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We've all experienced its affects to some degree - The tiresome process of hiring contractors to install a patio or walkway that looks great one season until six months later, it doesn't. It's no secret that the +30 / -30 temperature swings of freeze thaw in North America have a significant impact on construction and the renovation materials we choose to work with.

Seven years ago, I met with Kyle Mufti, CEO of **North American Concrete**, at the World of Concrete show to discuss the challenges of building in Ontario's harsh climates and then again at The Toronto Building Show in 2019. A lot had changed in five years. I was curious to learn what kind of innovation was behind such conviction in the product. Today, North American Concrete offers a 25-year warranty to their clients across all sectors on most concrete applications. We took some time to sit down and get a better understanding of how and why.

"We're in the business of customer service, and our entire company lives and breathes that culture. Our job was always to provide a lasting service that saves our clients' money so that's what we chose to spend time on perfecting first," Says Mufti.

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SO THE INDUSTRY HAS CHANGED, BUT HOW?

Concrete products are constantly challenged, and innovation continues to raise the standard with it. Admixtures and plasticizers in the cement, microfibers for crack prevention, integral colourings to prevent spalling and longer lasting high-grade sealers just to name a few.

The one we were most interested in was another division of Mufti's construction group, North American Rebar™, which distributes FRP vinyl ester rebar from several locations in Ontario to contractors and suppliers. "FRP rebar was something that had to happen, traditional steel was increasing in price and ineffective. The vinyl ester rebar we distribute is 2.5 times the strength of steel, will never rust, has maximum bonding adhesion, and has better coverage ratings all while being competitive with steel pricing," says Mufti. "It's only a matter of time before steel reinforcements are completely replaced."

In 2020, Mufti met with Borna Miragha, CEO of MST Bar, to build a relationship that would move MST bar across North America. MST Bar is currently a leader in the GFRP rebar market. With the collaboration of University of Sherbrooke & University of Concordia in Canada, MST-BAR® & MFX-BAR® are tested and proven to be the best GFRP rebar in the market today. A massive leap for progress and longevity in the construction industry.

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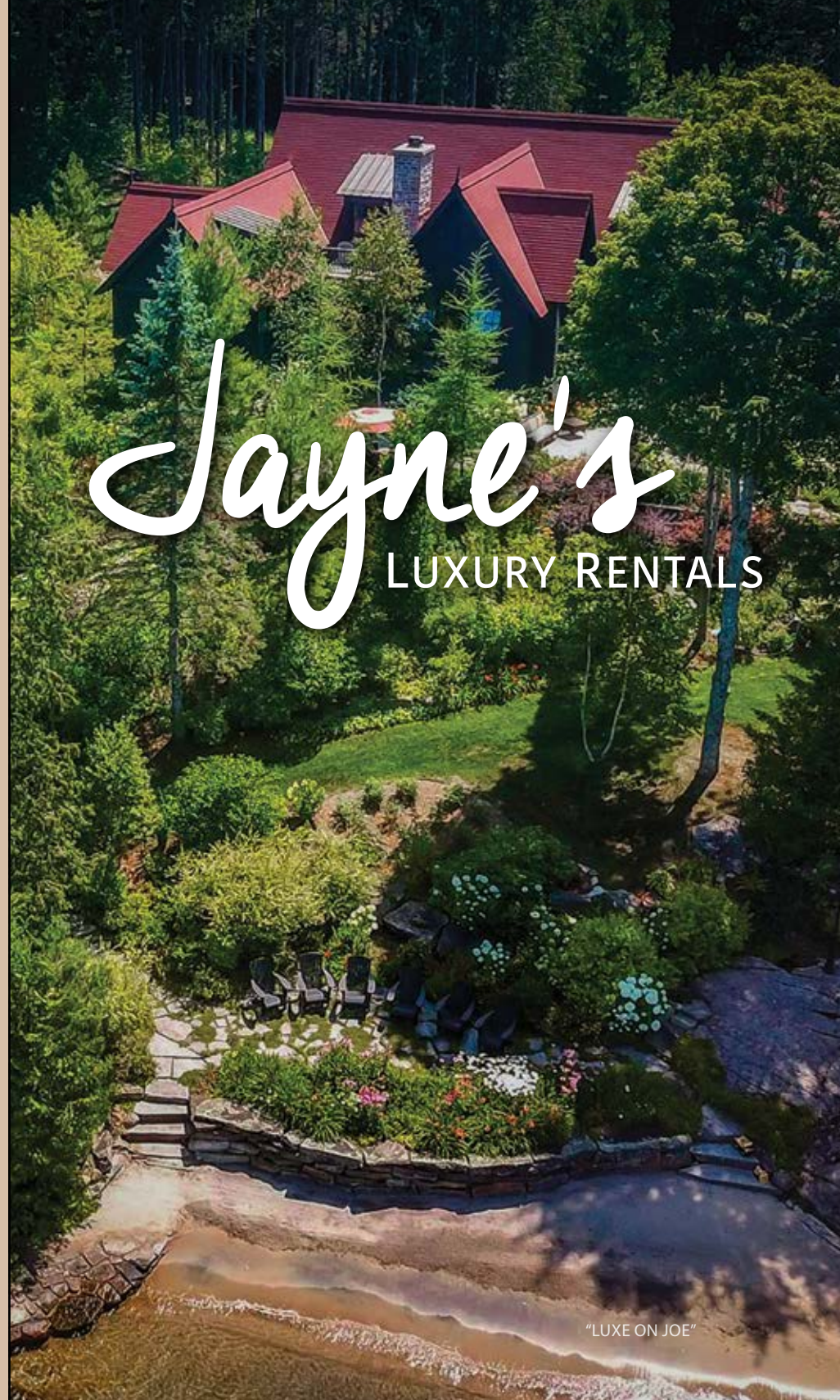


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editor's note



TWENTY-THREE YEARS OF LIVING WITH SOMEONE is a long time. It's 23 years of joint house projects, some gone right and some gone wrong. It's choosing area rugs and furniture – and having dreaded paint colour conversations.

I'll admit I have a little tunnel vision every time we start a project. I like the idea of the finished product, but I have no patience when it comes to waiting for the results. I've realized how maddening it must be for my husband Emil when I saunter in, mid-project, and point out, "You missed a spot," or "Is that the real colour?"

The year I was pregnant with our now 20-year-old daughter, I was determined to paint our powder room. One night at 11:00 p.m., I busted out the paint supplies and started, even though he said it was too late. Within an hour, I'd made a disaster of things and he found me slumped in a teary mess on the floor. There was no "I told you so" or "Look at this disaster." He calmly picked up a brush and started painting. The man is a saint.

Over the years, I've seen dozens of beautiful homes for OUR HOMES, and often come home brimming with ideas to elevate our space. Emil has never hesitated to bring my ideas to reality. He learned to install crown moulding and wall panelling. He's scraped ceilings and painted rooms over and over again. If I point out a patio lantern I like, he hits the garage to build one. Even though I joke a lot about our disaster of a garage, it's the space he uses to make our house a home.

We're gearing up for summer. In the last few years, Emil's become a hobby gardener and has set his sights on square-foot gardening. With a small subdivision yard and limited space, it's the perfect project.

Gina Makkar, *Managing Editor*
gina.makkar@ourhomes.ca

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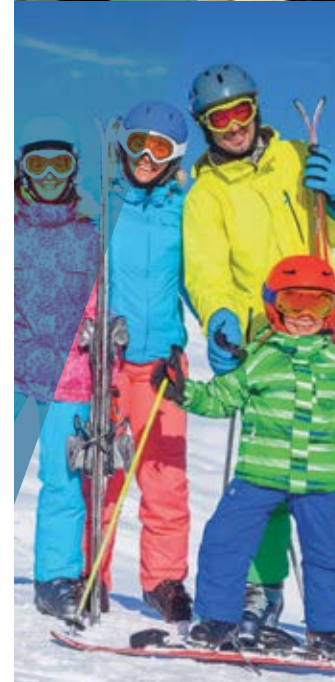


ON THE COVER

A luxe redesign blends traditional with a modern take. Story, page 34. Photography by Jason Hartog.



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Interior Designer Dolores Pian shares her ideas.

SURVIVING THE ELEMENTS

The great outdoors: Whether we experience it on a tiny balcony, a cosy deck or a big backyard, we all want to get out to enjoy warmer temperatures. While it's lovely to lounge, linger and live outdoors, you need to know Mother Nature is cruel towards materials. The scorching sun, with temperatures that go up and down, along with the wind, rain and water are all challenging to materials, natural or man-made.

To navigate the dos and don'ts for your outdoor life experience, first, ask yourself, "How much time do I want to devote to maintenance?" A bit of research will make your lounge time more enjoyable.

CABINETRY AND FURNITURE – MAINTENANCE 101

- ☀ Most products are made of plastic, wood, aluminum or wicker, and each material has its own set of positives and negatives.
- ☀ Take time to read and follow manufacturers' instructions to clean and maintain any products. It'll make your life easier in the short and long run.
- ☀ Corrosion- and weather-resistant means the finish protects materials. It is not waterproof.
- ☀ UV-stable and light fastness is a stabilizer added to protect from deterioration or fading in the sun.
- ☀ Fire, heat and impact-resistant materials are easy to clean and non-corrosive. The most practical is stainless steel.
- ☀ The easiest solution is to cover your furniture and place in storage when not in use.

WANT SUSTAINABLE PATIO FURNITURE?

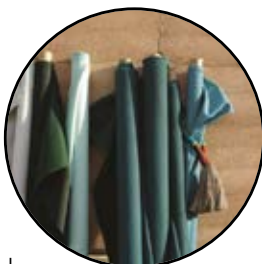
Look for recycled plastic, reclaimed wood or FSC-certified wood. Teak is well known for durability, beauty and strength and is popular on ships.



CABANACOAST: Landing Deep Seating in Umber

FABRICS

Cushions and fabrics make outdoor lounging comfy. Make sure fabrics are breathable and UV, water, mildew and stain-resistant. Most people are familiar with Sunbrella fabric for its durability and soft feel. Power-washing is not recommended as it can ruin the seams of the cushions.



SHADES AND CANOPIES

Extend your outdoor stay in a natural way to keep cool, protect yourself from UV rays and reduce the premature ageing of wood and fabric. Add a fan for ultimate breezy coolness.

