

THE BEST LITTLE COTTAGES *on the Coast*

We all have a thing for them—small(ish) hideaways just a short hop from the water. Cottages are big on soul and slim on excess, and have character for days. Here, get to know the spirited shore dwellers who have met their match: a New Yorker who rescued a Caribbean colonial, an Oregon couple who brought their cottage dreams to sea level, and a stylist in Santa Barbara who sprouted extra living space outdoors. Plus, find tips for hosting a houseful, the best cottage communities, and clever ways to get more out of small spaces. (Hint: we love the fresh air!)

BY MARISA SPYKER



A 19th-century cottage on Harbour Island in the Bahamas



FROM LEFT: ANNIE SCHLECHTER/STYLING BY LIZ STRONG, LU TAPP/STYLING BY MAX HUMPHREY, DAVID ISAAC/STYLING BY LIZ STRONG

A floating home on the Willamette River in Portland, Oregon



A 1950s cottage with a secret garden in Santa Barbara, California

CARIBBEAN QUEEN

A SERIAL COTTAGE RESCUER BRINGS A HISTORIC HARBOUR ISLAND HOME (WITH A PARTY-GIRL REP) ROARING BACK TO LIFE



Homeowner Trish Becker stands in the breezy Dutch doorway of her rooftop deck. The siding is painted Powdered Petals, and the shutters are painted Minerva, both by Pittsburgh Paints.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANNIE SCHLECHTER STYLING BY LIZ STRONG

New cypress shiplap planks were rabbeted onsite to mimic the look of the original walls. Becker painted them Cumberland Fog by Pittsburgh Paints and hung a pair of paintings by Bahamian artist Amos Ferguson.



There's nothing like a pink, down-on-its-luck cottage to turn Trish Becker's head. The New York-based jewelry designer and house rescuer (this was her first renovation of three) has a soft spot for old Bahamian colonials with a story, and this one—nicknamed Chatterbox—had plenty to say. It was built by Earl Johnson, who is said to have been a ship builder and also the first home builder on the island. It changed hands in the mid-1970s, sold to a family whose daughter gave it its name, apparently because of all the parties they hosted. And Becker has kept that tradition alive, creating a lively landing pad for all of her guests. (She hosted 30 people in the little cottage on New Year's Eve!) Here, she dishes on bringing the old girl back to the glory of her heyday.



A widow's walk offers a bird's-eye view of the bay side of the island.



The countertops are crafted of ipe from the Dominican Republic.



Rattan reigns in the living room, where a vintage hexagonal table and shapely armchairs harmonize with island maps framed in rattan hoops. The lamps are vintage demijohns wired for electricity.

COTTAGE CREW

Architect
de la Guardia
Victoria Architects
& Urbanists, Inc.

Designer
Trish Becker
Design

Builder
Owen Higgs
Construction

YEAR BUILT
Late 1800s

SQUARE FEET
1,800

First things first: This cottage looks like it could certainly draw a crowd—can it fit one?

Trish Becker: The funny thing is, when I first saw it from the street, I was a little discouraged by its size. It seemed so small! But the moment I opened the front door, I was blown away by how open and airy and wonderful it felt. It was a very thoughtfully planned house that was built to get the maximum out of a small amount of space. Each room flows into another, so nothing stops you when you move through it. And there is this great porch off

the second-floor bath, plus a widow's walk where you can see 360-degree views of the island and the ocean. So, yes, the more the merrier!

What kind of shape was the house in?

TB: Not good, a bit ramshackle. A renovation in the 1950s had removed some of the original architectural elements and replaced them with some really unattractive modern details, like jalousie [louvered] windows, a glass-paneled front door, and drywall ceilings, which covered up these gorgeous little beams

and took away nearly five inches of ceiling height.

You had no renovation experience. So where did you start?

TB: With good architects! It was their suggestion to stick with the purest forms of materials—like hardwood and unlacquered brass—because of the way things age down here. It made sense not only for the visual aspects, but also for the practical benefits, because the materials will last longer. Historically, these are materials they would have used in the original construction.



