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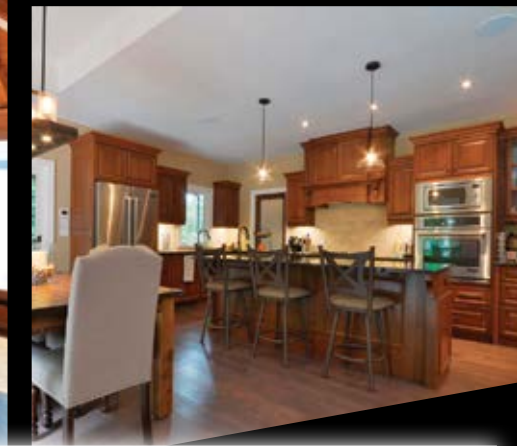
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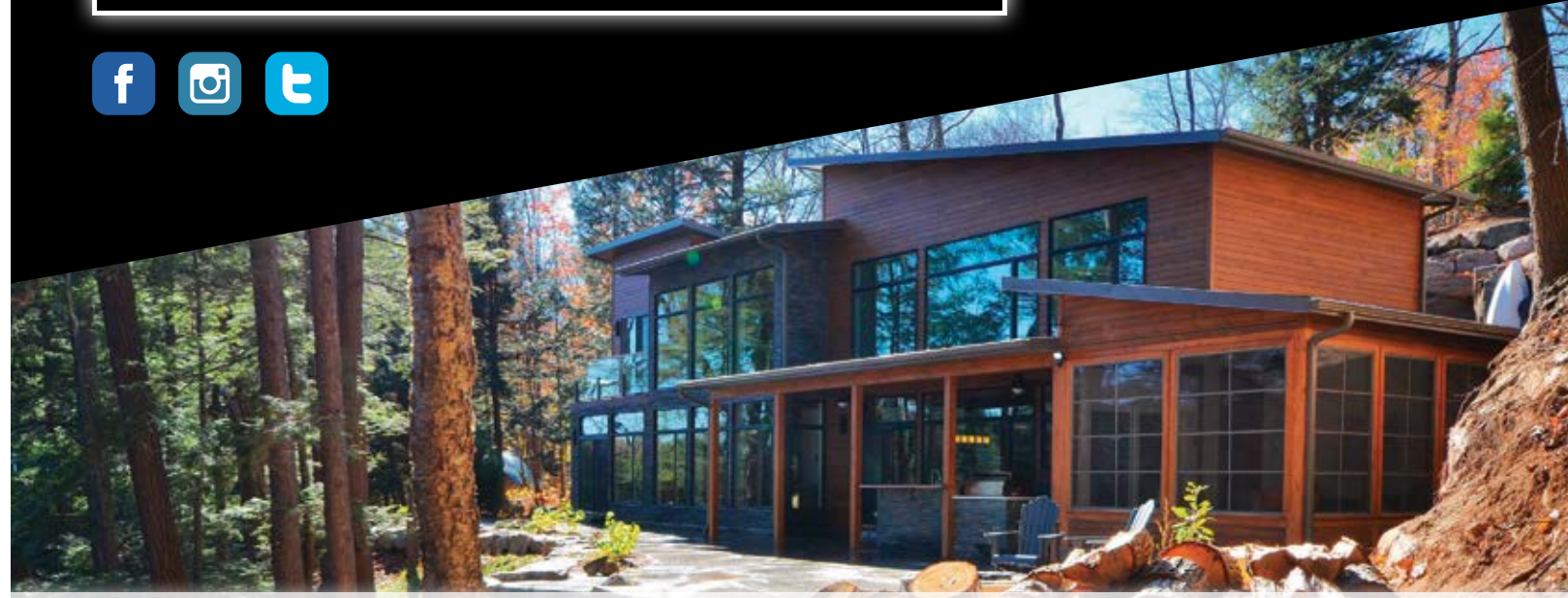
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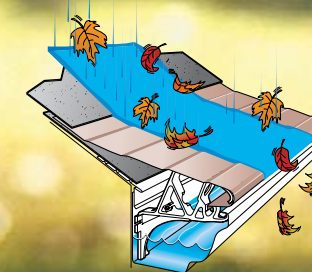
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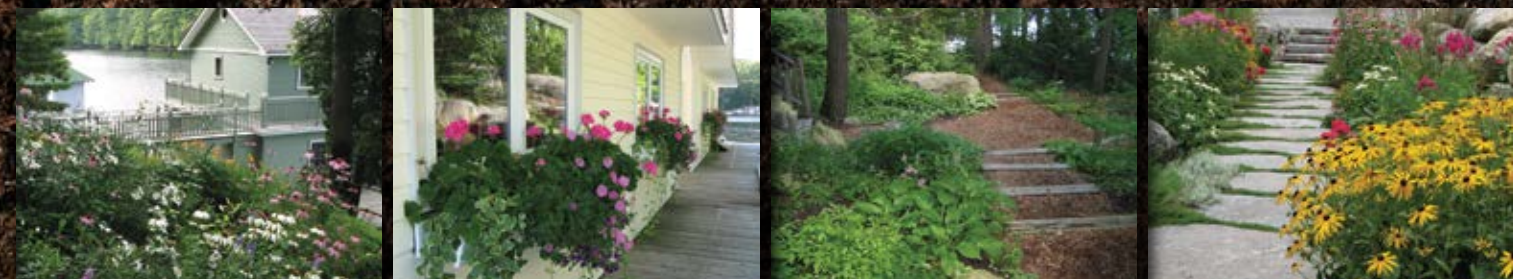
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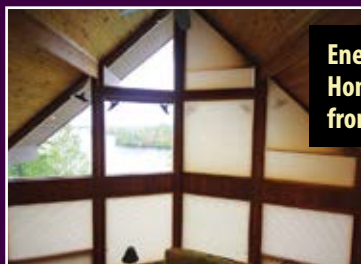
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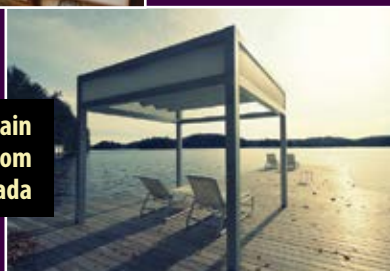


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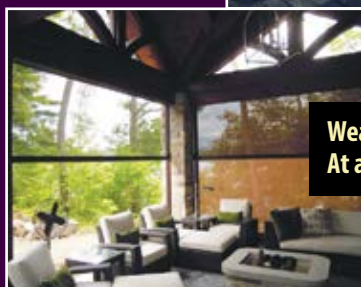


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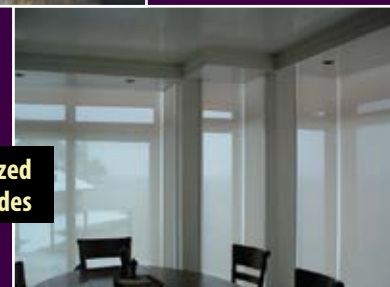
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ROOFERS EARN EVERY PENNY THEY MAKE.

That's a lesson I learned while installing new shingles on our house last fall. I set out to do it alone. After all, I was experienced. I had helped roof my dad's newly-built garage in 1967, then helped re-roof it some years later. Removing the old shingles on our house and nailing down a new layer would take about three days, I figured. Boy, was I wrong.

It took me half a day to just get a start on tearing the old shingles off one of the roof's four facets. It was awkward work, bending over, prying up shingles with a spade while keeping my balance on the sloping roof. The entire facet took more than a day to clear off.

Then I remembered the house needed new eavestroughs. Its old plastic troughs weren't installed properly. There was no slope to them. Water had pooled and frozen, cracking the plastic on corners that sprouted leaks when it rained. Removing the old eavestroughs, priming and painting the fascia took time.

Back on the roof, removing the shingles revealed some of the 10-inch decking boards were broken. Repairing them required a trip to the lumber yard, some basic carpentry and, of course, more time.

