

# This Old House

SPECIAL READER-CREATED ISSUE

Save  
more than  
**\$10,560**  
with these  
reader tips  
p. 88

## Best-ever BEFORE + AFTERS

SEE  
AMERICA'S  
best  
remodel!  
p. 70

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OCTOBER 2014 | THISOLDHOUSE.COM

Easy how-to

barn door from  
pallet wood

coiled rope  
ottoman

copper  
harvest  
wreath

PUT YOUR HOUSE  
ON THE COVER!  
See p. 11 for details

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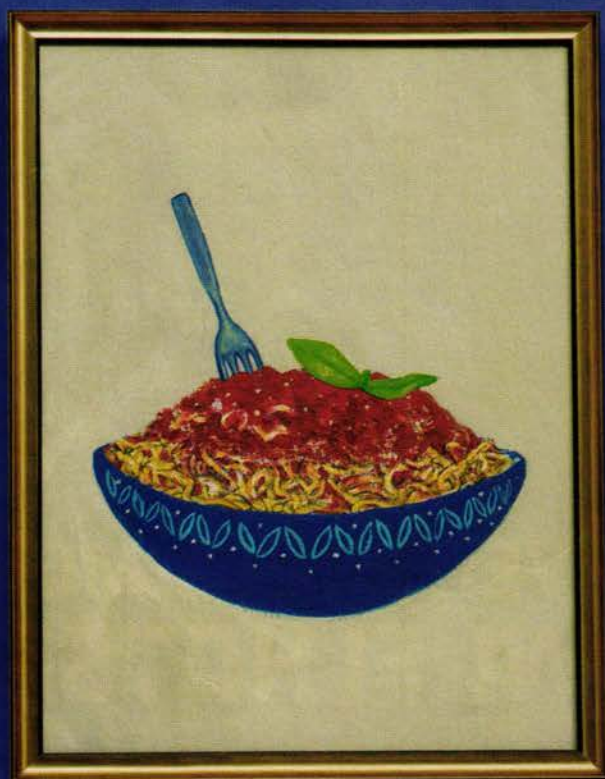
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OCTOBER 2014

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THIS OLD HOUSE OCTOBER 2014

100%  
reader-  
created  
issue

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Cover Photograph by WENDELL T. WEBBER  
Styling by MARIELLEN MELKER

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PHOTOS: (CLOCKWISE FROM TOP) HELEN NORMAN; WENDELL T. WEBBER; RYAN BEINY



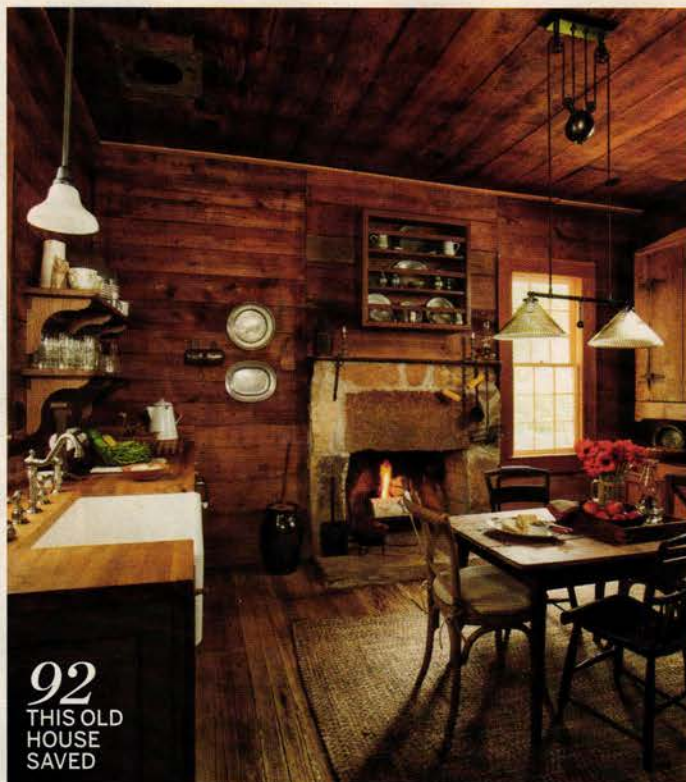
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THIS OLD HOUSE OCTOBER 2014

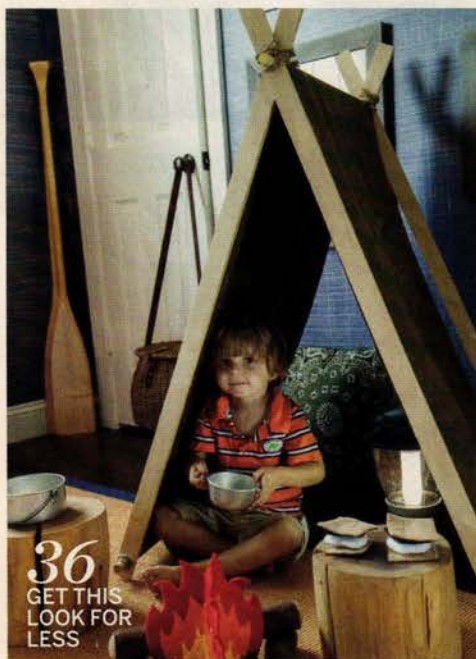


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GET THIS  
LOOK FOR  
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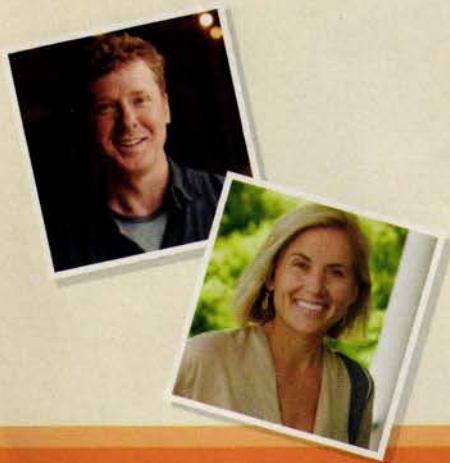
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# Kitchen Solutions

An all-new online mini-series from the producers of *This Old House*!



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# Reader mail

WE LOVE HEARING *TOH* readers' stories about remodeling. We saved some recent favorites to share in this special reader-created issue. The words of the homeowners below are a sample of many that made us reflect and laugh and remember that home improvement is so much more than just boards and nails and drywall.



### "It changed who we are"

Ever hear that song "Where the Green Grass Grows"?

For our first home, it was our dream to live the simple life, to escape the city. We wanted a garden, an orchard, a shop for my husband Justin's cars, open space for dogs and kids to run. We wanted goats named after *The Andy Griffith Show* characters. So we bought the farm.

The hardest part of our remodel was that overwhelming sense of despair when you have no idea what you're doing and are completely burned out. The best part? It changed who we are. We have become more well-rounded, more humble, and a better team as husband

and wife. We learned we were capable of any job if we were determined and worked together. I love cooking in my new kitchen, hosting big crowds in our new dining room, and not lugging laundry up and down the stairs. Most of all I love that we are living our dream, and the journey that has been.

—Megan Moore TAYLORSVILLE, GA.,  
VIA THISOLDHOUSE.COM



### "I can do this"

My husband, Mark, decided on buying our 1920 bungalow because he looked around and said, "I can do this." He gutted, patched, scraped, drilled, stapled, glued, dug up, filled in, ran wires, cut pipes, painted, stained, and rebuilt or custom-built everything he could. He worked on the house right up until the summer before he had a bone-marrow transplant, when he was so tired that he could barely lift his drill. He fought this battle the way he approached his life: Do it right or don't do it at all. But it was not to be. He passed away in February.

He left me a legacy of love, sweat, and tears (yes, blood too), and every day I feel an overwhelming sense of him and all he did to make this home for me. I look around and I remember every job and who did it. The house isn't done yet and probably never will be, but I will continue to be its caretaker as I tackle the jobs to come: landscaping, a bathroom redo, electrical upgrades, and a flat roof he never got to, which, of course, is leaking.



Megan and Justin Moore did most of the work themselves on their Georgia farmhouse.





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\*As reported in the Alliance for Audited Media June 2014 Publisher's Statement



## Reader mail

Thank you for the love of home you share with us in *TOH*. It is your legacy to your family and they feel it, no matter how exasperating it gets sometimes.

Now, do I want a roll roof or a rubber membrane, and *why* are these terms part of my vocabulary???

—Cathy Hines CHICOPEE, MASS.

### “Family, Friends, TOH, and Google”

My wife, Nola, and I—with the help of many friends—started a full tear-out of our soon-to-be-new home recently. I am so thankful I had a jack-of-all-trades dad who taught me so many skills. Along with my memories of him, I have years of watching *TOH* TV that have taught me well.

As Nola and I say: “*Family, Friends, TOH, and Google... Grant us the courage to fix the things we can, the humility to call in the pros when we are in over our heads, and the wisdom to know the difference!*”

—Wray Bassett DOVER, PA.



### “I haven’t even seen it yet”

During my recent 12-month deployment to Afghanistan, your show was my stress release. Growing up, I spent a lot of time building with my grandfather—a master carpenter and my hero. Carpentry has always been my outlet, and every time I build something, I think of him. I recently bought my first house, in Maryland. I haven’t even seen it yet, but I have so many projects to do. Since my grandfather isn’t here anymore, I turned to *TOH* for advice. Every day after work I would log on to YouTube and go straight to the videos on the *TOH* channel. Thank you for making my deployment easier and for all the knowledge.

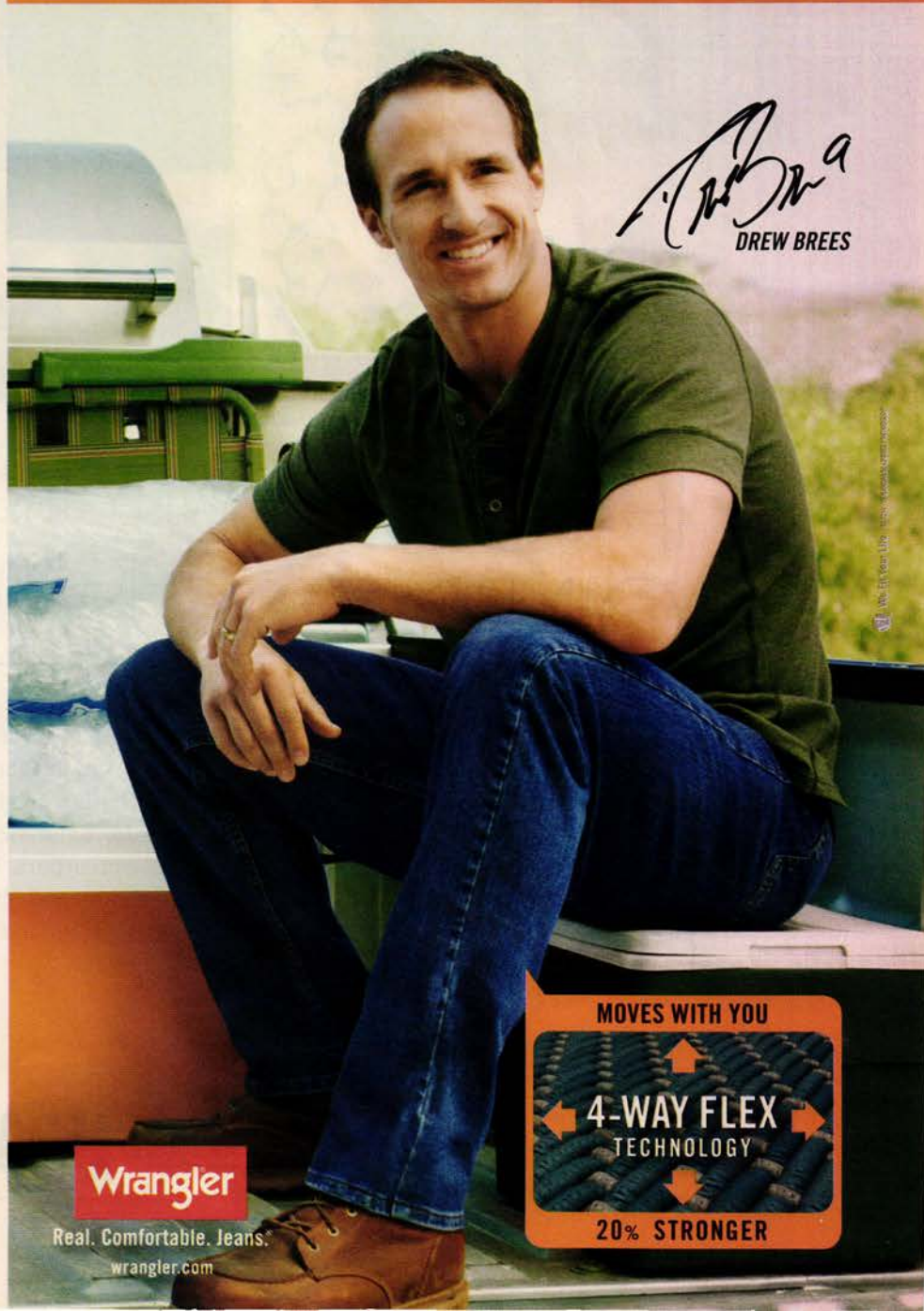
—Sgt. Joshua Schneider BY E-MAIL

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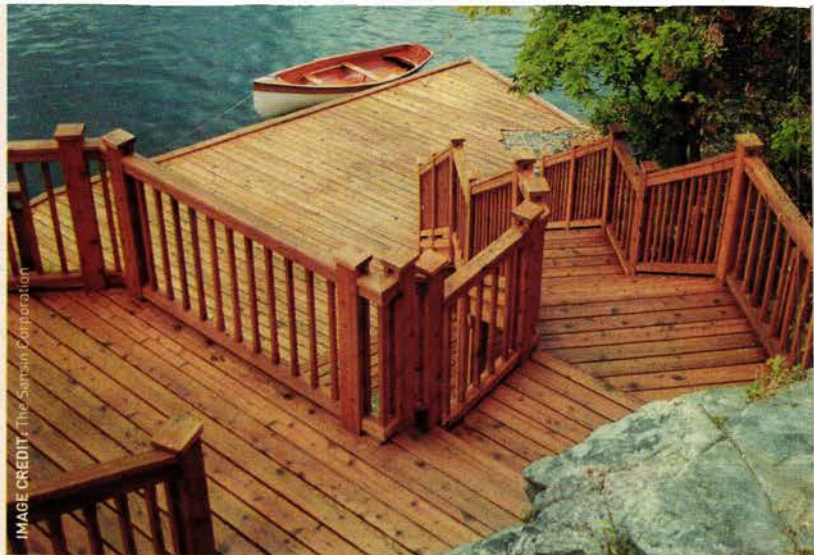
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# Letter

FROM THIS OLD HOUSE

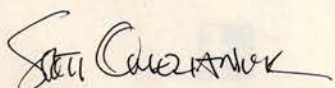
## You're committed. As in, kinda insane

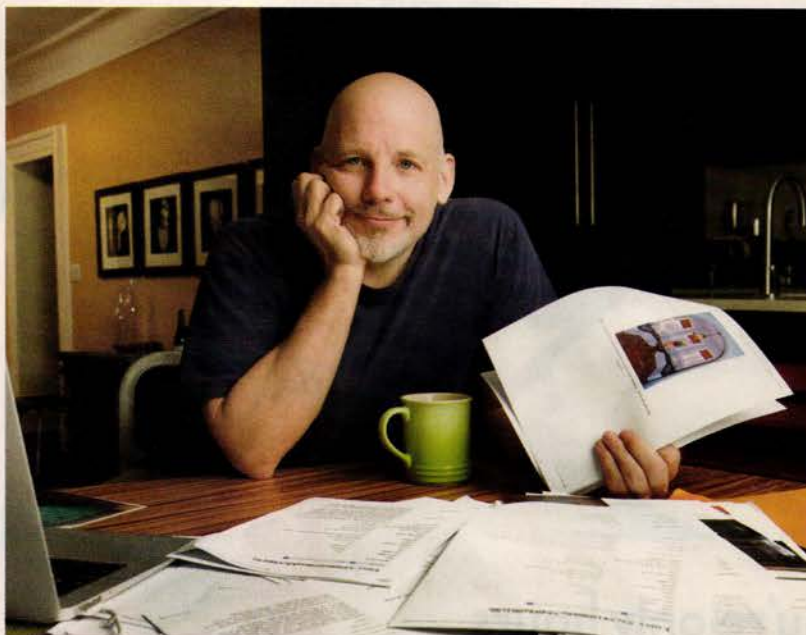
Sometimes I think about you all, and it makes me wonder about the readers of other magazines. I wonder if the reader of *Vogue* designs and sews her own couture. I ask myself, do the people who read *Bon Appétit* don a toque and clogs and cook a hundred meals a night and yell like Gordon Ramsay? Does the reader of *Popular Science* slip into crazy-inventor mode, put on those dark goggles and stare at glowing beakers, trying to perform cold fusion experiments in his or her basement?

In the main, I'm gonna say no to all of the above. And that, I think, is what makes all of you special. Because you, in fact, do the home-improvement equivalent of those things. You engage with the subject matter of *This Old House* in a way that readers of any other magazine—and especially other home magazines—would never do. It's amazing. Or, to put it another way, insane.

And we love you for it.

The editors here at TOH see the passionate hands-on, hire-it-out, do-whatever-it-takes-to-make-a-house-a-home spirit that our six-and-a-half-million readers have, and we are awed by it. Happens every year at this time, when we pore over your letters to pull all your work together for your reader-created issue. It's on every page, with people like Sheryl Kindle Fullner and David Lebel, who would just not let illness or injury stop them in their quest to make a better place to live (see page 86). Or Darleen Young, who wouldn't let a power outage keep her from making Christmas dinner: She used a cordless drill to whip up her mashed sweet potatoes. And it's certainly there in the story about Tom Peterson, the winner of this year's Search for America's Best Remodel, who not only quit his day job to overhaul his New Jersey farmhouse but also bought the equipment and taught himself to make miles of molding for the place. He deserves the \$5,000 grand prize for that. Elsewhere, there's Brett Youmans, who finds time to be a flight attendant and weed 17 backyard garden beds and has also put in the work to win remodeling awards through the years for virtually every room in his house, including the bath we're featuring on page 80. I couldn't compete with that record. Oh, but there is one record my wife is worried I will be able to compete with: Joe Landsberger's. His remodel has lasted for 35 years—and counting.

  
SCOTT OMELIANUK, EDITOR  
scott@thisoldhouse.com



The editor mulls the merits of some of the 2,418 entries sent in by readers like you to help us make this issue.



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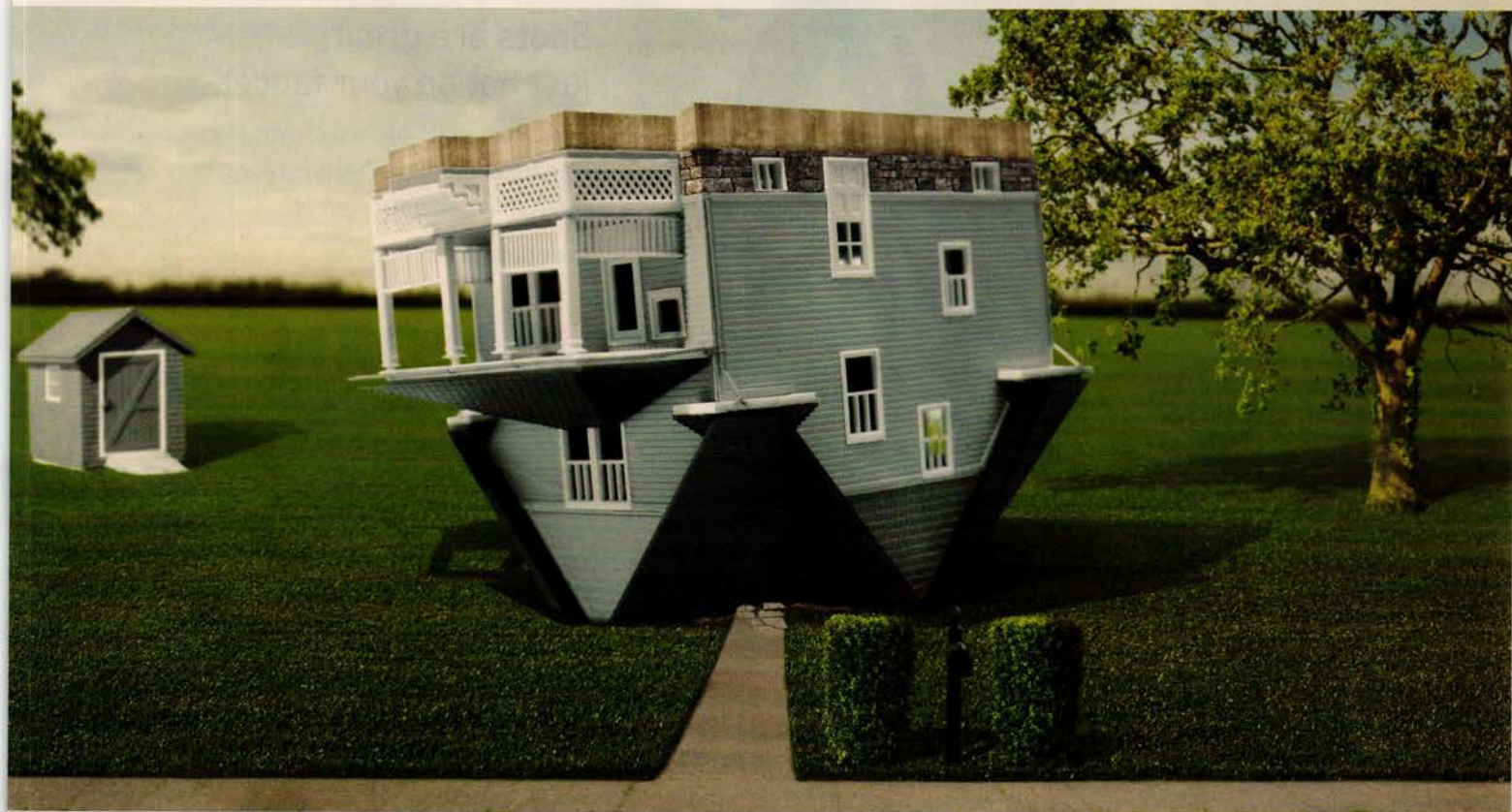
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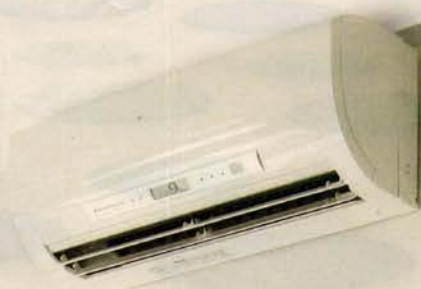


