiding beneath a mound of foliage, or the weird kiwi-shaped fruits of ‘Little Potato’ climbing an A-frame trellis. You’ll also see some of the more popular heirloom cucumbers, like ‘Lemon’, ‘Crystal Apple’, ‘Boothby’s Blonde’, and ‘Poona Kheera’. And you’ll definitely find one that isn’t related but nonetheless tastes like a cucumber—the cucamelon!

All three of my nieces have birthdays within a 2-week span in late summer, and every year, they all ask for the same gift — a big container of cucamelons.

Not all cucumbers live up to their hype (true for any vegetable); we’ve tried many that we’ve found disappointing or simply not to our liking. But that’s part of the fun of having a vegetable garden — experimenting!

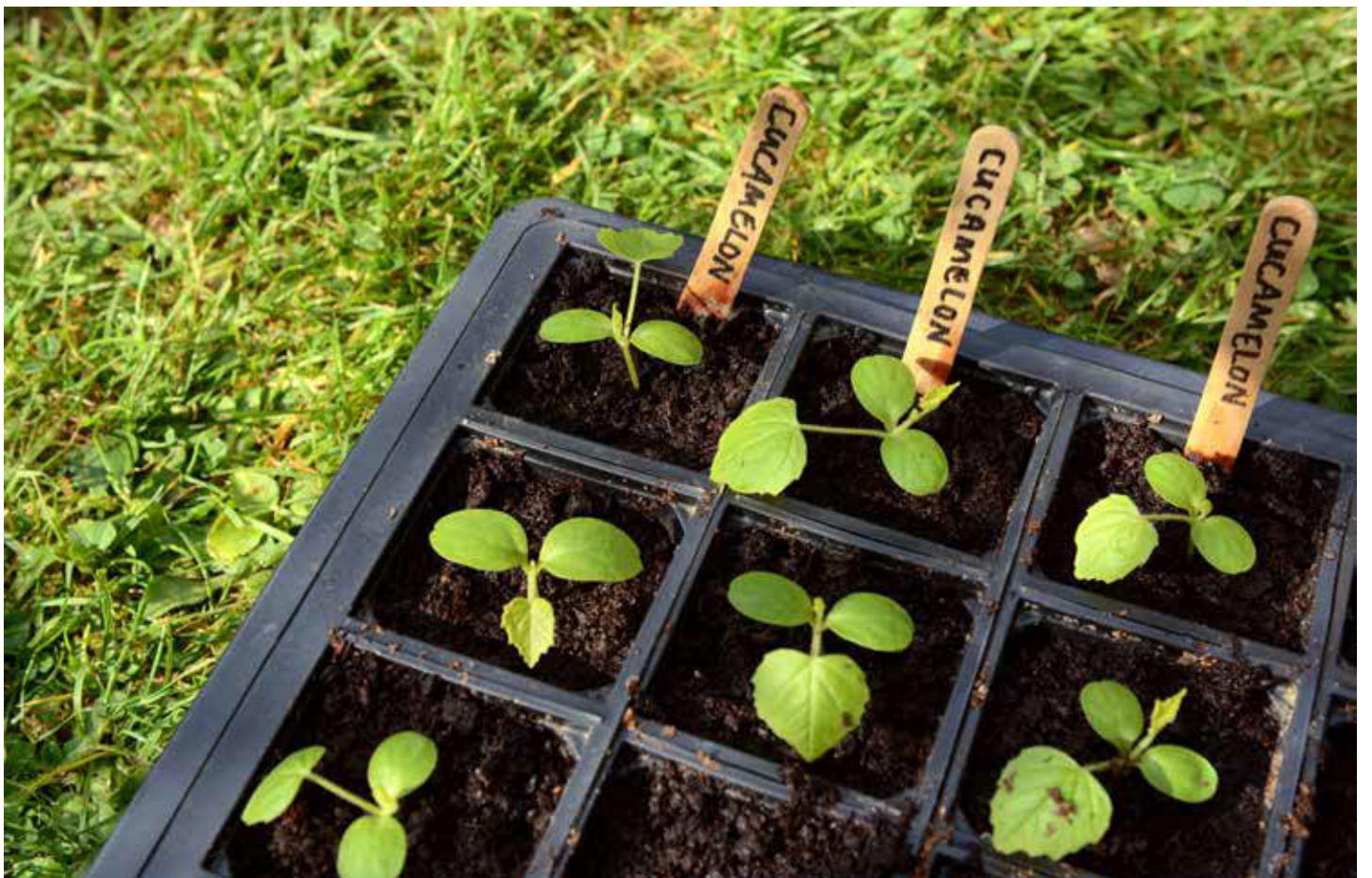
Cute, crunchy cucamelons

What’s the most popular crop in our vegetable garden? Easy! It’s cucamelon. The fruits, which look exactly like tiny watermelons, rarely make it into the kitchen; instead, we gobble them up by the handful, straight from the vines. The plant is a distant relative of cucumbers, and these inch-long fruits do have a cucumber-like flavor with a pleasing citrus tang.

