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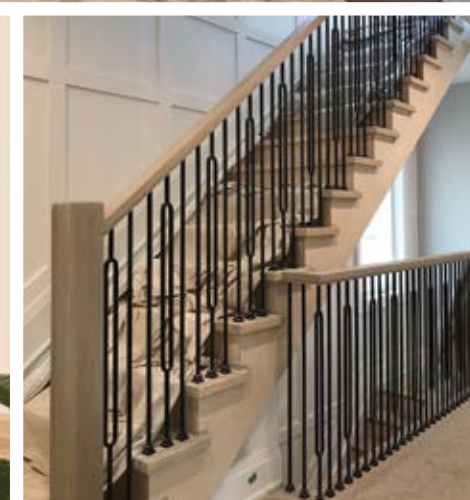
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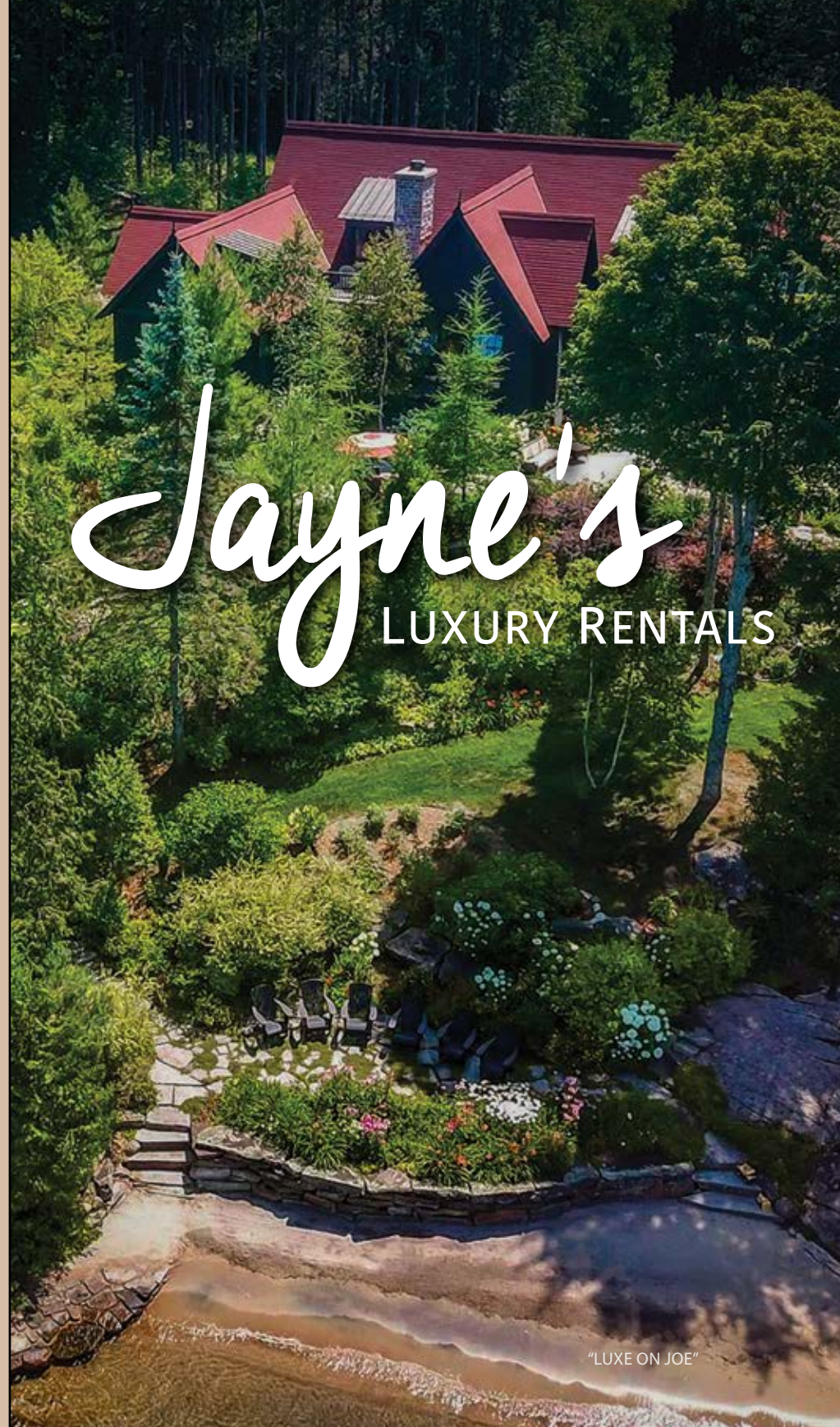
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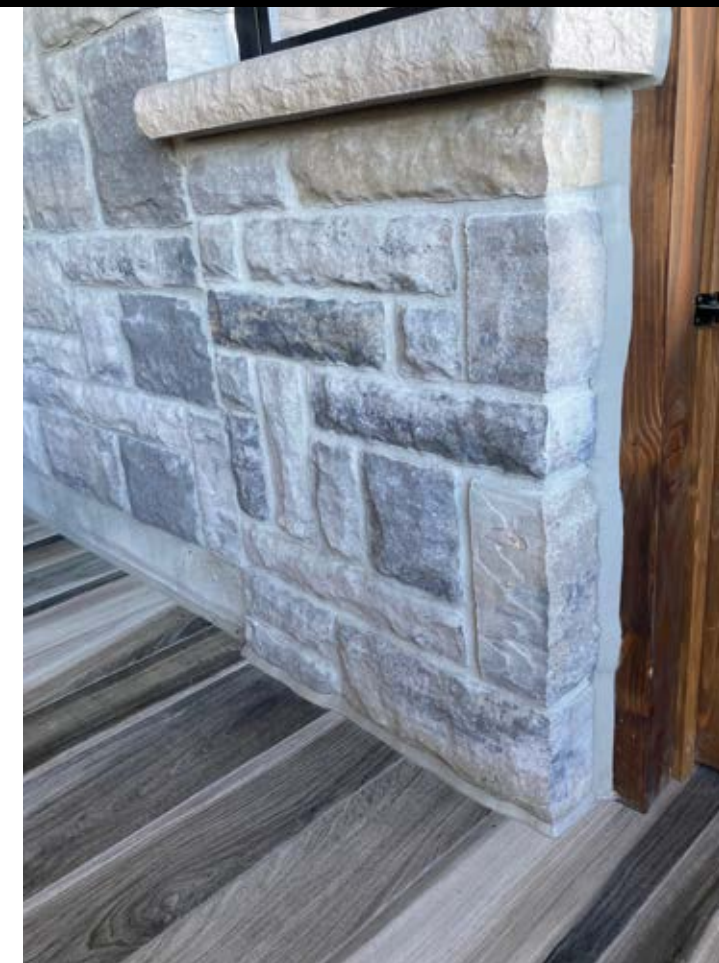
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OUR HOMES is a registered trademark of OUR HOMES MEDIA GROUP INC.
OUR HOMES Muskoka is published four times a year.

OUR HOMES is distributed via free pick up to residents of Muskoka region and to cottagers via direct mail. Copies of OUR HOMES are available for free pick up at high traffic locations throughout the region. OUR HOMES is distributed throughout select resorts and hotels, and to select business leaders via direct mail.

Please send all letters and/or feedback to OUR HOMES Magazine, 25 Elgin St., Collingwood, ON L9Y 3L6. Or email us at editor@ourhomes.ca. All letters received are subject to editing for grammar and length.

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editor's note



BEING HOMEBOUND CAN BE A PLEASURE when making the best of it. In this edition, three couples share their delight in creating a unique habitat in which to enjoy their natural surroundings. Marie and Graham Keene invited OUR HOMES to the new cottage they built on Wahwashkesh Lake. An inventive electrical engineer, Graham designed charming and original finishing touches for this lake house. He converted Coleman naphtha lamps, those ubiquitous lanterns, once standard equipment at campsites and cottages, into electric lights that glow at the flick of a switch. In the powder room, he used an outdoor water tap handle to fashion an overhead light switch. Innovative rustic touches, pine floors, shiplap walls and carefully chosen antiques construct an East Coast boathouse ambience the couple envisioned for their holiday home.

Daryl Idiens and his wife Melissa chose a spot with an unusual geography to meld building styles. On the southeast coast of Lake Rosseau, in a sheltered bay area, unlike the steep rocky shores around much of Muskoka, the terrain slopes gently to the lake, a topography well-suited to farming. In what was once a large hayfield, Daryl and Melissa blended country cottage and farmhouse styles to build a new 7,000 sq. ft. lake house. From the upland side, it looks like a large, sturdy farmhouse. Viewed from the lake, its glass walls, high windows and wide, sheltered patios affirm that this home was built to savour lakeside summer living.

In Haliburton, Ryan Harkin and Blair Cox conquered the challenges of a high, craggy shoreline with a series of decks and stairs descending from their newly rebuilt cottage to the edge of Kennesis Lake. They created an array of vistas overlooking one of Ontario's cleanest lakes and Norah's Island, a nearby ecologically sensitive 22-acre islet. Protected as wilderness by the Haliburton Highlands Land Trust, the island is home to rare species of orchid.

Hope you enjoy your cottage visits in these pages as much as we did chronicling them.