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# home solutions

Edited by Michelle Brunner

INSIDE

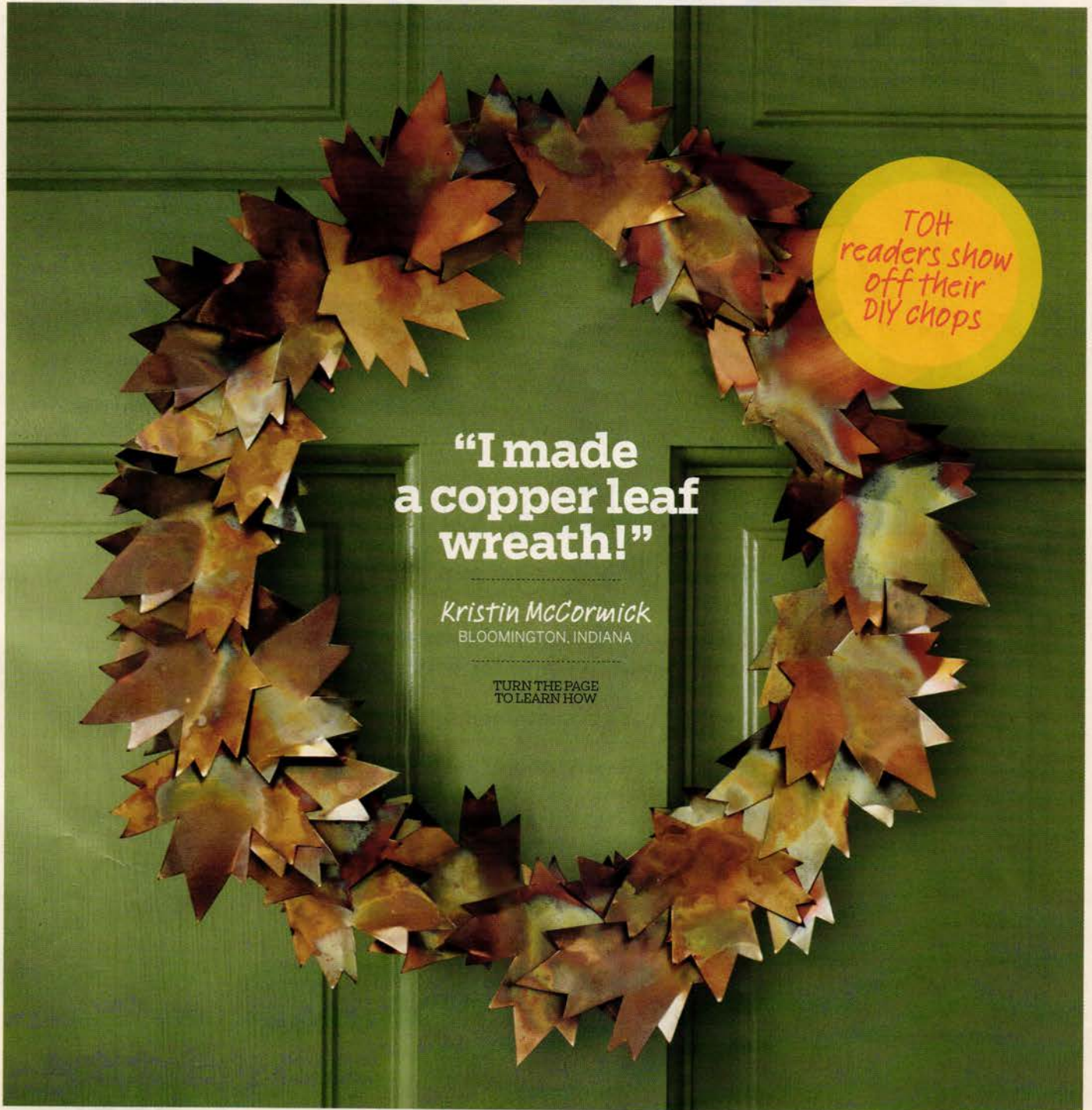
SPACE-SAVERS

BUDGET TIPS

EASY UPGRADE

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MORE



TOH  
readers show  
off their  
DIY chops

**"I made  
a copper leaf  
wreath!"**

*Kristin McCormick*  
BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA

TURN THE PAGE  
TO LEARN HOW





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## Copper leaf wreath how-to

(CONTINUED)



**Kristin McCormick**

BLOOMINGTON,  
INDIANA

Don't ever say that jewelry designer Kristin McCormick doesn't rise to a challenge. During a routine crafts competition with her female relatives, she came up with a wreath design (previous page) inspired by the breathtaking fall foliage near her southern Indiana home. She made her maple leaves from leftover copper sheeting she had on hand, but you can replicate the look from the materials below for about \$50. Here's how she did it.

**1.** Draw leaf forms onto thin, pliable copper sheeting or flashing, and cut them out with scissors. To give them some color variation, burnish the copper by quickly running a propane torch over the metal. Let cool. For deeper color, keep repeating. Bend the individual leaves gently to give them some dimension.

**2.** To make a base for the wreath, thread wire through copper refrigeration coil to form a circle, leaving enough wire to make a loop to hang the wreath (you could also use a wire wreath form). With a hammer, pound the base of the copper wreath flat.

**3.** Using a hot-glue gun, affix the leaf forms to the wreath base, layering them so that the base is completely covered.

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## Standout storage

Whether reimagining awkward nooks or bringing much-needed order to cluttered spaces, TOH readers are home-organization heroes. Check out your clever handiwork here. —JEREMY LANGE



### Not a single inch wasted

"After designing a custom double vanity for our master bath, we were left with almost 6 inches of space on each side. My wife had the idea for spice-rack-style storage, so I built these pullouts."

—Thom Fiore

ORADELL, NEW JERSEY



### New idea in window dressing

"When we lost a bedroom window to our master suite addition, we decided to turn it into a focal point. My father-in-law constructed the shelves, and we added trim and corner pieces, which we picked up for less than \$25."

—Jill Blackmon BOAZ, ALABAMA



### Decorative and handy, too!

"Using corbels and beadboard from the lumberyard and shelves from another project, I created open shelving in my kitchen. I love seeing my favorite dishes in their own special places. Even the coffee cups hang from hooks, so they're easy to grab."

—Jeanne King CAZENOVIA, NEW YORK



### Best. Gift. Ever.

"For my fortieth birthday, I asked for better organization. Fortunately, my husband's a weekend carpenter, so he designed and built these lockers in our mudroom using plywood and poplar. They corral the kids' backpacks and hide their shoes. They even give me back a bit of my sanity."

—Heather Whalen WORTHINGTON, OHIO



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BARGAINS  
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ABOUT



**Jaime Scott**  
FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

**ITEM:** Vintage buffet turned teal coffee bar (shown at left)

**PRICE:** \$145

"I knew this sideboard would be perfect for our kitchen—it just needed paint. And it was a lot cheaper than buying extra cabinets."



**Kat Hertzler**  
NARVON, PENNSYLVANIA

**ITEM:** Drop-in bathtub

**PRICE:** \$85

"I couldn't believe we found a tub for this price. It was the best deal in our bath reno."



**Jennifer Cline**  
RAVENNA, OHIO

**ITEM:** Shaws white farmhouse sink

**PRICE:** \$50

"It has a small hairline crack, but that's almost totally hidden by the countertop. It was definitely worth it!"



**Kathleen Nutter**  
SEVERNA PARK, MARYLAND

**ITEM:** Granite counters

**PRICE:** \$200

"We purchased several slabs of granite from a restaurant in Baltimore, then my husband learned to cut them from an online tutorial."



**Darla and Greg Krause**  
CHICAGO

**ITEM:** Kitchen cabinets (19 uppers, nine lowers), quartz countertops, and pendant lights

**PRICE:** \$2,425

"Our cabinets came with countertops and tons of extras. We couldn't have gotten the same deal anywhere else."



**Paul Ferrari**  
BILLERICA, MASSACHUSETTS

**ITEM:** Two sets of upholstered booths

**PRICE:** \$40

"The restaurant banquettes were in mint condition. They're perfect for my man cave."

## How you score on Craigslist

When it comes to shopping online for a renovation, Craigslist is often the place TOH readers hit up first. Here are a few of your tried-and-true strategies.

→ **CHECK OFTEN AND CHANGE YOUR KEYWORDS:** "It takes a lot of persistence," says Greg Krause, who used a free iPhone app (cPro craigslist client) to search multiple areas for kitchen cabinets every day. Using related terms, like *kitchen counter*, helped him hunt up hidden offerings.

→ **INQUIRE ABOUT ADD-ONS:** If you're buying kitchen cabinets, ask for touch-up paint the owners might have on hand so that you'll be able to conceal any bumps and bruises the cabinets sustain in the installation process. Asking for the extra pieces to go with any purchase can save you future headaches.

→ **SHARE YOUR WISH LIST:** Sellers might have other items they haven't gotten a chance to list yet, so it doesn't hurt to ask. For instance, if you're buying a toilet, ask the seller if he may be parting with a sink or a tub in the near future.

→ **KNOW WHEN TO WALK AWAY:** For items like wet-location can lights for a bath, which are fairly inexpensive to begin with, save the hassle by buying new.

→ **GO THE EXTRA MILE:** Increase the distance you're willing to drive—by about 200 miles. "We bought a door in Indiana for \$200 that would have been listed at \$1,500 or \$2,000 in Chicago," says Greg. "It took a little more time, but we made up for it in savings." —MEGAN BAKER



**Panasonic**

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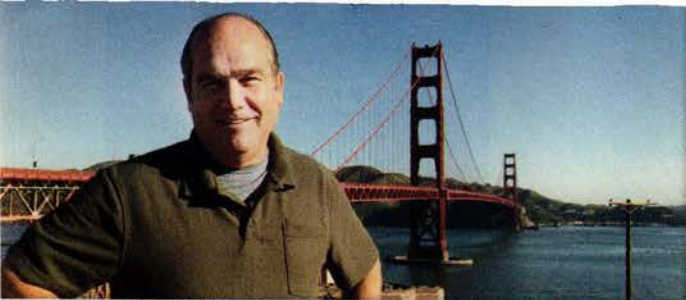
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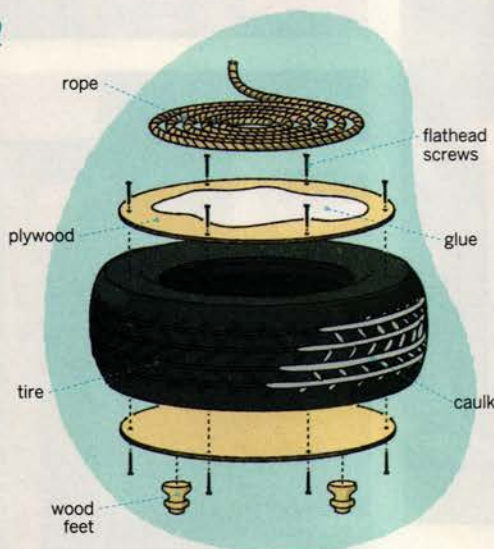


## DIY rope ottoman



**Denise Rodriguez**  
SEATTLE

Inspired by her years living aboard a fishing boat, Denise Rodriguez wanted to add a coastal element to her living room. "I fell in love with an abaca ottoman, but it was too expensive, so I made my own," she says. With a little patience and a lot of glue, Denise created a statement piece from a used tire she got for free (you may want to rinse off yours with diluted bleach) and  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch manila rope. For her how-to, read on.



→ Cut two circles of plywood  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches smaller than the diameter of the tire. Using six flathead screws, affix the plywood to the tire. Taper the wood's edges with a palm sander.

→ Fill in the treads with caulk to create a smooth surface for the rope; let dry.

→ Spread a layer of construction adhesive on the plywood, then use a hot-glue gun to secure the end of the rope to the center of the plywood and begin coiling. Wind the rope, gluing as you go; let dry.

→ Screw in wood furniture feet (\$6 each at home centers) to elevate the ottoman to coffee-table height. —RUSSELL WILLOUGHBY

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## Ways you wowed us

From a secret passage to a schoolhouse turned guest cottage, these seven projects prove once again that there's no shortage of creativity when TOH readers remodel. —KATELIN HILL

### Tin coved ceiling

"We were inspired by an antiques store my husband and I like to frequent, where the whole place is done with tin. I liked the idea of having tin as an accent, so we had a beam moved, in order to put the recess in the ceiling, and chose a chrome finish."

—*Sue Pratt* PITTSFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS



### Eclectic guest cottage

"The little cottage on our property, which was used as a schoolhouse many years ago, had such a unique architectural style. We wanted to preserve the great details, like the flared roof. We jacked up the house and made it level, replaced many shingles, repaired the original windows, and installed Bermuda shutters for a little extra charm."

—*Michael Solari* DELAND, FLORIDA



### Secret passage

"The shelving in the living room swings out to give access to my office upstairs. I did all the millwork myself out of sapelli wood and designed the staircase to accommodate the tight space. There's 200 square feet behind the fireplace you'd never know was there."

—*Stephen Forman*  
AMHERST, NEW YORK





### Intricate Italianate

"We wanted to do this beautiful old house justice. I climbed up scaffolding 20 feet high to work on the exterior, even though I'm terrified of heights. We cleaned up the brick and painted it white, and used three shades of gray to bring out the original details."

—Brett Youmans READING, PENNSYLVANIA



### Outdoor oasis

"We had a bare backyard with uneven terrain, but now it's a cozy terrace, perfect for entertaining. We especially love the fireplace mantel, which was milled from a cypress tree grown on a property that's been in our family for over 100 years."

—Lisa and Chris Barr  
RUSTON, LOUISIANA



### Historical brick floor

"We knew we wanted the look of traditional New Orleans brick, like you'd see on the sidewalks 100 years ago. So we collected bricks from neighbors and Craigslist—we even found some under our garden beds—and laid them all by hand."

—Ryan Patrick NEW ORLEANS

### Problem-solving shelving

"The built-ins in our daughter's room were my husband's brainchild. We had a wall with awkward angles, and an odd bumpout for the HVAC and ductwork that couldn't be moved. Now, with a window seat and some crown molding, it's a focal point."

—Heather Thibodeau  
IJAMSVILLE, MARYLAND





# They gut-rehabbed a bath for \$877

An opened-up layout and all new finishes and fixtures take a full bath from dreary to cottage-charming



before

**BEFORE** Speckled paneling and an interior wall made the space feel small and dark. **AFTER** Removing the wall that enclosed the toilet room helped open up the space, and stealing 1 foot from the room next door for the tub surround opened up a sunny window. Minty-green walls and vintage-style finishes throughout give the room a fresh look.



\$0 upcycled  
DIY rope shelf

\$2 floor-  
model sink



Angie  
and Colby  
Campbell  
BREWER, MAINE

**RENOVATING THE ONLY BATHROOM** in the house can be crippling. That's why Angie and Colby Campbell set to work whipping their lone bath into shape before they even unpacked the moving boxes in their new 1910 Colonial Revival, in Brewer, Maine. First to go was the dingy paneling and vinyl flooring; next they tore out the wall partitioning off the toilet room. They pried out the old pink cast-iron tub

before bumping the shower space 1 foot into the adjacent office to annex the window and brighten the bath. After Colby popped in the new acrylic tub, Angie added subway tiles to the shower walls and hex tiles underfoot. New baseboards and MDF beadboard on the ceiling help further the vintage cottage look. Angie found a sturdy wood buffet on Craigslist that the couple converted into a vanity and installed perpendicular to the old sink's spot. She painted it gray and screwed in new porcelain knobs before painting the walls a retro minty green. New lighting, plus a DIY mirror and rope shelves, finish the space. The result is a soothing retreat—and the couple's favorite space. "Everything was boxed in before," says Angie. "Now it feels a thousand times bigger and more luxurious." —MEGAN BAKER

## THE PROJECT TALLY

Tore out old paneling and flooring, removing the wall enclosing the toilet and bumping out the back wall of the tub/shower by 1 foot ..... \$80

Installed a new acrylic tub, showerhead, and tub filler ..... \$260

Tiled the shower and the floor ..... \$300

Added new baseboard, plus MDF beadboard on the sloped ceiling ..... \$70

Scored a used buffet on Craigslist that the couple painted and converted to a vanity ..... \$82

Painted the walls a soft green ..... \$50

Installed overhead lighting, to brighten the space, and a new vanity light ..... \$25

Trimmed a plain mirror with scrap wood, then made a rustic wood-and-rope shelf using salvaged wood found in the basement ..... \$10

**TOTAL** ..... **\$877**



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# You've got pull(s)

From curvy classics to sleeker updates, today's bin pulls run the style gamut

BY MEGAN BAKER + PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK LUND



**Danielle Pratt**

HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS

"I wanted something sturdy for our deep kitchen drawers."

**SCOURING THE** thousands of entries in this year's Search for America's Best Remodel, we saw bin pulls pop up in kitchens and bathrooms alike. These alternatives to traditional handles caught on in the mid-1800s, thanks to an ergonomic shape that lends extra heft when opening deep drawers. Simple originals gave way to fancy scrollwork versions, angular Craftsman styles, and curvy Art Deco models. Here and on the following pages, find 19 of our favorite current styles, inspired by you.

## 1> botanical border

HICKORY HARDWARE

Made of: Zinc with an aged-brass finish

Size: 3 inches center to center

Highlights: Rope detailing and dainty florals evoke French country style. \$6.88; wayfair.com

## 2> classic cup

ATLAS HOMEWARES

Made of: Zinc with an oil-rubbed-bronze finish

Size: 2½ inches center to center

Highlights: Faux exposed screwheads add casual cool to vintage-style half-moon pulls. \$8.92; atlashomewares.com

## 3> sleek silver

AMEROCK

Made of: Zinc with a satin-nickel finish

Size: 3¾ inches center to center

Highlights: The industrial look is softened by a weathered finish. \$6.76; hghhardware.com

hardware that packs a style punch





4



#### 4> fluted shape

SCHAUB & COMPANY

Made of: Zinc with a bronze finish

Size: 3 inches center to center

Highlights: An elegant, Art Deco-style mix of straight lines and soft curves.

\$9.16; atgstores.com

5



#### 5> aged look

LAUREY CABINET HARDWARE

Made of: Iron with a pewter finish

Size: About 2½ inches center to center

Highlights: Refined design and a roughened finish lend an antique feel.

\$5.90; build.com

6



#### 6> squared off

HICKORY HARDWARE

Made of: Zinc with a bronze finish

Size: 3 inches center to center

Highlights: Angular pulls are right at home with simple Shaker-style cabinets.

\$5.91; wayfair.com

7



#### 7> backplated

HOUSE OF ANTIQUE HARDWARE

Made of: Sheet steel with a black finish

Size: 3¼ inches center to center

Highlights: This authentic reproduction of a popular early-20th-century design shows off exposed screwheads.

\$4.89; houseofantiquehardware.com

8



#### 8> long and lean

SIRO DESIGNS

Made of: Zinc alloy with a brass finish

Size: 3¼ inches center to center

Highlights: Art Nouveau-style ovals offer a slender profile, perfect for a vanity.

\$4.47; myknobs.com

9



#### 9> stately scrolls

BOSETTI-MARELLA

Made of: Brass with an antiqued-bronze finish

Size: 2½ inches center to center

Highlights: Baroque details make this pull a showstopper.

\$7.14; wayfair.com

10



#### 10> warm glow

LIBERTY HARDWARE

Made of: Zinc alloy

Size: 3 inches center to center

Highlights: The shiny copper finish takes center stage on an elongated version of the classic.

\$4.32; homedepot.com

11



#### 11> basketweave

TOP KNOBS

Made of: Zinc with an antiqued-bronze finish

Size: 1½ inches center to center

Highlights: Diminutive size keeps intricate details jewel-like for a small drawer.

\$6.90; thebuilderssupply.com

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### 12> roped in

RICHELIEU HARDWARE

Made of: Zinc alloy

Size: About 3¼ inches center to center

Highlights: A twisted border adds detail to this plain pull.

\$4.31; myknobs.com

### 13> mirror magic

MARTHA STEWART LIVING

Made of: Polished nickel

Size: 3 inches center to center

Highlights: Shiny chrome and a boxy shape can go contemporary or vintage.

\$5.49; homedepot.com

### 14> scalloped edges

CAL CRYSTAL

Made of: Brass with an oil-rubbed-bronze finish

Size: 3½ inches center to center

Highlights: Exposed screwheads bring a bit of an edge to this sculptural style.

\$7; build.com

### 15> a hint of copper

LIBERTY HARDWARE

Made of: Zinc alloy

Size: 3 inches center to center

Highlights: Copper accents give straight edges extra dimension.

\$4.48; homedepot.com

### 16> Victorian style

HOUSE OF ANTIQUE HARDWARE

Made of: Unlacquered brass

Size: About 3 inches center to center

Highlights: A cast motif recalls 1890s Eastlake designs.

\$6.19; houseofantiquehardware.com

### 17> sleek curves

SIGNATURE HARDWARE

Made of: Brass with an antiqued-bronze finish

Size: 3¾ inches center to center

Highlights: Soft yet substantial, an oval pull looks classic yet new.

\$5.95; signaturehardware.com

### 18> weathered copper

DYNASTY HARDWARE

Made of: Zinc alloy

Size: 3 inches center to center

Highlights: An antiqued finish and pitted surface create a timeworn look.

\$3.17; homehardwareexpo.com

### 19> dark detailing

RESTORATION HARDWARE

Made of: Solid brass with an oil-rubbed-bronze finish

Size: 3¼ inches center to center

Highlights: Intricate designs give this pull presence. \$9; restorationhardware.com

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# She serves it sunny-side up

Homemade stencil + primer + paint = brand-new floor

BY DEBORAH BALDWIN

how to  
cook up  
a new floor  
finish



**Lori Dunbar**

SHEBOYGAN, WISCONSIN

"This was a chance to do something creative."

**WHEN LORI DUNBAR** pulled up her sunroom carpet, then the four more layers of flooring and underlayments beneath it, she was surprised to uncover not the hard maple found elsewhere in the house but battered pine. "And it was in really rough shape," she says. "So I thought, *This is a chance to do something creative.*" A graphic designer by trade, Lori used Adobe Illustrator software to tweak a blossom design she found online, making it larger and more stylized. This would be her template for a hand-cut foam-core stencil, with dots between the petals to serve not only as a flourish but also as a guide for lining up the stencil as she moved it across the floor. After a pro sanded the floor, Lori put down a coat of primer, followed by three coats of porch-and-floor paint in glossy egg-yolk yellow. Starting in the middle of the room, she used a small paintbrush and white paint to fill in the pattern, using just one coat for an aged look. Two coats of polyurethane provided added scuff protection. "The motif is beautiful on its own," says Lori. "And the color is so cheerful. No wonder everyone loves this room." ■



## FOR THE STEP-BY-STEP

To find Lori Dunbar's template and how-to, scan this page with the Blippar app or go to [thisoldhouse.com/oct2014](http://thisoldhouse.com/oct2014)





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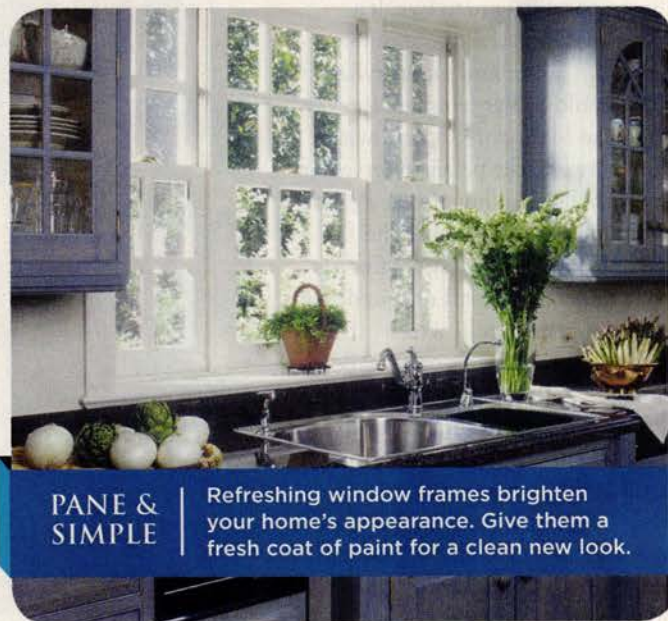
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# This kid camps out at home

Rustic finds, vintage wares, and handmade touches animate the living quarters of a little explorer

BY KATHRYN O'SHEA-EVANS + PHOTOGRAPHS BY HELEN NORMAN



## Heather and Dave Thibodeau

IJAMSVILLE, MARYLAND

"He's got a lot of spunk, and now his room reflects that."

