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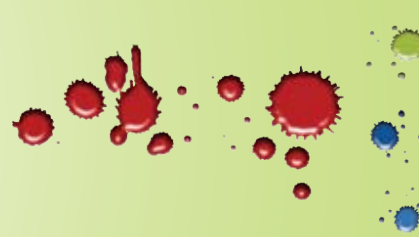
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## editor's note



**EVERY PLACE OUR HOMES IS INVITED** to photograph and write about has its own unique personality. I'm referring to something completely different than a home's architectural style.

I hear it all the time, "If only these walls could talk." I can tell you that they do. Homes certainly tell stories about the people who live in them and the more personality, the better the story.

It was a comment Cathy Tait made about her incredible waterfront home to writer Kathleen Duncan that made me realize just how much our homes say about us. "This is not a precious home," Cathy says. What she means is that while her home is beautiful, it was designed, crafted and decorated for living (page 76). This home makes you feel at home. Treasured art fills the walls and each room is thoughtfully and intentionally outfitted with furniture and accessories that bring comfort and joy. I also love that the Tait home isn't huge, yet every square foot is built to enhance the lives of everyone who steps inside.

When Elke Bradford of Designers Plus Kitchen & Bath tells me she has a space our readers should see, my ears perk up. Elke never disappoints. Her latest creation (page 28) is fun and innovative. She and her husband Jim have now renovated three homes that have been featured on the cover of OUR HOMES.

If you're considering condo-living, Pratt Homes has the home for you. We had so much fun shooting this feature (page 54). Check out each model to find out which one captures your lifestyle.

We also tour two more custom homes (pages 50 and 58) and remind everyone that building the home you want is always within reach (page 42).

If your walls could talk, what would they say about you? Whatever you do to your home this spring, make sure to add some personality.

Sincerely,

Georgette McCulloch, Editor-In-Chief  
[editor@ourhomemagazine.com](mailto:editor@ourhomemagazine.com)

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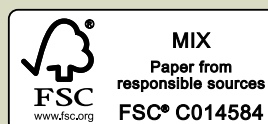
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Sandy MacKay.

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advice

## PAPER possibilities

Every so often I look around my home and wish that I had covered every wall in grasscloth and over-painted in white. It would achieve an aged look like a charming farmhouse in the English countryside and I would never have to think about my walls again. Of course, I would. And how could you not with all of the wonderful wallpapers on offer?

We've seen enough traditional wallpaper to know that it can be beautiful in the right setting and withstand the test of time, so you will see no toile or damask on this page. But will you be happy with your walls in time or will they age quickly with some of the newer, more daring designs? Wallpapering can always be stripped away and re-painted (or re-papered) but the expense would be a shame, so choose wisely.

Manufacturers will provide samples to take home and look at in situ. What you see online or in a showroom does not always translate well at home so take advantage of this service and make sure you're happy with the colour and the pattern.

When you're ready to take the plunge, think of two things: What am I trying to achieve? How can I achieve it?



Designer  
Stephanie Redmond  
answers your questions.

### WALLPAPERING SCENARIO 1

**Dilemma:** I would like to see a bold change in my modern dining room.

**Advice:** Use a daring pattern on one wall to create a visual pop when entering the room.

I have never been a fan of the "accent wall" but it does apply in some cases. Take this Cole & Son geometric (1) which gives the effect of a colourful kaleidoscope. It is shocking and the scale enormous, but it could be stunning paired with all things simple to tone it down. For something less extreme, try Trove wallpapers. Again, the scale is huge, but the pattern, a little softer (and easier to apply on all walls if you choose). My favourite is Auva in blue (2). You would certainly have no need for art!

### WALLPAPERING SCENARIO 2

**Dilemma:** I would like to add warmth to my den.

**Advice:** Choose a paper-backed linen or a finely textured grasscloth and apply to all walls.

Applying texture to walls gives a sense of being enveloped in a room. It creates warmth and a cosiness that you can't achieve with a flat paint. And there are limitless possibilities when it comes to textures – try Phillip Jeffries' Manila Hemp (3) or Tapetex's Espada Linen (4). If seeing the seaming will bother you, steer clear of grasscloth and opt for a paperbacked fabric instead. The seams are tighter and inconspicuous. It's admittedly, my favourite treatment.

### WALLPAPERING SCENARIO 3

**Dilemma:** I would like to make my bookshelves appear more interesting and less bare.

**Advice:** Use a small-scale pattern to create a visually interesting backdrop.

Choose a classic like Farrow & Ball's Polka Square (5), whose gold dots will add a bit of glam to the setting. Or try Galbraith & Paul's Small Star (6) for a contemporary twist on classic patterning. This would create a beautiful backdrop highlighting the items placed in front. Of course, when choosing your paper, keep in mind what you intend to place on the shelves. If the objects are ornate, be sure to tone down the backdrop.

Wallpapering never really went away, but with the advancement of printing techniques and the popularity of home decorating we've certainly seen an incredible array of new designs. It's exciting and the applications are endless. The only trouble with wallpapering is, once you commit to one area, the remaining walls seem nude by comparison! **OH**

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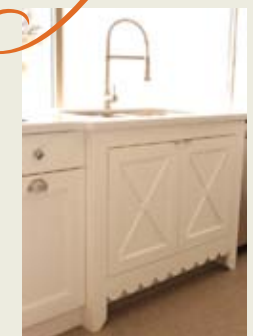
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BY M. CAROLYN BLACK  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY



What is now a beautiful guesthouse used to be a boathouse in the early 50s. After a major overhaul the space has an edgy Malibu North look and feel. The main cottage is next door.



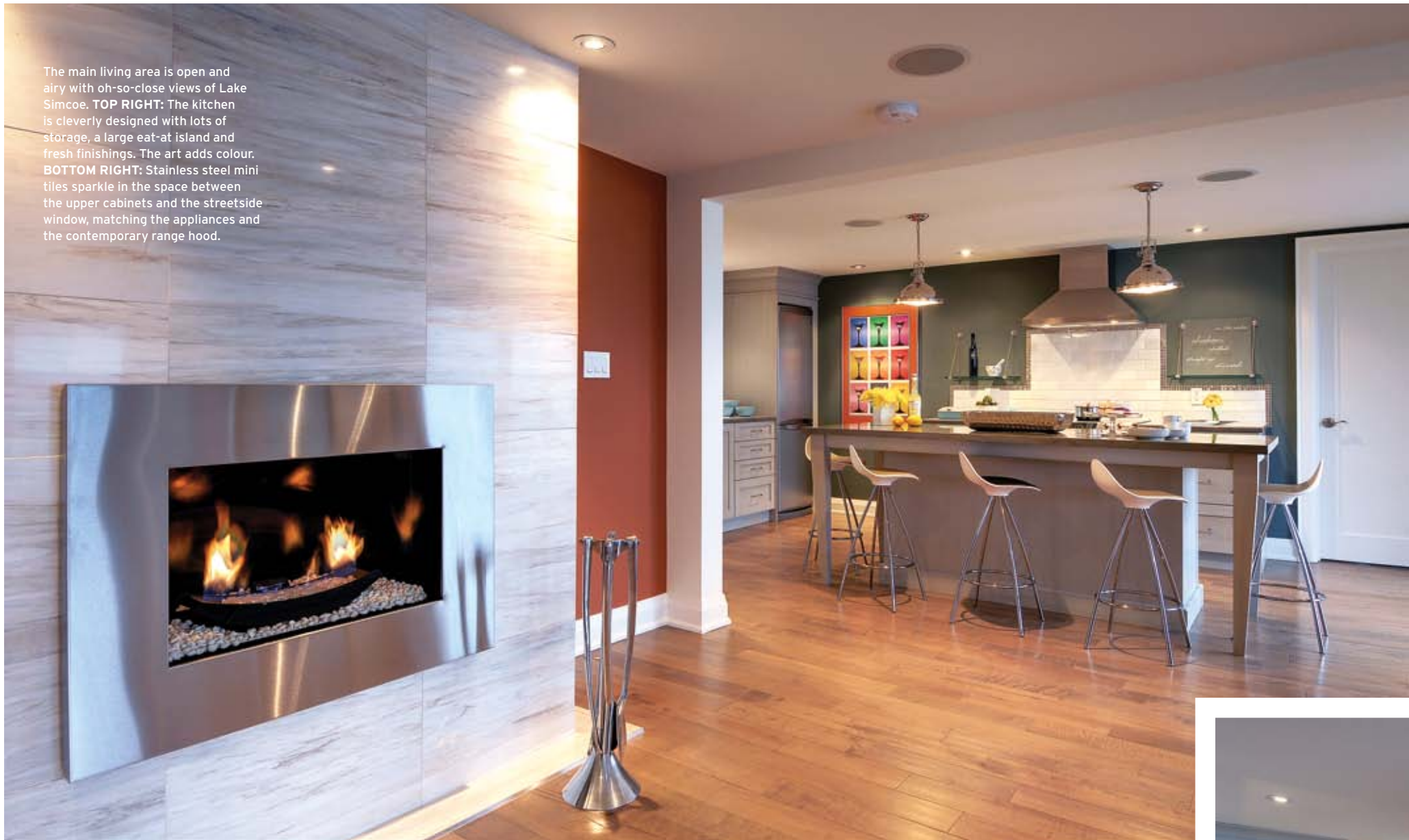
The before picture shows a nondescript brown ranch bungalow, the sparse lawn dotted with weeds and no garden to speak of, yet in the background the promise of a big sky over wide open water beckons. Originally a boathouse built in the early 1950s, the dwelling was converted into a cottage several years later and its location – nestled right beside the shoreline of Lake Simcoe – made it ideal for a potential guest cottage for the Walton family, who own a larger cottage next door. Marilyn and Howard Walton spend their summers here and the decision to spruce up the small home for guests was easy. Choosing the designer to do it was equally simple.