FLOORING

What's under your feet needs to be practical, beautiful and long-wearing. First, take an inventory of the area you want to cover. Assess conditions such as drainage, holes made by animals, soil type and exposure to sun and rain. This will determine what materials you'll need to use. Flooring options include:

Wood: It's versatile. Redwood and cedar have a natural resistance to rot and the elements. Other woods require sealants.

Stone: Natural and durable. Includes granite, slate and marble and still requires care. Dark stones absorb the heat and will scorch your tender tootsies.

Brick and permeable concrete pavers: Great hardscape options for eco-friendly patios and walkways.

Tile: Porcelain tiles can mimic the look of other materials, including wood and stone, all while being durable and budget-friendly.

Rubber paving stones and recycled plastic: Helps divert waste from landfills. Resilient, durable, slip resistant and shock absorbent – a favourite around pools and kids' playgrounds.

Composite Decking: Wood fibres encased in plastic and binding agents. Low-maintenance, easy to install with a multitude of great traits. Very popular despite higher cost of materials.

Carpets: Makes the outdoors homelike. The synthetics are easy to clean, and are mould, mildew and stain-resistant. Many are made of recycled materials.

Artificial Grass: It's not the real thing, but it is easy to install and long-lasting. You do need to vacuum it.

NOTE: Make sure your flooring has a matte or non-slip finish. Shiny surfaces are hazardous around water and in the winter.



HINKLEY: Hardy Island Round Side-Mount LED Path Light

Finally, your evening outdoor stay is more enjoyable when you light things up! Make sure any fixture you use is wet-rated. Safety first. **OH**

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6 BARNBOARDSTORE

Bench

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RECIPE AND PHOTOGRAPHY **JENELLE MCCULLOCH**

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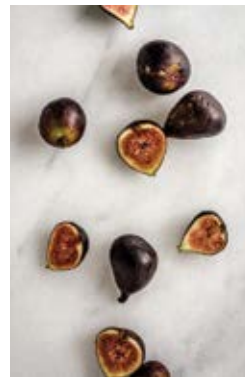
INGREDIENTS

FIG SYRUP

- 1 cup figs, diced
- ½ cup white sugar
- ½ cup water

COCKTAIL

- 1.5 ounces gin
- 1.5 ounces elderflower liqueur
- 2 ounces lemon juice
- 1 ounce fig syrup
- 1 ounce egg white, pasteurized
- Garnish: edible flowers (optional)



HOW-TO

FIG SYRUP

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan and simmer for 10-15 minutes.

Remove from heat and cool for 30 minutes.

Strain with a fine mesh strainer and store in fridge.

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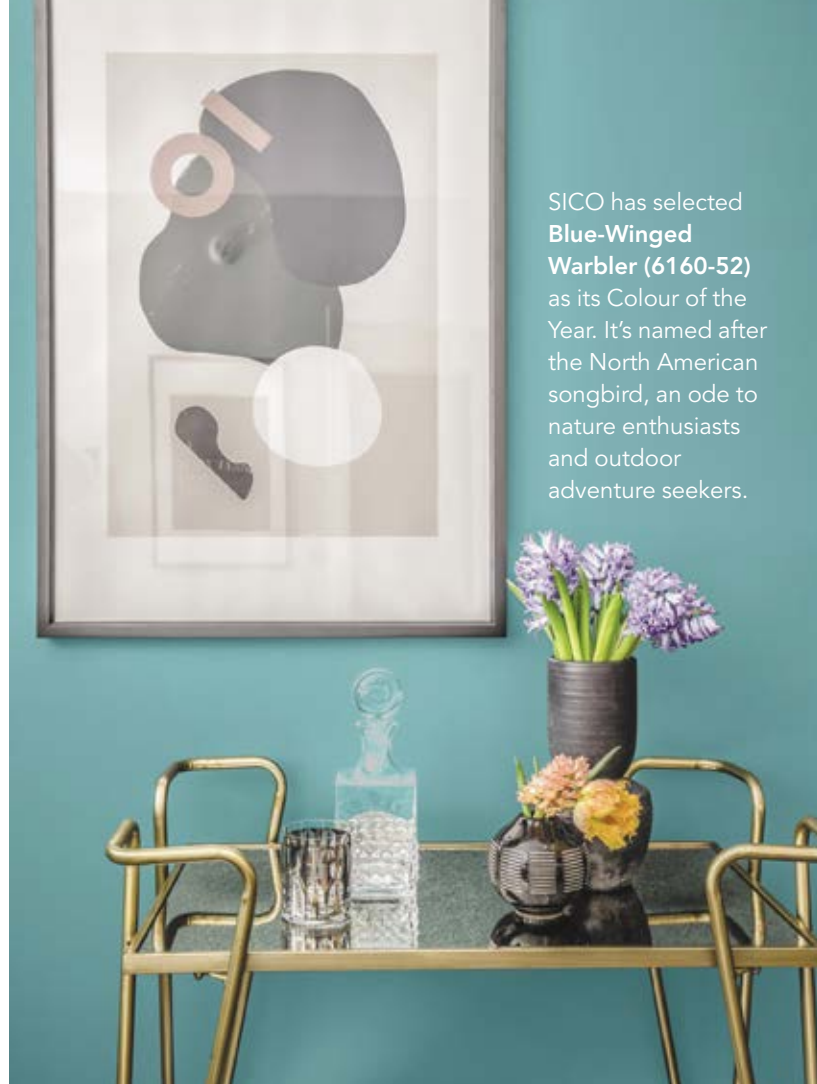
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decorating

COLOUR TRENDS

STORY **GEORGETTE MCCULLOCH**

It's a blue year for interior design. Major paint brands have picked their top paint colours, and blues are trending for your walls and home accessories.



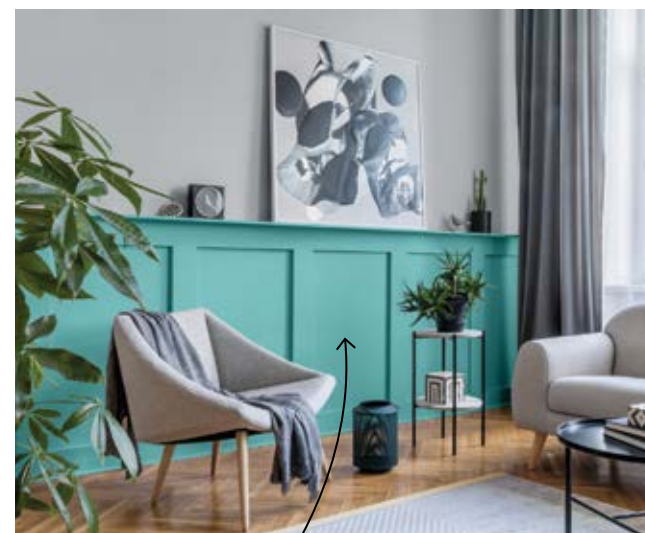
SICO has selected **Blue-Winged Warbler (6160-52)** as its Colour of the Year. It's named after the North American songbird, an ode to nature enthusiasts and outdoor adventure seekers.

THIS YEAR'S COLOURS ARE OPTIMISTIC AND PLAY TO OUR OVERWHELMING NEED FOR COMFORT AT HOME.

THE BLUES



Beuti-Tone Paint has selected **Dancing in the Rain (C20-5-0644-0)**, a pastel blue. "It's a blue we can relax in while feeling as though we are in a calm and tranquil environment," says Kristen Gear, Beuti-Tone's lead colour designer.



Aqua Fiesta (PPG1147-4), a vibrant blue-green, is Glidden's first-ever accent colour of the year. It's a bright refreshing aquamarine that will make a splash in small doses, perhaps on millwork or an accent wall. *Continued on page 28*

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FROM CITY TO COTTAGE



decorating

Benjamin Moore says its colour, **Aegean Teal (2136-40)**, will help create natural harmony in your home. The company calls the colour "intriguing, balanced and deeply soothing." Imagine this colour on your kitchen cabinets.



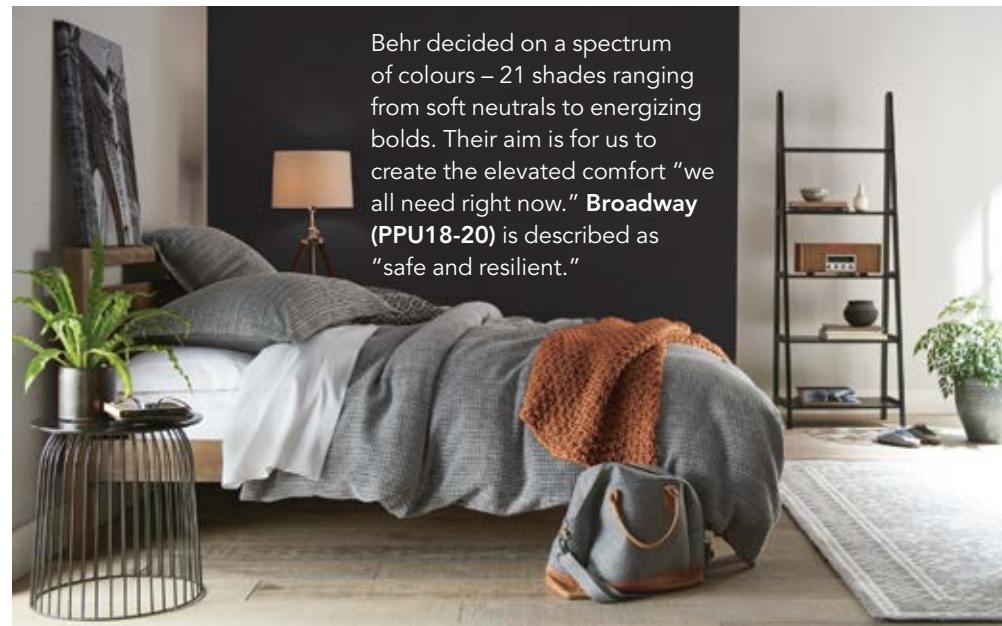
BACK TO NATURE

While blues dominate, our natural surroundings also inspire colour.



Urbane Bronze (SW 7048), the top pick from Sherwin Williams, is a warm hue the company says will help you create "the ultimate retreat for reflection and renewal," and "a sense of calm from the ground up." It's perfect for window trims or accent walls.

MOVING AWAY FROM GREY



Behr decided on a spectrum of colours – 21 shades ranging from soft neutrals to energizing bolds. Their aim is for us to create the elevated comfort "we all need right now." **Broadway (PPU18-20)** is described as "safe and resilient."