A chic game table and chairs earn a prominent spot just inside the front door. The hoop-back chairs (in Cooled Blue finish) are from Red Egg, and the hall rack is a French antique.

A rattan console Becker found on eBay anchors the porch bar. The table umbrella is Balinese, and the greenery is from a local papaya tree.



Every renovation comes with the unexpected, right? What was your biggest surprise?

TB: When we went to take down the drywall in the kitchen, it basically disintegrated, much to the shock of those who were working on it at the time. They had to do an emergency propping of the roof over the kitchen while they removed the rest of the wall and put it back up. We fancied this as being a quick little fun project, but of course it was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life.

So naturally you decided to do it again and again! What's the most important thing you learned from Chatterbox that helped you in later renovations?

TB: That there are three rules when renovating in the Bahamas. One: shit happens. Two: if it isn't perfect, it's called "island charm." And three: believe in happy accidents. We had many accidents during the renovation—and most

of them would fall into the first category! But we did have an instance where a pair of original built-in drawers were accidentally removed during demolition. It felt like a loss at the time, but then we realized how much it opened the room up. Now, that bedroom sports two double beds with plenty of room for hanging out.

Entertaining seems to be second nature to this cottage. These days, what's on the menu?

TB: My absolute favorite meal to serve, when we can get it, is fresh stone crab from the neighboring island of Eleuthera. It feels incredibly luxurious and it's local.

More importantly, though, what's everyone drinking at your house?

TB: The Goombay Smash! It's a traditional Bahamian cocktail made with equal parts white rum, dark rum, coconut rum, and pineapple juice. It'll kill you, but it's really yummy!



The simple white guest bed is one of a pair from West Elm. The dresser is limed oak from Design Workshop.



The headboard in the master bedroom is by Suzanne Kasler for Ballard Designs.



The tile inlay on the front porch is a reproduction of the original, which led visitors to the front door.



The back porch is framed in a cultivar of hibiscus brought to the island in the 1970s for a wedding. The sofas are whitewashed teak.

HOST WITH THE MOST

Yes, you can squeeze in more guests! Here, Becker's tips for entertaining to the max when square footage is at a minimum.

1. Rethink bedrooms. Larger spaces are traditionally reserved for master bedrooms, but if your beach cottage is a guest magnet (as beach cottages typically are), switch the conventional setup. "I like to give larger rooms pairs of twins or double beds. You can easily fit more than one bed and still have room to spare."

2. Clear the path to the kitchen. In rethinking Chatterbox, Becker added a door connecting the kitchen to the patio; this ensured that the high-traffic room had multiple access points.

3. Get hooked up. Tiny cottage baths afford limited storage space, so Becker thinks vertically. "I put hooks everywhere," she says. "Things don't dry very well here, so it's nice to have a place to easily air out things like towels and swimsuits."

4. Build a bar. When space is a commodity, a separate area for storing and mixing drinks can be super practical. "In a cottage kitchen, the refrigerator is often tiny, so having a bar fridge in an adjacent room makes it easy for guests to help themselves and saves space in the main fridge."

5. Store more. "Make sure guests have someplace to hide their suitcases away," says Becker. "It makes all the difference between feeling like you're in a hotel and feeling like you're actually living there. If there's not enough closet space, make sure the beds are tall enough so luggage can fit underneath."

SAILORS' HIDEAWAY

A PAIR OF VETERAN BOATERS MAKE LIFE ON THE WATER A FULL-TIME GIG, WITH A 24-HOUR WILDLIFE SHOW INCLUDED



Owners LauraLee Symes and her husband, Bill (opposite), share their cedar-shingle cottage with their bichon frise, Lucy. The door is painted Noir by Pratt & Lambert.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY LU TAPP STYLING BY MAX HUMPHREY



It seems pretty dreamy to live in a house that floats. What's the catch?