**Elke Bradford** of **Designers Plus Kitchen & Bath** has been in the design industry, along with her husband Jim, for 37 years and she had already redone the main cottage for the Waltons. “Having worked with Elke in the past and loving her work I was totally confident in putting this project in her hands,” Marilyn says. At first it was going to be a simple renovation; small improvements meant to modernize and perk it up. But the bungalow needed some structural changes – there was no entrance from the waterfront to the cottage, interior doorway heights were too low and the roofline needed to be changed, plus there was a five-inch difference in floor height from one end to the other.

**TOP:** The renovation included adding an entrance from the waterfront to the cottage. **TOP LEFT:** New rooflines were added to the board and batten exterior. The grey and orange colour scheme looks great in all seasons. **ABOVE:** Designer Elke Bradford of Designers Plus Kitchen & Bath transformed the guesthouse. **OPPOSITE:** The entrance has all the necessary elements: a closet, storage, a drop zone and a mirror.



The main living area is open and airy with oh-so-close views of Lake Simcoe. **TOP RIGHT:** The kitchen is cleverly designed with lots of storage, a large eat-at island and fresh finishings. The art adds colour. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Stainless steel mini tiles sparkle in the space between the upper cabinets and the streetside window, matching the appliances and the contemporary range hood.



Once it became apparent that the structural changes would create a blank canvas, Elke asked Marilyn what she would like to have done. “Marilyn handed me the cottage keys and said, ‘surprise me,’ which was wonderful,” says Elke. Because Elke and Marilyn had worked together on other Walton residences in the past, Marilyn was comfortable putting the entire design into Elke’s hands, and Elke was comfortable taking on the task because she was familiar with the Walton family’s taste.

“When I did her main cottage a few years ago I had a good understanding of what she would like except I wanted the guest cottage to be different,” she explains. The main cottage has a Muskoka look and feel and Elke was thinking that the smaller guest cottage would be a perfect fit for a more edgy “Malibu North” look. The end result is absolutely stunning.

The once-decrepit lawn has been replaced with shapely stone, winding pathways and perennial gardens by **Zeng Landscaping** in Creemore. Pillars with a solid stone base frame the orange doorway and the roofline is completely different, with a new peak that adds much-needed curb

appeal to the waterfront dwelling. Stately cedars outline the property and the exterior paint colour, a customized version of Benjamin Moore’s Metropolis, makes the residence pop but is still subtle enough to fit perfectly within its frame of trees, stone, sky and water.

Since the guest cottage used to be a boathouse it’s only steps away from the water, something Elke kept in mind when she considered tearing the place down or renovating it where it stood. “That was the beauty of this building,” she says. “Had we torn it down we would have needed to go much further back from the shore to rebuild.” The structural changes and new design as envisioned by Elke were completed by Barrie contractor **John Raimondi** of **Meridian Design Build Inc.**

Designers Plus supplied and installed the kitchen backsplash and bathroom tile, including a wavy, shoreline-shaped pebble tile that embraces the wall around the tub in the guest bath. Elke likes to colour match so all of the paint colours are custom mixed from Benjamin Moore’s Aura line supplied by **Sue Kay & Company** at **Allandale Decorating Centre**.



The stylish guest-house bedrooms feature en suite bathrooms and lots of storage for a hotel-like experience. Designers Plus sourced the bedding and furniture for both rooms.

“Elke and her team were so great to deal with, from their exquisite taste and great ideas to their excitement upon completion. They don't just get the job done they treat it as if it was their own. Their trades are excellent as well, which is so important in the finished product.”

Marilyn and Howard are completely happy with the finished guest cottage – so much so that Elke and her design team have undertaken a renovation on their Toronto home – and they look forward to hosting family in the cottage this spring and summer. Marilyn says, “We love our guest cottage. Our sons are presently using and enjoying it so much.”

While Designers Plus usually has about 15 to 20 jobs in various stages of completion on the go, Elke says, “The most enjoyable thing about those jobs is the people.” Obviously, from Marilyn's perspective, the feeling is completely mutual. **OH**

Marilyn also asked Elke to furnish the guest cottage, which is not normally something Elke is involved with, and she was thrilled to take on the task with her design team. Guests can sit and enjoy a cup of coffee in white leather swan chairs in the family room that swivel to face either the magnificent waterscape or the beautiful modern marble fireplace. The family room also boasts several solar tubes – clear inserts in the roof that bring natural light into the room – and the roller blinds are by **Salnek's Custom Window Treatments** in Barrie.

All the bedroom furniture and linens were supplied by Designers Plus and Elke also added beach features like a bedside glass lamp filled with sand and pebbles. A credenza from Crate & Barrel was hand-finished by Elke in a weathered grey wash to complement the driftwood colour of the wood floors throughout the cottage. “The colour scheme really started with the

floor, which is a hand-scraped driftwood stain,” Elke says. All of the wall colours, from the kitchen's Blue Echo to the bathroom's serene Crystalline plus the exterior colours were customized by Elke and her team.

The kitchen and bathroom cabinetry and fixtures were ordered through Designers Plus and all of the light fixtures were purchased through Restoration Hardware. Some of the items, like the kitchen stools, took many months to arrive but Elke says she looks at delays this way: “You have a choice; you can go to choice number two or you can stay with your first choice, which you know is the right choice, and wait a little longer but have a very happy client.”

