

APRIL 2013

HOUSE & HOME

THE MAGAZINE OF HOME & STYLE

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Spring Decorating: Laid-back Style

Fresh & Wild



A YOUNG COUPLE REINVIGORATE A LAKESIDE COTTAGE WITH NATURE-INSPIRED FINISHES AND EXOTIC FLOURISHES.

Text by ELLEN HIMELFARB | Photography by ANGUS FERGUSSON

RIGHT: The deep lakefront deck of Allison and Tony Willson's cottage on Balsam Lake, Ont., is set up like an outdoor living room. **Table, sofa,** Andrew Richard Designs; **poufs,** Serena & Lily. OPPOSITE: To encourage cosy gatherings around the iconic river rock fireplace, the living room is filled with as much seating as Allison could squeeze in, including a sofa from Montauk and rattan chairs from Angus & Company. She found the classic roll-arm settee for \$50 at a local antique barn and reupholstered it in natural linen. **Chandelier,** Addison's; **ottoman,** Sarah Richardson Design; **bamboo chair,** Rose Antiques; **linen** for drapes, Designer Fabrics.

Get Organized
Create a fireside dining nook in your living room (opposite) for casual nibbles or card games.





Working with South Simcoe Renovations, Allison gave the kitchen a new lease on life by adding new Ikea base cabinets fitted with custom doors to match the existing uppers and painting the marble-topped island a contrasting grey. She clad a \$300 range hood in beadboard painted a creamy white to match the cabinets, and her collection of creamware. Texture and character are brought in via grasscloth wallpaper by Thibaut, a distinctive herringbone-patterned travertine floor and wood-panelled ceiling. **Stools**, Love the Design; **lights**, Hudson Valley; **travertine**, Saltillo.

Get Organized Corral pretty kitchenware with the same hue in open storage units.

If you've ever wondered how important the cottage is to a family who cottages, consider this: Tony and Allison Willson bought theirs when they'd been dating just nine months. They got engaged here. And because they were renting in Toronto at the time, the cottage, which they get up to most weekends throughout the year, was essentially their first home. Interesting, then, that Allison, a designer with Sarah Richardson Design, decided to take things slowly when it came to decorating the four-bedroom home. A full three years slowly. But, when it was finally done, it virtually radiated a warm, inviting charm that's simultaneously stylish and stay-awhile-and-sink-in cosy.

"We really needed to take time to figure out how we wanted to live ... together," says Allison. "We hadn't bought a stick of furniture before. We needed to figure out our direction — how we wanted it to feel. To ask, 'What do you like? What do I like?' I think, in the end, I was given pretty free rein, though I considered Tony absolutely. I wanted it to reflect who we are as a couple, but also as individuals."

This part of Balsam Lake in Ontario's Kawarthas region has been home to Willsons for generations. Allison, a first-time owner by contrast, was determined to get the look right. The couple spent dozens of weekends in the cottage, built 10 years ago by Tony's uncle, before changing a thing.

That's not to say they didn't spend countless hours at markets in the country and vintage stores in Toronto to hunt down furniture for the cottage. "I couldn't pass one without walking through the doors," Allison says. But the design process, she says, took at least a couple of summers to complete. "It was important that our cottage was inviting — comfortable in a way that felt collected." Spoken like someone truly appreciative of the innate charm found in the best cottages. "I don't think I'd adopt the same method in a city house, but cottages need a bit of whimsy to them; your life is more casually on display at a cottage," she says. "I love the relaxed vibe created when pieces from a million different places come together."

It must be daunting for a designer to marry into a cottage family — to respect the sense of place and heritage, while also bringing her own aesthetic and ideas to the table. But Allison never had any intention of taking on a big renovation. She left the cottage's layout untouched, save for the kitchen, where the window was so tiny the space was dark as night by 2 p.m. each afternoon.