Walter Franczyk

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SPRING 2021



ON THE COVER

Shady summer afternoons promise cool comfort at this charming Highlands cottage. Story, page 74. Photography by Sandy MacKay.



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SURVIVING THE ELEMENTS

The great outdoors: Whether we experience it on a tiny balcony, a cosy deck or a big backyard, we all want to get out to enjoy warmer temperatures. While it's lovely to lounge, linger and live outdoors, you need to know Mother Nature is cruel towards materials. The scorching sun, with temperatures that go up and down, along with the wind, rain and water are all challenging to materials, natural or man-made.

To navigate the dos and don'ts for your outdoor life experience, first, ask yourself, "How much time do I want to devote to maintenance?" A bit of research will make your lounge time more enjoyable.

CABINETRY AND FURNITURE — MAINTENANCE 101

- ☀ Most products are made of plastic, wood, aluminum or wicker, and each material has its own set of positives and negatives.
- ☀ Take time to read and follow manufacturers' instructions to clean and maintain any products. It'll make your life easier in the short and long run.
- ☀ Corrosion- and weather-resistant means the finish protects materials. It is not waterproof.
- ☀ UV-stable and light fastness is a stabilizer added to protect from deterioration or fading in the sun.
- ☀ Fire, heat and impact-resistant materials are easy to clean and non-corrosive. The most practical is stainless steel.
- ☀ The easiest solution is to cover your furniture and place in storage when not in use.

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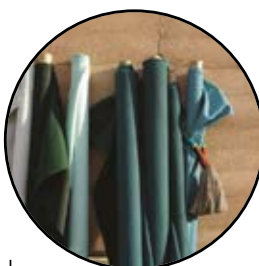
Look for recycled plastic, reclaimed wood or FSC-certified wood. Teak is well known for durability, beauty and strength and is popular on ships.



CABANACOAST: Landing Deep Seating in Umber

FABRICS

Cushions and fabrics make outdoor lounging comfy. Make sure fabrics are breathable and UV, water, mildew and stain-resistant. Most people are familiar with Sunbrella fabric for its durability and soft feel. Power-washing is not recommended as it can ruin the seams of the cushions.



SHADES AND CANOPIES

Extend your outdoor stay in a natural way to keep cool, protect yourself from UV rays and reduce the premature ageing of wood and fabric. Add a fan for ultimate breezy coolness.

FLOORING

What's under your feet needs to be practical, beautiful and long-wearing. First, take an inventory of the area you want to cover. Assess conditions such as drainage, holes made by animals, soil type and exposure to sun and rain. This will determine what materials you'll need to use. Flooring options include:

Wood: It's versatile. Redwood and cedar have a natural resistance to rot and the elements. Other woods require sealants.

Stone: Natural and durable. Includes granite, slate and marble and still requires care. Dark stones absorb the heat and will scorch your tender tootsies.

Brick and permeable concrete pavers: Great hardscape options for eco-friendly patios and walkways.

Tile: Porcelain tiles can mimic the look of other materials, including wood and stone, all while being durable and budget-friendly.

Rubber paving stones and recycled plastic: Helps divert waste from landfills. Resilient, durable, slip resistant and shock absorbent – a favourite around pools and kids' playgrounds.

Composite Decking: Wood fibres encased in plastic and binding agents. Low-maintenance, easy to install with a multitude of great traits. Very popular despite higher cost of materials.

Carpets: Makes the outdoors homelike. The synthetics are easy to clean, and are mould, mildew and stain-resistant. Many are made of recycled materials.

Artificial Grass: It's not the real thing, but it is easy to install and long-lasting. You do need to vacuum it.

NOTE: Make sure your flooring has a matte or non-slip finish. Shiny surfaces are hazardous around water and in the winter.

Finally, your evening outdoor stay is more enjoyable when you light things up! Make sure any fixture you use is wet-rated. Safety first. **OH**



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RECIPE AND PHOTOGRAPHY
JENELLE MCCULLOCH

MELON PROSCIUTTO SALAD

This is the perfect fresh and bright salad for spring. Sweet, juicy melon and salty, slightly smoky prosciutto are a classic pairing.

INGREDIENTS

SALAD

1 cup melon, balled (your choice: cantaloupe, watermelon and/or honeydew)

1 cup bocconcini cheese

8-10 pieces of thinly sliced prosciutto

Mint, to garnish

Basil, to garnish

DRESSING

¼ cup olive oil

2 Tbsp wine vinegar, your choice

1 tsp honey

A few leaves of basil, thinly sliced

Salt and pepper, to taste

HOW-TO

In a large bowl, mix together dressing ingredients.

Add melon and cheese and toss to coat in the dressing.

Place the melon mixture on a platter and arrange with slices of prosciutto.

Tear mint and basil to garnish on top. **OH**



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Sow EASY

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY
MELANIE REKOLA

2020 was a wild year that brought so many challenges – some were utterly heartbreaking and others were just plain annoying. The lack of availability of items we take for granted was frustrating, including plants. Many garden favourites just weren’t attainable. Seed-sowing to the rescue!

Most garden seeds (both flowers and veggies) are readily available online and at your local nursery, often in varieties you might otherwise never find. Plus, growing plants from seed is an inexpensive, fun and rewarding process. Most seeds can be started indoors earlier in the growing season but for this piece I’m focusing on the direct sowing method because it’s terrifically simple. Direct seeding/sowing means to plant seed directly in the garden. Sounds easy doesn’t it? That’s because it is!

Unlike their inside-grow counterparts, seeds that have been grown in place don’t experience the stress of transplanting and won’t need to adjust to their new surroundings. Often you won’t lose any time at all direct-sowing and I learned this (again) firsthand during last year’s growing season when a friend gifted me a variety of veggie seeds in June. With no time to start indoors I had no choice but to direct-sow them. To my surprise, many of these sown-in-place seedlings grew better and produced more than the ones I started inside the previous months.

TIPS FOR SEEDING SUCCESS

Though direct-sowing is easy, it doesn’t mean your new plant babies won’t need care. Follow these tips for the best direct-seeding success:

- Make sure to clear your seeding area of any weeds and have the soil loose, damp and ready for planting.
- Most of the specific sowing info per plant variety is found on the seed packet. Please read carefully. The rule of thumb is to plant a seed three times as deep as its circumference, but some require light or a cold stratification to germinate. Also keep in mind that when to sow is equally important, as some seedlings are frost-hardy and some are not.
- Mark your spot. It’s really easy to forget where you planted seeds once springtime growth is in full swing.
- Water your seeds gently as needed until you see germination, then again whenever you see the soil surface looking a bit dry. Watch the weather and adjust your watering. Schedule accordingly as seedlings can easily die from drought or drowning at this delicate stage.
- If you have a good germination rate, you may need to thin your seedlings to give them airflow and room to grow. I find it’s better to pinch the unwanted seedlings off at the base because pulling them disturbs their delicate, young root systems. If the unwanted seedlings are edible plants you can eat them, too.
- Keep watching and caring for your new brood until they’re established plants, and always be on the lookout for pests and predators. Some insects love to snack on and decimate defenseless seedlings.

MELANIE’S PLANT PICKS

Annual flowers, vegetables, and even some perennials are great candidates for direct-sowing. Some plants even seed themselves for subsequent years. Here is my list of favourites, but please don’t let it limit you. There are many others that will work.



THE EDIBLES

Beans, salad greens, parsley, basil, dill, borage, cilantro, fennel, beets, carrots, peas and radish.



BLOOMS-FOR-DAYS ANNUALS

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DEPENDABLE PERENNIALS/BIENNIALS

Foxglove, blue flax, black eyed susans, milkweed, butterfly weed, columbine and lupine.

PRO TIP: After your seed garden is well established, don’t forget to sow succession crops of both flowers and veggies to keep those beautiful blossoms and edibles coming all season long. You can even save some seeds at the end of the season for next year.

Lessons learned? Direct sowing is a little bit risky and patience-building but also incredibly easy and inexpensive. Which method will you choose this gardening season? **OH**

Melanie is a certified horticulturalist and landscape designer.



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FARMHOUSE

at the lake

Steel and asphalt roofing by GBC Contracting Services Inc. shields this large modern farmhouse on Lake Rosseau.



Describing Daryl Idiens’ new home is all about perspective.

“It’s farmhouse on the back and cottage on the front,” explains Daryl, who purchased the 36-acre Port Carling waterfront hayfield in 2018. He’d eyed the property from the east side of the bay where his family has cottaged since 2012. When the property came to market, the Idiens family couldn’t bear to watch anyone else breathe new life into the land.

This parcel – with its 240 feet of Lake Rosseau waterfront – was part of a nearly 200-acre land grant given to pioneer Roger Mahon in 1900. “The feeling of a farm is special, I think, and the feeling of this farm on a lake is unique,” Daryl says. “We don’t get to have this opportunity very often, especially in Muskoka, so we wanted to appreciate the land that we had. And it took some time to figure it out.”

“Luckily, modern farmhouses are pretty trendy right now,” he adds. “So we merged modern farmhouse and cottage into one, and put it into the hayfield, which we hayed before we dug the foundation.”