**CALL IT ONE PART** Adirondack lodge, one part Boy Scout den. The bedroom Heather and Dave Thibodeau put together for their 3-year-old son, Hudson, demonstrates yet again how DIY can really deliver. The couple used a denim decorative painting technique to color the walls, fashioned a tent from an army blanket, and saved money by scouring resale shops, Etsy, and eBay for woodsy elements, such as tree-stump seats and an antler chandelier. "We also made sure to include quirky pops of color, like the orange desk and pillows, to keep things playful and childlike," says Heather. Read on for ways to ready a room for your own wild thing.

### patchwork madras drapes

Hudson's grandmother sewed his curtains from vintage remnant fabric. This version has a blackout lining—ideal for midday naps. \$69 for a 44-by-63-inch curtain; [potterybarnkids.com](http://potterybarnkids.com)



### ship-style sconce

In stainless steel and glass, this light strikes the same note as the homeowner's pricier version. \$65; [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

*mom and dad  
brought the  
outdoors in*





get this look  
for less

### bandanna pillows

Sew your own cowhand cushion covers from 20-inch-square bandannas (the ideal size for 16-inch-square pillows) in long-wearing polyester. \$11 for a dozen bandannas; [orientaltrading.com](http://orientaltrading.com)



### antler chandelier

Lighting made from deer racks evokes mountain-lodge interiors. This resin version gets the job done at a fraction of the price. \$189; [homedepot.com](http://homedepot.com). Linen lamp shades, \$4.98 each; [lowes.com](http://lowes.com)

### orange desk

Find an old teacher's desk at a thrift shop—or pick up and paint this pine number. Desk, \$279; [ikea.com](http://ikea.com). Valspar's Autumn Blaze, \$42 per gallon; at Lowe's stores



### camp blanket

Oregon-made Pendleton blankets are a Wild West staple. This one is a wool-and-cotton blend, which softens the feel—and the price. Starting at \$109; [pendleton-usa.com](http://pendleton-usa.com)



### no-frills chair

In anodized aluminum, this industrial-style seat echoes the homeowners' flea-market find at left. The brushed silvery finish gives it old-school patina. \$100; [crateandbarrel.com](http://crateandbarrel.com)

### sleek storage

"Toys, diapers, and clothes get hidden in the drawers; good-looking books get displayed on the shelves," Heather says of Hudson's hutch. \$155; [ikea.com](http://ikea.com)



### denim walls

The Thibodeaus painted over a base coat of Behr's Vermont Cream with Sherwin-Williams's Indigo Batik mixed with clear glaze. Running over it top to bottom and side to side with a linen weaver brush created the textured look. Paint, from \$32 per gallon; at paint stores





• **get this look  
for less**



### wood oars

The Thibodeaus found their vintage paddles online, but we like the price of these new varnished models. \$10 each; [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)

### vintage-sign art

For graphic punch, the homeowners mounted cotton dish towels printed with retro fishing scenes in wood frames. Set of four towels, \$32; [antiquekitchen.com](http://antiquekitchen.com). Pine-look frame, \$21; [wayfair.com](http://wayfair.com)

### vintage creel

An angler's shoulder-slung wicker basket serves as a catchall for Hudson's teensy stuffed animals. We found this look-alike on eBay for \$39.

### faux campfire

This kid-friendly version of a roaring blaze (with s'mores!) is hand-stitched of felt spun from recycled plastic bottles. Three Wee Monkeys fire, \$23, and s'more, \$8; [etsy.com](http://etsy.com)



### stump seat

Contact an arborist for a slice of a downed tree you can strip of bark and then age and sand yourself. Or opt for this silky smooth, splinter- and bug-free reclaimed redwood one. Inspired By All Things stump, \$95; [etsy.com](http://etsy.com)

### DIY

**A-frame tent** What kid doesn't love a fort? To make this one, we drilled  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch holes near one end of four red oak 1x2s and inserted a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch dowel to create the frame, securing the crosspieces with jute twine. Then we cut an army blanket to size, laid it over the top, and tied off the blanket corners. Blanket, \$31; [galaxyarmynavy.com](http://galaxyarmynavy.com) ■



PHOTOS: (COURTESY) PILLOWS, CHANDELIER, BLANKET, ART, OARS, VINTAGE CREEL, STUMP SEAT, FAUX CAMPFIRE.





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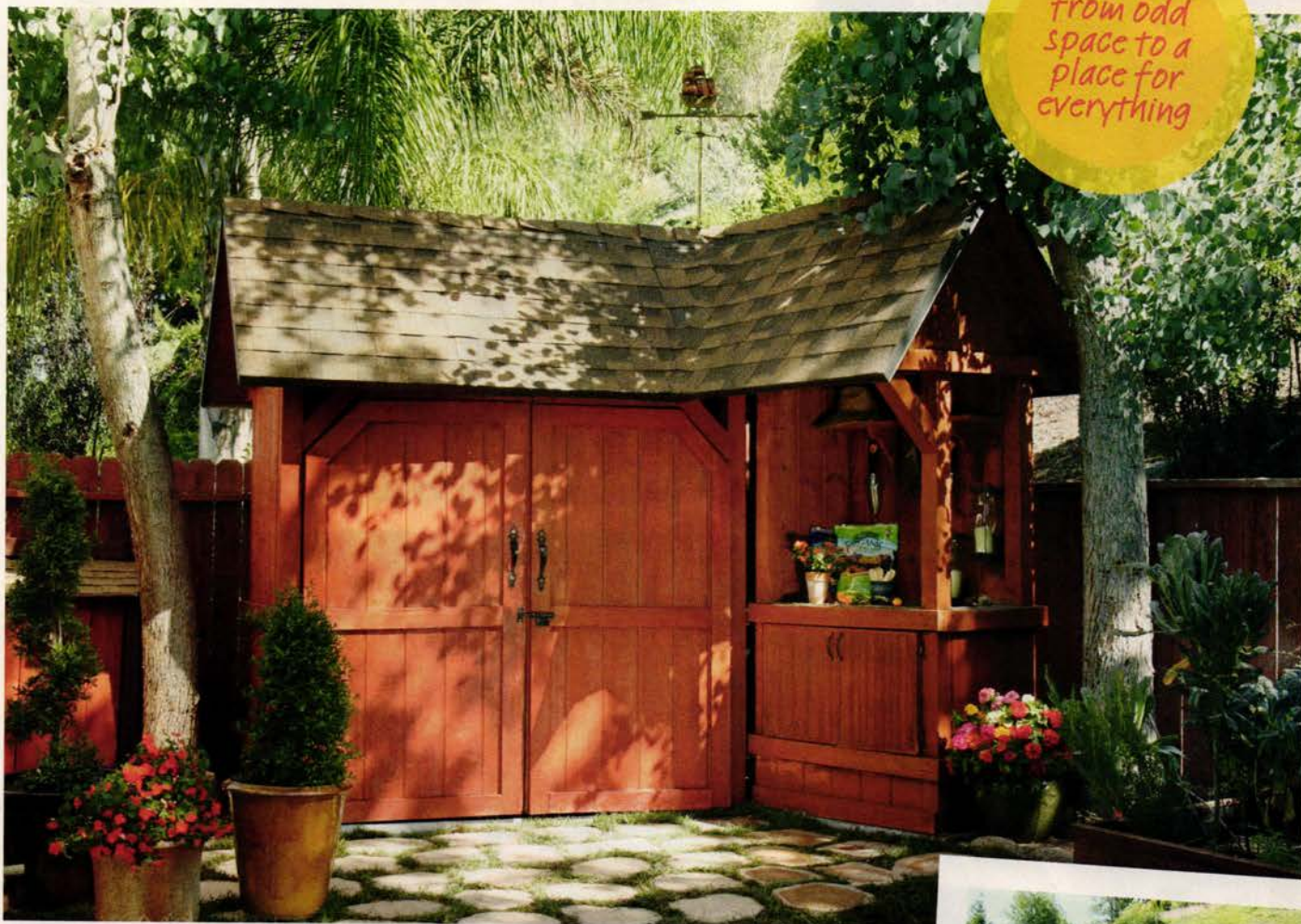
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# He's got a head for sheds

A yen for a garden shed in an awkward backyard corner led this design-savvy homeowner to build one his way BY KATE KARAM

from odd  
space to a  
place for  
everything



**Alan Cusolito**

LAGUNA HILLS, CALIFORNIA

"I wanted a shed that was a focal point, not an eyesore."

**SQUARE PEG, ROUND HOLE?** No problem for an industrial designer like Alan Cusolito. When he spied a photo of a fanciful L-shaped outbuilding that wouldn't quite fit along his fence, he simply applied his engineering skills

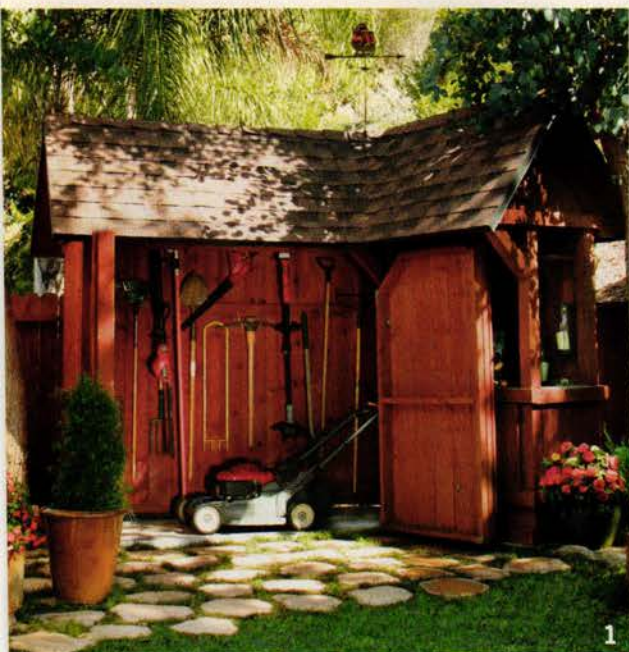
to create his own version. He rejiggered the inspirational shed's perfectly perpendicular shape to accommodate the 110-degree angle of his lot so that the wing that houses a potting table could follow his lot line exactly. The 9-by-7-by-3-foot structure not only fits snugly, it has storybook character to spare. Constructed of 2x4s and half-inch interlocking pressure-treated panels, the entire unit is screwed together to make it easy to relocate, if need be. Alan dove in without so much as a measured drawing. "I really just winged it and had it framed in 2 hours," he says. "From there, it came together easily and quickly." With a budget of about \$2,000, this project has proved to be a sound investment; Alan now builds custom backyard escapes for other lucky gardeners.



before

**BEFORE** With nowhere else on the property to locate a shed, Alan had to make the obtuse angle of this corner work. **AFTER** Stained a rich redwood hue, the outbuilding provides ample storage and serves as an eye-catching focal point in the yard.





1



2

1] The interior of Alan's shed holds yard tools and equipment; a loft space under the roof provides even more storage for lawn chairs and holiday decorations. 2] Referencing the ocean, five miles away, Alan chose a galleon weather vane to cap off the shed. 3] Clad with copper sheeting, this potting table and the cabinet below keep gardening supplies organized.



3

## More of your spiffy sheds

Renovated by TOH readers, each of these outbuildings is proof positive that while a practical bonus space, a shed can have major curb appeal, too.



**Heidi and Brent Kruse**

SIOUX FALLS, S.DAK.

"We moved and rebuilt our neighbor's garage on a \$2,000 budget. It makes a great workshop space, and it's a joy to see how perfectly it fits into our historic neighborhood."



**Stephen and Eva Carbonaro**

YARMOUTH PORT, MASS.

"It looked like a teardown, but with a few bundles of cedar shingles, new trim and paint, plus a DIY door and shutters, our shed now offers beautiful, useful storage."



**Karen and Lynn Juckett**

LITTLE ROCK, ARK.

"We each wanted different things from the shed, so when we renovated it we split the interior into two sections. His tools live in the back; the front is where the grandkids play."



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# Look what you found!

From a homemade mousetrap to a fading Civil War tintype, the oddities readers have discovered in and around their homes surprised even us BY KATHRYN O'SHEA-EVANS

accidental  
time  
capsules

## PHOTO OPS

*Steff and Jeff Condon*

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN



The Condons bought their 1918 Tudor totally ransacked. "Even the radiators and cast-iron sinks had been stolen,"

Jeff says. But they loved the floor plan and the 60 divided-light windows, so all the work, including tedious days spent scraping those painted-shut windows, was worth it. Plus, some goodies had been left behind. When Steff took a crowbar to the ceiling in the room above the garage, for instance, she discovered an unmarked paperboard box hidden between the rafters.

Inside? Two glass bottles of what they presumed to be well-aged moonshine (Michigan enacted its own prohibition in 1916) and a trove of black-and-white photos and negatives. "There's one of four guys drinking in the woods and another of them all pretending to pee outside!" Jeff says. "They're just being crazy buddies." Another find behind a closet wall: a 1934 copy of *The Case of the Curious Bride*. As for the suspected moonshine, it remains unopened.

Apparently, Steff and Jeff aren't as crazy as the previous owners.



## SOMETHING OF NOTE *David and Bonnye Good* SEYMOUR, INDIANA



Late one night, while stripping layers of wallpaper from the living room of their 1911 Craftsman, David noticed writing underneath—and got so excited that he ran upstairs to wake Bonnye.

Together they uncovered the original builder's note scrawled on the wall, with the names of the architect (Robert H. Hall), contractors (Niemeyer and Rockstroh), and even the plumber and decorator. "I added our family names at the bottom, then preserved the note under spray lacquer and conservation glass," Bonnye says. "It's a daily reminder of the care that went into creating our home."





## A STITCH IN TIME

**Cindy and David Horn** FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE



For a couple of years before they renovated their 1910 shotgun cottage, it was used for storage and filled with dusty items of yesteryear. "Mason jars, Mazola oil, and a lot of garbage, honestly!" David says. "I started hauling all the trash out to the curb, including one funky-looking La-Z-Boy. When it flipped over, there was an old quilt under the worn-out cushion—probably meant to add a bit of padding." It turned out to be not just any old coverlet: It was a faded friendship quilt with the names of many local citizens stitched in. Upon closer inspection, David spotted the names of some of his relatives in one of the triangles, including a few of his grandmother's siblings, who were an early act at the Grand Ole Opry. Because the quilt holds so many regional names, the Horns have thought about donating it to the local historical society so that everyone can enjoy it—and to help ensure that it never again winds up as a cushion.

## PIPE DOWN

**Terry McBride** HARRISBURG, MISSOURI



When Terry was replacing broken cedar siding attached with square handmade nails at the bottom of his farmhouse kitchen's exterior wall, he unearthed a red clay pipe bowl and a reed stem.

"The carpenter had to have dropped it when nailing the horizontal tongue-and-groove pine boards for the interior walls," he says. Terry knows the kitchen was added in 1852, so he dates the pipe to that time, too. Though common in the 19th century, an intact one is a rare find today. We're just glad it wasn't lit when it fell—or this whole story might have gone up in smoke.



## SHOO, FIRE, SHOO!

**Susan Hollenbeck**  
EL CAJON, CALIFORNIA



California is prone to brushfires, but Susan doesn't worry. Years ago she

found a talisman posted in the attic of an 1800s miner's cabin deep in the woods of Big Sur's Los Padres National Forest, where she was a caretaker. It was a piece of withering, yellowed paper with five words block-printed by hand that read the same forward, backward, up, and down. Known as the Sator Square, this Latin palindrome has been used to ward off evil since the Roman Empire. "It's supposed to keep the house from burning, and it must do the trick," she says, "because in 1970, a forest fire came right up to the cabin on three sides, and never burned the structure." In every house she's lived in since, she writes out the same square and hangs it in a closet. "I still haven't had a fire...and I live in Southern California!" she says. "People might think it's kind of witchy, but it seems to work."





## PROTECTED ASSETS

*Becky and Will Viall*

BELLEVILLE, ILLINOIS



When Becky and Will bought their 1904 house, the parlor's pocket doors didn't

operate properly. "Will was popping one off its track and felt an obstruction deep in the opening," Becky says. "He used an iron bar to pull out an old insurance policy. Dated 1942, it was a fur floater for 'one skunk coat, valued at \$225.' That's over three grand in today's dollars! Yes, but so-called 'American sable' was worth it, especially in brutal midwestern winters.



## UNION-MADE *Sheri and Clyde Renner* CAMP POINT, ILLINOIS



When the Renners were in the midst of what they like to call the, ahem, "Rennervation" of their 1891 Queen Anne, they uncovered crumbling, lipstick-kissed love letters from a woman named Flossy under the bedroom linoleum, and a broken child's tombstone from 1870 that they think was used to build a cistern. But some of the coolest finds must have once belonged to a Civil War officer who lived in the house. "I chanced upon a Union officer's belt buckle in the ground near the foundation," Clyde says, noting that it reads *E Pluribus Unum*. "And once, when our contractor was drilling a hole in the porch ceiling, he looked up to see a little face staring back at him! He reached up into the hole and pulled out a tintype of a Union soldier."



## CHANCE OF SHOWERS

*Lynn and Luann Coon* PARIS, IDAHO



At the time the Coons' vacation house was built—1906—there was no indoor plumbing. While renovating the bathroom, they discovered a huge wood barrel in the attic space above it. "We figured it was used to store water for baths or even showers," Luann says. The Coons ended up having to rig a makeshift pulley to lower the barrel out of the attic, using an old horseshoe and a rope. (Note: Don't try that one at home.) "Now it sits on our front porch," she says, for all the world to see. "Our neighbor's cat gave birth to a litter of kittens inside it this spring!"



## THREE CENTURIES OF SECRETS

*Richard and Amy Burchfield* PORT ROYAL, PENNSYLVANIA



If you live in a house as old as the one owned by the Burchfields—it's a log farmhouse built circa 1780—you're bound to uncover a few noteworthy artifacts of rural life. In their 40 years there, they've found everything from old newspapers to a secret closet, long boarded up and hidden away, that they like to imagine was a stop on the Underground Railroad. The Burchfields—this year's Dining Room winners, page 82—shared a few more portable objects with us (below): a homemade mousetrap they date to the 1830s that was set above a horsehair plaster-and-lath ceiling; a Hershey's Cocoa tin top (the Hershey's chocolate factory was founded about 60 miles away in 1903); a corn husker; and a wood clapper the Burchfields believe was used for applause at local theaters. The clapper may also have frightened pesky birds away from the crops, but like all these objects' true histories, time won't tell.



### MOUSETRAP

This was sitting above the kitchen ceiling—with 30-some rodent skeletons nearby.

### HERSHEY'S COCOA TIN

Someone once cut a slit in the top, perhaps to use the tin as a money jar.



### CORN HUSKER

A tool like this, used to slice open husks during the fall harvest, could be useful today, since the family grows up to 20 varieties of corn.

### WOOD CLAPPER

This may have been used at the theater—or to scare birds away from crops.



## SHEDDING NEW LIGHT

*Dennis and Corinne Girouard*

PLAINFIELD, NEW HAMPSHIRE



It's one thing to find knickknacks behind old plaster. It's quite another to stumble upon entire outbuildings. "Our oldest son was using a chain saw to tackle an especially large clump of bushes on our three-acre property and uncovered an empty gardening shed," Corinne says. They eventually fully renovated it, even adding electricity and running water. "The faucet is nicer than the one in our kitchen!"

## A SMUTTY SURPRISE

*Robin and Lynda Otey*

YAKIMA, WASHINGTON



When an electrician was stringing new wiring in the bathroom of the Oteys' 1957 ranch, he found 20 *Playboy* and *Penthouse* magazines from the mid-1980s stacked in neat piles on top of the ceiling panels. Among them: the September 1981 *Playboy* with Bo Derek on the cover and the January 1984 issue featuring the last nude photo taken of Marilyn Monroe. "We looked up their value because we were curious," Lynda says. "But they're not even worth the cover price! Besides, the 'great articles' we have now are worth so much more." ■





# Easy, Elegant DIY Decor

**W**ith a little imagination, and Minwax stains and finishes, you can transform flea-market finds and unfinished wood pieces into personal treasures. For more inspired ideas and tips on how to achieve the rich finishes shown here, visit [minwax.com/pinterest](http://minwax.com/pinterest).

## Mudroom Cubbies

Arrange three unfinished pine modules vertically along your wall and lay another in front across the floor. Top it off with a cushion for a comfortable shoe-changing station.



Pin it

## Hanging

### Photo Gallery

String colorfully framed family photos from a curtain rod for a dramatic gallery-like display.



## Bookcase Turned Into Breakfront

Add diagonal inserts to an unfinished wood bookcase and you've got a dining room breakfront or bar.

Pin it



## Smart Bed(room) Storage

Place three shelving units in a U shape on the floor, and add a piece of plywood on top for a bed frame and much-needed storage solution.

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# "TOH came to my rescue"

A longtime fan gets her dream remodel, as the crew resuscitates her Greek Revival

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANTHONY TIEULI



**Angela Daigle**

BOSTON

"I'm so excited to live in an adult house!"

WHEN PEOPLE LEARN that the guys from *This Old House* TV are renovating my 1850 brick rowhouse, in Boston's Charlestown neighborhood, the first thing they ask is what it's like behind the scenes. I laugh and think of the first time I met the whole crew. Tom, Norm, and the production team were heading over and I was still on an important conference call when I stepped into the kitchen—and right into a big pool of water. The ice maker in the freezer door had sprung a leak. I started shoving towels under the fridge, but when they soaked through, I broke into the conversation and explained what was going on. Someone reminded me to turn the shutoff valve, which I finally found in the basement; I finished mopping up just as Tom stepped through the front door. Phew!



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season  
with us!



## COZY QUARTERS

ABOVE: Built in 1850, the brick rowhouse sits on Bunker Hill in Boston's oldest neighborhood. LEFT: The TOH TV crew will work with architect Sally DeGan to maximize the house's 1,500 square feet of space. FAR LEFT: Homeowner Angela Daigle saved for nine years for her renovation.



## UPGRADING THE OLD

(1) An original marble mantel in the second-floor living room will be retrofitted with a high-efficiency gas insert. (2) A collapsed claw-foot tub rendered the guest bath unusable. It will be restored and outfitted with a shower.



Fighting floods wasn't what I had in mind when I bought my house 10 years ago. I was drawn to period details, like the pumpkin-pine floors, Greek Revival moldings, and marble mantel. But the yard, at more than 1,000 square feet—enormous for a city lot—is what really spoke to me, and to my two pugs, Louis and Petunia. Just about everything else felt like it was held together with chewing gum and duct tape. So many things had broken over time that I began to joke that my house was conspiring against me. The second-floor bath sprang a leak just after my parents had moved into the adjacent guest room for a spell. The heat waited until the coldest week of winter to conk out.

I kept paying to patch little problems but managed to squirrel away savings as I planned my dream remodel. I knew it would include a modern bath on every floor and a cozy master suite that would make coming home every night feel like checking into a swanky hotel after a long day of travel. I was already talking to other contractors when I applied to *TOH TV* on a whim. I'd been a fan since watching the remodel of another house in Charlestown years ago; I remember being so impressed at how the crew carefully restored all the plasterwork there.

I was stunned the following week when the producers called, asking to tour the house. I spent the entire weekend doing that special kind of deep cleaning you do only when someone *really* important is coming over. I was so nervous that the crew wouldn't like my plan or that they'd question why I wanted to stop at 4 feet for a



## PRESERVING THE PAST

(5) *TOH TV* general contractor Tom Silva and host Kevin O'Connor remove bricks one by one to be used later for the kitchen bumpout as cameraman Steve D'Onofrio captures footage for the show. (6) Tom takes a break during a day of demolition.



