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Two of the most satisfying investments you can make in your home are kitchen and bath renovations. A 2017 Remodeling Impact Report, by the National Association of Realtors and the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI), names kitchen renovations and upgrades, along with bath renovations and additions,

highest among the projects that have “the greatest appeal to potential buyers.” While the report cautions that these projects are not guaranteed to yield the highest dollar-for-dollar financial return when selling your house (look to less glamorous improvements here, like roofing, insulation, and refinishing wood floors), kitchen and bath upgrades not only appeal to potential buyers, they also provide homeowners with enhanced enjoyment of their home.

If you’re ready to renovate, this special “Kitchen and Bath” issue of HOME will give you plenty of inspiration. See how local homeowners and designers transformed their spaces in our feature on kitchen renovations, and learn from their tips and experiences. Discover the history behind our modern kitchen layout and the development of the “kitchen work triangle” that many of us probably take for granted. For the bath, we’ve got great ideas on how to upgrade your space with stylish vanities and soaking tubs, as well as advice on easy improvements like towels and linen closets.

With spring on the way, check out our articles on what to prune now in the garden, and on permeable hardscape, a green trend that will take care of soggy situations in your landscape.

Have you ever wondered about backyard beekeeping? Our story on apiaries offers advice from local beekeepers on setting up your own hive this spring. We’ve also got tips for beginning a running regime, no matter your age or fitness level. For a relaxing respite, perhaps a spot of tea? Our article on afternoon tea will tell you how to properly serve and enjoy this traditional spread. And finally, our year-long “Design, Defined” series will cover some of the most popular design trends, including their history and how to achieve the look.

We hope this special issue of HOME will inspire you to try something new. Whether it’s a kitchen or bath upgrade, a new hobby, or a new design style, early spring is an excellent time for a fresh start! Until next time...

— *Rory Rhodes, Editor*
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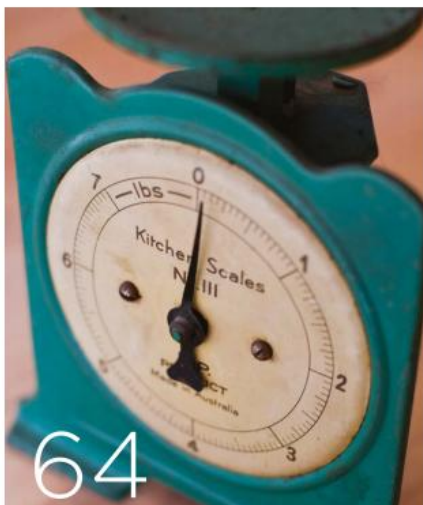
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THREE TERRIFIC TRANSFORMATIONS



BY NOELLE MILAM

Most homeowners understand that renovating a home is an enormous undertaking, involving months of careful planning, communication, compromise, and significant financial cost. Renovating a kitchen means all of that and more. With its many functions and components, today's kitchens are so much more than simply a place to prepare a meal; they are often the heart of the home—the central place for meal preparation, family dining, homework, and entertaining. Embarking on the renovation of a room that is so integral to family life is not to be done lightly. Kitchen renovations can take two to four months or more to complete, depending on the complexity of the job. But as three fortunate Roanoke Valley families discovered, sometimes the wait is oh, so worthwhile.



The Horwatt Kitchen

Linda Horwatt makes the trip from Southwestern Virginia to Houston, Texas quite often to help her daughter Susan Murphy with her four young children—a gift of her time that Susan describes as “priceless.” So perhaps it's not surprising that Susan Murphy wanted to give something back to her mother. After careful thought, she felt that what Linda would most enjoy was a new kitchen for her 1970s ranch home in Garden City.

“My mother still lives in the home I grew up in,” Susan explains. “She raised my brothers and me in that home, and now that we are all grown and moved, it just seemed like a bright new kitchen was something she deserved.” Working together, Susan and Linda planned out a list of things they felt would be necessary upgrades for the space, with an eye to redesigning the kitchen to be more efficient, better suited to Linda's needs, and more attractive.

Susan and Linda saw an ad for Circle Design Studio, did some online research, and called John and Theresa Dorlini, the husband and wife owners of the design and build firm. The Dorlinis were perfect for the job—with combined backgrounds in architecture, interior design, and a Class A contractor's license (the highest level of licensure), Circle Design had the ability to take on a detailed renovation project from the design phase through completion. The project was challenging because of the tight turnaround time—Susan wanted the renovation to take place while her mother was visiting them in Texas—and the scope of what Susan and Linda envisioned. “We were contacted by Susan,” John Dorlini recalls, “and were blown away that she wanted to do this project as a gift for her mother. We have young kids ourselves, and were both touched and excited to take on this job.” Dorlini credits the advanced design software they use, which allows them to show plans in 3D, for helping with the success of the undertaking. “It gives us the chance to see the entire project before it begins,” he explains, “and helps the clients to envision what we've designed.” It can also help to cut down the design time, since clients can see everything about the room, even how their own furniture will look.

Working together via phone and email, Susan, Linda and the Dorlinis created a plan for Linda's kitchen that included enlarging the kitchen window, relocating the sink, custom cabinetry—including a



dry bar in the adjoining dining area—new backsplashes, and updating lighting and appliances. The whole kitchen was designed to meet Linda’s needs. When asked about the project’s biggest challenge, Dorlini chuckles, “Next to a tight turnaround of six to eight weeks? Probably finding a way to hide electrical outlets.” Since Susan had requested a new white backsplash unmarred by visible outlets, Circle Design located under-cabinet lighting that included them. Of the challenge to completing the project while Linda was in Texas helping Susan with the grandchildren, Dorlini says, “Susan wanted it to be finished so that her mother could return to a bright new kitchen, and it really came down to the wire.” He recalls with a laugh, “I mean, she called from the airport to say they’d landed in Roanoke, and I said, ‘Well, you’d better stop at the grocery store or something on your way home!’”

Dorlini and his crew did finish on time, and Susan was able to give her mother the kitchen of her dreams. Susan attributes the success of this long-distance renovation project to excellent communication. “I really feel that talking to each other [via phone] as opposed to email was critical for a project like this,” Susan advises. “The more clear you are about your wishes and goals, the better your project is going to be.” The transformation speaks for itself—Linda adores her new kitchen, and Susan is proud to have given her mother something she will enjoy for years to come. “This project breathed so much new life into this home,” Susan says. “It’s bright, open, and up to date, and Circle Design helped us make it what she deserved all along.”

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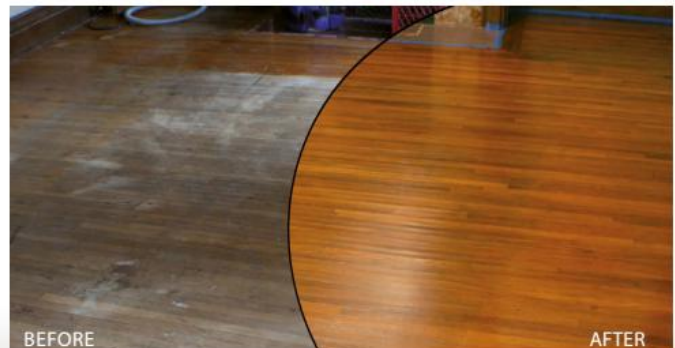
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The Corbin Kitchen

Frank and Sally Corbin purchased their home on the Blackwater River in Glade Hill three years ago. The couple, originally from Maryland, were looking for a home for their retirement years, and when their real estate agent showed them the house, on five and a half acres with frontage on the river, they knew they'd found just the place. The home was a perfect size, and the land had a gentle slope down to the river, but the kitchen needed some work. "We purchased the home knowing we needed to do something about the kitchen," Sally laughs. "I mean there were only four cabinets!" Storage was definitely an issue, but Sally explains that the layout was also cramped, especially the area around the oven. "Frank and I were always bumping into each other," she recalls. "I'm the cook, but he's the cleaner, and it was hard to work around each other." The couple planned to live in the home during renovation, so they wanted to be especially careful about minimizing the time they were without a kitchen.

After researching, Frank and Sally decided to work with Tommy Rakes at The Cabinet Gallery at Smith Mountain Lake. Rakes put his forty years in the building industry to work for the Corbins and their challenging kitchen. "We discussed changing the areas where the traffic patterns weren't good," he says. "I've learned over the years that you have got to listen to the customer carefully in order to balance their goals with my own advice to help them navigate the planning process." Sally wanted an easily-accessible double oven and more storage, and Rakes showed the couple how they could get that, plus a better layout around the sink and refrigerator. It took four versions to get the plans just right, and then the Corbins moved on to the task of choosing colors for their cabinets and countertops. They discussed timeframes, and Rakes assured the couple that once the planning was done, they would be able to use their new kitchen in five weeks' time.

Rakes credits this quick turnaround to experience and careful planning. "The key to a successful remodel is to make it the least disruptive process possible," he explains. "Planning is key, so that when you are ready with the cabinets, all the other installers and subcontractors are ready to roll." Sally and Frank were delighted with the turnaround time, which did indeed stay within Rakes' five week



prediction. "It was sort of hard to not be able to cook meals," Sally says, "But we scheduled two trips away during that time to get out of their hair and came back and—*voila!*—the cabinets were in, and there was only a week to go."

Sally's favorite thing about her new kitchen is the beautiful copper sink she picked out, followed closely by her new flat cooktop, and of course, the room to move around. "You can now say that I am spoiled rotten!" Sally laughs. "I love my kitchen so much." With renovations recently completed, the Corbins have started to personalize their new space. Sally has found space to display her collection of antique crocks, they've ordered a new light fixture for over their island, and Sally found glass and ceramic "pumpkin knobs"—each one unique—to adorn their new cabinets and make the space their own. When asked for advice for other families who might be considering a kitchen remodel, without hesitation, Sally says, "Take your time and plan carefully. Make sure you like it, and it feels like your taste and your home."



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The Poulos Kitchen

When Deno and Tina Poulos inherited Deno's family home in Roanoke, they knew they wanted to make some changes to make the place their own. "Deno actually helped to build this house for his parents in 1979," says Tina, "But to live here ourselves, we needed to update the kitchen to include more storage and workspace." Both of Greek descent, Tina and Deno share a love of entertaining family and friends, and cooking. As a chef and restaurant owner, Deno had a lot of ideas about what he wanted to change about the kitchen, and the couple began to plan. Among their wishes for their remodeled kitchen were a large island for food prep and casual dining; a coffee bar area; and more storage. They also wanted to update the look and flow of the kitchen to more of an open concept feel. Finally, they wanted the kitchen to feel personal and unique, and to reflect their family heritage. "We wanted to keep some of the nostalgic items of the family home, like the metal roosters Deno's mother made," Tina explains, "While still updating and making the kitchen our own."

The Pouloses discussed these goals with Terri Langford, owner and designer at Cabinetry With TLC in Roanoke. Langford was intrigued by the idea of reinventing a family kitchen and felt a sense of rapport with Deno and Tina. "They were a lot of fun to work with," she recalls. "They knew what they wanted from their

space, but were also open to suggestions." They decided to open up the dining room and existing breakfast area to the kitchen to achieve the open plan more popular in contemporary kitchens, and placed a seven-foot island at the center of the space, giving Deno and Tina lots of room for prepping and cooking. Next, appliances, semi-custom cabinets and solid surface countertops were ordered. The family was not living in the home at the time of the remodel, which made some things easier. Langford and her contractor had constant access to the site, allowing for a quick turnaround, and the Poulos family wasn't trying to live in a home during major construction. "We always say that there is going to be some inconvenience when you are remodeling," says Langford, "But our goal is to minimize the inconvenience as much as possible." To this end, she pre-scheduled all the countertop templates, so that everything would be ready to go when the new cabinets arrived.

Through it all, Langford was in constant communication with the Pouloses. "Communication is huge," she explains, "And keeping that line open makes all the difference." For example, when Tina mentioned her desire to incorporate some nostalgic items from the old kitchen into the new one, Langford found a way to repurpose Tina's favorite keepsake—a French door that separated the old kitchen from the dining room—as a barn door for the pantry. They were also able to incorporate the whimsical

PHOTOS: KEVIN HURLEY



glass cabinet knobs that are filled with navy beans, kernel corn, and various herbs, that belonged to Deno's brother.

The result of all this careful thought, meticulous communication and hard work is a kitchen as warm and inviting as it is functional for the Poulos family. Tina and Deno love their new kitchen, which has met and exceeded all their goals. They also stress the importance of research, communication and working with someone you trust. "My words of advice for anyone contemplating a kitchen renovation," Tina says, "Would be to know what you want, research designs and products, and call someone like Terri who can integrate your wants with their expertise in design."