Melding inherent farmland character with Muskoka waterfront appeal drove the building design for Daryl and his wife, Melissa, who spent a year walking the property, amassing photos and dynamic inspirational plans for **Terry Ledger** of **T-Squared Design Studio Inc.**

The couple wanted an abundance of floor-to-ceiling windows and sliding doors to capture the lake view and natural light. Hide-away automated phantom screens in the three-season Muskoka room, along with sliding doors in the great room, open to create 1,100 square feet of indoor/outdoor space. *Continued on page 39*

TOP LEFT: Cutting Brothers Inc. assembled sturdy fir timbers to craft the home’s poolside pergolas and sun shelters. **LEFT:** Twilight descends on the illuminated upland elevation of the farmhouse. **TOP RIGHT:** Choosing between a dip in the lake and a swim in the luxurious pool is a challenging decision. **RIGHT:** The long dock terminates at a three-slip boat port with enough room to berth a seaplane.



“THE FEELING OF A FARM IS SPECIAL, I THINK, AND THE FEELING OF THIS FARM ON A LAKE IS UNIQUE.” – Daryl Idiens





The great room is designed for entertainment. With its attractive Rumford fireplace from **The Fireplace Stop**, luxurious 22-foot cathedral ceilings, 120-inch Ultra Short Throw projector and cosy mini-bar, it is strategically situated in the floor plan, well away from the six spacious

bedrooms – each with its own en suite.

Upstairs, a spacious children's bunk room, envisioned by the owners, sleeps eight in four beds with trundles. It features a large screen television, a children's book nook and has its own washroom facilities. *Continued on page 40*

ABOVE LEFT: Hudson's Bay striped, walking stick umbrellas await the rain at the bottom of the oak staircase by Barrie Trim & Moulding Inc. **ABOVE RIGHT:** To the right of the staircase, an elevator provides access to the home's three floors.



A cathedral ceiling soars above the great room where a Rumford fireplace by The Fireplace Stop helps warm the space. **ABOVE:** Sliding glass doors in the great room open to a screened, three-season Muskoka room.



The children's bunk room has four single beds with trundles and a pullout sofa - space enough for 10 youngsters. Soundproofed to provide peaceful sleeping, it boasts an 80-inch TV and full bathroom with separate water closet.



Accessibility, a high priority in the design, was achieved with the surprisingly flat building site, a large elevator to the upper floor, sill-less showers and wide doors. Even the two-car garage was extended to include golf cart parking. The cart makes exploring the property barrier-free, including accessing boats at the 200-foot long, 3,200 sq. ft. dock built by **Muskoka Crib Docks Ltd.**

Building permits were issued on October 18, 2019 and construction of the 7,400 sq. ft. waterfront farmhouse began. **Craig Watson Construction Inc.** was the lead contractor on site. Local timber framers **Cutting Brothers Inc.** built

the solid fir pergolas and sun shelters outside. **GBS Contracting Services Inc.** installed the steel and asphalt roofs protecting the home from the elements. Outfitters for the project, **Barrie Trim & Mouldings Inc.**, provided and installed trim and moulding throughout, as well as oak stairs, railings and 96-inch solid interior doors. The work of Barrie Trim & Mouldings solidified the look and style of the cottage.

“They used a 12-inch shiplap throughout, which is becoming more popular in cottages – although it’s not far off from the farmhouse style either,” Daryl says. *Continued on page 42*



LEFT: Quartz surfaces by Brothers Marble Works Inc. shape the food preparation surfaces and countertops in the kitchen, where the farmhouse sink overlooks a panoramic view of the bay. **ABOVE:** Part of the open-concept main floor, this living room offers another comfortable gathering spot in front of the fire. **BELOW:** With room for 14 people, the family’s long wooden dinner table, owned for more than a decade, has a new home at the centre of the main-floor living area.

“THE COTTAGE WAS DESIGNED TO BRING FRIENDS AND FAMILY TOGETHER.”
— *Daryl Idiens*





LEFT: A wall of sliding-glass doors, topped with custom-fitted windows by Grace North Windows & Doors, in the master bedroom opens to the front yard patio and Lake Rosseau.

RIGHT: Like other bathrooms in the home, this double-headed, glass-walled shower in the master en suite has no sill.

BELOW: Styled after 18th-century French furnishings, two matching black hardwood cabinets flank the en suite's antiqued vanity.



Calm, a **Benjamin Moore** colour, blankets the walls. "I like the name and I like the colour," he explains. "I used it on every element inside. In fact, all doors, trim and encasements are done in Calm. There's no white trim in this house." **Grace North Windows & Doors** supplied Weathershield windows to enable a wealth of bright natural light throughout the home.

With the exception of the bathrooms and the two laundry rooms, Daryl chose composite-based engineered oak hardwood throughout to minimize flooring contraction and expansion due to excessive lakefront humidity.

The owners' favourite design magic is found in the spectacular master bedroom, where wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling sliders open to the Lake Rosseau waterfront for stargazing at

night or watching boats by day. It also features a distressed brick-veneer gas fireplace, all the smart home technology integrated throughout the rest of the home, and a discreet side door offering covered access to the hot tub across the front deck.

Just outside the Muskoka room is the popular 18 by 41-foot in-ground pool with deck jets, a custom bar top and seating facing the lake.

Melissa, along with her mother, Angela Vassallo, led the family's decorating dream team. "We'd already accumulated a cottage-worth of décor, and we kept some of that furniture," explains Melissa. "We had a 14-person dining table, which we've had in our family for over a decade, and we love entertaining people here. It's a beautiful big slab of wood that lends itself to that sensibility." *Continued on page 44*



feature



LEFT: Illuminated by the natural light of a dormer, this second-floor hallway leads to three of the home's bedrooms. **ABOVE:** An en suite with a blue vanity resonates with a nautical theme, a favourite style element in this lake house. **BELOW:** A creative decorator, Melissa mixed and matched wooden furnishings to complete this comfortable bedroom.

A map of the three big Muskoka Lakes, a large wooden sailboat adorning the great room mantel and a nostalgic snapshot of family beach fun all fit a niche space in the new home. "So these items get to shine on their own, in addition to some of the other pieces that our family had," Melissa says. "The combination of all these elements lent themselves to a very unique look that I think fits this property well." Her husband agrees: "The nice thing about modern farmhouse and cottage styles is that they parallel in design in a lot of ways, so it wasn't that difficult."

Continued on page 46



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Barn board and dark, durable leather go equally well in farmhouse or cottage, he points out, and even the solid pine beams in the great room have that rustic, earthy feel at the heart of both decorating styles.

In less than 10 months, the breathtaking Muskoka farmhouse retreat was ready for its first guests. “Everybody who comes here

stays longer than they expect,” says Daryl. “The cottage was designed to bring friends and family together. It offers enough room for people to function in their own space quietly, and to join the party when they feel like it. The flow and balance of how the cottage works encourages people to not rush home.” **OH**

LEFT: Designed to resemble antique packing cases, a polished aluminum footlocker, night tables and desk lend this bedroom a modern rustic look. **BELOW:** Flawless Touch Flooring used tiles from Tilemaster Barrie to create the gingham floor pattern for this black, white and grey bathroom.

SOURCE GUIDE

- Art De Vie Renovations • Barrie Trim & Mouldings Inc. • Brothers Marble Works Inc. • Budget Blinds of Muskoka • Craig Watson Construction Inc. • Cutting Brothers Inc. • Erborn Electric Inc. • GBS Contracting Services • Grace North Windows & Doors • MAI Dream Developments Corporation • Mason's Masonry Supply Ltd. • Muskoka Crib Docks Ltd. • Muskoka Heatworks • Stonescaping Muskoka Inc. • T-Squared Design Studio Inc. • The Fireplace Stop • Tilemaster



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PEOPLE

“Over the years we slowly developed a comprehensive network of craftsmen who operate both small and large wood shops – craftsmen who take pride in their work and give back to their local communities. Many of these builders are Mennonites, people steeped in wholesome values and experienced craftsmanship. Other builders are young (sometimes old) entrepreneurs, unafraid of hard work.”



Iris and Todd Jones



STYLE

“We have developed extensive lines of rustic and urban styles of bedroom sets, table sets, sideboards, coffee and end tables, entertainment units, bathroom vanities and so much more. And because these products are often built exclusively for us, we can offer flexibility of choice in colours and design – custom orders are welcome.”



ECOLOGY

Lumber used by furniture makers is harvested from carefully managed forests. Stains and lacquers are the most environmentally responsible and the finished products come with zero packaging. “We blanket everything and transport products to our warehouse or directly to your home.”

SOURCES

While most of their wood shops are in rural Ontario, Muskoka Furniture sources products like mattresses and upholstery from efficient factories in Toronto. Everything is proudly Canadian made and comes with a guarantee. “We stand behind everything.”



SERVICE

“We remain old-fashioned in our outlook,” says Todd. “We may not be perfect, but we strive for outstanding customer service and superior products. We are not happy until our customers are happy. The transaction does not end at the cash register; it ends when the customer has received the product and is satisfied,” he says. “Many claim that we provide them with their favourite shopping experience here in Muskoka. We hope many more will come and find the same.” **OH**

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the **SPRING** *Migration*

STORY **MARK WIERCINSKI**



THE EARLY BIRD

Migration is the uncontrollable urge to travel. It is a way to take advantage of seasonal habitats and food sources while reducing competition. Birds with the ability to fly and cover huge distances gain the biggest advantage, securing food and shelter before the late-comers. This is also where the strong have the best chance to succeed. Those journeys are long, dangerous, full of risks and can be deadly at times. Migration is driven by instinct and accomplished by star navigation, magnetic fields, landscape recognition and good old-fashioned follow-the-leader. We can help. Put out food, offer shelter and give the migrators a place to restore energy and find a safe place to rest.



