

# Victorian VANTAGES & VIGNETTES

STORY LAUREL FORTIN | PHOTOGRAPHY SANDY MACKAY

Tucked into the southern lee of the escarpment between Creemore and Dunedin, Somerset Farm stretches over a lush and romantic 15 acres.

From the road, a tree-lined drive winds toward a carriage house modelled after one of the Creemore area's original Victorian barns. Past an open-air gazebo and a folly garden built to resemble the antique ruins of a church, visitors arrive at a limestone grotto and waterfall before a final uphill climb to the stone-clad home nestled on the edge of the woods. Designed in the mid-1990s by local realtor and builder Patrick Prime to resemble a long-established English mansion, the current estate has absolutely blossomed under the care of owners Marilyn and Robert Chenier.

Last spring, the hands-on gardeners not

only repainted the road frontage's 2,000 feet of post-and-rail fencing by hand, they then opened their grounds to be a stop on the **Bleu Venue Events' Backyard Glam Tour**. Creemore designer **Marcy Stewart** of **Flowers by Ms. Design** styled nearly a dozen separate conversation and rest areas across the property with décor and furnishings.

Delighted visitors strolled through vignettes including two full silver tea services, bird cages and gauzily draped seating areas in the trees. The outdoor settings were styled with furniture from Casualife and décor from **Collingwood Home Hardware, Victorian Values, Seasons In**

**Creemore and Flowers By Ms. Design.**

Marilyn and Robert have frequented many nurseries in the region to source just the right flowers and plants to populate their opulent gardens, including **Clearview Nursery Ltd.** and **Riverside Greenhouses**. They have planted hundreds of shrubs and perennials over the past six years along with truckloads of soil and compost. Annual plantings and petunia-laden urns at the house come from the Cut and Dried Flower Farm in Glencarin. The original property's hardscaping was adeptly installed by **Martin Zeng of Zeng Landscaping**, including the stone pathways and terrace.

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The Noisy Valley panorama from the veranda or stone patio is stunning any time of the day. A pergola with English gardens is visible, as is the carriage house in the distance.



▼ At the centre of the English garden, a tall, circular fountain provides water for bathing birds and a focal point for those seated in the gazebo.

▼ The welcoming equestrian scene on the Somerset Farm road entrance. The ironwork on the front gate was created by local blacksmith **John Knappett**.

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❖ Hundreds of rose bushes fill the gardens, along with boxwood shrubs and perennials such as lavender, hostas and daylilies.

» The carriage house has a loft suitable for an artist's studio with room below for five horses. The loft has a trio of dormers and is topped with a cupola.

« The gothic, lancet arches of the two-sided garden folly are echoed in the grotto at the base of the slope below the owner's home. Double columns support limestone bricks forming one doorway, one window and three columned arches, all surrounded by petunias and hostas.





« Patio furniture on the lower lawn provides a respite from the sun. Whimsical parasols hang from the trees, on offer as extra shade for visitors.

« A bistro set in the trees by the house receives a hint of privacy from the surrounding gauzy sheets.



« The sounds of the waterfall spilling over the limestone grotto give a serene resonance to the setting.



« Cut flowers are woven around a chandelier mounted underneath a Casualife patio umbrella. Flameless candles light the table set with a pink runner and shining silver tea set courtesy of Seasons in Creemore. Art by local artist Peter Taylor hangs under the arches. Designer and stylist Marcy Stewart of Flowers by Ms. Design reposes in the shade by the grotto.



« The large gazebo provides shade and a vantage point for the extensive English gardens. Planters at the gazebo were supplied by Riverside Greenhouses. Styled with furniture from Casualife and décor from Collingwood Home Hardware. Many varieties of hydrangea surround the gazebo and compete for the fullest blooms.



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» White porcelain candle pillars anchor a serving table in the shade. Teacups glued to saucers are strung by ribbon from the ribs of a Casualife patio umbrella. Birdseed on the saucers attracts smaller chickadees and goldfinches. A round, canopied daybed from Casualife becomes more enticing with pillows from Victorian Values in Creemore. The canvas canopy lifts or lowers to let in or block light for its loungers.

» Pink table runners play off the voluptuous tones in the petunia planters. Taper candles and a silver tea and coffee set fill the table with shine. The lavish table settings and silver tea set courtesy of Seasons in Creemore.



» A glass conservatory sunroom allows four-season views. Many varieties of soft pink, yellow and peach daylilies fill the garden beds, along with purple, white and pink summer phlox, lavender, shrub roses and small hydrangea.