Elke wanted the guest cottage to be upscale but also feel homey, so the Walton family and friends would feel comfortable and want to stay there. According to the homeowners, she succeeded in spades. Marilyn says,

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# Flowers OF THE SPRING FOREST

STORY AND PHOTOS BY MELANIE REKOLA

Here in Canada the early spring forest is a wet and muddy affair. But don't let that deter you from donning your rubber boots, grabbing your camera and exploring the diverse life that inhabits our local forests. You must seek forest flowers early in springtime as they need the sunlight available in early spring to develop; before the tree leaves come to choke out the forest-floor light. From native orchids to tiny carnivorous sundews, we are fortunate to have our diverse ecosystem. Keep on the lookout for these native beauties; as well as a perfectly preserved paw print or two!

## THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPORTANCE OF THE FOREST

It is said that the forests are the “lungs of the Earth.” Canada has 10 per cent of these lungs! Trees and forest ecosystems are tremendously important for our environment.

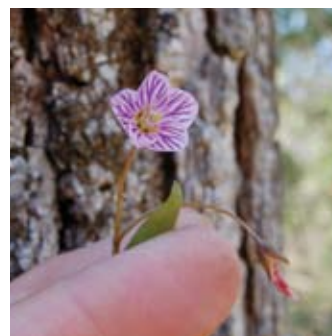
### Trees can:

- Reduce the effects of climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide gases that contribute to the “greenhouse effect”
- Conserve energy by reducing heating (by buffering cold winter winds) and cooling costs (by shading buildings in the summer) by up to 50 per cent
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- Provide us with food
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- Reduce waste water impact on storm drains

Let us all take part in preserving this irreplaceable treasure. Plant native trees and plants wherever you live, leave nature as you find it and why not take an extra bag when you hike and pick up after those who take for granted our special space on this fine Earth. You'll enjoy your walk even more the next time if it's garbage free!



**Jack-in-the-Pulpit:** This striking perennial also produces shiny red berries in late summer. The tiny flowers are hard to spot and actually form at the yellowish base of the tube! Its remarkable flower shape makes it a favourite of children.



**Spring Beauty:** A dainty beauty with weak stems bearing white or pink blooms with deeper pink veins. The plant prefers moist soil and disappears entirely after flowering. The flowers close at night, during storms or cloudy weather, just like tulips and dandelions.



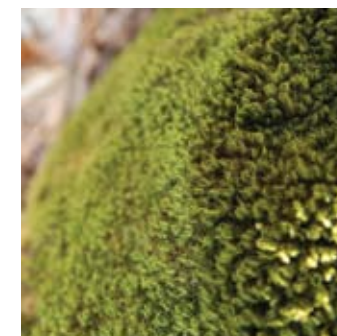
**Trillium:** Probably the showiest of the spring forest and Ontario's provincial flower. The whole plant dies down and disappears after flowering. Though you can pick this flower if it's on your property, remember that it may take up to five years for the seed to germinate and the plant to flower. Large-flowered trillium seeds are usually dispersed by ants. The ants carry the seed to their nest to feed their larvae, which is afterwards discarded in the ants' nutrient-rich waste pile. The seed has a much greater likelihood of survival placed in such an area.



**Round-Lobed Hepatica:** These pretty plants form small clusters of only a few inches in height. This early spring wildflower has no petals. They are usually white or light purple and are common in areas where coniferous trees are more abundant. The blue-colour bloom is uncommon, so lucky for you if you chance upon one! Fine hairs on their stems keep a layer of warm air close to the plant, providing much needed warmth in freezing temperatures.



**Lady's Slipper:** Can be yellow or pink and is in the orchid family. Kids love this exotic looking plant and it actually resembles a lady's slipper. If you do happen upon one, please do not disturb as they are rare and will likely not survive a transplant.



**Sundews:** The common sundew is a small carnivorous plant with narrow, hairy leaves. These plants feed on insects! They produce a sweet and glistening “mucilage” that covers its leaves, attracting insects. The insects then get stuck in this mucilage, the plant dissolves the insect and then absorbs its resulting nutrient.



**Trout Lily:** Another plant whose seeds are dispersed by ants. The bloom is a clear and happy shade of yellow, with long elegant petals. Its flowers open in midday sun and it only has two leaves, which resemble the skin pattern of a brook trout! **OH**

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## real estate

# PLANNING YOUR CUSTOM HOME

Building a custom home was such a pleasure that Sheri and James Cox say they'd do it again. "We are thrilled with our home," says Sheri. "It is exactly everything we wanted and then some."

Distler Construction Ltd. built the Cox's five-bedroom house on Georgian Bay. "We explained to them the features we wanted in a home and they came up with a plan for a home that would suit the lot and had everything in it that we wanted," says Sheri. She and James like their surroundings to be unique and special to them. "That's why we went custom. There is no other home like ours out there. It is tailored to our lot. It is tailored to our family," says the mother of three children, aged 9, 10 and 12.

Unlike some contractors who offered estimates with 10 to 20 per cent variables, Distler gave them a firm price and finished the 3,500 sq. ft. home ahead of schedule and within one per cent of their final budget. "That was huge for us," says Sheri. "It made a difference in being able to add different features to the home."

Working with a custom builder overseeing all aspects of construction was worth it, she says. "It eliminated a lot of the hassle and stress. It was fun, being able to choose colours and flooring and stonework. It made it very hassle-free. We'd do it again."

A custom-built home is an opportunity to make your living space precisely as you want it – a rare chance to use creativity and personal tastes to please and comfort you and your family. For many people, building a home is one of the biggest investments they will ever make. So a great deal of planning and prudence is essential.

Deciding how much you can afford is a key step, says Liam Cragg, a mortgage broker with Community Mortgage Services Corp. When a financial institution pre-approves your mortgage, calculate the monthly payment, add property taxes, utilities, insurance and all the other costs of home ownership to determine your total monthly cost, Cragg advises. "There has to be a comfort factor," he says. "That's the first thing you should establish, 'What amount of payment is reasonable for me to handle?'"

The more money you have available to build a custom home, the easier financing will be, he says. If you own a mortgage-free home and intend to sell it when your new home is finished, you could get a line of credit against your existing home and use that money, as you need it, until you reach substantial completion on the new house, Cragg explains. When you sell your existing home you then pay off the line of credit. If your existing home is not mortgage-free, a bank may offer you a line of credit based on your equity.

It's always a good strategy to ask for more financing than you need, Cragg says. "You don't have to use the additional funds, but if you run into problems during the construction phase and go back to your lender for more money your lender might say no. Then your financing options could get expensive," he warns.

The cost of a custom-built home depends on its size, complexity and finishes, says Scott Clark, operations manager for Edenlane Homes Inc., a family owned and operated design and construction company. Other expenses, such as building permits, architectural fees, a development permit, as well as water and sewer services, may add to the final price.

Prospective custom homeowners, Clark says, must make many decisions prior to construction to determine whether their house will be as expensive as one already built.

BY WALTER FRANCYK  
ILLUSTRATION BY SHEILA BRITTON

Finding the right builder is crucial. Clark recommends speaking to a few builders right at the start of the project. Visiting trade shows that showcase builders will provide a feel of what's involved, he says. "The client should feel comfortable and secure with the builder from the beginning," Clark says. "If there is even a slight sense of apprehension on the part of the client regarding a particular builder, then walk away."

The Canadian Home Builders Association (CHBA) advises anyone looking for a contractor to ask around and talk to friends, family, co-workers and neighbours. Find out if their contractors lived up to expectations. How were issues resolved? Use the business directory in this magazine. The beautiful homes featured in OUR HOMES magazine are owned by people happy with their builder's work. Drive around, look at homes and find out who built the houses you like.

"A client should request references from a builder's previous clients," says Clark. "See some of their work, ask how the financial portion of the project works, ensure the builder has all the necessary insurance and find out who they use for subcontractors."

After interviewing builders and checking references, ask a short list of contractors to provide an actual bid, based on clear and detailed plans and specifications, the CHBA suggests. The bid that affords the best overall value, not necessarily the lowest price, is the one to look for, says the CHBA.

