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SUMMER 2018

Country Decorating Ideas® #211

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MAKEOVERS**
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on the bright side

Refreshed with colors borrowed from sky, surf and sand, a dated waterfront property is brought back to life.

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Dana Small took a cue from the water surrounding her home to design a family room with pale sand grass-cloth walls, a wavelike print fabric by Quadrille and leafy lamps. The wall art includes four dog portraits by British painter Sam Charles and a piece entitled *Preppy Gators* by Florida artist Kelly Tracht that hides a TV. The ceiling's old-growth pecky cypress boards and a cerused oak table are nods to the property's tall banyan trees.



Dutchy, the family's Cavalier King Charles spaniel, *above*, greets guests at the front of a gallery that wraps around the house. A mix of paintings by famous and obscure artists and some by the Smalls' children hangs on the walls and in the arch-topped niches between the bedrooms.

"I wanted our living room to be used regularly, not just for special occasions, and to have an indoor-outdoor feel," says Dana. Her strategy was to mix comfy sofas and chairs with materials found in nature. The bamboo ceiling by Safari Thatch, *opposite*, is a real conversation starter, but Dana's shell-encrusted limestone fireplace surround is the room's star attraction.

Stuart, Florida, is a little town bordered by the St. Lucie River and the Atlantic Ocean. It's a place where sailfish, sea turtles and dolphins abound, and life revolves around water-related activities. When Dana Small first saw the property where she and her husband, Ramsey, now live with their two children, she felt there was something purely magical about it.

"We were living in Miami but were looking for a quieter place to settle down and build a custom house," she explains. Driving around Stuart one weekend, the Smalls spotted a real estate agent putting out a "for sale" sign in front of a dilapidated home with an attached guest cottage. "The house was in sorry shape, but the location was spectacular. Mature banyan trees and water surrounded the land on three sides," she says. "We made an offer within minutes, and a month later it was ours."

Soon after, Dana and Ramsey hired a local architect to redesign and rebuild the house with Caribbean-style touches to make it more open to the outdoors. Dana, a designer and owner of the shop Matilda's (matildaslifestyle.com), reimagined the interior using bright and bold shades of turquoise and green that reflected the coastal landscape. She also chose wall-coverings, light fixtures and furniture with a tropical look. One of her favorite features of the remodeled house is a wraparound gallery that functions as a hallway.

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*The cupboard's white plates, pitchers and goblets
look like fine porcelain,
but they're actually made of sturdy acrylic
that can be used indoors and out.*

Set for a lunch gathering, the dining room's rustic farm table, left, is layered with rattan chargers, Classic Bamboo china by Juliska, ceramic fish bowls and shell-embellished napkin rings. Fresh bougainvillea sprigs add a bright burst of color to a carved mango-wood shell. To complement the aquatic motifs, a metal chandelier resembles a graceful piece of coral.



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“We used a series of French doors to keep the area from feeling closed in,” she says. “Opposite the doors, cozy seating nooks between the rooms are perfect for relaxing, gazing at the shore or taking a nap.”

Dana, who grew up a thousand miles from South Florida, in Ohio, loves waking up to the sound of the ocean lapping at the shore. “Throw open the doors or look out any window and you can see the water,” she says proudly. “This truly is paradise.”

In the kitchen, above, traditional style goes bold. White crown and box moldings are offset by lively leaf-green walls, scrolled corbels support a carved wooden range hood and Jerusalem stone counters are illuminated with glass column pendants by Juliska. Island-height bent rattan chairs are customized with seat cushions covered in Quadrille’s geometric China Seas Fiorentina fabric.

Travertine stone tiles and Benjamin Moore Spring Leaf green tie together the kitchen and breakfast area, *above right*. A woven reed pendant light and a rustic wood table provide an earthy contrast to white woodwork, cabinetry and Chippendale chairs. Favorite family vacation photos are displayed in colorful frames both sides of French doors leading to the guest cottage.

Near the twins’ bedrooms, a small space painted sky blue serves as a study hall, *right*. Dana outfitted the room with upholstered benches and a narrow table handcrafted from cerused oak. “The technique of treating wood with a liming wax is a great alternative to painting it,” she says.





In the Smalls' home, even a tiny mudroom is lavished with color. Dana uses Benjamin Moore Tropicana Cabana on the ceiling and floor. A few of Dana's Quadrille fabric tote bags hang from hooks below a white resin seahorse chandelier. Raffia baskets keep flip-flops and sunblock within easy reach but out of sight.



On the second floor, the master suite, *above*, features a West Indian-style tongue-and-groove ceiling. An array of Quadrille's solid and patterned turquoise fabrics enliven both serene diamond-patterned grass-cloth walls by Phillip Jeffries and a supersoft herringbone woven wool area rug.

Fabrics tie the master bedroom's sitting area and balcony, *right*, to the water below. A collection of starfish and sand-dollar prints matted with woven rattan flanks a bookcase niche. The cabinet's center section has roll-back doors to hide the TV when it's not being watched.





Soft shades of blue animate a guest bedroom, *above*, where a painting of Jamaica's historic Round Hill resort hangs above the bed. For counterpoint, a plaited seagrass headboard from Pottery Barn, bamboo roll-up shades by Smith & Noble and raffia bolsters add texture. Dana detailed the pure white pillow shams and simple drapery panels by Ralph Lauren with lacy bands by Lilly Pulitzer. The Palm Jungle wall-paper is by Cole & Sons.

Italian glass mosaic tiles set as cabochons between large travertine stone pavers echo the wall color in the master bathroom, *opposite*. "When we were remodeling the house, a freestanding tub with views of the banyan trees outside topped my wish list," Dana explains. Beachy touches include a starfish print from Natural Curiosities and shell-studded wall sconces.

color continuity

Using the same palette throughout most of your home has several benefits. When shades flow from one room to the next, the effect is tranquil and calming, even if the colors are bold or intense. Also, any space will seem larger if the eye doesn't stop at the door to refocus on a different color scheme. When designing adjacent areas, consider using the same flooring and window treatments while varying the lightness or darkness of all or some of your colors. It's a popular decorator's trick to keep a whole house palette from feeling like too much of a good thing! For the ultimate color connection, borrow a palette from a vista viewed from the house. A cottage with proximity to a lake or ocean, for example, benefits from walls, upholstery fabrics or artworks that reflect shades of water.

French doors in virtually every room imbue the home with
breezy indoor-outdoor
style that's in keeping with its tropical locale.