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TOP RIGHT: Guests are greeted in the entry with a pretty vintage vignette: a desk from Arcadia Antiques, a stack of suitcases from Putti and a sculptural lamp from Absolutely Inc. Rope-patterned wallpaper by Cole & Son is perfect for a cottage. **Mirror**, Guff; **stool**, ChairTableLamp; **fabric**, Kravet. RIGHT: The deck can seat 10 comfortably. The wood furniture — including a sofa, table and chairs by Andrew Richard Designs, and Muskoka chairs from

Tyrone Mills — is classically Canadian, while the upholstery and accessories give it zing. A nook (far right) outside the principal bedroom gets a more sophisticated look with Dorothy Draper-chic chairs from the Châtelet warehouse recovered in an outdoor fabric by Trina Turk. **Poufs**, Serena & Lily; **cushion upholstery**, Silva.

Get Organized Stacks of suitcases (top right) look whimsical and can also store bedding or towels.





RIGHT: The TV room could have served as a repository for family cast-offs; instead, Allison transformed it with dynamic textiles (a rug from West Elm and wicker accents) and a console piled with items inspired by the outdoors.

Blue bottles, The Door Store.

OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT: With its workbench-style table from Guff, elegant bentwood chairs and enamelled pendant lights from Smash, the dining area has an urban, industrial sensibility.

Chairs, Gar Products; **basket**, Kiondo.

TOP RIGHT: French doors in the principal bedroom lead to the deck. Furnishings like a sand-coloured armchair and sisal rug don't fight the bold wallpaper for attention. **Rug**, Elte.

MIDDLE RIGHT: The old vivid brown wood siding was painted a quieter rustic grey. BOTTOM LEFT: Allison found a bubblegum-pink pouf at HomeSense and wrapped it in rope for a nautical effect. A ladder holds throws for movie nights. **Throws**, Ikea and West Elm.

BOTTOM RIGHT: A natural tone is set in the powder room by the Woods wallpaper by Cole & Son. An antique bedside table from Angus & Company was turned into a vanity topped with an ironstone sink. **Faucet** (acid-washed by The Door Store), Rubinet; **mirror**, Elte.

Get Organized
Tuck a console table behind your sofa (right) for display and items you need close at hand.

"Cottages need a bit of whimsy ... I love the relaxed vibe created when pieces from a million different places come together"





Allison says the hand-painted bedroom wallpaper embodies her style: traditional with a fun edge. Wrapping the space in the bold Chenonceau pattern by Schumacher meant she didn't need to invest in artwork and all the other furnishings had to be white or natural to keep the look low-key. She found a Georgian fanlight in an architectural salvage shop and fused it to a beadboard base to craft a statement headboard. The drapes are trimmed in rope for a nautical note. **Wallpaper**, Bilbrough & Co.; **table**, Harvest Antiques; **linens**, Restoration Hardware; **lamp**, ChairTableLamp; **rope trim**, Designer Fabrics.

Get Organized Maximize handy bedside space by using a long console table as your nightstand.