Valspar's colour experts unveiled 12 "fresh and familiar colours" that are on-trend now and are "easy to love forever." One of our top picks from this collection is **Soft Candlelight (3005-6C)**.



Farrow & Ball has selected 12 shades for its 2021 colour trends, mostly earthy neutrals and natural colours. The company says its selections reflect "a broader trend toward warm, organic colours and away from cool greys and blues." We like **Green Smoke No.47**. **OH**

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Sow EASY

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHY MELANIE REKOLA

2020 was a wild year that brought so many challenges – some were utterly heartbreaking and others were just plain annoying. The lack of availability of items we take for granted was frustrating, including plants. Many garden favourites just weren't attainable. Seed-sowing to the rescue!



Most garden seeds (both flowers and veggies) are readily available online and at your local nursery, often in varieties you might otherwise never find. Plus, growing plants from seed is an inexpensive, fun and rewarding process. Most seeds can be started indoors earlier in the growing season but for this piece I'm focusing on the direct sowing method because it's terrifically simple. Direct seeding/sowing means to plant seed directly in the garden. Sounds easy doesn't it? That's because it is!

Unlike their inside-grow counterparts, seeds that have been grown in place don't experience the stress of transplanting and won't need to adjust to their new surroundings. Often you won't lose any time at all direct-sowing and I learned this (again) firsthand during last year's growing season when a friend gifted me a variety of veggie seeds in June. With no time to start indoors I had no choice but to direct-sow them. To my surprise, many of these sown-in-place seedlings grew better and produced more than the ones I started inside the previous months.

Continued on page 32

Melanie is a certified horticulturalist and landscape designer.



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TIPS FOR SEEDING SUCCESS

Though direct-sowing is easy, it doesn't mean your new plant babies won't need care. Follow these tips for the best direct-seeding success:

- Make sure to clear your seeding area of any weeds and have the soil loose, damp and ready for planting.
- Most of the specific sowing info per plant variety is found on the seed packet. Please read carefully. The rule of thumb is to plant a seed three times as deep as its circumference, but some require light or a cold stratification to germinate. Also keep in mind that when to sow is equally important, as some seedlings are frost-hardy and some are not.
- Mark your spot. It's really easy to forget where you planted seeds once springtime growth is in full swing.
- Water your seeds gently as needed until you see germination, then again whenever you see the soil surface looking a bit dry. Watch the weather and adjust your watering. Schedule accordingly as seedlings can easily die from drought or drowning at this delicate stage.
- If you have a good germination rate, you may need to thin your seedlings to give them airflow and room to grow. I find it's better to pinch the unwanted seedlings off at the base because pulling them disturbs their delicate, young root systems. If the unwanted seedlings are edible plants you can eat them, too.
- Keep watching and caring for your new brood until they're established plants, and always be on the lookout for pests and predators. Some insects love to snack on and decimate defenseless seedlings.

MELANIE'S PLANT PICKS

Annual flowers, vegetables, and even some perennials are great candidates for direct-sowing. Some plants even seed themselves for subsequent years. Here is my list of favourites, but please don't let it limit you. There are many others that will work.



THE EDIBLES

Beans, salad greens, parsley, basil, dill, borage, cilantro, fennel, beets, carrots, peas and radish.

BLOOMS-FOR-DAYS ANNUALS

Cosmos, zinnia, calendula, sunflowers, nasturtium, nigella, bachelor buttons, california poppies, morning glory and moonflower.



DEPENDABLE PERENNIALS/BIENNIALS

Foxglove, blue flax, black eyed susans, milkweed, butterfly weed, columbine and lupine.



PRO TIP: After your seed garden is well established, don't forget to sow succession crops of both flowers and veggies to keep those beautiful blossoms and edibles coming all season long. You can even save some seeds at the end of the season for next year.

Lessons learned? Direct sowing is a little bit risky and patience-building but also incredibly easy and inexpensive. Which method will you choose this gardening season? **OH**

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STORY **JOYCE GIONET**
PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON HARTOG**



CHANCES ARE YOU'VE MADE A FEW UPDATES TO HOME SWEET HOME DURING THE PANDEMIC. FOR MANY OF US, HOME NOW SERVES AS AN OFFICE, CLASSROOM AND GYM. Continued on page 36



Wallpaper makes a statement backdrop for deep aubergine and mixed metal accents. Incorporating texture in the drapery and rug adds warmth.
ABOVE: Standing: Luisa Maringola and Marisa Lupo, seated: Evelyn Solis and Cindy Grande.

Staring at the same four walls has sent us into a frenzy of redecorating, renovating and in some cases, completely re-imagining our spaces to accommodate the new normal. It's worth stating that including a designer in the reno process can save you time, money and even disappointment when you realize you're not a Joanna Gaines, Nate Berkus or Bobby Berk. Homeowner Christina Liu is inclined to agree.

"In my previous home I did the decorating myself and even though I spent a lot of time on it, the final result was not what I envisioned or hoped for," Christina says. "Updating this house, I decided to trust the professionals." Acting on a friend's referral, Christina hired **Marisa Lupo** of **Lumar Interiors**. "Marisa has much more experience coordinating colours and styles," says Christina. "She was able to incorporate some of my old furnishings into the new look." At the start of the process, Marisa and senior designer **Cindy Grande** asked



plenty of questions to learn what the homeowner liked. "The pair presented me with a number of options based on my thoughts and input. This was amazing and so much easier!"

Lumar is a one-stop furnishings and décor shop for its clients. With 20 years in business, Marisa and business partner **Luisa Maringola** have developed an extensive network of high-end suppliers. There's little they can't access or customize. All upholstery is made in Canada and protected with Crypton, an antimicrobial, stain-resistant technology, bonded for the life of the fabric.

This home redo involved one major structural change. A wall was taken down between the kitchen and family room to create a main-level great room. Little changed in the kitchen, but the limestone floor was the inspiration behind a new limestone fireplace mantel. The elegant floral carvings are a nod to old Europe. They accentuate the home's luxury vibe.

Lumar is a one-stop furnishings and décor shop for its clients. With 20 years in business, Marisa and business partner **Luisa Maringola** have developed an extensive network of high-end suppliers.

In the great room, the double windows are an architectural standout. Lots of light makes it a welcoming space for get-togethers. Wood elements work well with the limestone. For the walls, the team chose **Benjamin Moore's** Natural Cream. A cooler pick might have been too harsh in this room.

Christina and her husband love luxury touches. They also lean toward formal furnishings in soft, subdued colours that promote a sense of calm. However, Marisa's choice of deep aubergine as the accent colour was a huge hit. Alongside the metallics, it's a knockout. Gold colours were introduced in the vestibule and carried into every room. The ladies at Lumar aren't shy about mixing their metals or metal textures – they've got it down to an art. The great room's foil wallpaper in mauve-grey tones makes a sensational feature wall. *Continued on page 38*

DESIGN TIP!

The reflective properties of metallic wallpaper can help lighten a darker room or windowless space, like a powder room.



LEFT: A sofa table helps delineate the space. **ABOVE:** A larger kitchen dining area is a bright, cheery space for eating and entertaining. **RIGHT:** Hints of gold are found throughout the redesign.

OPPOSITE, LEFT: The corners are not forgotten. Here, a chair and side table create additional seating. **TOP RIGHT:** Neutral hues in the furnishings create a blank canvas for a myriad of colour accents. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** Details in the fireplace mantel add timeless formality.



DESIGN TIP!

Working with creams and off-whites is trickier than you think. Unless you're a pro, get colour advice.

RIGHT: This room is a perfect blend of old meets new with antique gold, a hand carved table and elegant, understated furnishings. **BELOW:** A German silver sideboard in the dining room is a showstopper that adds architectural interest.



An eclectic mix of old and new conveys a chic ambience. In the formal living room, the underside of the console's glass top is painted in chinoiserie, a whimsical western style of decorative art inspired by Chinese motifs and techniques. It dates to the 17th century. On top of the console, textured ceramic vases are paired with an antiqued gold mirror. The standout here is the hand-carved Christopher Guy cocktail table called Matisse. Its lovely curves, looped detail and Renaissance gold-leaf and black lacquer finish are a terrific addition to a transitional space. Bright white painted wainscoting wraps the room in delicate old-world-meets-modern charm.

In the dining room, a German silver sideboard is a mod addition. It strays from formality just enough to be

interesting, without appearing out of place. Deep aubergine makes a cameo appearance via accessories. Christina brought the dining room chairs from her previous house and Marisa had them reupholstered. Lighting accents the main level in warm burnished silvers and golds. Marisa quirkily refers to them as the "room jewelry."

The pandemic has sparked a resurgence in our desire for houseplants. It's a trend that's happening around the world. Perhaps we're trying to reduce our stress levels or maybe we just want to see things growing and thriving while we continue our love affair with sourdough starters and banana bread. Whatever's behind the trend, Marisa and Cindy are incorporating this welcome revival of "live" and "green" into their own designs.

Continued on page 40

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Chinoiserie is a whimsical, timeless way to add character to a home.

RIGHT: A jewel in every room, artwork is meant to complement and complete a space. **BELOW:** It's all in the details, and mixed metals and textures are found throughout the design.



A successful outcome is achieved by giving clients options without overwhelming. "We presented Christina with two or three styles of sofas, chairs, tables, lighting, rugs, paint colours, finishes, etc., on the design board," says Marisa. To her delight, Christina gave the team free rein on the project, right down to choosing accessories. "Some clients like to add the finishing touches themselves, but often they have no time to get around to it," she adds. "On this project, everything came together beautifully for Christina, right down to the smallest detail. She now has a luxurious finished product that she can still add to or change over time."

"My favourite room is the family room," says Christina. "My husband likes traditional, but I like things

a little more modern. Marisa used the velvet accent chair and pillows to make the room feel warmer. She also selected a metallic wallpaper that matches the lighting and cabinet. This makes the house feel both modern and traditional at the same time."