Once I started nailing down new shingles, I used a simple hammer instead of a pneumatic nail gun because by then I knew I couldn't work fast enough to justify the daily rental cost of an air compressor and nailer. The wear and tear on my knees was painful. They were rubbed raw on the asphalt grit. My gardening knee pads wouldn't stay in place as I shuffled around, so I'd wrap my knees with tensor bandages before putting on my pants.

When I quit for the day, I'd cover exposed decking with plastic tarps, weighed down with small stacks of shingles, to keep the rain off. That worked well until one morning when violent winds, gusting to 90 km/hr, blew away every



tarp and the shingles that had held them. Luckily, I was home at the time and saw everything sail off the roof. I climbed up, stapled the tarps back in place and picked up broken shingles scattered in the garden, flower beds and even on the clothesline.

A couple of neighbours lent a hand, helping to shingle for a few hours and providing a pickup truck and trailer to haul old shingles and other debris to the dump.

The finished job looks great. Getting it done was satisfying, even though it took weeks, instead of days. Next time, however, I'll hire a pro.

Walter Franczyk

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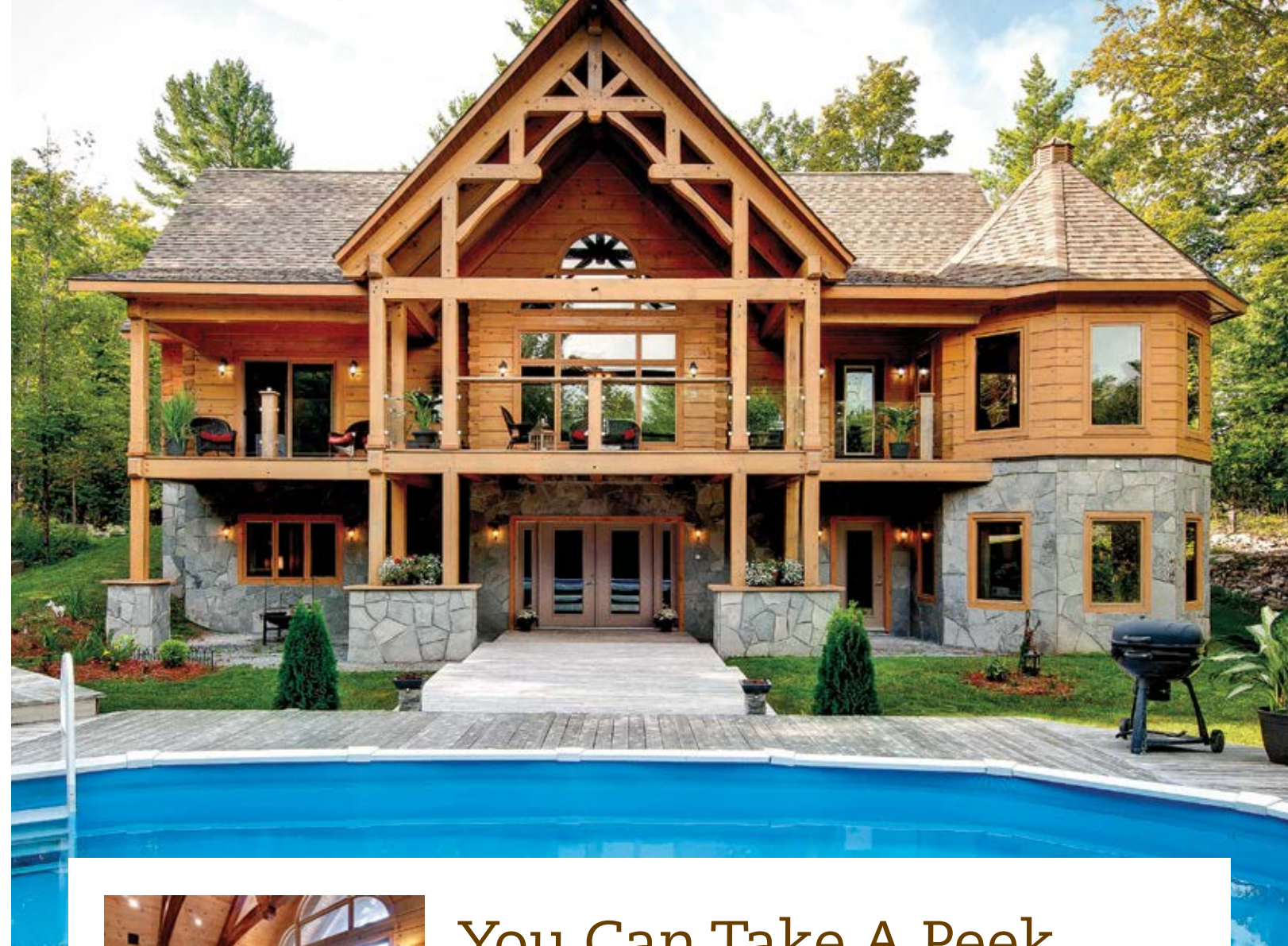
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HOME OFFICE SPACES

As life becomes more mobile and employers embrace the idea of teams working remotely, more people are turning their homes into multi-use spaces.

The home office used to be a reprieve from family life, a place to pay bills and catch up on the occasional unfinished project. More a library than a workplace, the chair was a little too comfortable and the light a little too dim. Today's mobility has changed that.

We take our work with us in our pockets wherever we go. iPhones, Blackberries, Androids, iPads – it's increasingly hard to disconnect from work but also increasingly easier to work from anywhere. A home office can provide some fantastic advantages and make achieving that life/work balance easier.

TO SIT OR TO STAND?

Most of us spend a lot of time at a desk and many people are switching to a standing desk. They are generally "sit or stand" – as in, they convert. They are designed so that your computer is brought up to eye level and you stand at your workspace. It's a more energetic pose to keep you alert and stop the negative effects that bad posture and sitting all day have on your body. For all the slouchers out there, this is something to consider. Although standing has its benefits, all day on your feet can be tough, so sitting for periods of time is still recommended.

When sitting, try using an ergonomic stool like the Buoy by Steelcase. Again, this "active seating" keeps your core engaged as it tilts and turns. Traditionally, people have spent a lot of time sedentary at a desk. We'd convene at the water cooler for a quick chat before getting back to work. But it wasn't just about the chit-chat. The water cooler provided us with a destination to stand at for a moment, to move and stretch our legs.

If you have the space, throw an accent chair in the corner. This wood frame chair by Structube is a stylish, compact piece that's cosy enough to read in, but guests can sit in it for a quick meeting. The fabric is 80 per cent polyester so you don't have to worry too much about stains from spilled coffee.



WHAT ABOUT BREAK TIME?

Personally I've made it my goal in 2016 to not use plastic bottles. And it's hard. But an offshoot of that resolution is to also cut down on disposable cups and plastic in general. It's important to stay hydrated, and if you work at home, you have your kitchen at your disposal. But don't forget your travel mug or bottle for meetings. I just bought one of these S'Well stainless steel water bottles for my dad because I thought it matched the inside of his car (and he needs to drink more water)!

WHERE TO PUT YOUR STUFF?

USM offers a wide variety of durable products that are customizable. Choose modular options like pull-down doors that hide your printer, regular drawers, filing drawers or open areas for display. It's a chrome and steel combination unit in a rainbow of colour options. I'm convinced it will never go out of style and is my personal favourite. If chrome is not for you, try Knoll for the higher end, or Ikea, which is always a brilliant standby.

GOT TECH?

If you're at home solo you may need a little music for company. Try a Sonos system that you can manage via your phone, computer or iPad. The speakers are lovely to look at and provide great sound. And last of all, for those who are trying to spend more time outside of the city, say, at a cottage or chalet, look into the magicJack for an area code that doesn't give away your whereabouts. **OH**

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We can't all have a green thumb, and we can't all reside in tropical climates. However, it is possible for anyone to bring their home to leafy life, no matter where they live! I've put together 10+ of my favourite ways to add some greenery to your every interior, so you can love your home no matter what the season.