These stories show that every successful kitchen renovation involves a combination of realistic goals, research, communication, flexibility, and patience on the part of the homeowner and their design and build team. Whether you're the kind of person who finds the design process exciting and fun, or somewhat daunting, it's the time and effort spent at this stage that makes the subsequent renovation go smoothly, and ensures that the finished product lives up to your expectations. It is possible to give this all-important room of your home the makeover it deserves and at the same time, get the space that you and your family will enjoy for years to come. ♦



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BEEKEEPING

a sweet investment

BY ALEXANDRA REYNOLDS



Honeybees are a buzz-worthy topic in the news. Reports about colony collapse, a devastating disorder that causes most of the worker bees to abandon their hive, may lead honey lovers to wonder, “How can I help the bee?” Backyard apiaries provide habitable spaces for new colonies to thrive, and area beekeepers Steve Villers and Chuck Vassar are happy to lend advice to newcomers. Villers and his wife, Joanne, own Blacksnake Meadery in Carroll County, where they raise honeybees for their mead, and they recently opened a tasting room in Roanoke called The Hive. Vassar is a member of the Botetourt Beekeepers Association, and has been keeping hives in his backyard for over five years. Both offer encouragement, knowledge, and tips for success to prospective beekeepers.

Common misconceptions

Beginners may be overwhelmed by the wealth of information available on beekeeping, and also confused by some misconceptions surrounding the practice. “Probably the biggest [misconception] is that bees are dangerous around children and neighbors, and that you need a lot of space for them,” says Villers. “They really don’t need a lot of space. As long as the hive is placed where people aren’t passing through their flight path, the bees won’t be aggressive.” He adds, “A six-foot fence helps keep their flight path above people’s heads. About ten feet of clearance in front of the hives does the same thing.”

Some assume that beekeeping is relatively simple; however, new pests and pesticides have complicated the practice. Vassar cautions, “You have to pay attention to the bees. There are insects that interfere with their lifestyle. Varroa mites are the most well-known pest they face.” According to Villers, “There are some strains of bees that are showing some resistance to mites, but we don’t have any that are completely resistant. We should all still be managing varroa levels in the hive.”

Equipment

Beginning beekeepers can find the equipment necessary to construct a backyard apiary in local stores around the Roanoke Valley. Some of the basic materials needed to construct an apiary include an inner and outer cover to close the hive, hive boxes to house the bees, frames and foundation wax to make the panels that bees use to build honeycomb, and a bottom board to serve as the base of the hive. Vassar recommends buying 8-frame boxes (boxes which hold eight frames) instead of 10-frame boxes because they are lighter, especially when the frames are loaded with honey and wax. You will also need a hive tool, a small handheld utensil used to remove frames from the hive.

Beekeepers can source bees in two different ways. “Bees can be purchased in a package, with a queen in a separate cage,” says Vassar, “Or as a ‘nuc’ (short for nucleus) colony with a queen that is already laying eggs.” Nucs can be started in the spring, because the colony is already established. Package bees may need to be started earlier, as they require time to adjust to their new queen. A mentor can help beginning beekeepers make decisions about building and establishing their hives.

Tips for beginners

New beekeepers should start with more than one hive. “Get at least two hives,” Villers advises. “That’s a pretty standard



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recommendation. Having two allows comparison so you might know what's 'normal' or not." To help control varroa mites, bees' main pest, Villers suggests staying away from harsh pesticides if possible, which the mites can become resistant to. "Thymol (essential oil of thyme) and oxalic acid (wood bleach) are two effective treatments that tend not to cause resistance in the mites and are also safer for beekeepers," he says. New beekeepers should be sure to purchase pest management materials when starting out.

Beginning beekeepers should not take any honey from their apiary in the first year because the bees need honey stores to sustain themselves over the winter. Villers says, "A growing number of beekeepers leave the honey 'supers' (the box used to collect honey) on until spring, so the bees can use what they need during the winter. This seems like a good idea for a backyard beekeeper." Again, it's wise for newcomers to consult a mentor or experienced beekeeper for determining when to harvest honey, and how much to take.

Attentiveness is important when caring for bees. "Pay attention to them. Work with the bees, and check on them once per week," advises Vassar, adding, "They live through the winter by huddling up and getting into a ball for warmth. They feed on the honey, but you also can help them survive by providing sugar water as extra food." Bees are resilient, but they are more likely to thrive with the help of careful human stewardship.

Mentorship and community

Novice beekeepers are likely to be more successful if they can lean on the advice and teachings of a seasoned expert. "The Virginia State Beekeepers Association has an excellent network of beekeeping clubs," says Villers. "Many of these clubs offer beekeeping classes in the winter or spring in which new beekeepers are paired with a mentor." There are several associations in the area, including the Blue Ridge Beekeeper's Association, the Botetourt Beekeeper's Association, and the New River Valley Beekeeper's Association. "The people in beekeeping associations are so helpful and willing to support newcomers. That's how I got started," Vassar says. Proving Vassar's point, Villers says, "We're still expanding our apiaries, and Jo and I might be able to mentor a few new beekeepers next year."



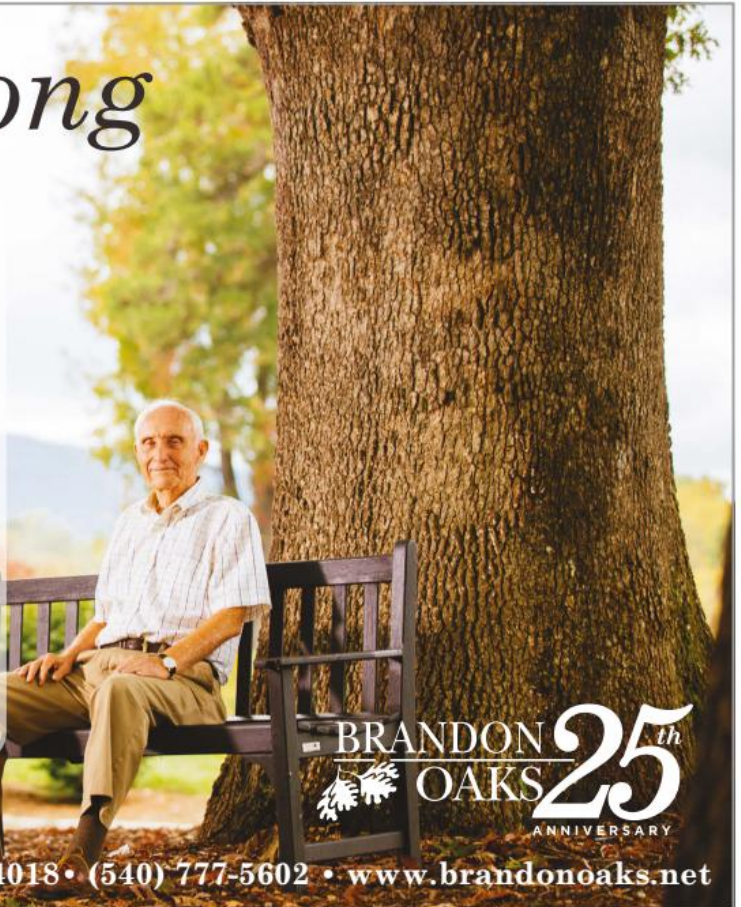
Beguiling bees

Countless beekeepers find immense fulfillment in their practice, even beyond the sweet reward of honey. "I've always been fascinated with nature, especially the living world," says Villers. "There's always something new in beekeeping, so it keeps alive that sense of wonder and curiosity so important to science and education." He adds, "It's also very satisfying to be part of a system so vital to our food supply and overall ecosystem function."

Bees are known to fascinate those who work with them. Vassar says he most enjoys watching them. "Inside the hive, they do everything in total darkness, then leave and come back with legs loaded with nectar," he explains. "It's amazing how they convert that to honey." Beginning beekeepers can be assured that they are in for an exciting and informative endeavor. ♦

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SOAK IN STYLE

freestanding tubs offer sleek oasis

BY ALYSSA MERCADANTE



Believe it or not, bathing was once considered a fashionable luxury rather than an everyday necessity. Back in the 18th century, the idea of the clawfoot tub emerged and became increasingly popular among royalty before making its way into homes around the world. Fast forward a couple hundred years, and freestanding tubs took a backseat in bathroom design with the advent of showers and the built-in shower/tub combo. In recent years, however, standalone tubs have made a comeback, and are now a stylish upgrade to any full bath.

Your bathroom is likely one of the most important rooms in your home. Let's face it—you spend a lot of time in there! Aside from your bed, it's where your days begin and end. It's where you get ready and prepare for the day ahead of you. It's where you unwind, relax and recharge after a long, hectic day. Because of this, it makes sense for your bathroom to be an oasis of sorts, and a beautiful freestanding—or soaking—tub can be the perfect focal point. Today, we are no longer limited to Victorian-style clawfoot tubs, as there are a variety of designs available on the market.



“Currently, freestanding tubs that are on trend would be clean line tubs that mount directly to the floor,” says Lindsey Johnson, showroom manager at Ferguson Enterprises. “We still sell tubs that come on feet or legs, but there is more of a push for tubs that are flush with the bathroom floor.”

As far as materials, colors and sizes go, Ferguson offers many options to customers. “You name it, and we can probably get it,” Johnson says. Some of the numerous different materials include acrylic, cast iron, metal, stone and composite.

“I love, love the look of freestanding tubs and would suggest it to any customer who was in the market for a tub,” she says. “Freestanding tubs now are very reasonably priced, and can accommodate a deck mount tub faucet, which generally saves on cost.” ‘Deck mount’ faucets, which are affixed directly to the tub itself (like a standard bathtub faucet) are a more affordable option to traditional ‘floor mount’ faucets, where the faucet is a separate fixture placed directly into the bathroom floor. Waterfall deck mounts, which dispense a wide, flat stream of water, are a stylish option for a soaking tub. For the ultimate in cool, a ‘ceiling mount’ tub filler directs a splashless column of water into the tub from a valve in the ceiling, but expect to pay more for this feature.

CMC Supply in Roanoke, a locally-owned wholesale business, also offers several lines of freestanding tubs to both contractors and homeowners, with brands including American Standard, Bain Ultra, Maax, Feurco, and Hydrosystems.

“Typical options include soaking tubs, air-jetted, or whirlpool features on most models,” says Jonathan Chisholm, division manager of the Virginia locations. “We have a wide variety of choices in our showrooms. This allows our customers to sit in and ‘experience’ the different styles available.”

Soaking tubs can be found in all kinds of different shapes and sizes. From rectangular to oval to slipper-shaped to asymmetrical, the options are limitless. However, both Johnson and Chisholm agree that contemporary, clean lines are the trend for the future. Sleek, bold and modern, a streamlined silhouette makes a strong design statement, so when choosing a freestanding tub and its location, consider visual appeal in addition to functionality. Since soaking tubs are not limited to a wall or corner, placing it away from walls or at an angle can be especially eye-catching, and the open space around it can actually make the room feel larger.

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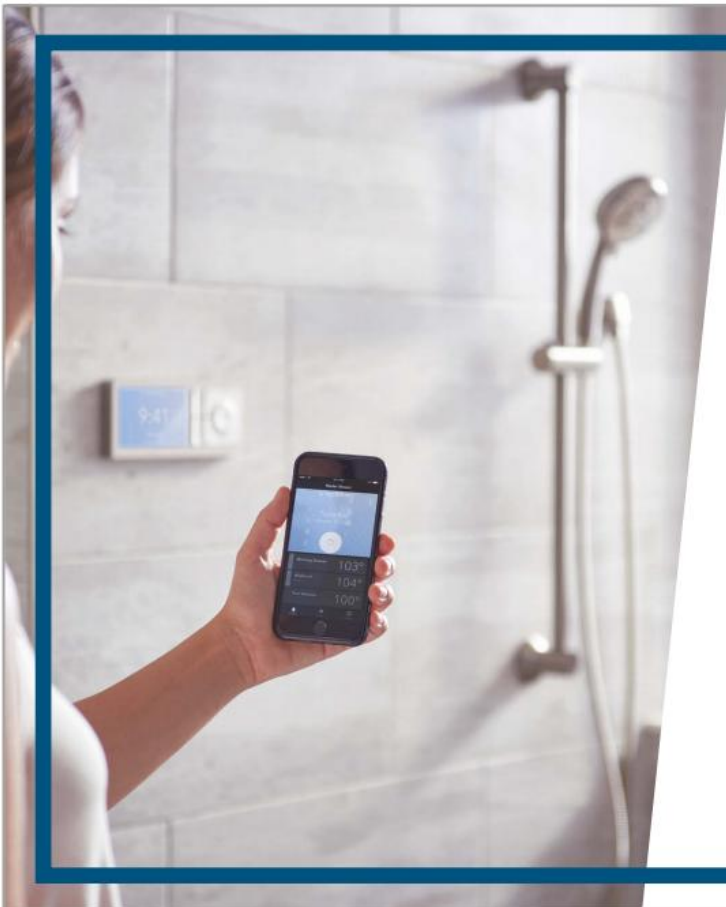
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With these new options and innovations, soaking tubs are no longer exclusive to luxury homes with roomy master baths. Because there are so many styles available, it's possible to create a spa-like environment in just about any bathroom, and you don't have to spend a fortune in order to get a luxurious feel.