LauraLee Symes: Well, the most surprising perk is that you become an integral part of the environment and of the river itself. We're constantly surrounded by beautiful wildlife; there are a couple of families of bald eagles that live behind our house, and otters regularly swim up to our docks. It's the cutest thing. But you asked about the catch: The difficult part is when they decide to move in. We've had Canada geese laying eggs, and otters hanging around and eating shellfish on our dock. That can smell a little!

In what ways is building a home on land different than building one designed on the water?

Bill Symes: It was actually surprisingly straightforward in terms of construction. Any material you can use on land you can use for a floating home. Ours is built on a log float and chained to pilings, much like a dock would be. We were limited in height and footprint, of course, because you can only fit so much on a float. Most homes here are around 2,000 square feet—some are pushing 3,000—but you can't get much bigger than that.

How did you make the most of your limited space?

LS: We really wanted an open first-floor plan, not only because it makes everything seem larger but also because it means that everyone can be together when we entertain.

Not many people can say they live on the water and mean it literally. But Bill and LauraLee Symes can, thanks to their shingle-style cottage that shares an address with fish, bald eagles, and otters on the Willamette River in Portland, Oregon. It's part of a small floating-home community called the Oregon Yacht Club, which dates to 1900 and was originally a traditional yacht club with a clubhouse, sailboat races, and swimming events. "We're both big sailors and had always thought it looked like an interesting place to live," says Bill. "But I think it was my wife's persistence that eventually sold us. She managed the Willamette Sailing Club across the river and would see these beautiful new homes being tugged to the community, so she just fell in love." Here, more on why they traded in their sprawling terrestrial home for a compact floating paradise.



A 72-inch daybed by Cisco Brothers stretches across a bank of casement windows in the living room. The trim is painted Decorator's White by Benjamin Moore.



A high-gloss ceramic tile backsplash reflects plenty of sunlight in the kitchen. The open shelving is stainless steel.



The lighting in the dining room is by Crate and Barrel, and the guitar is Bill's Martin D18. "He serenades me while I cook breakfast," says LauraLee with a laugh.

COTTAGE CREW

THE TEAM

Architect
BC&J
Architecture

Designers
Bill and
LauraLee
Symes

Builder
Even
Construction

**YEAR
BUILT**
2015

**SQUARE
FEET**
2,100

For storage, we carved out several built-ins—including a wine fridge and a dining room buffet with drawers—and added a hidden closet underneath the stairs. And because we don't have a garage or basement, we put our utilities in the attic.

Portland is anything but traditional in architectural style, yet the shingle-style design of this home is so classic. Where did your inspiration come from?

BS: In the course of our research, we came across a book showcasing the beautiful boathouses of Lake Muskoka in Ontario, Canada, and it became a huge inspiration for us. It seemed to us the perfect style for a home on the river.

We are surprised there are so few others like it in the area. We're hoping to start a trend!

The city is also known for being a bit gray, but this house is filled with so much light. What's your secret?

LS: That was a concern we had, especially because the design has this roofline that extends well past the windows, which I was worried would make the house dark. But Peter, the architect, focused on where the sun was going to be at different times of the day, and flared the eaves in a way that would take advantage of that light. Plus, the windows bring in light from two sides, so it feels like summer in here even on the darkest of days.

As owners of a flower shop just up the road [Sellwood Flower Company], is it hard to be without a lawn or garden to work in?

LS: It's funny because a lot of people here buy hundreds of plants and keep them in pots on their deck, but I wanted to do less of that because it's what I do every day at work. One thing we did, though, was install a planter that runs the length of the float that borders Fleet Street [a floating sidewalk residents use to get from land to their houses] and plant camellia and star jasmine. It creates a charming wall of greenery that provides a little privacy in the courtyard outside the kitchen.

What's the most interesting waterbound vehicle you've seen from your house?

BS: We live on a channel right across from the sailing club, so it's become a part of our routine after work to just sit on the dock with a cocktail and watch the world go by. We've seen dragon boat races, rowing team practices, and a sternwheeler that gives tours right off our moorage. Sometimes it seems like it's about to come in straight through the front door!