FORCE OF NATURE

While blue might seem like everyone's favourite colour, green is an easy choice for adding some edge without taking a wild risk: the intensity of rich greens makes them feel haute couture, but these classic hues don't go quickly out of fashion. Use vivid shades in fabrics with a sheen (like velvet or silk) for accents that feel alive, or go bold with an emerald sofa or stool – it's near-neutral enough to not clash with other furnishings.

For a more romantic or eclectic approach, try a green powder-coated metal accent, such as a garden basket, rustic ladder (great for holding towels or books) or a vintage sign. This colour softens metal's tough exterior and adds a sense of whimsy, bringing the outdoors in with no maintenance required. *Continued on page 24*



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VEGETARIAN PALETTE

Green is usually a popular paint colour, but there is an especially strong selection of verdant hues on the market at the moment. Vivid emerald shades add drama while working well with other hues; try Benjamin Moore's simply named 2044-10 Green for an accent wall or a full room where you want a moody, intimate feel. For an airier all-over colour, try HC-119 Kittery Point Green (part of Benjamin Moore's 2016 palette), or the subtly minty HC-141 Hollingsworth Green.

Don't want to commit to such a large stretch of colour? Use tinted glass accents to add vivid colour in bite-size doses. Seaglass vases especially add a sense of beachy calm; add a few branches for height and you've got inviting all-year greenery.

EXOTIC APPEAL

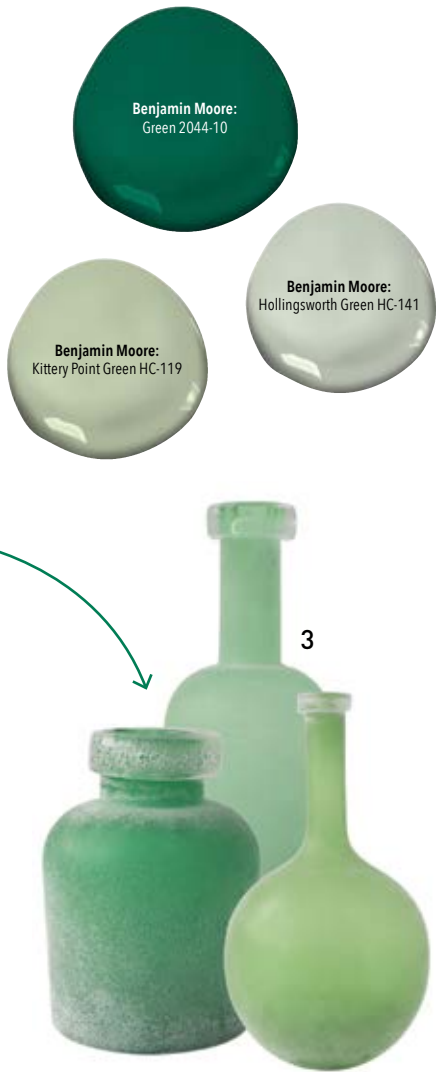
Orchids have an instantly luxe air, appearing delicate and sophisticated. Luckily, however, they are hardier than they seem. Due to their tropical origins, orchids actually thrive in steamy environments, making them an excellent choice for bathrooms and spaces that may seem unsurvivable for other plants.

Cactus planters are another smart option for those who find it challenging to keep a living plant...well, alive. They typically require watering just once a week, perfect for adding some exotic flavour to your home even if you're often on the go. Have a planter prepared by a florist in a glass vessel of your choosing for a sculptural statement.

FIDDLER ON THE ROOT

Fiddle leaf fig trees are must-have décor plants right now: once you see one, you'll notice them everywhere in magazine spreads and online blogs – or even past episodes of *House!* The oversize leaves make an eye-catching statement, feeling earthy but also modern, and what could be more indoor-outdoor than a perfectly home-size tree?

These trees require a decent amount of indirect light, so they work well for rooms where light is available in the day, but isn't too intense (usually south-facing). Beyond this they aren't tough to care for, as long as they get monthly fertilizer and the occasional dusting. Also consider a cheerful lemon tree, moving it outside in the summer and back in during the cold.



NO DIRT ON ME

Air plants seem almost miraculous: they don't need soil to survive, instead drawing nutrition literally from the air. Care usually involves occasional misting, so they're a good option for those who want a living plant in a small space without too much effort.

If you prefer your blossoms grown by someone else, you can always grab them fresh at the local supermarket. Pick up inexpensive but shapely flowers, strip away any fillers like excess leaves and stems, and place the blossoms in threes in small bud vases. You'll show the sense of pride in your home of a true design maven without an outrageous budget. **OH**



1. JONATHAN ADLER: Lampert Sofa in Emerald
2. MOBILIA: Emile Accent Table in Green 3. WEST ELM: Waterscape Vases.

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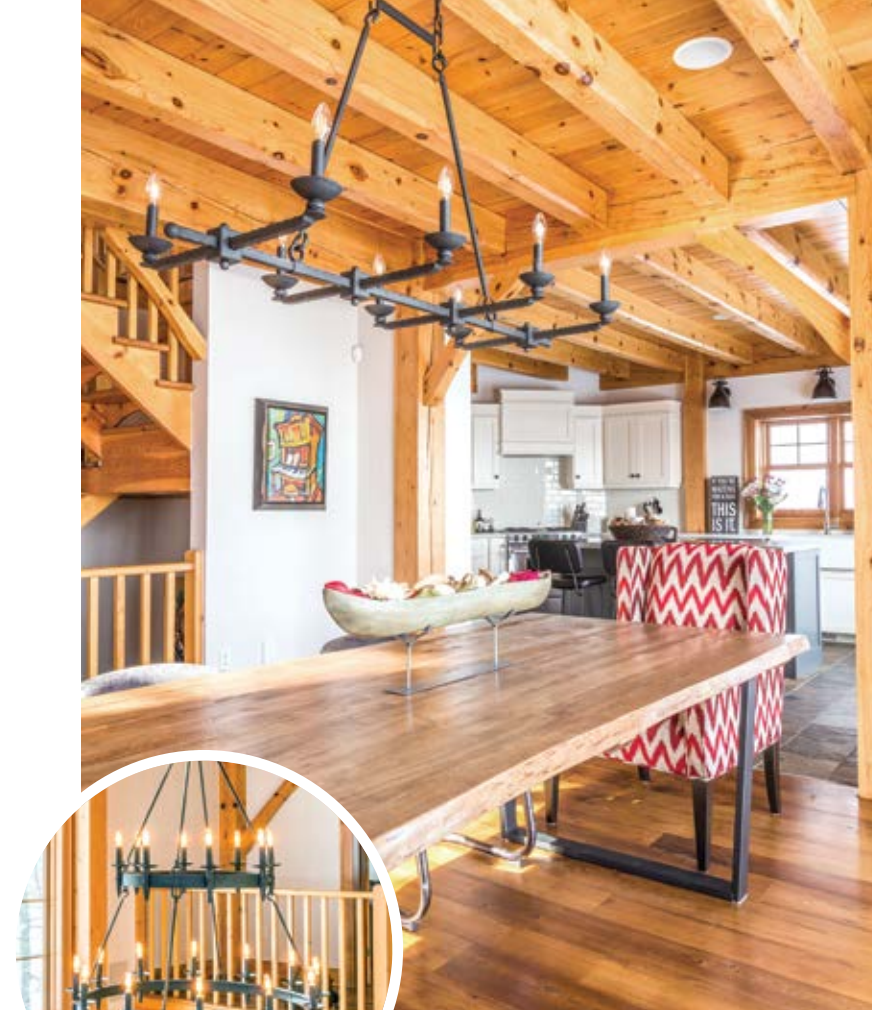


Cactus planters are a smart, low-maintenance option.