Develop a contract, determine a price and get a warranty on materials and workmanship in writing. "Verbal assurances that a contractor will come back and fix anything that goes wrong is very difficult to enforce after the job is finished," the CHBA warns. Have a lawyer review the draft contract and insist on proof of liability insurance and Workers Compensation coverage or equivalent private disability coverage for exempt workers. "A contract that requires compliance with the laws of your province or territory is a good way to protect yourself and your family from legal or financial risks," the CHBA says.

The CHBA offers a wealth of information on its website [www.chba.ca](http://www.chba.ca). It has worksheets to help you decide what you need in a home, how much it will cost, and how to rate builders. **OH**



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# FRESH FOR SPRING

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE FOX

**THE PLACE:** Fresh Flowers By Leanne is a full-service flower shop specializing in affordable, fun arrangements for everyday life. Fresh offers local, out of town and international delivery. Leanne George opened her beautiful shop two years ago after working in the industry for more than a dozen years. Fresh has grown substantially and weddings are a huge part of Leanne's business. "We've done flowers for weddings as far north as Kearney and Muskoka, south to London, over to Collingwood and east to Orillia," she says.



**THE STYLE:** A custom flower tower stacked with galvanized pails of fresh seasonal and everyday flowers greets customers at the door. Come in and select flowers to bring home in a very euro-market style, Leanne says. "On any given day you will find fluffy, beautiful hydrangeas, chartreuse Fuji mums, an array of Gerbera daisies, fragrant lilies and seasonal flowers such as Ginestra, tulips, daffodils and Agapanthus." Leanne and her staff are constantly changing the décor with new vases, wall art and plants arriving monthly.

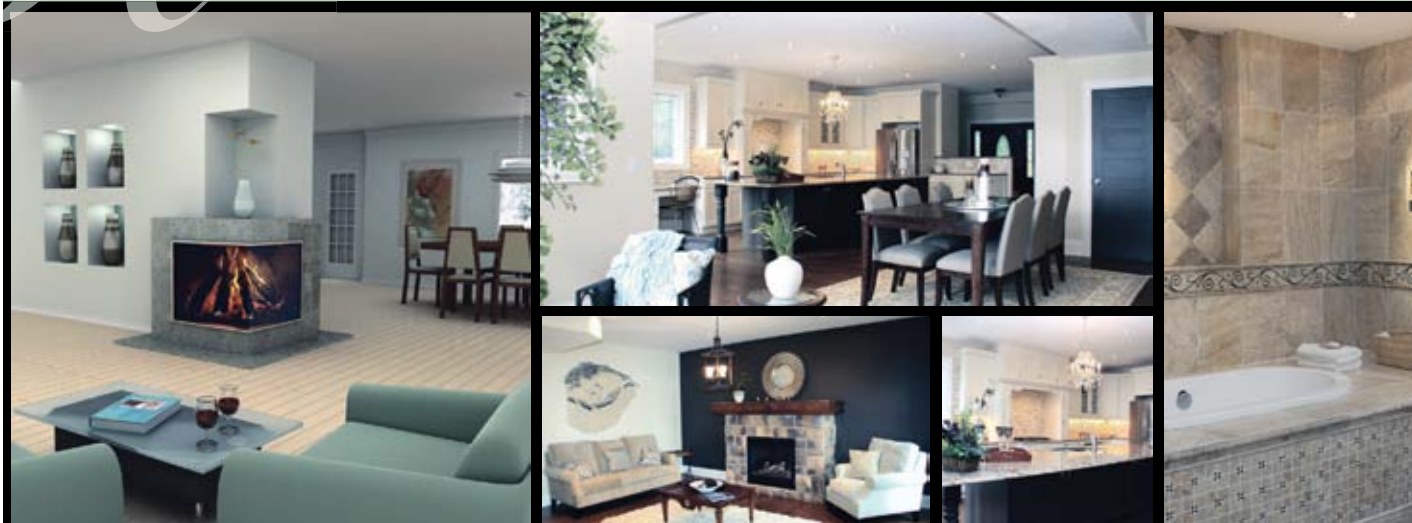
**WHAT'S HOT:** Tangerine and greys are in this season. "We're also adding non-floral items such as brooches, curly willow, birch, vintage and lace - thanks to a certain royal wedding," says Leanne. This spring, bring the outdoors in with blues, greens and browns. Moss is big this season. Leanne also suggests adding some stems to your floral arrangements. "Blue skies, greens and browns translate into fresh, fresh, fresh for spring," she says. Treat yourself to a fresh bouquet designed by Leanne and her staff - you deserve it!

**FAVOURITES:** Hydrangeas and peonies are floral favourites here at Fresh while wall vases and wall art are always in demand. Turquoise pots are new this spring. Everyone loves flowers and Leanne and her staff create beautiful arrangements you'll be proud to give or keep for yourself. This shop has more than fragrant flowers and unique vases. Simple, fun and stylish items for your home include lamps, mirrors, mats for your floors and placemats and napkins for your table.

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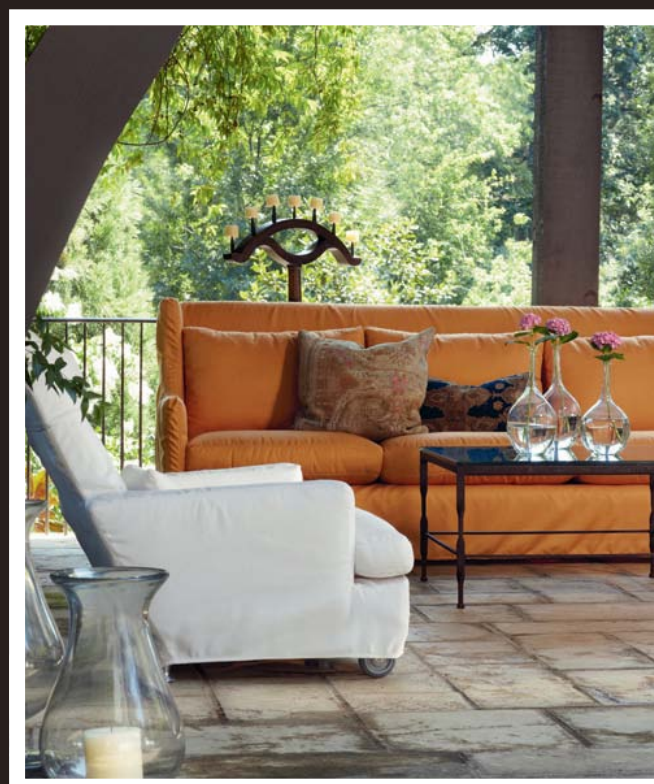


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**Homes By DayCore** really stands behind its slogan - "Building Homes As Unique As You Are."

Each home we build is a reflection of who our clients are," says Bob Graves, a partner in the company. "Every home built is always different than the one before, offering incredible features, products and trade workmanship to ensure the journey of building your new home ends with a smile."

DayCore's model homes show off extras that can really make a home pop. A visit helps clients visualize their dreams and understand what truly makes a custom home custom. *Continued on page 52*





Hardwood flooring flows throughout the home and into the lovely quest bedroom. The large master en suite has a large soaker tub, separate glass-enclosed shower and plenty of counter space.

The company is currently building in prestigious **Carson Ridge Estates** and **Vespra Valley Estates**. Carson Ridge Estates features sprawling homes on large lots in an exclusive country setting. DayCore's Executive Model is located at 77 Glenhuron Dr., Midhurst.

Vespra Valley Estates is within minutes to ski hills and golf courses, featuring well treed lots and rolling terrain. You can visit DayCore's Country Estate Model at 98 Budd's Mill Rd. in Snow Valley Landing, Springwater.

People build custom homes because they want a truly unique home that fits their lifestyle.

