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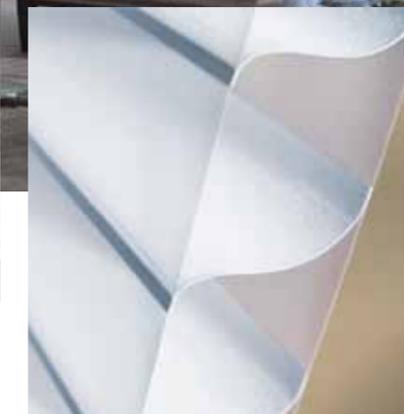


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TRACIE ZORZI  
tracie@ourhomesmagazine.com

OUR HOMES MEDIA GROUP INC:

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF** GEORGETTE MCCULLOCH  
editor@ourhomesmagazine.com

**MANAGING EDITOR** ADRIENNE BROWN  
adrienne@ourhomesmagazine.com

**ART DIRECTOR** TARA CHATELL  
tara@ourhomesmagazine.com

**PRODUCTION DIRECTOR** LYNN DERRICK  
lynn@ourhomesmagazine.com

**PRODUCTION MANAGER** TRACY SHUTTLEWORTH  
tsw@ourhomesmagazine.com

**WEB EDITOR** SHELBY HILSON  
shelby@ourhomesmagazine.com

**PRESIDENT** DAVID LOOPSTRA

#### CONTRIBUTORS

Sheila Britton, Adrienne Brown, Jill Ellis, Alison Habermehl, Jason Hartog,  
Lisa MacColl, Jadwiga Podowski, Stephanie Redmond,  
Melanie Rekola, Yanic Simard, Jude Wayland, Tonia Wilson

#### MARKETING & ADVERTISING SALES

**For Advertising or General Inquiries**  
TRACIE ZORZI 905.875.3509  
tracie@ourhomesmagazine.com

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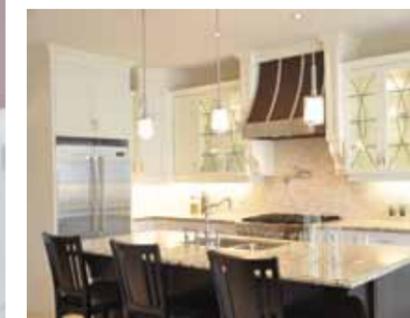
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## editor's note



**IN THE SUMMER, I TRY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE** of warm, sunny weather while it lasts by working out on my deck when I can. I look out over my garden and can wave to my neighbours when they're outside too (shhh: I also like to peek over the fence at what everyone has added to their backyard décor for a fresh season).

By the end of any summer afternoon, I start to hear more and more people in their yards and I can smell them firing up their barbecues. That's what summer's all about!

I envy the backyards of both of our feature homes this issue. One has a multi-level deck overlooking greenspace that offers quiet, natural views right in Waterloo (page 36). The homeowners didn't have to add a water feature because they have a real one – complete with wildlife – adjacent to their property!

The other, a brand new build by Milla Homes (page 22), has a dreamy pool with a waterfall, perfect for summer fun. Just the sound of the water flowing into the pool in this beautiful backyard oasis relaxes me.

We've also found plenty of fun and funky summer décor at our favourite retailers across Waterloo Region, so we've shared a few of our favourites on page 18. I'm a big fan of bright colours and I'm glad they're so trendy right now. One small pop of colour in your décor can really liven up a room – and your spirits!

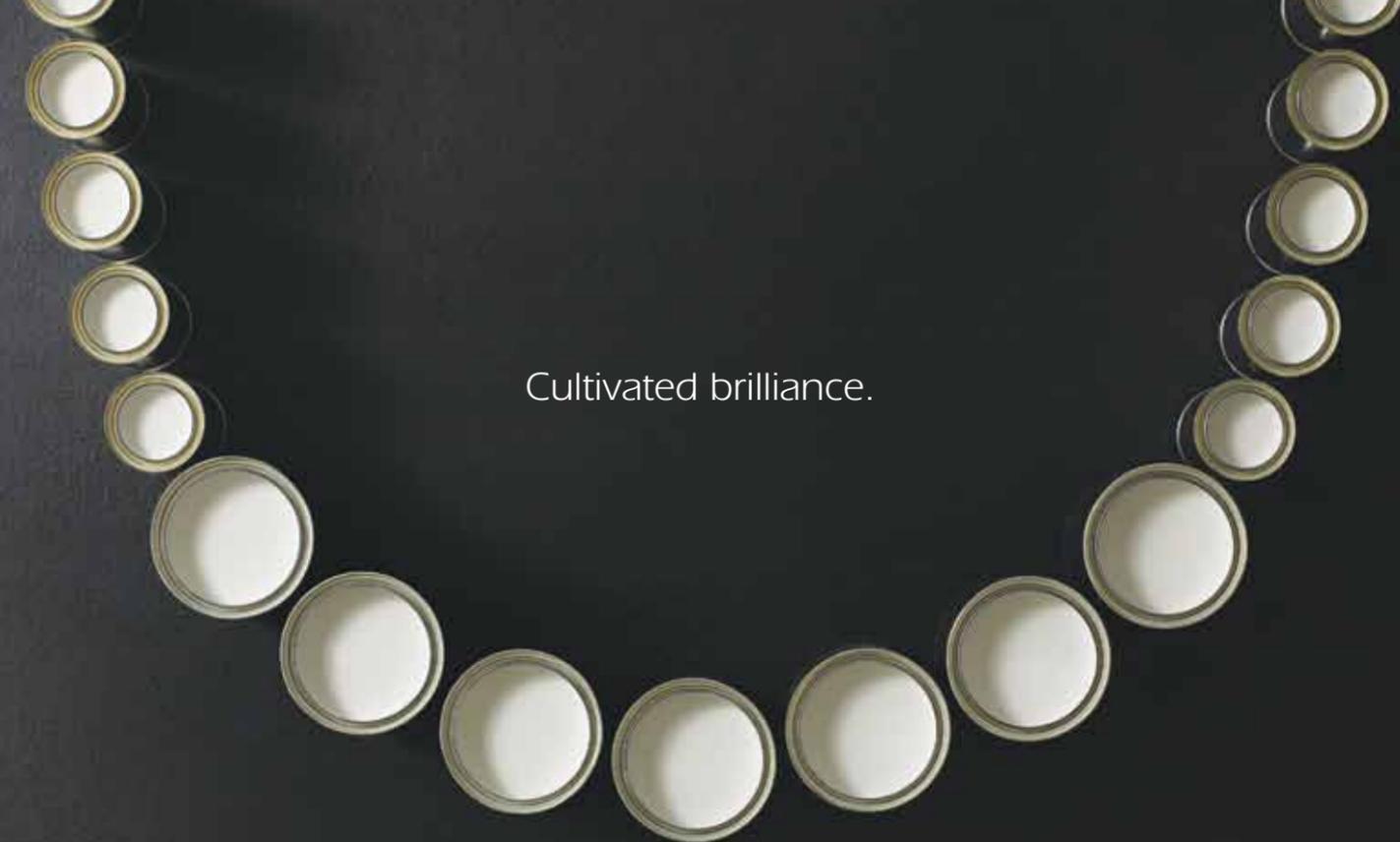
I hope you find a colour that really inspires you this season, but most of all, I hope you make time to get outside with family and friends.

Cheers!

*Adrienne*

Adrienne Brown, *Managing Editor*  
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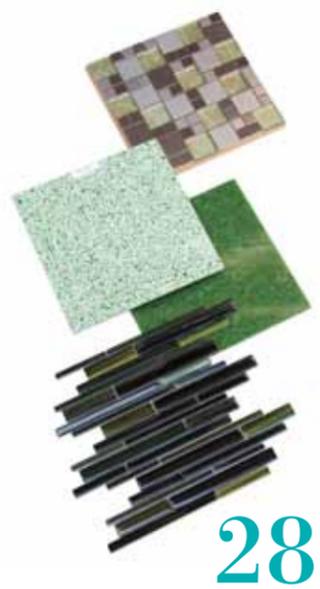
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## summer

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### ON THE COVER

In the conservatory at a home in Laurelwood. Story, page 36. Photography by Jason Hartog.



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## publisher's note



**IT'S FINALLY SUMMERTIME** and now that we get the feeling of warm sunshine on our skin, everyone's spirits seem to perk up. I've spent the past two months meeting new clients, visiting beautiful homes and chatting with new and old friends alike. Everyone is planning their summer vacations! It's refreshing to hear what everyone has in store for this highly anticipated season. We all feel the same way and summer is the best time of year for entertaining our family and friends.

In the quieter moments, it's also a great time to sit outside with the sun on our faces, perhaps savouring a hot morning coffee on the front veranda or a cool afternoon drink in the backyard – perfect opportunities to relax and enjoy the summer issue of OUR HOMES magazine! I hope you find inspiration in these fresh pages. Whether you are gardening, painting, entertaining or trying to change your carbon footprint, there's something for everyone.

My goal this summer is to try the eco-friendly laundry soap mentioned in the article on page 34. As a family of six, we have plenty of laundry and I know it's important to do what I can to be kind to the Earth.

Have a great summer and see you in the fall.

