

country living

A visionary approach
to salvage defines
the country estate
of a renowned
landscape architect.

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Reclaimed




To create their charming, rambling country house in Uxbridge, Ont., Neil and Carolyn Turnbull artfully grafted a reclaimed 36' x 48' barn (left side of house here) onto the property's original 1840s farmhouse (right side). The siding and eavestroughs were carefully matched to those on the house to create a seamless transition. Shaded by a large maple tree, the front door of the original house is framed by old metal organ pipes instead of a porch (the barn entry is the primary door now). On the new addition, a Juliet balcony off the master bedroom looks out onto a weeping false cypress tree.

Hedgerow Farm

brims with creative spirit. Rendered with great panache and on a bold scale, the Uxbridge, Ont., home of Neil and Carolyn Turnbull is a fascinating assemblage of the rare and the extraordinary, with a few doses of the ordinary, repurposed in remarkable ways, mixed in for good measure. Free from the tyranny of the latest interior design trends, it's a liberating place to visit, a place that inspires us to see things fresh, to take inspiration from the world around us, and to make our homes truly, uniquely ours.

While creative, it's also quite disciplined, perhaps thanks to the couple's professional work. Neil is a respected landscape architect, and he and Carolyn run Neil Turnbull Limited, one of Canada's most successful design/build landscape companies. A tour of the property demonstrates the rigour with which the couple created this amazing estate. The site includes a nursery, which supplies specimen trees and shrubs destined for Turnbull-designed gardens, and a wood shop where precision-made fences, gazebos, bridges and assorted architectural elements for Neil's gardens are crafted.

The company was founded in 1978, and this hive of enterprise was established in 1987, when Carolyn and Neil bought the 100-acre property and its small, circa-1840 classic stick-built frame farmhouse — primarily as a weekend getaway from their base in Toronto — and planted a 15-acre nursery. By 1992, the couple were permanent residents (Carolyn is from the area



The couple has a one-acre vegetable patch in which they grow lettuce, potatoes, Jerusalem artichokes, heritage tomatoes, fava beans, sunflowers, squash and more.

Grandeur



The hall and great room in the barn addition are topped with an atrium and lit by clerestory windows and a big old chandelier from a Buffalo office building. The underheated concrete floor has decorative wood insets that also act as expansion joints. Granite for the hand-cut fireplace was found on site. The mantel is carved with peonies, echoing the acres of blooms outside. Painting (over fire), *Dance of the Sycophant* by Peter McBurnie; paintings (throughout room) by Anita Constantini; chandelier, Eric Cohen.

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The dining room is located in what was originally the old house's living room. Its big table is made from an end-grain pine furrier's work table that's mounted on the remnants of a gnarled Chinese elm tree that once stood in the front garden at Toronto's O'Keefe Centre. In quirky Hedgerow Farm fashion, it's

flanked by modern leather-upholstered chairs. The pine plank floor is original. The spiky cleome were grown in the garden. Artwork (in dining room, on left), *Archangel Raphael* by Gerard Gauci; artwork (in dining room, on right), a self-portrait by Daniel P. Izzard; artwork (in kitchen) by H. Tygesen.

explains Neil. "This makes the two buildings knit together. And we chose a siding for the addition that is quite similar to that on the old house." What isn't as noticeable when looking at the exterior is that the barn addition is sunk several feet into the ground so that the two buildings' rooflines align.

The Turnbulls also adjusted the traditional barn structure by adding an atrium-like great room, topped with a clerestory, in the middle. Here they hung an enormous metal chandelier, a piece found in St. David, Ont., but originally from an office building lobby in Buffalo, N.Y. In addition to visually connecting the first and second floors and creating an unimpeded

pathway for light to pour in from the clerestory, the atrium is, as Neil notes, "the perfect place to install an 18-foot Christmas tree."

A gracious staircase was incorporated on one side of the atrium. It leads to a gallery around the atrium on the second floor, and the three bedrooms open onto the gallery. The second floor, like the ground floor, connects to the original house.

Both sections of the house have an open-concept layout. "We basically cut the walls off and attached the two structures," Carolyn explains. The old house now contains the kitchen, dining room and a den, with

CONTINUED ON PAGE 108

and always wanted to settle here). And in 1995, they felt it was time to enlarge the charming house, which had also become the company office.

They pondered what kind of addition they wanted. "We decided we didn't want to add more little 'boxes' to the charming ones we already had. We've always loved the romance of barns and felt that the kind of space a barn offered would be the perfect complement to the house," Carolyn explains. "The property's original barn had burned down, and we felt the land was 'missing' a barn." The fact that decades-old barns are unique handmade artifacts also appealed to the couple. "They're pieces of Canadian architectural history," Carolyn says.

The plan was to find a barn, take it apart, reassemble it on their site and use it as the framework for the addition. The pair found their barn with the help of Tony Jenkins (whose Kingston-area business finds barns and log homes and moves them to the new sites). He located one in Newburgh, Ont., near Kingston, that fit the Turnbulls' needs: it was the right size, had a roofline similar to that of the existing house and was, interestingly, from the same era as the house. It was a small barn, 36 by 48 feet (as opposed to the more typical 40-by-65-foot size), which worked well with the scale of the existing house.