## MORE ON CHARLESTOWN

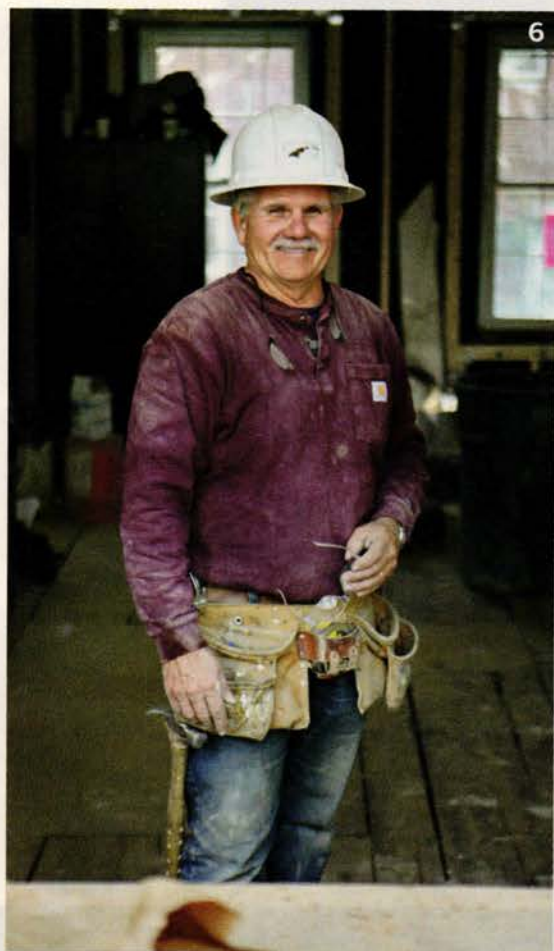
For photos, a project recap, and air dates for the season beginning on October 2, scan this page with the Blippar app or go to [thisoldhouse.com/oct2014](http://thisoldhouse.com/oct2014)





#### ALL OPENED UP

(3) The *TOH* TV crew and production team survey the first floor after removing the wall separating the kitchen and the formal dining room. (4) With jacks and steel beams supporting the upper floors, Tom and Kevin demolish the back wall on the first floor.

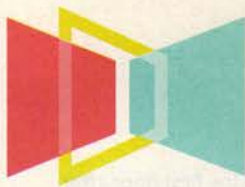


kitchen bumpout behind my 19-foot-wide rowhouse.

Contrary to all my fears, Tom and Norm totally understood how important my yard was to me and thought my shallow bumpout idea would work well. They also came up with the idea of salvaging the bricks we'd remove from the back of my house to build the small addition and suggested knocking out an abandoned chimney in the kitchen to create space. After that meeting, Tom even offered to stay and fix my leaky fridge.

I was over the moon when my house was selected. I'm living in a nearby rental during the remodel, but I come by often to see the progress. You can imagine how shocked I was when I arrived one day to find that the entire back of my house was missing, to make way for the bumpout. It's unsettling to stand in your living room and feel a breeze blowing in from your backyard. But when I saw Tom emerge from the pile of rubble and, amidst all the chaos, start to calmly pick out individual bricks to reuse, the same way most people pick out apples at the supermarket, I knew I was in good hands. And, as I often remind the crew, they saved my house before they even got to work. If I hadn't been home to meet them for that walk-through, the fridge flood could have ruined everything. ■

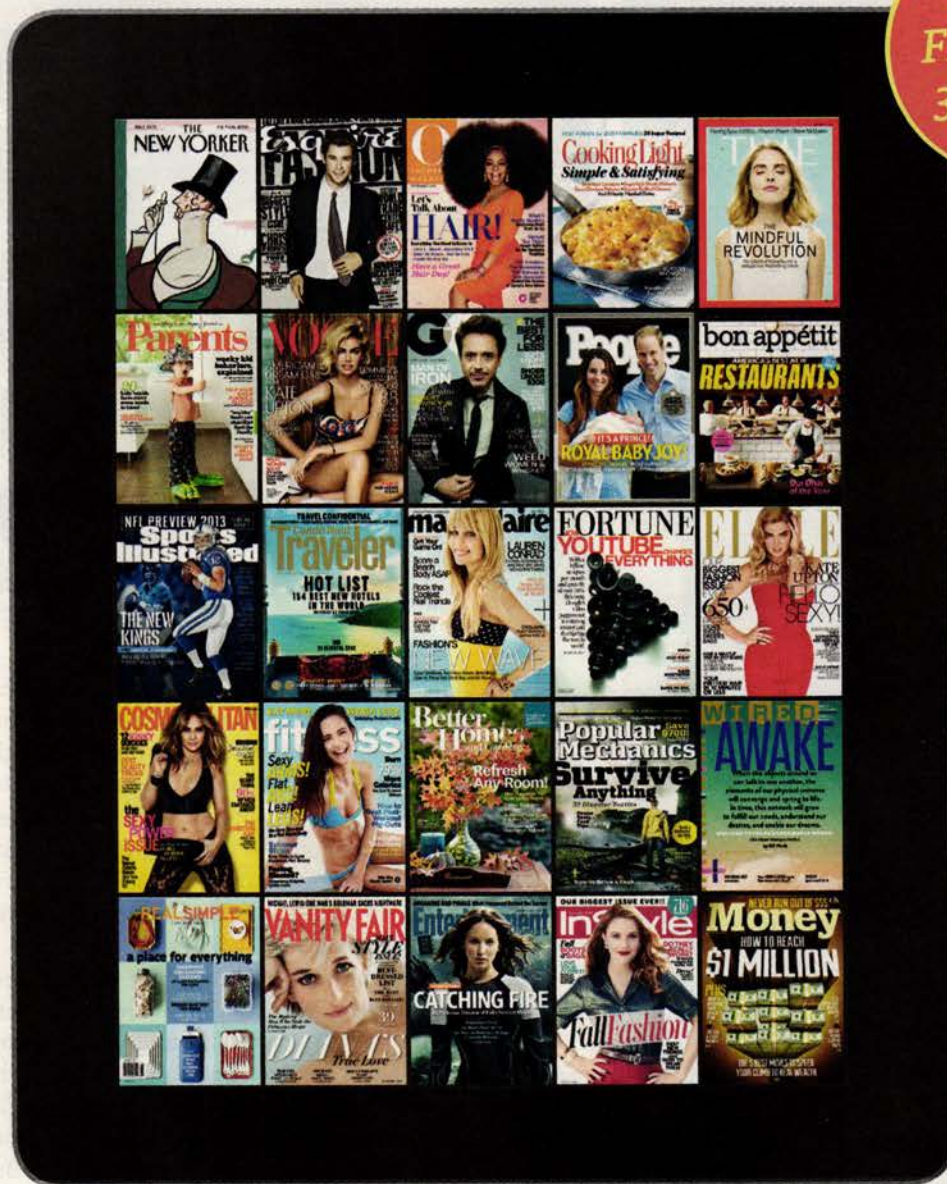




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# You sweat the small...change

Congratulations! You pinched your pennies so hard, you could have bruised Lincoln ILLUSTRATIONS BY MICHAEL WITTE

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## Covet thy neighbor's fieldstones



**Rita Salisbury**  
SEAFORD, DELAWARE

"I pulled up and removed all the fieldstones from a

wall surrounding a friend's very large, very unwanted planter bed to use in building my new house. So far, for all my sweat equity—I calculated that I hauled over 10,000 pounds of stone—I have a fire pit in my backyard and stone-covered columns and steps on the front of my home. I did the fire pit, but masons did the stonework on the house. (I know my limitations.) I still have some left, so I think I might start work on a fieldstone path."

**What Rita Saved: \$1,000**

## Let your flag fly (for free)



**Jill Blackmon**  
BOAZ, ALABAMA

"I used an old croquet mallet as a flag pole on my porch. It works

great because the mallet head keeps our University of Alabama flag from slipping off the end."

**What Jill Saved: \$8.99**

## Presto-chango frame



**Cheryl Reinecker**  
YORK SPRINGS, PENNSYLVANIA

"I wanted a unique way to display family pictures, as well as artwork from my grandchild. I took an old multi-pane window frame without the



## Doggone clever pet door

**Susan Richards** SANDY SPRINGS, GEORGIA

"Instead of buying an expensive dog door, I bought an inexpensive screen door with two small screened panels at the bottom. I removed the screen from the bottom panels and repurposed a piece of heavy vinyl to make flaps to cover the holes. Now I have a double dog door for my Australian shepherd and my yellow Lab. It's really funny to watch them shoot out the door at the same time!" **What Susan Saved: \$124**



• **fat-wallet awards**



## Rock 'n' roll end table

**Jeanie Hevener** MOUNT JOY, PENNSYLVANIA

"There was this big ugly black box in my living room called a subwoofer that my husband just couldn't part with. So I took an old end table of his, chopped the legs off, and set the top right on the subwoofer, which made a perfect base. My new end table looks like one piece, it didn't cost me anything, and my husband loves it because he gets to keep his subwoofer. It's gotta be from the '80s!" **What Jeanie Saved: \$350**

glass and a rusty piece of sheet metal, both found in our old barn. I cut the metal to fit behind the frame and attached it to create a divided magnetic board. I made sure to sand all rough edges, sealed it, and put felt pads on the back to keep it from scratching the wall. Now I can display and change pictures regularly with fun, inexpensive magnets in individual frames!"

**What Cheryl Saved: \$16.99**

## Groove-y cabinet doors



**Trent Tobiason**

COLUMBUS, NEBRASKA

"I had boring old flat-panel kitchen cabinets. I made a jig and used a router to make a V-shaped groove about 2½ inches

from the panels' outside edges. Combined with new hardware and white cabinet paint, they now resemble paneled doors at a fraction of the cost."

**What Trent Saved: About \$900**

## Couch-surfing contractor



**Jennifer Born**

LAKEVILLE, MINNESOTA

"We used Bagster bags and had Waste Management pick them up as we finished stages of our demolition. Otherwise, our driveway would have been occupied by a large dumpster for a much higher cost: 10 months at \$100 to \$150 a week. Oh, and my husband and I have a friend who is a jack-of-all-trades, and he lived with us for free in exchange for

all the help. After we finished, he moved back in with his mom—to help her replace her windows."

**What Jennifer Saved: \$5,071 on trash pickup plus many thousands in labor costs**

## Formica fix-up



**Doreen Cagno**

LITITZ, PENNSYLVANIA

"I really wanted concrete counters, but making the molds sounded very involved and they would still cost over \$500. I kept thinking, *There's got to be a way to get the look.* I found a photo of a product called concrete feather finish, and I knew I'd seen it before—in my garage! My husband works for a flooring company. I ran in and asked him if we could use it on our countertops, and he said, 'Yeah, that would totally work. It bonds to anything.' So we did three coats, sanded each one, and then sealed the counters. They've held up really well, even with three boys."

**What Doreen Saved: \$450**

## Savvy salvage



**Deb Briscois**

AMHERST, NEW HAMPSHIRE

"I found a discarded wicker chair near a dumpster, and all it really needed was a new paint job. I sanded off the old white and bought a few cans of brilliant-white spray paint, and now it looks 100 percent better. Keeping with the cheap budget, I wasn't about to buy a cushion. They're too expensive! So I waited until the pet-bed cushions went on sale and bought a brightly colored one for \$5 that fits the chair perfectly. It's comfortable, too."

**What Deb Saved: \$189.50**



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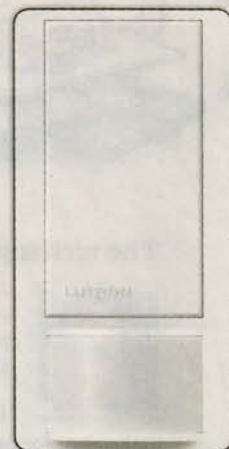
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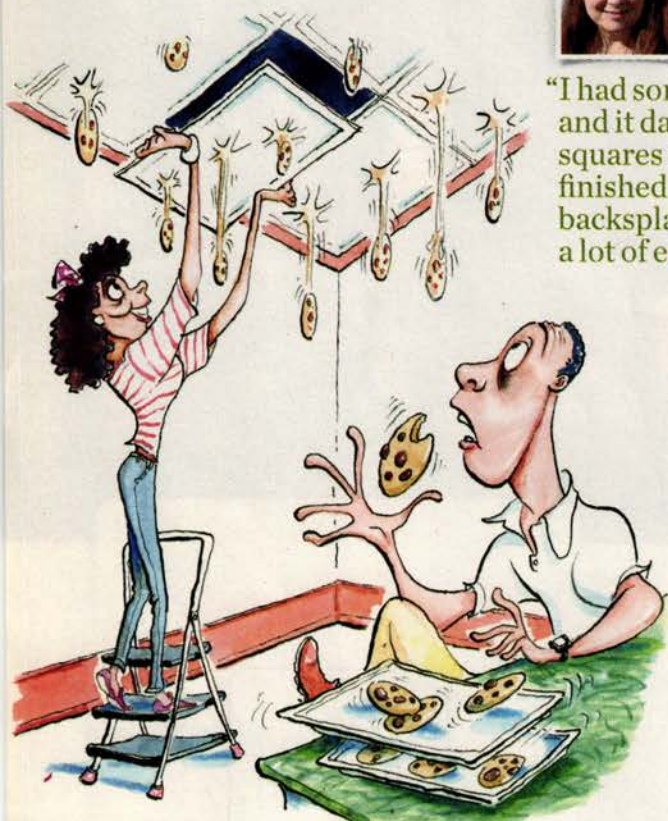




## Cooking up a new look

**Suzy Myers** VILLA RICA, GEORGIA

"I had some disposable aluminum cookie sheets from the party store, and it dawned on me that they would make great faux tin tiles. I cut squares from the cookie sheets, embossed a pattern, primed them, and finished them with acrylic metallic paint. I used them to create a backsplash, but they would make an awesome-looking ceiling. That's a lot of embossing, though!" **What Suzy Saved: \$118**



## To catch a leak



**Mary Bergsteinsson**

STOUGHTON,  
SASKATCHEWAN,  
CANADA

"Our home is more than 100 years old, and the balcony above the kitchen is constantly leaking. Instead of redoing and sealing the floor of the balcony, we took a rubber pool liner and laid it in there. Of course, we made sure it goes up the sides of the balcony. Presto—nothing has leaked since."

**What Mary Saved: At least \$850**

## Colorful stairs



**James Wolff**

BERLIN, WISCONSIN

"After I finished my basement, I decided I wanted a carpet runner for the stairs, but I didn't want to spend a lot of money. So I asked my furniture company if they had out-of-stock samples in the back, which I got for free. I chose alternate colors and styles and simply tacked them down with carpet tacks. The result is colorful and comfortable stairs."

**What James Saved: \$259**

## Price-match score



**Rebecca Hatcher**

PLANT CITY, FLORIDA

"While researching new tile for my living room and dining room, I found what I wanted

advertised for \$1.58 per tile at a nearby home center. I live within a 30-mile radius of two different locations of the same chain and am aware that they run different specials. I checked the price of the same tile at the second store, and their close-out sale price was 19 cents per tile—but they only had 13 pieces left. So I called the store manager of the first location and asked if he was willing to honor the company's price-match policy. He was! And I was able to purchase \$814 worth of tile for \$97.85 to cover 515 square feet. Then I installed it myself."

**What Rebecca Saved: \$716.15**

## Or...ask for free stuff



**Blair Anderson**

BOCA RATON, FLORIDA

"Get in touch with a property manager or an interior

designer—they are always dealing with people who are moving out or changing their furnishings. They will let you know ASAP if someone is getting rid of expensive sofas, cabinets, shelving units, TVs, etcetera. How reliable is this method? Well, I have my entire house full of free furniture that I paid nothing for! The only thing you may need, if you're lucky, is a truck or a moving company for that 90-inch TV or the three-piece black-lacquer cabinet set. Good luck!"

**What Blair Saved: \$50,000**

## The writing on the wall



**Stephanie Marchetti**

FITCHBURG,  
MASSACHUSETTS

"Instead of paying for wallpaper for an accent wall in my living room, I ordered a couple of water-based paint pens. Then all I did was print out a template of a Moroccan pattern, trace that shape onto a piece of cardboard—from the box the pens came in!—and cut it out to use as a stencil. I downloaded a 'level' app and then duct-taped my phone to the stencil and traced the stencil on the wall until it was covered. I spent a half hour a night for four or five nights, and it has made a pretty huge difference. Everyone thinks it's wallpaper—they always touch it to see."

**What Stephanie Saved: \$506.39**

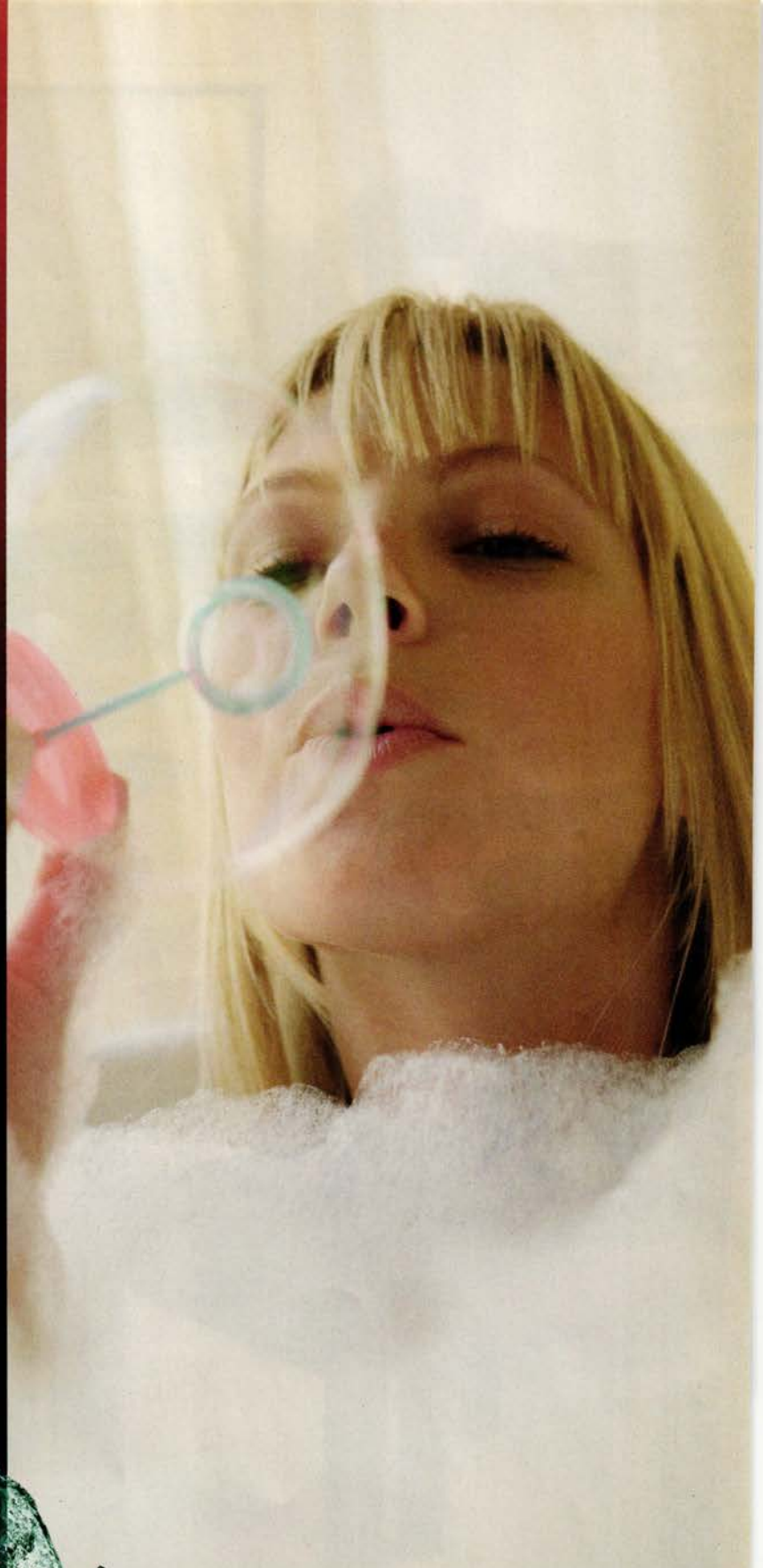


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# You love this rustic touch

We asked TOH fans about sliding barn doors and got a flood of questions. Here's our answer **BY SAL VAGLICA + PHOTOGRAPHS BY RYAN BENYI**

how to  
build  
a sliding  
barn door



**COST** \$378

**TIME** 7 hours over two days

**DIFFICULTY** Easy. Fitting the pallet boards requires some fiddling, but the skills are basic.



**Deborah Beck**

BUCKS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

"We want to install a sliding barn door. Any ideas?"

**MORE THAN 1,000 OF YOU**, including reader Deborah Beck, wanted to know the best way to tackle this project. It's easy to see why: Hanging a door on a track means you don't have to rip open and reframe a wall for a pocket door. Plus, mounting hardware is available in all manner of

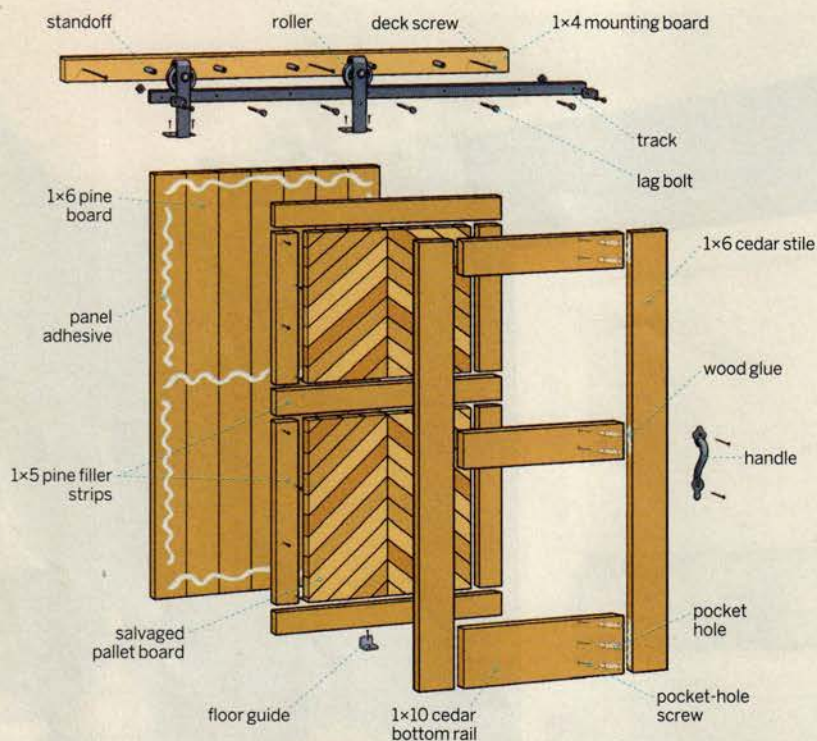
styles and budgets, and the door options are limitless—from salvage finds to original DIY creations like this one, a mix of pallet wood and common cedar. Follow along for the how-to from TOH senior technical editor Mark Powers and to see a gallery of readers' own sliding-barn-door projects.

Track and rollers:  
Vintage Sliding Door  
Hardware Kit, \$270;  
[nwartisanhardware.com](http://nwartisanhardware.com)



## DAY-TO-DAY TIMELINE

**SATURDAY** Build the door (Steps 1–4).  
**SUNDAY** Hang the door (Step 5).



Finished dimensions:  
38½"W × 2¼"D × 83½"H

Find a cut list at  
[thisoldhouse.com/oct2014](http://thisoldhouse.com/oct2014).