Marisa is aware that not everyone can afford to do a complete refresh or reno in one go and that's okay, she says. She believes home is an evolving thing, "so do it in stages, but do it well." Asked to define what the professionals at Lumar Interiors bring to their clients that's particularly unique, Marisa sums it up nicely. "When it comes to design, we like to push our clients out of their comfort zone a little. We tell them, 'We do you. Only better!'" **OH**

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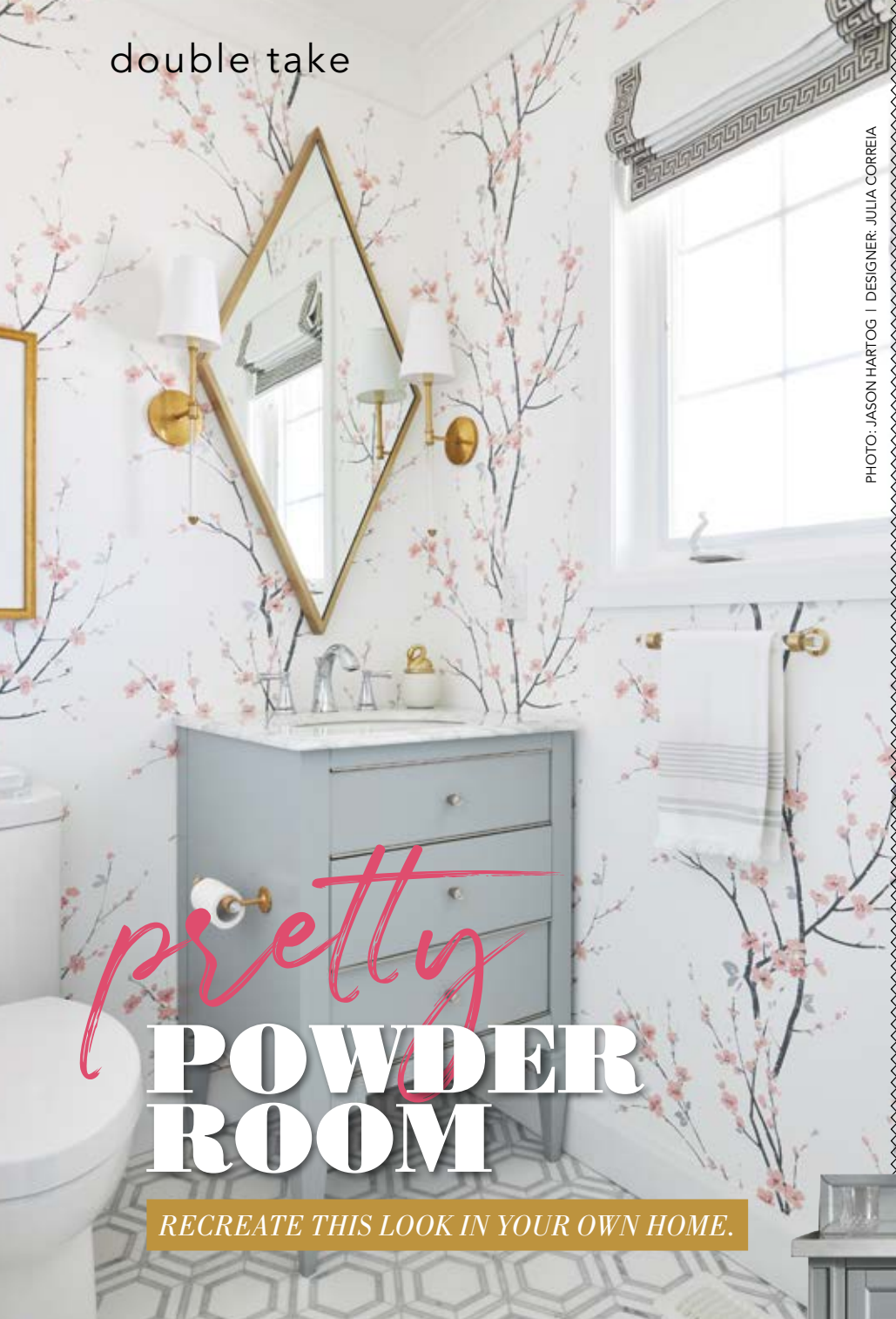
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PHOTO: JASON HARTOG | DESIGNER: JULIA CORREIA



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ON A MISSION

PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON HARTOG**

THE PLACE

In business for more than 30 years, **Manderley Fine Furniture** is the largest distributor of Stickley Furniture. Handcrafted since 1900 in upstate New York, Stickley’s solid wood designs have profoundly influenced the modern home. The Stickley story began with the motto *Als Ik Kan* – meaning “to the best of my ability.” Gustav Stickley marked products with this Flemish phrase to assure customers that each piece was of the finest quality. Though the pieces have benefitted from advances in technology, there is still a tremendous amount of hand work in every piece. Beautiful, durable designs have stood the test of time for more than 100 years. Today, many antique Stickley pieces have garnered staggering prices at established and prestigious auction houses.



STEWARDS

Manderley owners Jim and Ilona Sublett have a keen eye for period furniture, and once owned an antique and refinishing shop. When Stickley looked to secure a Toronto distributor, they jumped at the opportunity. They love the company philosophy, craftsmanship and the fact that the product is made in North America.



WHAT’S NEW

Celebrating 21 years of Stickley’s Collector Edition designs, the 2021 Collector Edition Harvey Ellis Console Desk offers a classic style suited for the current work-from-home world. The small profile is crafted of solid quartersawn white oak with an elongated Harvey Ellis botanical inlay embellished on both side panels. The versatile piece provides plenty of room for a laptop or children’s schoolbooks, and works well as a sofa console or hallway table. **OH**



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cooking at home

RECIPE AND PHOTOGRAPHY
JENELLE MCCULLOCH

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Continued on page 48



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INGREDIENTS

(Serves 4)

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1.5 cups white sugar

¼ cup water

1 cup heavy cream

5 Tbsp butter

1 tsp salt

½ tsp ground cinnamon

¼ tsp ground nutmeg



CANDIED WALNUTS

½ cup sugar

1 tsp water

1 cup walnuts

½ tsp salt



PEACHES

6 peaches, halved and pitted

1 tsp butter

¼ cup sugar

½ tsp ground cinnamon

Your favourite ice cream

HOW-TO

CARAMEL SAUCE

Place sugar and water in a heavy-bottomed pot. (It is very important while caramelizing sugar that you do not stir it! Stirring will cause the sugar to crystallize and create a mess.)

Heat water and sugar over medium heat until sugar is dissolved and comes to a simmer. Let the water and sugar simmer untouched until an amber colour is achieved, about 10-15 minutes.

Turn off heat and whisk in heavy cream. (A word of caution: Be careful at this step, as the cream will cause a lot of steam and can result in a steam burn.) Whisk in butter until melted.

Return to stovetop and stir on low for 2-3 minutes until caramel bubbles. Add salt and spices. Let cool.

You can store sauce in fridge for up to 1 week.

CANDIED WALNUTS

Cover a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Over medium heat combine sugar and water (again, do not stir!) and bring to boil until mixture is amber in colour.

Remove from heat and stir in walnuts.

Once coated, turn walnuts onto the baking sheet and separate with a fork.

Sprinkle with salt and let cool to harden.

PREPARE PEACHES

Now for the easy part! Melt butter in a large saucepan over medium-high heat.

Dip the cut side of the peaches in sugar and cinnamon and place sugar side down in the pan. Cook until caramelized and soft.

To serve, top peaches with ice cream of choice, caramel sauce and candied walnuts! **OH**



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MATERIAL WORLD

STORY **EUGENIA TRIANDOS AND KORINA KHAMIS**
PHOTOGRAPHY **DREW HADLEY**



Fashion runways have always been at the cutting edge of design, inspiring everything from simple daily clothing choices to complete lifestyles – and yes, they even have a say in what our home environments look like, too. As designers, we're personally drawn to the latest collections from notable fashion houses, with anticipation of what might walk down that runway and change the trajectory of interior design as we know it.

Perhaps the most literal connection between fashion and home décor is the use of textiles. Look around you – they are everywhere, from window coverings and wall treatments to your furniture upholstery and accessories. Here are some of our favourite fabrics and where to use them.



WOOL

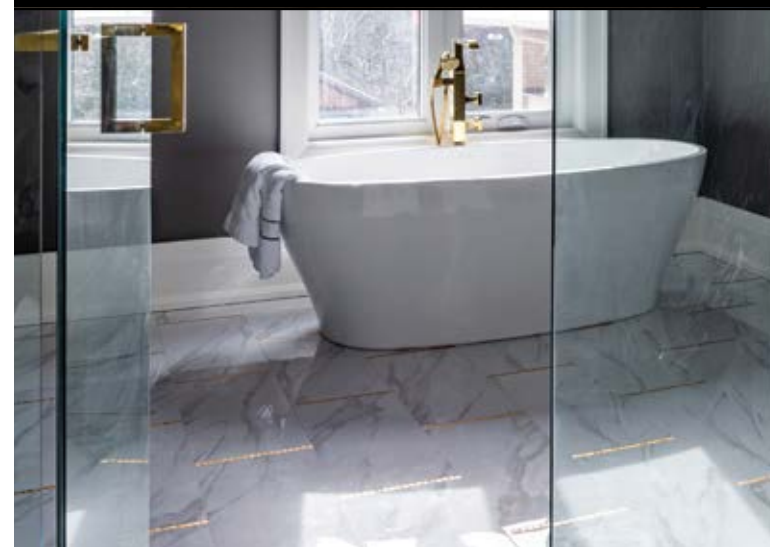
Just like your favourite sweater, wool is great to snuggle while lounging. Wool throws and pillows add decorative texture, but they also serve a warm and cosy purpose on colder nights. This fabric also boasts many natural benefits. It's a renewable resource, biodegradable, durable and despite visions of shrunken sweaters emerging from washing machines and dryers, modern innovations mean many wool products are no longer "hand-wash" or "dry-clean only."

SILK

Silk is a highly durable and beautiful material, making it the perfect choice for fashionable and functional flooring. A rug that is 100 per cent silk or a wool/silk blend has a natural sheen to it, and because it usually has a higher knot count when compared to other rug materials, it allows for intricate patterns in its designs. While our favourite silk rugs have a single, solid colour, this natural material has organic variances in colour, making a solid rug feel beautiful and luxurious.

Continued on page 54

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design ideas



VELVET

Velvet is classically rich and luxuriously over-the-top, instantly adding glamour to everything it touches. In the right doses, it can elevate the look of any room. This fabric is consistent; its low pile gives it a smooth appearance, which shimmers under different light. This quality makes it a beautiful choice for furniture upholstery and pieces featuring beautiful curves. Despite its dramatic look and feel, velvet is low-maintenance and very forgiving, making it an elegant and practical choice for sofas, chairs and cushions.