Melding a stately farmhouse and an old barn could have created an incongruous mess, so the couple was very careful to establish continuity between the buildings. "The secret is that the eavestroughs on the addition align with the old house,"

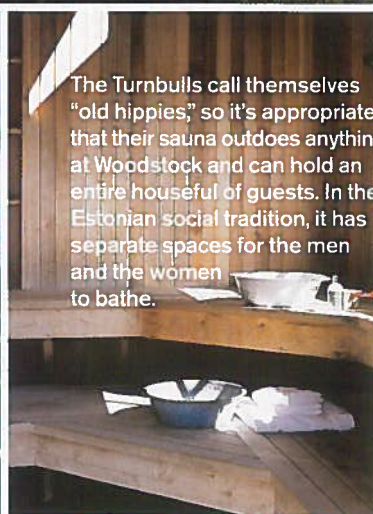
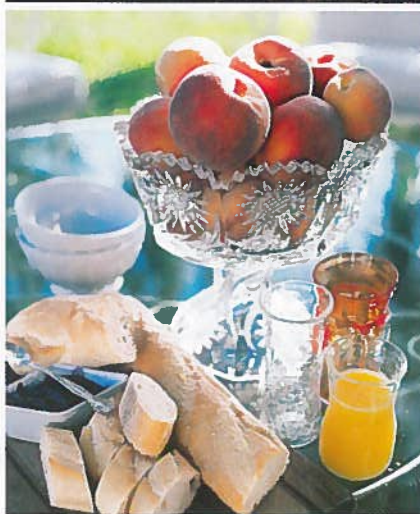


Put in by Neil, the two-acre pond is set in a low-lying part of the land and flanked with verdant plantings to give it a natural look. Although it's man-made and has been stocked with fish, the couple think of it as a natural landmark because it's spring-fed and has developed its own ecosystem over the years. The two-storey sauna cabin is a

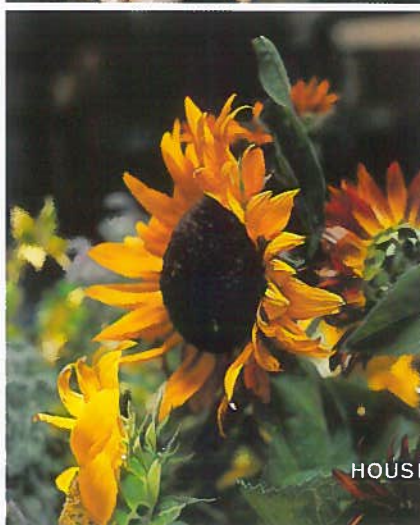
quick run away, making a bracing dip as easy as possible. A lovely spot to sit, the floating dock is also the launch for short kayak or canoe paddles to the pond's two islands. The silo was part of the property's original barn, which burned down. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The couple's collection of antique urns are put to use around the property.



Outside the kitchen (in the old house), stepping stones set in gravel lead through a shady rock garden, part of the "dry garden," which is home to xerophytic (low-water needs) plants, as well as peonies and columbine. Catalpa trees add exotic ambience. **RIGHT:** Sunflowers are some of the "easy, happy" flowers that Carolyn and Neil choose to grow in their abundant gardens.



The Turnbulls call themselves "old hippies," so it's appropriate that their sauna outdoes anything at Woodstock and can hold an entire houseful of guests. In the Estonian social tradition, it has separate spaces for the men and the women to bathe.





located in the new addition. The master bedroom is a commanding space that juxtaposes a fieldstone fireplace (made from granite boulders from the property), an ornate door surround, terracotta lion statues and contemporary light fixtures from Italy.



TOP RIGHT: The scenic wall hanging of a stone castle and riverside in the new wing's second-floor gallery was likely a photography backdrop in the early 1900s. The atrium's railing is reclaimed cast-iron fencing. The sink in the bathroom is an old Scottish washtub topped with marble.

FAR LEFT, CENTRE: A globe artichoke in the garden.

CENTRE: Carolyn and Neil have kept chickens for about 10 years. The coop houses laying hens, and meat chickens and ducks.

BOTTOM LEFT: The walls of this guest bedroom in the barn wing are "brown board": rough, unfinished aged wood found in a barn. When exposed to the elements outside, it turns grey; inside, it ages to this mellow brown.