"Most customers choose their tub for design and space allowed," Chisholm says. "Other considerations are resale value. When choosing a tub for a new bathroom, we would start with the style of faucet, and move on from there. Budget and practicality both come into play when making the selections. You are not limited to a plain or dull bathroom if you are on a limited budget; however, if you're looking to splurge, the sky is the limit."

By choosing a freestanding vessel over a built-in tub, you can make the absolute most of the most private room in your home. With just this one fashionable addition, you instantly gain more style options, an eye-catching space, and a spa-like atmosphere for your very own retreat from the hectic world. ♦



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THE MAKING OF A

MODERN KITCHEN

HOW EARLY 20TH CENTURY SCIENCE
PLAYED A ROLE IN TODAY'S DESIGN

BY MITZI BIBLE



A wave of inventions brought many time-saving appliances to homes in the early 20th century. Electricity and gas ushered kitchens into the modern era; the icebox on the porch was replaced with a large indoor refrigeration unit, and a new kind of stove sported a range that could cook food at different temperatures. Women learned to become masters of these new handy products that reduced the hours spent in the kitchen and left time for other pursuits—or even a career—outside the home. At the same time, a newly designed kitchen layout was introduced that brought efficiency to this full-scale domestic operation.

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At the turn of the century, the middle class grew, and people depended less on domestic servants and became the cooks themselves. A generation before, many homeowners gave little thought to the design of their kitchen, especially if they were wealthy enough to have others do the cooking for them. Spaces for organization and storage were not standardized. Because stoves were also used for heating the home, keeping pots and pans nearby wasn't always a top priority. Utensils or dishes weren't necessarily stored in proximity to the workspace, either; sometimes they were kept in a pantry far from the room. Instead of today's countertops for food preparation, there were long tables that were often in a separate area from the stove or sink.

As kitchens—and those who used them—began to change, however, a proper workspace was needed that could help cut down on the time it took to make a meal. Industrial engineer and psychologist Lillian Gilbreth came on the scene at the right time.



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Our basic kitchen designs today can be traced to Gilbreth's work in the 1920s to 1940s. You may know her as the mother from the popular tale about her family, "Cheaper by the Dozen," written by her husband and daughter in 1948. First an autobiographical book about the carefully planned and methodical raising of twelve children, by two parents who made a living as "efficiency engineers," the story was made into a movie a couple years later (and remade more than 50 years later, starring Steve Martin and Bonnie Hunt.)

As the first experts in scientific management and efficiency in the workplace, Gilbreth and her husband, Frank, had consulted with factories on the best methods of manufacturing in the early 1900s. They used short films to study each individual movement of the human body while performing a particular task. Their goal was to reduce the number of steps it took to make a product, as well as reduce the stress on the body (what we call "ergonomics" today.) The Gilbreths developed a theory that there was "one best way" to accomplish any multi-step job, and they carried this philosophy into their own home as they managed a full household—and then some.

Triangle of efficiency

When Frank died unexpectedly in 1924, Lillian was determined to continue her research in engineering and psychology, and became a public model of balancing a career and family life. She applied her expertise to the kitchen, looking at the space as a factory of sorts, with the modern homemaker as its manager and meals as its product. Utility and kitchen appliance companies in need of someone who not only studied efficiency but also had an interesting story to go along with it, found a spokesperson in Gilbreth. She was hired to design sales displays, and may be best known for her "Kitchen Practical," a layout which drew three important appliances together: the stove, the sink, and the refrigerator. Her layout placed these appliances at the three corners of a triangle—with none of them more than a couple steps away


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from each other—thereby linking the centers for storing food, cleaning and preparing food, and cooking. (This design is often referred to as “The Golden Triangle.”) The counter space—at that time usually part of a freestanding cabinet, such as the Hoosier cabinet—was situated next to the stove, with food stored above and pans stored below. A rolling cart was used for more preparation space and also for wheeling dirty dishes to the sink, which was outfitted with an attached drying board.

An article in the New York Herald Tribune from 1930 explained Gilbreth’s design, saying that those who followed her layout would “cut almost in half the number of motions required in preparing any given dish, and reduce to less than one-sixth the amount of walking required.” As Gilbreth’s son and daughter wrote in “Belles on Their Toes,” the 1950 follow-up memoir to “Cheaper by the Dozen,” “Mother planned, on paper, an efficiency-type kitchenette of the kind used today in a good many apartments. Under her arrangement, a person could mix a cake, put it in the oven, and do the dishes, without taking more than a couple of dozen steps.”

It wasn’t long before the concept of a continuous work surface followed, connecting all the appliances and countertops together in L- and C-shaped designs. The idea of putting a

desk in your kitchen? That came from Gilbreth, too. She designed the Gilbreth Management Desk, with special drawers for sorting bills, important papers, cookbooks and other household manuals. That handy foot pedal on your trash can? You can also thank the country’s “first lady of engineering” for that.

A happy home

Lillian Gilbreth’s innovative work in applying techniques from industrial production to the home kitchen was groundbreaking. With her inspiration, the idea of a kitchen as just a utilitarian workroom tucked at the back of the house faded into the past. People began to take pride in their modernized, efficient kitchens, dressing them up as inviting rooms for guests. They added patterned tile floors and painted the walls and tables in bright colors. The combination of modern appliances and scientific efficiency helped improve quality of life by saving both time and energy—a goal of the Gilbreths from day one.

While we may not have a dozen children to raise, we can all agree that a well-designed, efficient kitchen is a valuable asset to any home. We have Lillian Gilbreth, and her “mini meal factory” philosophy, to thank for that! ♦



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vanity fair

UPGRADE THIS WASHROOM FIXTURE FOR CUSTOM APPEAL

BY MEGAN BRUFFY

We've all seen exaggerated infomercials—you know the ones, where everyday people are shown in black-and-white struggling to complete a mundane task. Then, with a burst of color, a product appears that miraculously solves the problem. When my husband and I first bought our house, our master bathroom felt like the stage of our own personal infomercial.

Every day brought an unnecessarily dramatic skirmish with our too-big-for-the-space vanity. Lack of room meant a gymnastic feat was required to open cabinet doors and, despite the cabinet's large size, the narrowly designed interior shelves would barely accommodate basic necessities. We were struggling to function in what should have been a tranquil oasis. After nearly a year of frustration, we found our salvation in a new bathroom vanity, and we haven't looked back since.

It's a tried-and-true fact that bathrooms are second only to kitchens in terms of resale appeal, and when it comes to remodels, bathroom vanities are one of the easiest ways to make a statement. From the cabinet style and countertop to the sink and faucet, a little change goes a long way.

Envision a fresh start

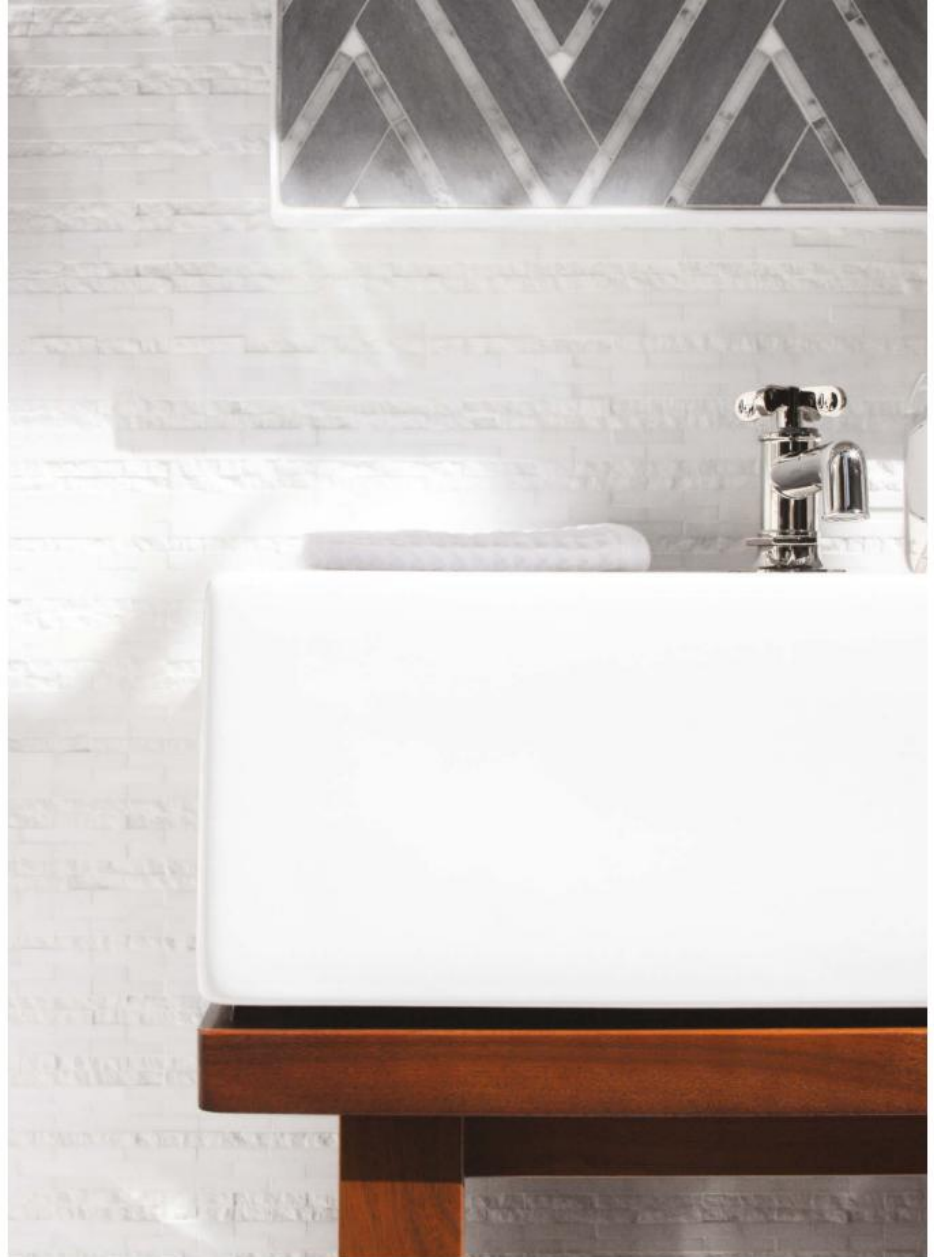
Don't get me wrong, builder-grade bathroom vanities can be perfectly presentable, but given the opportunity, why not amplify the charm? You can either augment what you have, or start from scratch.

Consider your vanity a blank canvas. Paint is a quick and fairly simple way to give it new life. Navy blue and pure black cabinets are ideal statement pieces. For added vibrancy, try these rich shades in shiny lacquer, then balance your new bold centerpiece with fashionable gold and brass fixtures. Though a seemingly daring choice for one of the smaller rooms in your home, these combinations exude elegance and style. For a more neutral look, consider a crisp white, a soft gray-blue, or rich espresso brown—any hue that enhances the room's color palette. To add dimension to cabinet doors, consider custom elements like molding, beadboard, decorative tin tiles, frosted glass panels, or distinctive hardware.

Storage is, of course, the ultimate vanity concern. If your current cabinet doesn't have drawers, consider mounting pull-out drawers inside the vanity. Sliding drawer kits are available at local hardware stores and installation is simple, just be sure to account for the plumbing pipes under the sink.

If you decide there is no salvaging your vanity, the world is your oyster. The considerations for vanities are many, but here are a few top factors. Your cabinet defines the space, so size is critical. Standard vanity lengths range from 24 to 60 inches, though smaller and larger varieties are available. In my case, the length of our vanity extended into the natural walking path. By replacing our 48-inch long behemoth with a 30-inch version, the room felt instantly larger. If downsizing is the solution for your bathroom, use masking tape or string to mark out various sizes and analyze the space. You'll know when it feels right.

Length also determines the number of sinks your cabinet can accommodate. For



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two sinks, a minimum of 48 inches is generally the threshold. In regard to height, a standard vanity is around 32 inches high, but an emerging trend is the comfort height cabinet, standing at 36 inches. Higher options are popular with both taller adults and retirees because they require less stooping, and some newer vanities even come with a built-in step stool disguised to look like a bottom drawer—perfect for young children who need help reaching the sink.

Once you've determined your dimensions, the journey to the perfect vanity begins! Two custom vanity styles dominate the market—freestanding and floating. Freestanding units have legs and tend to look more like traditional furniture, while floating, or wall-mounted, units skew toward the sleek and modern. Floating vanities give the illusion of more space because there is nothing touching the floor, but they can also be short on storage since they occupy less space.