HIGH ON Lake of Bays



Wrought-iron chandeliers in the dining and great rooms energize the space.

TOP: The dining room, linking the kitchen with the great room, is furnished with a live-edge table from Urban Rustic Living.

RIGHT: The stone fireplace at the heart of the cottage ascends two storeys.

OPPOSITE: Pine posts and beams, the backbone of the Cummings' family cottage on Lake of Bays, frame large windows that illuminate the great room.



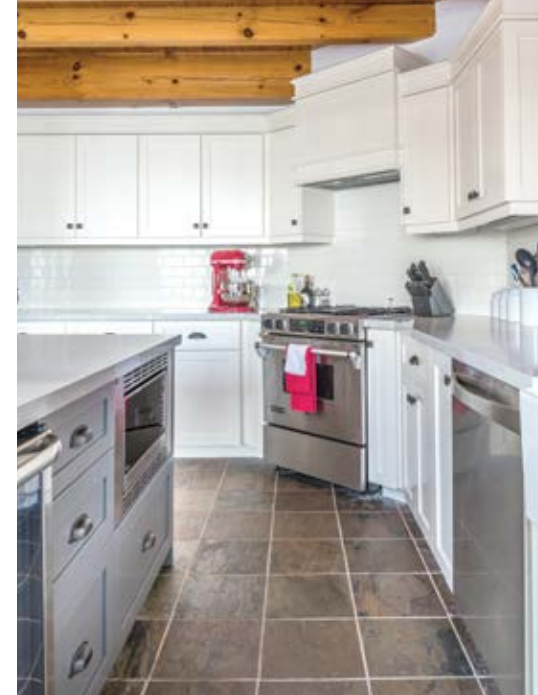
STORY **WALTER FRANCZYK**
PHOTOGRAPHY **SANDY MACKAY**

With daughters on three different continents, Rob Cummings was looking for a place where they could all gather when he found a cottage overlooking Lake of Bays. "I bought it for my children and put it in a trust for the kids," says Rob, a banker who lives and works in Belize. One daughter lives in China, another in England and one in Toronto.

"We needed a home in Canada that we can all go to, essentially, any time of the year." The Cummings had a family vacation spot north of Kingston, but it was remote, with few all-season activities. Lake of Bays is a little bigger, with access to all-season services, a ski hill, snowmobiling and the nearby communities of Huntsville and Bracebridge. The rugged hills around the lake are especially appealing to Rob, originally from mountainous Vancouver Island. Daughters Kristen, Jacquie and Tori grew up around water and love swimming, skiing and snowboarding. "This was really the perfect place for us to spend time, any time of the year," Rob says. "We love the views. It reminds us of the west coast a little bit."

South Mary Lake Contracting Ltd., now known as SML Contracting Ltd., originally built the three-bedroom, timber-frame cottage with three storeys hugging a rocky bluff about 100 feet above the lake. "It was built over a cliff," says SML Contracting owner **Bruce Fitter**. Constructed about 12 years ago, the lake house was assembled with

Continued on page 29



lots of wood – pine ceilings, soaring beams, sturdy timbers and reclaimed hemlock floors. “I love the post and beam. It seems to just fit in so well with the environment,” says Rob. “The post and beam is something the family was looking for – traditional Ontario.”

After buying the cottage in October, he and his daughters decided to renovate the kitchen to make it more family-oriented, an inviting place to cook and to gather. “They wanted something a little lively, a little more modern, lighter and a little more useable,” says Rob. They hired SML Contracting to rebuild the kitchen and **Tary Roossien of Urban Rustic Living** to furnish and redecorate the cottage.

Working with Rob and his family was a great experience, says Tary. “They know what they want and once you get it, they step back and let you go for it.” The cottage needed new lighting because that’s a great way to update things very quickly, says Tary, who also owns and operates **The LightHouse Design Centre**. Wrought-iron chandeliers were hung in the great room and dining area, a driftwood chandelier in the master bedroom and industrial-style lamps in the kitchen.

SML rebuilt the kitchen with new cabinets and appliances, a central dining bar, granite countertops and a gleaming backsplash in white subway tile. The dining bar provides more working space and an area in which to entertain, says Tary. “Sometimes there won’t be many people here when Rob is here, so he won’t always be using a big table. The dining bar gives him a nice space to be able to sit and sort of hang out.” She was impressed with how

Continued on page 30



TOP LEFT: New kitchen cabinetry by SML Contracting surrounds modern stainless steel appliances. **ABOVE:** Plaid and checked fabrics enliven the top floor TV room where a cowhide mosaic covers the floor. **LEFT:** Tary Roossien and daughter Maxine of Urban Rustic Living furnished and decorated the renovated cottage. **OPPOSITE:** SML Contracting remodelled the kitchen to give it more space for food preparation, cooking, family gatherings and informal meals.



efficiently SML, led by project manager **Kyle Newman**, completed the renovation. “They did a great job and they did it quickly,” says Tary, who helped coordinate renovations. Rob and his family, who also hired SML to build a large new garage uphill from the cottage, are pleased with the work. “It was well managed, they did it on time and on budget,” he says. “I was very happy with them.”

Hemlock floors, yellowed from years of exposure to sunlight beaming through the home’s large windows, were refinished. New furniture was ordered.

Tary’s design team, which includes daughter **Maxine Roossien**, offset the prominent pine ceilings, timbers, window and door frames with new barn-board furnishings. “We were very, very aware of what we put in here,” she says. “We gave it a little more of a masculine edge, much more tapered and tailored. Our biggest goal was to update it, so we made sure we weren’t putting in traditional-style furniture. We used a combination of leather and fabrics. We used a lot of textures.”

Two double-bed bunks, custom-made by Urban Rustic Living and dressed in red, white and blue linens, provide enough space to sleep eight guests in the Cabin Room. Down the hall, in another bedroom, fabric and wood form the bed footboard and headboard, flanked by night tables made of barn board and metal. In the master bedroom, decorative steel turnbuckles intersect the dark wooden headboard. Throughout the home, barn board tables stand on legs made of metal pipes.

Continued on page 32



TOP LEFT: Maxine Roossien accessorized the cottage with detailed décor and bedding from Urban Rustic Living. **ABOVE:** Double doors open to a main-floor bedroom where the bed frame is made of fabric and wood. **LEFT:** Large bunkbeds, with space to sleep eight, furnish the main floor Cabin Room.

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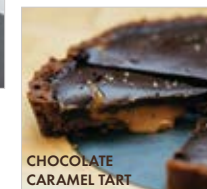
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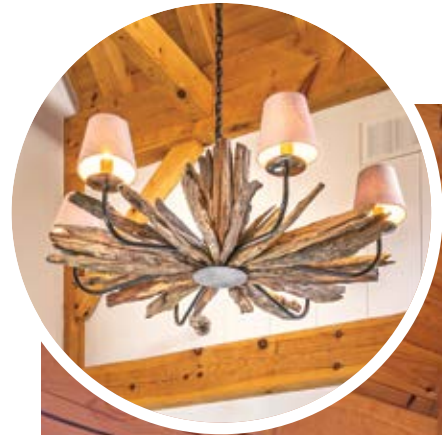
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feature

One-of-a-kind touches like a driftwood chandelier and patchwork-hide ottoman set a rustic mood in the master suite.



"We all liked Tary's style," says Rob. "Her country style just fit our style and fit the building as well." Most importantly, he says, Urban Rustic Living was full-service. "The girls and I helped design and pick things out, but Tary delivered, set things up and project-managed the kitchen. It was so convenient for all of us," he says. "We're all really happy."

When Rob and Kristen arrived just after Christmas, the home was complete and ready for them. "The rooms were together and he was able to enjoy that part of the holiday with his family and that was his goal," says Tary.

To improve access to the lake for the sisters and their grandparents, the family contracted **Inclined Elevation Inc.** to build an engineered lift that will move people up and down the steep hill between the cottage and the lake. Once weather permits, **Attainable Solutions Inc.** is slated to build a new boathouse atop the steel pier already installed at the shore.