BOTTOM RIGHT: A collection of metal watering cans is displayed on hand-hewn benches (made locally) under a group of lilac trees.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: The guest cabin was built using only reclaimed

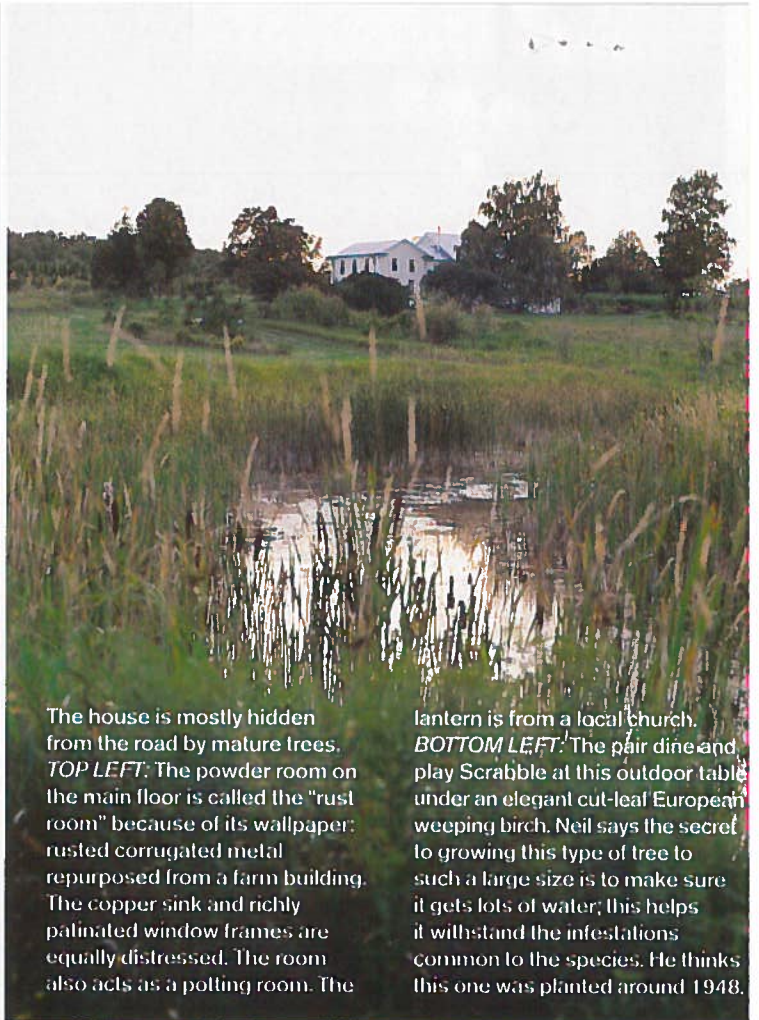
wood. It's located off the north end of the barn ("about half a block"). Next to it is "Neil's yard," a storage spot for urns Neil will incorporate into the gardens he designs.

The plaster ram, a circa-1900 sign for an English wool company, was acquired by Carolyn and Neil only after they revealed to the previous owners that it was going to a home with the right name — Turnbull. Ram, The Door Store. A stuffed buck's head greets visitors in the barn's entry hall.

"Neil's yard" also houses this old French lamp standard, as well as old newel posts, staircases, etc., to be used in his designs.

The guest cabin's floor is made of wood from an old dock. A cast-iron wall plaque made by a friend welcomes overnight visitors.

This area, paved in Colorado red sandstone, used to be the front terrace of the original house (today, most people enter the house through the barn door). The terrace's focal point is a circa-1880 cast-iron urn and pedestal.



The house is mostly hidden from the road by mature trees. **TOP LEFT:** The powder room on the main floor is called the "rust room" because of its wallpaper: rusted corrugated metal repurposed from a farm building. The copper sink and richly palinated window frames are equally distressed. The room also acts as a polling room. The

lantern is from a local church. **BOTTOM LEFT:** The pair dine and play Scrabble at this outdoor table under an elegant cut-leaf European weeping birch. Neil says the secret to growing this type of tree to such a large size is to make sure it gets lots of water; this helps it withstand the infestations common to the species. He thinks this one was planted around 1948.



The kitchen's richly carved cabinet (of disputed pedigree) is fitted with a sleek stainless steel sink and countertop. Neil and Carolyn found the carved wooden face on the front in Jamaica. The tongue-and-groove ceiling panelling is original to the house.

everything old can be new again

Hedgerow Farm offers valuable lessons in repurposing old and unusual items to personalize an interior.

- Mix old with new. An artifact — whether man-made or natural — can add wonderful character to a contemporary interior, reused as, say, a lamp or coffee table.
- Juxtapose ornate items with simpler pieces to establish contrast and highlight the unique piece. The dining table's gnarled elm base is complemented by a sleek tabletop and chairs.
- There can be great beauty in a patina. Peeling paint and nicks and scratches are delightful imperfections brought on by time.
- A repurposed object works best when it's functional as well as visually intriguing. While the Turnbulls will turn ancient pipes into a stand for a bathroom sink, they will also incorporate a new basin and fixtures so the vanity will be as easy to use as it is to look at.
- Neil Turnbull "lets recycled items suggest what they want to be." Think outside the box, he says. If you don't know what to do with a piece, try standing it on its end, or displaying it in situ temporarily.
- Incorporate gifts from artistic friends to give your interior personal meaning.
- If you come across collectibles with your initials on them, or better still, your surname, buy them and display at home.
- Group small or disparate artworks together in an "art wall" installation for greater impact.