It is impossible not to appreciate a garden full of life and colour. Songs and activity just bring warmth and appreciation to our souls. (And who doesn't need more of that these days?) There are so many things to learn from birds, including watching them find nests, lay eggs, hatch young and fledge. Parents tend and teach, and a cycle of life is witnessed.

The birds that migrate and stop are so diverse. Warblers pass through with small, colourful blasts. Large, ominous hawks arrive and many stay and set up shop. Little brown birds that skulk around but have big voices include song sparrows and house wrens. Rare or common, those birds make it fun. They bring sound, colour and life right into our backyards – or, if you like to explore, our forests and wetlands – and virtually anywhere we go. Birds are there to greet us. It's all good and refreshing and gives us an attachment to the outdoors again. **OH**

Mark is a biologist with the Department of National Defence.

Spring brings more sun with longer days. Snow melts, ice breaks and waterways flow. But without a doubt, my favourite sign of spring is the return of birds.

The spring migration is a chance to witness one of the greatest natural phenomena right in our backyards. The parade of colour and diversity is amazing and a reminder of nature's wonder. Birdsong is a natural wake-up call, and after their spring arrival I can disable my alarm for the coming months. That dawn chorus is tonic for my spirit. How many of you can't wait for the first robin, redwing or sparrow to sing? Or maybe to simply see more birds at your feeders?

IT BEGINS IN MARCH

If you are keen and observant, you can see the start of migration sometime in March. It is subtle, and slow to start, but it is there. Horned larks and bluebirds are often the first migrants to return. They set off my radar and I start looking for new birds each week.

By the time April swings around, another two or three species return each week. The hardy seed-eaters are often the first to get a head start on the trip north. It makes sense, as the seeds and fruits left on plants and shrubs are the first abundance of food. There will be a bigger wave of arrivals as the snow disappears

and the weather warms. More species mean more colour and more song. Ducks and geese of all sorts find open water and make me shiver at their ability to swim in the presence of frost and ice at the water's edge.

In May new birds arrive on a daily basis – sparrows and finches, then orioles and buntings. There are colours everywhere. The feeders become crowded and the seed gets gobbled up. You can put out different foods and add water to the menu and those birds will reward you with all kinds of activity and behaviour.



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Maritime NOTIONS

STORY CHARLENE PECK
PHOTOGRAPHY SANDY MACKAY



A tiny enamel propane stove heats a corner of Graham and Marie Keene's cottage kitchen, where decorative corbels adorn interior walls. **OPPOSITE:** Wade Stiles and Tom Whitmell built the 1,800 square-foot Wahwashkesh Lake cottage adding maintenance-free Maibec siding and trim.

WHEN GRAHAM KEENE BEGAN SKETCHING NEW DESIGNS AT THE KITCHEN TABLE, HIS WIFE MARIE KNEW LIFE IN THEIR CUTE WHITESTONE CABIN WOULD NEVER BE THE SAME.

Continued on page 56



“THEY LITERALLY BUILT THE PLACE BY HAND WITH NO HEAVY EQUIPMENT.” – Graham Keene

Built on casters, the oak-topped kitchen island can be easily moved and positioned to suit any chef. **OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT:** A vintage icebox from Harris’ Furniture & Antiques provides storage in a corner of the dining room where a stained glass chandelier from Tijuana, Mexico illuminates the simple wooden dinner table. **TOP RIGHT:** A Heartland refrigerator, matching dishwasher and farmhouse sink align to create an efficient kitchen. **BOTTOM:** The Heartland stove from Fireplace & Leisure Centre has propane-fired burners and an electric oven.

“I’ve always been interested in architecture, and quintessential beauty,” says Graham. “This was an opportunity to take all of my thoughts and ideas and put them into one structure.”

After spending a summer vacationing in the cabin they’d purchased in 2017, the Keenes found they loved being on deep, clean and peaceful Wahwashkesh Lake, with its endless network of inlet nooks and crannies to quietly explore. They had friends on Wahwashkesh and great neighbours. “But that cottage was hot and we had to share one bathroom with guests,” recalls Marie, shaking her head. “We knew it wasn’t going to work for us.”

Graham’s sketches, now framed and displayed in the new kitchen, feature an 1,800 sq. ft. cottage with cathedral ceilings. An open-concept kitchen/great room is flanked by a laundry-room, powder closet and a master bedroom with en suite. Nestled into A-frame-like rafters,

the loft opens to a common room and two mirror-image bedrooms separated by a three-piece bath.

Brenda Ryan of **FAD Architects** in Parry Sound prepared Graham’s sketches, incorporating structural elements into architectural blueprints for municipal building approval. Contractors **Wade Stiles** and **Tom Whitmell**, who were recommended by Wahwashkesh Lake friends, began construction shortly after the old cabin was demolished.

“I was the project manager and basically worked with two good old boys from the area,” explains Graham. “They literally built the place by hand with no heavy equipment to put up the large beams and trusses. It was such a delight to work with two guys who take great pride in their workmanship. We are now great friends.” All the interior fir posts and beams are structural, including support for the mezzanine area of the loft.

As an electrical engineer with a fascination for making just about

anything work, Graham was impressed with how the ceiling – with its bare rafters – perfectly captured his vision for an old Maritime boathouse look. Using an intricate built-up roof system, six-inch lumber was secured on edge to the exterior of the finished ceiling and covered with standard sheathing materials, forming cavities for R30 insulation. The multiple layers are completed with weather/ice shield and a steel roof from **Stanley Steel** of Parry Sound.

The staircase crafted in white pine from **Rona** and the wide plank, red-pine flooring from **South River Planing Mills Inc.** add rustic simplicity. All walls are clad in shiplap milled by South River Planing. “They don’t actually kiln dry the lumber I selected, so it was subject to further drying once installed,” Graham points out. “It created irregularity in the lines of the boards, adding to the charm and naturalism of the cottage.”

Continued on page 59



A wrought iron chandelier from Northern Iron hangs from the cathedral ceiling in the cottage great room. Graham built the wooden love seat at the front of the room. **OPPOSITE, TOP:** A retired railway baggage cart serves as a coffee table. A wood stove from Fireplace & Leisure Centre warms the space. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Sliding barn doors with automatic closers save space. **BOTTOM MIDDLE:** Eclectic art adorns the shiplap walls. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The ground-floor master bedroom has a walkout to the front deck.



Sliding barn doors throughout operate on quiet, spring-loaded automatic closers. Unadorned Farley windows complete the look. Made in Ontario, these inexpensive quality vinyl windows offer one of the highest R-value ratings available.

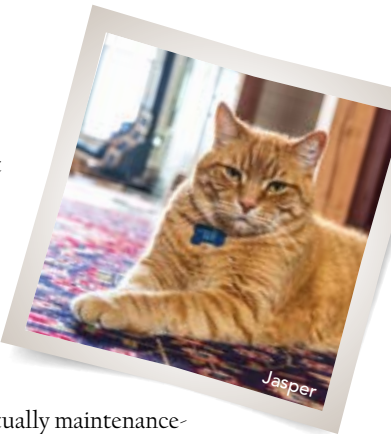
"I wanted the cottage to be virtually maintenance-free," notes Graham. "It gives me comfort that Marie and I can spend our twilight years coming up here and not having any cares, because there's not a lot of effort to keep it going."

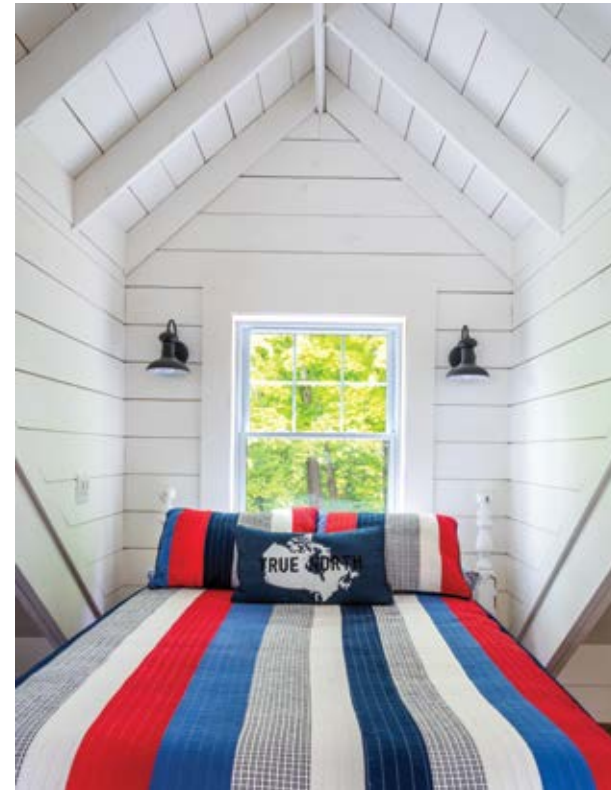
The Maibec maintenance-free siding and trim, with its 25-year warranty, is pre-painted by the manufacturer in an ultraviolet-free environment for superior adhesion. Decking is durable composite board. Wooden steps down to the lake are covered with checkerboard aluminum treads to reduce wear and maintenance. Soffits are durable, solid quarter-inch vinyl beadboard, making them beautiful and maintenance-free.