Have you ever had a "man overboard" situation?

LS: Thankfully, not yet. But our dog, Lucy, has: I think she was bummed I didn't take her paddleboarding with me, and she fell right in!

COMMUNITIES, FROM LEFT: THEA WALTON, THOMAS ROCHE/GETTY IMAGES, ROSS CHAPIN ARCHITECTS, CHRISTINE VISWANATHAN



In the master bedroom, the owners awake to sweeping river views. The plaid reading chair is by Schoolhouse Electric Co.



A built-in guest bunk is tucked into the eaves in a small studio upstairs. The rug is by Rejuvenation.

IN GOOD COMPANY

Cue the block party: In these charming communities, cozy cottage culture is a neighborhood thing.



OREGON YACHT CLUB Portland, Oregon

The floating-home community abuts a wildlife refuge and enjoys a front-row seat to sailing races along the Willamette River, so the tight-knit residents here like to sit back and watch the action.



MARTHA'S VINEYARD CAMP MEETING ASSOCIATION Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts

The 318 houses that make up this centuries-old colony, which was founded in the mid-1800s as an area to hold religious meetings, are beloved for their distinct Victorian architecture and gingerbread details.



THIRD STREET COTTAGES Whidbey Island, Washington

Developed by architect Ross Chapin in the late 1990s, this was the first contemporary "pocket neighborhood:" a planned grouping of houses designed around a shared outdoor area. Here, eight cottages are tucked behind a wooden picket fence and colorful, English-style gardens.



CRYSTAL COVE BEACH COTTAGES Newport, California

Once a backdrop for classic Hollywood beach films, this picturesque cove became a haven for artists and families, who built a slew of rustic abodes along its shore. Twenty-nine of the original 46 cottages (some of which are available to rent) were recently restored.

CALIFORNIA DREAMER



A STYLIST IN
SANTA BARBARA
GROWS THE LIVING
AREA OF HER MID-
CENTURY COTTAGE
WITH A GARDEN
OASIS MADE FOR
STRETCHING OUT

Homeowner Elizabeth
Burns outside her
private garden,
accessible through
a mahogany-and-
opaque-glass gate of
her own design

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DAVID TSAY STYLING BY LIZ STRONG



Awning-style aluminum
windows send fresh air into
the living room, where a
vibrant gallery wall blends
land- and seascapes with
three-dimensional art.
The leather sling chair is
from Wisteria.

Bring New Englanders to central California in the middle of winter and chances are they'll consider staying there—and outside—forever. Elizabeth Burns and her husband, Kevin, knew from their first February trip they'd be back to Santa Barbara, and less than three years (and many visits) later, they'd snapped up a mid-century cottage with views of the ocean and the mountains from a spacious backyard. "There wasn't much out there besides a concrete patio, so we did a complete overhaul," says Elizabeth. "We added seating areas, a dining table, an outdoor shower, a fire pit, and a redwood hot tub. And for the garden, we went with very unfussy, wild California foliage." Here's more on how she transformed the modestly sized cottage into an indoor-outdoor oasis that lives large.

COTTAGE CREW

THE TEAM

Architect

Nick Noyes
Architecture

Designer

Elizabeth Burns,
edb designs

Landscape Designer

Jeffrey Gordon
Smith Landscape
Architecture

Builder

Hanseth
Construction Corp.

YEAR BUILT

1950s

SQUARE FEET

1,900

The exterior is painted Brilliant White by Benjamin Moore. The front door is aluminum.



The farmhouse-style dining table and chairs are from Restoration Hardware.



Evergreen maiden grass, rosemary and pitto-sporum hedges, and a low wall crafted of Santa Barbara sandstone wrap the fire pit on two sides.



The kitchen opens to a narrow side patio screened by a wall of bamboo. Elizabeth gave the maple cabinetry a fresh coat of paint, and the Caesarstone countertops were existing.