Tracie Zorzi, Publisher  
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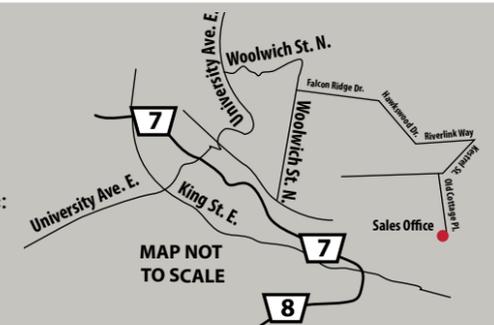


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Zanzibar, Saffron from the Coordinations collection.

advice

# HERE COMES colour

## THE SPUMONI TREND

Say the word “pastel” and I envision spumoni ice cream (yes, I love it) and Easter eggs. Delicious yes, but attractive? Pastels seem so faint compared to their primary counterparts, a weaker version of the true thing. But when you describe them, they’re wonderful and yummy (cotton candy, mint chip, lemon chiffon) or romantic and flowery (rose, lavender, wisteria). Maybe they’re understated, but these introverts of the colour wheel are whimsical, refreshing, and dreamy. What tones could better characterize summer? So how do we use them? It’s always fun to see these trends in print but how do you incorporate a trend into your otherwise permanent décor?



ELMIRA STOVE WORKS



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Designer Stephanie Redmond answers your questions.

## THE ANSWER? DO IT YOURSELF.

Get out your dirty t-shirt and ripped jeans! Whether you’re having a romance with the pastel trend or into a more vibrant palette, here are a few ideas for a do-it-yourself approach.

## PAINT DIPPED ACCESSORIES

A note-worthy trend that cropped up is paint-dipped furniture and accessories. Start with a wooden spoon. It couldn’t be easier and there is virtually no investment. Paint the legs of a chair. Dip the base of a basket or a set of wine glasses. You don’t have to actually dip an object in a bucket of paint if it’s too large. Just give the illusion by painting the lower or upper portion of a piece and voilà, you’re showing your trendy side. A small item is a great way to practice, but to make an impression, do something sizeable. I recently cut and hemmed a table skirt in burlap and dipped the lower portion in Benjamin Moore’s HC-59 Odessa Pink. It looks wonderful as a centerpiece stacked with books and white pillar candles.

## LINENS

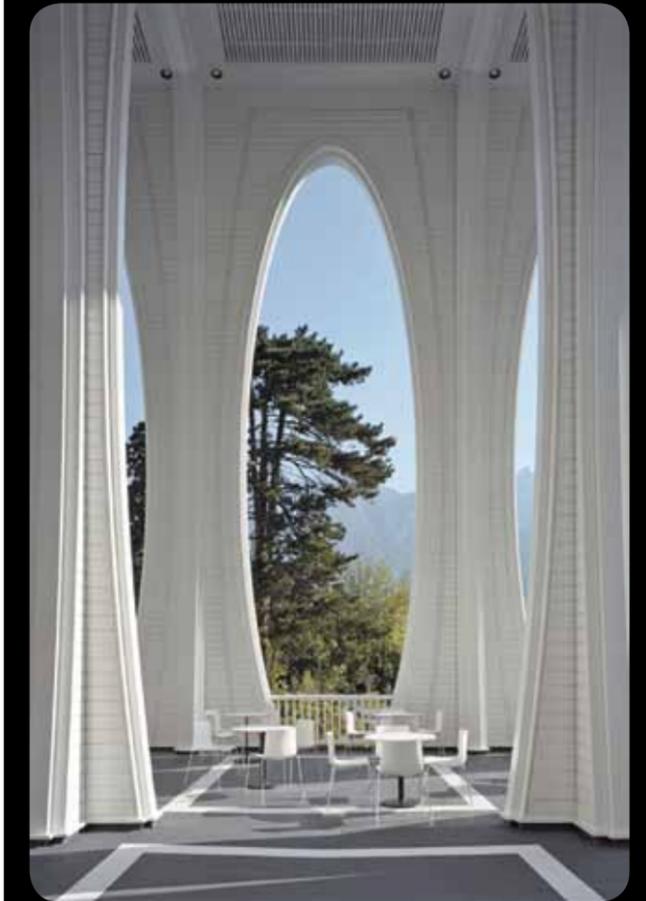
If you have an old set of white sheets to spare you can incorporate two trends in one: Tie-dyed linens (that boho-chic thing) in soft pastel tones – a tablecloth, curtains, duvet cover, toss cushions. Those are just a few ideas. Tie-dyeing is actually really easy. Sew together two 24-inch square fabric pieces and when you’re done you have a throw pillow that screams “hello 70’s!” If you don’t have anything on hand, purchase a textural linen or heavy cotton duct by the yard at your local fabric store. It’s not as easy as ordering online, but you’ll be proud of your design. Check out the Rit Dye website for colour ideas.

## FLOOR STENCILING

An old wood floor in rough shape is always a dilemma – to refinish or to paint? I’ve always wanted to try stenciling: Maybe on a third floor? A dark space that needs some livening up? A country kitchen? This is a great way to incorporate colour into a space. Buy a roll of paper at a craft store and create your fabulous shape. Stain or paint the entire floor an inspiring colour, then use your cut-out to stencil in white or another colour of choice. Choose wisely! Let’s not forget that this is a LOT of work. Forget the sweat, tears and hours of labour! How incredible is that end result? Stain colour suggestion: For a beautiful blue tone try MinWax Pearl Gray.

The ideas may be endless, but the do-it-yourself method does take planning and time. Most importantly, send us some photos! Everyone has a different approach to decorating and it’s always fun to see what our readers have been up to. **OH**

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*“All colours are the friends of their neighbours and the lovers of their opposites.” – Marc Chagall*

Bright colours don't just belong in the garden! Summer is the perfect season to bring some funky and fun décor into your home.

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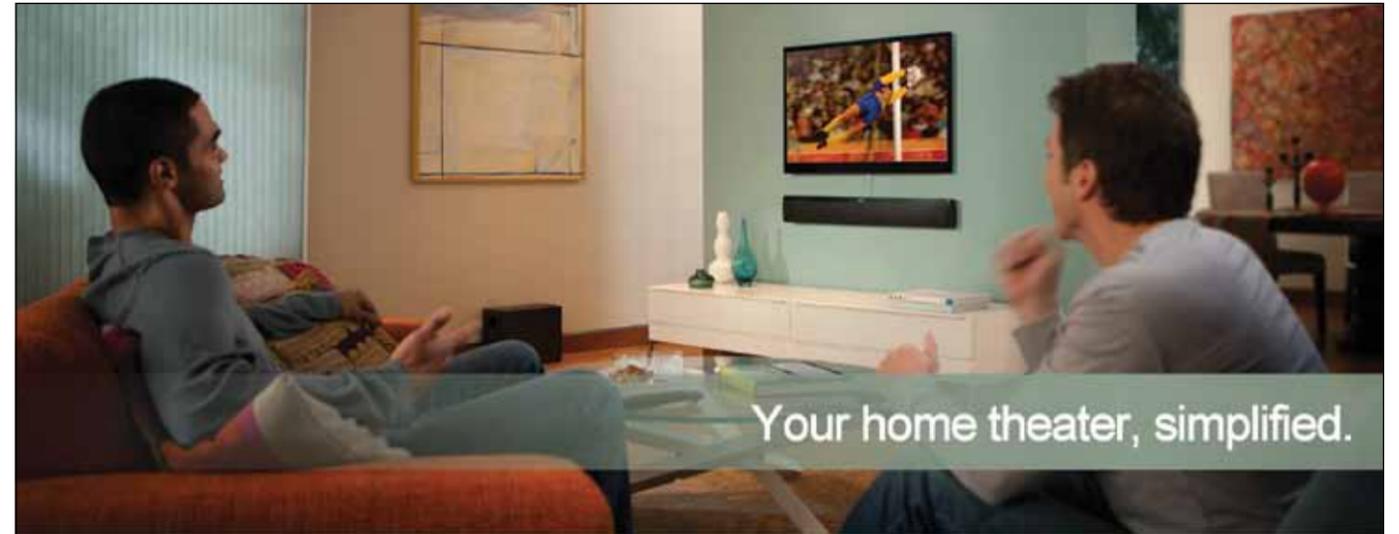
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LEFT: Spiral stairs connect the main-floor office space to an upstairs library, where George Milla, the owner of Milla Homes, stands [BELOW]. BOTTOM: A large painting from Paula White Diamond Art Gallery + Design Studio is the focal point of the home's wide-open foyer. OPPOSITE: This kitchen, featuring double ovens and plenty of work space, is a baker's dream.