LINEN

Linen is widely known for its versatility, both on and off the runway. This organic material varies in weight from light and airy to heavier options, and is known for its characteristic woven texture and casual vibe. Linen can be easily dressed up with a bold pattern or colour, thanks to its ability to absorb dye. All of these qualities, combined with the fact that linen always seems to fall nicely, make it a favourite choice for window coverings.



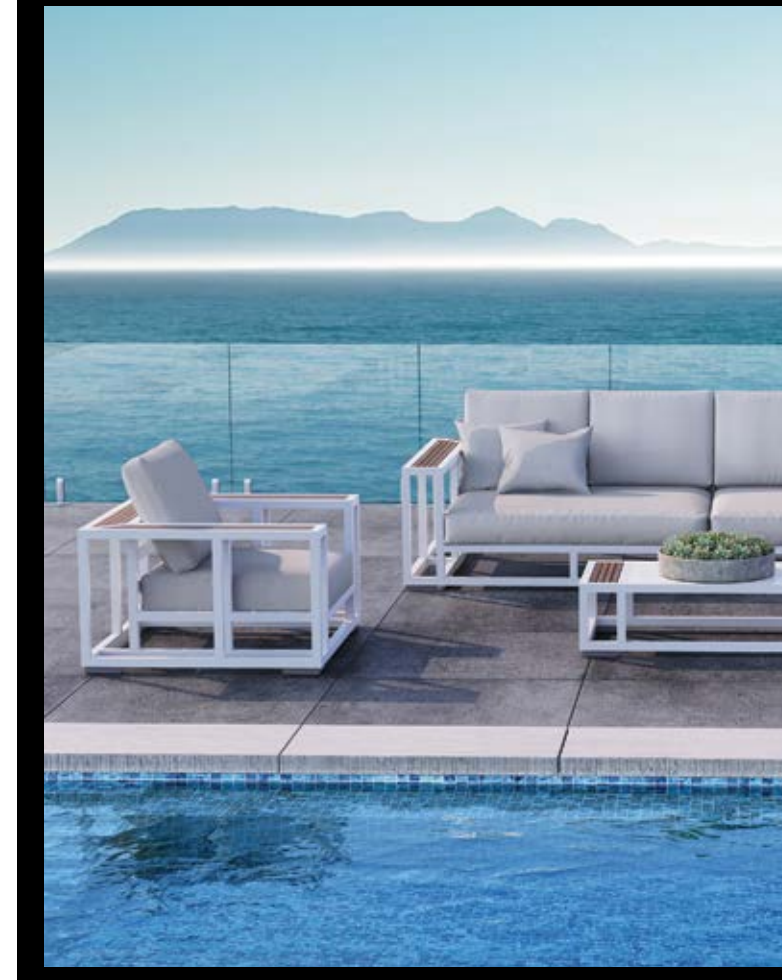
COTTON

There's nothing quite like the look, feel and even the smell of crisp cotton bedding. There's a reason we all use cotton in a variety of applications on a daily basis. This particular material pleases the masses – it's smooth and soft, not scratchy like some linen bedding or hot like silk. The structure of cotton fabric has air channels that make it cool and breathable, and this is one fabric that actually gets better with use. The more you wash it, the softer it gets.



PHOTO: MIKE CHAJECKI

When it comes to finishing touches in your home, textiles are everything. They add softness, texture and depth to your design and create a cosy nest to settle into at the end of the day. Do your research and consider your choices from an aesthetic and practical standpoint. Remember, there's a perfect fabric for every application. **OH**



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STORY **CONNIE JESKE CRANE**

IF YOU TRIED TO COMPLETE SOME HOME IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS (OR EVEN BASIC MAINTENANCE) OVER THE PAST YEAR AND HIT A FEW SNAGS, YOU'RE NOT ALONE.

Homeowner Karen Homer has certainly been there. Homer, who's been completing a string of projects on her Guelph century home over the past year, recalls encountering everything from booked-up contractors to lumber shortages to COVID-related product and shipping delays. With a custom door for example, she says, "This door should usually take nine weeks to come, which is long enough, but it took 16 weeks."

Add to that an extra layer of COVID protocols and PPE. At one point, during some mould remediation work in her basement, Karen found herself dealing not only with "guys in COVID suits but others in mould-hazard suits. So it's been fun!"

For industry players and homeowners alike, 2020 was uniquely and unforgettably challenging. If you plan to begin a new project this year, here's a look at what's in the forecast for the home improvement industry plus advice on navigating challenges.

Continued on page 58

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MORE OF THE SAME BUT DIFFERENT, TOO

What can homeowners expect this year? We talked to Michael Garrity, CEO of Financeit, a Toronto-based company that provides mobile-friendly financing apps for things like home renos.

Michael begins by making sense of what happened last year. "If there was a theme for 2020, it would be 'Dealing with change without a playbook,' right? We had no idea this was going to come, once it hit us we had no idea how big it was going to be, what the implications were going to be, what the government reaction was going to be, what people's perceptions of safety would look like. It was all trial by fire."

Adding to the complexity, says Michael, after an industry lockdown in Q2, the home improvement sector saw a wild 60 per cent year-over-year rise in the third quarter – hand-in-hand with unprecedented delays and shortages.

For 2021, with a second lockdown in January, he says, "We are going to continue to wrestle with effects and implications of the health pandemic for the entirety of the year." Yet Michael also sees more reasons to be encouraged.

"What's different this year from last year is we have information; we know what to expect. We're done with [establishing] policies and procedures and protocols. We know how to operate in a lockdown... in a grey zone, and a yellow zone and red zone. We're ready as an industry."

BETTER TECH TOOLS

In 2021 we're all also armed with geeky new skills, having mastered virtual meeting platforms and other tech tools thanks to COVID. Michael says on the industry side, "We've moved to virtual consults, taken advantage of new tools that are available so we can minimize interruptions with customers." In this wider-scale adoption of tech, he says his own company's online applications, which allow customers to finance home improvement projects online, also saw real growth in 2020. "Electronic payments and online financing tools like ours exploded because of again just health concerns and the inconvenience of cash."



PHOTO: KELLY HORKOFF
LANDSCAPING: SHADES OF SUMMER LANDSCAPING AND MAINTENANCE



NATUREKAST WEATHERPROOF CABINETRY

SUPPLY ISSUES

Supply issues are improving. Overall, Michael says, "I think that supply chain issues are going to be less frequent because of knowledge. We know and we can plan for alternative places to source material from."

SPECIFIC TRENDS

Michael says the past year also brought a "reinforcement of the value of the home." In 2021, with people still not travelling, we should see more of the same – spending on backyards, pools, spas, outdoor kitchens, new driveways, basketball courts and anything that maximizes enjoyment of our homes.

ADVICE

For 2021, with home improvement projects, Michael advises planning ahead as much as possible. "Secure the contractor that you want to work with as early in the season as you can because there will be an increased amount of demand."

And for larger spends, particularly if you might sell down the line, Karen says a savvy realtor with good local knowledge can really help you prioritize spending. "I had a realtor walk through the house with me and make lists of bare minimum things that needed to be addressed," she says.

Finally, the right mindset – being patient and flexible – and the need for good safety protocols will stay with us this year. "We're going to experience elements of the health pandemic for all of 2021," says Michael. "It's safe to do projects, as long as you take care." **OH**



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feature

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STORY **DENISE WILLSON**
PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON HARTOG**

WHEN ANGELA AND KEN WALKED INTO NEWMARKET DESIGN FIRM AND SHOWROOM NICHE DECOR IN SEARCH OF FURNITURE, THEY HAD NO IDEA THEIR DINING ROOM MAKEOVER WOULD TURN INTO A COMPLETE FACELIFT – IN AN ENTIRELY NEW HOUSE. Continued on page 63

The spacious dining room's large table easily accommodates friends and family.



The new furnishings are positioned strategically to maintain effortless flow and maximize seating when the couple hosts guests.

“We originally thought we wanted an updated dining room,” says Angela, “but we soon came to realize that new furniture wouldn’t fix the problem. What we really wanted was a larger kitchen, a master walk-in closet and more storage space. We also wanted to update our old furniture and décor in a calming, similar style to our new dining room. We decided we needed a new house.”

The couple – married for 39 years – were thrilled to find this 14-year-old bungalow on an acre-plus parcel abutting a forest in the heart of Stouffville. “We fell in love with the area,” says Ken. “It’s very quiet, peaceful and the deer come right into the yard.” Only a 10-minute drive to Aurora amenities, the 4,300 sq. ft. house was the perfect blank slate. “The new house gave us the chance to update our old furniture with a fresher, contemporary look. But we needed help,” Ken says. While they knew what they wanted, they were design newbies.

The couple returned to Niche Decor, where designer **Shima Yazdan** had helped with their dining room. “Angela and Ken wanted a classic, timeless look for their new house,” says Shima. “They liked serene neutrals with a focus on solid, quality pieces that are Canadian-made or locally sourced.” Besides furniture, Shima guided the couple in choosing area rugs for the main rooms. They used art to add visual elements that tie furniture and décor pieces together and installed window coverings to frame their favourite feature of the house: the assortment of windows that soak in the greenery from the woods surrounding the back of the property. **ONIT Electric** updated the place with LED lighting and replaced old light fixtures with new, modern fixtures. Shima planned furniture layout in user-friendly hubs to create flow while considering function. “This was the first time we’d used a designer,” says Angela. “Shima was wonderful to work with. She asked questions about how we use every room, listened to us, and understood what we were looking for.” At an age when most look to downsize, the couple sized up to accommodate friends and family. They wanted a formal dining room and areas for lounging.

Continued on page 64

feature

Angela and Ken hired the **VM Home Improvement** team to gut and update the home's four bathrooms. "We took dated, dingy bathrooms and made them into beautiful works of art," says Steven van Niekerk, one of three owners of VM Home Improvement. "We love the modernized bathrooms," says Ken. They installed raised vanities, porcelain tile flooring, and contemporary fixtures that add to the spa-like vibe while honouring the home's traditional elements. The house also got a fresh coat of paint on the interior walls, and for fun, they added a little bit of glitz. "The wallpaper is a conversation piece," says Angela, laughing. "We call it our 'wow paper.'" Megan Mitchell and her team at **Paint Crew Canada** painted the entire home.



