

MALIBU NORTH

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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,