"Making a visual impact is important but does not always have to be costly," Graves says. "Just by adding a few interesting features in the right places can make a house unique and will not break the bank, and in the long run it's well worth it."

Homes By DayCore has been blessed with many wonderful client referrals who are looking for the right builder for their waterfront property or cottage. DayCore also offers full renovation services, which include additions, basements and main-floor makeovers. **OH**

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# BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY

If living in the city while enjoying nature in your backyard is your ideal lifestyle choice, look no further than **Manhattan**, an incredible condominium development in Barrie by **Pratt Homes**.

Manhattan is located on Ferndale Drive and backs on to the Bear Creek Eco Park – picturesque wetlands with trails, bike paths and a floating boardwalk. Manhattan also has a Central Park with a jogging track, ice skating rink, playground equipment and gazebo.

This is a new era for Pratt Homes,” says company co-owner Karen Hansen. “High-end details, custom finishes and underground parking are all exciting next steps for our company. Residents who already live in Manhattan enjoy their morning coffee on their oversized balconies watching deer, rabbits and ducks waddle through the bush land.” *Continued on page 57*



Bruno Tidd, Sales Manager for Pratt Homes can guide you through the purchase of a new condo.



## HIP CHIC MODEL 606 SQ. FT.:

- Designed for the single student or professional who requires an easy-to-maintain space that's bright, beautiful and large enough to entertain friends.
- A Murphy bed shows flexibility in this well-designed compact space.
- Wall units help to suggest ideas for maximizing the long wall with added storage for extra clothes, entertainment equipment and dishware.



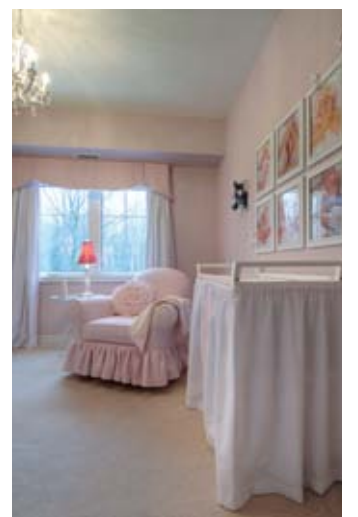
## MANHATTAN MODEL 793 SQ. FT.:

- A contemporary, sleek, one-bedroom design with a huge balcony.
- Manhattan-Mod is an ideal theme for this model since the entire development is “Manhattan - Where Urban Meets Nature.”
- The large white leather sofa fits nicely along the black accent wall. The kitchen shows off all the possibilities available in the Pratt Design Studio.



## THE BRIDAL SUITE 1101 SQ. FT.:

- Designed for a young couple with room for baby.
- This two-bedroom, two-bathroom suite is perfect for couples choosing the freedom of condo living.
- Beautiful touches like the wedding cake, champagne and large diamond rings for drapery suggest how romantic this home could be.

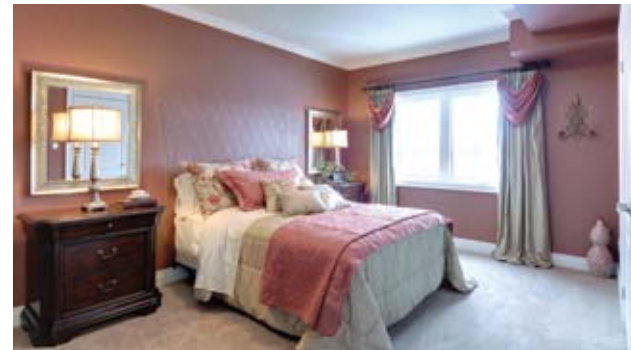


# showcase



## FORMAL MODEL 1,464 SQ. FT.:

- "Relaxed Elegance" is a spacious home with a unique layout and a warm, inviting atmosphere.
- There is a huge great room with a built-in bar, a large four-seat sofa and a separate dining room, making this space great for entertaining.
- Three large bedrooms were decorated in a formal manor showing a romantic master suite with en suite bath, guest bedroom with oversized window and a home office.



## RUSTIC MODEL 1,087 SQ. FT.:

- This model was designed for anyone who loves nature and casual living.
- The master suite offers total privacy with a wonderful walk-through closet to a private en suite bath.
- Rustic bunk beds in the second bedroom show how a young family would live or a space for grandchildren to stay while visiting their grandparents overnight.



Pratt's in-house designer  
Cynthia Grassing



Hansen says Manhattan offers something for everyone. "We offer bachelor, one, two and three-bedroom units ranging from 606 to 1,464 sq. ft.," she explains. Prices range from \$152,990 to \$266,990. The units are well appointed with excellent use of space. The 1,464 sq. ft. model includes a formal dining room, huge great room and three bedrooms with oversized windows and Juliet balconies.

All units come with an oversized eight-by-14 foot balcony, adding an extra 112 sq. ft. to each unit. The balconies are covered with Duradek material and have black tempered-glass railings. The prices also include underground parking and large basement storage.

Pratt Homes recently unveiled five spectacular, fully furnished and decorated Manhattan models that you just have to visit. Pratt's in-house designer Cynthia Grassing created living spaces that reflect different lifestyles for diverse demographics, from singles and first-time buyers to young couples and empty nesters.

Grassing also helps buyers through every step of the design process, from selecting interior finishes to paint colours to room layout. It's a service Pratt buyers appreciate. **OH**  
[www.pratt-manhattan.com](http://www.pratt-manhattan.com)

# KEEPING THE FAMILY CLOSE

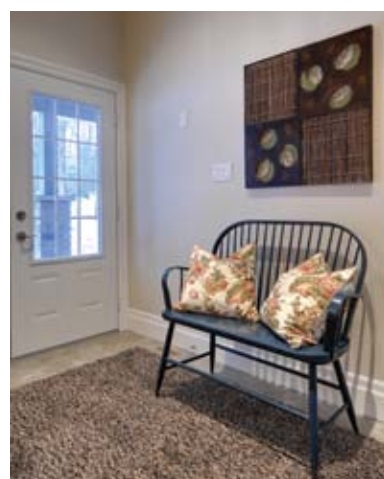
Angela Chang says she never really wanted a cottage, until, that is, her two daughters left for university.

“And then my friend told me that ‘kids always come home to a cottage,’” she says. “So I told my husband, ‘I want a cottage.’”

Angela and her husband Yule Chen set out to find an ideal place to spend time with their family and friends, but it had to be relatively close to their home in Richmond Hill; they did not want to drive north for hours in heavy traffic. The couple started searching the shores of Lake Simcoe and discovered a beautiful waterfront property that, they eventually learned, needed to be torn down. *Continued on page 60*



First came the waterfront location, then came a referral to Wayne Ezekiel of A.N.T. Construction. The end result is a finely crafted cottage that will stay in this family for generations.



# showcase



The master suite is located along the back of the home just behind the kitchen. It includes a walk-in closet and a spacious en suite.



“That’s when we were referred to **Wayne (Ezekiel of A.N.T. Construction)**,” Angela says. “I liked Wayne the minute I met him. I told him, ‘I trust you’ and guess what? He delivered.”

Yule and Angela took possession of their 2,000 sq. ft., three-bedroom cottage last summer. Her daughters love it and Angela hopes they will have families and bring their children to the lake home. She wants to add a second floor in the future to accommodate her grandchildren. For now, there’s plenty of room.

The clean-face, direct-vent wood fireplace in the great room is a focal point and the kitchen, with vanilla-cream antiqued cabinets and a large granite-topped island, is a wonderful place to eat and gather.

“Now my cottage looks better than my house,” says Angela, noting that they plan to live at the cottage while their home in the city is renovated.