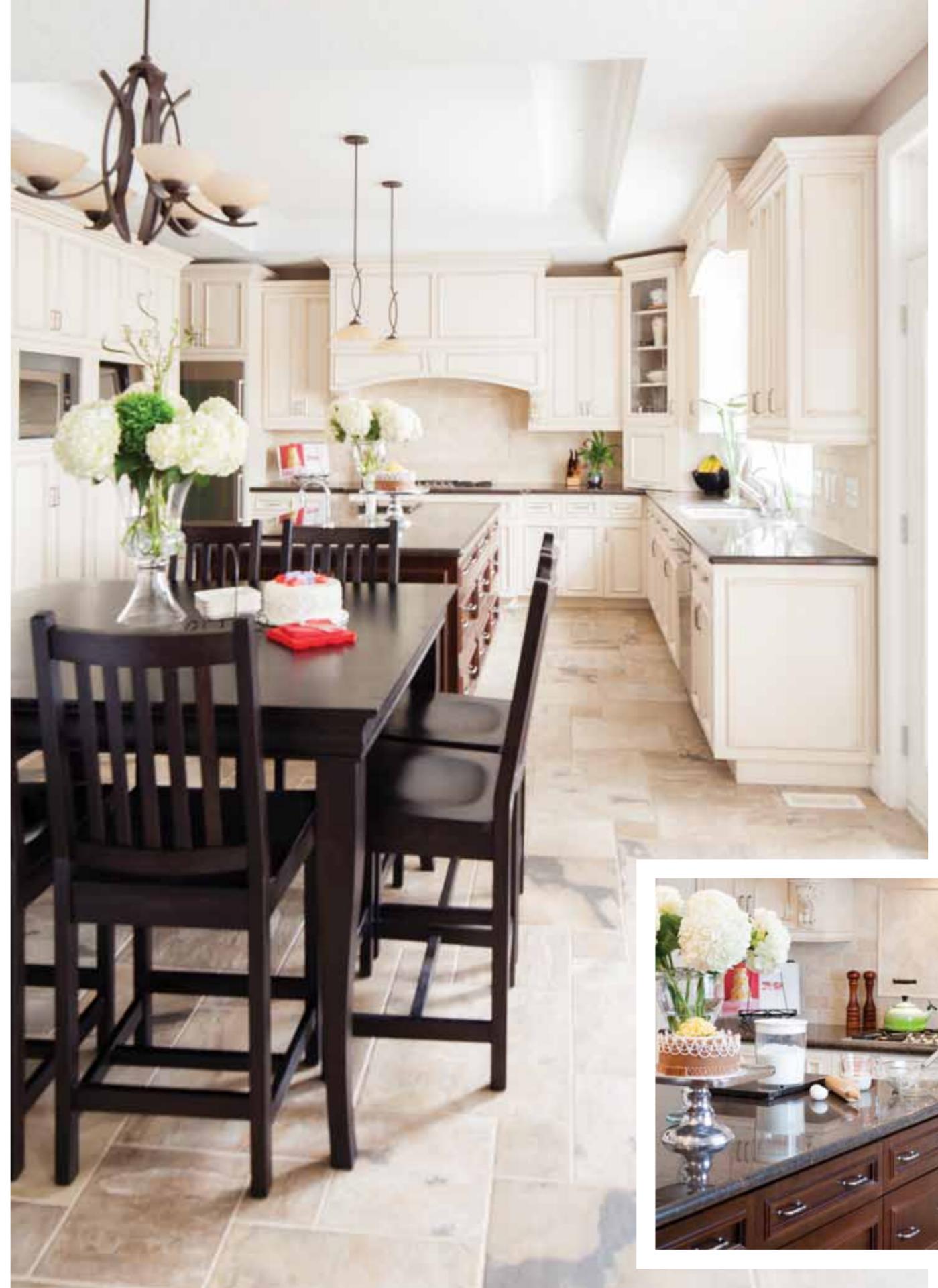
# TAILOR-MADE *treasure*

BY ADRIENNE BROWN  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON HARTOG  
STYLED BY JADWIGA PODOWSKI

There's more to a Milla home than meets the eye – a beautiful, functional space that's tailored perfectly to its owners.

Two years ago, **Milla Homes** built this custom home for a local family of four. They were the first family on their street and they don't plan on leaving, especially since every design decision was made especially for them.

Upstairs, for example, instead of four bedrooms (the original plan from the builder), the homeowners opted for three – a tranquil master with a Juliet balcony overlooking the backyard and two large bedrooms for each of their sons. The master bedroom is separated from the master bath by a double-sided gas fireplace, which sits beside a soaker tub. **K-W Glass Systems Inc.** installed the mirrors and shower doors in all of the bathrooms. *Continued on page 24*



**BOTTOM:** The family of four spends lots of time poolside during the summer, especially when the waterfall is flowing [BELOW].  
**RIGHT:** The living room's waffle ceiling adds extra interest to the room, particularly with its two skylights. **TOP FAR RIGHT:** Designer Jadwiga Podowski helped the homeowners select beautiful, solid furniture for their living spaces. **BOTTOM FAR RIGHT:** The homeowner found her dining set while on a trip to North Carolina.



The space that would have been the fourth bedroom is now a common space where the two boys can do their homework. Conveniently, this sits right beside the library, which is lined with shelves of books and features two large chairs ideal for cosying up with a good read. The library is open to the foyer below and has a great view of one of three stunning paintings the homeowners purchased from **Paula White Diamond Art Gallery + Design Studio**. It also has a spiral staircase down to the main-level office, which is just off the front entrance. The windows in the foyer feature beautiful wrought iron inserts from **Blind Ambition**, a special touch that completes the look.

It's these fine, yet fun touches that make the home work for this family. "My kids love the spiral stairs for hide and seek," laughs the homeowner. And that's partly why they decided to build with Milla Homes – every detail is tailored to their needs, and nobody else's.

Originally, the homeowners had found a resale home they liked, but the location wasn't quite right. So they took the concept to Milla Homes,

where they started to reshape it into exactly what would work for them. "Sometimes we had airy-fairy ideas and they could mould them into something we liked," says the homeowner.

**Mark Van Dongen**, General Manager of Milla Homes, says the design process was very collaborative. "There wasn't a room or space in this home that wasn't thought through in terms of how this family lived and how this area would be used."

In particular, they spent a lot of time planning out the perfect kitchen for the homeowner, who is an avid baker. Now, she has a sleek, functional workspace and a huge island topped with granite from Guelph's **Graniteworx Inc.**, lots of storage in cabinets by **Barzotti Woodworking** (also in Guelph) and a set of double ovens so she can bake to her heart's content. The whole space is lit with beautiful fixtures from **Living Lighting**.

Off one side of the kitchen, through a pantry and bar area, is the dining room, and off the other is the family's wide-open living space. The homeowners decided they didn't need both a living room and family room

because they'd only use one, so they opted for one big living space they can all enjoy on a regular basis. "We never used our old living room, so we decided to just have one room," says the homeowner.

And what a room it is. The living space features a beautiful gas fireplace and mantel topped with a television and electronics from **Gibson Sound & Vision**. Decorator **Jadwiga Podowski's** work really shines here with a collection of beautiful throw pillows and tall plants that sit perfectly under square skylights at the end of the room.

"Every space was personalized. This home is a great example of what custom building really means," says Van Dongen.

From the living room, the family can access its marvellous backyard. **Red Bear Lawns and Landscaping Ltd.** sculpted a beautiful yard around the family's pool, which features a waterfall.

When it's not beautifully sunny outside, though, the family spends a great deal of time in the basement, which is outfitted with a home theatre system and long, comfortable sofas. *Continued on page 26*



**LEFT:** The homeowner's painter was hesitant to hang wallpaper because he said it was passé and he hadn't done it in years. He relented, and has since had plenty more requests to hang wallpaper, which is back in style! **BELOW:** The sleek master bath features big windows, just like the rest of the home.



There are more benefits to choosing Milla Homes than all these beautiful finishes though. The company puts just as much care into everything we can't see in a home as what we can see.

"At the end of the day, we incorporated a whole lot of comfort features as well as many technological and peace-of-mind features in a very low-maintenance yet high-performance home," says Van Dongen.

The heating and cooling was taken care of by **Overland RNC**. Van Dongen says Milla Homes uses heat recovery ventilation (HRV), which is a dedicated mechanical ventilation system that can be set to constantly refresh interior air by exchanging it with outside air. This drastically improves the interior air quality and reduces and controls the home's humidity levels.

One of the newer behind-the-scenes features is the Kitchener-made Power-Pipe, which can reduce household hot water heating costs by up to 40 per cent. According to **RenewAbility Energy Inc.**'s website, "The Power-Pipe consists of multiple coils of copper tube wrapped together around a copper central drain pipe. Hot water going down the drain transfers its heat to incoming cold water moving up the coils."

These details set Milla Homes apart from their competitors. They're so impressive, in fact, that the homeowner's sister recently bought a Milla Home, too. **OH**