The Keenes choose to draw their drinking water from the lake rather than from a well. The piping is kept operational with a heated trace line during the winter months. "Best drinking water ever," boasts Graham. "We run as much as we can off propane. It is cheaper than electricity overall and places no peak demand on the grid. Propane-fired central heating makes the addition of air conditioning very cost effective for the few days you really need it," Graham explains. Propane also fuels their stovetop, barbecue, kitchen heater and on-demand water heater.

Juxtaposed within the cottage's rudimentary character is a home movie theatre with retractable screen in the great room and smart home automation, temperature control and security technology that the Keenes can monitor remotely for peace of mind.

Continued on page 60





LEFT: The cottage loft contains a common room and two matching bedrooms. **ABOVE:** In an intimate embrace, an upstairs dormer hugs a red, white and blue bed. **BELOW LEFT:** Harris' Furniture & Antiques furnished both loft bedrooms. **BELOW RIGHT:** The pastel blue mirror in the three-piece loft bathroom was inspired by décor in Newfoundland's Fogo Island Inn.



Otherwise, the slower pace of life at the cottage brings the couple back to a simpler time, satisfying a yearning to get back to basics. "It makes me feel at peace with myself," Graham comments. "It's not overly complicated."

A massive wrought-iron chandelier made by **Northern Iron** in Barrie is a focal masterpiece in the great room. In the kitchen, the farmhouse sink is highlighted with barn lamps, while recycled warehouse lamps provide primary lighting. Appliances, like the old-style wood cookstove from **Fireplace & Leisure Centre**, are replicas that function as modern conveniences.

All of the cottage walls, clad in **Benjamin Moore** Simply White invite meaningful accoutrements. "It's a great blank canvas," explains Marie. "You can add colour in your décor in other ways." *Continued on page 62*



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Double decks, protected by screens and an awning afford plenty of sheltered outdoor living space. **BELOW:** A tiny bunkie awaits guests near the waterfront.



Checker plate aluminum sheaths the stairs from the cottage deck to the front yard.

Beachy finds and eclectic relics include a birch-bark lamp and comfy pillows from **Huckleberry's**, as well as new and reclaimed furniture from **Harris' Furniture & Antiques** in Parry Sound.

"Every place you look there's something unique that means something to me," Graham says. Gifts from friends – including a beaver pelt, a photo of Graham and Marie on the step of the original cabin, and an old maritime ship light – are among the array. Graham's decorating philosophy is: Dare to be different and don't worry about current trends.

Now, as the seasons change, the mini-guest bunkie is complete. Finishing touches are being added to the garage with its man-cave upper story and solar panels on the south slope. Already Graham is excited about his next venture, a four-acre island with cottage and sandy beach that they've purchased on Wahwashkesh, about five minutes away.

He has more ideas he's itching to pursue. **OH**

SOURCE GUIDE

- Ability Tile • FAD Architects
- Farley Windows • Fireplace & Leisure Centre • Harris' Furniture & Antiques • Huckleberry's • Northern Iron • Selectric Electrical • South River Planing Mills Inc. • Stanley Steel
- Wade Stiles Construction



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Tracy Lamore (Little T) & Tracey Sitts (Big T) with Bear

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Our newest lighting line is Hubbardton Forge – beautiful fixtures made of hand-forged iron and hand-blown glass in Vermont. A sampling of chandeliers is displayed in the showroom.



Continued on page 66

MUSKOKA UPHOLSTERY

Specializing in furniture reupholstery, Muskoka Upholstery is a family business in Huntsville where Curt and Paula welcome clients to their log-cabin home-based shop. They update quality pieces to reflect their clients' styles – items such as this 1940s platform chair in Whiskey Italian leather (bottom right) or a push-back recliner with nailhead trim in Italian Ranch Cocoa Bean leather (bottom left). “We take the time to create a space you love with items that are special to you.”



*Paula Murdoch
& Curtis Bick*



MEMORABLE PROJECT

This unique Mid-century club chair (right) covered in Pendleton fabric and a modern man-made leather speaks volumes about the creativity that flows from this shop. The wood was refinished, new foams and fillers applied, readying for another 60 years.



EXPERTS

Curt and Paula and their team of experts have been putting their magic touch on furniture pieces from Gravenhurst to Timmins and from the Algonquin Highlands to Rosseau. They've successfully revamped lodges and resorts.



Continued on page 68



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James Pitropov

PHOTO: GEORGE LEET

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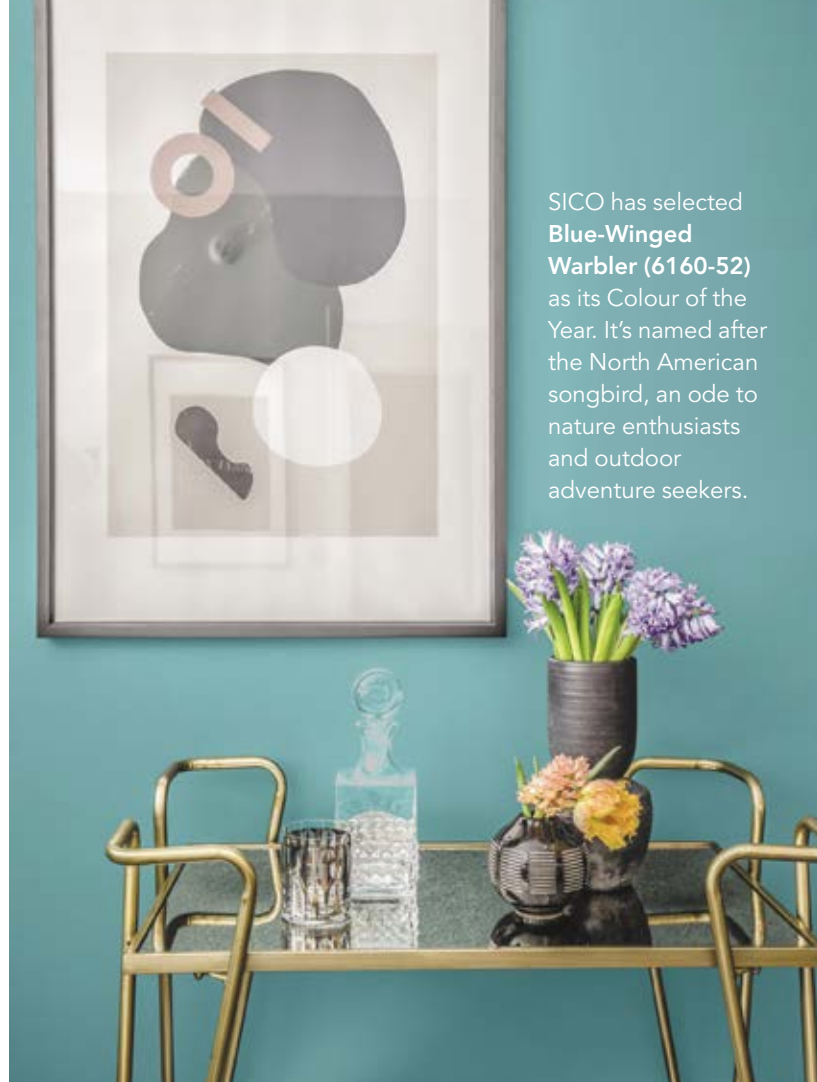
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decorating

COLOUR TRENDS

STORY **GEORGETTE MCCULLOCH**

It's a blue year for interior design. Major paint brands have picked their top paint colours, and blues are trending for your walls and home accessories.



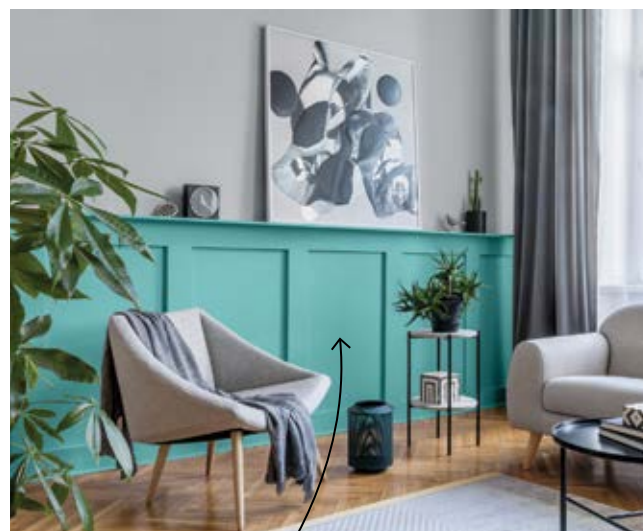
SICO has selected **Blue-Winged Warbler (6160-52)** as its Colour of the Year. It's named after the North American songbird, an ode to nature enthusiasts and outdoor adventure seekers.

*THIS YEAR'S COLOURS
ARE OPTIMISTIC
AND PLAY TO OUR
OVERWHELMING
NEED FOR COMFORT
AT HOME.*

THE BLUES



Beauti-Tone Paint has selected **Dancing in the Rain (C20-5-0644-0)**, a pastel blue. "It's a blue we can relax in while feeling as though we are in a calm and tranquil environment," says Kristen Gear, Beauti-Tone's lead colour designer.