» Homeowner and artist Robert Chenier designed and built the numerous birdhouses found throughout the property. Continued on page 92



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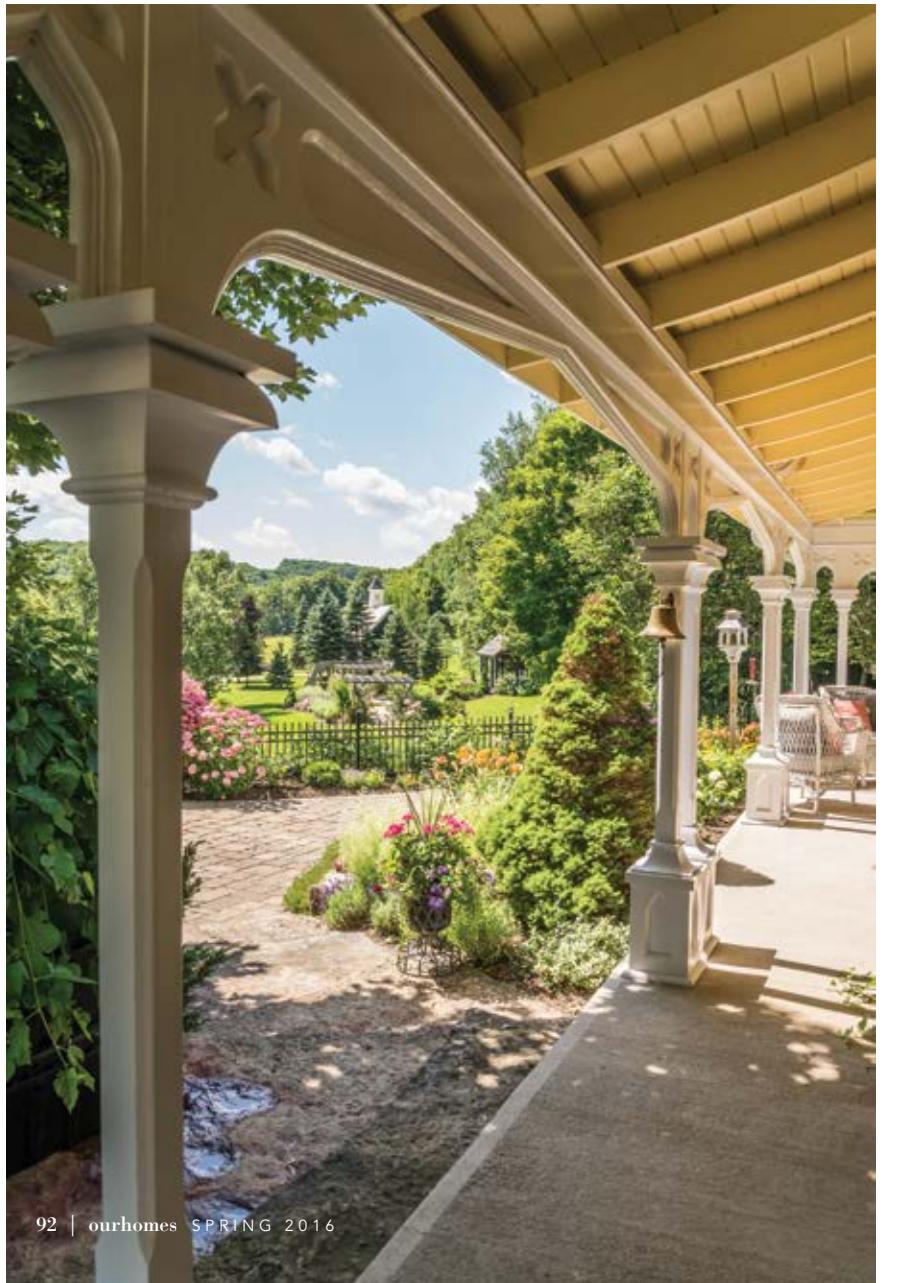
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## feature

▼ A wide veranda wraps around the front and side of the house, offering shade to the rooms inside as well as wonderful spots to enjoy afternoon tea. Beautiful millwork and finishes offer a hint of what is to be found inside the home.



« Homeowners and gardeners Marilyn and Robert Chenier enjoy a cup of tea in the wicker furniture on the wraparound veranda.

▼ A Serbian spruce and ornamental oak tree provide softness to the front corner of the home. The stone pathways installed by Zeng Landscaping connect the house to the forest behind the home. Playing on the Victorian theme, Marcy Stewart hung birdcages under the trees around the grounds.



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