Very rarely, you might find cucamelons at the farmers’ market, but they can fetch up to \$20 a pound! The price alone makes them worth growing for yourself. They’re an easy crop; the vines are very productive, and they’re rarely troubled by the many insects and diseases that plague cucumbers.



Photo: James Ingram





Slow to start, but vigorous

Impatient gardeners will find cucamelons slow to start in the garden, with growth not taking off until the summer weather heats up. That said, they will tolerate a cooler spring better than cucumbers do, and once they're established, cucamelons are quite a bit more drought tolerant. The vines are delicate looking, with thin stems and small leaves, but don't be fooled! This is a plant that can hold its own in the garden. People with limited growing space can plant them in large pots on a deck or patio; just be sure to provide something for the vigorous vines to climb.

Sours with age

About a week after you see the first flowers, begin checking for ripe cucamelons. They tend to hide behind the foliage, so look closely. Once they're about an inch long, start picking. The sourness of the skin intensifies as the fruits age, so pick them young if you want to minimize the citrus bite. We start picking the first fruits in late July or early August, with the last few plucked from the vines in October.

Cucamelons are open-pollinated and produce both male and female flowers on the same plant, so you can save the seed from any ripe fruits that fall to the ground. Warm-climate gardeners will find that a few cucamelons left behind will self-seed quite easily.

There are so many ways to use these fun fruits. As the name suggests, they're perfect for pickling! We eat them out of hand, pack them in the kids' lunch boxes, and take them along to picnics and barbecues. You could even pop them into your gin and tonic.

Growing great cucumbers and cucumber melons

Start the seeds indoors six weeks before your last spring frost. Sow the seed in 4-inch (10-cm) pots to give the plants a chance to develop a substantial root system before planting out and to minimize transplant shock. Once the risk of frost has passed, harden off the young plants and move them to the garden.

Gardeners in northern regions with unpredictable late-spring weather may wish to protect young plants with cloches or a mini hoop tunnel. Open the ends of the tunnel during the day to regulate

temperature and allow air to circulate. I usually leave the mini tunnel in place for 2 to 3 weeks, depending on how quickly summer arrives, then replace it with a trellis.


Heat, sun, and rich soil are the keys to growing success with these plants, so pick a site with full sun and amend the soil with aged manure or compost.

Seriously consider trellising the plants. We grow ours on sturdy A-frame trellises; this keeps the foliage and fruit off the ground, which minimizes the risk of diseases and makes harvesting a snap. Also, unsupported plants will sprawl in every direction, quickly taking over a garden bed.

If you want to save the seeds of heirloom cucumbers and cucumber-like plants, such as burr cucumber, just let a few fruits ripen fully on the vines, or collect any fallen fruits at the end of summer. Scoop out the seeds, which will be surrounded by a gel-like coating, and place them in a container, along with a small amount of water. Leave the mixture to ferment for 3 days (expect mold to form on the surface). The good seeds will sink to the bottom of the container; when this happens, pour off the mold, pulp, and water. Rinse the seeds left at the bottom of the container with fresh water until clean. Spread them on paper towels or a clean dishcloth and let dry for at least a week. Store the fully dried seeds in envelopes. ✨

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Photo by Trisha Campbell

home away from home

Long weekends at a cottage by the water sounds great, but there's plenty to consider before buying a recreational property

— BY KEN KELLEY —



Photo by Trisha Campbell

Call it a bungalow, a cottage, or your home away from home, a recreational property gives you a chance to get back to nature without roughing it. But before you think about setting up that new barbecue and inviting your friends for a swim, there's a lot to keep in mind .

"When purchasing any property, buyers need to be aware of any costs that go along with each sale," says Amy VanBuskirk, a realtor with Creativ Realty in Moncton, N.B. Research the property tax in the area you're considering. Keep in mind, she says, "Homes in cottage country tend to be closer in proximity than what you normally see in a city. I always recommended locating the property pins or have the land surveyed to be sure you know exactly what you are purchasing."

Trisha Campbell, a realtor with Exit Realty in Charlottetown, agrees that it's key to take your time and learn all you can about a property before making your move. "If a property has been sitting on the market for an extremely long period of time, it's usually overpriced," she says. "This is where talking with a real-estate professional can come in handy as they can check what comparable listings sold for and ensure that you're not getting taken advantage of."