While local stores and online retailers offer endless options for vanities, you can also repurpose existing furniture or vintage

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finds. A dresser can easily be converted into a vanity by cutting openings in the back and drawers to accommodate the plumbing and sink. Be sure to seal and lacquer any wood surfaces so it can withstand water and the humid bathroom environment.

Select a stylish surface

If you're anything like me, you've spent more than your fair share of time fawning over countertop options. With their relatively small size, bathroom vanities offer a chance to use high-end products without the hefty price tags.

Engineered stone like quartz and porcelain, which have a marble-like aesthetic, are excellent options for bathrooms because they are non-porous, meaning they don't need to be sealed and they resist stains. With its natural specks, swirls, and veins, granite has long been a fan favorite. Another non-porous surface, it isn't damaged by water and heat, so bring on the curling irons, ladies!

Aside from its fitting name, soapstone offers a classically beautiful look and gains a stunning dark patina over time. Though it is a softer surface than other

varieties, scratches can be disguised with mineral oil, and it is impervious to chemicals. Alternatively, solid surface countertops, crafted from acrylic resins and natural materials, are affordable without sacrificing style. This durable option resists stains, mold, mildew, and bacteria.

If you're feeling adventurous, consider concrete, which can be cast into various shapes and stained a range of colors. While generally associated with ultra-modern designs, concrete can also blend seamlessly with neutral-hued rustic decor. A practical choice for bathrooms, it resists heat, stains, and scratches. Keep in mind that it requires regular sealing and can be quite heavy, so it isn't the best choice for delicate furniture.

Opt for a distinct basin

Now that you've explored cabinets and countertops, the question remains: What type of sink is best? The main sink styles are drop-in, integrated, undermount, and vessel. With a drop-in sink, also known as top-mount, the top edges rest on the counter. An advantage to this option is that most any material can be used for



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the countertop because the sink completely covers the cutout and prevents water damage. Another popular choice, integrated sinks are one with the countertop—no seams or ridges—which makes for easy cleaning, a great choice for high traffic bathrooms.

Undermount sinks are, as the name implies, mounted underneath the countertop. This creates a sleek look because less of the actual basin is visible, and the counters extend seamlessly across the vanity. A vessel sink, another great choice for repurposed furniture, sits entirely on top of the cabinet. These bowls often appear like works of art and can match any style—glass for modern bathrooms, or blue-and-white porcelain for more traditional spaces. The primary consideration with vessel sinks is height. Since the bowl sits above the surface, the vanity height may need to be lowered to ensure the bowl doesn't end up uncomfortably high.

Of course, sinks come in many shapes and sizes. Once you determine the sink style and how much counter space you want, think about shape. Rectangle and square varieties edge toward the modern, while round and oval bowls evoke a traditional quality.

Adorn with tasteful finishes

With all the key pieces in place, only the finishes remain. From hardware to faucets, this is where your design comes alive. Metals are all the rage, from brass to gold to pewter. To jazz up

an existing vanity, trade builder-grade drawer pulls for ones with more personality—crystal knobs, rope knots, or hammered silver bars. Since you only need a few, why not splurge a little or try something fun? Local consignment and antique stores are prime resources. Drawer pulls are also an ideal place to tie in accent colors. For instance, if your wall shelves and mirror are trimmed in brass, install matte brass pulls.

Faucets are the perfect accessory, and as far as I'm concerned, they're the heart of the vanity. To create a cohesive look, coordinate all the finishes in the room, from faucets to towel bars. Matte and brushed finishes, such as nickel, are handy for hiding water spots, while traditional bronze has perennial appeal. Chrome and brass are a bright, clean look which can range from traditional to modern.

When it comes to choosing a style, keep the atmosphere of your bathroom in mind. If you have a rustic theme, why not opt for a retro water pump? Going for a modern look? A boxier style will be just the ticket. Functionally, faucets can have a single lever or two separate handles, which can offer a vintage feel. If you select a vessel sink, consider a wall-mounted faucet, which has come into favor in recent years. Since the vessel sits high off the vanity, a wall-mounted option saves you the hassle of finding an extra tall faucet.

From my infomercial-like vanity experience, I took away one invaluable piece of advice: It doesn't have to be this way! With a little innovation and thoughtful design, we can all have the vanity of our dreams. So, go ahead, unlock your imagination and let the ideas take shape. ♦



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HIGH TIME FOR TEA

tips for an elegant afternoon refreshment

BY MARLEY MILLER

High tea isn't what most people think it is. In England, high tea is more like dinner—meat, game pies, that sort of thing—served to hungry workers at the end of their day. Afternoon tea, on the other hand, is a more elegant affair. It began when Anna, Duchess of Bedford, got hungry before dinner. In the 1800s, lunch was served around 11 a.m., and dinner was not eaten until everyone had returned from their planned evening activity, at about 8 or even 9 p.m. So Anna began to request a tray of food along with tea in the afternoon to tide her over until dinner. The practice caught on quickly, and afternoon tea was born.



The good news is you don't need to be a duchess or even have matching china to host a traditional tea. There are many books and articles to guide you in finding menus, recipes, and etiquette for a proper tea. One of my favorites is Carolyn Caldicott's "Vintage Tea Party," not only for the beautiful photography, but also the recipes. Meanwhile, here are some guidelines and menu suggestions to get you on your way.

Tea time

The ideal time for afternoon tea is between 3 and 6 p.m., depending upon when you plan to serve dinner.

Setting the table

- **Plates:** Appetizer, dessert, or salad plate is the appropriate size. The plates can match or, as many hosts and hostesses do, you can combine a lovely assortment of vintage-inspired pieces.
- **Tea cups and saucers:** Mix and match—even the cups and saucers can be different patterns. But, no mugs allowed.
- **Serving bowls:** If you are including creams and a curd (such as a lemon or lime curd), small glass or crystal bowls make lovely serving dishes.
- **Napkins:** Linen or high-quality cotton are fitting. A little lace trim wouldn't hurt, either.
- **Tea tray:** The tray must be sizable—enough to hold a pot of tea, tea cups and saucers, milk pitcher, sugar bowl, and stirring spoons.

- **Tiered tower:** This will be the focal point of your table. While there is no official requirement for how many tiers must be on your tower, traditionally there are a minimum of three—one tier for each menu item.

A spot of tea

The proper ratio for a brewed pot of tea is typically two teaspoons of loose tea per cup boiling water, steeped for five minutes. (Tea bags do not generally make an appearance at afternoon tea.) If you are hosting a larger group, consider multiple varieties of tea.

Watch the water! The longer water boils, the more oxygen it loses, ultimately affecting the taste of your tea. If you are like me and watching water isn't your forte, try an electric kettle. It will turn off once the water has reached boiling and is ready to be added to the tea pot.

If your guests take milk and sugar, pour the tea in their cup first, leaving room for the additions. It's traditional to use sugar cubes. Never add milk to the pot of tea—it inhibits the steeping process.

Menu notes

A traditional tea generally consists of a mixture of sweet and savory items. For a small tea, one from each category is suitable. For a larger function, you can make multiple varieties from each category. The three typical elements of afternoon tea are:

- **Scones:** Served with a jam, a curd, and some sort of cream. Scones can be infused with herbs such as thyme or rosemary,



or contain dried fruits, such as cranberries. Raspberry jam, lemon curd, and clotted cream are popular toppings. Clotted cream, a thick cow's milk cream, is traditional; however, it can be difficult to find in the United States. A suitable substitute would be either cr me fra che (found in the cheese section of most markets) or an unsweetened whipped double cream, which can be made by whisking heavy cream until thick.

- **Finger sandwiches:** While the classic cucumber sandwich is most welcome at tea, also consider finger sandwiches with smoked salmon and cream cheese, or ham.
- **Dessert:** An elegant dessert is de rigueur at tea—after all, it was a duchess who spearheaded the whole concept. Think a beautiful chocolate tart or even the extravagant Op ra cake, an elaborate, six-layer dessert filled with alternating layers of almond sponge, coffee buttercream, and chocolate ganache. ◆

Sample Menu TEA

- *a pot of Darjeeling*
- *a pot of Earl Grey*

SCONES

- *cream scone served with a blackberry jam and a lemon curd*
- *cranberry scone served with a honey-flavored double cream and a fig jam*

FINGER SANDWICHES

- *a slice of baguette topped with chive cream cheese and smoked salmon*
- *roasted turkey breast with cranberry mayonnaise, served on a biscuit*
- *three-cheese bread with melted goat cheese, sharp cheddar, and mozzarella*

DESSERT

- *petit fours*
- *chocolate or fresh fruit tart*
- *op ra cake*

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LOVE *your linen closet*

BED, BATH AND BEYOND ORGANIZATION

BY MARISSA HERMANSON

The smallest nooks and crannies of your home shouldn't be overlooked, especially in terms of organization. If the closets where you tuck away your home goods are well-kept and uncluttered, it helps your abode run like a well-oiled machine.

These days, linen closets contain more than just linens and have turned into a catchall for everything bed-and-bath-related. Control the chaos of your linen closet with these organization and folding tips. And, if you don't have a proper linen closet, we have a few suggestions on how you can easily DIY one.





Overall organization

When organizing your linen closet, use bins of the same color or material, like seagrass or canvas, to create a cohesive look. By using the same organizational bins throughout, your closet will appear tidy, giving you a calming feeling every time you open your closet door. To ensure that you can easily find what you are looking for, label your bins with pretty tabs.

Fill other bins with items like rolls of toilet paper and tissues, so they are out of sight. Lidded glass jars are great for storing items like cotton balls, Q-tips, and clothes pins, and also for displaying them in a pretty way. Small plastic drawers are the perfect place to tuck away random things like hair accessories, bandages, medications, and other small items of that nature.

Store seasonal linens, like heavy quilts and flannel sheets, higher up in the closet, since you'll only need to access those a few times a year. And, make sure that the items you are using daily are within an easy arm's reach—towels, toiletries, and such. At the bottom of the closet, tuck away

a small stool so that you'll always be able to get a leg up to grab the hard-to-reach items.

Fill a caddy with cleaning supplies such as bleach, paper towels and plastic gloves so you can easily grab them when your bathroom needs a quick clean-up. To use every square inch of space, don't forget about the back of the closet door. Hang your ironing board, or install a towel bar or rack of narrow shelving to store small items like toiletries.

Folding tips

Folding fitted sheets can be cumbersome and, if you don't do it right, can leave your sheets wrinkled and your linen closet looking a mess. To properly fold your fitted sheet, the key is getting the corners folded up within one another. While it can be helpful to watch a video of this being done, here is a step-by-step guide:

Place a corner of the fitted sheet over each of your hands with the inside of the sheet facing away from you. Take your right hand/sheet corner and cross it over your body,



CATAWBA

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placing it onto your left hand/left sheet corner. Keeping your left hand in the corners, use your right hand to grab the fold and shake the sheet so that the sheet lines up on the bottom. (Your goal is to keep all corners on your left hand.) Take your right hand, while still holding the fold, and find the outside sheet corner at the left bottom and bring it up, placing the third corner over your left hand with the other two corners. Bend down again and, using your right hand, grab the fourth corner and pick it up and place it over your left hand with the other three corners. Place the folded sheet on a flat surface. The elastic edges should naturally fold into an L-shape, so that the bed sheet looks like a square. From there, fold the sheet into thirds, so that it is long and thin. Fold the sheet into thirds again so that it is neat and compact.

Bed sheet pro-tip: To keep bed linens tidy and together, fold them and store them inside a matching pillow case.

Look no further than the linen department in stores for inspiration on how to fold your towels at home. This method works for hand towels and bath towels alike, and allows you to display them beautifully:

Fold the towel in half so that the top and bottom are touching, then fold it in half again. From side to side, fold the towel into thirds, so that it is a small, compact rectangle. When stacking the towels in your linen closet, make sure that the nicely folded edge is facing out to keep your closet looking orderly.

Linen closet diy

Don't have a linen closet? That's okay! You can easily make your own linen closet with furnishings like an old armoire or bookcase. Transform a bookcase into linen storage by displaying beautiful folded linens and adding matching baskets as a catch-all for cleaning products, toiletries and tissues. A chest with drawers is a great alternative, as you can easily tuck linens and bathroom supplies out of sight. If you have a spacious bathroom, you also can install cabinetry or a shelving unit that can be used as towel and toiletry storage.

With the proper storage systems in place and some tidy folding methods, your newly organized linen closet is guaranteed to keep your household running smoothly. ♦

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AT HOME WITH ELAINE STEPHENSON

*Interior Designer's Abode Features
Antiques and Original Art*



BY CHRISTY RIPPEL
Photography by Kevin Hurley

The ranch style home is at the heart of Cornwallis Avenue, one of the most sought-after streets in South Roanoke, prized for beautiful homes, low street traffic and walkability to the local elementary school. When Elaine Stephenson and her husband Bill saw the house twenty-seven years ago, they knew it was the one.