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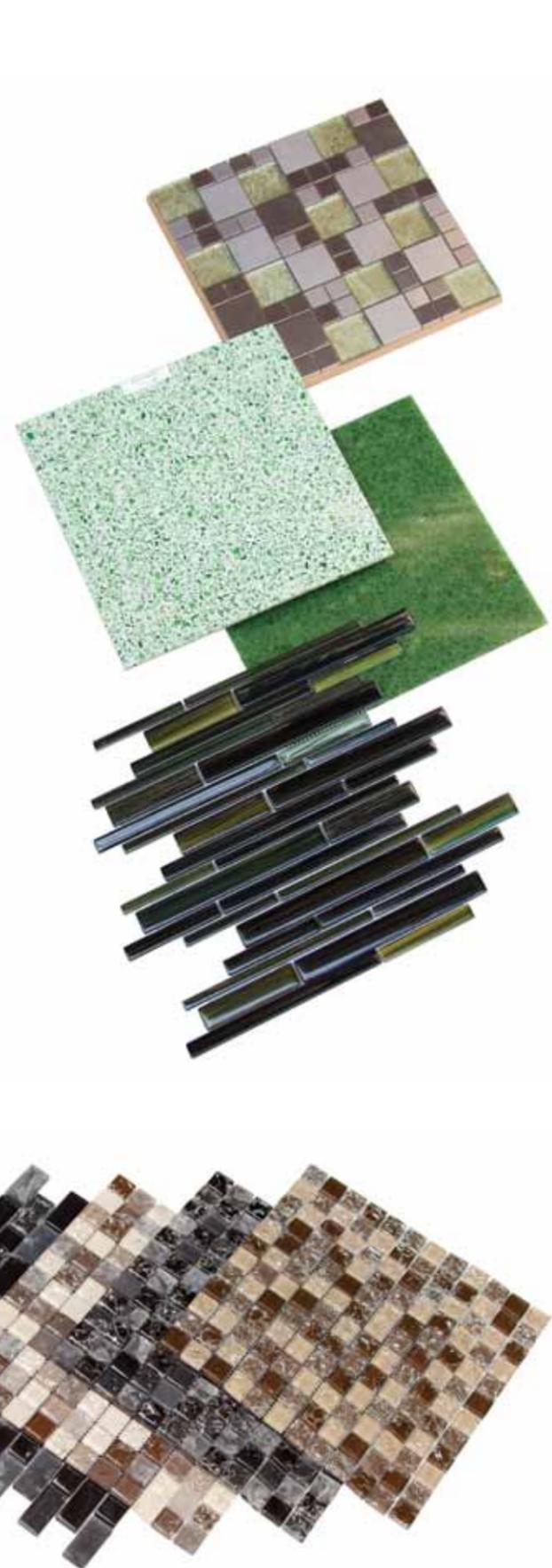


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# TILE IN Style

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON HARTOG

**THE PLACE:** Located inside the beautiful Hacienda Sarria building on Union Street in Kitchener, **Casa Bella Tile & Stone Inc.** is obviously a first-class company. Owners Mary Werenko and Kim DeVries have been doing business here for five years, but they've been selling tiles for what they call "forever." They've been in business together for about 20 years. Mary's daughter Jennifer Legault joined them three years ago. Their showroom is packed with tile samples for every room - and for long-term use. "We show people how not to get caught up in trends," says Mary.

**THE STYLE:** With a massive selection of sleek and modern designs, Casa Bella Tile & Stone has every colour, texture, shape and size of tile anyone could ever want. The showroom is bright and fresh and displays on one side of the room showcase how different tiles can really transform a space.

**WHAT'S HOT:** Mary says "fancy, fancy glass" is extremely popular right now. This includes cracked glass tiles, shiny mosaics and pretty pebble tiles. "A lot of people don't want to commit to a lot of colour with tile because it's so permanent," says Kim. But touches of colour can be combined with neutrals to create unique looks.



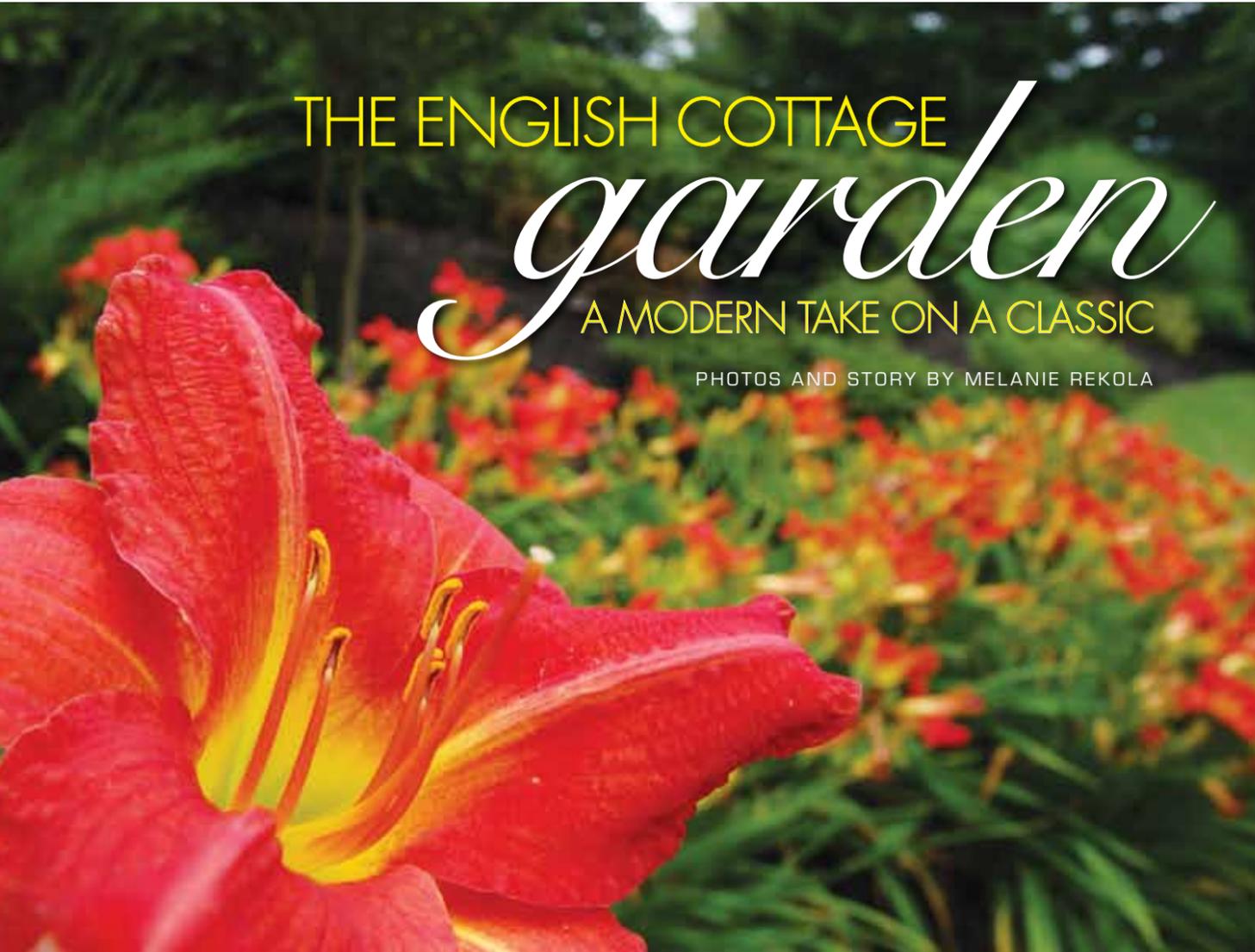
Left to right: Kim DeVries, Mary Werenko and Jennifer Legault.



**SEASONAL:** As soon as summer weather hits, people start visiting Casa Bella Tile & Stone for outdoor tiles. Mary says many people are updating their yards or looking for nice stones for around their pools.

**FAVOURITES:** All the ladies are drawn to different tiles and their top picks change frequently. Right now, Mary says she likes patterned tiles, including some that look like grass cloth. Kim loves tiles in earth tones with a bit of shine. "Earth colours but not earth texture," she says.

**WHERE:** 1254 Union St., Kitchener  
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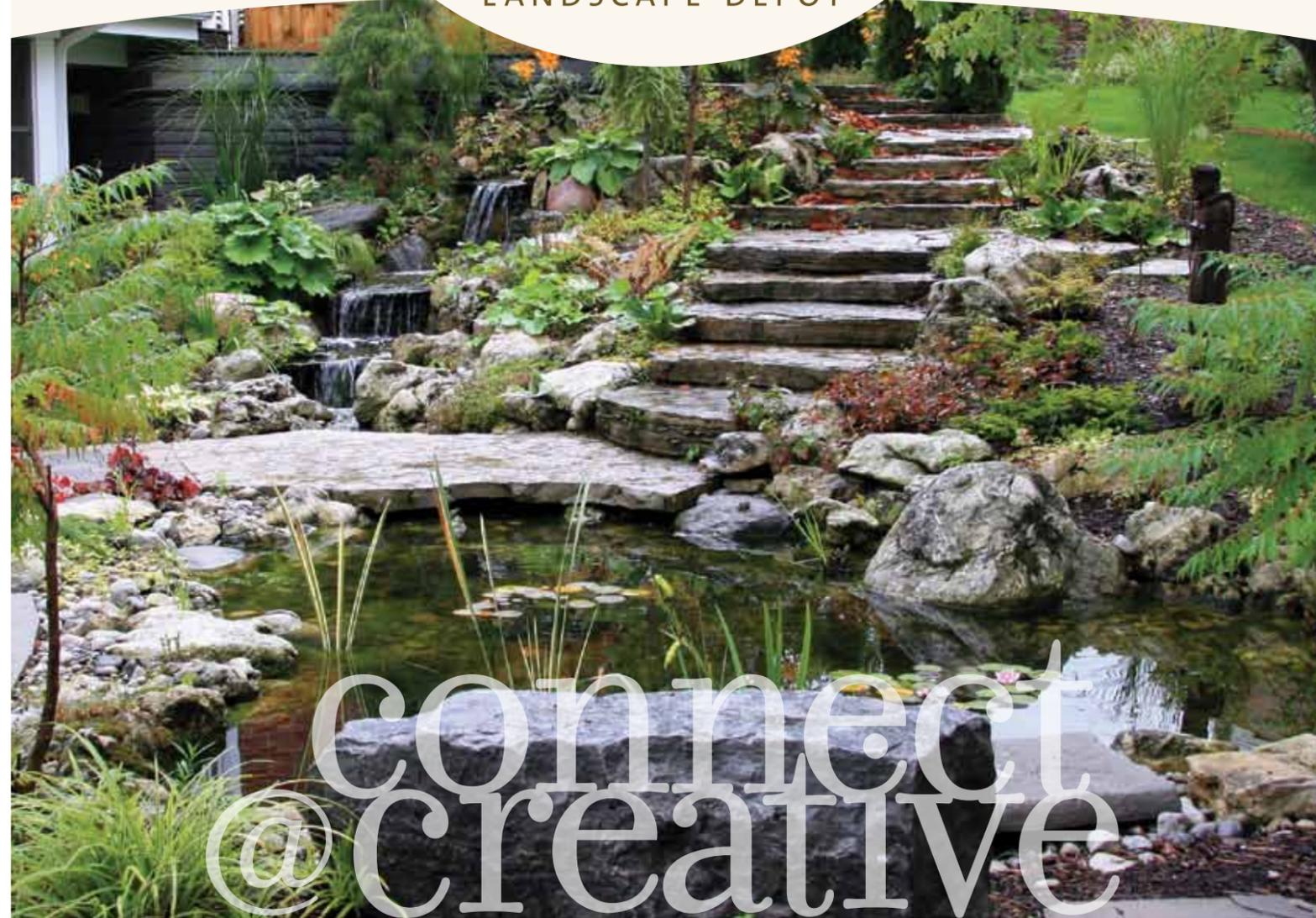