Investigating the financial side is your first step, but there are other major factors to consider if the price is in your range. The run-of-the-mill precautions for buying a house all apply.

Campbell recommends property and septic inspections before the sale. "When considering purchasing any property, you need to do a thorough home inspection so you are aware of the condition of the structure, the windows, electrical system, and anything that might require repair in the future," Campbell says. "You can then plan your repairs or updates accordingly."

If the long-term plan for your vacation property is turning it into a permanent residence, VanBuskirk suggests making sure what you want will be possible.

"If you're planning on adding onto the structure in the form of an addition or a second floor, be sure to look into this before making the purchase," says VanBuskirk. "This way, you could potentially avoid problems down the road when you want to put your plans in action."

Another factor to consider before making your summer home your permanent residence is ensuring the roads in the surrounding community have year-round access. Campbell says this is not a given

in all cottage communities. If the cottage is on a private road, you and other owners could be responsible for road maintenance.

"Additionally, if you're looking to call your cottage home on a full-time basis, you will need a property that is not only properly insulated, but also has a foundation under it," she adds. "Many cottages aren't built with those considerations in mind, both of which will ultimately add to the cost of the home."

If you're still a part of the workforce and aren't in the position to live at your cottage full-time, you could turn it into a rental property.

Campbell agrees that it's a smart way to have the property pay for itself when you're not in a position to use it, but advises people to ensure they are compliant with governmental regulations. For example, in P.E.I., rentals that are not monthly are highly regulated in the province, and the owners of unregistered properties face big fines.

Another critical consideration when it comes to owning a summer property is ensuring you have the proper insurance coverage in case things go awry.

Recreational-property insurance is different than the coverage for your primary home. How much the cottage will be used and how often it is occupied affect the insurance you carry on the property.

The Insurance Bureau of Canada's website says that due to the risks associated with part-time occupation of the property, insurance for a cottage is normally provided on a "named perils" policy instead of a comprehensive or all-risk policy.

With a named perils policy, risks including fire, smoke damage, or explosion are covered, while other risks like water damage or vandalism may be more difficult because your cottage could be vacant for weeks at a time, leaving an issue like a burst pipe to become a bigger problem than it would in a year-round home.


There's a lot to consider before purchasing a cottage, but the work will all be worth it when you're sitting on your deck listening to waves crash on the beach. ✨

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SIPPING CIDERS FOR SPRING



Hop On Board

Coastliner Craft Cider

Fredericton

5.4%

The first thing you notice upon opening a bottle of this hopped cider is its sweet, floral aroma, followed closely by a hint of herbal hops. For a beer lover like me, adding hops to the mix piques my interest instantly. While this very dry cider is sweet, it's not cloying. Earthy, mildly bitter New Brunswick-grown Golding hops blend well with the natural apple flavour to create a taste that will keep you coming back for more.



An ardent beer lover embraces cider, the official beverage of spring

— BY KIM HART MACNEILL —

If cold, frosty beer is summer's official drink, then I name cider spring's choice to sip. Whether you choose sparkling or still, apple or another fruit, cider is laced with fresh aromas and flavours that pair well with the smell of growing grass and fresh leaves. Here are seven Atlantic Canadian options to try this season.



Foundation

Chain Yard Urban Cidery

Halifax

6.3%

Halifax's newest (and only) cidery made a name for itself with this offering by winning gold for Standard Cider or Perry at the 2017 Atlantic Canadian Beer Awards, the same year the cidery won Cider House of the Year. It's easy drinking, semi-dry, and not too sweet. It's refreshingly carbonated with lightly tropical notes and just a hint of apple on the finish. Perfect for someone trying to develop an appreciation for cider.

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Spring

Red Rover Brewhouse
Fredericton

7%

A semi-dry, English-style cider, and an aptly named beverage. This cider tastes the way a big crate of apples at the farmers' market smells. It's bursting with sweet, fresh apple taste and aroma that can't help but invoke thoughts of spring with each sip. It's sweet, but not sugary. In 2015, Red Rover won Cidery of the Year at the Atlantic Canadian Beer Awards, and with these flavours we can see why.

The Baker and The Brewer Sour Cider

Gagetown Fruit Farm

Gagetown, N.B.

4.8%

Reading the back of this bottle intrigues instantly. It's made with sour-dough starter, which becomes abundantly clear as you pour it. The aroma is distinctly sour dough, and not entirely appealing, but have faith as this foreign smell gives way to a delicious cider. It's not sour in the way this beer drinker expected, but it's certainly a unique flavour with a tart edge. Like sour-dough bread infused with baked green apples.