“My husband grew up in South Roanoke, and we knew we wanted to raise our family here,” says Elaine, who was drawn to the home’s gently sloping yard, natural light and “good bones”—though the interior would need some renovating and a designer’s touch. Elaine, who has owned and operated Elaine Stephenson Interiors in Roanoke since the 1990s, was then a budding interior designer and excited for the challenge.



Art and design have always been a part of Elaine’s life—her mother was artistic, making custom hand-painted lamp shades, and her daughter is an interior designer in Raleigh, North Carolina. “I always knew I wanted to be in the [interior design] field, but I wanted a traditional liberal arts education first,” Elaine explains. She has an undergraduate degree in art history from Hollins University, and her appreciation for art is obvious. The Stephenson home brims with original works from several celebrated local and regional painters, such as Mary Boxley Bullington and Ted Turner, as well as artists of national acclaim, like Henry Botkin.

Following her undergraduate studies, she pursued a BS in interior design from UNC-Greensboro, and is ASID and CID certified—which means she has passed certifying exams and is professionally trained, educated and tested. Elaine’s education and experience gave her the tools and confidence to shape the design of both her own home, and countless clients’ homes over twenty-plus years of work. While her clients might dictate design direction for work projects, her own style is distinctly Southern with a heavy nod to the traditional, but with some whimsy and fun. “I love traditional, but I want to mix it up—I want it to be unexpected,” Elaine says.

The Stephensons’ home had been left largely untouched since its construction in the early 1950s, and while Elaine noted that the house had an easy floor plan, they immediately contemplated how they could add on to the home to suit their growing family, which eventually included a son and daughter, now both in their mid-twenties.

As homeowners of older homes often do, the Stephensons have made incremental changes over the years, like a kitchen renovation in 2001, a down-to-the-studs project that maintained the same footprint as the original. The kitchen, the hub of their home, has an airy cheerfulness from an oversized floral wallpaper on a creamy yellow background, and plenty of light. It has two full-length windows over the countertop, as well as a double sliding door to a screened-in porch which was added during a major renovation to the home in 2007. The porch, one of two off of the main level, was designed with relaxation in







mind and has a fireplace, plush outdoor furniture and a built-in grill. “We use this a lot. We love to sit out here and when we entertain, people tend to end up out here,” Elaine notes.

The kitchen connects to the breakfast area and family room—one big space which was also part of the renovation in 2007 by local contractor Matt Prescott, of Prescott Construction. The Stephenson family moved out of their Cornwallis home during the renovation, renting a house for seven months in the neighborhood. The end result, among other things, was an expanded footprint that included the spacious family room and breakfast area on the main level, which features a vaulted ceiling, stone fireplace and large windows. The breakfast area includes a rustic table, with seating for eight, that looks out over the rest of the space, which includes a built-in bar. The bar has a beverage fridge and ice maker disguised by custom paneling, while nestled between the beverage fridge and the wall is an antique sideboard that Elaine found while the renovation was ongoing. “I purchased it from a local antique dealer, and the area was actually built around it,” Elaine says. “There isn’t an inch to spare and it fits perfectly.”

The breakfast table is situated in a prime spot. From here, one has a view of the television, the fireplace, and the backyard, visible though a large window which takes up most of the far wall of the family room. Elaine’s desk, where she works when she isn’t at her Franklin Road office, is butted against the window. In addition to the desk, the room is filled with a couch and three sink-in chairs fit for relaxed family life, which includes a yellow Lab. Between two English arm chairs covered in a narrow striped fabric is a family treasure—a cherry side table made by Bill’s grandfather.

The breakfast table also affords a view of a gallery wall of original paintings and drawings, curated over a number of years and anchored by a large, colorful painting by Donald Purdy, a well-known American painter, depicting three women and a dog at a kitchen table. Elaine was gifted some of her art collection by an aunt, and she has added to it every year—at Christmas, each of her two children receives a piece of art, some of which hang in their old bedrooms and throughout the house.





To the right of the gallery wall is a recessed, built-in desk with shelves above—a home for Elaine's collection of well-worn cookbooks and antique copper Lusterware. Lusterware is pottery or porcelain with a metallic glaze, and during the 1820s to 1860s there were a number of English factories producing these pieces. "Lusterware is one of my favorite things, and I'll pick it up whenever I find it—it isn't expensive, but I think it's so pretty," Elaine says.

For a more formal affair, the Stephensons have a dining room with walls in a custom burnished gold paint (courtesy of local painter Nene Roe) along with a coordinating Brunschwig & Fils wallpaper in a butterfly pattern. The dining table, which seats ten, was passed down from Elaine's parents, and the Queen Anne chairs are draped in custom slipcovers. A bowfront chest occupies the far wall. "It was the first antique I ever collected, and I got it for my 21st birthday," Elaine remembers. It isn't the only nostalgic item in the room—the candlesticks on the





dining table were an engagement present to the couple from Elaine's parents.

Connected to the dining room is a large living room, whose tall windows face the street. It was left untouched in the renovation, and its furniture is a mix of antique pieces collected over the years. It is painted a mid-tone green, and the large windows are covered in simple rice paper shades, which Elaine favors because they impart neutral texture that doesn't compete with the room's other elements—in this case, stand-out art. The living room houses original paintings of beach scenes by Henry Botkin, a mid-century American Modernist painter. Opposite the wall of windows is a fireplace framed by original built-in bookcases on either side, housing books, family photos and mementos.

When the Stephensons purchased their home, the entrance to the master bedroom was off of the main foyer. During the renovation, the entrance was relocated to a small hallway, and the footprint of the house was expanded to allow for a new galley-style master bathroom. The bedroom has a built-in raffia and wood wardrobe, custom made



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by local craftsman John Davis. It has the British West Indies look that Elaine envisioned, and he also created a matching double vanity in the master bathroom.

The other main floor bedroom belonged to the Stephensons' son, and still houses many of his childhood things, along with a custom-made trundle bed designed by Elaine and built by local upholsterer Roger Creasy.

During the renovation, the walkout basement was expanded and finished, creating a rec room that the kids claimed as a hangout. A half bath off of the main area has a cork floor in a diamond pattern, which Elaine chose for its look as well as its sustainability. Her grown daughter's room and a guest bedroom is also housed in a wing of the lower level, along with a full bath featuring a cheery aqua and green paisley wallpaper by Cole & Son.

In a separate area of the basement, Bill has a dedicated stomping ground—an office in dark tones and a billiards room with masculine wood paneling. “The pool table is from the Shenandoah Club—they were getting rid of it, and we thought it was so neat. It was made in the 1920s,” Elaine remarks, running her hand appreciatively over its surface. The pool table, the largest antique in the house, fits in seamlessly in a home that honors the beauty of the past.

Elaine's design business continues to boom, and she is often busy designing tasteful interiors for clients throughout Virginia. But her own home provides a respite from that busy life, a cozy haven to host family and friends, and showcase her love of art and her signature Southern style. ♦



SUPPER SIMPLIFIED

SLOW COOKERS VS. DIGITAL PRESSURE COOKERS

BY SLOANE LUCAS

No matter how much time you have, it never seems to be enough. And when it comes to meal preparation, speed and ease are key to trimming time spent in the kitchen. A tried and true method of making mealtime easier is relying on specialized cookware to speed up, or streamline, the process. Slow cookers allow for minimal prep time in the morning and result in a meal waiting at the end of the day. Digital pressure cookers combine the speed of a traditional stovetop pressure cooker with the ability to set it and walk away.

The skinny on slow cookers

Slow cookers, including popular brands like Crock-Pot®, employ electronic monitoring to manage cooking time and temperature level. Like traditional Dutch ovens, they are capable of holding and maintaining heat for an extended period of time—usually via ceramic or cast aluminum interiors. But many new slow cookers have the added benefit of controls that automatically turn off after the desired cooking time is achieved.

Recipes usually call for ingredients to be added all at once, then the machine is turned on and a combination of temperature and time is selected. Most slow cookers offer high heat settings that run for a shorter time, and low heat settings that run for longer, and will usually turn from active cooking to warming after the initial cooking time is done.

Slow cookers are available in a range of sizes, shapes and colors, with basic functionality or a slew of features. They are also available at a variety of price points. Depending on the model of slow cooker you buy, you can sauté and brown meat in one pot, making cooking even easier.

Cleanup can be a breeze, as most slow cookers can be fitted with plastic bag inserts that can withstand a long cook time. Once the meal is served, just pull out the bag and throw it away.

The lowdown on digital pressure cookers

Pressure cookers leverage the liquid in a recipe to produce trapped steam, which creates pressure, helping food cook quickly and retain its moisture. In the same way that a Dutch oven is the analog cousin to the slow cooker, digital pressure cookers are electronic versions of traditional stovetop pressure cookers.

Digital pressure cookers, including the popular Instant Pot® brand, combine some of the best properties of their cordless ancestors while allowing for more precise temperature control and minimal (if any) monitoring.

Slow & steady vs. instant gratification

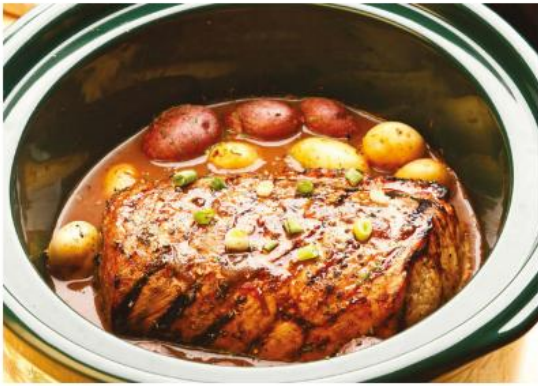
Both slow cookers and digital pressure cookers allow options for easier meal preparation, including potentially setting the appliance up in advance of coming home, so meals are ready upon arrival. Both also allow you to free up your stove and oven for other uses—ideal when cooking a large meal.

Time Savings: The best advantage of a digital pressure cooker is speed. The pressure cooker allows cooks to create delicious meals in a fraction of the time. Just be careful when reading recipes: The cook time is different from the overall time food needs inside the appliance, because the cooker needs time to reach peak temperature and pressure before actual “cooking” time starts. Don’t forget to also factor in any prep time.

But even with prep and warm-up time, digital pressure cookers can be used that evening with no advance planning—even when cooking with frozen ingredients. Slow cookers don’t offer that; ingredients usually need to be defrosted in order for the correct cooking temperature to be reached for safe cooking and eating. Even the ‘fastest’ slow cookers will take about three to four hours on high heat, so if you haven’t planned ahead for your meal, you’ll be scrambling for what to make.

Slow cookers do save time, but on the back end. Even recipes that involve marinating, browning or other pre-cooking can result in a meal ready to eat as soon as you walk in the door. If you prep





ingredients the night before, you can usually keep the insert in the fridge overnight, pop it in the cooker as you leave, and come home to a meal.

While some digital slow cookers allow you to pre-program a start time, because ingredients will be sitting on a counter a room temperature for the bulk of the day, chefs need to be mindful of food safety and potential spoiling.

Simplicity: Basic slow cookers are often simple to work, having only a few buttons and intuitive settings. Digital pressure cookers, by contrast, are more complicated. While they get easier to operate with repetition, chefs will need to become familiar with the various settings and procedures.

Range of use: Each option has limitations and advantages in terms of what can be cooked. For slow cookers, only certain types of meat and vegetables can withstand cooking for long times. Slow cookers can make tough cuts of meat tender, but they can also leave other meats mushy. Digital pressure cookers, since they cook for less time, allow

for more flexibility on your choice of meat or vegetable. On the flip side, slow cookers are often better for dairy-based sauces, where a pressure cooker might cause curdling or scalding.

While numerous aficionados cite the multi-functionality of digital slow cookers—arguing that they can serve as rice cookers, yogurt makers and other appliances—many slow cookers can also be enlisted for these functions. However, most digital pressure cookers allow you to sauté as a standard option, whereas with slow cookers, that functionality will cost extra.

Whether you choose a slow cooker or a digital pressure cooker boils down to personal preference and needs. They both offer many of the same advantages over oven or stovetop cookware, but with distinct differences that make each more suited for different lifestyles. Whichever you choose, you're well on the way to streamlined, easier meal preparation. ♦



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TOWEL TALK

PUTTING TOGETHER YOUR TOWEL WARDROBE

BY KATHERINE FULGHUM KNOPF

Too often, towels tend to be the unappreciated workhorse of the linen world. They are such a part of our daily lives that we often use them without much regard and take them for granted until they fall apart, or we suddenly realize that guests are coming and it's time for a spruce up! While there is a dizzying assortment of towels available, knowing what you're looking for will make shopping easier, and will help you put together a towel wardrobe that will be both stylish and practical.

Evaluate usage

When making your shopping list for towels, first consider your needs. How many people will use these towels? Where will they be used—in the master bath, for the kids, in the powder room, at the beach? How often will they be used? These considerations will affect everything from style to size to quantity, so know what you need before you shop.