THE ENGLISH COTTAGE  
*garden*  
A MODERN TAKE ON A CLASSIC

PHOTOS AND STORY BY MELANIE REKOLA

The English cottage-style garden is a haphazard affair. A wild and densely planted mixture of ornamental and edible plants, it represents a functional garden connected to working class citizens going back several centuries. Its beauty depends on charm and grace, rather than grandeur.

This distinct garden style originally used structured edges (usually rectangular) to contain a chaotic blend of shrubs, perennials, annuals, herbs and edibles. *Continued on page 32*



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They included slim, straight paths with whimsical furnishings and structures such as waddle fencing and rose arbours. The use of scrambling vines was and still is essential to this classic method. Busy pollinators love these types of gardens for their emphasis on the “flower” rather than a beautiful leaf or habit. What I am drawn to personally about this garden approach is that each year is different. The self-seeding quality of much of the plant materials makes the landscape change year to year, depending on which plant took hold the previous year. Therefore I am never bored.

Originating in the middle ages, the emphasis of the cottage garden was absolutely on vegetables, herbs and even fruit trees, with ornamentals to fill in between. Typical plant materials used were primrose, thyme, calendula, violets, daisies, roses, ivy etc., but any locally found vegetation would do. Over time the perennials, shrubs and annuals became more dominant. As this style of gardening evolved, quirky arbours and rustic furniture were added. More stylized versions grew in the 1870s in reaction to more structured and high maintenance English estate gardens that used formal design and mass plantings of dazzling greenhouse annuals.

Modern-day cottage gardens house a wide variety of modern plant materials and personal variations of the more traditional English cottage garden. Ornamental grasses, hosta and daylily, plus new varieties of tidy flowering shrubs do much to modernize. Curvature has also been added, with wide borders and sweeping curves. Traditional roses, with their full fragrance and lush foliage, continue to be a cottage garden foundation – along with current disease-resistant varieties that keep the original attributes. Informal vines, both traditional and modern hybrids, are still a cottage garden mainstay. Self-sowing annuals and freely spreading perennials continue to find a place in the new cottage garden, just as they did in the traditional cottager’s garden. What they share with the tradition is the lush, relaxed look, covering every square inch, with a rich variety of flowers, herbs, and vegetables.

Many people are attracted to this garden style due to the “natural” feeling they evoke. They look as if no planning was necessary to create their beauty, but buyers beware. These gardens are still high maintenance.

Weekly weeding and deadheading are necessary to keep plants looking even somewhat controlled. If this doesn't scare you and you still decide that this is the garden-type for you, it is essential to mass plant with a smaller list of vegetation and repeat, rather than using a massive inventory. Create balance and harmony within the bed with the size of the plant, shape of the blooms, leaf size and habit. But remember, an English cottage garden is all about surprise! Consider hedging such as privet to contain and give a neater appearance, and use mulch to make weeding less of a chore. If using potted plants, keep pots the same colour. They can be different sizes and shapes, but by keeping the colour consistent, you are creating a foundation for the plantings. They don't have to be a neutral colour like clay or brown. Consider a bold colour such as royal blue or yellow. Such pops of colour, although not traditional, can be seen in many current day English cottage gardens and will keep your landscape up to date.

Gardens are forever growing and changing and this is what keeps us enamoured with them. Let them have a little more freedom and you may be surprised. Sometimes Mother Nature makes a better combination than what we can ever imagine ourselves. **OH**



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# earth friendly LAUNDRY

BY ADRIENNE BROWN



Nothing compares to the scent of fresh, clean laundry. Unfortunately, sometimes Mother Nature takes a big hit when we use lots of energy, water and chemicals to achieve that comforting smell.

Luckily, a few small changes can take your laundry routine from harmful to healthy. These eco-friendly laundry habits are better for the environment and, in some cases, for your health too.

### START WITH EFFICIENT MACHINES

If you're in the market for a new washer and dryer, this is the perfect opportunity to choose energy-efficient appliances, which use less energy and water than conventional machines. Look for the blue- and-white Energy Star logo, which marks appliances that use 10 to 50 per cent less energy and water than standard models. Front-loading washing machines are also a great choice because they use less water and less energy than top-loaders.

If your current machines are still healthy and you're not ready to invest in new ones, there are still a few simple steps to make running them easier on the environment.

About 90 per cent of the energy expended to wash clothes comes from heating water. Set your machine to use cold water to save all that energy. Cold water is also easier on your clothes, so they should last longer.

It's important to always wash full loads – but don't overstuff. Running your washing machine for just a few items wastes water. However, overstuffing it means the machine is working overtime, which could mean a shorter lifespan for your appliance.

### CHOOSE OR MAKE NATURAL PRODUCTS

If you want to wash with soaps that are gentle on the earth and your clothes, shop for cleaning products that are plant-based, rather than petroleum-based, then choose the most concentrated product. Anything larger is likely the same product just watered down.

Just like food, the fewer ingredients and chemicals on a label, the better. But if you'd rather make your own cleaning solutions, it's as easy as mixing up products you likely already have in your cupboards. Everything from vinegar and lemon juice to baking soda and borax can be used to clean your clothes.

For example, a simple solution of about 1/2 cup of white vinegar, 1/4 cup of baking soda and 3 cups of water can be mixed together in a spray bottle and used as a natural stain remover for tough spots before clothes go in the washer.

Similarly, a cup of vinegar during your rinse cycle will soften your clothes just as well as any fabric softener – and you'll avoid all the toxic, flammable chemicals associated with those.

### DRYING

Efficient drying starts right in the washer: if you're planning on tossing damp clothes into the dryer next, choose the highest spin cycle in the washer first, which will remove plenty of moisture and reduce your drying time.

Dryer sheets may make your clothes and towels feel like a dream, but they're actually chockfull of chemicals that are both bad for the environment and your health. You can get the same static-busting effect from dryer balls, which you can use over and over.

Better yet, ditch the dryer altogether and hang your clothes to dry. In summer, put them out on a clothesline to blow in the wind. You don't have to damage Mother Nature to dry your clothes – she'll dry them for you! In winter, hang a clothesline in your laundry room, use a drying rack or hang clothes on hangers around the house. This is a bonus when dry winter air is at its worst because damp laundry helps add moisture to the air without having to plug in a humidifier.

### DRY CLEANING

Traditional dry cleaning methods use a cocktail of chemicals just to get clothes "clean." These can cause everything from eye, nose and throat irritation to liver and kidney damage – and they don't stay at the cleaners, they come home on your clothes.

Instead of taking clothes labeled as "dry clean only" to a conventional dry cleaner, shop around for more eco-friendly options. Find a cleaner that uses carbon dioxide or try a professional wet cleaning company instead. They'll treat your delicates as gently as any dry cleaner and their methods are far more eco-friendly. **OH**

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# A NATURAL beauty

BY LISA MACCOLL  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON HARTOG  
STYLED BY ALISON HABERMEHL

“We drew the plans for this house on a piece of paper. We wouldn't change a thing.”

Jen and Perry had a specific vision for their Laurelwood home. With their builder, **Dave Wilton**, they took their plans to home designer **John DeVos of DeVos Design & Drafting** to ensure it met building code requirements. “We didn't know about the width of hallways or stairwells and John brought our vision to life. By designing it ourselves, we could include details like separate walk-in closets or a storage area for my extra dishes. We had a good idea about what we couldn't live without,” says Jen.

*Continued on page 38*



EXTERIOR PHOTOS COURTESY OF MONARCH LANDSCAPE



**TOP LEFT:** The home's beautiful backyard seating area was created by Monarch Landscape. **MIDDLE LEFT:** Solid stairs flanked by large planters connect the upper and lower levels of the yard. **LEFT:** The home's bright kitchen is both inviting and functional. **ABOVE:** A large dining room, just off the kitchen, is ideal for family gatherings and formal meals. **OPPOSITE TOP:** Inside the front door, the homeowners have created a gallery wall with photos of their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents, some of which they collected from other family members. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** The floor pattern in the parlour is repeated in the dining room and great room, all on the main level.