Rummed Cider

Planter's Ridge
Port Williams, N.S.

9.5%

Annapolis Valley apples meet Ironworks Distillery's Bluenose Rum. The Lunenburg distillery's product lends a molasses and caramel flavour and subtle spicing to this smooth cider. It's well balanced and avoids being too boozy despite its high ABV. This is a pricy bottle, about \$11 for 500 ml, but worth it.

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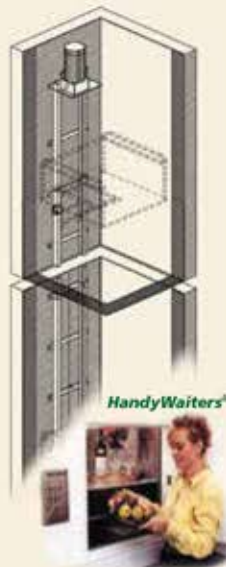


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Ginger Snap

York County Cider
Fredericton
6.5%

Prepare yourself, this cider is bracing. Golden in colour, yes, but the cloudy veil I peered through as I held it up to the light told me I was in for a new experience. The ample quantity of ginger in the mix nips at your nose when you smell it. Fresh, tart apples are in the driver's seat on this one, with the ginger flavour riding shotgun. The slow ginger burn coats your mouth and leaves your throat feeling pleasantly warm between sips.



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Hard Rhubarb Cider

Stone Poste Cidery
Falmouth, N.S.
10%

You'll find no apples in this bottle—just Annapolis Valley-grown rhubarb. Dry and sweet with a white wine-like flavour. This cider is still, meaning it's non-carbonated. Carbonation is often associated with cider's crisp taste, so if you're not used to a still cider, it's an adjustment; think of it like a dessert wine, not a party-time slammer. ✨



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IN TRADITION

Ma Belle's Café on Ochterloney Street in downtown Dartmouth, N.S. carries on a historic tradition. The tiny British-themed café serves afternoon tea, a meal of sandwiches, scones, jams, sweets, and tea, by reservation only.

Owners Danny and Jennifer Deagle bought Ma Belle's four years ago from the previous owners, who offered tea service since 1988. The couple recently announced plans to sell the café, but hope to find a buyer who will keep its current concept.

"The first time we did it, I saw how people enjoyed it," Danny says. "It was such a nice, social get-together."

Afternoon tea at Ma Belle's includes dainty sandwiches cut into triangles (crust-free, of course). The café serves sandwiches on house-baked bread filled with classics like cream cheese and cucumber, cucumber with cheddar and mayonnaise, ham and cheese, egg salad, and chicken salad. Alongside it serves raisin scones with jams and assorted sweets like carrot cake and sticky toffee pudding. To set the mood, the spread arrives on tiered plates.

"It's not like any other brunch or lunch," Danny says. "It's a personalized meal with a special feel."

Anne Russell, the Duchess of Bedford, started afternoon tea in the mid-1840s, says etiquette and entertaining expert Charles MacPherson. "She had trouble waiting between lunch and dinner."

MacPherson is the founder and president of Toronto-based Charles MacPherson Associates Inc., which offers luxury household services and operates North America's only registered school for butlers and household managers. You may know him as Charles the Butler, author of *The Butler Speaks*.

MacPherson says the Duchess wanted a meal that could tide her over between lunch and dinner, which was traditionally served between 7 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. The Duchess invited her friends to the meal, and started an afternoon social ritual for Britain's middle and upper classes.

While many use the terms interchangeably, there is a difference between afternoon tea and high tea. MacPherson says high tea was a meal for working-class people like coal miners, and consisted of a tea and a hot meal such as shepherd's pie. Afternoon tea or low tea was reserved for the middle and upper classes.

Today, afternoon tea service and its offerings continue to evolve. "It's now becoming a meal," MacPherson says. "It's my favourite meal of the day."

Historically, afternoon tea was a casual affair, served on the coffee table with linens draped over it, MacPherson says. The meal itself was simply tea and a dessert like a slice of cake. Modern tea with its tiered trays of sweets and ornate teacups started with hotels and restaurants.

As for the tea, MacPherson suggests serving a light tea, such as Darjeeling. "You don't want the tea to overpower the rest of the food," he says.

Tea should last about two hours, starting around 3:30 p.m. or 4 p.m. While afternoon tea conjures up images of holding dainty cups with pinky fingers in the air, there really doesn't need to be etiquette with this meal. It can be as fancy or as casual as the host would like.