Fiber types

No matter how good it looks, if a towel doesn't do its main job—absorb water—it's not going to get you far. Absorbency and durability are key features of your towel wardrobe, so be sure to read the label when shopping. Lighter weight towels can be great

for tucking into a bag for a trip to the beach or the gym, but be aware that they are generally less absorbent, so a heavier towel might be best for your master suite. Also, remember that softness is determined by the length of the cotton fibers (longer equals better), but regular washing and allowing towels to air dry after using will also affect how they feel and last. When shopping, it helps to know some of the different cotton fibers that are available...

Egyptian: If you want towels that feel sumptuous and last, Egyptian towels have long been the standard. Made from extra-long fibers, "true" Egyptian cotton is high quality, fluffy, and absorbent. Egyptian cotton produced outside of Egypt can be of varying caliber, so if you want premium quality, check the label for

a black triangular seal from the Egyptian government, and be prepared to pay accordingly. And, due to their absorbency and density, make sure that these towels are allowed to dry properly after use.

Pima: Pima is grown in the southwestern United States, and is actually the same plant as the cotton grown in Egypt, so it will have a similar feel and absorbency to Egyptian cotton. It's known for its soft weave. Supima® towels are touted as being made from extra-long Pima cotton fibers, so you should expect superior feel and quality when purchasing towels with this label.

Turkish: Turkish towels tend to have slightly shorter fibers than Egyptian cotton (though high-density Turkish towels can actually be thicker and fluffier than Egyptian ones.) These fibers will dry more efficiently while still providing softness and absorbency, so they're well-suited to humid environments.

Bamboo: Bamboo or bamboo-cotton blends are a new trend in towels and are growing in popularity. Besides being soft and absorbent, bamboo is an eco-friendly choice due to its sustainability and lack of pesticide use. It's also naturally anti-bacterial and color-fast.

Organic cotton: Certified organic cotton towels are sustainably produced and pesticide free, and their smaller carbon footprint makes them an attractive ecological alternative.

Quantity

A good rule of thumb is have two bath towels, two hand towels, and two washcloths per person. This allows you to keep one set in use while the other is in the laundry. If you like a generously-sized towel, consider upgrading your bath towels to bath sheets, which have a few extra inches of width and length. For beach or pool towels, count on one per person, and add a couple extras to the stack to have plenty for a day on the water.

Color

While fluffy, pure white towels are timeless and provide a posh, spa-like feel, it can be fun to mix it up a little. An unexpected accent color, bold pattern, or stylish trim can look great in a powder room or kids' bathroom. Like accent pillows, towels can also be swapped out seasonally, allowing you to enjoy bright colors in warm months, and richer or muted tones in cooler months, if you so desire.

With warm weather on the way and lake and beach trips on the horizon, now is a good time to stock up on beach towels, but it's always a good time to invest in bathroom linens. Purchasing a quality towel wardrobe will bring you pleasure every time you use them, because nothing beats stepping out of the shower and into a soft, fluffy towel! ♦

CARE TIPS

- Wash new towels before using to remove any chemicals and dirt from the manufacturing and shipping process.
- Wash towels after every three uses to ensure freshness.
- Don't use liquid fabric softener, as it reduces absorbency.
- Vinegar in the wash cycle can help increase absorbency and remove any musty odor if towels were damp for too long.
- Dry towels thoroughly to avoid mildew, but be careful not to overdry them, as this can break down fibers faster.

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GENERALLY SPEAKING, THE TIMING OF PRUNING IS DETERMINED BY WHEN THE PLANT BLOOMS. IF IT BLOOMS IN SPRING, WAIT TO PRUNE UNTIL AFTER IT FLOWERS; IF IT BLOOMS IN LATE SUMMER OR EARLY FALL, YOU CAN PRUNE IN EARLY SPRING."



Spring pruning
**THE ART
OF THE CUT**

BY BECKY CALVERT

Pruning is one of those gardening tasks that can be fraught with uncertainty. It's all about the timing—prune a tree or bush at the wrong time of year and at best, you'll forgo blooms or fruit for the season; at worst, you can irreparably damage or even kill the plant. So how is one to know the best time to prune?



Benefits of early spring pruning

Early spring, before many plants have leafed out and before new growth has begun, is an excellent time to prune, according to Kathleen Reed, Associate Extension Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources at the Roanoke County/Roanoke & Salem office for Virginia Cooperative Extension. “Pruning improves the appearance or health of plants, controls the size and shape, helps to prevent property damage or personal injury, and influences the fruiting and flowering of some plants,” says Reed.

Cool weather pruning is also a good time to prune many plants because you can see their natural shape, says Jane Baber White, a Lynchburg-area landscape designer for over forty years who specializes in historic garden restorations. Cool weather pruning also reduces stress on the plant, although ideally, you’ll want to wait until the danger of hard frost has passed to do heavy pruning. “You have to think of pruning cuts as open wounds on the plant until they heal,” says Reed. Pruning at the end of the dormant season means plants will heal during the rapid growth spurt of the spring, leaving plenty of time for them to recover during the growing season.

Not every plant needs pruning however, according to White. “A lot of pruning is not necessary if the right plant is selected for the right location,” she says. “It doesn’t make sense to try to make the plant into something it cannot be. If you need a tall narrow-growing plant, select one that does that naturally, rather than one which is known to have spreading branches. The right plant for the right spot requires very little maintenance and pruning.”

New vs old wood

While now is the ideal time to prune many of the plants in your garden that benefit from an occasional or yearly trim, some should be left alone. Generally speaking, the timing of pruning is determined by when the plant blooms. If it blooms in spring, wait to prune until after it flowers; if it blooms in late summer or early fall, you can prune in early spring. This is because some plants bloom on old growth, whereas others bloom on new growth.

Spring blooming shrubs, such as forsythia, azalea, and lilac all bloom on old wood—that is, their buds were set last





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year. If you prune them now, you'll lose your upcoming spring flowers. By pruning immediately after flowering, you'll ensure that these plants have time to form next year's crop of flowers.

Summer bloomers, such as crape myrtle and rose of Sharon, bloom on this season's growth, so they can be pruned in early spring before they leaf out. Non-blooming plants, such as evergreens or deciduous shrubs, can be pruned in early spring as well, and even into the early part of the summer. Pruning plants in late summer risks encouraging a flush of new growth which may not harden before colder temperatures and frost sets in, causing damage to the plant.

For deciduous trees, now is also an excellent time to prune. However, avoid pruning while they are leafing out, as the tree's energy reserves are low and bark can be easily damaged. If a plant has been neglected, they may need a hardy pruning to rejuvenate, regardless of when they bloom. It is best to tackle this before they fully leaf out. You may lose a season of blossoms when you do this, but a healthier plant will make it worthwhile. Reed advises pruning up to thirty percent of an overgrown or damaged plant if necessary.

Tool tips

It is important to prune with the proper tools. Use a tool with a blade that will easily cut through the thickness of wood without crushing or damaging it. For branches under three-fourths of an inch in diameter, a hand pruner should work well. Lopping shears, with their longer handles, are designed to cut branches up to about 1 3/4 inches. Pole pruners can be used to reach branches up to 2 inches in diameter as far as 12 feet off the ground (although care should be exercised when trimming around utility lines.) Chain saws can be used for larger branches, with all the recommended safety gear. Hedge clippers can be used on thin-





stemmed hedges. No matter the tool, they should be properly maintained after every usage. Clean them after every use, taking care to disinfect them to discourage diseases from spreading. Rubbing alcohol, Lysol and Listerine are effective while remaining non-corrosive to metal. Bleach or other heavy duty cleaners, such as Pine-Sol, can be highly corrosive to metal and should be avoided. Following the cleaning of your blades, dry and oil them to maintain them for years to come. Regular sharpening is also recommended.

In addition to benefitting your spring garden, pruning is therapeutic for the gardener, and is an excellent excuse to get outdoors and prepare for the season. "Every time you go into your garden, have your hand pruners with you and a bucket for trimmings, and make corrections on the spot," advises White. "Small corrections, if done regularly, are always helpful and healthy. It's impossible for a real gardener to have a quick visit to their garden. One thing always leads to another—it's hard to stop, but also important to know when to step back and admire your work... and stop!" ♦

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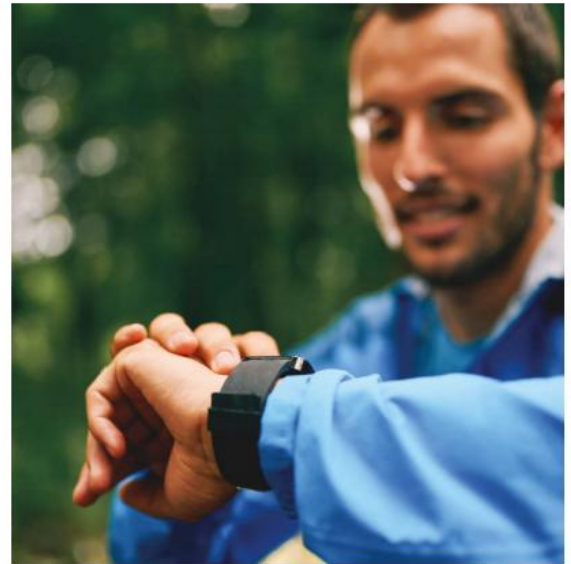


get up and go

HOW TO BEGIN A RUNNING REGIME

BY JANE RENNYSON

I don't know why it took me 42 years to realize that I was a runner, but it did. Like many of us, I was busy with life, and it left little time for me. However, life has a way of settling down, and when mine did, I decided that I would run. I didn't just want to go out for a jog a couple of times per week—I wanted to accomplish a goal that I had contemplated many times before, but was too afraid to admit. I wanted to run a half marathon. I had absolutely no idea how I was going to run such a long distance, but a good friend suggested that we figure it out together, and we did it. What I realized, the day of our half marathon, is that running a race isn't really about just running. Anyone can run, if they find what motivates them, and overcome their personal obstacles—whether it's their weight, an injury, lack of support, or time constraints.



If you are thinking about hitting the trails, there are a few things that I have learned that can make accomplishing your running goal a reality instead of just a dream.

Find your support

The first important thing that I learned is to share your goal with someone—a friend, a family member, or even a co-worker. Even if you're just starting to run for the exercise alone and are not going to run an actual race, they will be able to support you by asking how it's going. If you do sign up for a specific event, be sure to tell your support system exactly when your race will be. You will be amazed at how many people remember that you're training for a race and will ask how you are progressing. I recommend going one step further and find a training buddy. My running partner and I met while we were volunteering at our children's school. We were merely acquaintances back then, but our friendship has grown stronger with each training run and race we finish. It's best to start running with someone that is at a similar level—that way you're both comfortable with the training and will most likely have the same goals and expectations. Running with a friend is also an excellent way to have extra accountability. There are always going to be roadblocks: a family or work obligation, less than desirable weather, or just plain fatigue. It's surprising what you can overcome when you know someone is counting on you to get in that early morning run.