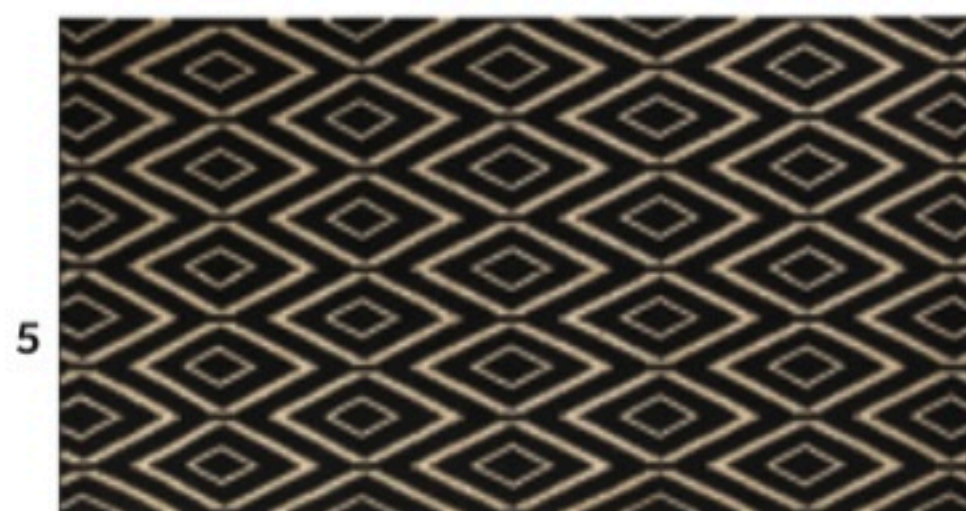
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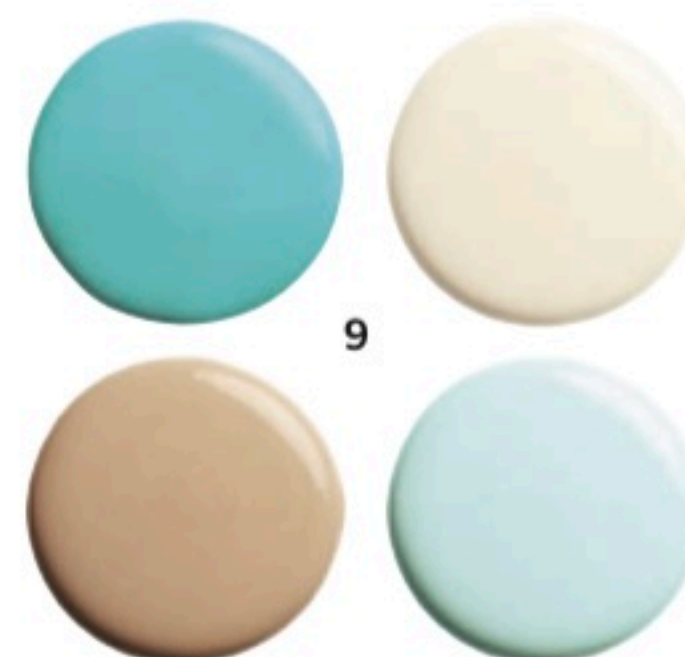
THE ACCENTS



GET THE LOOK OF ALLISON WILLSON'S HIP ALL-SEASON COTTAGE.



THE PALETTE



1. A tufted sofa in a creamy upholstery with hints of espresso is both elegant and cosy. Sofa 3772-03 by Lee Industries. 34" h. x 87" w. x 41" d. \$3,774. At Rousseau's.

2. A back-to-basics drafter's stool has simple, durable style and can double as an end table. Vintage Toledo barstool. Wood; steel. 25" to 29" h. x 16" diam. \$295. At Restoration Hardware.

3. The heirloom-style Charlotte headboard in warm white brings a sweet country look to bedrooms. MDF; hardwood veneer. 63" h. x 62" w. x 2½" d. (queen). \$734. Through potterybarn.com.

4. Dress up a bedroom or bath with playful striped totes to corral beach towels or laundry. Sailor Stripe hamper by Pehr. 20" h. x 18" diam. \$65. At retailers across Canada.

5. Set a bold tone in the living or TV room with the graphic Kite kilim rug. Handmade by Craftmark-certified artisans. Wool-cotton. 8' x 10'. \$659. At West Elm.

6. A textured ottoman of coiled jute lends a hint of seaside ambience. Buoy ottoman by Two's Company. Jute; coir. 14" h. x 18" diam. Approx. \$345. At retailers across Canada.

7. Play up the drama with daring walls in high-contrast prints. Chenonceau wallpaper by Schumacher in Charcoal. \$173/roll. At Bilbrough & Co.

8. Mix graphic and feminine fabrics for an eclectic look. From left: Madison Linen Mist, \$146/yd., at Kravet; Chatham Inn Pearl, \$234/yd., at Lee Jofa; Vert Stripe in Grey, \$25/yd., at Designer Fabrics.

9. Paint colours based in nature ensure an appealing continuity. Clockwise from top left: Turquoise Powder (2057-50), Cloud White (CC-40), Harbour Fog (2062-70), Bluffs (CC-338), Benjamin Moore.

SEE SOURCE GUIDE



IPAD-EXCLUSIVE CONTENT
Get Allison Willson's cottage-hosting pointers in our iPad edition.

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