Aqua Fiesta (PPG1147-4), a vibrant blue-green, is Glidden's first-ever accent colour of the year. It's a bright refreshing aquamarine that will make a splash in small doses, perhaps on millwork or an accent wall. *Continued on page 72*

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Benjamin Moore says its colour, **Aegean Teal (2136-40)**, will help create natural harmony in your home. The company calls the colour “intriguing, balanced and deeply soothing.” Imagine this colour on your kitchen cabinets.



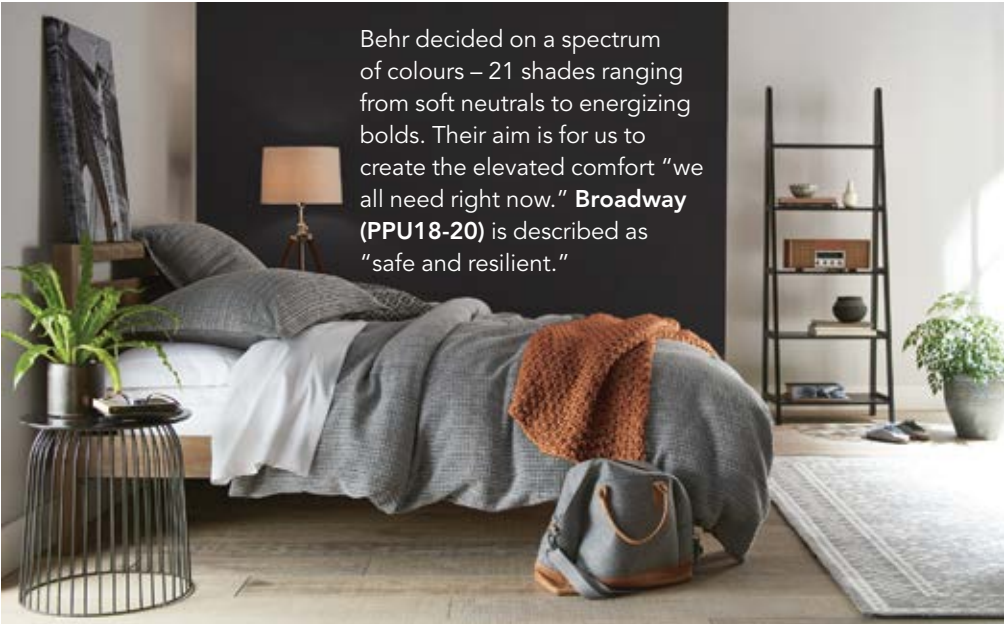
BACK TO NATURE

While blues dominate, our natural surroundings also inspire colour.



Urbane Bronze (SW 7048), the top pick from Sherwin Williams, is a warm hue the company says will help you create “the ultimate retreat for reflection and renewal,” and “a sense of calm from the ground up.” It’s perfect for window trims or accent walls.

MOVING AWAY FROM GREY



Behr decided on a spectrum of colours – 21 shades ranging from soft neutrals to energizing bolds. Their aim is for us to create the elevated comfort “we all need right now.” **Broadway (PPU18-20)** is described as “safe and resilient.”



Valspar’s colour experts unveiled 12 “fresh and familiar colours” that are on-trend now and are “easy to love forever.” One of our top picks from this collection is **Soft Candlelight (3005-6C)**.



Farrow & Ball has selected 12 shades for its 2021 colour trends, mostly earthy neutrals and natural colours. The company says its selections reflect “a broader trend toward warm, organic colours and away from cool greys and blues.” We like **Green Smoke No.47**. on

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SHARING *Bliss*

STORY **LEE-ANN CHOQUETTE**
PHOTOGRAPHY **SANDY MACKAY**

SOMETIMES, THE BEST THINGS IN LIFE ARE THOSE YOU NEVER SEE COMING. THE SAYING COULD NOT BE TRUER FOR TORONTO'S RYAN HARKIN AND HUSBAND BLAIR COX, WHO, IN 2018, BOUGHT A COTTAGE AND UNINTENTIONALLY CREATED A SUCCESSFUL COTTAGE RENTAL BUSINESS.

Continued on page 76

The main deck at this Kennisis Lake cottage catches the warmth of early morning sunlight and the soothing coolness of shady afternoons.

“Our plan was to have a cottage we could enjoy, and to rent here and there to cover some of the expenses,” says Ryan. “We were not looking at a business.” As they renovated their cottage on Redstone Lake in the Haliburton Highlands, Ryan posted pictures with captions online. “People kept following us,” he says. “I did not know that, with the posts, I had accidentally driven up demand for the cottage. The cottage got totally booked and it sort of accidentally became a business,” he chuckles while shaking his head in amazement. And that is how **The Birchwood Cottage Co.** began.

With so many people interested in The Birchwood on Redstone Lake, Ryan realized they were on to something. “So we kept going, and in October 2019, we decided to buy a second cottage on Kennisis Lake. I decided to quit my job as a sales manager for a high-end jewelry store in Toronto and make this my full-time job. It is my baby,” says 27-year-old Ryan, whose husband Blair owns and manages Solo Bace hair salon in Toronto. *Continued on page 78*

“WE ARE RIGHT AT THE END OF A POINT, SO WHEN YOU ARE ON THE DECK, THE WATER WRAPS AROUND. IT IS BEAUTIFUL.” – Ryan Harkin



TOP LEFT: The cottage on Kennisis Lake overlooks Norah’s Island, a wild, ecologically sensitive islet, protected by the Haliburton Highlands Land Trust. **LEFT:** Ryan and Blair completely renovated the original three-season cottage with new wiring, plumbing and interior finishes. **ABOVE:** An inviting setting for summer dinners on the deck.



LEFT: Cottagers can enjoy a relaxing soak in the hot tub or the toasty evening glow of a Muskoka firepit on the series of decks facing the lake. **ABOVE:** The owners staggered a combination of black metal railings and glass railings to guard the cottage decks and stairs to the waterfront.



LEFT: Calacatta quartz from Delray Granite covers the Ikea kitchen cabinetry. Herringbone subway tiles form the backsplash. **BELOW & BOTTOM:** Reclaimed wooden art on a barn board wall conceals the cottage’s new electrical panel. Bent railway spikes serve as coat hooks on a barn board wall.



They gutted the Kennisis Lake cottage over the winter of 2020 to have it ready for June. Ryan and Blair did a lot of the tear out, helped as much as they could to cut costs, and hired contractor **Jeff Sharpless** of **Woodlands Custom Structures** to do the rest. “Jeff is fabulous; he is our go-to guy,” says Ryan, who moved to Canada from Scotland about six years ago.

They installed new windows and exterior doors from **Nortech Home Improvements**, new electrical services, plumbing and six-inch walls for insulation. “If you came here in January 2020, the only things supporting the cottage were the exterior walls and the beams,” says Ryan. “It would have been less expensive to build a new cottage. But we love the land,” he says. “There are big granite outcrops all over out there. We have over 200 feet of shoreline.

We are right at the end of a point, so when you are on the deck, the water wraps around. It is beautiful.”

Ryan and Blair worked hard to optimize every single inch of the cottage’s 1,100 square feet. “We replaced and refreshed everything,” Ryan says. “We must have changed the layout of the open living/dining/kitchen – everything – 10 times before we decided, ‘This is it.’”

By replacing closets with hooks and dressers, they not only optimized the stunning lake views, but also created precious extra space. In the entranceway, curled iron spikes serve as coat hangers and a custom wooden bench by Haliburton’s **Living Woodwork** is the perfect perch for putting on or removing footwear. Metal and wood artwork, hung with a piano hinge, provides easy access to an electrical panel while concealing it from view.

Continued on page 80



Recessing a wall in the living room created a niche for a custom-built wooden bench at the dinner table. The pedestal table is made of reclaimed oak. The chandelier is walnut.



Bumping into the adjacent bedroom, they not only made space for a chic and comfortable dining nook, but also created the perfect wall for a large-screen television in the adjacent bedroom. In the spacious master bedroom area, they used the reclaimed footage to create a large and luxurious shower in the en suite and a cranny for stackable laundry appliances.

Clad in reclaimed barn board from **Emmerson Lumber Limited**, the main bathroom features a three-by-four foot glass shower by **Haliburton Glass & Mirror** and a vanity with Cora marble double sinks. Leather-strap mirrors add grandeur to the space. **Lockside Trading Company** and **Simply Cottage** supplied an array of furnishings and décor. “We tried to use as many local companies as we could,” says Ryan.

Sunlight plays on the lightly stained ash floors, pine doors and wood beams while simple white trim and ceilings give the space an open, light and stylish feeling. **Revival Flooring** supplied the cottage’s distressed ash flooring. Calacatta quartz countertops by **Delray Granite** overlay Ikea kitchen cabinetry in an efficient cooking space that overlooks the living room.

Continued on page 82



Facing the leather-furnished living room, a Samsung Frame TV on the back of the kitchen counter offers a choice between wall art and entertainment. **LEFT:** A sliding glass door opens from the living room to a dinner space on the deck.



One bunk room and two bedrooms are beautifully furnished and super comfy beds are dressed with crisp linens, duvets and lots of toss cushions. Hudson's Bay-style towels are a nod to their desire to include Canadiana, decorative deer and modern lighting add hits of contemporary, and a large leather sofa, with furry toss cushions and woolly throws nearby, gives the comfy vibe Ryan and Blair want. Soft lighting, candles and plants make Birchwood on Kennis Lake feel like home away from home.