A.N.T. has been building homes in Innisfil and Simcoe County for 20 years. “We want the journey to be a smooth but exciting one for each of our clients,” Ezekiel says. “Our architectural design team converts your dream into working drawings and the interior designers assist in the selections to reflect your vision.” At A.N.T., a professional project manager oversees the skilled trades and the client is always aware of the progress, schedules and changes to the schedule. **OH**

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# JUST ADD *sunshine*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE FOX

It's time to step out of our cocoons and into the fresh air. Add some curb appeal and a landscape you'll love with some TLC from experts who can make your home or cottage the envy of the neighbourhood.

## ▲ Chase Mariano and Mark Nunn Blue Diamond Pools & Landscaping

**WHATS HOT:** Pools are typically becoming smaller due to yard size and limited access. Smaller chill/splash pools with a "sports" depth are popular. These are pools without a deep end and are perfect for playing games like volleyball and water polo. Sports pools are great for families to enjoy and for people who want to stay in shape and swim lengths. These pools are also less expensive to run.

**EVERY POOL SHOULD HAVE...** a dream oasis with a WOW factor. Ideas include full-width, walk-in steps or an area with a bench seat and lots of jets with a waterproof controller or side air-jet controller. Jet seats create relaxing sounds and white water and it's a great place to loosen tense back muscles and enjoy a refreshing summer cocktail. We also recommend insulating your pool and other green initiatives, including installing an efficient pump that can save energy.



## ► Melanie Rekola and Kukka

(Kukka means flower in Finnish)

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**MY COMPANY'S PHILOSOPHY:** A truly spectacular residential landscape must contain three key elements: a well-designed outdoor living area, lush plantings to soften the stonework and trees to ground the dwelling.

**FAVOURITE TREE:** Serviceberry. It's native, has white flowers followed by edible blue berries, then scarlet foliage in fall.

**FAVOURITE PERENNIAL:** Daylily. It's tidy, low-maintenance and very floriferous.

*Continued on page 66*



▲ Dave Goodwin, Kim Costain  
and their black lab Kylie  
Near North Landscaping

**WHAT IS YOUR COMPANY'S TRADEMARK?** Over the past several years we have grown this company into a multi-faceted landscaping company that covers the entire spectrum of property services. We offer quality workmanship and superior products, combined with a personalized one-to-one relationship with the client.

**WHAT ARE TODAY'S LANDSCAPING MUST-HAVES?** Many clients want an outdoor living space with kitchens, spas and intricate property design.

► Jeremy Burns

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*Continued on page 68*

PHOTO BY JASON HARTOG



► Steve Gauci  
Napoleon Home Comfort

**WHAT'S NEW FOR SPRING?** This spring we will continue to expand our "outdoor living" category with the introduction of more patio furniture, outdoor accessories and, of course, the best - a redesigned line of Napoleon Grills. The launch of our HVAC product has been well received this heating season and if the summer is also unusually warm our full line of Napoleon central air conditioners should continue to gain market share.

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► Ray Foster  
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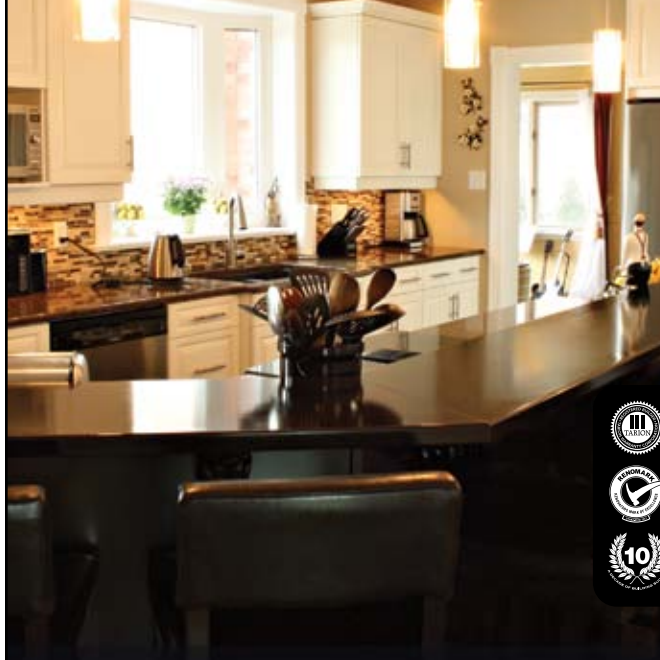
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good taste

# PICNIC *perfect*

BY TONIA WILSON

The birds are singing, the buds are blooming and there is a freshness in the air that beckons us outside. Springtime is one of the most cheerful seasons as it gives the exhilarating promise of great weather and outdoor fun. What better way to celebrate the arrival of spring than with a picnic?

When thinking about wines to pour at your picnic you want to think about fresh, light offerings. Just as the winter jackets and mittens get packed away, so too should the heavy red and white wines that are meant for rich, wintry meals. They can be laid down for another year of aging. Instead, pull out the fresh, crisp whites and light reds in their place.

There are many options to choose from. For conventional whites you could pour an unoaked Chardonnay or Sauvignon Blanc. If you'd like to get a little more adventurous try looking to the east of Europe for some interesting grape varieties such as a dry Furmint from Hungary, or a Grüner Veltliner from Austria. A Pinot Gris from British Columbia, or a dry Riesling from Ontario will also be elegantly refreshing, and make for great partners with cheese.

When considering lighter reds, Pinot Noir from Canada, Oregon or Burgundy can't be beat. Wines made from the Barbera grape in Piemonte, Italy are really appealing, as well as many of the wines from Spain or Southern France made from the Grenache grape (Garnacha in Spanish). Lastly, my favourite wines paired with lighter fare are those made with the Cabernet Franc grape. I've never met a Cabernet Franc I didn't like; they are always tasty and at the very least interesting. Look for those coming from Niagara or the Loire region in France.

After having said all this, my true favourite for a picnic wine is a rosé; there is no better place to drink rosé than outdoors and under the sun. And its pretty pink colour goes with everything!

Now that we have looked at possible picnic-friendly wines we need the picnic-perfect cheeses. One style of cheese to consider is "fresh" cheese, meaning "not aged." Fresh cheeses are released to market days, and sometimes hours, after being produced. They tend to be lighter in both flavour and texture because of their youth. One of my favourite food moments was while driving through a small, rural town in France. There was a hand-written sign on the side of the road reading simply, "Fromage Frais," Fresh Cheese. I followed the arrow and a few turns later wound up in a farmer's

garage. He showed me his cheese and his goats and sold me two cupfuls of fresh tangy goat's cheese, still dripping with moisture and waiting to be spread on a baguette with jam. Other types of cheese that fall into the "fresh" category include ricotta, mozzarella di bufala, bocconcini, cottage cheese and feta. These are all great cheeses for spring but for our purposes we'll want to round out the offerings to include a few more styles. Below are two groupings of cheeses that would make wonderful additions to your picnic.

**Cheese Option #1**  
Sheep's Milk Feta  
drizzled with Honey  
Camembert  
Beaufort

**Cheese Option #2**  
Crottin de Chavignol  
Saint André  
Aged Farmhouse  
Cheddar

The spontaneous nature of a picnic calls for foods that are easy to prepare and serve. Therefore, if you create one substantial main dish accompanied by the cheeses, you'll succeed in making a great meal with little effort. I suggest Salade Niçoise, a flavourful salad full of colour.

The variations on this salad are plentiful but the basic ingredients remain the same.