In July, the Cummings clan, including all three sisters, grandparents and some cousins, is expected to gather for their first summer holiday at their Lake of Bays retreat. **OH**



TOP LEFT: A corner tub lends a contemporary look to the master en suite. **LEFT:** In a quiet spot in the master bedroom, a small leather armchair with a cowhide ottoman provides a great view of the lake. **ABOVE:** Canadiana, including a framed tribute to the iconic bush plane, the de Havilland Canada Beaver, decorates the ground floor games room.

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PHOTOS & STORY
WALTER FRANCZYK



THE PLACE: Harris' Furniture & Antiques is growing more user-friendly with recent changes to accentuate bedroom furnishings, mattresses, sofas and wooden Mennonite furniture. "What we do hasn't changed but we are more efficient," says owner Dean Harris. "We continue striving to perfect what we do, which is providing excellent customer service and value for money spent." He and his wife Colleen opened the store at the north end of Parry Sound in 1982. Its large front porch brims with antiques and

collectables. Inside, separate galleries showcase all the new furnishings that any home, cottage or condo would need.

THE STYLE: They call their style relaxed and casual. "It's for comfortable northern living – it's hardy and durable," says Dean. It includes sturdy upholstered furniture, antiques, wooden tables, chairs and shelves, as well as repurposed creations. "We've broadened our scope of Mennonite furniture," he says. "We buy it unfinished and finish it in our finishing shop."



THE PRODUCTS: The store emphasizes Canadian-made products that deliver excellent value. Canadian offerings include sofas by Superstyle Furniture Ltd., a Toronto furniture maker for nearly 50 years, mattresses by Dreamstar Bedding Ltd. and reclining sofas and chairs from Elran. "We believe in Canada," Dean says. "We believe Canadian-made products are among the top. You get more value for your money from the Canadian lines we carry."

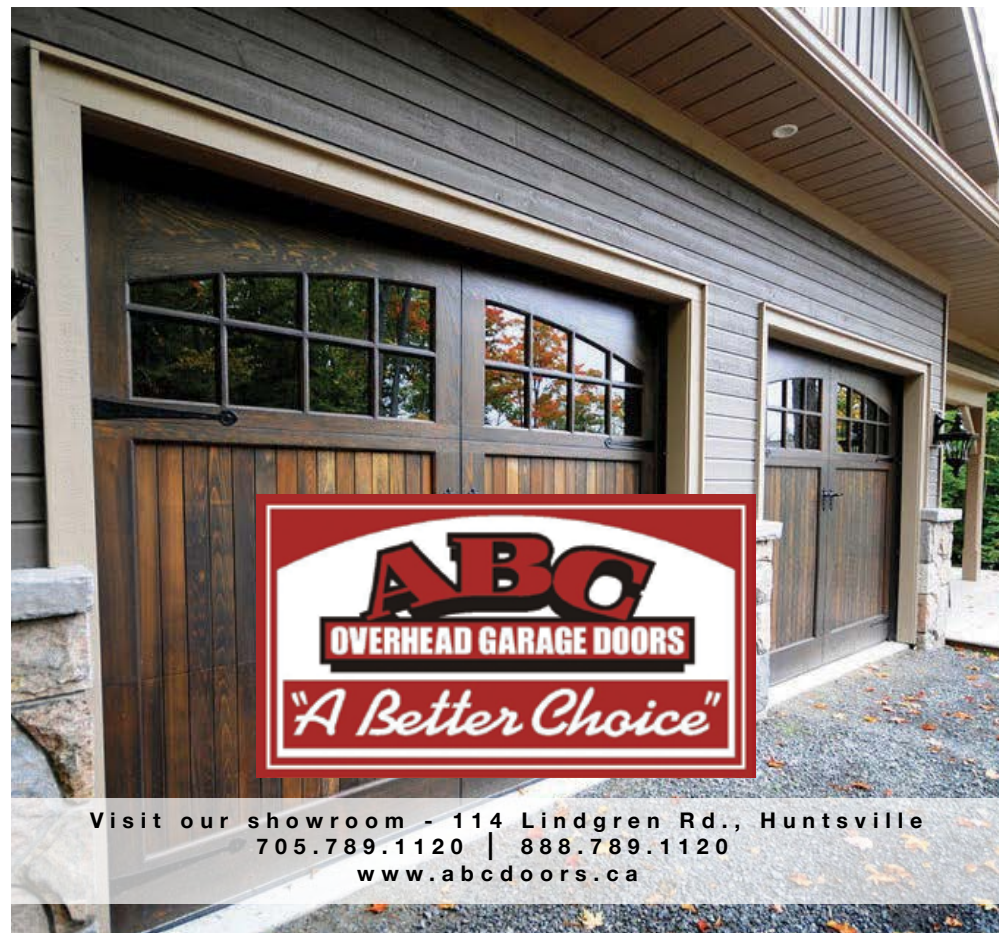
oil, are Dean's favourites. "It's challenging to find, rewarding to buy and a pleasure to own." It's great, he says, to sell a piece of nostalgia to an eager collector or someone decorating a man cave, office or recreation room. If you are selling, Dean is an active buyer.


GET THERE:
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WHAT'S HOT: Harris' original creations include pop- and milk-crate furnishings, repurposed canoes, sleighs and toboggans. The shop also up-cycles old dressers to make modern bathroom vanities with a vintage look. "We pretty much sell everything we make," says Dean. Adjustable beds, some with massage features, are a new product at the store. "They're a therapeutic bed for our aging population and the discerning shopper."

FAVOURITES: Collectable signs and advertising, especially for gasoline and







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PERMANENT PERENNIAL BULB essentials

An early epiphany leading to a career in horticulture and landscape design occurred in my 20s. I had just purchased my first home and was eagerly poring over a bulb catalogue, planning my first spring garden. I was so excited about the rich riot of colour and diversity that I literally could not sleep that night!

STORY AND PHOTOS
MELANIE REKOLA

Melanie is a certified horticulturalist and landscape designer.

online Get more in outdoors at ourhomes.ca/mag/outdoor

Oh, how tastes change with time and experience. I am no longer seduced by big, bright blooms that perish after only a season or a few short years. I have evolved into a thrifty gardener, of both time and money. Call me anti-annuals. I even use perennial plants in pot displays. You, too, can follow suit and choose bulb workhorses that are truly recurrent and/or that multiply over time and you won't feel deprived of a gorgeous colour range or variety – I promise.

BULB BASICS

Spring bulbs can add an extra two months of beautiful blossoms to your garden, and because our Canadian garden season is short, it makes them especially important. This spring or summer, plan where you would most like to see those blooms appear next year and you'll be ready for bulb planting this fall.

Place spring bulbs amongst perennial plants so that their emerging leaves will mask the bulbs' unsightly, but necessary, dieback foliage. Bulb foliage must be left intact so that their energy can be reabsorbed back into the bulb for next year's bloom.

I am using the generic reference of "bulbs," but really, these underground storage organs come in several forms. Bulbs, corms and tubers are the three most common. Regardless of which type, always plant bulbs in well-draining soil to avoid root rot. Plant in autumn with the pointy side up; perhaps you can also spot the remains of the old roots on the bottom. If it's still not clear which side is up, plant on its side.



Flowering in later spring, the small orchid-like Dutch iris is a classic available in all sorts of sumptuous colours. The true-blue hues are especially handsome.



This old fashioned favourite heralds the end of winter and promises fair weather to follow. The very early blooming, miniature plant often is found flowering amongst the snow with bright, pure white blossoms. New offerings include larger, doubled blooms with interesting markings.



Another small but familiar mainstay, crocus comes in both early and mid-spring blooming varieties. Crocus hues include white, bright and subtle shades of yellow, plus cool-tone purples and blues that are a perfect complement when planted side by side.



