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NANTUCKET NATURAL

An island retreat is enlivened with antiques, a summery palette, and a truly organic garden

Written by **MOLLY JANE QUINN**
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Interior Design by **RICHARD PLUMER DESIGNS**
Landscape Design by **HEMINGWAYS CAPES**

DESIGNERS OFTEN OBLIQUELY REFER TO their creations as “inspired by nature.” In the case of a shingled summer house overlooking Nantucket Harbor, interior designer Gilbert Powell can genuinely claim Mother Nature as his muse: The house’s palette of crisp blue and white interspersed with punches of green was plucked directly from the idyllic Monomoy landscape.

Powell, who co-owns the Palm Beach, Florida, firm Richard Plumer Designs with fellow designer Stephen Mooney, opened a sister outpost in Osterville, Massachusetts, three years ago after noticing how many Floridians summered on Cape Cod and Nantucket. Fortuitously, a favorite Palm Beach client was just then in the midst of a summer-home move from the Cape to Nantucket.



THE BLOUSY PROLIFERATION of vivid periwinkle and French-blue hydrangea perfectly frame the deck, where white wicker furniture is dressed up with cushions in a fanciful sea-star pattern.





“It almost didn’t matter what we did inside, when you look out at the view,” says Powell. “The harbor, the foghorn blowing, downtown glittering at night: You just want to get outside.”

In order to best take advantage of the sublime location, the homeowner looked to Nantucket architecture firm Bottecelli & Pohl to design an addition to the 1980s cottage (originally designed by Lyman Perry Architects of Pennsylvania). The new space includes a bath and sitting room on the first floor and a guest bedroom with a darling private porch on the second floor. “We wanted to enhance the existing building,” says Ray Pohl of the design. “There was a lack of symmetry, and this addition added balance.”

Like the rest of the house, both new spaces have heavenly views. “We wake up at 5 a.m. and get the eastern light that turns all of town bright pink,” says the homeowner, “and at night, we have fabulous sunsets.”

Unlike many empty summer homes that require all new furnishings, this one was easily filled by the owner’s vast collection of heirloom antiques, from tall-boy dressers to blue-and-white Wedgwood jasperware and rustic majolica. “I summered at my grandparents’

house on Cape Cod as a child with many of these pieces,” says the owner, “but this house is smaller, so I scaled back and only kept my favorites.”

“She’s fun and creative,” says Powell of his client. “She already has beautiful antiques, so in decorating, we were looking to make the space become more alive.”

With Plumer Design associate Jill Crompton, Powell focused on a consistent palette to create a traditional Nantucket look. For the walls, they chose faux finishes and papers with small repeats to create a neutral backdrop for the owner’s many marine-themed prints and paintings. Fabric and carpet patterns were selected in either astral or oceanic motifs, such as coral and nautical stars. Oddly enough, the house had few interior moldings, so Nantucket carpenter/contractor Jeff Ballinger went to work adding trim that jibed with the antique furnishings.

At the back of the house, French doors on each side of a large bay of windows (which delineates the kitchen/family room from the formal sitting room opposite the front entry hall) open to a long deck that faces the harbor. For the decking, Ballinger used en-

WALLPAPER THAT RESEMBLES cracked plaster (ABOVE) provides a soothing complement to the earthy tones of antique majolica in the dining room.

In the formal sitting room (FACING PAGE), the homeowner’s collection of Wedgwood transferware informed interior designer Gilbert Powell’s choice of blue and white fabrics and floor coverings.



Environmentally friendly ipe, a nearly indestructible Brazilian hardwood seemingly made for weathering Nantucket squalls.

Wrapping around the house to the kitchen, the deck also offers a sheltered nook for alfresco dining with a water view. “The reason we added that porch was that my grandparents’ house had a porch where we ate our meals,” says the homeowner. “I missed eating outdoors.”

From the road, the house is hidden by tall California privets, creating the sense that this is a sheltered oasis. Katie Hemingway of Hemingwayscapes, a Nantucket organic landscape design firm, created a charming, pesticide-free garden on a berm that once covered the property’s septic system (the house is now connected to town sewers) with a large stand of roses surrounded by spiky purple Agastache and white spider flowers.

“I try to match the garden to her personality,” says Hemingway. “She has an English garden fancy but, like me, likes things to look natural. We call it controlled chaos.” Adds the homeowner: “I love looking down at that garden from upstairs in the house.”

Three years after the owner first fell in love with the location, the renovation project is near completion. Powell and Crompton arrive pre-season to open the shuttered house and survey any areas that might benefit from updating: a new game chair here, changing out a runner there, finding the perfect shade for a newly acquired Sandwich-glass lamp. Powell often flies to Nantucket for the day to shop for antiques with the homeowner, an assignment he relishes. “Decorating is a lot like painting,” he says. “You keep looking for that last piece, the final brushstroke.” ■

TEXTILES IN THE GUEST quarters (ABOVE) hint at the homeowner’s love of gardening, with rose varietals popping up in the prints on Roman shades and the plush upholstered chair. The front garden (RIGHT AND BELOW) includes a charming stone path that leads to a shady sitting area.

FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE RESOURCES





DESIGN DECISIONS
Back to Nature

Organic land-care companies such as Hemingwayscapes balance aesthetics with environmental awareness. "Going organic with landscaping requires a shift in focus from the plant itself to the soil where it grows," says Katie Hemingway, co-principal of the Nantucket firm. Hemingway and her husband and business partner, Jonathan Hemingway, are both accredited by the Massachusetts chapter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association, a nonprofit agency that educates landscape designers about the latest organic gardening practices. At right are what she considers the top three considerations for an organic garden.

FERTILIZE WITH CARE

Hemingwayscapes uses a house-made custom compost blend and applies fertilizers and soil amendments approved by the Organic Materials Review Institute, a nonprofit organization that lists products allowed for use in organic production and processing.

PLANT FOR CONDITIONS

The long-term goal for organic gardens is achieving balance between the plant, its environment, and the soil. "At this site, we planted salt-tolerant, wind-tolerant perennials," says Katie Hemingway of the Monomoy estate, which is blasted by the salty winds off the harbor.

PROTECT AND TREAT

The Hemingways eschew toxic chemical fertilizers and pesticides. During the growing season, they routinely apply compost tea (a liquid solution made by steeping compost in water) to condition the soil and prevent plant disease.