Toss together in a large bowl some halved, boiled new potatoes, cooked green beans, a can or two of tuna in oil, black olives (not the tinned ones), a big handful of halved grape tomatoes, finely diced red onion and some chopped basil. Season generously with salt and dress liberally with olive oil and white wine vinegar. Add to your menu a baguette, ciabatta or an olive-studded fougasse and your picnic is ready, all you need is the blanket. **OH**



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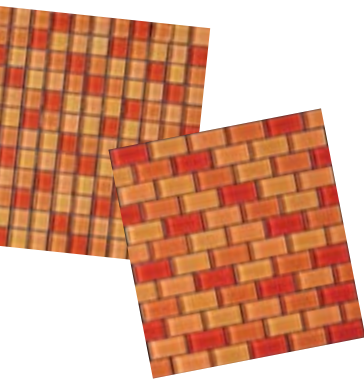
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The unique white vaulted ceiling in the living room sets a refreshing tone for the entire home. **TOP RIGHT:** Outside, landscaped tiers lead down to a sandy beach. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Chris Bondar of Gilkon Construction says this home was a pleasure to build.

The suggestion of a salty tang flavours every tread, turret and transom of this Cape Cod-style vacation home on the southern shore of Georgian Bay. From the painted cedar-shake exterior to a souvenir starfish tucked into a built-in bookshelf, the New England coast is near in heart if not in actual miles. *Continued on page 79*



# WELL WORTH THE WAIT

BY KATHLEEN DUNCAN // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY



“There’s something about a nautical theme that gives the hope of travelling,” says homeowner and avid global explorer Cathy Tait, who chose a myriad of blues and whites to complement nature’s palette. “It imbues faraway places.”

As if made to order, a lighthouse lends a haunting serenity to the island vista across the water, visible from nearly every room in this house, expertly built by **Gilkon Construction Ltd.** – including the four-season sunroom, which boasts drop-down panes by ROSS Windows & Doors that sink into the foundation. The resulting screened-in haven invites cooling breezes while overlooking the expansive deck.

Landscaped tiers created by **Kelly’s Northern Landscaping and Classic Stone**, step down to the sandy waves.

The white tower and scarlet peak of the iconic beacon across the sound echo in the seascapes gracing the second-floor hallway. The architects of both structures clearly share the form-should-follow-function philosophy of design.

Despite the overwhelming evidence that an art connoisseur is in residence, this house – named “Glencairn,” according to the curbside plaque transplanted from an ancestral home in Scotland – invites guests to plunge in and enjoy their stay wholeheartedly, rather than tip-toe timidly at the periphery. *Continued on page 80*

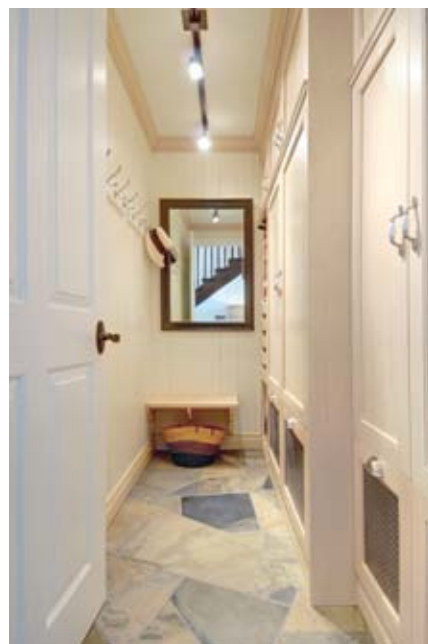


**ABOVE AND RIGHT:** The kitchen was inspired by the movie *Something’s Got To Give*. Creamy cabinets surround a well-appointed island with a raised wood-topped bar. The granite counters are striking with tones of orange and green. **FAR RIGHT:** There is no need for a formal dining room in this casual cottage. There is plenty of room at the kitchen table to entertain a crowd. **TOP RIGHT:** The four-season sunroom has unique drop-down windows that sink into the foundation.





**LEFT:** Seating in the artfully decorated library-theatre room is ultra comfortable. **BELOW:** This walk-in mudroom/closet is furnished top-to-bottom with custom cabinetry and hidden storage. **OPPOSITE LEFT:** A cosy sitting area in the large master suite. **OPPOSITE RIGHT:** The labradorite quartz-topped vanity in the master en suite is said to have healing powers. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** The master bedroom is bright and fresh with an inviting view out large windows.



“This is not a precious house,” assures the hostess, who shares Glencairn with husband Ian (both management consultants with a ravine-backing home in Toronto), daughter Meghan (a museum curator), son Cameron (a university senior), and a rotating cast of friends and family. “You know the saying ‘build it and they will come?’ Well, they come – and come again.”

Completed in the summer of 2008 by Gilkon, veteran custom home builders, the house is the result of patience rewarded.

“It took us eight years to find it,” Cathy recalls. “We wanted it to face west for the sunset, to be on a beach, and to have pristine waters with a sandy bottom. We knew what was on the property could be changed, but those things can’t – or not easily.”

Once the ideal location and environment had been discovered, **The Ideal Environment/Brian Lee Architect** was enlisted to replace the

existing cottage (while retaining its cedar tongue-in-groove boards to clad the sunroom’s floor and vaulted ceiling.)

Gilkon worked closely with Lee.

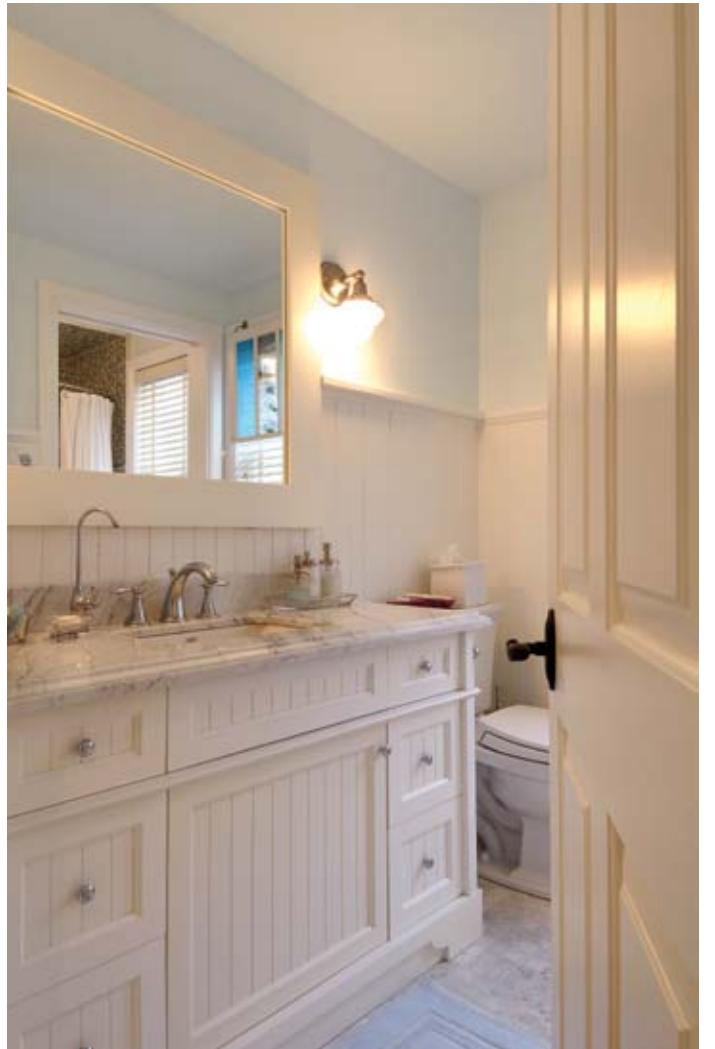
Earthwork was completed by **S. Charlebois Haulage & Excavating Ltd.**, while plumbing and heating contractors **Tom Downer Ltd.** and electricians from **Simcoe County Contracting** were brought in for the modern conveniences.

“I enjoyed the finishings on this house – the roof was a challenge,” says Gilkon co-owner **Chris Bondar**, who clearly enjoys being tested. “And the eyebrow in the vaulted ceiling of the living room – it too was a unique challenge that turned out beautifully.”

The unique ceiling design (painted by **Richard Secord**) is highlighted by a four-panel casement series and arching transom by Kolbe Windows & Doors.