Built by **Wilton Custom Homes Ltd.**, the house backs onto Laurel Creek Conservation Area and overlooks a pond and woodlot. **Monarch Landscape** took care of all the landscaping, which includes privacy features such as a curtain that can be pulled across the lower-level seating area. Stone walls and wooden lattice panels child-proof the space. The property features a two level deck and patio, including a built-in stone “man-becue” accessed from the kitchen door. “Monarch was great to work with. They listened and created a space that fit our needs,” says Jen.

**Panagos & Van Flooring** provided and installed all the flooring. The main floor hallway, kitchen, sunroom and bathrooms are finished in travertine. The great room, living room, dining room, hallway and office feature Lauzon hardwood floors with a contrasting inlay. The inlay and flooring colour in the living room and the great room are reversed to add visual interest. The pattern of the inlay is also mimicked in the tile mosaic backsplash in the kitchen above the stove. The kitchen features granite countertops, cabinetry by **Olympia Cabinets K-W Corp.** and French doors that open right onto the upper deck.



Soft and comfortable décor in the master bedroom creates a warm, calming space. **TOP LEFT:** The bird and butterfly patterned wallpaper between the master bedroom and bath is a favourite feature for both Jen and Alison. **BELOW LEFT:** The landing at the top of the stairs is open and airy with built-in shelving and a reading nook.



Alison Habermehl from **hd Style Studio** helped the homeowners find just the right item to hang above the fireplace in the great room, a wrought iron piece from **Artefacts Salvage & Design** in St. Jacobs set between wood shutters. **ABOVE LEFT:** Jen, the homeowner, sits down with Alison for a visit in the conservatory. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Every piece of art and décor was carefully hand-picked by Alison and Jen to complete each and every space.



Once the structural details were tailored and in place, Jen and Perry were ready to translate the individual rooms into an extension of their style, ready to make it their home. They hired interior decorator **Alison Habermehl** from **hd Style Studio** to create a space that met the needs of the couple and their young children. “We balanced child-friendly spaces with a space they could entertain in,” says Habermehl. “We also wanted to showcase their curated collectibles and art collection.” They created different zones and made use of built-in shelves and display units.

The great room is one of the most-used spaces in the home. It features a two-storey vaulted ceiling, skylights and a striking fireplace topped by shutters and a wrought-iron decoration custom made for the space by **Artefacts Salvage & Design**. **hd Style Studio** designed a tufted ottoman with storage for the kids’ toys and books. Some of the couple’s artwork, including an abstract painting by family friend Patrick Bugeja and a painting by Charles Sucsan, decorates the walls.

From the great room, three sets of French doors open onto the adjoining sunroom. The doors can be opened to add space for parties or to provide air flow in the summer. “The great room was more of a challenge than I expected,” says Jen. “**Riley Painting Corp.** did a fabulous job, but I would get a phone call and have to decide how far up the wall I wanted the main colour to be in the great room while people stood on a scaffold waiting for me to decide. The perfect accent for the fireplace took time, but was worth the wait.” *Continued on page 40*

# feature

**BELOW:** The guest bedroom (inspired by Jen's blue and white dishes) in the lower level gives visitors their own space. **RIGHT:** Jen can create beautiful things in a beautiful room, thanks to her specially-designed craft area. **BOTTOM:** The lower level living space is designed for adults and kids alike. A children's play space off to one side balances out the stylish "play" area for adults.



Jen admits the chaise in the sunroom is her favorite place to sit and read. It looks out on Laurel Creek Conservation Area, and it is a serene and inviting space. The chairs and chaise were specially designed and provided an inspiring starting point for the seating areas outside on the patio.

Personal touches reflect Jen and Perry's practical attention to detail. A sitting area at the top of the stairs has a good reading light and a basket of books so that Jen can sit and read while her kids drift off to sleep.

Jen has her own space in the lower level, too. At the bottom of the stairs, she has a cosy, functional craft room. Around the corner, her collection of blue and white antiques inspired the décor for the spare bedroom. It features an antique white wrought iron bed. Custom made shelves by Artefacts Salvage & Design display Jen's antique blue-ware plate collection. "We started out needing a place to showcase my plates, and ended up with a room that is fresh and inviting," says Jen.

The main space includes a play area for kids and comfortable chairs for adults. The chairs and games table by the fireplace are from **Cornerstone Home Interiors**. The built-in shelves on either side were designed by hd Style Studio and created by **Mike Bebenek Carpentry**. On an opposing wall is a set of framed bird prints that Alison says took a great deal of time to choose. "Jen and I chose each picture individually, and considered things like what direction each bird was looking so that each print worked perfectly with all the others."

Alison describes the home as intimate. "Everything in the home has been personally chosen," she says. "The collections are curated and every detail has been carefully thought out."

Jen calls it a classic country home with modern touches. "At the end of the day, it's our home and we wanted to be comfortable living here and I wouldn't change a thing." **OH**

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# 10 DESIGNER SECRETS

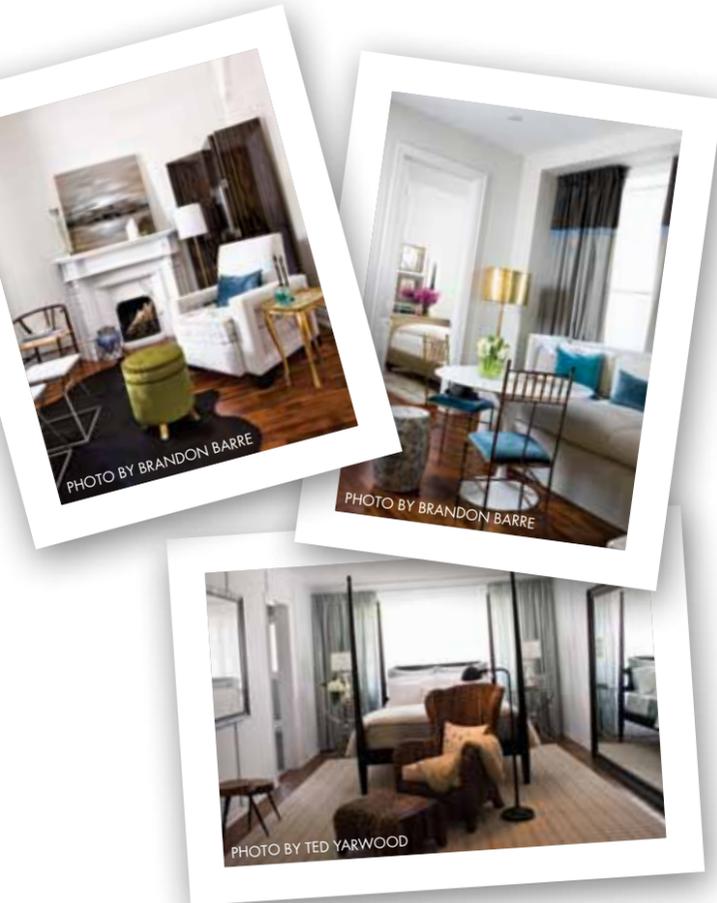
BY YANIC SIMARD



Well-known Canadian designer Yanic Simard offers his top 10 tips on adding the “cherry on top” to your latest renovation project.

You might think that once the walls are freshly painted, and the furniture is all in place in your newly designed room that it's time to sit back, relax and enjoy the space – wrong! You've

got one last (the most important!) step to go, which is, of course, adding the finishing touches. Think of it as adding the “cherry on top.” It doesn't look (or taste) as good until you've done that.



## 1. It's all in the lighting

Lighting is the one thing that can either make or break the overall ambience in a room. When coming up with a lighting plan, I always make sure that adjustable pot lights on a dimmer are a part of it. They're great because the lights can be positioned to highlight or draw the eye away from a particular area. A dimmer switch is a feature that you'll learn you can't live without, helping set the mood that you are trying to achieve depending on what you're doing in the space (and the best part is it's only temporary).

## 2. Mirror, mirror on the wall

Mirrors are a staple in any décor – especially in small spaces. Mirrors can make the room feel and look bigger than it really is, reflect light and add the perfect amount of sparkle to the space. The larger the mirror, the greater the results.

## 3. The exploration of texture

Experimenting with a variety of materials is a very good trick to use when it comes to a well-decorated space. It's not only about using a bunch of different fabrics, but different finishes too. A room that has varying textures is more visually appealing, and will help guide the eye around the space rather than having it focus on one point. I like to mix metal, glass, wood and painted pieces all together.

## 4. Adding personality with artwork

People tend to shy away from bringing artwork into a space, simply because they're unsure of how to position it on the wall. A rule of thumb is that the middle of the artwork should be at eye level. Artwork should be hung no more than seven-to-10 inches above a table, and five-to-eight inches above a sofa. You can also always rest your artwork on a surface and lean the piece against the wall.

## 5. Comfort and colour

Furniture feeling bare and bland? Cushions are the cure! They can add pops of colour and comfort! Experiment here with pattern and colour that you might have been nervous about putting on the walls.

## 6. Visual interest through varying heights

When decorating, be sure that the accessories you use are at varying heights; having everything at one level creates much less interest.

## 7. Back in time

I like rooms that look like they've taken years to put together, even if they haven't, and bringing in mid-century pieces of furniture is just the way to do that. I believe that every space should have at least one mid-century piece in it somewhere!

## 8. Feeling blue

The colour blue is my go-to accent hue. You can almost never go wrong if you stick within a monochromatic scheme with various tones of this soothing colour.