### TOOLS

tape measure  
miter saw  
bar clamps  
drill/driver  
speed clamps  
straightedge  
combination square  
pneumatic nailer  
and compressor

caulk gun  
pocket-hole jig kit  
⅛-inch drill bit  
cotton rag  
small paintbrush  
stud finder  
⅝-inch drill bit  
¾-inch socket  
wrench  
2-foot level

### MATERIALS

#### track and rollers

**1×6 pine** Get seven 8-footers for the back.

**1×3 strapping** Get one 8-footer for blocking.

**1×4 pine** Get one 8-footer for the mounting board.

**1×5 pine** Get one 10-footer and two 6-footers for the filler strips.

**pallet boards** Salvage about 40 pieces.

**1×6 rough common western red cedar** Get three 8-footers

and one 6-footer to make the face frame.

**1¼-inch deck screws**

**18-gauge 1¼-inch brads** for the pneumatic nailer

**1¼-inch pocket-hole screws**

**3-inch deck screws**  
**panel construction adhesive** Get two tubes.

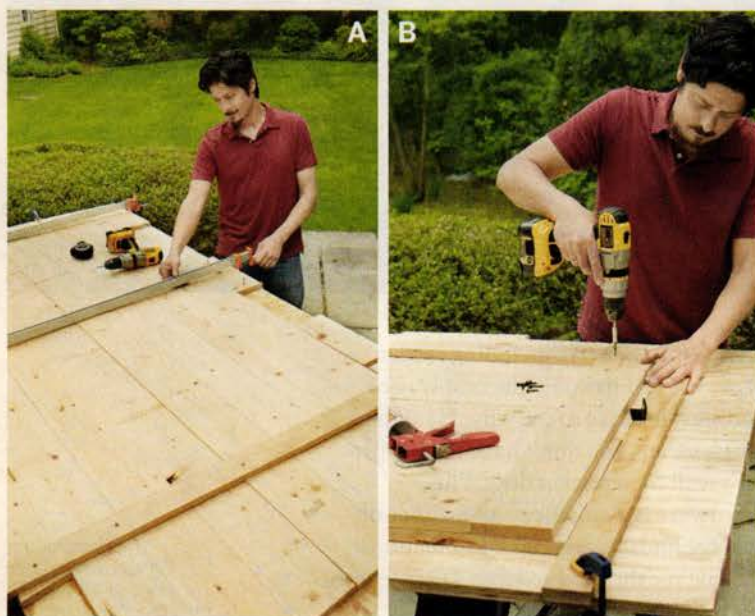
**wood glue**

**paste wax**

**100-grit sandpaper**

**latex paint**

**door handle**



**Before you begin:** Measure the width of the door from the outside edges of the casing, then order a hardware kit with a track twice that width.

## 1 MAKE THE BACK

**A] Assemble the boards.** For our 30-inch-wide opening, seven 1×6s spanned the casing perfectly; you may need to rip the pine boards to width. Measure from the floor to the top of the door casing, then cut the boards ½ inch shorter on a miter saw. Gang the boards side by side, place the blocks along the outside edges, and use long bar clamps to cinch them together. Square up the assembly with longer strapping at the top and bottom edges. Screw the blocks and strapping in place, and remove the clamps.

**B] Add filler strips.** Use a miter saw to cut the 1×5 filler strips according to the cut list. Add adhesive and set the top rail flush along the top of the boards; adhere the upper stiles below it, flush to the outside edges, and the middle rail below them. Add the lower stiles and rail, leaving a 1-inch channel for the floor guide that contains the door. Drive a 1¼-inch deck screw through each strip into each 1×6 it crosses.

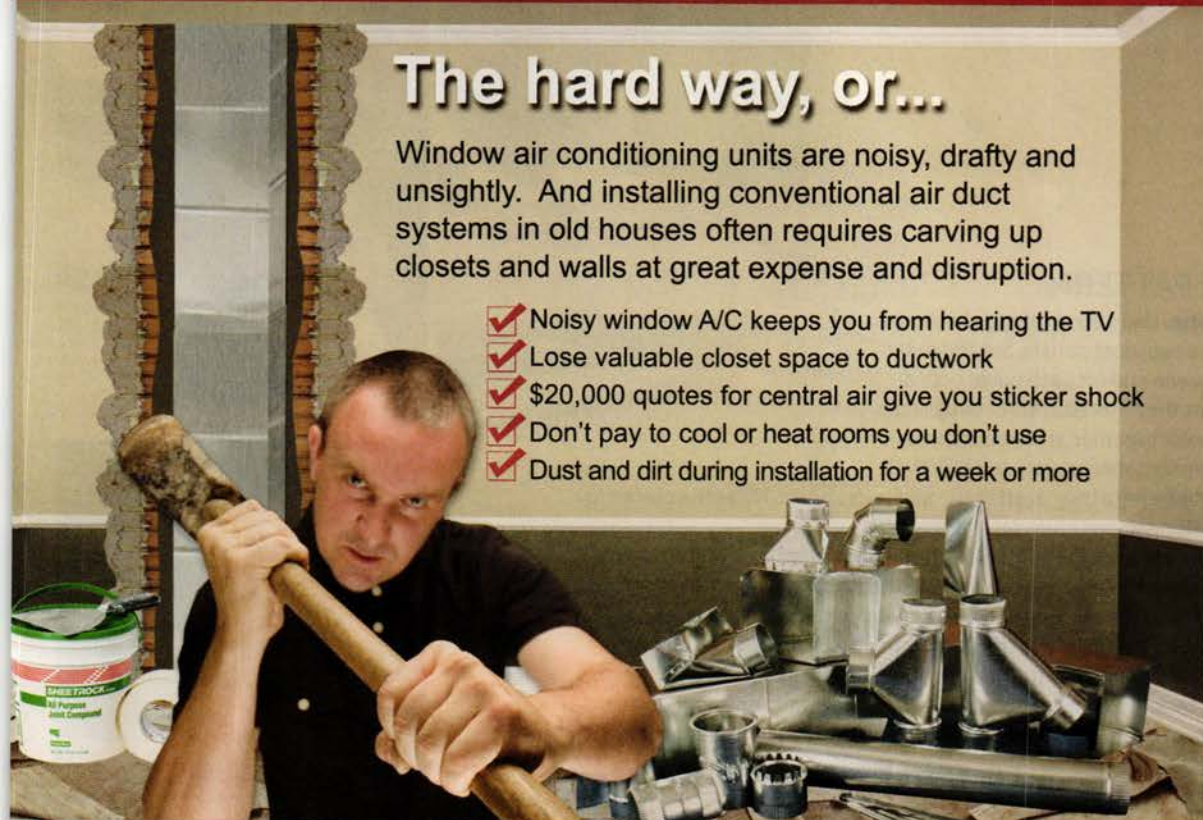


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\*Savings may vary based on model selected, hours of operation and geographical location. Example given based on 26-SEER system versus 13-SEER system.



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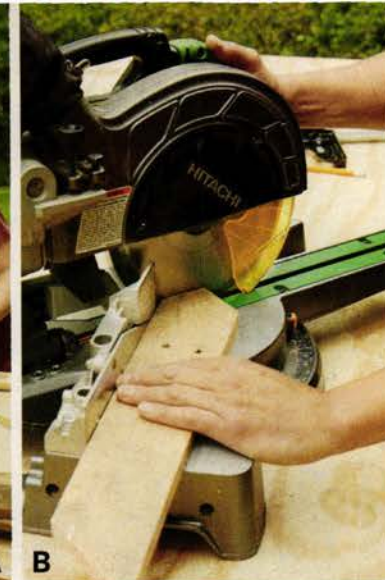


## 2 INSTALL THE PATTERN

**A] Cut the chevrons.** Use a straightedge to mark a centerline down the door's two inset panels. Set the miter saw to 45 degrees and cut one end off each pallet board. Starting at the top rail, butt the mitered ends of two pieces of similar thickness and color together at the centerline, forming an arrow. Use a combination square to mark the boards about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch short of where they overlap the stiles, as shown. Miter the pieces to length, then dry-fit them. Repeat, one chevron at a time.

**B] Cut the corners.** For the boards that hit the corners, use the combination square to mark where the piece overlaps the stile and the rail. Cut the two angles on the miter saw, as shown. After installing the longer pieces, fill the rest of the pattern with scrap, cut to fit.

**C] Install the pattern.** With the chevrons dry-fit in both panels, lift out one pair of boards at a time, apply panel adhesive to the undersides, and press them back in place. Using a pneumatic nailer, tack the boards in place with  $1\frac{1}{4}$ -inch brads, one near each corner of each board. Repeat the process, adhering and nailing each pair of boards as you work down both panels.



**TIP** For the strongest bond, spread glue on both edges of the joint and drill the pocket holes in the rail so that the screw grabs the stile's edge grain.



## 3 MAKE THE FACE FRAME

**A] Drill pocket holes.** At the miter saw, cut the cedar according to the cut list. Arrange the pieces rough-face down covering the filler strips. Clamp a pocket-hole jig at the end of a rail, even with one edge, and use the kit bit to drill a hole. Reset the jig along the other edge and repeat. Drill two pocket holes at each end of the upper and middle rails, as shown, and three at each end of the wider bottom rail.

**B] Build the frame.** Apply wood glue to the ends of the rails and the adjoining edges of the mating stiles, then clamp the frame together. Drive the screws provided with the kit into the edges of the stiles at each pocket hole, as shown. Remove the bar clamps.



# This Old House blueprint

Events, Promotions,  
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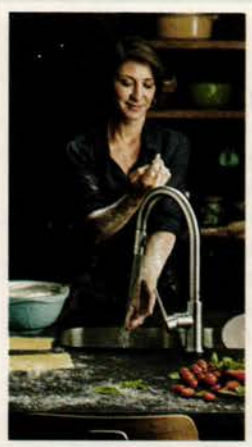
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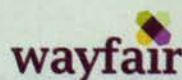
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## And the Winner is...

To celebrate our June Outdoor Living issue, we launched **The Living Alfresco Sweepstakes**: a chance for one lucky reader to get a jump start on building the backyard retreat of their dreams.

Congratulations to **Carrie R. of Katy, TX** who won a **\$22,150** outdoor prize package, courtesy of **Eldorado Stone, Jacuzzi, and Wayfair.com!**



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## • weekend remodel

### 4 FINISH THE DOOR

**A] Attach the face frame.** Gently remove the face frame and set it aside. Apply panel adhesive in a zigzag pattern along the filler strips. Bring the frame back to the table and orient it rough-side up, hiding the screws. Lay it in place, as shown, and align it along all four edges. Tack it down with 1¼-inch brads every 8 inches or so.

**B] Rub on the finish.** Lightly sand the entire door with 100-grit paper to knock down any splinters. Use a cotton rag to rub a liberal amount of paste wax into the wood.

**C] Attach the rollers.** Center the rolling hardware on the width of the cedar stiles. It may help to remove the wheels first. Mark the screw locations, drill pilot holes into the filler-strip edge with a ⅝-inch bit, then screw the hardware in place, as shown. Replace the wheels and slip the track into their grooves. Measure between the door and the track to determine how high above the casing to mount it—¾ inch for this hardware.



### 5 HANG THE DOOR

**A] Attach the mounting board.** At the miter saw, cut a length of 1×4 equal to the length of the track. We painted ours to match the wall. Use a stud finder to locate the framing and mark locations above the head casing. Level the mounting board above the casing and drill pilot holes through it and into each stud with a ⅝-inch bit. Secure it with 3-inch deck screws.

**B] Install the track.** Measure ¾ inch above the casing and mark two spots on the mounting board. Hold the track flat against the board, with its bottom edge at the marks. Using a 2-foot level, check that it's level, then mark each lag bolt location on the board. Set the track aside and drill ⅝-inch pilot holes at each mark. Thread a lag screw through one hole and a standoff and tighten it—not all the way—using a ⅝-inch socket wrench. Ratchet the rest of the lags in place, then go back and snug them all up.

**C] Roll the door on.** Install a doorstop at one end. With a helper, hoist the door onto the track and slide it to the stop. Install the other stop. Position the L-shaped floor guide so that it contains the door in both its open and closed positions. Mark the screw locations, drill pilot holes, and secure the guide to the floor with the included screws. Position the door handle on the centerline of the stile, drill ⅝-inch pilot holes, and secure it with the included hardware.



#### SEE HOW IT'S DONE

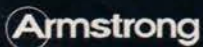
To watch a video of this project or to watch TOH general contractor Tom Silva build a barn door, scan this page with the Blippar app or go to [thisoldhouse.com/oct2014](http://thisoldhouse.com/oct2014)





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## A story behind every door

Three readers take three different approaches to closing off a room while adding architectural charm



### Upcycled French doors

"My husband, Matt, and I are big on repurposing as many original elements of our 100-year-old home as we can. We saved these French doors during our renovation and hung them between the kitchen and the dining room, letting the sunshine flow through."

—Shirley Watson

SOUTHPORT, NORTH CAROLINA



### Repurposed panel door

"Our kitchen was very shiny and white, and I thought it could use some patina. We salvaged a panel door and brought it with us from Rhode Island, then got all the pieces we'd need to make a track for \$194 from a ranch-supply store here in Billings. I love that it retains a little of the New England history."

—Jennifer French  
BILLINGS, MONTANA

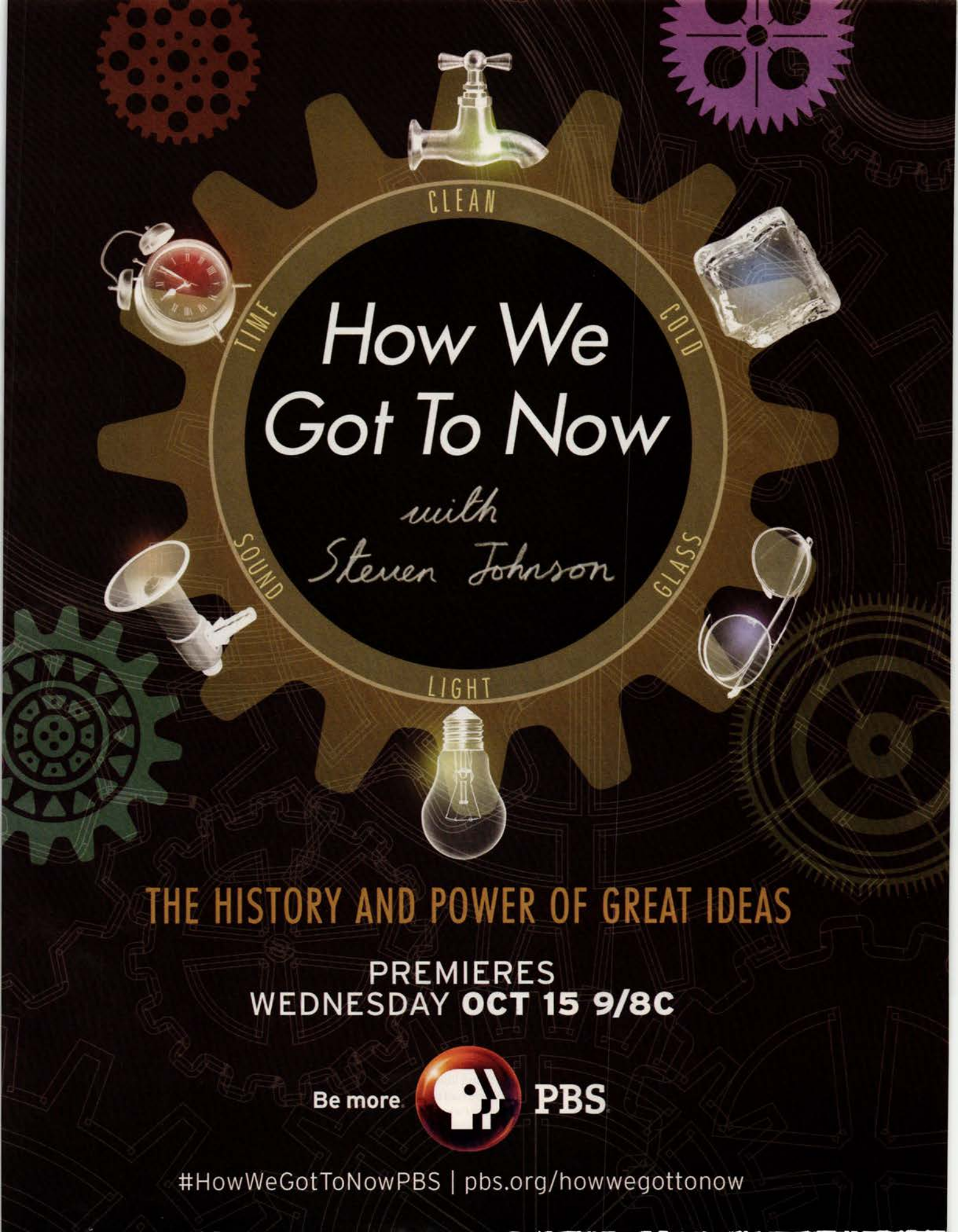


### Classic Z-shape

"We felt that a more rustic style of barn door would work the best with the rest of our old house. I laid out boards reclaimed from my father's barn until I got the basic shape I wanted. Then I just cut them to size, nailed it all together, stained and sealed the wood, and hung it from a track I found on Etsy."

—Joanna Knox Yoder  
LAUREL, MARYLAND





# How We Got To Now

*with  
Steven Johnson*

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ABOVE: The exterior boasts the original corbels, but the shutters, copper gutters, and fiber-cement clapboards are all new. INSET: The 1800s farmhouse had been moved and set on a new foundation. OPPOSITE: Tom and Becky Peterson and son Taylor, 18, gather in the new kitchen, the first room that was made livable during a whole-house gut redo that stretched to 10 years. "Every day brought a new miracle," says Becky.





How did one of your fellow readers earn our awe—and a \$5,000 prize? Well, first he had to “retire” so he could work on the house full-time. Nice job!

BY **TOM PETERSON** • PHOTOGRAPHS BY **WENDELL T. WEBBER**  
STYLING BY **MARIELLEN MELKER** • PRODUCED BY **COLETTE SCANLON**







## Before switching gears,

my wife, Becky, and I were both in pretty high-octane jobs and beginning to think one of us should be doing something different. We barely saw each other, and I'd get home most nights after our son, Taylor, was in bed. Something had to give. In the end, I decided to make a change. I quit my job solving problems at a private bank to work full-time fixing up a house.

We were already looking for a fixer-upper near where we were living, in New Jersey, when I passed this wreck of a farmhouse in the town of Branchburg. An old red barn sat right behind it—perfect for a dream workshop. I said to myself, *Wow, now there's a project!*

The place was on a cul-de-sac surrounded by new houses. It had been empty for two years, and at one point had been at risk of being razed. But it was a local landmark, and the neighbors wouldn't have it. Ultimately, the developer moved the house and the barn to a corner lot and plunked them onto brand-new foundations.

The house was unusual, nothing like the box-shaped McMansions you see everywhere. I liked the front porch and could imagine how one in back would be even sweeter. The place was crying out with potential.

At this point I was officially retired—and getting ready to work harder than I ever imagined.

I had a million plans for the house, but before we signed on the dotted line, I checked in with the historic preservation commission. I'd heard horror stories about renovations screeching to a halt because a roof or a paint color wasn't acceptable. Local officials came by for a walk-through, and they not only threw support behind my plans but also gave me the best tip of all time: Be careful what you throw out. (See "Prize Inside," page 75.)

Soon we were in a rental nearby, and our household had a new routine.



before

**TOP LEFT:** Furniture-inspired cabinets painted a custom yellow and a farmhouse sink evoke the home's past.  
**INSET:** The old galley kitchen. Sink: Shaws. Faucet: Moen. Range: Viking





ABOVE: "The first time I saw the kitchen fireplace, I knew how I wanted to finish it," says Tom, who made the eating nook's paneling, mantel, and pine-topped table. LEFT: The nook is steps from the granite-topped island. Paint: Benjamin Moore's Van Courtland Blue (fireplace wall). Floor tile: Daltile. Wine refrigerators: GE



#### SHOP THIS STYLE

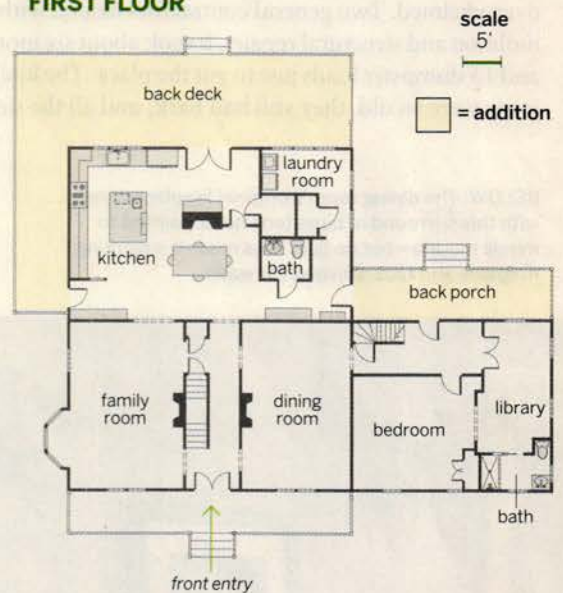
To find furnishings similar to those used in this house, scan this page with the Blippar

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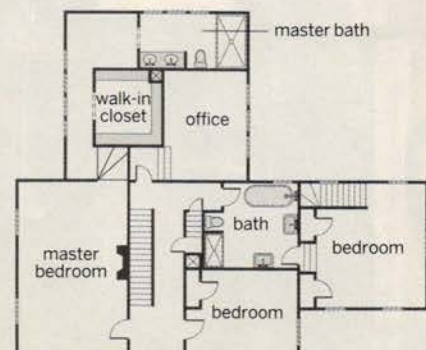
## FLOOR PLANS

The 3,020-square-foot house was gutted and largely reframed and rebuilt with new joists, support columns, engineered beams, and a more open plan, including a large kitchen and guest suite downstairs and an L-shaped master suite plus two other bedrooms and a second full bath upstairs. The porches, wraparound deck, roof, siding, insulation, windows, exterior trim, landscaping, and infrastructure, including chimney and fireplace work, are also new.

### FIRST FLOOR



### SECOND FLOOR





Becky would jump on the 6 A.M. bus to New York, and I'd drive Taylor, then 8, to school. I hadn't had a chance to do that before, and I had no idea how much it would mean to me over the years to come. Let's just say I've never missed a football game.

My first encounter with a table saw dates back 20 years, when I was bitten by the furniture-making bug. From there, my passion widened to woodwork and built-ins. I couldn't wait to finish this house with casings, wainscoting, and all the rest.

But first I had to focus on making sure the place didn't collapse. The floors weren't level, and they sagged in spots. Termites had compromised the old beams. Rain poured in through one wall. The weight of the roof was pushing out the walls, and we'd need new joists and support columns.

One thing I've learned through life is that there's a solution to every problem—you can't let yourself be overwhelmed. Two general contractors helped with demolition and structural repairs. It took about six months and 15 dumpster loads just to gut the place. The kitchen joists were so old, they still had bark, and all the siding

**BELOW:** The dining room's original fireplace came with this surround of bluestone hand-painted to mimic marble—but no flue. Pros made it a working fireplace and faux-finished the walls.



was nailed right to the studs. No insulation! All the plumbing and wiring, even the furnace, had to go. With the floors opened up, the two chimneys at the center stood free; we used one as a gauge as we very, very slowly jacked up sections and shimmed the support columns in the basement to make the first floor level.

We'd knock off at sundown just hoping this thing would still be standing in the morning. I had a number of sleepless nights, but the challenge was like a drug.