Outside there is lots of room to relax in the shade or sun. Sliding doors in the master bedroom and main living area open to a large wraparound patio. Five separate decks on descending stairs lead to the docks below. The **Home Hardware** firepit and a hot tub, furnished by **The Pump Shop**, are popular spots. *Continued on page 84*

ABOVE: The canopy bed in the master bedroom was manufactured with reclaimed Russian oak. An old Quebec farmstead supplied the barn board on the bedroom wall and in selected locations throughout the house. **TOP & MIDDLE RIGHT:** A synergy of ceramic tile and wood sheaths the walls of the central bathroom where Haliburton Glass & Mirror furnished the shower stall. **RIGHT:** Decorative paddles from Simply Cottage hang near the bathroom's space-saving pocket door.



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feature



ABOVE: Matching leather-strapped mirrors hang in the en suite where Hudson's Bay towels are stowed beneath the double vanity. **TOP RIGHT:** Sturdy modern bunk beds provide extra sleeping space in this guest room. **RIGHT:** A vintage-style metal bed from Lockside Trading Company furnishes this cosy bedroom.



As they ready the cottage for new guests, they tidy and fill the woodpile, generously restock the welcome goodies, meticulously clean, fluff pillows, artfully dress beds with fresh crisp linens and ensure everything is in its proper place.

It has been a busy two years, but already they are talking about adding other cottages to The Birchwood Co. If they can rebuild a cottage and launch a new boutique cottage rental in the middle of a global pandemic, the sky is the limit. **OH**

SOURCE GUIDE

- Delray Granite • Emmerson Lumber Limited • Haliburton Glass & Mirror
- Home Hardware, Haliburton • Living Woodwork • Lockside Trading Company
- Nortech Home Improvements • Revival Flooring • Simply Cottage • The Birchwood Cottage Co. • The Pump Shop, Haliburton • Woodlands Custom Structures

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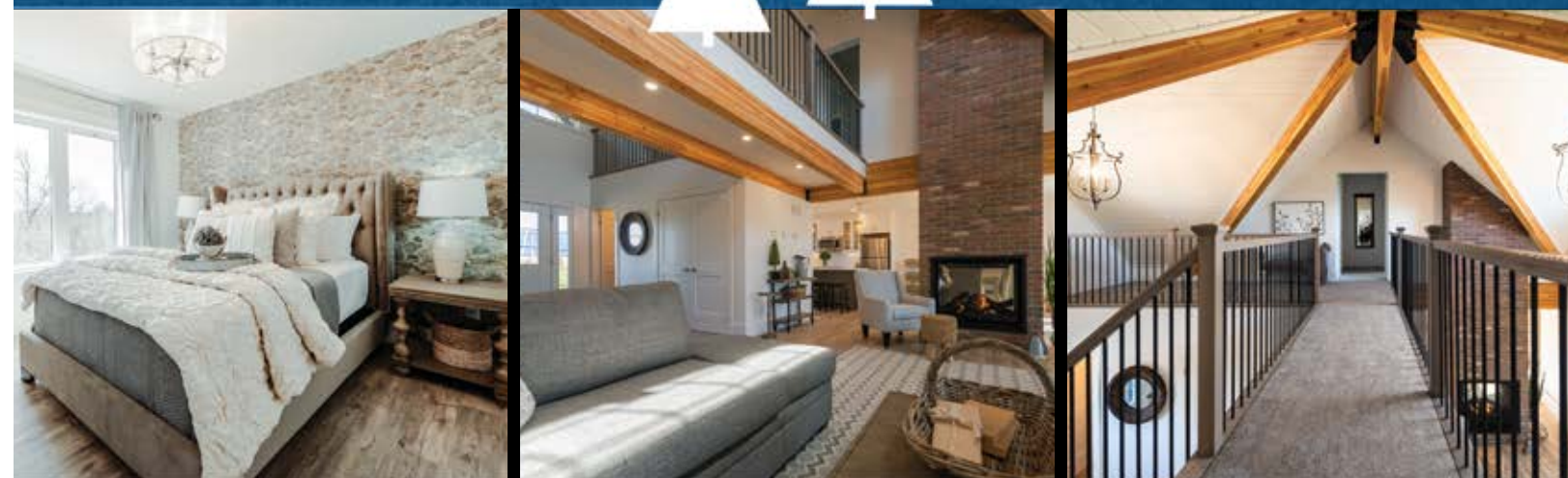
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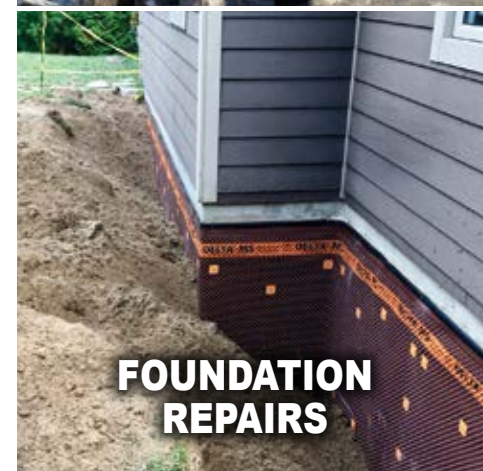
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PROJECT AND PHOTOGRAPHY TARA CHATTELL

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Tools & Materials

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- Paintbrush
- Hot-glue gun
- Egg cartons (1 egg carton makes 3 flowers)
- Acrylic craft paint in colour of choice
- Acrylic craft paint in metallic gold
- Picture frame

How-To

PREPARE EGG CARTON

Tear off the side and top of your egg carton, and using your scissors, cut out 12 individual cups.



Tear off the tall corners and around the top edge of each individual cup until the height is somewhat even all the way around. Don't worry about getting it perfectly straight – the imperfection adds to the rustic beauty of these flowers.

Divide your cups into groups of four. Each flower uses four cups.

ASSEMBLE FLOWER

Take three of the cups and cut slits into each corner, down to the bottom where the cups are bent. Take the fourth cup and cut slits in each corner, a little further past the bend towards the centre.

Tear around the edges and remove sharp corners to create a more rounded shape for each petal. Curl each petal out with your fingers.



To make the outside portion of the flower, glue together the first three pieces, offsetting the petals of each layer.



For the middle of the flower, take the fourth piece, overlap each petal and glue together. Curl out the top edges.



Attach the middle piece to the outside pieces. Now you have a full flower.



Make a stamen for your flower by cutting out a small rectangle from the top of the egg carton. Cut two slits into the rectangle and curl it into itself. Place a dot of glue on the bottom and attach it inside the middle of your flower.

Repeat the above steps until you have enough flowers to cover your frame.

PAINT FLOWERS

Mix your paint with a couple drops of water. This makes it easier to apply.

Coat your flowers with paint, making sure to cover all the petals, front and back.

Once the paint dries, take a very small amount of gold paint and lightly brush the edges of all petals.

EMBELLISH FRAME

Paint your frame the same colour used for your flowers. You can brush a little bit of gold paint over the edges of the frame as well.



Using your glue gun, attach finished flowers around the edge of your frame.

Voila! Now your frame is ready for a picture. **OH**

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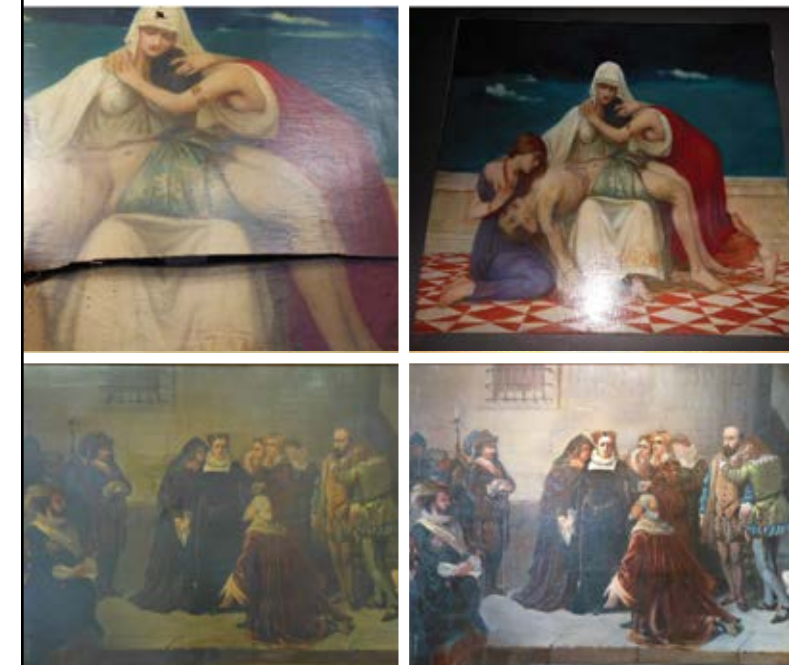
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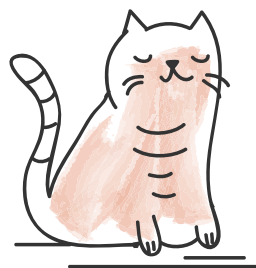
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CATIOS

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STORY **CONNIE JESKE CRANE**

PHOTO: COURTESY OF HELLAS CUSTOM CATIOS



PHOTO: COURTESY OF JILL GRAHAM



Meow. Not that long ago, it was the norm to throw open the door and let your cats prowls the 'hood when they wanted out. More and more though, we've come to associate negatives with letting our kitties participate directly in the food chain. Not only are outdoor cats' lives drastically shorter thanks to dangers and predators, they also kill distressing amounts of wildlife, birds in particular. (For more details, see sidebar.)