Afternoon tea started as a bridge to keep royals full between lunch and dinner, but today it's best served casual and with good company

— BY SUZANNE RENT —



TIME FOR TEA

Phillip Holmans, owner of World Tea House on Argyle Street in Halifax, imports teas from 20-some countries around the world, many of which he's visited to select teas for his shop.

For morning tea, Holmans suggests a stronger brew such as one of the breakfast blends, including those of English, Irish, and Welsh varieties. These teas, Holmans says have dark, robust flavours. "That's what will give you a strong cup of tea."

For afternoon tea, choose something light in flavour and colour such as a Darjeeling, which Holmans says has musky, honey notes that pair well with the sweets and sandwiches.

For something different, try green tea or an Indian Nilgiri tea, which Holmans says has the same flavour profile and lighter, sweeter style of a Darjeeling.

Unlike morning teas, afternoon teas contain less caffeine "so you're not wired up," Holmans says.



Shadow Lawn Inn in Rothesay, N.B., started offering afternoon tea 70 years ago. Owner James Gallagher says the inn hosts 25 to 30 per year. "People kept asking for it and our venue is the ideal spot to offer it in this region," Gallagher says.

The setting features intimate two- and four-seat tables with delicate china and crisp white linens. The food includes open-face or triangle-cut sandwiches filled with smoked salmon, lobster, egg salad, and ham and Swiss cheese.

The inn's signature white-chocolate scones with jams and clotted cream are the star of the sweet tray, alongside lemon squares and sticky date pudding (see recipe on page 43).

Gallagher and his staff set long tables with old-fashioned teacups and saucers, and serve sandwiches, sweets, and scones on multi-tiered plates. "It gives people the feeling of sophistication," Gallagher says. "It brings them back to a romantic image."

When it comes to planning an afternoon tea at home, MacPherson suggests serving sandwiches, scones, and desserts, or even hot *hors d'oeuvres*. Ultimately, he says, afternoon tea is about keeping it simple and social.

"It's a great way to enjoy the company of family and friends," MacPherson says. "It's a great way to entertain without going into a great production."



Scones

Charles the Butler uses this recipe at home when he serves afternoon tea. Like most favourite recipes, it was passed down from a friend.

Recipe courtesy of Charles MacPherson.

Yields 36 scones

INGREDIENTS

5 cups (1250 ml) all-purpose flour
2½ Tbsp (35 ml) baking powder
5 Tbsp (75 ml) sugar
½ tsp (2.5 ml) salt
½ lb (0.22 kg) butter
3 large eggs, cold
1¾ cups (430 ml) buttermilk

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oven to 425°F (218°C).
2. Measure dry ingredients into food processor.
3. Cut butter into small pieces and add to food processor, pulse until it resembles course meal. Do not over pulse.
4. In separate bowl, beat eggs and buttermilk with hand whisk. Reserve 3 tablespoons.
5. Slowly run food processor, adding wet ingredients to dry until ball forms.
6. Remove dough ball from food processor, place on floured counter, pat and roll gently. Do not over roll.
7. Cut with flour-dipped cookie cutter (do not twist cutter).
8. Place scones on cookie sheet, brush tops with reserved egg/milk mixture.
9. Bake 17 to 20 minutes, until lightly brown.

MacPherson says, "I have added raisins or currants, and it's a wonderful addition. Do this at the dry stage, one or two cups worth. This recipe can easily be cut in half for a smaller batch without fear."

Strawberry Jam

MacPherson uses this recipe based on one he found in *The Blue Chair Jam Cookbook* by Rachel Saunders. It's simple and a classic that you'll find in most family cookbooks. *Recipe courtesy of Charles MacPherson.*

INGREDIENTS

4 lbs (1.8 kg) large strawberries, hulled
2 lbs + 10 oz. (0.9 kg + 283 g) white cane sugar
3.75 oz. + 2.75 oz. (106 g + 57 g) strained freshly squeezed lemon juice

DIRECTIONS

1. In 11 or 12-quart copper preserving pan or wide nonreactive kettle, combine berries, sugar, and 3.75 oz. lemon juice.
2. Cook over medium-low heat, stirring constantly with heatproof rubber spatula.
3. When juice starts running and mixture foams around the edges, gradually raise heat to high, stirring often.
4. Boil vigorously for 20 to 30 minutes, gently scraping bottom of pan with spatula every minute or so to avoid sticking. If jam sticks, decrease heat slightly while continuing to cook at a rapid boil.
5. Cook, stirring and scraping frequently, until foam subsides, mixture grows dark and shiny, and berries appear softened and saturated with liquid, about 25 minutes total.
6. Stir in remaining 2.75 oz. lemon juice, stir frequently. If necessary, lower the heat slightly to prevent scorching.
7. In 3 to 5 more minutes, jam should look shiny and thick. Remove from the heat and test for doneness, using spoon/freezer method (dip spoon into jelly, if it sheets off, jam is ready).
8. Using stainless-steel spoon carefully scrape all white foam off the top of the mixture while you test. Do not stir.
9. Pour into sterilized jars and process according to the jar manufacturer's instructions.



