



# DIY STORY DARLING PHOTOGRAPHY

**MERRILYN PATTERSON**  
**JASON HARTOG**

Leslie and Gord had lovingly restored a rundown cottage near Point Clark and owned a subdivision house in Fergus, but they longed to have a home that had a cottage feel, without the commute. They craved a combination house and cottage.

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**TOP LEFT TO RIGHT:** A woodland garden + quaint cottage decor = "The Hottage" for this Fergus couple. **RIGHT:** The built-in drawers and servery in the dining room are original to the house. **OPPOSITE:** Pale grey and white in the dining room provide the perfect backdrop for the fresh navy and white summer palette.





A half door to the mudroom keeps Kensie, the family pet, in her place when needed.



A 50s bungalow in Fergus on a large lot lined with mature trees called to them. Leslie imagined the home decorated in cottage style, and the large backyard a beautiful woodland retreat. Gord had learned to trust Leslie's vision after their cottage experience and they took possession in February 2015. The transformation to "The Hottage" began.

They hired **Paul Kraemer of Kraemer Quality Construction** to oversee the renovations, which included the kitchen, bathrooms, flooring, mudroom, windows, new stair railing, basement, exterior siding and decks.

Leslie and Gord did the design, much of the demo, basement floor installation, painting and staining. The ceramic floor and subfloor in the hallway and kitchen had to be removed, which involved the painful process of chipping off thinset to get at the screws. Attaching a grinder to a shop vac, Gord was able to grind the thinset down while containing the dust and allowing the removal of thousands of screws.



**LEFT:** A large pine island and apron sink evoke cottage style. **BELOW:** Leslie incorporated a plate rack in her cabinet design for the kitchen eating area – another nod to cottage and country living. **OPPOSITE, LEFT:** A mudroom at the back door doubles as a hangout for Kensie. **RIGHT:** Vintage picnic baskets store outdoor paraphernalia and Kensie's food.

Leslie designed the kitchen layout and drew inspiration from British Chalon Kitchens for the stove alcove, plate rack, double wooden knobs and cabinet base design. **Auke Bijlsma of Wellington Millwork** installed standard, stock-size cabinets, milled and trimmed to look custom made. Leslie chose a neutral colour scheme that she uses as a backdrop for seasonal decorating.

When the couple took possession, there was an L-shaped living/dining room. They removed the wall between the dining area and the original small kitchen and created a new entryway from the living room to the new expanded kitchen. *Continued on page 39*





**TOP LEFT:** Leslie, Gord and Kensie relax in the living room. **LEFT:** A chair in the piano room was refreshed with a coat of black paint after being rescued from the roadside. **ABOVE:** Gord and Leslie redesigned the original L-shaped living room to create a distinct separation between the living room and eat-in kitchen. Fireplace insert supplied by Fergus Fireplace.

While Paul and his crew were working on renovations, the couple were busy painting the interior. Leslie painted the entire basement level – with only the electrician’s hanging lamps for light in order to be ready for the April move-in day. While most of the renovations were complete, the movers had to step over plumbers as they finished the kitchen.

Leslie has a keen eye for decorating. Every room in the house has been carefully curated and the changing colour theme is dictated by the season. For summer Leslie chose a fresh navy and white palette that carries from room to room. She’s also a talented painter of both walls and furniture pieces. Her vignettes throughout the house emulate the cottage theme she and Gord planned. *Continued on page 41*



What was once a bedroom off the front entry is now the piano room and towards the back of the house, the mudroom hallway bench is decorated with baskets and holds barbecue utensils and other outdoor items. A broom closet was removed to enlarge a two-piece powder room, and just before you go out the back door, a closet was removed to complete the tiled mudroom and create a perfect spot for Kensie, the couple's mini Golden Doodle. A half door to the mudroom keeps Kensie in her place when needed.

The master bedroom carries the navy and white theme and the retro chenille bedspread evokes the cottage feel. Handy built-in drawers under the dormer are part of the original design. Leslie is particularly fond of the picture hanging beside the bed. It's called *The Verandah*, circa 1930.

The master bath boasts a new walk-in glass shower and a claw-foot tub. Tile for the shower surround and floor is from **Ceramic Decor**. Leslie changes the drapery with every season. The whimsical bird print was found at **Len's Mill**. She hangs the fabric from metal clips that make seasonal changes a breeze. *Continued on page 42*

**ABOVE:** A chenille bedspread, vintage art and a comfy throw over the wrought-iron bed speak to the cottagey summer theme in the master bedroom. **ABOVE RIGHT:** What cottage bedroom would be without a washstand and a bouquet of blooms? **RIGHT:** The front hall stairs had a makeover with a new railing, refinished treads and a fresh coat of white paint. **OPPOSITE:** A claw-foot tub in the master bath and bird patterned curtains blowing in the summer breeze promise a sweet retreat from hot, hazy days.





A guest room tucked under another dormer could well be a cottage lakeside room. Blue and white throws are ready for an afternoon nap or a peaceful night's sleep.

One more bedroom in the lodge-style basement is the place where the boys in the family sleep when they come to visit. A games room keeps them occupied on rainy or cold evenings. Gord made a ping pong table using an old air hockey table as the base.

Leslie's vision for the outdoor space was drawn on a napkin. The large mature trees shade the backyard and different outdoor rooms add parochial charm. Leslie imagined a small barn that she could put a harvest table in and entertain in all seasons. **Bosman Home Front** customized a standard shed by adding barn door hinges and barn door detail, z-shutters and a cupola with weathervane. Barn details were also applied to the storage shed and potting shed, which has a Dutch door and a farmhouse sink that was left over from renovations. *Continued on page 44*

**ABOVE:** Down the hall from the master is a guest room fitted with a black wrought-iron bed, dressed in Leslie's summer navy and white palette and accented with fresh flowers from WR Designs. **TOP RIGHT:** The basement guest bedroom has a lodge-like feel. **RIGHT:** Gord says this is his favourite view from inside the house. Cottage country style and the simple airy palette blends with the original character of the house.

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Amongst this DIY couple's many talents, they are also gardeners. Before they could get to the plantings, a full-size basketball court was discovered under inches of soil and had to be removed. **Highlander Landscapes** was contracted to build the fence and remove old shrubs and stumps and the basketball court. Leslie designed stone-lined walkways – one leads to a garden bench. After putting down 400 rolls of sod and 11 yards of mulch, they planted flowering trees, trilliums, hostas and other shade loving plants. Many of the plants and shrubs were purchased at **Little Tree Garden Market**. Gord built raised beds for herbs and vegetables.

A stone fire pit, flagstone patio and large decks complete this woodland retreat, along with a hot tub where Gord and Leslie relax, gaze at the stars, and survey the beauty from their "Hottage" in town. **OH**

**ABOVE:** A customized shed that looks like a barn, is used for entertaining. Leslie changes the décor with each season. **TOP RIGHT AND BOTTOM FAR RIGHT:** A potting shed is a charming addition to Leslie's woodland garden. **RIGHT:** Et voila! The woodland garden at "The Hottage" – with walkways and a bench beneath mature trees.

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