Becky and I love old houses but we wanted all the conveniences—central air, a whole-house sound system, even a central vac. A local architect put our plans on paper so I could get permits, and I have to tip my hat to the folks at the building department—they were great, every step of the way. We reframed walls and installed joists 12 inches on center because I wanted a house that was sounder than a bank. To get a big, open kitchen, we took down walls, which meant adding a 1,100-pound beam overhead to support the second floor.

To gain space downstairs, we moved the basement





## PRIZE INSIDE

The Petersons were about to toss the original hanging fixtures when Tom recalled a local historian pointing out that they might be worth something. Indeed. When he got around to sending off a photo of the foyer lamp to a nearby auction house, Rago Arts, he got a quick callback. To the couple's astonishment, the estimate was \$20,000 to \$30,000. They made a date to be there when the bidding began, and guess what: That little fixture turned out to be a very rare antique Stickley. It sold for \$310,000—or \$10,000 more than they paid for the house.



TOP LEFT: The family room ceiling coffers are new. The pine chest in the far corner is something Tom whipped up. ABOVE: The hall bath upstairs only looks old. LEFT: The original mahogany balustrade and newel post were taken apart, stripped, and reassembled.





## WELCOME TO MY WORKSHOP

If I was going to work on the house full-time and make every linear foot of casing from rough-sawn lumber, I would need a better place for my tools than a shed. Before we even moved in, I designed a 700-square-foot wraparound addition in back of our two-car barn. It has plenty of wall space for pegboard, and floor space for lumber and equipment. Some of the tools date to when Becky and I were first married, and I decided to teach myself skills by making a pie safe like one Norm built on *New Yankee Workshop*.

At the heart of it is an industrial-grade SCM Mini Max combo machine with five motors and an 8½-foot sliding table. I can clamp a

sheet of plywood to the table and slide it across the blade for a dead-straight cut. It also has a planer, jointer, shaper, and mortiser, so I can make all my own stock and build furniture. Standing right next to it is a Williams & Hussey molder with custom knives I had made that allowed me to replicate the old moldings in the house. I made most of the casing, trim, paneling, and built-ins right here. At one point I had three giant stacks of rough lumber—this place was just jammed with wood. Even if I could have found the old profiles, this way was cheaper. It really kills me to buy something I can make. I'd much rather build my own medicine cabinets and bookshelves. More important than the money is the satisfaction of getting it right.

Naturally, this type of work takes its toll—I lost months to a rotator-cuff injury, and another year went toward a double knee replacement. But I couldn't wait to get back to the workshop and to my passion. We still have that pie safe, by the way. Becky put it in near the kitchen, where we can see it every day. —T.P.



**ABOVE:** The upstairs hall is now lined with homemade casing and wainscoting—Tom even made the chair. The floor is new quartersawn white oak. **RIGHT:** The master bath overlooks the garden through a row of light-filled windows. Tile: Daltile. Windows: Pella







stairs. Upstairs, we moved openings to improve the flow and raised the roof so that you don't have to duck to get into Taylor's bedroom.

There was one near disaster, after I took apart the main staircase's mahogany balustrade to have it stripped. Each baluster had a hand-cut pin to dovetail into its tread, so I numbered them as I took them out. To my horror, the numbers got stripped off with the paint, and I thought I'd never figure out which baluster went where! But as I like to say, there's a solution to every problem. Through trial and error, I figured it out.

Once various pros had taken care of the plumbing, wiring, heating and cooling, chimney work, and dry-walling, I had a big empty box. This was what I'd been waiting for—a chance to dream up all the details inside and out, from interior trim to shutter caps.

I replicated the original casings in my shop, installed wainscoting in the main halls, and built a lot of furniture and cabinetry. I even developed a system for installing bookcases: Start with 5-inch-high plywood bases, and if you get them level, what's on top will be too.

Finally, I reached the last thing, the downstairs bath, this time with a new helper—Taylor. In the time it's taken to finish this house he's turned 18 and started college.

No matter what he chooses to do in life, I hope he is as happy as I have been working on this house. Becky agrees. We've already talked about what we'd do if life presented us with another falling-down house: She'd keep her day job, and I'd head off to my workshop. ■

**TOP:** Tom enlarged the master bedroom, shifted passageways to create an open suite with a walk-in closet and bath, and lavished it all with woodwork. **INSET:** The old layout was awkward, with a forlorn decorative fireplace between two doorways. Paint: Benjamin Moore's Georgian Green (walls)



#### COMPLETE THE TOUR

To view additional photographs of this house and see a gallery of whole-house runners-up, scan this page with the Blippar app or go to [thisoldhouse.com/reader2014](http://thisoldhouse.com/reader2014)



(ONE  
ROOM)

# Wonders

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(BEST  
REDO)

# KITCHEN

*Shannon Varley and BJ Miller*

KNOXVILLE,  
MARYLAND

**WHAT THEY DID** Camped out in an RV while turning their condemned farmhouse into a cozy home—complete with a charming new kitchen

**HER STORY** BJ and I have been hobby farmers for almost a decade, raising cows, chickens, pigs, and rabbits for ourselves and our two kids—and a bit of profit. We'd always wanted to own our own land, rather than rent, and we finally found something within our budget: a little 1800s farmhouse foreclosure on 15 acres. At last, we had our own farm, but since the place was condemned, we couldn't exactly move right in. So we pulled into the driveway in an RV, and that's where all four of us lived for two years as we peeled away decades-old layers of sad remodels.

Since we do a lot of our own butchering and food prep, creating a functional kitchen was important to us, but it also had to be inviting. The existing layout would work, but the walls were crumbling and the

**ABOVE:** An oversize island now anchors the L-shaped kitchen, which had suffered from various "updates" over the years (before). Live-edge open shelves add to the period farmhouse feel; the single-basin stainless-steel sink is large enough to handle farm-to-table food prep.



*before*





**ABOVE:** Family and friends helped repoint the stone walls of kitchen, an 1850s addition to the existing log home. The original, pre-addition windows remain.

cabinets were flimsy, so we tore those out. When we did, we found beautiful natural stone that needed only some repointing. We ripped out the floors, too, and BJ laid new pine planks stained to look like they're original. We purchased cabinets and installed all new appliances, most of which we were lucky enough to get for free from our old rental's owners, who were doing their own remodel.

But we realized we were short on counter space and would need more room for food prep. A woodworker friend had a large island that had been custom-built for homeowners who changed their minds, and we were able to buy it at a reduced rate. It's big enough to hold a hog!

BJ hung open wood shelving, and an antique postal box to store wine, then added a woodstove we owned to help warm the room during chilly winters. Now it's one of my favorite spaces in the house—somewhere we can all cozy up together and hang out. It sure beats gathering around the fold-down Formica table in the RV.

## (BEST REDO) BATH

*Brett Youmans*  
READING, PENNSYLVANIA

**WHAT HE DID** Gutted a sadly outdated—carpeted!—third-floor bath and created a boutique retreat for guests



**HIS STORY** A week after closing on our 1870 Italianate, my partner, Rich Ault, and I had sledge-

hammers in hand. Our goal: to renovate the place one room at a time. That was eight years ago. With full-time jobs, the overhaul took a little longer than we'd anticipated. Okay, a lot longer. And the last major project was the third-floor bath. Why did we wait so long to tackle this room? Quite frankly, it terrified us.

Yellow 1960s-era gingham wallpaper covered the walls (and ceiling, no less!); smelly brown wall-to-wall carpeting of a similar vintage padded the floor; and a hideous vanity with a Formica countertop dominated the room. Although we'd removed the carpet and floorboards early on, while rewiring the house, not much else had been done. For years, we used the space for storage.

I'm a flight attendant and stay in a lot of hotels with nice baths, so I knew I wanted our guest bath to feel like a luxurious oasis. The first step was reconfiguring the cramped space. An interior linen closet and a larger hall closet ate up a lot of real estate. We opened them up, incorporating the closet space into the bath, gaining valuable square footage. Next we tackled the walls: Shallow stud bays—only about 2 inches deep—necessitated building out at the sink to hide the plumbing. Since we were already bumping out the wall, we brought it out far enough



*before*

**RIGHT:** After removing the old wallpaper (before), Brett's partner, Rich Ault, designed and installed board-and-batten paneling with a picture ledge. In the shower, marble tiles are laid in a running bond pattern and a basketweave design.







to create niches for extra storage. The plaster was in such bad shape that we just covered the rest of the walls with a mix of board-and-batten and horizontal planks.

While the tub looks right at home in the space, it has actually lived all over the house. We bought it three years before we started the renovation, but we couldn't get the beast up the narrow staircase. It sat upside down in our living room (we didn't want to risk nicking it) before we moved it to the dining room, where it lived for a year. Good thing we weren't entertaining a lot! We

moved it to the third floor when we got around to redoing the stairs, while the balustrade was removed.

Working with heavy materials on an upper floor of an old house is tough. I wish we'd had an elevator; there are 52 steps from the basement to the third floor. We'd lug boxes of tile up and then realize we'd forgotten some tool in the basement. But, in the end, all the trips up and down the stairs were worth it. We have the guest bath of our dreams. Now I don't have to rely on hotel rooms for a spa-like getaway—I can just go upstairs.



**ABOVE LEFT:** Dual pedestal sinks keep the space feeling open and airy. **TOP:** Since nobody can see into the third-floor bath, the couple eschewed window treatments in favor of glass display shelves. **ABOVE:** The frames of the oval mirrors originally housed vintage needlepoint from Brett's grandfather. A horizontal plank wall conceals plumbing and adds towel storage.





(BEST  
REDO)

## CURB APPEAL

*Tanya and Brian Taylor* OAK PARK, ILLINOIS



*before*



*during*

**WHAT THEY DID** Meticulously restored their Italianate's facade by hand-milling cedar boards to mimic walls of elegant hand-cut stone

**HER STORY** You know the saying about buying the worst house on the best street? That's what we did. We spotted this 1867 Italianate, a beauty left to decay for decades, and made a low offer. But when the owners countered, I got cold feet thinking about the ancient kitchen, leaky roof, and 18-plus windows that needed replacing. Brian said, "Tanya, this house has location,

location, LOCATION!" Our house is in Oak Park, just outside Chicago, renowned for its period architecture.

After several years of interior renovations, Brian started work on the new porch, stripping the aluminum siding from the front of the house to reveal a layer of old, damaged clapboards. Under that, we were stunned to discover the real prize: the original 19th-century cypress siding, made to resemble a stone facade. The tongue-and-groove boards had been routed with bevels every 16 inches to look like a row of blocks. Then the siding was painted a natural color and textured

**TOP:** New boxwood shrubs complement the Italianate style. Once an unloved rental (before), the house's great bones remained intact. Hidden under two newer layers was the original siding (during).



(BEST  
REDO)

## DINING ROOM

*Richard and Amy Burchfield*  
PORT ROYAL, PENNSYLVANIA

**WHAT THEY DID** Combined their living and dining rooms into one character-filled space



**HIS STORY** When I asked Amy for her hand in marriage, in 1974, I was a man of modest means. As a

schoolteacher turned farmer, I told her I could offer her a diamond engagement ring or, if she'd rather, new carpeting for the 1780s farm-

house we were buying. I offered her a third option, too: a dairy cow for the 50-acre farm the house sits on—but she knew we'd get one anyway. She went for the carpeting.

Forty years, four children, and two grandchildren later, we'd tired of the carpeting and our cramped living quarters; we couldn't squeeze our

**ABOVE:** "This house was love at first sight," says Tanya, shown with Brian and their daughter, Rachel.

with sand. It's very convincing. We found the "stone" on just two sides of the house and decided to restore what was damaged and carry it around to the other sides. Easier said than done! For two years, the house sat exposed while we searched for a mill to re-create this material at a reasonable cost. Tired of the Tyvek wrap—and the drafts—I put my foot down and told Brian he'd have to figure out how to do it himself.

Though he's an architect, not a craftsman, Brian rose to the challenge. Each of the 100-plus cedar boards required five setups of tools and blades for a total of 12 passes to create the tongues, grooves, and bevels. The quoins had been removed all along the corners, so he milled and installed those, too. There was, as he says, "sweat, tears, and plenty of blood" along the way.

We were thrilled to receive a preservation award from the village, but the real pleasure is knowing, after seven years of work, that our home is finally living up to its history.

**BELOW:** Combining the existing living room (before) and dining room created space for a table that expands to seat 20.



*before*



### THE BEST OF THE REST

To view galleries of the finalists in all these contest categories, scan this page with the Blippar app or go to [thisoldhouse.com/reader2014](http://thisoldhouse.com/reader2014)



(BEST  
REDO)

## YARD

Terry and  
Steve Metzler  
ST. LOUIS

### WHAT THEY DID

Transformed their “average suburban backyard” into a bubbling wonderland

**HER STORY** Back in 1990, when Steve and I saw the backyard of the house we’d just bought, my first thought was: *Dustbowl on a hill*. It was a steep, barren slope that funneled water straight toward the foundation, which was either a nightmare or, we decided, a perfect landscaping opportunity. We planted trees to stabilize the hill and installed a modest 600-gallon pond near the back door, and were quite pleased with it all.

Until, that is, we got garden envy after going on several of the Pond-O-Rama tours held in St. Louis each year and seeing all the elaborate water features. Figuring, “Hey, we could do that ourselves,” we decided to fully landscape our half-acre yard, creating a waterfall as the centerpiece. It would cascade from the high point of the slope, split into two streams, and feed a large pond filled with lilies and koi. Ignorance was bliss!

It took us two years, working every available weekend, to complete the project. With the first bite of the

**ABOVE:** Pulling down the ceiling revealed chestnut joists. **INSET:** Now 94, grandma Sara Burchfield took charge of chinking the logs.



during

family together in a single space. So we set out to combine the living room and dining room and restore some period charm.

Our kids helped us tear down the wall between the two rooms and pull back layers of paneling and plaster, exposing the original log walls as well as the stone-and-brick chimneys for the fireplaces in our basement. Beneath Amy’s moss-green carpeting, hidden under three more

layers of flooring, we discovered wide-plank chestnut floorboards. Tearing out the ceiling revealed chestnut joists and a massive, 16-inch-square center beam.

We thought it would be a shame to hide away the woodwork and masonry for another 200 years, so we scrubbed them and sprayed them with a pressure washer, using tarps and sawdust to protect the floors. My mother did the chinking between the logs, something she’d never attempted.

We finished the space with new lights and a farmhouse table large enough to host four generations of our family. And as for a diamond ring? Amy finally got that, too—back on our 25th anniversary.



before





**LEFT:** The Metzlers split the stream just as it starts to run, creating a lush island bed with a station clock as its focal point. They found several large, flat stones mixed in with a pallet of river rock and used them as bridges. **OPPOSITE:** The half-acre lot started out as mostly lawn (before).

shovel, we hit bedrock. It required a jackhammer, pickaxes, and, ultimately, a backhoe to carve out the hole for the 2,500-gallon pond. It took many more hours of shoveling to hew the hillside for the waterfall and dig channels for the streams. Using just a hand truck, Steve and I moved more than 8 tons of river rock uphill, two or three stones at a time, and fit them like a giant puzzle—with plenty of arguing along the way. It was miserable work and, to say the least, a happy day when we finally turned on the water.

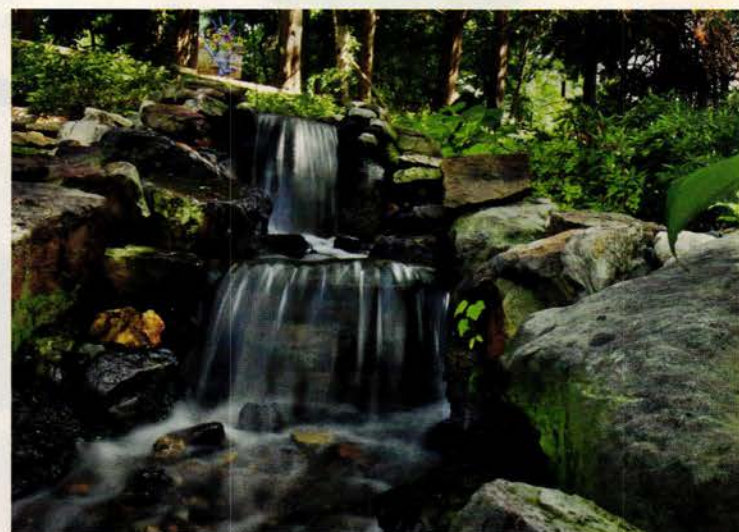
While the water feature is the star, I'm proud of the gardens, too. We have four seasons of interest, thanks to 250 varieties of hosta, 60 varieties of daylily, 17 different Japanese maples, and dozens of other perennials and shrubs.

We love our yard and can't believe we did this ourselves. Now it's *our* garden that's a hot ticket on the Pond-O-Rama tour! ■



**ABOVE:** "Steve's the pond guy, I'm the plant nut," says Terry. "I can't resist adding more flowers to the garden every spring!"

**TOP RIGHT:** A clever placement of stones and plants at the top of the hill creates the illusion that the waterfall is fed by a natural stream. **RIGHT:** A pump keeps the water rushing at 4,500 gallons per hour, eliminating any chance of it stagnating.







Hats off to you superheroes of the home. Whether saving a historic plantation from fauna gone wild or making a Christmas miracle with power tools, these honorees proved their mettle

BY NINA MALKIN

## THE "BRING IT ON HOME" AWARD

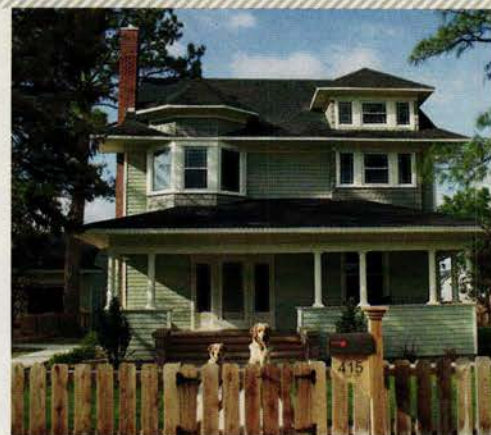
*Kris Munsch*

HAYS, KANSAS



Feeling lost after his 16-year-old son, Blake, died in a car wreck, Kris

sold the house he and his boy had renovated as a team. "I was trying to run from the pain," he says. He used savings to travel from state to state, building birdhouses for strangers, until an urge called him back to Hays. Once there, he learned that the house directly across from the one he'd rebuilt with Blake was for sale. Empty for 40 years, the 1908 Craftsman (above) was so dilapidated that Kris was the only bidder. It proved to be the toughest project he ever took on—he still recalls the day he lugged fifty 12-foot pieces of drywall up three stories—but it healed his soul. "I'd feel Blake's spirit guiding me. Now I look at the house we did together and think, It's good to be home."



## THE "GATHERS NO MOSS" AWARD

*Sheryl Kindle Fuller*

EVERSON, WASHINGTON

The first big challenge Sheryl tackled after successfully battling breast cancer was to banish the moss on her roof. She experimented with numerous options—including a supersized squirt gun—before filling a plant sprayer with moss killer and scrambling up a ladder to vanquish the ghastly growth. "I felt triumphant," Sheryl says. "I got my body back!"

## THE "LONG HAUL" AWARD

*Joe Landsberger*

ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

If patience is a virtue, Joe will have a comfy spot in heaven: It took him 35 years to remodel the 1880s Stick Style home he bought in 1979. He started with no tools (or skills) but ample perseverance. This timeline shows his progress through the years.







## THE "CREATURE FEATURE" AWARD

*John Gay and Steve Stoncbraker*

EDENTON, NORTH CAROLINA



Athol Plantation, erected in 1836, was delivered vacant—of people. Surrounded by swamp, the place was lousy with snakes, bats, and bugs. "It was like a Stephen King story," Steve says. The spookiest part? The buzzing in the walls. "We drilled a few holes and they started to ooze," John says. The goo turned out to be the work of industrious honeybees, whose colony ran 36 feet from basement to attic. Now restored to its full splendor, the antebellum belle would make Scarlett tear up.



*"To get to the bathroom during our reno, we'd walk a 20-foot wood plank across open joists—pretty scary at night!"*

*—Zenta and LaVern Benner*

PERKASIE, PENNSYLVANIA



## THE "BOUNCE BACK" AWARD

*Amanda Lebel and David Lebel*

ASHFORD, CONNECTICUT



This father-daughter duo was set to remodel the dingy bathroom in Amanda's log cabin. Then a sudden fall left David with a brain injury requiring three surgeries and major rehab. "He needed to relearn how to walk, talk, eat, do everything," Amanda says. Yet within six months David

was raring to go. "It was amazing to hear him speak his thought process aloud, figuring out how to wire switches or manipulate pipes," says Amanda. "That's how I knew he was all right."

## THE "CORDLESS CHRISTMAS" AWARD

*Darleen Young*

RANDOLPH, MAINE



Unwilling to let a power outage spoil Christmas, Darleen used her cordless reciprocating saw to build an oven out of cardboard. Covered in foil and set on a kerosene heater, it baked the ham. Next she chucked a mixing beater in her cordless drill to whip up her sweet potatoes. "Nothing's impossible if you stay calm," Darleen says.

1980

Joe builds first addition. In other news... The first personal computer, the Commodore 64, goes on sale; Prince William is born

1990

Joe replaces baseboards, doorways, and walls. In other news... Markets crash on Black Monday; Prozac is released

2000

Joe builds cupola and re-sides garage. In other news... Google is founded; Clinton-Lewinsky political scandal breaks

2010

Joe builds third addition. In other news... Hurricane Katrina hits New Orleans; White Sox win first World Series since 1917

Joe remodels his kitchen a second time. In other news... Obamacare enrollment begins; royal baby Prince George is born





23 READER

# Tips

THAT SAVE  
YOU TIME AND  
MONEY

20 14

We asked. And you delivered. Once again, you've sent us scores of ingenious ways to save time, money, and aggravation using nothing more than the everyday stuff people have around the house. Here are the best—the most original—of the bunch

## 1 Ant repellent

Have an ant problem? Spread cinnamon across the path where they're entering the room. They'll avoid it like the plague.

—Don Ellis

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA



## 2 Finishing-nail remover

The neatest way to extract finishing nails embedded in old molding is to pull them through from the molding's back side, of course. But the usual tools—hammers, cat's paws, and nippers—all put sideways pressure on the wood, which can crack it.

That's why I use a pop-rivet gun: Slip it over the point and it'll pull the nail straight through the material.

—Perry Manor

MIDDLETON, WISCONSIN

## 3 Safe thistle killer

To get rid of these noxious weeds, spray their leaves or douse their roots with white vinegar. They don't come back.

—Janet Main BARRY, ILLINOIS

## 4 Plastic-pipe wrench

Tightening those winged plastic nuts used on toilet seats is tough on fingers. I took a short length of 1-inch-diameter PVC pipe and used

a hacksaw to make four equally spaced notches, 1/8 inch wide and 1/2 inch deep, in one end. The notches fit over the wings, so all you have to do is twist the pipe to tighten (or loosen) the nuts.

—Byron Roubanes

SUGAR CREEK, OHIO

## 5 Saw-blade storage

I protect and store my circular 10-inch saw blades in a neat stack of 5-gallon-bucket lids. To identify each blade and the last time it was sharpened, I write on each lid's edge with Magic Marker.

—George Peltier

MENOMONIE, WISCONSIN



## 6 Instant aging tonic for wood

To make new pine boards look like old barnwood, put rusted nails in a jar of vinegar for a few days. When you brush on the solution, it turns the pine a lovely grayish color.

—Kerry-Lynn Moede

WILLIAMS, ARIZONA

## 7 Makeshift concrete form

The instructions for installing a basketball backboard pole called for a cylindrical concrete footing. I made my own crude form by kerfing and snapping a piece of drywall at regular intervals, every inch or so, leaving the inside paper layer intact. In the hole, backfill held the form in place as I dumped in the concrete.