The sectional is upholstered in Belgian linen, and the coffee table is crafted of reclaimed elm wood.

Looking at this house feels like taking in a big breath of fresh air. Does it feel that way when you're inside?

Elizabeth Burns: Yes, and I've actually heard people say that before! I think it has to do with all of the light this house gets. We live much of the year with the French doors open, and going without screens on some of the windows makes a huge difference, even when they're closed. It truly feels like you're living outside year-round.

Are you an obsessive gardener?

EB: I spent a lot of time gardening when I lived in New England—our house used to be on the garden tour and everything. But when I moved here it was like I was moving to Mars. I come from the land of peonies and lilacs, and here it's succulents and agave. I had to learn a



Oversize concrete pavers harmonize with the minimalist mix of stucco, glass, and metal along the back of the house.



The log bench was a vintage find at local home/garden shop Porch.



The outdoor shower decking is ipe, and the table is from West Elm.



Artist Maurice Connelly's wine barrel sphere sculptures put a modern spin on a rustic potting area. The vintage surfboard is from Mate Gallery.

lot of new lessons, but I love that although it's a year-round garden, it's not a full-time job like it was during peak months back east.

What were you most excited to be able to grow in California that you can't grow in New England?

EB: Probably the citrus—I think it just symbolizes California. We grow oranges, grapefruit, and Meyer lemons, which I use in a lot of my cooking. I make a lemon-ricotta lasagna, and in the winter we make wassail, which is sort of like hot apple cider with fresh Meyer lemon and ginger in it. If you add bourbon or rum it makes it even better!

For some people, beach houses are color magnets,

but you chose a more neutral palette. Why?

EB: It's so beautiful here—we have views of the mountains and the ocean from our backyard—so I didn't want lots of pattern and color to compete with that. I wanted everything to be simple so you're automatically drawn outside.

In what other ways did your outdoor views inform your style inside?

EB: I was definitely inspired by the lifestyle of California—that casual, unfussy feeling. My theme throughout was pretty much wood and white, with a little bit of metal and lots of texture thrown in. I really wanted everything to feel earthy and natural. We also replaced the floors, which were an orangey maple color,

with a much lighter wood that matched the concrete pavers outside. So when the doors are open, everything just flows.

One piece that's anything but neutral is your surfboard. What's the story behind that?

EB: We got it for my daughter, but when she realized she wouldn't be able to fit it in her studio apartment, she gave it to me. Orange is way outside my color palette, but when I found a place for it in the garden, I fell in love with it. Now our house is known for that surfboard, so we can never get rid of it.

Ever caught a wave on it?

EB: Oh, no—I'll leave that to the pros who know what they're doing! I'll stick to gardening.

ROOM TO GROW

Short on square footage? Here, five tips for taking life outside.

1. Bring outdoor spaces into the fold. Because the Burns's garden and outdoor living areas are accessible from nearly every room in the house (there are seven sets of French doors and four additional glass doors), they feel like a continuation of the interior rooms.

2. Keep temps in check. Tackle space design with sun positioning, wind direction, and shade in mind. Invest in cooling and heating elements to temper hot days and chilly nights (bonus for those that draw a crowd, like fire pits).

3. Turn interior weaknesses into alfresco wins. For instance, a tiny master bedroom gains a sitting room *and* instant indoor/outdoor cred when connected to a private patio for coffee and sunset cocktails. Or free up space for a bigger kitchen by moving the formal dining room to a breezy porch.

4. Give them purpose. The patio off the Burns's kitchen leads to a small edible garden, where galvanized feed troughs are planted with herbs and grapefruit, lemon, and apple trees. "I think of this area as an extension of my kitchen," Elizabeth says.

5. Dial up the fun. From funky conversation pieces (hello, vintage surfboard!) to bar carts that roll out into the fray, lively additions turn static spaces into party central.

BUILD YOUR BEACH COTTAGE Check out our cutest, teeniest house plans at coastalliving.com/tinyhouse