TOP RIGHT: Updated bathrooms honour the home's traditional style while using contemporary materials. **ABOVE & RIGHT:** The right window coverings maximize the view to the outdoors. Artwork and rugs tie in seamlessly with the home's new furnishings.



The couple also refurbished the existing kitchen cabinetry and replaced the dated hardware with modern brushed-nickel hardware to complement the new décor throughout the home. "We love to entertain," says Angela. "I love to cook, to try new recipes, and hopefully soon friends and family can gather around the kitchen island for special occasions." The lighting and Sonos sound system add to the ambience.

Not everything went as planned. Moving day was June 2020, amid the pandemic. The couple had given away most of their furniture and had only a limited number of pieces to move into the new house. Their plans to start fresh were thwarted by business closures and delays that made it difficult to receive orders. "Angela and Ken were good sports living with limited furniture and having to conduct meetings online," says Shima. "Discussions and presentations normally done in person were done via Zoom and telephone calls – ways to work around the COVID crisis." Still, there was a silver lining. The time awarded Angela and Ken the chance to see how they used the house before making décor choices.

Continued on page 66



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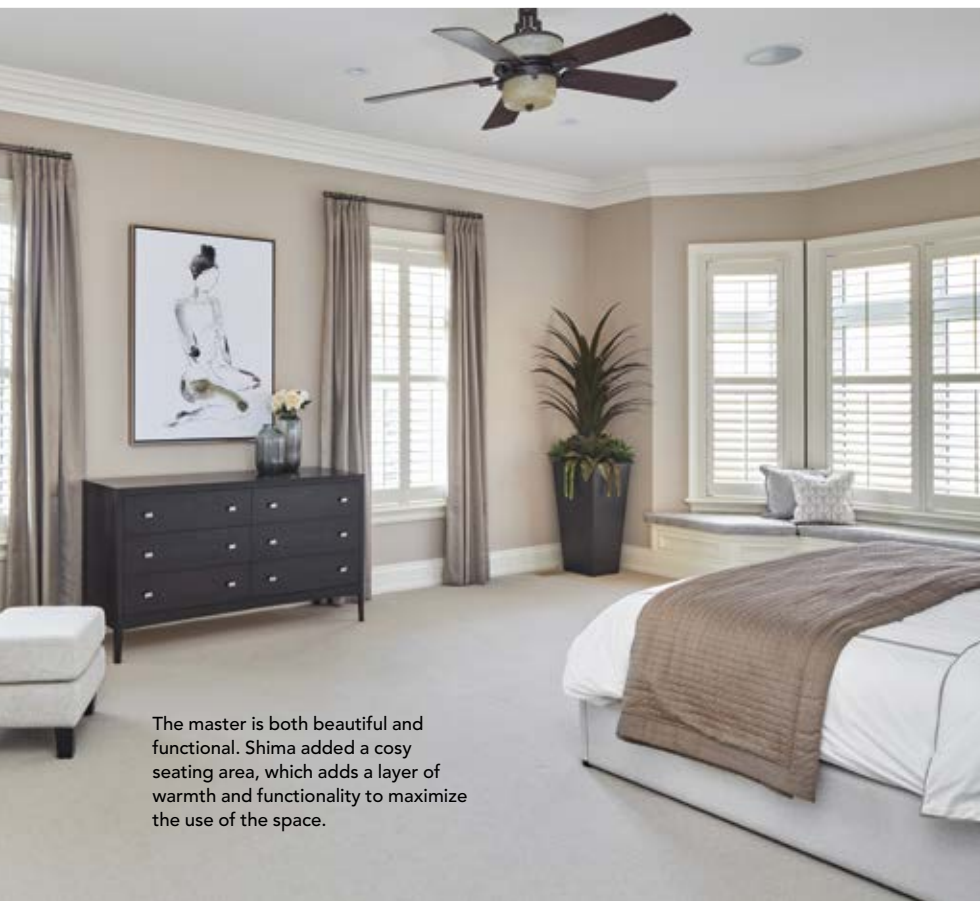
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feature

For example, they originally thought the window seat in the master bedroom would be enough seating. After using the space for a few months, they realized the room needed more warmth and functionality. Shima knew a cosy seating area was the answer. “The project kept layering organically,” says Shima, “and it came together nicely.”

When asked what they loved most about hiring a designer for the first time, they answered with gusto: “We loved that we could test furniture and décor items to get a feel for how we use the space before purchasing.” This process gave the homeowners confidence in their decisions, which is a great start, as they know they’ll need Shima to design and decorate the pool house they plan to build this summer. Of course they need a pool first, but that doesn’t stop the couple from dreaming about colour palettes, patterns, furniture placement and all things décor.

It’s safe to say these design newbies are no longer inexperienced. They’ve caught the design bug. **OH**



The master is both beautiful and functional. Shima added a cosy seating area, which adds a layer of warmth and functionality to maximize the use of the space.



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Continued on page 70

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PROJECT AND PHOTOGRAPHY TARA CHATELL

Egg Carton FLOWER PICTURE FRAME

These adorable flowers are so easy to make and no one will guess they're made from egg cartons! Use them to embellish a picture frame, mirror, memo board or anything else in your home that could use a makeover with some pretty flowers.

Tools & Materials

- Scissors
- Paintbrush
- Hot-glue gun
- Egg cartons (1 egg carton makes 3 flowers)
- Acrylic craft paint in colour of choice
- Acrylic craft paint in metallic gold
- Picture frame



How-To

PREPARE EGG CARTON

Tear off the side and top of your egg carton, and using your scissors, cut out 12 individual cups.



Tear off the tall corners and around the top edge of each individual cup until the height is somewhat even all the way around. Don't worry about getting it perfectly straight – the imperfection adds to the rustic beauty of these flowers.

Divide your cups into groups of four. Each flower uses four cups.

ASSEMBLE FLOWER

Take three of the cups and cut slits into each corner, down to the bottom where the cups are bent. Take the fourth cup and cut slits in each corner, a little further past the bend towards the centre.



Tear around the edges and remove sharp corners to create a more rounded shape for each petal. Curl each petal out with your fingers.



To make the outside portion of the flower, glue together the first three pieces, offsetting the petals of each layer.



For the middle of the flower, take the fourth piece, overlap each petal and glue together. Curl out the top edges.



Attach the middle piece to the outside pieces. Now you have a full flower.



Make a stamen for your flower by cutting out a small rectangle from the top of the egg carton. Cut two slits into the rectangle and curl it into itself. Place a dot of glue on the bottom and attach it inside the middle of your flower.



Repeat the above steps until you have enough flowers to cover your frame.



PAINT FLOWERS

Mix your paint with a couple drops of water. This makes it easier to apply.

Coat your flowers with paint, making sure to cover all the petals, front and back.

Once the paint dries, take a very small amount of gold paint and lightly brush the edges of all petals.

EMBELLISH FRAME

Paint your frame the same colour used for your flowers. You can brush a little bit of gold paint over the edges of the frame as well.



Using your glue gun, attach finished flowers around the edge of your frame.

Voila! Now your frame is ready for a picture. **OH**



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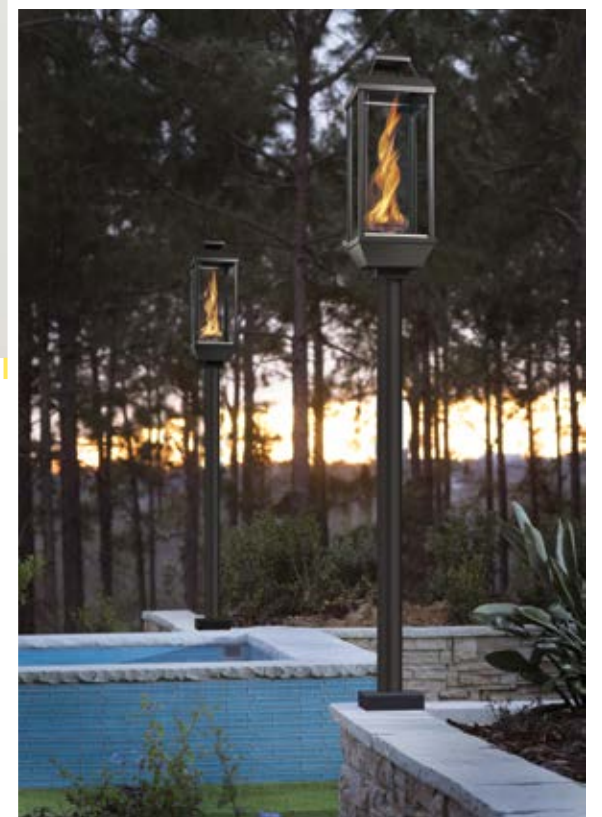
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Continued on page 76

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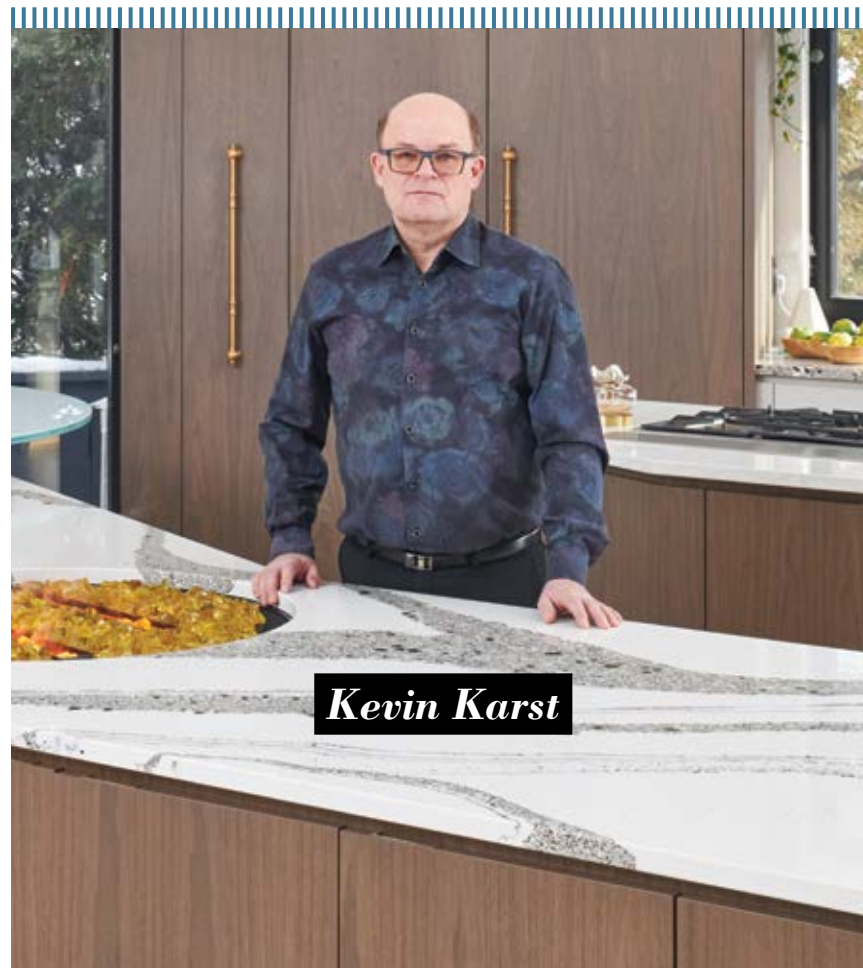


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Kevin Karst

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Continued on page 78



James Pitropov

PHOTO: GEORGE LEET

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"Our design philosophy is 'Love where you live.'"