Programs and apps

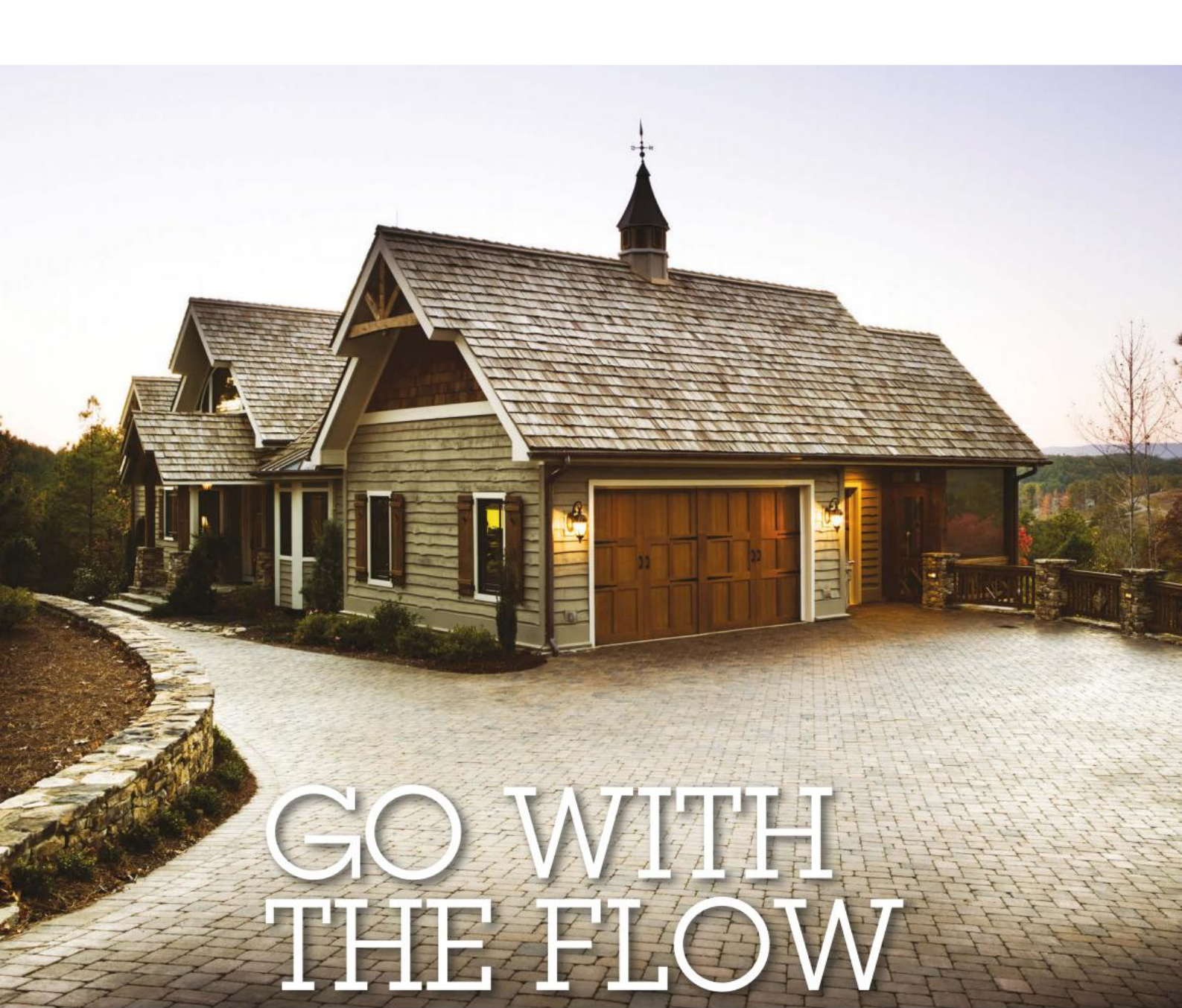
If you don't have anyone right now willing to take on the challenge with you, it's ok! There is an entire community online willing to help. If you're a beginner and are looking to start running, you may want to consider a "couch to 5K" program. This is a program specifically designed to have you up and running a 5-kilometer race (3.1 miles) in about eight to ten weeks. You start out slowly, with a walk or jog warm up, adding a short run each time you train, which is usually three or four times per week. The remaining days of the week are for rest or cross training, which could be hiking, swimming, biking or lifting weights. The goal is to build up to thirty minutes of continuous running. One of the most popular online programs is called "C25K" (which stands for "couch to five K.") You can access the information on their

website or you can download the free app, which is a great tool. Each day of the program begins with an inspirational quote to get you started with a positive mindset. It gives you a specific workout for that day and talks you through it, from warm up to cool down. If you're more advanced, you can use the internet to find a workout plan for the specific race you intend to run, and you can use an app that tracks that workout. Two highly-rated apps are "Nike+ Run Club" or Under Armour's "Map My Run." Both allow you to simply press 'start' and it will track your distance, time, speed, and calories burned. They also allow you to share your progress through various outlets on social media, such as Facebook.

Gear up

Once you've decided that you are going to hit the road and tackle a running goal, you will need some gear. Just like any sport, there are many different items that you think you may need. But if you ask any runner what their most important piece of equipment is, chances are they will say it's their shoes, and I couldn't agree more. I have had lots of problems with my feet, including two surgeries, and I cannot run any distance without my orthotics. But a good pair of shoes can ease the impact of running on your feet and make it enjoyable, even if you've had problems in the past. I suggest going to a local running shop, where you can have your stride evaluated and shoes fitted specifically for you. It may seem like a bit of an investment, however there is nothing worse than sore feet during a run. And more importantly, a great pair of shoes will prevent other injuries to your legs, hips and back.

With spring on the horizon, you may be thinking about how you'd like to get fit for the warm season ahead. Or perhaps months of cold weather have given you "the blahs" and you need a boost of energy to make it through the remaining weeks. It could be that you just need to finally challenge yourself, like I did. Whatever the case may be, running could be the answer. There is rarely a day that I don't come in from a run feeling better than when I left. If you are considering running that 5K, 10K, half or even a full marathon, simply grab your shoes and go. Don't hold yourself back, and don't let anything keep you from crossing that finish line! ♦



GO WITH THE FLOW

PERMEABLE HARDSCAPE OFFERS ECO-FRIENDLY OUTDOOR SPACES

BY RORY RHODES

It's hard to find a home without hardscape. Whether it's a driveway, walkway, front porch, an entry around an exterior door, or a backyard patio, virtually every home needs some kind of hardscaping to help make outdoor areas more usable. Oftentimes, these zones are constructed with materials such as a slab of concrete or mortared pavers. But if you're looking to create a new feature on your property, or to replace an existing surface, there's another option you should consider: permeable hardscape.

Around this time of year, many homeowners are eager to begin preparing their outdoor spaces for spring and warmer weather. If you've been experiencing any flooding, muddy or soggy areas, or are envisioning an expanded outdoor living space this season, you might be thinking about installing or upgrading the hardscape on your property. There are many ways to accomplish this, but an increasingly popular choice is permeable hardscape. Like its name suggests, permeable hardscape allows water to pass through the materials and into the soil beneath, and it has several positive attributes.

The positives of permeable

Permeable hardscape is an excellent way to control the flow of water on your property. Not only does it prevent water from ponding in low spots in your yard, it also prevents a lot of run-off and erosion problems caused by traditional, non-permeable surfaces. If you've ever seen water sheeting off a concrete patio during a heavy rain, you know all that water has to go somewhere. This type of run-off can cause problems, not only to nearby structures and gardens, but also to local waterways. Water from residential areas, often full of soil nutrients and chemicals, eventually ends up in streams, which can cause chemical imbalances and sediment build up.

Permeable hardscape, on the other hand, allows water to be filtered back into the soil, which replenishes groundwater and prevents erosion and pollution problems. If that fact alone isn't enough to convince you, consider the fact that permeable hardscape is already mandatory in many commercial applications, and may be the future in residential areas as well. Chuck Kepley, sales manager for Boxley Materials Company, points out that the hardscape along downtown Roanoke's Elmwood Park Art Walk was actually built with permeable pavers, and that area homeowners are beginning to follow suit with similar installations. "We see it more and more every day, mainly for earth-conscious people," says Kepley. "But many municipalities are now taxing citizens for rainwater that runs off into the sewer system, and so more homeowners have installed permeable driveways for the end-of-year tax credits."

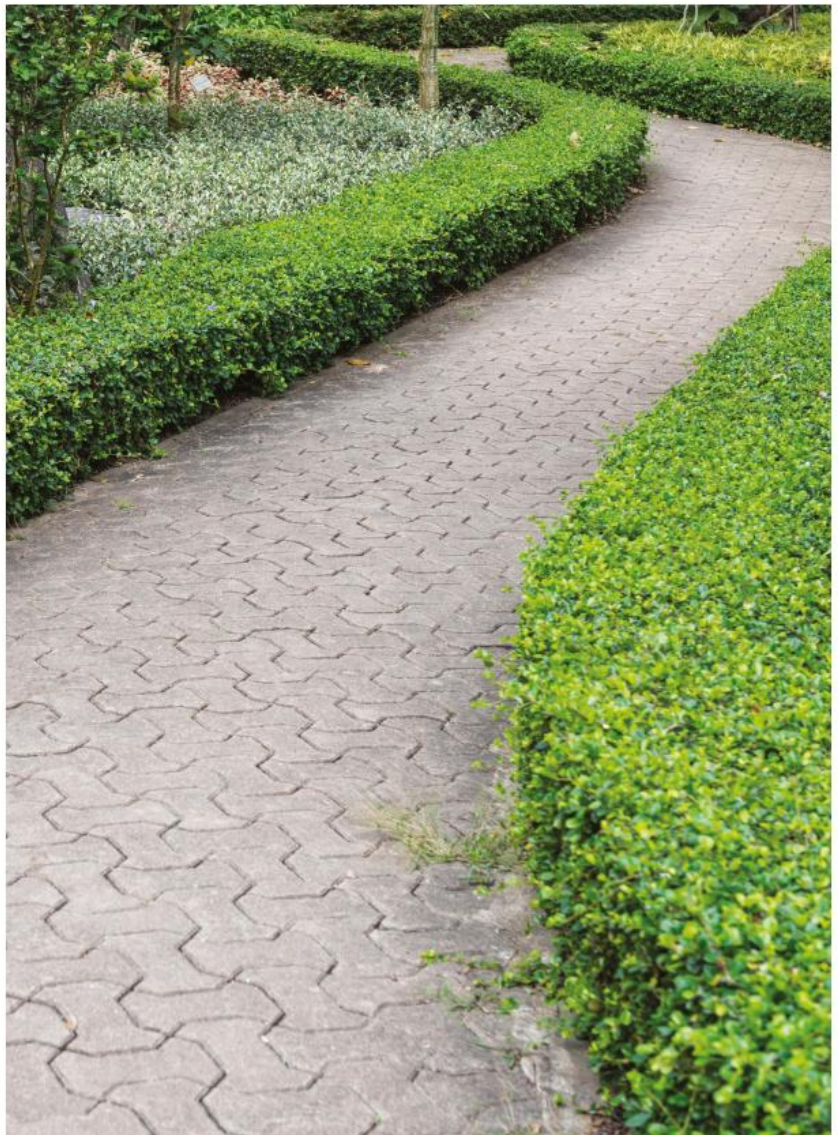
Additionally, Mark Maslow, president of Southern Landscape Group, says, "When you choose permeable, the major advantage is that you don't have all of that run-off going into your landscape, which mitigates a lot of problems, and it also limits the amount of water that goes down into storm sewers and ends up in creeks and streams."

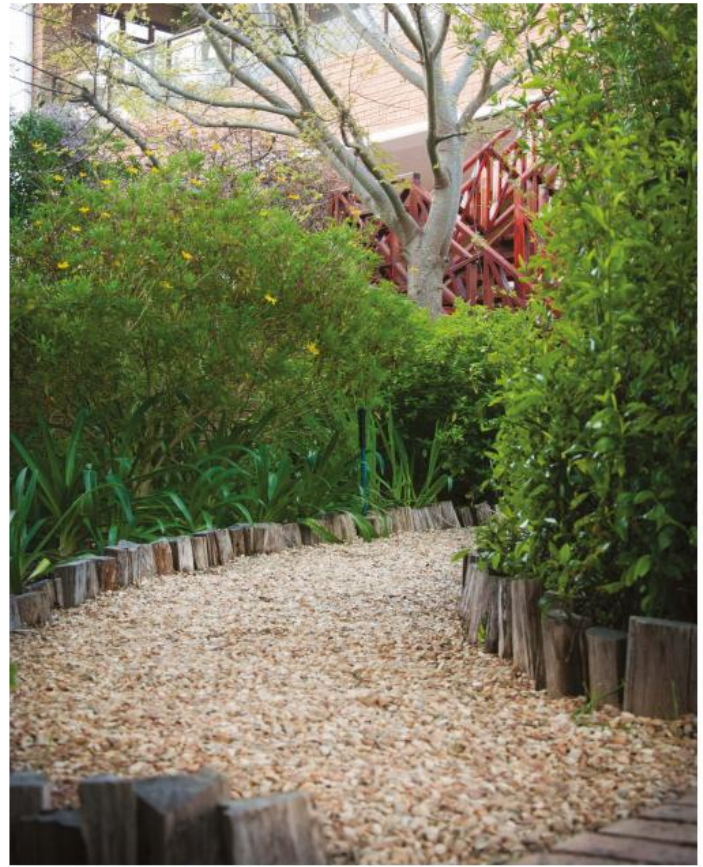
Luckily, there are plenty of attractive choices in permeable hardscape, along with local experts who can guide you through the process.

Materials

As with traditional hardscape, homeowners have options in the finished look that will complement any style of home. There are hundreds of options—from modern slabs to rustic cobblestones—but all permeable pavers are designed with interlocking space keepers on their sides. This system allows for a gap between pavers which can be filled with fine, clean-draining stone. Not only does this facilitate water drainage—the interlocking grid ensures that the finished surface is stronger than freestanding pavers.

Additionally, the pavers themselves are specially fabricated to be porous. According to Maslow, even concrete used in permeable applications is a porous





version. “Permeable pavers have more of a natural hydraulic balance,” he says. “They trap and slowly release water into the ground, rather than having water flow across the surface.” Maslow notes that there are also natural flagstones you can use in certain applications, if preferred, and that in this case, permeability will come from the construction of the base layer. When using freeform flagstone, fitting them closer together will allow more ease of furniture placement, while wider spacing offers a more natural look, especially when gaps are filled with plant material.

Boxley distributes several lines of permeable pavers, and Kopley says that they are just as attractive as clay or concrete pavers, if not indistinguishable. They are also ADA compliant, due to their even surfaces and minimal gaps between pavers.