—Kevin Wallace

MANCHESTER, MISSOURI

## 8 Revive old O-rings

I had a hard time finding the correct O-rings to fix a leaky faucet, so I rubbed a dab of silicone paste on the old, dried-out ones. It brought them back, good as new. No more leaks.

—Arthur E. Green

NORFOLK, VIRGINIA





# 9

*Dorothy Thues*

CONIFER, COLORADO



## HELP ON WHEELS

I couldn't carry the heavy plywood and MDF panels by myself from my garage workshop to the kitchen I was rebuilding, so I enlisted some help: my son's skateboard. It's also perfect for moving drywall.



# 13

**Guy Parish**

GLENDAL, ARIZONA

## SPLINTER-FREE GRIPS

My wheelbarrow handles were worn and full of splinters, so I covered them with discarded inner tubes from the bike shop. I dressed the ends of the handles with liquid electrical tape and secured the grips with regular electrical tape.



length and mount it level, with the screw holes flat against the wall and the angled edge pointing up and out. Then cut a piece the same length and mount it on the picture with the angled part facing down. Just nest the picture cleat in the wall cleat. Easy, cheap, and secure.

—Samuel Hildreth

WARRENSBURG, MISSOURI

## 14\_ Varnish vanisher

If I get varnish on my hands, I'll rub on some petroleum jelly and then wipe them clean with a paper towel. The jelly takes the varnish right off.

—Erin Osborne

COXS CREEK, KENTUCKY



## 15\_ Easy estimator

To estimate how many cubic yards of material you need to cover an area to a certain depth, you can use an online calculator or a physical one to divide 324 into the square footage, times the depth. But here's a simple way to do the calculation in your head that gets you close enough. Multiply the



## 10\_ Plastic wrap stops paint

Glad Press'n Seal plastic wrap is

fantastic for protecting surfaces from paint drips and errant brushes and rollers because it sticks so well to itself and other surfaces. I've used it on the backs of toilet tanks, exposed pipes, and baseboard heater covers, to name a few. It's faster and less fussy than taping up sheets of masking paper. When I'm painting, I'm never without it.

—Lisa Schroeck

ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA

## 11\_ Hair dryer for hot glue

If you need to remove leftover globs of hot-melt glue stuck to a surface and don't want to risk gouging or tearing it, soften up the globs with a hair dryer, set on HIGH, for 30 seconds. Then you can pop them off with a putty knife.

—Harry Betzel

ROMEONVILLE, ILLINOIS

## 12\_ Ready-made French cleat

The ramped aluminum trim pieces for carpet edging—the kind you see at thresholds—make great French cleats for hanging pictures. Cut a



square footage you want to cover by the depth (in inches) of the coverage. Multiply the result by 3 and divide by 1,000. For example, to cover a 200-square-foot garden with 2 inches of topsoil:  $200 \times 2 = 400$ .  $400 \times 3 = 1,200$ .  $1,200/1,000 = 1.2$  cubic yards.

—Jim Adcock

BELLEVUE, WASHINGTON

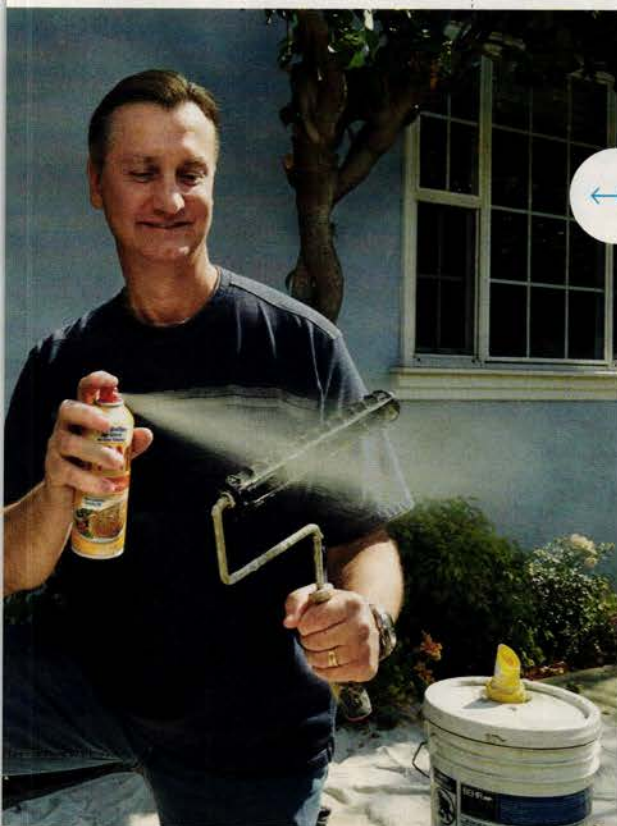


## 16 Wasps away

To get rid of yellow-jacket nests safely—without

handling chemicals or getting stung—connect your wet/dry vac to enough sections of PVC pipe to reach the nest from the ground. Prop or hang the pipe a few inches from the nest entrance, switch on the vac, and let it run. Every wasp coming or going gets sucked up and swiftly laid to rest.

—Jim Martin PARMA, OHIO



## 17 Cleaner for dishwashers

When the inside of my dishwasher

gets dirty from minerals and soap scum, I put a scoop of Tang orange drink in the empty dishwasher and run it for a full cycle. When it's done, the inside is spotless.

—Joseph Silva

WHITMAN, MASSACHUSETTS

## 18 Handheld bit guide

I had to drill a hole through a round metal bar, but I couldn't keep the bit from wandering. So I drilled a small hole in a wood plug, then held it against the bar to steady the bit long enough to get the hole started.

—Paul Martin

TINLEY PARK, ILLINOIS

## 19 Mastic remover

Ripping out our old linoleum floor was easy, but the black mastic

underneath remained stuck to the wood floor no matter what adhesive remover we tried. Then our dog peed on it. As we cleaned up his mess, the glue came right off! So we bought a gallon of household ammonia and a spray bottle and followed this procedure: Spray the ammonia, let it sit, scrape off the goo. Repeat if necessary. All the mastic came off, and our refinished floors look beautiful!

—Richard and Donna Joy

THOMASVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

## 21 Two tapes stop dust

During demolition, when I need an enclosure to contain dust inside a house, I use this two-tape method to secure plastic drop cloths around door openings: First, place strips of painter's tape on the wall. Then stick the plastic sheets to those strips using duct tape. That way, there's no worry about the plastic coming loose or the duct tape lifting the paint or leaving sticky residue on the wall.

—Robert Clark

ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

# 20

Curtis White

CORONA, CALIFORNIA

## PAM TO THE RESCUE

Before painting, I spray cooking oil on the roller frame so that the roller covers will slide off easily when I'm done.



## 22 Putty softener

To soften old, hard plumber's putty or

glazing compound, stick it in a microwave for about 15 seconds. If it's in a metal can, take out a hunk and nuke it on a paper towel.

—Dan Miller ELGIN, ILLINOIS

## 23 Cheap way to scrub sanding belts

When sawdust clogs my sanding belts, I get rid of it with a 6-inch piece of old vinyl garden hose. I clamp the sander to a bench and turn it on, then I rub the cut end of the hose against the moving belt. The sawdust comes right off.

—Steve Fuller

EAST TILBURY, ESSEX, U.K. ■

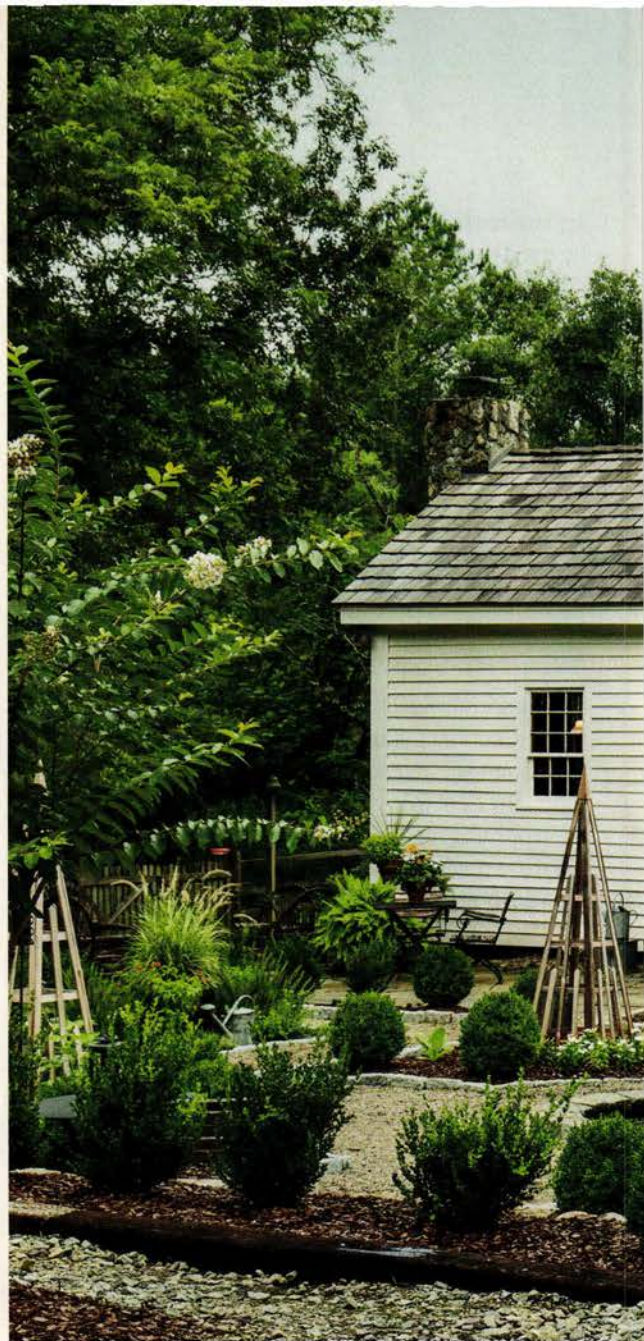




Our back-page column is the place where many of you dream of finding your next home. The three families in this story have done just that, moving heaven and earth—and in one case, the house itself—for the chance to make that fantasy a reality. Here's how they polished up their diamonds in the rough

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BY **PAUL HOPE**  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
**DEBORAH WHITLAW LLEWELLYN**  
STYLING BY **THEA BEASLEY**







In a nod to the house's origins as a farmer's cottage, Scott Pluckhahn and Keith Crosby (OPPOSITE) grow cotton and tobacco in the parterre garden.

# 1 STORIED FARMSTEAD

*Scott Pluckhahn and Keith Crosby*

LITHONIA, GEORGIA

ISSUE: MAY 2012

"When I look back, we were really crazy to do this," jokes Scott Pluckhahn, fondly recalling the day he and partner Keith Crosby committed to buying and restoring the 1,200-square-foot Housworth farmhouse, just outside of Atlanta. The Georgia natives had been living in a cottage nearby when they first toured the historic home, which

was for sale two years before it appeared in the magazine's Save This Old House column. "We were looking for something with an interesting history," says Scott. "We just loved that it had only been owned by one family. It looked like it was frozen in time, it was so rustic!"

"Rustic" was a generous description of the place: The







**LEFT:** Original pine boards plank the walls, floor, and ceiling in the living room. The space also retains what is believed to be the original wood mantel, which was likely stained black to conceal soot. **BELOW:** A granite fireplace partially heats the combination kitchen and dining room. The stones were quarried over 160 years ago from nearby Arabia Mountain.

leaking roof, rotted siding, and collapsing porches might have sent many a buyer scurrying. But Scott and Keith saw past those problems to the original 1840s details, such as the intact pine paneling and the granite fireplace, and they loved the picturesque setting, which included a seven-acre parcel.

Built by the Housworth family, who farmed the plot and drew their water from a nearby creek (indoor plumbing didn't arrive until the 1980s), the house had barely escaped General Sherman's March to the Sea, which left much of the area ravaged. Learning it was slated to appear in the pages of *This Old House* really kicked the couple's decision-making into high gear. "We knew it wouldn't be long before another reader swept in and bought the place," recalls Scott.

Soon after, with the purchase complete, they got to work. "Lots of people would have covered up the dark paneling inside," says Keith. "But we have a deep appreciation for early American history, so we did everything to preserve the original integrity of the house." The couple opted to have a period-appropriate cedar-shake roof installed and replaced about half of the lap siding before painting the exterior. The front porch, enclosed during a 1980s renovation, was opened up and restored. Determined to preserve the southern-yellow-pine walls and ceilings, which miraculously had never







#### MORE UPDATES!

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**TOP LEFT:** The bathroom features a freestanding vanity and a claw-foot tub, to prevent damaging the wall paneling. **ABOVE and TOP RIGHT:** Cotton bolls from the garden hark back to the farmstead's early days, as do thread spools used as drawer pulls. The original owners would have had these in abundance and might have used them in lieu of fancier hardware. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The master bedroom's nine-over-nine windows are replications of an intact original Scott and Keith found during the renovation.

been painted, Scott and Keith set about hand-scrubbing the boards themselves and left them in their original state. "There were certainly hiccups along the way," says Scott, "like the downpour that came when a portion of the roof was still missing! Thankfully, Keith was home and managed to jury-rig a tarp and a section of pipe to route the water out through a nearby window."

As a blueprint for much of the renovation, the couple relied on a similar house from the period, which had been restored by the Atlanta History Center, not far from their house. The restoration now complete, the couple has since opened their home to the public, conducting tours of the house and surrounding land. "We see it as a chance to educate people on life in the South before the Civil War," says Keith. On one recent occasion, Housworth descendants stopped by after a family reunion to tour the home many of them remembered from childhood. "To know that the great-grandson of your home's first owners is standing in your living room, admiring the work you've done, is pretty incredible," says Scott. "It doesn't get much better than that."



**BELOW:** The handsome Stick Style house was cut into panels and trucked more than 170 miles, from Biddeford, Maine, to Deer Isle, before being rebuilt on a new lot. **TOP RIGHT:** Restored window bays were fitted with bench seating to create reading nooks throughout the house. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The large kitchen occupies a replica of the 1920s addition that was left in Biddeford but reproduced after the house was moved.



## 2 COASTAL RETREAT

*Damon and Cindy Beyer* DEER ISLE, MAINE

ISSUE: JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2001



"When I saw the house, I knew it could be my one shot at having the vacation house of my dreams," says Damon Beyer, a seemingly unlikely candidate for buying and moving a massive 5,600-square-foot

Stick Style house in Maine. A resident of Texas, Damon first got a glimpse of the place on the back page of *TOH* during a layover at the Phoenix airport while traveling on business. He frantically called his wife, Cindy, who encouraged him to see the house for himself.

Some quick rejiggering of his return flight allowed for a stopover in Maine, where he'd arranged to tour the house and meet with an architect and house mover. "It was a total mess, but I just loved it anyway," he says. "The stick work was completely intact, and the casings around the

bay windows were simply stunning." A short time later, the couple signed the papers, paying just \$1 for the deed, and embarked on the lengthy odyssey of disassembling, moving, and rebuilding the place on Deer Isle, the only coastal area nearby with zoning laws that would permit the home to be rebuilt to its original height of 36 feet. The lot they purchased came with a small farmhouse, which Damon restored so that he, Cindy, and their two children had a place to stay while the main house was rebuilt.

Four years later, the family was able to move in. What was supposed to be just a summer house has become a favorite getaway—the family has spent Christmas there for the past five years. "It was a huge struggle to pull this off," Damon admits, "but I'm so glad we did. In our entire lives, we never could have found anything else quite like it."



# 3 HEARTLAND HOMESTEAD

*Ann and Kevin Mutschler*

PEKIN, INDIANA

ISSUE: OCTOBER 2010



"If we didn't buy this house, I knew we'd regret it for the rest of our lives," says Ann Mutschler, who, with her husband, Kevin, decided to ditch their fast-paced lives in San Jose, California, buy their dream

home, and move across the country with their two children. "Kevin and I had always wanted to restore an old farmhouse together," says Ann. "It just happened to be in Indiana." Ann had never even visited the Hoosier State, let alone considered living there. But after reading about the quaint Gothic Revival online, Kevin flew out to see it for himself. Standing in front of the house for the first time, he called Ann and said simply: "It feels like home." He shot a quick video before returning to show the family. "I remember tearing up when we watched Kevin's video," says Ann. "I saw the sweet porch with gingerbread trim,

and the grassy fields all around, and I knew immediately it was the life I wanted for my kids."

Six weeks later it was theirs, and the family flew across the country to take up residence in an apartment around the corner from their new home. It took Kevin nearly nine months of hard work before the family could move in; a few unexpected discoveries, including rotted joists and structural beams, pushed the timeline back.

There's still work to be done, like replacing floors in the living room and tackling the second-floor bedrooms, but the family is steadfast in its commitment to the place. "I knew plenty of people would tell us we were crazy for doing this," says Ann, "but I'm amazed how many have confessed that they've often dreamed of doing the same thing. And we get to live that dream every single day."



**ABOVE:** The circa-1850s farmhouse got a new coat of paint and a white picket fence. **TOP LEFT:** The kitchen looks out onto pastureland that the family uses for vegetable gardens and raising chickens. **LEFT:** From the beginning, Ann and Kevin were determined to do as much of the work themselves as they could—Kevin built in the medicine cabinet in the bathroom, and they salvaged the pedestal sink. ■





Advertisement

FOUR QUESTIONS FOR

# Richard Trethewey

*Plumbing & Heating Expert of This Old House since 1979*

**You appeared in the very first season of *This Old House* TV. How has the production of the show evolved over the years?**

When we first started, we shot scenes using one big camera with a cable that was connected to a van full of video gear, and the director spoke to the crew through a beat-up speaker inside the house. Now, with handheld video monitors and wireless microphones, we're more nimble. And we have smaller digital and infrared cameras that can shoot in tight spaces and behind walls, so viewers don't miss a thing.

**Are there HVAC innovations that excite you?**

Electric heat pump inverter technology. Traditional units are either 100% on or off. These cold-weather heat pumps use sensors to vary compressor speed based on need, delivering maximum comfort and consuming minimal energy. I'm also impressed by heating and cooling systems that have become so small and efficient that some can be tucked into a closet—and that's been critical in Charlestown, where the home is a small rowhouse.

**Charlestown, the site of this season's first project house, has special meaning for you. Why?**

Stunning architecture, and even new-builds that are respectful of the past, make Charlestown one of my favorite neighborhoods. I actually live there on my sailboat from November to April, just about a mile and half from the job site.

**What can we expect to see you doing in Charlestown this season?**

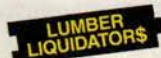
I'm excited about sharing Charlestown's rich history and attractions. This season I'll visit the *Charles W. Morgan*, America's oldest commercial ship still afloat, as it prepares to sail for the first time in 100 years. I'll tour Graves Light, the tallest lighthouse in the approaches to the Port of Boston, and I'll learn more about the fascinating engineering behind the Zakim Bunker Hill Memorial Bridge, one of the widest cable-stayed bridges in the world.



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# Ask

## THIS OLD HOUSE

INSIDE  
CRANKY CASEMENTS/UNGROUND OUTLETS  
/LUMPY LANDSCAPE/COLD SHOWERS/MORE

How do I clean  
rust off the  
tools I got from  
my father?

—Robert Koker  
KENNESAW, GA.



These  
planes  
of mine  
were once  
covered in

rust too, but I got rid of it by using a 6-amp battery charger and a baking-soda solution—1 tablespoon per gallon of water—in a 5-gallon bucket. I clipped the charger's black cable to a plane body, minus its wood or brass parts, and dunked it into the solution. Then, with the red cable clipped to a partially submerged piece of clean steel that wasn't touching the plane, I cranked up the charger. Several hours later, the electric current had lifted all the rust off the plane. After a light wire brushing and a coat of Boeshield spray, my planes have been rust-free ever since.

—Richard Hill  
SUFFOLK, VA.

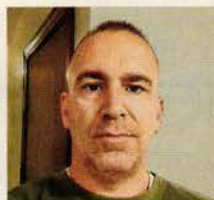
this issue,  
reader experts  
provide the  
answers



*Our cast  
of reader  
experts*



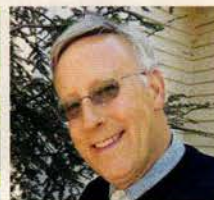
**GERRY POMANTI**  
Master plumber with G4 Mechanical Services, in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Years in the trade: 30+



**MICHAEL BOND**  
General contractor; owner of MLB Construction in Needham Heights, Mass. Years in the trade: 15+



**MAURICE TURGEON**  
Master electrician; owner of The Semi-Retired Electrician, in Wilsonville, Ala. Years in the trade: 50+



**TED CARTER**  
Landscape designer; owner of Ted Carter Inspired Landscapes, in Buxton, Maine. Years in the trade: 40+

Our usual cast of TOH TV regulars—Tom, Norm, Richard, Roger, and Kevin—is taking a well-deserved break this month from providing their expert advice and guidance. So we recruited a group of your fellow readers, pros from our online community, to pitch in and answer your home-improvement questions. The show guys will be back next issue, but if you need help before then, pay a visit to TOH's online discussion boards at [advice.thisoldhouse.com](http://advice.thisoldhouse.com) or [facebook.com/thisoldhouse](http://facebook.com/thisoldhouse)

The swing-out sashes on casement windows operate within tighter tolerances than those on double-hungs, so they require more care to install.

**I left my new wood casement windows open for most of the summer, and now some won't close tightly. Is there any way to fix this problem from the inside?**

—ELENA SANTANGELO, NORRISTOWN, PA.





**Michael Bond replies:** Unless the hinges or opening mechanisms are broken, two things could be going on. Either the sashes were unfinished and swelled up in the summer humidity or the windows weren't installed properly to begin with.

If swelling is the problem, try again to close them after a week or two of dry weather. If they shut, make it a priority to get a couple of coats of paint or a clear finish on them right away.

Now, if the sashes still won't shut even when dry, incorrect installation is probably the cause. Casements, more than any other window type, need to be securely and precisely anchored so that they don't fall out of square. You can see for yourself if that's the problem by holding a level against the side jambs to check them for plumb and against the sill to check for level. If either of them is out of whack, the window will have to be removed and reinstalled.

Since your windows are new, I would call the installer, explain the problem, and ask him to take a look. If that route doesn't get results, call the manufacturer. They can usually send a technician out to assess and fix things at no charge to you.

### **Q Where's the hot water?**

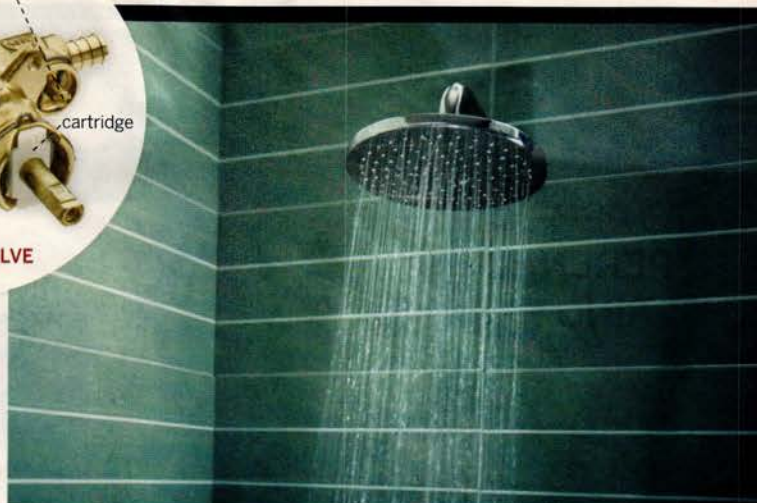
**Our shower delivers very little hot water, but our other fixtures are fine. Is it safe to run a snake down the PEX tubing to unclog it?**

—SCOTT MATSON, BURLESON, TEXAS

**Gerry Pomanti replies:** Because you have decent flow through the other hot-water outlets, I suspect the problem is with the shower valve itself, not the water-supply pipes; any debris inside a PEX supply pipe would be pushed to the valve any-



**SHOWER VALVE**



An inadequate, low flow of hot or cold water from a showerhead may indicate that debris is clogging the shower valve.

way. Here are a few things you can do to troubleshoot the valve.