Jean Bisnaire & Shima Yazdan

PHOTO: JOANNA KATCHUTAS



ADVICE

We tend to steer clear of trends and advise our clients to create spaces that reflect who they are and how they want to live. Are you a formal person? Casual person? Your house should showcase that! **OH**

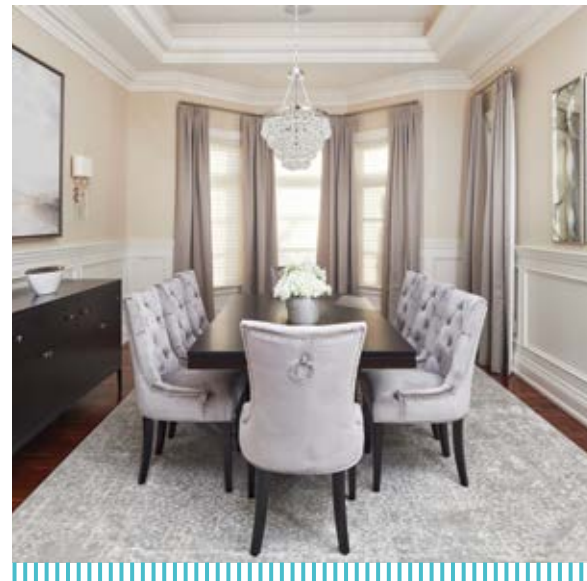


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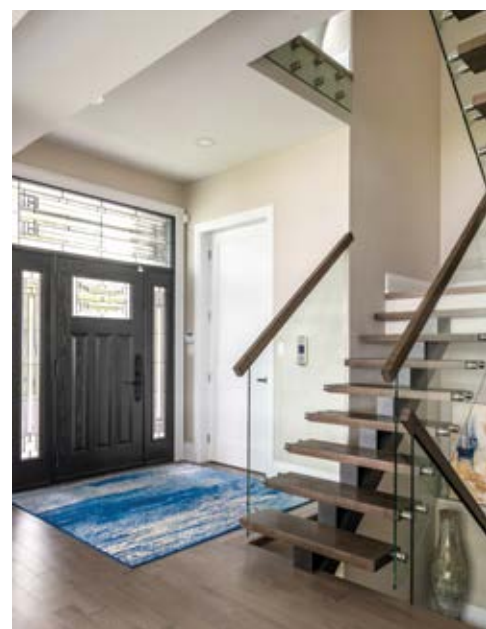
TECHNICAL ELEMENTS

STORY **KATHLEEN DUNCAN**
PHOTOGRAPHY **SANDY MACKAY**

*IN BUILDING HIS NEW WATERVIEW HOME IN BARRIE'S SOUTH END, GLOBALLY ACCLAIMED FIGURE SKATING COACH **DOUG LEIGH** HAND-PICKED A GROUP OF HIGHLY SKILLED INNOVATORS TO FORM THE UNIFIED TEAM REQUIRED TO BRING HIS UNIQUE VISION TO LIFE.*



In the great room, a light grey leather sectional from Aboda Decor is situated to enjoy the ever-changing waters of Kempenfelt Bay. A Stressless recliner is the ideal perch in front of large windows from Kempenfelt Windows and Doors that frame the view from the back of the home. **BELOW LEFT:** The home is a showstopper in a prime location. Doug says it's "five minutes away" from work and play. The stone on the exterior was completed by Coutts Masonry. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The custom glass staircase by Creative Design Stairs & Railing off the front entrance adds a contemporary vibe to the home.



Doug Leigh & Diane MacFarlane

"I wanted to find the people with the passion to create what I was trying to achieve," he explains. "The experience I wanted to have, I wanted them to have it, too. Their fingerprints are all over this place."

Well known for bringing out the best in those dedicated to being the best, Doug and his **Mariposa School of Skating** have 20 world and Olympic medals to their credit since he started the school more than 40 years ago. Now semi-retired, he admits it is still a rare day when he doesn't lace up his skates.

With the same patience, precision and practicality he brings to the ice, Doug set out to create an exceptional environment that

went beyond bricks and mortar.

"On the coldest, darkest day of the year, I want this house to be full of energy," he says. "It is meant to be a chameleon and change with the season: a summer cottage, a winter chalet."

The open-concept 3,700 sq. ft. home has an elegant contemporary style.

To complete the timeless look, Doug and his partner Diane MacFarlane worked closely with "wonderful" **Michael Miller**, head designer and sales consultant at **Aboda Decor**, a family-owned Barrie business. Its 10,000 sq. ft. showroom features premiere Canadian-made furniture, artwork, lighting and accessories. *Continued on page 83*

“I WANTED THE VIEW UNOBSTRUCTED, SO WE CHOSE A JENN-AIR COOKTOP WITH DOWNDRAFT SO WE CAN COOK AND SEE PEOPLE AND THE VIEW.” – Doug Leigh



Engineered hardwood flooring extends into the kitchen and dining room. A built-in beverage bar is a step away from the dining area and outdoor deck.



LEFT: Perkinsfield Kitchen & Bath built the kitchen. The extensive cabinetry is painted Cloud Cover from Benjamin Moore. The walls throughout are Collingwood with Decorator's White on all trim. **BELOW:** This wall unit tucked behind the kitchen provides a bench and lots of storage for gear. **BOTTOM LEFT:** Designer Michael Miller selected the elegant and comfortable bar stools by Trica Furniture.



Although Diane and Doug researched for months, Miller helped them lock in their design, colours and decorating decisions. “I was involved from the beginning, helping to simplify the whole process,” says Michael. “That’s my job.” Michael also advised on furniture placement, which he says can be tricky when the pieces are floating in a space – like the Pinnacle leather sectional in the living room, the Stressless recliner and the glass and steel Trica dining room table. Accessories were chosen to complement Doug’s two Olympic torches (from 1988 and 2010) that are displayed in open cases flanking the entrance to the living room. “When they are downlit with LEDs at night, it’s beautiful,” says Michael. Built with entertaining in mind, each floor features a visually dynamic wall of tilt-and-turn Euro windows overlooking the bay. From the outside, the black frames contribute to an industrial modern exterior, enhanced by a stone and stucco facade. Inside, the windows match the Benjamin Moore Decorator’s White (from Irvine Carpet One) applied to the Barrie Trim and Moulding Inc.’s finishings. Walls throughout are painted Collingwood. Their custom builder, Advantage Homes, possessed the passion, professionalism and expertise Doug was looking for.

Continued on page 84



LEFT: Doug can see his boat in the marina next door from the deck off the kitchen. **FAR LEFT:** Aboda Decor's in-house designer Michael Miller helped Doug plan and select all the finishing touches in the home. **BOTTOM:** More large windows provide a breathtaking view in the downstairs rec room.

Claire Shortt of **Claire Shortt Custom Home Designs** drew up plans to ensure every centimetre of the three storeys was maximized. Leigh's son Dustin joined the design meetings. Together, they applied the philosophy of organic architecture, orchestrating an internal harmony that extended seamlessly to the outdoor spaces. The physical and emotional well-being of residents and guests is clearly paramount throughout.

A custom four-person (with luggage) Lucanus Corporation elevator ensures accommodation without sacrificing beauty. Preverco maple hardwood provides continuity underfoot from the main and upper levels, while a house phone and industrial handrails create confidence. Matching premium vinyl planking in the lower-level games room, which designer Michael calls indestructible, continues the flow while encouraging engagement with the walk-out to a hot tub patio and the docks and beach beyond.

The gravity-defying floating staircase by **Creative Design Stairs & Railings** leads up to a lavish master suite boasting a fireplace, private balcony and coffee bar. Twin walk-in closets and en suites meet in an oversize shower with **Bathworks** fixtures.

Continued on page 86



WHERE BOTH *STYLE AND FUNCTIONALITY* MEET.

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ABOVE: Imagine waking up to this view every day. The master suite upstairs has a quiet place for Doug to work from home. **BELOW:** The en suite is smartly designed with a centre shower with a walkthrough on each side to separate his-and-her bathrooms. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** There's a handy built-in beverage bar in the master bedroom.

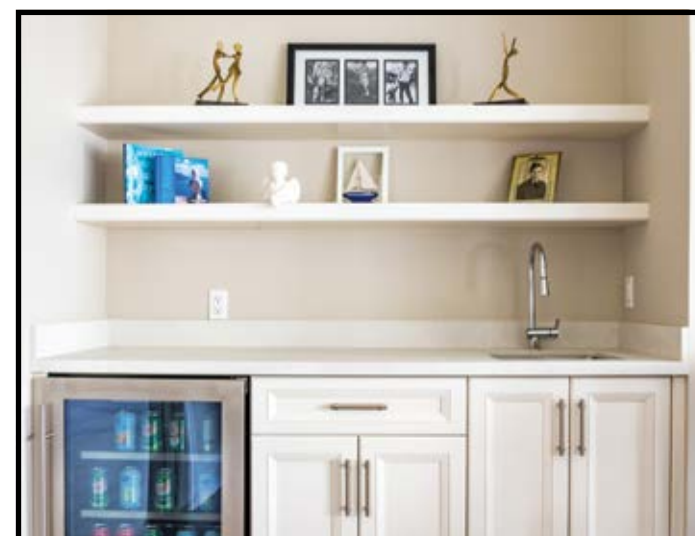


To optimize comfort, heated flooring and a zone-based temperature system are controlled by remote access engaging the gas furnace and boiler set. Electrical expertise, including the car plugs in the fully-finished four-car garage, was contributed by **Leigh Technical Solutions** (led by Doug's brother Don).