In Ancaster, Jill Graham and husband Les Csepey reflect Canadians' changing outlook. Graham, an owner of three cats who grew up with outdoor felines and currently rescues cats says, "Absolutely, I would never let my cats outside. I don't believe in it."

According to Humane Canada's Cats in Canada 2017 Report, leagues of cat owners like Graham and her husband have produced a "particularly exciting statistic." Specifically, the 2017 public survey found 72 per cent of cat owners now prevent their cats from roaming free – an astounding 13 per cent leap from 2016 when only 59 per cent reported doing so.

BEHIND THE CATIO TREND

All great of course, but as any cat owner knows, simply herding cats indoors is a compromise. "These are such interesting little creatures," says Don Bacha, of Hellas Custom Catios in Edmonton, noting a cat's innate curiosity and activity level. So here's where catios come in. Don says outdoor pet enclosures can be a great solution, helping cat lovers embrace responsible pet ownership yet also give their felines back some of the outdoor experience – safely.

The concept isn't entirely new. "It's been big in Australia and Great Britain for 20, 25 years," says Don. Yet in North America, he says, we've only been hearing about catios for 10 years or so, with much more interest lately. In fact, Don and his wife and business partner Yvette recently scaled up their business

due to demand. No longer only serving Alberta, they now ship their catio kits across Canada and the U.S.

A RANGE OF CATIO OPTIONS

Considering a catio? There are a range of options available today to fit varied budgets. At the low end, Don says, you could simply purchase a wire crate from a local pet store and place it outside so your cat can enjoy some fresh air and stimulation.

For DIYers, there are plenty of catio building plans and resources available online. (Local SPCAs can help guide you.) Increasingly, there are also ready-made catio kits available from various suppliers, with Hellas being one of the notable Canadian-made options. Don says his company's solutions range "anywhere from \$1,500 to the sky's the limit" depending on size and customized options such as catwalks. His standard catio product measures four feet by four feet, and has a galvanized two by two-inch wire mesh, which Don says is both low maintenance and strong. "We're comfortable saying large dogs or even a small bear are not going to get in."

If your budget allows, Don recommends fitting your catio with an independent access (i.e. pet door) to let cats come and go from the house as they please. "If you have to take your cat out to [the catio], it's not as fun."

Finally, there are uber-high-end solutions that are, let's face it, as nice for the humans as for the cats. In 2020, Jill and her husband completed a screened-in catio/addition on the back of their Lake Erie cottage. "We take our cats with us when we go down and wanted a safe spot for them to really enjoy the feel of the outdoors and being at the lake." Their simple catio project ultimately morphed into a \$20,000 project, complete with a screened-in porch, storm-proof slider windows, and two access doors into the cottage giving the cats

a scrambling circuit. The space lets everyone enjoy the lake breezes and nature, but as Jill insists good-naturedly, "The initial intent was I wanted something for the cats."

BENEFITS

To be sure, safety and peace of mind are top benefits. Yet many catio owners also get a huge kick out of watching their animals safely playing or lazing in the sun. Don says he's had many clients thrilled to see their indoor cats get a taste of outdoor fun. As a cat owner himself, Don says his cats' year-round adventures in their (admittedly fancy) catio are hugely entertaining. "In the colder days they'll go out and check their little territory and run back in and lick their paws. In the summer they're like little children – they'll come in to eat and then run right back out!" **OH**

FREE-RANGE CATS: NOT-SO-FUN FACTS

- 🐾 In Canada, cats are the number one killer of birds: They kill anywhere from 100 million to 350 million birds annually.
- 🐾 Coyote attacks on outdoor cats are not uncommon. In California, one study found that 20 per cent of an urban coyote's diet consists of cat.
- 🐾 Toxins like antifreeze and rat poison taste good to cats, meaning outdoor cats face more poisoning risks.
- 🐾 Roaming cats are also frequently hit by cars. In Toronto, more than 1,300 dead cats were collected from city streets in 2017.
- 🐾 The Ontario SPCA says the average life expectancy for a free-roaming cat is two to five years; for indoor cats, it's more than 12.

[Sources: Environment Canada, U.S. National Park Service, Nature Canada, Ontario SPCA]

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INGREDIENTS

FIG SYRUP

1 cup figs, diced

½ cup white sugar

½ cup water

COCKTAIL

1.5 ounces gin

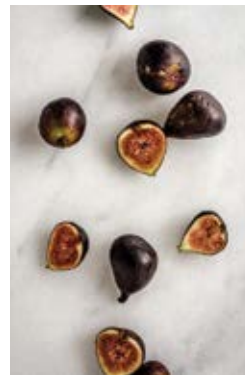
1.5 ounces
elderflower liqueur

2 ounces lemon juice

1 ounce fig syrup

1 ounce egg white,
pasteurized

Garnish: edible
flowers (optional)



HOW-TO

FIG SYRUP

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan and simmer for 10-15 minutes.

Remove from heat and cool for 30 minutes.

Strain with a fine mesh strainer and store in fridge.

PREPARE COCKTAIL

Chill glassware of choice.

Combine all ingredients in a cocktail shaker and add ice. Shake until chilled then strain.

Garnish with edible flowers. **OH**



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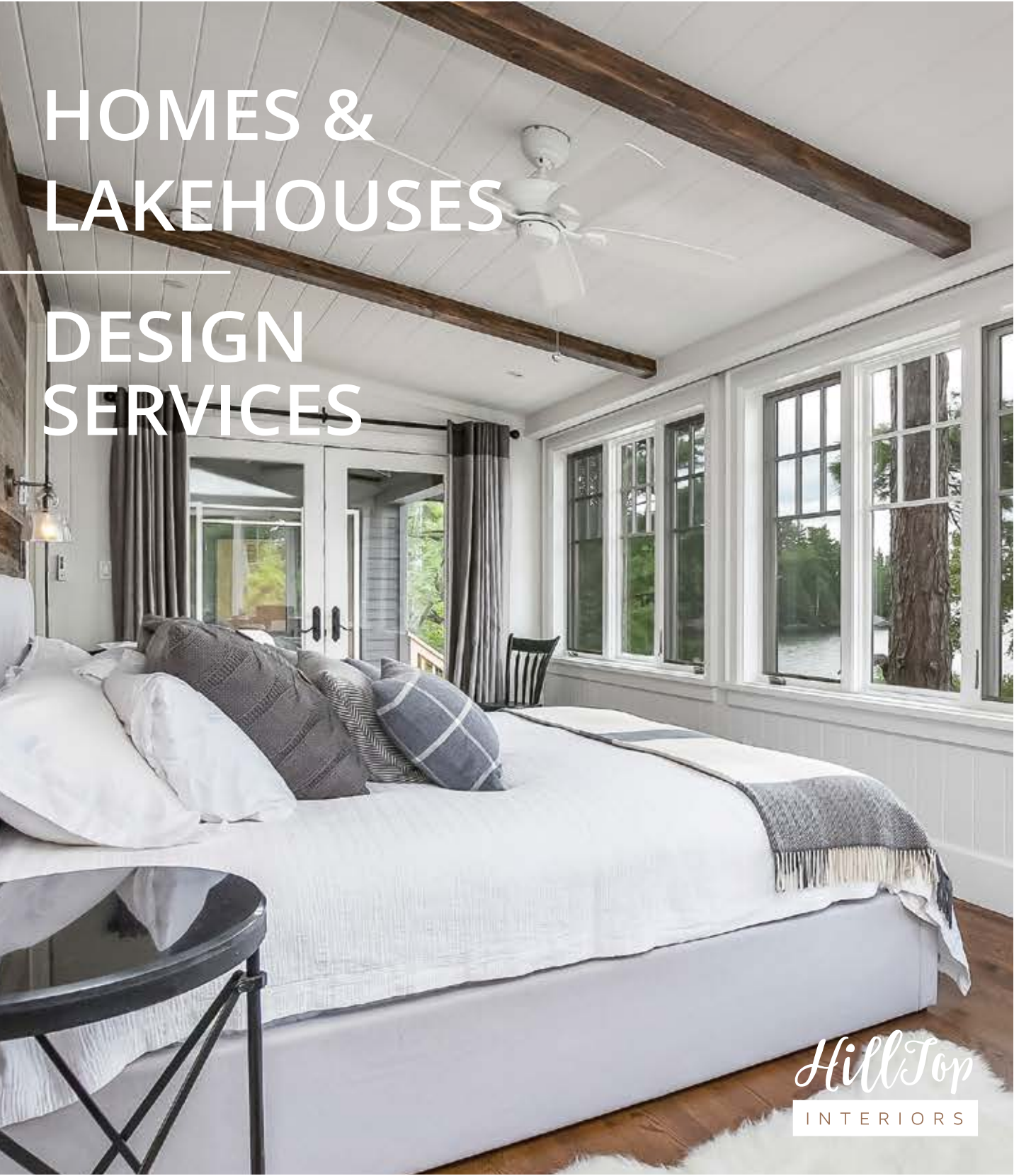
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