## 9. Always an excuse to buy yourself flowers

It's great if you can have fresh flowers in your place all of the time, but it's especially nice to purchase them when you're expecting house guests. Flowers will cheer up any space and make it feel more welcoming.

## 10. Adding your touch

Even the most stunning pieces of furniture sometimes need to be dressed up a bit to feel warm and inviting – an entryway console table for example. Put one or two ottomans underneath it to make it feel more full, and style the top of it with accessories and books to give it your personal touch. **OH**



*“You should see what your home can be...”*

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## real estate

# IS A REVERSE MORTGAGE RIGHT FOR *you?*

BY JILL ELLIS  
ILLUSTRATION BY SHEILA BRITTON

You're living the Canadian dream of owning a beautiful home. You bought your house right after you got married 20 or 30 years ago and have been steadily paying down the mortgage, and now there's considerable equity built up.

This is the perfect scenario for taking a reverse mortgage, according to Carmen Alpaerts, an experienced mortgage broker in Ontario. "A reverse mortgage is using the equity in your house as collateral for a loan. It is tax-free money and you don't have to make monthly payments to pay it back," she explains. Alpaerts is a long-time mortgage broker who has won several national and provincial awards.

While this sounds too good to be true, there are catches and it's not for everyone – ergo the profile above of a couple for whom a reverse mortgage works. In fact, in her nearly 30 years as a mortgage broker, Alpaerts estimates that she's only done about 20 of them, in comparison to thousands of regular mortgages. But she expects this type of financing to become more popular because of the ageing demographic. According to Statistics Canada, the number of Canadians over the age of 65 will rise from 4.7 million in 2010 to 9.3 million in 2030.

What is a reverse mortgage? According to the Canadian Home Income Plan (CHIP, a chartered bank) website, "A reverse mortgage is secured by the equity in your home. Unlike a traditional mortgage in which you make regular payments to someone else, a reverse mortgage pays you."

There are conditions and limitations. The borrower and his/her spouse must be 55 or older, but you can get a larger loan if you're older. You can only get up to 50 per cent of the value of the equity in your home. The loan is tax-free and no payments are due until the property is sold. Interest is usually a little higher than that charged on traditional mortgages and is compounded on the principle from the time of borrowing.

Taking a reverse mortgage on their rural property was the answer for George and Maxine Scott. At 78 and 73 respectively, they were facing mounting credit card and other debt and had \$180,000 still owing on a first mortgage, but their house was appraised at \$390,000.

Alpaerts helped them navigate a rather complicated situation by securing a private second mortgage because the \$140,000 available through reverse mortgage wasn't sufficient to pay off the first and take care of the debts.

"People have misgivings (about reverse mortgages) because the interest multiplies on the principle, but it's a good way to get money and not have to make payments," explains George. "Property (value) is going up around here, so it's good for us," adds Maxine.



Alpaerts agrees that a reverse mortgage can be a good thing for the right people in the right circumstances but cautions her clients to consult with the appropriate professionals before going ahead. "Besides a mortgage broker, they should have an accountant, a financial advisor and a lawyer on their team," she says.

"It can be a good solution if you outlive the equity in your house, but if you outlive the money, it can be detrimental." **OH**

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- Can make funds available for catastrophic illness

### CONS:

- Compounded interest causes equity to diminish quickly
- Interest is higher than on traditional mortgages
- Heirs won't receive benefit of equity in home
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# Lords OF THE LANDSCAPE

BY ADRIENNE BROWN // PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON HARTOG

Jordan and Ryan Ward are hands-on guys. They know that if you want something done right, you have to do it yourself – and they do, happily.

“When you visit, you’re going to see us in every corner of the depot,” says Jordan.

The pair of brothers, along with their father, Monty Ward, and his wife, Iris Ng, own and operate **Creative Landscape Depot** in St. Jacobs.

Eight years ago, the business started as a landscape maintenance and construction company. Within two years, with lots of clients and plenty more demand, growth was inevitable. Jordan says the next logical step was to house their own inventory, so they bought a wide lot in St. Jacobs and began to set up shop.

Waterloo Region homeowners and contractors began flocking to Creative Landscape Depot for all their needs and this became the focus of the family business. They soon eliminated their maintenance and construction offerings to focus on supplying other businesses with a wide range of natural stone, decorative stone, topsoil and mulch.

“Because we started at the installation level, I think we understand the product well,” says Jordan. “It’s been six years since I’ve put my hands on a project and I miss it,” he says. “But now I get to connect with so many clients and lots of projects at one time.”



Having been on both ends of the business, everyone knows how to work with trades people, as well as customers who come in themselves. “We like to share in their ideas and insight,” says Jordan. “Many people may not have had that resource before.”

He enjoys the chance to work with homeowners who are often intimidated by shopping for landscaping products. But now, with everyone at Creative Landscape Depot able to offer guidance on projects from idea to installation, people don’t have to feel so clueless – whether they’re doing it themselves or hiring a contractor.

“What has separated us is that we’re owner-operated,” says Jordan. “We’re interested in the day-to-day with every client – whether they’re spending one dollar or \$100,000.” Everyone has a vested interest in making sure every customer’s requirements are met or, ideally, exceeded.

According to Jordan, it also helps that he has a creative background and the family is full of avid travellers. They often draw inspiration from what they’ve seen across the globe and Creative Landscape Depot has started to source and import product from around the world.

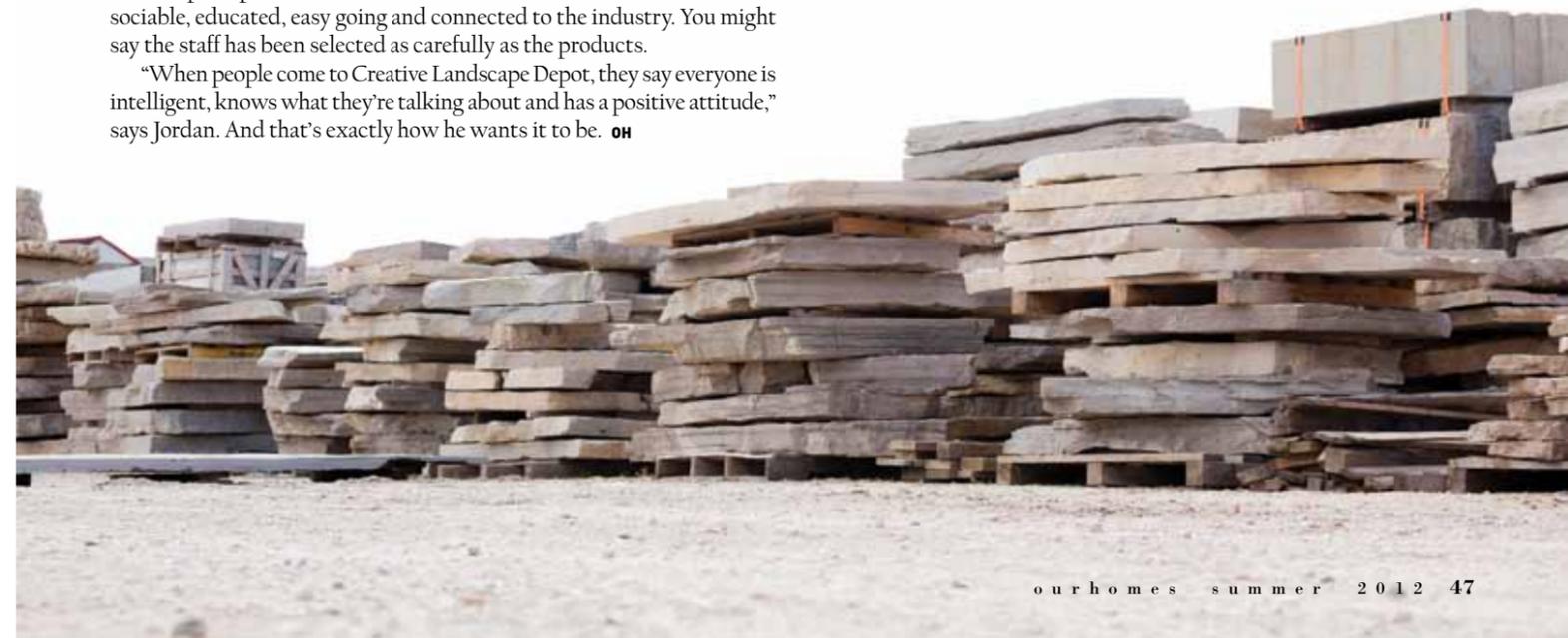
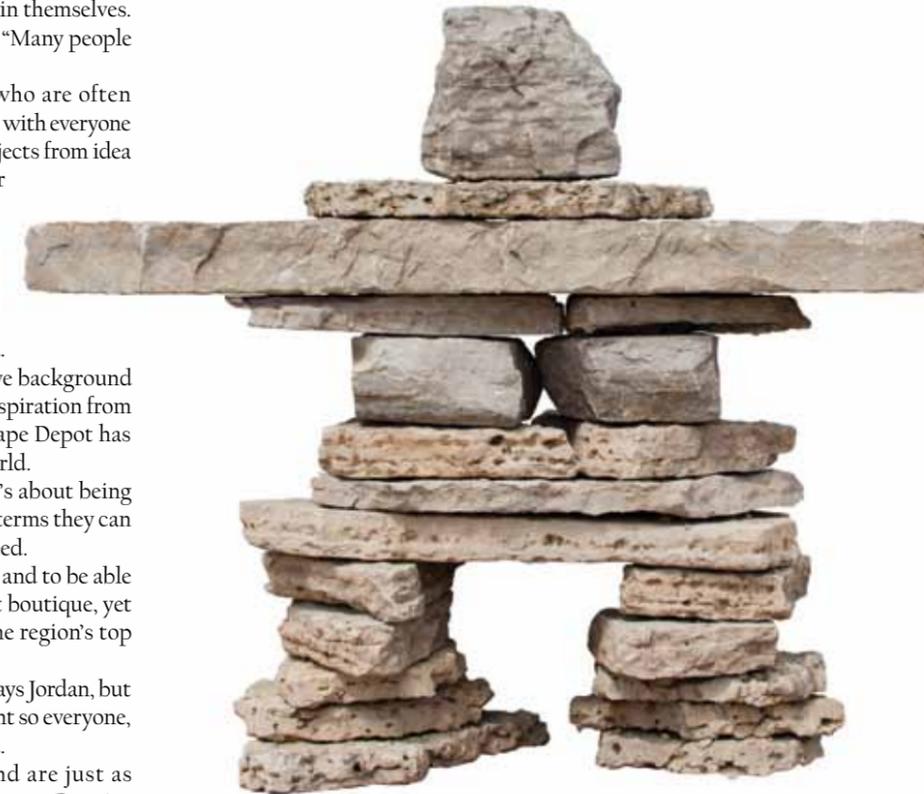
“But it’s not just about filling the bins,” says Ryan. “It’s about being involved with the homeowner.” They engage people with terms they can understand and talk through projects as long as people need.