Very diverse in size, the striking spherical shape of ornamental onion flower adds excitement and grandeur to the late spring garden. Purple shades are most commonly seen, but they're also available in white, blue, yellow and pink. Though expensive, it's a worthy long-blooming addition.



Most of the large and lovely hybridized tulip blooms you know and love do not reliably return in our Canadian climate. The red, orange, and yellow varieties of the Darwin Hybrid series have a good chance of re-bloom. For the most dependable sort, choose species or botanical tulips and their barley-hybridized strains. If marked as "naturalizing" you're on the right track. Though smaller than their commonplace counterpart, these demure beauties will dependably reappear, every year.



The large daisy-like blossoms of the Grecian windflower are available in a rich and delicious colour range. From cool mauves and blues to happy pinks and fuchsias, these hardy bulbs boast an extended bloom period of four-to-six weeks, beginning in mid-spring.



Daffodil blossoms are gorgeous, enormous and some (dare I say) are even exotic looking. New varieties are offered in a number of warm colour combinations, sizes, styles and bloom times. A glamorous and showy addition to the spring garden with a lengthy display, plant them in droves.

A WORD ABOUT COLOUR

Though some bulbs listed here may be considered common, it is how you use their colours to keep your garden fresh, exciting and current. A common blunder is to add all hues to the garden. Instead, choose a restrained palette. Decide on warm or cool tones or a monochromatic, analogous or complementary theme for a spectacular and sophisticated springtime display. Now is the time to take note and plan your next spring garden wisely. Enjoy! **OH**

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STORY **CHARLENE PECK**
PHOTOGRAPHY **SANDY MACKAY**

Tempered glass and brushed nickel railings guard the stairwell leading to the ground floor. The natural look of Lafitt stone, manufactured by Permacon, encases the wood-burning fireplace.

sharing a vision

TOP: The Blain family including Sophia, 7, Olivia, 9, Tanya and Randy all played a role in making their new home in Huntsville. Their miniature dachshund is Lilly. Missy (short for Mischief) is an American bulldog and sheltie cross that Randy found as a puppy on the road. **RIGHT:** Travertine tiles, bordered with inlaid glass, overlay the floor at the front entrance. The wooden cabinet was originally built as a change table for Blain's sister Danielle. The cabinet's glass top showcases pebbles the girls collected at Vernon Lake and Buck Lake.



When Huntsville contractor **Randy Blain** began building his own home, he didn't have to look far to find good help.

"I've built this team over 11 years now," says the owner of **Randy Blain Construction Inc.** "All of these guys know our expectations, they know how fussy we are and also know it's not acceptable to drag out timelines." Home building is always a group effort, he says. "It's not one person that builds a house. Everybody worked together as a strong team."

With a professional background in interior decorating, Randy's wife Tanya is a key contributor. "I looked after picking flooring, tiles, fixtures," says Tanya, "all of the finishes."

Randy oversaw the structural components with a degree of ingenuity. "Those timber frame beams outside come from an old barn – the first barn ever built in Burk's Falls," Tanya points out.

The dream of building their own home first took root Oct. 31, 2006, when they purchased a lot on Peacock Bay Road near Ravenscliffe. "It's a builder's dream lot," Randy explains. "It's all sand, there's no rock. It's raised, so there's no chance of any type of flooding, and the lot was already cleared. We used all the same material we'd dug out of the hole to backfill with, because it was drainage sand."

The couple modified The Eddystone plan from **Rolston Home Building Centre** to suit their needs. It spans 2,100 square feet on the main level; plus a full basement and a 400 sq. ft. garage currently serving as a workshop.

Continued on page 46

Priorities from the outset were that it had to be energy efficient and, due to allergy concerns, critter-proof. “That’s why I went with the ICF (Insulated Concrete Form) building system,” Randy says. “It may not be everybody’s taste, but this is an ICF home right from the footings to the roof.” Not only is the system energy efficient, it’s also exceptionally strong in windstorms and has high soundproof ratings.

Work on the Blain home began in 2013 and progressed like falling dominoes: permits, driveway, excavation, footings, foundation, framing, well and septic. All of the finishing followed. And somewhere in the midst of it all, during November, 2013, the family moved in.

Some work, like the roof, was subcontracted, while Randy and Tanya focused on the interior framing, installing floors, trim and the kitchen backsplash. A lot was done in the evenings and on weekends when pressures often tangled with daily family life. Yet, they managed to turn time together into opportunities to have fun. “The whole family did all the painting in a weekend,” Randy recalls.

Daughters Sophia and Olivia chose their own bedroom colours and pitched in with a flurry of paintbrushes to get a start on their closets. The bold blue and green room has Olivia’s personality written all over it. “That’s what everyone says when they come in here,” says Olivia.

Building his own home has influenced the contractor’s approach with clients. “When they mention something, and you’re doing it yourself, you understand,” Randy says. “You become more sensitive to the small issues, something as simple as the location of a light switch. The choice of flooring is huge in terms of cleaning and durability. Even the choices the client is going to make on trim – if it’s for a high traffic area – they’ll need something very durable.”

All of the trim in the Blain house is solid American poplar rather than medium-density fibreboard (MDF). “It’s more durable,” Randy explains. “So if a kid kicks it, it’s not going to dent, or break apart. It’s a little more money on the outset, but it’s worth it since we’re going to stay here.”

In the Blain home, designing with sensitivity to lifestyle meant overcoming the dynamics of sharing a home with a business



LEFT: Engineered white-oak floor tiles by Tembec make a very durable floor in the kitchen and dining room. **ABOVE:** The mudroom inside the family’s front entrance has plenty of hooks for winter coats and outdoor gear. **BELOW:** Panelled in clear pine, the powder room is furnished with a vessel sink mounted on a thick hemlock plank salvaged from a barn. **OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT:** The couple’s business office at the front door is just steps away from all that the comfy kitchen offers. **BOTTOM:** Kitchens by Crane supplied cabinetry in the kitchen where aZura Stoneworks ledge stone serves as the backsplash.

office. This was accomplished with two front entries. One leads into a mudroom with wooden storage cubbies and handy access to a two-piece powder room, the garage workshop, laundry room and kitchen. Sights and sounds of the Blains’ active family life are separated from a second formal entry where clients access Randy’s business office and guests walk into an open-concept living/dining room.

Most noticeable in the guest foyer is how stone skirting on the exterior was also used to build the fireplace. “It’s great when the doors are open,” Tanya explains. “It looks like the

stone continues into the house.”

Covering the home’s gables are drunken-weave cedar shingles, made by hand with a jigsaw, just one idea from other builds that Randy wanted to try at home.

He was sensitive to building within market value. All three bedrooms are fairly basic, although the master en suite features a jet tub and custom glass and marble tiled shower. Outfitting the primary bathroom was a frugal endeavour. “Both the vanity and the shower were on liquidation clearance from **Rona** in Huntsville,” notes Randy.

Continued on page 48



Space-saving, four-panel shaker doors glide silently on a barn door track at the master bedroom entrance. **RIGHT:** The Blain sisters sit with Lilly in Olivia's bedroom, a space decorated in vivid colours. **BELOW:** Salvaged bricks line the walls of the cold cellar where Tanya stores homemade pickles, spaghetti sauce, choke cherry jam and applesauce. Barn boards cover the ceiling while thick hemlock gangway planks serve as shelving.



Their square, wood-tile flooring was purchased on clearance from **Tembec Inc.**, two years before starting the house.

Still, the home has showplace appeal with an intricate aZura Stoneworks ledge stone backsplash complementing 42-inch kitchen cabinets and Blain custom-designed, custom-made crown moulding.

Downstairs, the large cold storage room is steeped in old root-cellar character with salvaged brick walls, a rustic barn-board ceiling and gangway-ramp hemlock shelving.

Another fun side project underway in the basement is a 13-by-18-foot theatre room. "It's weird because I don't watch TV," says Randy. "I know it sounds funny." Funny, because for the past two years, he's been the principal general contractor for the Cottage Life television series *Colin & Justin's Cabin Pressure*.