Sticky Date Pudding

This recipe calls for a *bain marie*. If you don't have one, place your baking pans in a large roasting pan or casserole dish and fill to half the height of your baking pans. Avoid using a Dutch oven as it holds too much heat. *Recipe courtesy of James Gallagher, Shadow Lawn Inn, Rothesay, N.B.*
Yields 2 pans (48 servings)

INGREDIENTS

7 cups (1.8 L) water
2.2 lb (1 kg) pitted dates
4 Tbsp (60 ml) baking soda
0.7 lb (320 g) unsalted butter, room temperature
2.2 lb (1 kg) sugar
12 eggs
2.2 lb (1 kg) all-purpose flour
4 Tbsp (60 ml) baking powder
2 tsp (10 ml) powdered ginger

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oven to 350°F (177°C).
2. Place dates and water into large pot, boil for 5 minutes.
3. In stand mixer, cream butter and sugar until pale and fluffy. Add eggs two at a time, mixing on medium-high speed until well incorporated.
4. Sift together flour, baking powder, and ginger; in large bowl, combine with butter-sugar-egg mixture.
5. Once dates are boiled, remove from heat, stir in baking soda. Mixture will foam.
6. Using rubber spatula, immediately stir dates into dough until combined.
7. Pour into rectangular glass baking pans sprayed with oil and lined with parchment paper.
8. Bake in *bain marie* for 20 minutes, lower the heat and cook at 300°F (149°C) until cake is firm.

Clotted Cream

Clotted cream is a staple of afternoon teas. Sometimes called Devonshire Cream or Cornish Cream, depending on the area of England you're in. Clotted cream is like butter, but sweeter, and can be spread on scones with jam. *Recipe courtesy of Ma Belle's Café, Dartmouth, N.S.*

INGREDIENTS

4 cups (1 L) whipping cream

DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oven to 350°F (177°C).
2. Pour whipping cream into 8" x 8" (20 cm x 20 cm) casserole dish.
3. Bake 8 to 10 minutes.

Crab Cakes

While hot hors d'oeuvres aren't traditional afternoon tea fare, this crab cake recipe is a good one to add if you want to mix it up.

Recipe courtesy James Gallagher, Shadow Lawn Inn, Rothesay, N.B.

Yields 12

INGREDIENTS



- 2 lb. (0.9 kg) crab, well squeezed and drained
- 4 eggs
- 2 Tbsp (30 ml) Sriracha mayo
- 2 Tbsp (30 ml) lemon zest
- 1 Tbsp (15 ml) grainy mustard
- 1/2 Tbsp (7.5 ml) each paprika and celery salt
- 2 sleeves Ritz crackers
- salt and pepper to taste
- 3 Tbsp (45 ml) mayonnaise



DIRECTIONS

1. Combine ingredients in stand mixer with paddle attachment, stir gently to combine.
2. Form cakes using large ice cream scoop, packed full.
3. Flatten cake into hockey puck form.
4. Freeze on cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Once frozen, place in bag in freezer.
5. Microwave 30 seconds each side. Pan fry in hot canola oil until golden brown and crispy on one side, flip and finish in oven for 3 minutes, and broil for 30 seconds.
6. Dab with paper towel before serving. ✨



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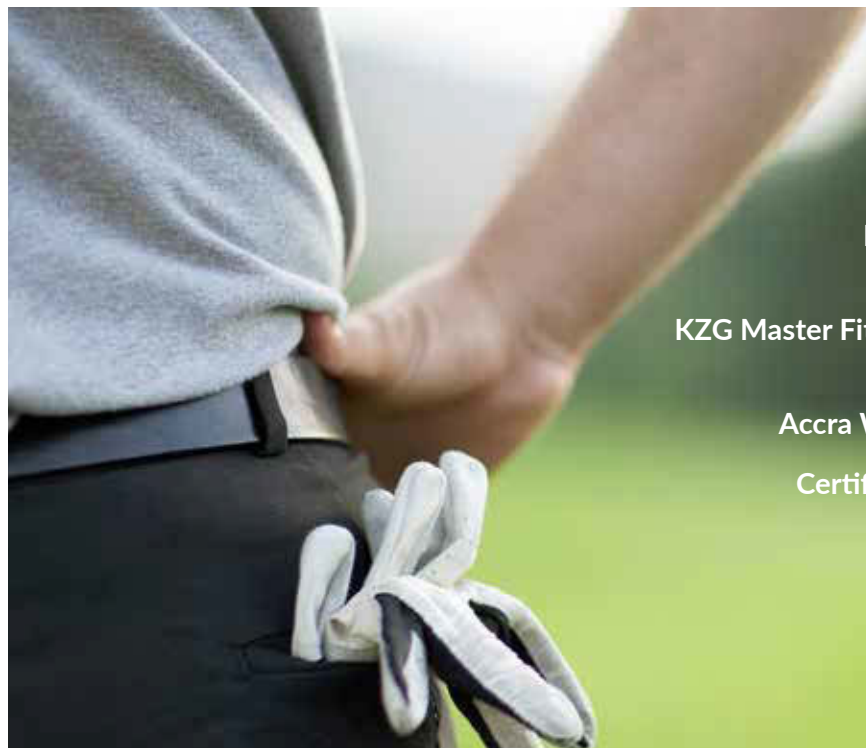
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bulbs to plant now