“Our most popular sizes of permeable pavers are 6x6 and 6x9,” says Kopley, noting that these sizes offer a traditional look. “They can be installed in patterns such as a running bond [the classic staggered pattern often seen in brick], stacked bond [a simple side-by-side pattern], basketweave, and herringbone.” Each option varies in cost, ease of

installation, amount of material required, and strength of finished product, so be sure to discuss the best choice for your landscape with your installer.

There are also options for the filler material between pavers, which is important for the filtration process. Small rock aggregate filters out both particulate and mineral matter that can be undesirable in large amounts when entering your landscape or local waterways. This small aggregate can be left as the finished look, or you can top it with pea gravel or a fine decomposed granite. An attractive option for naturalizing or softening the look of permeable hardscape is to place grass or ground cover plants between the pavers. Any hardy, low-growing plant (such as dwarf mondo grass or creeping thyme) or turf grass can be used, though of course grass will require regular weed-whacking to keep it looking good.

An alternative to permeable pavers is to hardscape an area with a natural stone aggregate, such as pea gravel, or crushed or decomposed granite. All of these options are charming—you’ll see this look everywhere from a country cottage to a European chateau. As you may know, pea gravel is a smooth, rounded stone about the size of a pea, which comes in a variety

of hues. Crushed granite comes in various sizes, and will have small textured stones in neutral colors. Decomposed granite, often referred to as “DG”, has a finer grain, more sand- or silt-like in appearance. Each has potential positives and drawbacks depending upon your landscape needs. For example, DG is an excellent choice for a walkway, but can be tracked into the house on shoes, so don’t install it directly outside a door—have a few feet of buffer zone. Pea gravel offers a soft, attractive look and is great for drainage—you can even use it as mulch—but it can be tough to wheel a lawn mower, wheelbarrow, or bicycle across, so consider location and usage before choosing this option.

No matter which finished look appeals to you, keep in mind that the top layer is the tip of the iceberg, so to speak. When choosing permeable hardscape, you are installing a system as much as an aesthetic feature. As Maslow points out, “With successful permeable hardscape, the majority happens underground, where you don’t see it.”

Estimating cost

Because proper preparation of the site is the key to success, you can expect to pay more for permeable hardscape than

traditional. Part of that is because you have to dig deeper to install the materials, and part of that is the amount of materials itself. Maslow estimates that permeable hardscape can cost anywhere from 20 to 50 percent more than traditional hardscape, depending on materials and the site, but adds, "Right now, it's used [in residential spaces] because it's eco-friendly and helps drainage issues, but soon it will be required." He notes that while it's already mandatory in commercial areas, a lot of his colleagues in Northern Virginia are required to have a percentage of their projects done in permeable surfaces, and he expects that trend to make its way here in the next five years or so.

Installation

Kepley says that driveways, patios, and sidewalks are all good candidates for permeable hardscape. "Anywhere you want to get rid of standing water," he notes. But there are location considerations. "You can lay permeable on a bit of a slope, but it doesn't perform best," says Maslow, because it's harder to control run-off on an incline. Also, you want to stay away from the 'drift edge' of any trees, because the excavation required will have a negative impact on root systems.

With the proper location identified, the first step of the process is to level the site and excavate down to the required depth. Maslow says, "We excavate down a minimum of twelve inches below the finished surfaces, but it can be as much as eighteen to twenty-four." Deeper excavations tend to be for vehicular and commercial applications.

Once the proper depth is reached, a sub-drainage system may be needed to pipe away excess water, particularly if being installed in clay soil. This under drain (also referred to as a "French drain" or "tile drainage"), says Maslow, is built by laying down a geotextile (i.e. permeable) fabric to filter water and stabilize the soil, then placing a perforated pipe that is routed to either a stormwater drain or some sort of bio-retention filter for emergency overflow.

From there, drainage stone is added to cover the base of the permeable structure. "It has to be clean aggregate," says Maslow, with no fine material that can clog the system. Kepley says that the lower substrate, or sub-base, will be larger gravel of about 1½ inches or more in diameter. Above that may be a base of ¾ inch gravel, followed by a layer of smaller bedding stone, on which pavers are placed. Bedding stone, such as pea gravel, is also used to fill the spaces between the pavers.

Given the technical know-how required for successful ponding and run-off management, it's a good idea to make sure your hardscape professional is ICPI-certified. The Interlocking Concrete Pavement Institute sets a national standard to ensure that projects will stand up to a lifetime of use, so be sure to ask about both certification and prior experience before installing permeable hardscape.

With so many attractive and eco-friendly options available, there has never been a better time to embrace the benefits of permeable hardscape. Alleviating drainage issues and increasing the usability of your outdoor areas are excellent reasons to go permeable. But using permeable hardscape offers the additional advantages of doing your part to filter and recharge groundwater reservoirs, as well as protecting local waterways. It's a green trend that's here to stay. ♦





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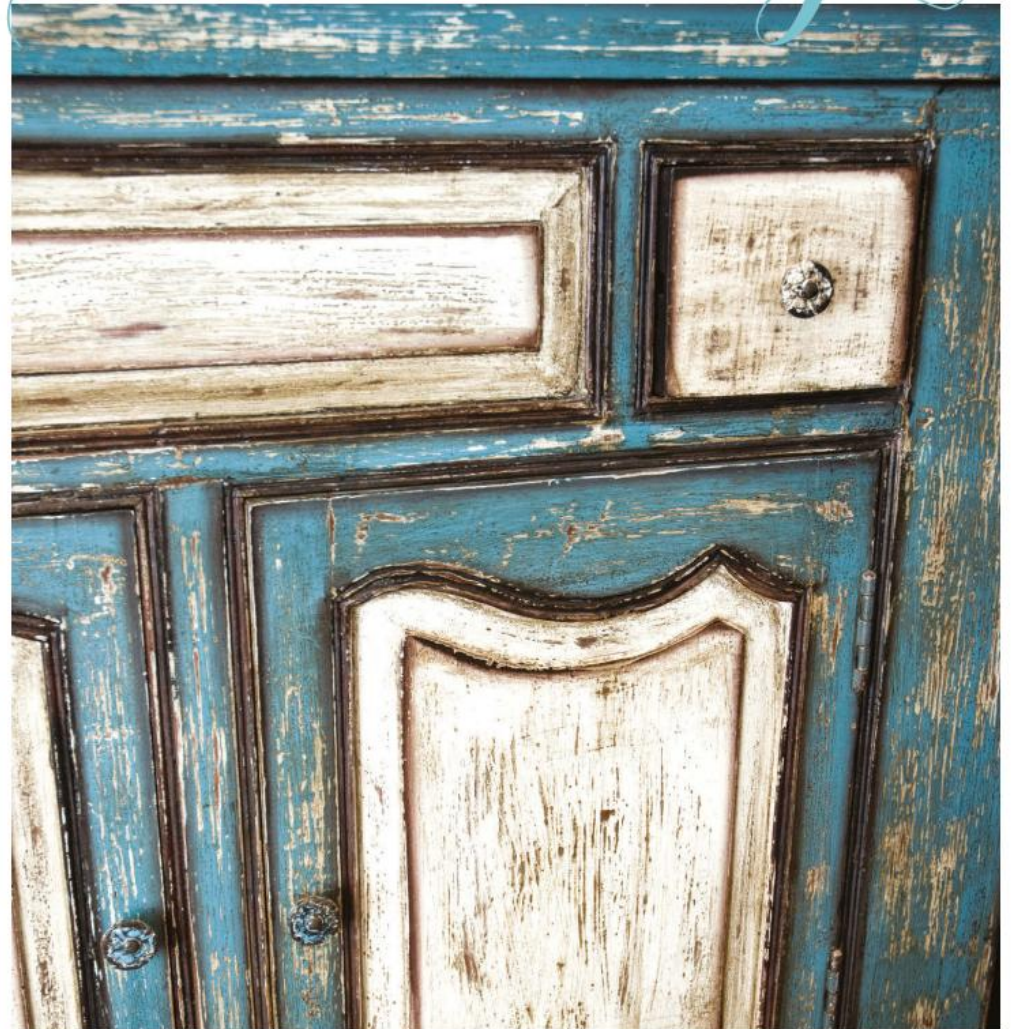
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DESIGN DEFINED *farmhouse style*



BY ASHLEY BLAIR SMITH

With its cozy charm and approachable aesthetic, farmhouse style has become increasingly popular in recent years. Exuding notes of simplicity and comfort with neutral color tones, antique pieces, and natural elements, this style has been popping up in stores and on design shows, and for good reason.

Blogger and home renovator Katrina Morris recently renovated her own farmhouse and says many people are drawn to this style because it's reminiscent of farm life and days gone by. "If you think about the old days, it was very simple and minimalistic," Morris says. "They didn't have a lot of stuff, but everything was hard working."



Morris, who previously ran a design business called I Heart Design and a shop at The White Brick House in Forest, specializes in custom-painted furniture, and is currently busy putting the finishing touches on her farmhouse while getting ready for a spring market at their property in Gladys, Virginia. She says it wasn't until she moved into her own farmhouse that she realized how much she truly loved having her own piece of land. "I would not trade it for this stage of our life, because it will change you," she says. "It takes away the busyness of life, and you realize you start to appreciate more when you live in a more rural area."

But you don't have to own a farmhouse or a parcel of land in order to enjoy this style in your own home—you just need to know what to look for and how to incorporate it into your space. A good starting point is to understand the source of the style.

Origins of farmhouse style

Originally inspired by farmers and the land they lived on and tended to, farmhouse style can be seen as a reflection of the love and connection the homeowner has for the land. More than just a particular look; it's a feeling. Morris describes it as one of hospitality and simple beauty. "It's an uncluttered, time-worn, casual feel," she says.

It also ties into the minimalistic movement we have seen on the rise recently, where people are turning toward furnishings that they love and have a need for, rather than simply having pieces to achieve a certain look.

"It's very simple in design and very uncluttered, and I need that," Morris says. "I have a very outgoing personality and I tend to take on a lot of things, and so the farmhouse style really has this simplistic design that is calming."

According to Morris, there are variations of the farmhouse style. "You have French farmhouse, you have country farmhouse, you have modern farmhouse, you have cottage, and then you have traditional," Morris says. "So you have all these terms that farmhouse style can be the foundation of and you can build on it."

Today's modern farmhouse style has touches of urban design, unlike the country look that was more popular in the 1990s and early 2000s. It's fashionable, but still has the feel of traditional southern hospitality. And there are unique pieces and elements that speak to everyone.

Key elements

While shiplap and harvest tables are farmhouse favorites, they are not the only elements that bring this style to life. Painted furniture is quite popular for the farmhouse look and adds a touch of charm. Morris has a vanity in her bedroom that she painted white. The vanity had been left in the farmhouse when she moved in, and she says that she enjoys pieces like this, which have history and character.



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"I like pieces that have dings and dents and scratches. It definitely adds to the feeling of time-worn."

Modern farmhouse design uses lots of textures, such as cotton, linen, twill, canvas, and grain sacks. Morris notes that red and blue grain sacks were a common staple of farm houses back in the day, and still look great in modern design. She adds that while the red and blue colors are characteristic of the American farmhouse style (think the American flag), those grain sacks were often from Europe, particularly France. "French farmhouse is very much incorporated into the farmhouse style that we have going on today, though a lot of people don't realize it," she says.

Neutral color palettes are intrinsic to the farmhouse look. Whites, creams, black, navy, and gray are all colors which work well. The fresh clean colors add a nice contrast with warmer elements like reclaimed wood and architectural salvage pieces. But don't limit yourself to neutral colors. Morris says that pops of red, especially a red front door, make for great statement pieces and focal points.

Reclaimed wood is often used for things like sliding barn doors, beams, and harvest tables, while architectural salvage, wrought iron pieces, and anything antique are characteristic of the style. Finally, natural elements such as greenery and flowers help to add a fresh touch to any room.



Make it your own

When it comes to farmhouse, it's important to bring in pieces that you enjoy rather than boxing yourself into a preconceived look. "I think that people can get caught up in what they see on Pinterest and Instagram and that's not their style," Morris says. The important thing to remember, she says, is the feeling that farmhouse should inspire. "Curate your favorite things, because again, farmhouse style is more about the feeling than it is one particular element."

The bottom line? "You need to love it, you need to love where you are, in whatever capacity," she says. "Whether an apartment or a mansion, just remember that farmhouse style is truly found in the simplicity of the interior."

Farmhouse style exudes comfort, charm, and sophistication, all while maintaining functionality throughout the home. It's more than a design trend—it's a way of life, and with simplicity and hospitality as the focus, it's easy to see why it is so loved. Says Morris, "I don't think farmhouse style is going anywhere. I believe it's definitely here to stay." ♦

For farmhouse inspiration, visit *The Morris Manor* at themorrismanor.com.



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