Raised seating, 120-inch projection television, draped walls, recessed pot lights and a suspended fibre-optic, starlit ceiling will set the stage. "I think you'll feel like you're in the movie," he envisions.

Whether discussing a wood feature wall to complete the kitchen, adding barn board to the living room ceiling, or installing a sun tunnel to brighten the mudroom, Randy and Tanya often laugh, wondering if their home will ever truly be finished.

In his professional world, Randy prides himself on meeting completion deadlines. At home, where he and Tanya build toward a shared vision, the project proceeds at the pace of family life. **OH**

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Old kitchen utensils come back to life as a whimsical hydroponic garden nourished by goldfish in an aquarium below.

STORY AND PHOTOS
WALTER FRANCZYK

Ancient Aztecs used aquaponics, a combination of aquaculture and hydroponics, to grow maize, beans, squash and tomatoes in their fabled floating gardens. In Thailand and China, farmers used similar soil-less methods to raise fish and snails in rice paddies.

While aquaponics has spread to many Canadian backyards as a source of tasty trout, tilapia, fresh fruit and vegetables, it is also moving indoors as living art.

Erica Jack, co-owner of Fab & Funky, a Muskoka furniture, home décor and clothing store, recycles utensils, furniture and glassware to create decorative aquaponics with delicious results. "It's a neat conversation piece," she says of an old kitchen sink with softly gurgling taps that water a bowl of thriving greenery. Nutrient-rich water flowing from the taps is pumped from an aquarium below, where goldfish swim.

Her tiny ecosystems imitate nature. Water from aquariums is fed to hydroponic plants while bacteria dissolve fish waste into nutrients for the vegetation. Filtered by plant roots, gravel and stones, clean water circulates back to the fish tank. The fish fertilize the plants. "I call it lazy gardening because you don't have to do anything but eat the herbs," Erica laughs.

She grows parsley, green peppers and chives in a fish-fed bowl in her window. In addition to strawberries, her aquaponic sink nurtures peppermint and chives. Another system grows spider plants, Christmas cactus and English Ivy. Lettuce grows very well, she finds. "It's all trial and error." If something dies, she advises, don't grow it again.

Continued on page 52

Working with Muskoka's NATURAL BEAUTY



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green living

A repurposed percolator waters green peppers, parsley and chives in an aquaponic system (goldfish bowl not pictured).



Glass and silver vases, combined with a baking pan and bowl, hold all the ingredients of this tiny aquaponic environment



Strawberries and peppermint sprout among the rocks in a recycled kitchen sink where the taps run rich with nutrients fed by a goldfish aquarium.

WHAT YOU NEED

- Goldfish
- Fish Food
- Aquarium / Fish Bowl / Big Jar
- Selection of Plants and/or Seeds
- Container to Grow Plants
- 8 mm to 16 mm Pebbles / Crushed Rock / Glass Beads
- Pond Pump (available where garden supplies are sold)
- Plastic Tubing and Clamps
- Location with Adequate Sunlight

HOW-TO

- Furnish and fill the aquarium, glass bowl or jar with water.
- Install the pond pump and connect plastic tubing to move water from the aquarium to the surface of your plant container.
- Fill your growing container with pebbles, crushed rock or glass beads.
- To avoid unnecessary contamination, wash soil off the roots of plant seedlings before planting them in the growing medium. Plant densely. If seeding the system, sprinkle seeds on the growing bed after you've transplanted any seedlings.
- Once you've operated the system for a day and checked for leaks, introduce your fish to their new home. **OH**

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RESETTLEMENT PLANS

STORY **MARY HATT** | ILLUSTRATIONS **SHEILA BRITTON**

Downsizing? Take it from someone who is going through it – moving from your family home can be a daunting experience. For me, there was the emotional toll of closing the door on a place that held me in its arms for years. Then, the practical challenges, especially since I am downsizing and getting rid of lots of stuff. Did I say lots? I mean tons!

What I’ve learned is that a home exists in two parts. Part one: the furniture, accessories and housewares we need and use every day. Part two: everything else. Once you go into the far reaches of your home’s hiding places, you’ll be staggered by what gets pulled out and tossed into the stockpile of stored belongings. Bedding, equipment, knick knacks, old rugs, guitars, karaoke sets, board games, party supplies, household items you thought your kids would want but, of course, they didn’t, precious kindergarten crafts, soccer trophies and heirloom pieces from the ancients.

It’s time to make some ruthless decisions about what to keep and what to toss. But it doesn’t have to be overwhelming.

“Give yourself two to three months to get organized before your move,” advises Janice Kirwin, owner of Lighten Up! Kirwin is a move manager and professional organizer in London, Ont., coaching people in the art of moving and downsizing. She adds, “You can’t say you’re going to organize your garage this weekend if it hasn’t been touched in 15 years.”

In helping her clients de-clutter their homes before a move, Kirwin advises taking on small tasks first, such as cleaning and organizing a closet or junk drawer. Once they have got the hang of household editing, they can move on to bigger jobs, like that garage, easily dividing things into “must have” and “can live without” categories.

These days, our environmental mindfulness is getting us to look beyond the local landfill when it comes to disposing cast-offs. There are consignment stores that may be interested in your gently used or quality goods. Kirwin notes that while charities welcome good pots and pans, lamps, dishes and clothing, many no longer accept sofa beds or fabric furniture, especially in dated styles or upholstery.

When planning your move, it is certainly helpful to know your destination. If possible, get a floor plan of that new space so you can figure out which of your things can be accommodated and how much extra room you will have.

Storage solutions become a necessity when you’re downsizing. Here are a few ideas for creating storage in your new home with existing furniture or new additions:

Armoires and bookcases: take them with you. They make ideal homes for extra stuff.

Ottomans: those with lids that lift can store blankets and cushions.

Beds with built-in storage underneath or under-bed storage containers make good use of unused space.

Floor-to-ceiling storage in the house or garage, where shelving, hooks and even a pulley system can handle sports and garden equipment.

Add built-ins to blank space, such as over the bathtub or toilet.

Invest in built-in closet systems or closet shelving to maximize available space.

While storage is one way to deal with your extra stuff, living with less is another. It’s a big trend these days. Kirwin observes, “People want less and that is why they are downsizing, even at younger ages.”

My own downsizing project is not yet over; most of my worldly goods have been in deep storage for the last few months while we look for a permanent, smaller home. With few exceptions, I haven’t missed, nor needed, any of it. I am, however, comforted by knowing it’s there. Guess I know what my next hurdle will be! **OH**



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IN SEASON SPECIALISTS

PHOTOGRAPHY **WALTER FRANCZYK**



PHOTO: BONNIE FOX

If sunshine and warm weather really do boost brain power and memory, a lot of people will be shortening their to-do lists this season. We asked a few experts for some tips on spring projects.

**DAVID GOODWIN
& KIM COSTAIN**, *Owners
Near North Hardscapes Ltd.*

When landscaping your property, be prepared. “Like all good work, the preparation is the most important,” says Kim. She and her husband Dave offer beautiful, practical and durable lawn and garden designs for homes, businesses, cottages and institutions. When planning a home renovation or building a new house, remember to map out your ideas. Clip pictures of what you’d like, keep samples in mind, and most importantly, have a design. Outdoor features and facilities such as swimming pools, irrigation, patios and walkways can all be better integrated and coordinated with a landscape design. Landscaping should be thought about, talked about and detailed in drawings. This is the time of year to get ready and to work with a professional landscaper so that you get your project completed this season.