Transform your backyard into a lush, almost tropical landscape

— BY CAROL MATTHEWS —

Don't despair if you didn't get your bulbs in the ground last fall. It's not too late to plant summer bulbs that will add exotic colour, fragrance, and atmosphere to your garden and deck for the summer, or in your home all year.

These bulbs are designated summer because they can't survive frosts and winter freezes. Gardeners must dig them up in autumn or bring their containers inside.

You are probably familiar with dahlias, begonias, and gladioli, but there are many less familiar flowers and leaves that make a great show. You can buy summer bulbs or plants that are already started in pots. Give

bulbs a head start by potting up them in April and setting them outside in containers or in the ground after the last frost.

When the season is over, summer bulbs require action after the first light frost in the fall, or when the foliage starts to die back.

You can leave them in the soil outside where cold temperatures will likely kill them; bring containers in to become houseplants, or save your bulbs. To save bulbs, dig them up and dry in the sun, or inside in a warm, dry spot. Once dry, cut the leaves just above the bulb or corm, and store bulbs in a cool, dry place for the winter.

For sweet, sun drenched tropical island fragrance, try:



Tuberose (*Polianthes tuberosa*)

This night-blooming plant features beautiful spikes of fragrant, waxy flowers, usually in shades of pink and white. It's grown worldwide for its intoxicating scent. Tuberose is also used in perfumes and added to Hawaiian leis.

To grow successfully, tuberose needs at least six hours a day of natural sun or a plant light. The soil must drain well or the bulbs will rot. Apply a balanced fertilizer every six weeks in summer. The blooms make a lovely cut flower and you will need only one or two spikes to scent a room.

Peacock orchid (*Acidanthera*)

My nose was the first to notice these tiny corms blooming in my garden.

A relative of gladiolus, its flowers are similarly shaped, but appear one to a stem. The plant has white flowers with maroon centers, and long slender green leaves. This medium-sized plant makes a better show in masses, and provides more scent.

In our northern location, Peacock orchids need lots of hot sun, especially in the afternoon. The more sun, the more fragrance. Keep soil moist, but not wet. Plant it where it will not receive a lot of wind. An extra bonus—deer dislike them.

Freesia

Freesia is the star of many florists' bouquets because of its fragrant funnel-shaped flowers in colours ranging from white to yellow, pink, red, and blue-mauve. Hand creams and candles often feature its scent.

Grow these corms in morning sun or light shade. Use compost enriched soil to avoid extra fertilizing, and ensure it drains well.

If you prefer lush, unusual foliage, try:



Elephant's ear (*Xanthosoma*)

While it does flower, gardeners grow this plant for its large leaves.

The plant grows from a corm, and in the tropics can grow over two metres tall, however about one metre is more common in Atlantic Canada. Still, the leaves are large and impressive. The heart-shaped leaves range in colour from dark green to golden-chartreuse and grow over a half metre long. This plant is often described as stunning and architectural.

It grows best in warm, humid areas, with dappled shade or morning sun. Elephant's ear is a heavy feeder so apply liquid fertilizer regularly.



Canna lily (*Canna Tropicana*)

Though not true lilies, these plants grow easily and flower readily, but its immense paddle-shaped leaves make the biggest impression.

Depending on the variety, leaves may be solid green, maroon, bronze, or striped in a variety of those colours. Its flowers resemble the shape of an iris blooming above the foliage in pink, red, orange, or yellow. The largest varieties can grow to nearly two metres tall.

Cannas prefer full sun and rich, moist-to-wet soil, and can even grow in water gardens. Feed it in spring and summer with a balanced fertilizer. A single plant can be a centerpiece in a garden bed, but a mass of them creates a tropical feel.