"It looks like a spaceship," Doug says of his mechanical room. "It's the energy heartbeat of the home."

Doug and Diane can most often be found in the kitchen with its Shaker and glass-fronted cabinetry by **Perkinsfield Kitchen & Bath Inc.** Its Benjamin Moore Cloud Cover colour coordinates with the Cloudburst Concrete Caesarstone-topped island.

Doug is thrilled with the project and the process. "Everything went well. It was fun. We had a lot of time and there was no pressure. The only thing I forgot was the doorbell." **OH**



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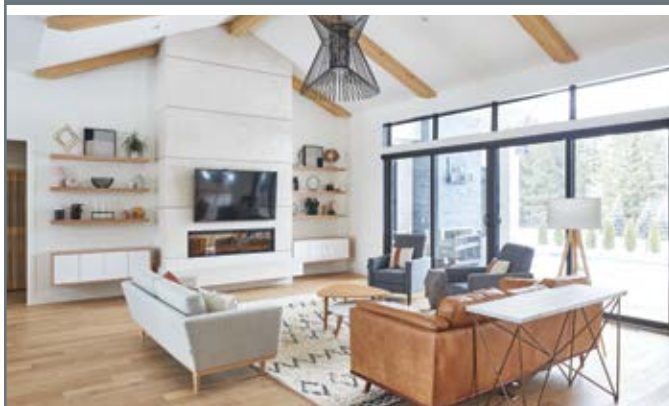
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RECIPE AND PHOTOGRAPHY
JENELLE MCCULLOCH

MELON PROSCIUTTO SALAD

This is the perfect fresh and bright salad for spring. Sweet, juicy melon and salty, slightly smoky prosciutto are a classic pairing.

INGREDIENTS

SALAD

1 cup melon, balled (your choice: cantaloupe, watermelon and/or honeydew)

1 cup bocconcini cheese

8-10 pieces of thinly sliced prosciutto

Mint, to garnish

Basil, to garnish

DRESSING

¼ cup olive oil

2 Tbsp wine vinegar, your choice

1 tsp honey

A few leaves of basil, thinly sliced

Salt and pepper, to taste

HOW-TO

In a large bowl, mix together dressing ingredients.

Add melon and cheese and toss to coat in the dressing.

Place the melon mixture on a platter and arrange with slices of prosciutto.

Tear mint and basil to garnish on top. **OH**



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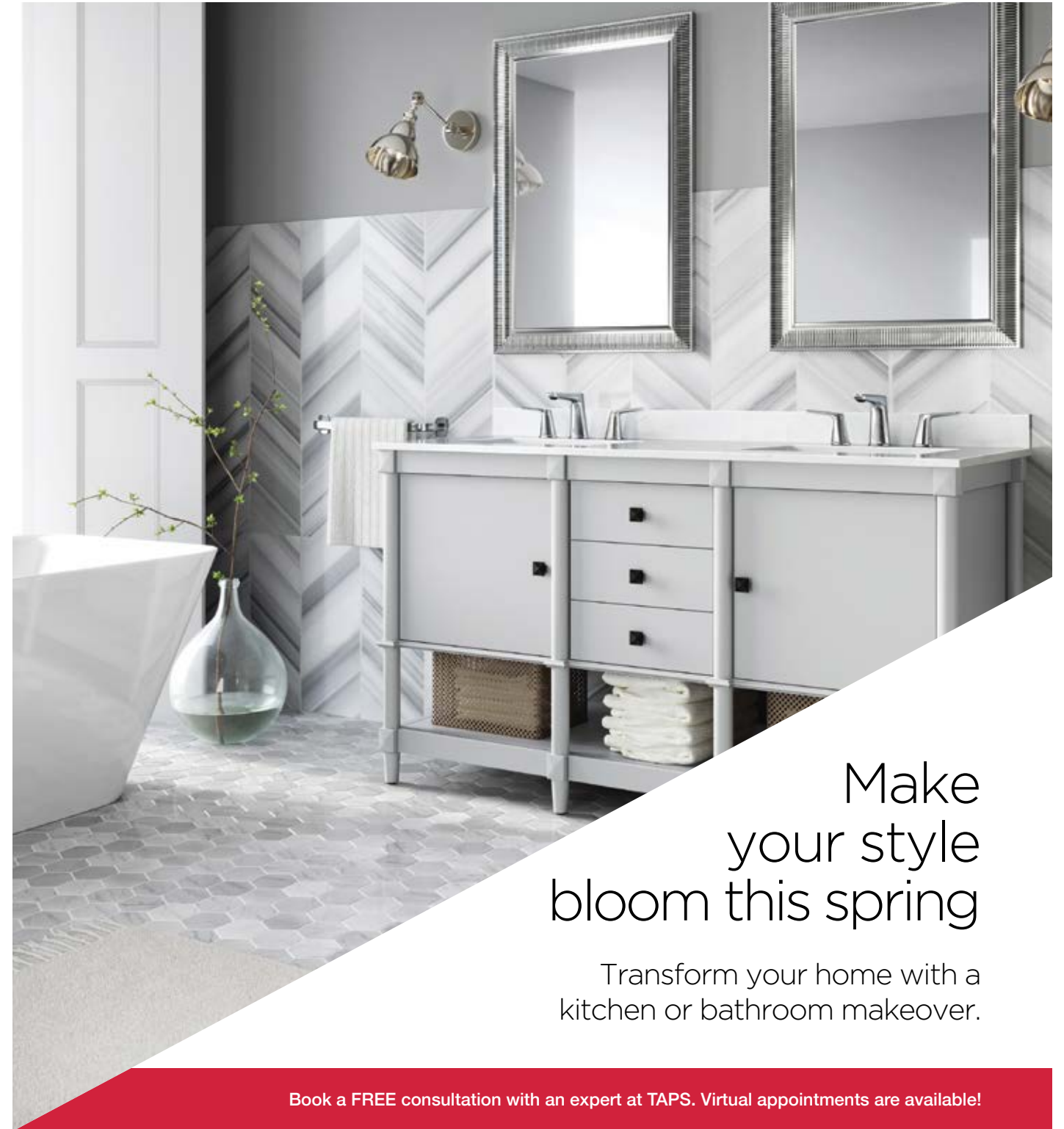
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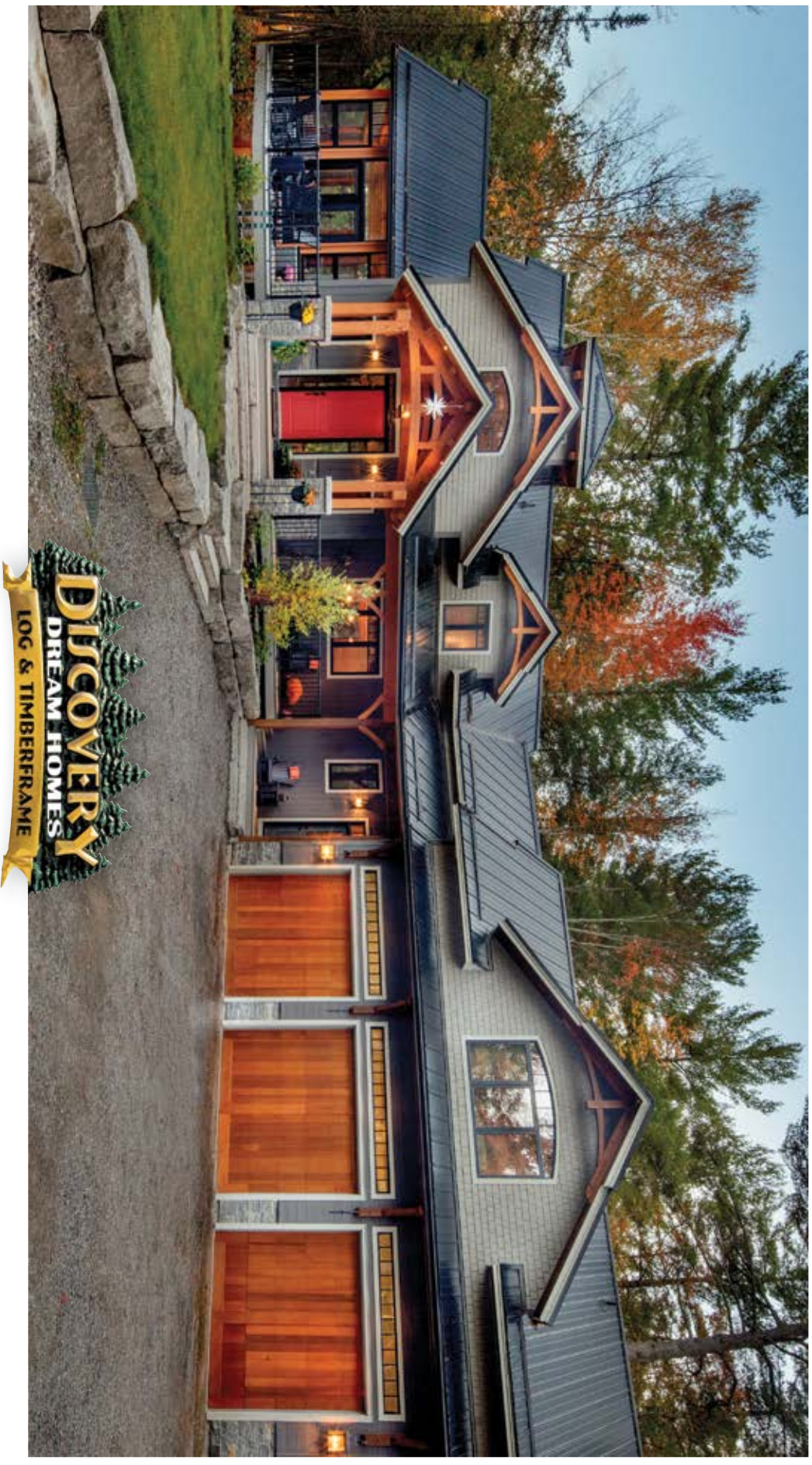
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