**BECKY
MACDONALD**
*Marketing Coordinator,
Paul Davis Restoration Inc.*

Spring is an exciting time of year. Unfortunately, what comes along with the nicer climate is a multitude of problems that were created by our great Canadian winter. Issues such as disrupted eavestroughs, a sagging deck or curling shingles are revealed once the snow melts and everything is in plain sight. Spring is the time to contact someone to help you deal with these problems

and avoid a long waiting list with contractors just heading into their busiest months. Not every complication results in an insurance claim but the right people to reach out to would be the same restoration specialists your insurance adjuster would call. Don't let winter damage to your house be ignored, it will only lead to greater problems down the road. *Continued on page 58*



BLAYNE HUTCHINS
Owner, Attainable Solutions Inc.

Before building a custom home, it's best to go into the process with a clear and realistic concept of what you want. Experience other spaces to see what you like and what works for you. Most people cannot truly visualize how things will really look, so when you see something you like, take notes and pictures, whether it is in friends' homes or public settings. Before you choose a contractor, ask to tour some of their projects, not only to see the quality of the workmanship but to also get a better grasp of the dimensions, feel, and look of different elements, from kitchens to fireplaces to lighting. Nothing replaces the knowledge you will gain from this process.

DAVID GRIGG & JENNIFER VEITCH
Owners, Brown's Appliances

"A lot of cabinetmakers suggest people choose the appliances they want before they design their kitchen," says Jennifer. She and her brother, David, have been involved in the family business, originally founded by their grandfather Clive Brown, since 1973. They believe in stocking appliances that don't break down. "We try to surround ourselves with products that can be serviced locally," Jennifer says. They can offer expert advice on kitchen and laundry floor plans, appliance locations and ventilation. "We have experience in finding products that best serve our clients' needs," Jennifer says. Homeowners no longer want appliances just like those of their friends and neighbours. "Now everybody wants something that's uniquely theirs," she says. "We go out of our way to find unique, high-quality custom pieces so each home can have its own personality." *Continued on page 60*





PHOTOGRAPHED AT BRACEBRIDGE QUALITY INN

AMY FRANKISH, BRANDY RATCLIFF, STEPHEN MOLLER, JOHN BENNETT, TRACY HOLINSHEAD, EMMIE-LEE BOWMAN, DAVID GARAGAN, RON HOLINSHEAD
Parry Sound Insurance Brokers Ltd., Muskoka Insurance Brokers Ltd.

People should consult with their insurance broker before warmer weather arrives. Sometimes insurance takes time to find and obtain – Friday afternoon at four o'clock on a warm spring weekend is not the time to inquire about boat insurance, if you want to use the boat that weekend. More than likely, we won't be able to place coverage in time for you. We represent

a variety of Marine Insurers. The challenge is finding the right coverage for your particular watercraft at a reasonable rate. The time to consider your home insurance is now. Spring isn't the only time that we see a higher level of claims. We don't want to have to tell you that you aren't covered for damage to your home, but coverage was available. **OH**

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DESIGN AND PROJECT **ANDREA RAMACIERI**
PHOTOGRAPHY **BONNIE FOX**



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Installing bead board throughout with some wallpapered accent walls

Adding window trim to all windows

Installing rods and drapes

Moving in furniture and accessories



The built-in banquette was removed from the living room and replaced with some stylish leather chairs.



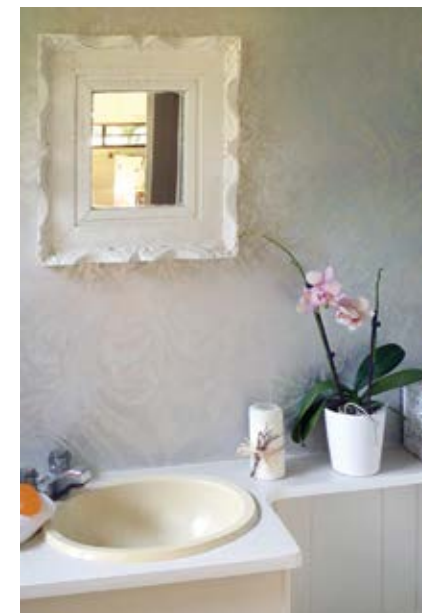
Designer Andrea Ramacieri completed the ultimate upcycling project. She gutted a 32-foot 1989 Glendale Golden Falcon travel trailer and turned it into an elegant, versatile and inviting space.



In the kitchen, the table and bench seating were replaced with a small table and chairs.



The bathroom received a fresh new look with tongue-and-groove pine bead board, elegant wallpaper and a decorative mirror.



In the master bedroom, wheel wells were boxed in and covered in bead board, and the built-in closet was gutted. A ready-made cabinet was installed for attractive storage.



Custom-made bedding completes the facelift in the master bedroom. OH



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easy BAKED WHITEFISH



STORY AND PHOTOS
PAT CROCKER

Bake a whole whitefish, trout or salmon fillet on a bed of diced spring vegetables. What could be easier? This dish comes together in less than 30 minutes for a delicious main course with a vegetable side. Serve with a warm or cold green salad or a side of rice. See our guide to spring vegetables for substitutions.

INGREDIENTS
Makes 4 to 6 servings

- Whole whitefish, trout or salmon
- 2 new potatoes, coarsely chopped
- 2 fresh spring turnips, coarsely chopped
- 1 onion, coarsely chopped
- 1 large carrot, peeled and shredded
- 1 cup fresh spring peas
- 10 fresh basil or sage leaves
- sea salt and pepper to taste
- 3 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil or coconut oil

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat oven to 350° F
- In a lightly oiled 9 x 13-inch casserole dish, combine the potatoes, turnip, onion, and carrot. Lay fish over vegetables and spread basil leaves over top. Season with salt and pepper and drizzle with oil. Bake for 10 minutes. Add peas around fish and bake for 5 minutes or until the fish turns opaque and flakes easily with a fork.
- Remove from oven and let rest for 5 minutes before serving.

SPRING VEGETABLES

Now is the time that fresh, tender, young vegetables and greens appear at Farmers’ Markets and many supermarkets. New potatoes, spring peas in pods and turnips are spring superstars, and while fresh is always best, sometimes substitutions are necessary.



peas: Small, sweet, green gems, spring peas are so tender they really need only a minute or two to cook, so consider adding them in the last 2 minutes of cooking the fish. Substitute frozen for fresh and add frozen in the last 6 minutes of cooking.



new potatoes: Small and tender, with thin skin, new potatoes are delicious boiled and served with butter and seasoned with salt and pepper. I sometimes make a meal of potatoes and peas to celebrate spring. For a change, use sweet potatoes or yams in place of the potatoes in this recipe.



turnips: The small, round, white and pale mauve vegetable we call turnip (Brassica rapa) is often confused with another root vegetable, the larger and more hardy rutabaga. When the milder, sweet-tasting turnips aren’t available, swap in rutabaga. **OH**

Pat Crocker is a culinary herbalist, writing and growing herbs in Grey County. She is the author of 18 cookbooks.

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- Antique American stain
- 2-inch stain brush
- Decorative stones
- Insulation or foam peanuts
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HOW-TO:

- Lay one 4-foot plank flat for the bottom of the station. Run a bead of carpenter's wood glue around the edge of the top surface.
- Place the remaining two 4-foot boards perpendicular on the surface of the bottom board.
- Use trigger clamps to fix the bottom and sides together tightly while the glue dries.
- Using a nail gun and 2-inch brad nails, fasten the sides to the bottom board.
- Run a bead of glue around the ends of the station.
- Press the two 8x8-inch pieces on the ends of the station and nail them to form a box.
- Sand the box until smooth and let stand for two hours or overnight.
- To stain: Shake the stain well and apply using a 2-inch brush. Wait until completely dry and add a second coat if desired.

TO ASSEMBLE:

- Cut a piece of insulation the size of the box and lay it in the bottom, or fill two inches of the box with foam peanuts, to cushion the stones and elevate the Sternos.
- Place the Sternos about a foot apart and fill the box with decorative stone. Voila! Your s'mores station is ready.

NOTE: Sterno ethanol gel is recommended for use with marshmallow roasting. It's biodegradable and water soluble. **OH**



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