The hot-water stop on the valve body may be partly closed. To get to this stop, remove the handle and wall plate and look in the wall cavity for a threaded rod on the left side of the valve body, near where the hot-water supply pipe is attached. If the slot on the end of the rod isn't horizontal—in the open position—turn it with a screwdriver until it is.

Still not enough hot water? Try adjusting the temperature limiter, which controls how far you turn the handle. To access it, take off only the handle; the limiter sits right behind it. In most cases, you pull the limiter out of its notched housing around the valve stem, turn it counterclockwise slightly, and slide it back in. Replace the handle and see if the water gets hot enough. Make these adjustments in small steps—you don't want scalding water to come out of the showerhead.

If that doesn't help, debris in the cartridge may be impeding the flow. Take off the handle and wall plate and shut off the water supply at the stops on both sides of the valve body (or at the main shutoff). Then remove the valve cap or bonnet nut and pull out the cartridge. (For a schematic diagram of your valve's parts,

go to the manufacturer's website.) If there's any debris, you can flush it out at the sink by running water through its ports. Once you put everything back in reverse order and turn on the water supply, you should have plenty of hot water.

### **Q Rough lawn**

**The acre of yard around our house is a lumpy mess of grass, buried tree stumps, and patches of dirt and weeds. What's the best way to level the lawn ourselves?**

—CATHERINE PHILLIPS, TOPSFIELD, MASS.

**Ted Carter replies:** While it's possible that you and your husband could tackle this project yourselves, I think you'll both run out of energy long before it's done.

For a property the size of yours, it would make a lot of sense to hire a good excavating contractor. He'll have the heavy equipment that can smooth out the lumps and remove the rotting stumps, and he'll have the skill to regrade your property so that water drains away from the house.

Just make sure to ask him to dress his work with at least 4 inches of good topsoil, the minimum needed to grow a decent lawn.





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## PROJECT OF THE WEEK

### HOW TO PROPAGATE FALL PERENNIALS INTO SPRING PLANTS



Photo: John Glover/Alamy

If you've got favorite plants such as coleus, geraniums, and impatiens still looking lush in your garden right now, and you live someplace with a real winter, think about propagating them before they wither away.

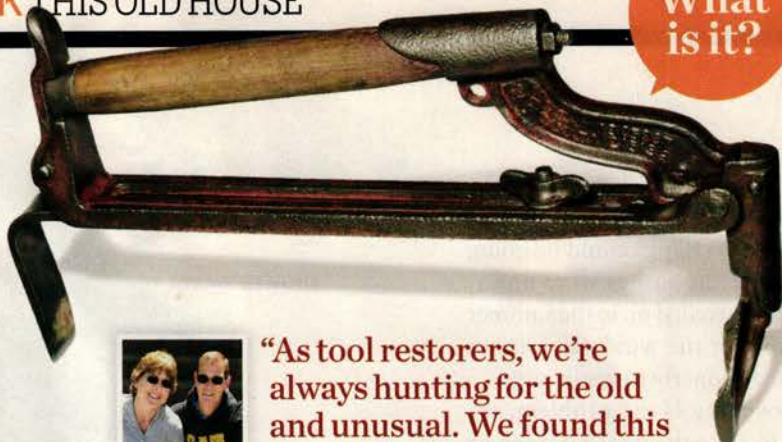
Any tender perennial—plants grown as annuals wherever there's a sustained hard freeze—can be grown from simple-to-take cuttings. Harvest small stems before the first prolonged frost, pot them up indoors, and they'll take root over the winter in time to fill in bare areas in your landscape come spring. Just park them on a south-facing windowsill and watch them grow.

You'll find all the tools and supplies necessary for this—and any—home project at The Home Depot nearest you.

For step-by-step  
instructions, go to  
[thisoldhouse.com/project](http://thisoldhouse.com/project)

## Ask THIS OLD HOUSE

What  
is it?



"As tool restorers, we're always hunting for the old and unusual. We found this at a yard sale. Can you guess what it's for?"

—Michele and Ron Busch  
NASHVILLE

A

Grabs onto big timber beams so that they can be twisted into place.

B

Stretches barbed-wire fencing, making it nice and taut.

C

Keeps rolls of paper towels clean and neat on job sites.

D

Squeezes together loose bricks so that they can be carried with one hand.

FOR THE ANSWER, SEE PAGE 104

### Ground an outlet

My satellite-TV supplier says its equipment needs a grounded outlet, but our 1940s house has only two wires. Can anything be done, short of rewiring the house?

—NELLO BURIAN SR., HARTSVILLE, S.C.

**Maurice Turgeon replies:** Sure, it's easy enough to ground one or two receptacles. And you really should do it for any receptacle that powers an electronic device, because without a ground, delicate circuitry can be damaged by lightning, power surges, or even static electricity.

You'll need a modern three-wire, tamper-resistant (TR) receptacle, a UL-approved bronze or copper ground clamp and screw, and enough 12-gauge copper wire—either bare or with green insulation—to reach from the receptacle to an acceptable grounding location. An acceptable location would be either the metal water-main supply pipe or, if the main is plastic, a grounding rod buried outside.

To start, shut off the power to the circuit you're working on and check the receptacle

end to make sure it's dead. Given the age of your house, your receptacles are probably mounted in metal boxes. If so, attach a short length of ground wire—a pigtail—to the box with a ground screw, then use a wire nut to connect this wire to a pigtail from the receptacle and to the wire going to the ground.

Fish the ground wire from the receptacle down through the wall to the grounding location. Then use the ground clamp to connect the ground wire to the grounding rod or to the metal water-main pipe within 5 feet of where it enters the house and upstream of the water meter. (If your house

## Ask THIS OLD HOUSE

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Or write to: Ask This Old House  
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Include a complete address and daytime phone number. Published questions will be edited for clarity and length and may be used in other media. We regret that, because of the volume of mail received, we're unable to reply to unpublished questions.



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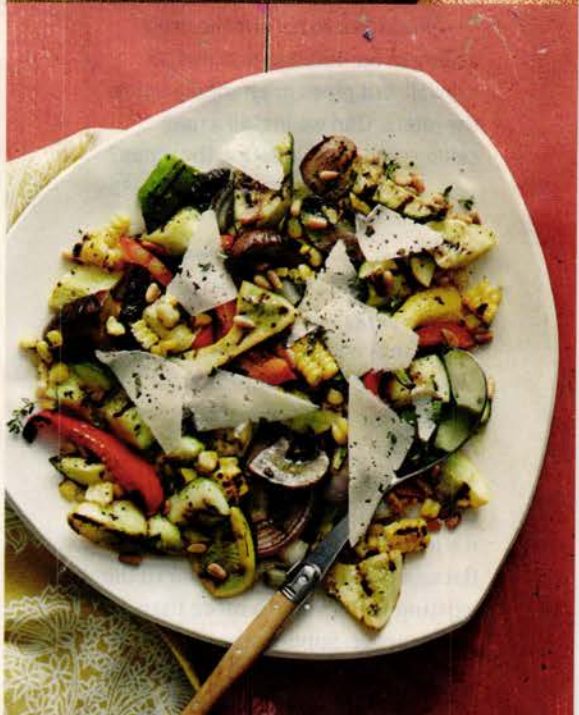
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doesn't have the two grounding rods required by code, this would be the time to put them in.)

To check your work, stick one end of a continuity tester in the neutral side of a receptacle—the long slot—and the other end in the grounding slot. If the tester lights up, the circuit is grounded.

## Q Pipes in the ceiling

We'd like to rip out the drop ceiling in our kitchen and put up drywall, but pipes are hanging below the joists. Can we install a new ceiling without relocating the pipes?

—JESSE JAEGER, LYNN, MASS.

**Michael Bond replies:** You can, and it's not that difficult. First, remove the drop-ceiling panels and their support grids and wires. Then inspect the pipes for leaks, the subfloor for rot, and the joists for oversize holes or notches. Fix any damage you find.

Next, measure how far the lowest pipe projects below the joist. If it's less than 1½ inches, screw 2x4s flat against and perpendicular to the existing joists and no more than 16 inches apart. Support the ends of the 2x4s with 2x3s screwed to the walls so that their bottom edges are level with the bottoms of the joists.

But if your pipes hang down more than 1½ inches, the easiest solution is to frame a new ceiling below the old one, using 2x6s to span the room's narrowest dimension. Just make sure the new ceiling will be at least 7½ feet high.

Start by measuring up from the floor to the lowest pipe. Transfer that measurement to a wall. Make a mark 6 inches below that point and draw a level line from it around the entire room. Now line up the bottom edges of your joist stock with the level line and screw them to the studs in the

## What is it?

### D BRICK CARRIER

Set this tool on a line of bricks and lift the handle. The bricks' weight tightens the carrier jaws, allowing you to tote as many as 10 bricks with one hand. This model was patented by the H.E. Fuller Co. in 1921.



walls all around the room to form ledgers. Toenail or toe-screw the ends of your new ceiling joists to the ledgers, 16 inches apart at center. Rough in your electrical for lighting, then fasten the drywall to the new joists and the underside of the ledgers.

## Q Clogged washer

After my washing machine's drain clogged three times last year, I figured lint was the cause and put a mesh filter on the washer's discharge hose. But now I'm changing out the filter every couple of loads. Any way to avoid this chore?

—JONATHAN BARNARD, SHALIMAR, FLA.

**Gerry Pomanti replies:** Lint clogs wouldn't be an issue and you wouldn't

need a filter if the washer's drain pipe were at least 2 inches in diameter and had a straight, ¼-inch-per-foot pitch. You might be able to replace the pipe, but it would be cheaper to deal with what I suspect is the real problem: a partial blockage that's causing the lint to plug the line.

A blockage of this sort isn't something you can easily dislodge with a snake. You'll have better luck hiring a professional drain cleaner to take a high-pressure hose and scour out the buildup of lint and soap scum.

To ensure that it stays lint-free, I recommend installing a washer-drain protector (Whirlpool part #367031) at the end of the drain hose. It's inexpensive, easy to clean, and much more effective at trapping lint than the sock-type filter you're currently using. ■



## ASK THIS OLD HOUSE BEGINS NEW SEASON

Tune in October 2 on most PBS stations for the premiere of the 13th season of **Ask This Old House**. For broadcast times, go to [thisoldhouse.com/tvschedule](http://thisoldhouse.com/tvschedule) or consult local TV listings.



# Directory

OCTOBER 2014

**COVER:** See the listing for "Grand-Prize Winners."

## HOME SOLUTIONS (pp. 15–26)

**Budget redo: Homeowner's blog:**  
Angie's Roost; angiesroost.com.

**GET THIS LOOK FOR LESS: This kid camps out at home (pp. 36–38) Homeowner's blog:**  
theheatherednest.com.

## LANDSCAPING: He's got a head for sheds

(pp. 41–42) **Shed design:** Alan Cusolito, Gizmo Design, Laguna Hills, CA; alancusolito.com.  
**Glazed pots:** campaniainternational.com.  
**All plants:** monrovia.com. **Garden tools:**  
Union Tools; wayfair.com. **Hand tools:**  
Fiskars; wayfair.com.

## FAT-WALLET AWARDS (pp. 55–58)

**Homeowners' blogs: Rock 'n' roll end table:**  
createandbabble.com. **Formica fix-up:**  
hymnsandverses.com. **Cooking up a new look:**  
suzyssitcom.com. **The writing on the wall:**  
sandpaperandglue.com.

## WEEKEND REMODEL: You love this

**rustic touch (pp. 61–68) Upcycled French doors:** Classic sliding door hardware kit; nwartisanhardware.com. **Repurposed panel door:** Stanley barn door hardware; amazon.com. **Classic Z-shape:** etsy.com/shop/eastoaklane.

## GRAND-PRIZE WINNERS (pp. 70–77)

**Architect:** Alexander T. Polaski, Clinton, NJ; althearchitect.com. **Chimney work:** Chimney Savers, Hillsborough, NJ; 908-359-7798.  
**Exterior: Siding:** jameshardie.com. **Windows:** pella.com. **Roofing:** Riversedge Roofing, Frenchtown, NJ; 908-996-6532. **Roof shingles:** certainteed.com. **Shutters:** atlanticshutters.com. **Trim:** miratectrim.com. **Porch railing:** vintagewoodworks.com. **Sconces:** geniehouse.com. **Paint:** HC-110 Wethersfield Moss (exterior siding), CC-550 October Mist (kitchen walls), HC-145 Van Courtland Blue (mantel surround), HC-98 Providence Olive (dining room base coat), HC-99 Abingdon Putty (dining room glaze), 274 Santo Domingo Cream (family room), HC-29 Dunmore Cream (upstairs hall), and HC-115 Georgian Green (master bedroom); benjaminmoore.com. Spring Grove (bathroom walls); dutchboy.com. Barn Red semi-solid stain (barn exterior siding); cabotstain.com. **Kitchen: Countertops:** Artistic Marble Design, Paterson, NJ; artisticmarbleanddesign.com. **Wine refrigerators:** ge.com. **Sink:** rohlhome.com. **Faucet:** moen.com. **Range and range hood:** vikingrange.com. **Floor tile:** daltile.com. **Hall bathroom: Shower wall:** Glass Castle, Neshanic Station, NJ; glasscastle.com. **Tile:** daltile.com. **Workshop: Combination machine:** minimax-usa.com. **Molder:** williamsnhussey.com.

**ONE-ROOM WONDERS (pp. 78–85) Kitchen: Cabinets:** kraftmaid.com. **Range:** vikingrange.com. **Wall ovens:** dacor.com. **Dishwasher:** mieleusa.com. **Runner:** dermondpeterson.com. **Tea towel:** studiopatro.com. **Plate (with cherries):** francespalmerpottery.com. **Bath: Homeowner's blog:** greenthumbwhiteapron.com. **Sinks and toilet:** Portrait collection; kohler.com. **Faucets:** signaturehardware.com. **Floor and bath tile:** tilshop.com. **Tub:** americanbathfactory.com. **Light fixtures:** restorationhardware.com. **Curb Appeal: Paint:** SW 7566 Westhighland White (body) and SW 7539 Cork Wedge (trim); sherwin-williams.com. 1116 Sepia Tan (trim); benjaminmoore.com. **Dining room: Table:** Custom. **Yard: Clock:** Howard Miller; jansenclocks.com.

## ASK THIS OLD HOUSE (pp. 99–104) Q+A:

**Thanks to** Gerry Pomanti, G4 Mechanical Services, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada; 807-628-6980. Michael Bond, MLB Construction, Needham Heights, MA; 617-851-3958; mlb-construction.com. Maurice Turgeon, The Semi-Retired Electrician, Wilsonville, AL; 205-669-9812; thesemi-retiredelectrician.com.

Ted Carter, Ted Carter Inspired Landscapes, Buxton, ME; 207-761-1823; tedcarterlandscapes.com. **What is it?: Thanks to** Michele and Ron Busen, Busen Restoration, Nashville, TN; busenrestoration.com.

**SAVE THIS OLD HOUSE: (p. 112) Thanks to** Cliff Zenor, Mishawaka, IN. Todd Zeiger, director, Northern Regional Office, Indiana Landmarks; indianalandmarks.org. ■

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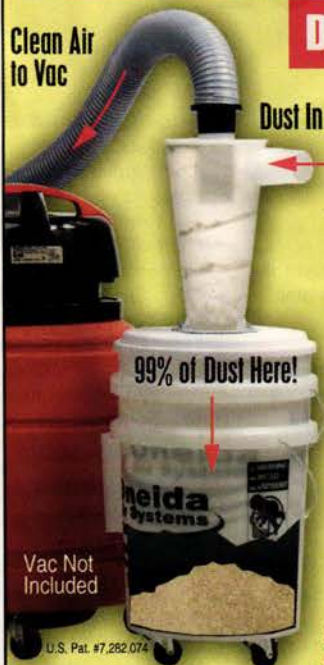
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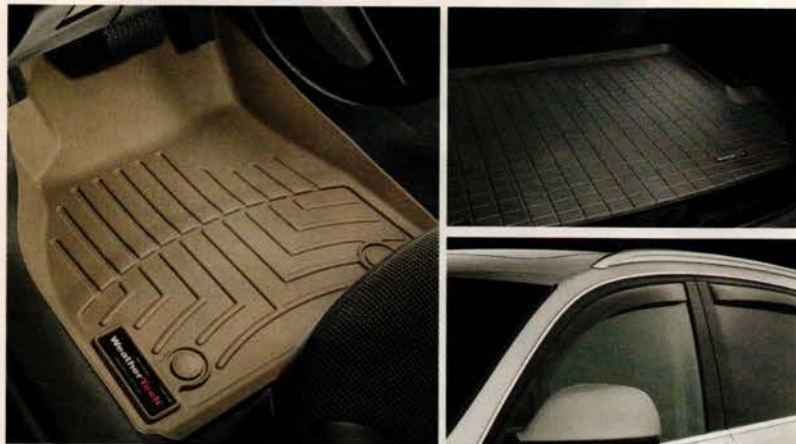
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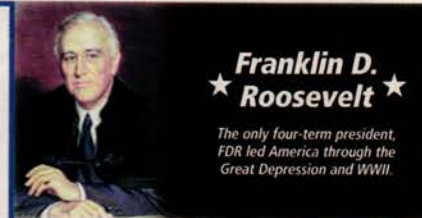
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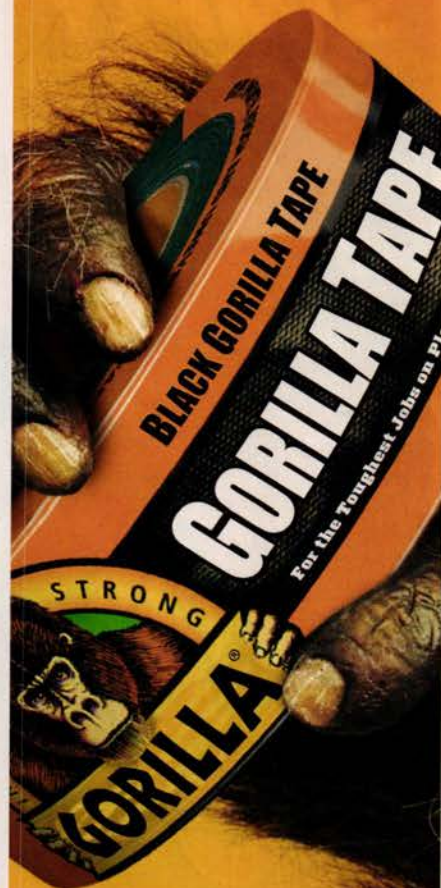
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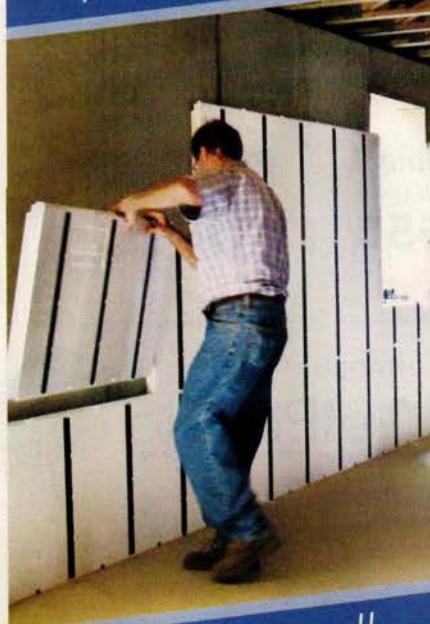
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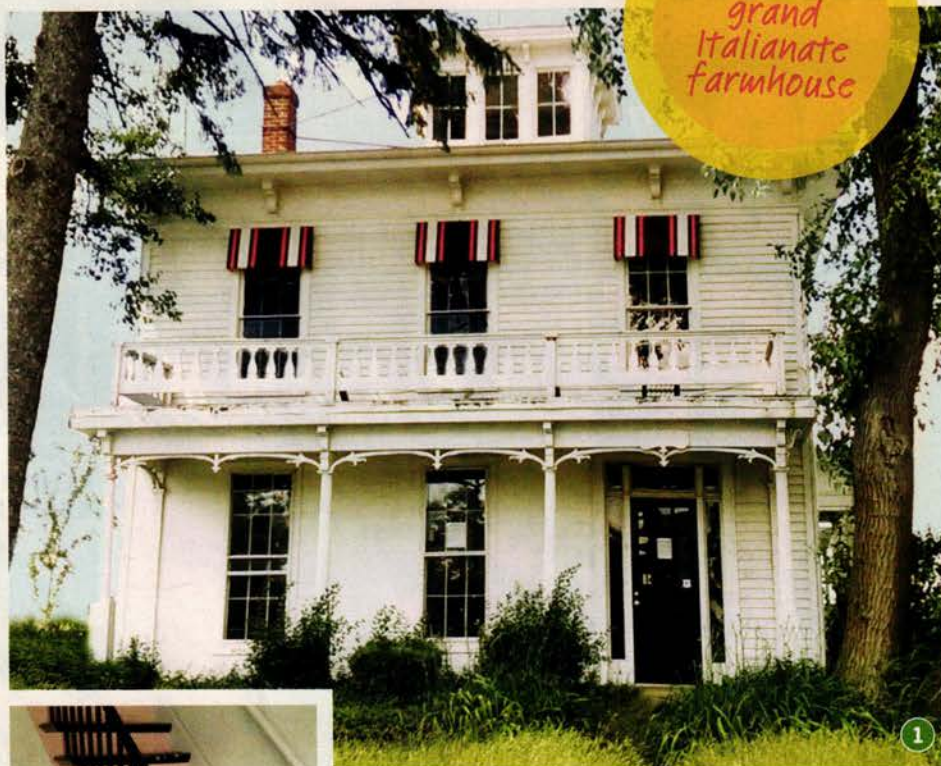
**Dear This Old House,**  
 We locals are proud of our past and our historic architecture, so I'm writing to you

about this lovely farmhouse I've long admired, which needs your help! Tucked between retail stores just north of our town, the Italianate beauty has impressed passersby for nearly 150 years. It was built by Daniel Ward, a native son who headed west in 1849, seeking his fortune during the gold rush. He found it quickly and came home to Mishawaka, where he built this rather formal farmhouse in 1865. It's one of only a handful of buildings that survived a raging fire in 1872 and, just as impressive, the decades of development that followed. But now, to pave the way for a mixed-use complex, the house is threatened with demolition. So I'm hoping a fellow reader with the resolve and the resources to step forward will move the house somewhere nearby.

Whoever does will have a picture-perfect Italianate, complete with a grand front porch and a rooftop cupola. The interior still has its handsome casings, original floorboards, and a columned mantel.

In addition to being moved, the place will need some work to shine like it used to. Until recently it was used as a clothing shop, so it lacks a kitchen, and it'll need updates to the electrical and plumbing systems. Whoever moves the house will have a big task but will also be the proud owner of a showpiece that's certain to turn heads for another 150 years.

Sincerely,  
 —Cliff Zenor



FREE!  
 grand  
 Italianate  
 farmhouse



**1]** The 2,500-square-foot house has four bedrooms and one bath. The cost of moving the structure locally and pouring a new foundation has been estimated at \$65,000. **2]** The original staircase is intact but has been painted black and pink, as have many of the floors in the house. **3]** Doorways throughout retain their casings and transoms. **4]** The exterior of the box bay is embellished with carved brackets that match those found along the cornice line and cupola.



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