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Angel wings (*Caladium*)

This foliage plant is almost prettier than flowers, with red, white, green, or pink leaves, or a combination. Angel wings can grow to 75 centimetres tall, depending on the variety.

This plant thrives in moist soil and light shade. Watering and fertilizing regularly will keep the *Caladium* happy and vigorous from the last frost in spring to the first frost in autumn. ❄️

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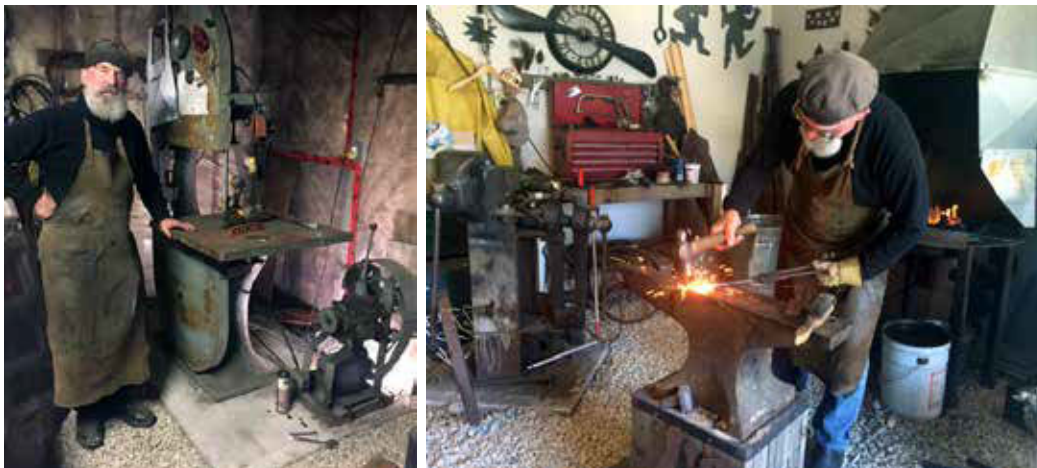
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— BY CHRIS MUISE —

K. John Mason is a fourth-generation blacksmith, but in the 1960s when he told his father he wanted to join the family trade, the elder blacksmith didn't like the idea.

"My dad always tried to talk me out of this...he said, 'Don't do it, it's dead. It's a finished trade,'" says the now 69-year-old Mason. "By the early '70s, you couldn't give iron away."

Mason took up smithing anyway, and travelled the world plying his craft. He did church work in Germany, and made chandeliers in Panama, and plied his trade in Istanbul, Mexico, Tehran, and Turkey.

By the time Mason returned to Canada, demand for the kind of classically-trained, all-in-one metalworking skill that he mastered had all but dried up.

"There was a micro-sizing in trades," he says. Craftsmen were beginning to specialize. "As time passed, there became drywallers, and electricians, and plumbers, and glaziers. So a single trade job is subdivided into many trades. Blacksmithing was no different."

The advent of tooling and fabricating factory-made pieces added to decreased opportunities for Mason. One need not be a master to get simple things done anymore.

But Mason eked out a decent living as a smith out of Jordan, Ontario, for 20 years, before moving to Blandford, Nova Scotia. He and his partner (in business and in life) Jayne Geldart, run K. John Mason's Ironworks.

"This direction change has probably been the most freeing for me," says Geldart, who met Mason four years ago and now runs the day-to-day business of the foundry.

Mason works traditionally, without electricity. He bought the forge from the Lunenburg Foundry's ship shed and relocated it to his South Shore business three years ago.

"It was standing independent and unused," says Mason. "Two weeks later they came back and said, 'Yeah, come and get it.'"

Within the fires of that forge, Mason creates unique pieces. That's what keeps him in demand.

"Nova Scotians are looking for unique pieces, art pieces," says Geldart. "Pieces you might not see on an everyday basis. Over the years, I've seen him make everything. And repair antique things that people bring in, as well."

He's known for his skills at lighting fixtures, such as the chandeliers he honed in Panama. One of his best sellers is a bird lamp. Wrought-iron vines and leaves are a regular motif on his works—there's no way to mistake a genuine Mason for anything else.

"I consider myself a bit of a table specialist," Mason says. "Not to sound egotistical about it, but I'm very proud of the level of the craft that I've raised myself to. In this day and age, I don't think you're going to find too many people who are interested in doing that kind of work. The kind of trade that I've enjoyed over the last 55 years, I don't think that trade's coming around again any time soon."

That said, he has no plans to give it up.

"We forge ahead," he says. ✨



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