*Continued on page 82*

**RIGHT:** The bathroom on the lower level also has built-ins. **FAR RIGHT:** The guest room has faux-wood ceiling beams created by muralist Lindsay Davis. A lot of the bedding and accessories in the home were purchased at Cabin Boy. **BELOW:** Built-ins line the top of the stairs.



**TOP LEFT AND LEFT:** Daughter Megan's room has fresh-white décor and a nautical theme. **ABOVE:** The shared bath upstairs has a separate shower room.



Bondar's Gilkon team is also very experienced with custom cabinetry, columns, stairs, handrails and other woodworking details employed throughout the home. Their mission included a living room mantel designed specifically to accommodate a model sailboat that made its way home from Hawaii. ("It took two years to find someone to assemble it," grins Cathy.)

The flooring – reclaimed rock-elm barn board, which had to be cleaned, planed and filled by hand – was also processed and installed by Gilkon.

The local history of the floorboards, which are briefly interrupted by granite (the entranceway is a smooth transition from the outdoors), slate (in the multi-purpose pantry) or tumbled Carrara marble (bathrooms), is now another page in the Glencairn storybook – an ongoing rich tale Cathy crafts to spark memories and conversation.

Another example: the vanity in the master bath is topped with green

labradorite quartz said to have healing powers. It isn't necessary to believe, but for those in the know who care to contemplate, life can be escalated to a level that is just a little more fascinating.

The artistic journey moves from the lighthouse seascapes (done by Portuguese artist Miguel Freitas, who Cathy met in his youth) to the over-sized Bob Marley oil portrait by Paul Ygartua that took its rightful place in Cameron's room after a three-year search, to a mixed-media Betty Boop by Steven Csorba that gains depth from a base layer of bubble wrap.

"There's always a story – that's how I choose art," confirms Cathy, who designed an entire wall to showcase a huge Chantal P. Durocher canvas that incorporates textural components, such as birch bark, that begs to be touched. "It was just the perfect painting."

An artistic appreciation for texture and depth can also be found in the Brazilian Barricato granite-slab countertop in the Something's Gotta

Give-inspired kitchen (the multi-colour design of the stone reminds Cathy of a Jackson Pollock painting), the tiny Egyptian tiles framing a nearby chalkboard, and the faux-wood ceiling beams created by muralist and trompe l'oeil artist **Lindsay Davies** in the guest room – the only room in the house without a water view.

Jhavi Desai designed the kitchen cabinetry and many of the built-ins. The kitchen cabinets were made by Prestige Wood Designs.

With a sound system set up by musicologist and sound engineer Andrew Weleshcuk of Solutions AV to stimulate another sense, guests can listen to the house selection or plug in their iPods wherever they happen to land – a perfect way to relax after a busy day of skiing or kayaking.

"This house has a lot of soul. Not to be absurd, it just grounds you as soon as you walk in. We worked hard at trying to get that feel and weren't in a rush. I think that made all the difference." **OH**

# 12 STEPS TO FEELING GREAT IN *your space*

BY IRENE TURNBULL // ILLUSTRATION BY SHEILA BRITTON

“What’s wrong with this space?” Gayle asks. “We’re just not comfortable here.” “We never use this room,” Adrienne says. “No one in the family seems to want to be in here for more than a few minutes.” “We just can’t seem to get it right,” a frustrated Donna confesses. “We can’t seem to pin down what’s bugging us. It’s not the colour, and we loved the furniture when we picked it out, but it just doesn’t deliver the comfort level we anticipated.”

If any of these comments strike a chord with you, you’ll be pleased to learn that the struggles of getting it right for your home interior often have little to do with the aesthetics of the objects you choose, and everything to do with how you feel as a result of the impact that our environment has on our overall comfort and sense of well-being. The good news is, once we make the connection with our real needs from our personal spaces, we can begin with ease to make the choices that support and comfort us.

Let’s start at the beginning. First, it’s important to understand that we experience our home spaces on two distinctly different but inseparable levels simultaneously. Rather like the proverbial chicken and egg, we are engaged in an entangled relationship of physical and emotional response that shapes our perceptions and ultimately influences our opinions about the degree of pleasure we are experiencing. We are conditioned by culture and life experience but our basic needs are pre-programmed into our biology. Some we are well aware of and others are acquired on a subconscious level and only grab our attention when they appear on our radar as intuitive feelings of discomfort. Our instinctive needs for safety, warmth, comfort and relationship are continually at work to be satisfied, so when we feel physically unsafe and emotionally disconnected, from people and our surroundings, we experience a negative response. When it comes to our homes, there is no getting away from satisfying these basic needs, despite the degree of luxury you can afford.

Here are some examples of things that can undermine our feelings of safety, leaving us feeling vulnerable, along with some suggested remedies to influence those “good energy feelings.”

1. Our backs to doorways and windows. Our eyes look

forward – we like to see who is approaching easily. If it is impossible to avoid, try to place a mirror in a strategic location so you can see who is coming behind you.

2. Too much distance between seats in conversational areas can restrict intimacy and leave us feeling exposed. Bring people comfortably close and remember sofas don’t always need to be backed against walls.

3. Sitting too close can feel like an encroachment of individual space, (like the middle person on a three-seater sofa).

4. Chairs with arm rests are generally more comfortable than armless for living and family rooms because they allow natural support in a relaxed state.

5. Blocked pathways – backs of furniture facing entranceways – and sofas loaded with cushions with no room for sitting – all subconsciously say “restricted area” do not enter!

6. Rigid seating arrangements with hard edges restrict intimacy. We are naturally comfortable in conversational circles. Try angling furniture to soften edges. Face seating into the centre so people can make direct eye contact without twisting and turning.

7. Bathrooms too close to communal areas compromise privacy and are extremely uncomfortable for guests.

8. Bedrooms at the front of the house or too close to the entrance door or exposed to high traffic areas keep us in a state of unrest when their purpose is to do just the opposite.

9. Improper lighting can make a room uncomfortable. Choose wisely. 10. Mirrors can be extremely useful decorating tools, but be careful of what you are reflecting.

11. Beautiful windows by day left uncovered at night turn to black mirror and can be very disturbing.

12. Create subliminal boundaries without barriers by using area rugs to define and anchor conversational groupings and fill in corners and uncomfortable gaps with plants either artificial or natural. **OH**



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(Please see ad on page 16)

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## finishing touch

TABLES BY ILEANA PALERMO // PHOTOGRAPHY BY BONNIE FOX

# ...ON THE Side

Most of us have big plans this spring to clean up, clean out and organize our homes and yards.

We're all either looking to get rid of stuff or find that ideal piece to fill or refresh the guest room or back porch. Before you toss that old mirror or tray, consider using it to create a one-of-a-kind, made-by-you side table. *Continued on page 94*



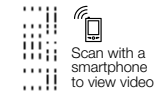
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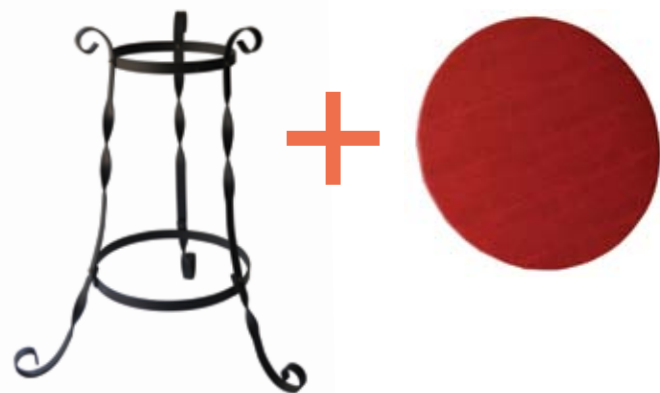
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