Jordan says their vision was to become a real boutique and to be able to offer top quality products. Six years later, they are that boutique, yet they know they have to keep working hard to remain the region’s top source for unique products.

“A stone yard can be perceived as cold and industrial,” says Jordan, but not theirs. They try to create a clean, organized environment so everyone, even families with kids, feels comfortable walking around.

They’ve also hired staff who share their vision and are just as knowledgeable about all the products as they are. Anyone at Creative Landscape Depot can work with either architects or homeowners and is sociable, educated, easy going and connected to the industry. You might say the staff has been selected as carefully as the products.

“When people come to Creative Landscape Depot, they say everyone is intelligent, knows what they’re talking about and has a positive attitude,” says Jordan. And that’s exactly how he wants it to be. **OH**





"Returning your landscape to a healthy, biologically stable environment may be one of the greatest contributions you can make to future generations."  
Carol Smyser, Nature's Design

## The **GREENING** of our Lawns

### TIPS ON HOW TO GROW A CHEMICAL-FREE LAWN

BY JUDE WAYLAND

Let's face it. There's nothing like a weed-free, well manicured carpet of emerald green. Kids love to roll around on it. (Dogs too!) And homeowners take great pride in admiring the fruits of their labour. We go to great lengths to attain the perfect lawn. In fact, we've been using pesticides, herbicides and chemicals since the '40s... in pursuit of that ideal verdant masterpiece.

Now that the use of chemicals has been widely prohibited, homeowners have no choice but to go organic if they want lush green lawns.

Chemicals were originally designed for one purpose - to kill living organisms - and their impact on the environment has been devastating and irreversible. These toxins contaminate groundwater, eliminate unsuspecting species, threaten our health, and harm the soil AND the grass itself.

Once you decide to "go green," throw out all those preconceived notions about lawns and weeds. (Some weeds, like clover, are beneficial to your lawn, taking nitrogen from the air and adding it to the soil). Healthy, attractive lawns DO NOT require chemicals for survival.

#### TO HELP YOU MAKE THAT SWITCH TO 'GREEN', HERE ARE 10 SIMPLE STEPS TO GROWING AND MAINTAINING A CHEMICAL-FREE, HEALTHY LAWN:

**1. START WITH SOIL:** It's the foundation for a healthy, organic lawn. Test it yourself. If the earth breaks apart, add more compost (organic material). If it holds together, you're good to go! You might consider doing a pH test to determine if your soil is alkaline, acidic or neutral.

**2. AERATE:** (early spring or late fall) Soil aeration is essential for improved drainage and oxygen absorption. Walk around your lawn wearing an old pair of golf shoes, or rent an aerator or spiked roller.

**3. RAKE:** (early spring after the grass dries, before weeds start germinating) Rake and remove dead leaves and debris. Use a de-thatching or stiff rake to increase air circulation and prevent fungal growth.

**4. FEED:** (early to mid-May) Liquid seaweed encourages growth by adding vital nutrients and hormones to your lawn. Use a hose-end sprayer and one-ounce per 1,000 sq. ft.

**5. FERTILIZE NATURALLY:** (late May/early June & late September/early October) After aerating, weeding and before seeding, apply a granular, organic fertilizer (nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium) or spread finished compost, manure and/or topsoil over your lawn. Apply in the fall, after the first hard frost (when growth has stopped, before your lawn turns brown). Lightly rake and water well.

**6. OVERSEEDING:** (spring or late summer) Replenish your lawn with hardy, pest resistant grass species. Seeds germinate in cool, moist conditions.

**7. WATER DEEPLY & INFREQUENTLY:** Water deeply (about one inch), early morning or evening, once a week. Shallow, frequent watering stresses your lawn, making it less tolerant to drought and more susceptible to pests.

**8. MOW HIGH:** A University of Guelph research study found that cutting your grass high (three-inch mower setting) denies weeds sunlight (discouraging growth), keeps your soil cool and moist, and prevents evaporation. A sharp blade avoids grass tearing.

**9. MULCH:** Grass clippings are free, full of organic matter and nutrients, and increase soil fertility by up to 30 per cent. A mulching mower/blade evenly spreads clippings over your lawn, allowing quick decomposition. Mulching creates a self-sustainable lawn - less work for you AND the planet!

**10. MONITOR:** Keep an eye out for weeds, pests and diseases. For every lawn problem, there's an organic solution. In time, a healthy, organic lawn will crowd out weeds and become resistant to insect problems. **OH**

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# make your summer sparkle: CREATING COCKTAILS with SPARKLING WINE

BY TONIA WILSON

Summer is a great time to bring out the bubbles. They're fun, festive and taste great. Quite often people perceive sparkling wine as too special to drink for informal occasions. Instead, it gets reserved for grand celebrations and extra special moments, and is relegated to the back of the cupboard or wine fridge waiting for the perfect moment to be unveiled.

I too am guilty of this habit, getting wines that are truly special and then letting them waste away waiting for just the right time to open them. It seems that sparkling wines suffer this fate even more so than still wines.

This reminds me of a cute story about my friend's adorable father. She would occasionally bring a bottle of wine to him as a gift. On later visits she would notice the unopened bottles and ask, "Why don't you drink them?" His reply would be, "No, no, those are too good to drink!"

These days there are a wealth of different styles and price points when it comes to sparkling wine. Many different countries offer wines that sparkle and for our purposes of making cocktails we are going to look at a few of these.

Prosecco is a sparkling wine from the north of Italy. It's a light, refreshing wine with hints of pear and almonds. On the northwestern corner of Italy in Piemonte we find Moscato d'Asti and Asti, both are wonderfully aromatic sparklers that add lots of intoxicating floral notes to your cocktail.

Cava is another terrific sparkling wine that comes from the area surrounding Barcelona in Spain. This wine is made with an interesting handful of indigenous Spanish grapes and has an earthy aroma with flavours of apple and lemon. In France, you'll find many sparkling wines that are far less expensive than Champagne and have

great personalities in their own right. Look for the term Cremant on the label and you'll know there are bubbles inside – the most commonly available versions come from the regions of Alsace, Loire and Bourgogne.

Last, but certainly not least is Canada. In many regions within our country we have great conditions for producing sparklers. These wines call for climates that are not too warm, allowing the grapes to keep their refreshing acidity. On Canadian bottles you may find the terms Brut, Sparkling or perhaps Cuvée. The bottle will tell you for sure as it will have a cork that is covered with a cage and foil over top.

So, now for the cocktails (recipes at right). One thing to keep in mind is that if you are purchasing a bottle of sparkling wine for cocktails you don't want to buy something top of the line. Bottles priced between \$10 and \$20 will be what you want to use. Also, consider the sweetness level of the wine itself. If needed, ask the wine vendor if the wine is dry, semi-sweet or sweet, as this will affect the final taste of your drink. One last word of advice, feel free to get creative. If you love a certain type of juice or liqueur then try a splash of it, that's what summer is all about, splashes of fun! **OH**

online

For more tips on sparkling wines, visit [www.ourhomesmagazine.com/sparklingwines](http://www.ourhomesmagazine.com/sparklingwines)



### THE "GIGI"

- 1 oz Cointreau or Grand Marnier
- 2 oz cranberry juice
- 2 oz sparkling wine

### "SORRENTO"

- 1 oz. Limoncello
- 2 oz. freshly squeezed orange juice
- 2 oz. sparkling wine

### "KIR ROYALE"

- 1½ oz Crème de Cassis (or a Kir Imperiale if you use raspberry liqueur)
- 3½ oz. sparkling wine

### "SUNSHINE"

- 1 oz. vodka
- 2 oz. pink grapefruit juice
- 2 oz. sparkling wine

### "NIAGARA BLISS"

- 1 oz. Niagara Icewine or Late Harvest
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Tonia Wilson is a Sommelier and Chef



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