





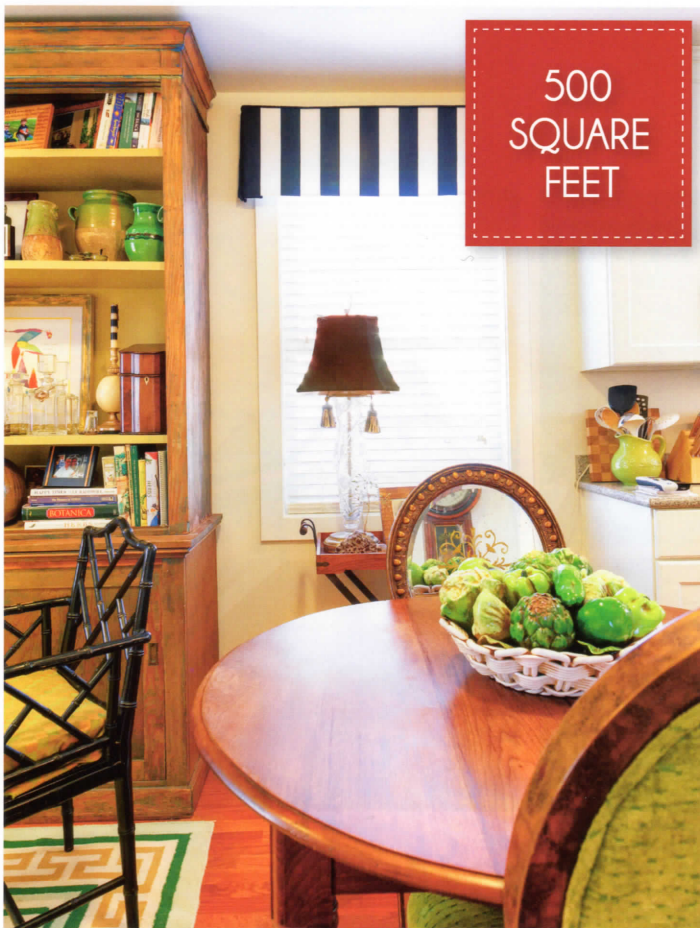
SMALL SPACE, BIG STYLE

Strategies for Making the Most of Any Small Space

BY LAUREL FEINMAN

Every home has one, and yours does too: that small space you've never quite known how to handle. Deep down, you know your little nook has untapped potential. You just need some fresh ideas and inspiration to access it!

Here are three different small rooms and some expert design strategies that might give your small space a big personality.



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DESIGNER'S PETITE ABODE

Photography by Virginia Hamrick

Designer Linda Martin had the courage to break one of the most highly regarded small space design “rules” when she moved into her petite abode on her son’s property. Many designers would recommend only using furnishings that are scaled for the room. But Linda defied that rule—and with great results.

Across one entire wall, Linda uses an enormous 10-foot long antique display hutch as a media center, bookcase, display space and home office. It’s so big, in fact, that she had to hire workmen to remove one of the windows in the room to get the top half of it in, and they removed the stairway banister outside in order to get the bottom cabinets through the door.

When she saw it at Circa, she recognized it and had to have it. It was a display case from The Young Men’s Shop, a place she remembered visiting as a little girl with her grandfather and father as they admired hats. It brought back happy memories and she knew it would fill many needs in her new home.

Linda says, “I think the key to choosing furniture for a small space has much more to do with its functionality than its form. Choose furniture that serves several purposes.”

Her kitchen table, when its leaves are added, becomes a worktable where she can spread out and create design boards for her clients.

She also explains that the lower cabinets of the hutch hold all of her design files and home office equipment. Everything is neatly tucked away behind closed doors. She saved one cabinet for her grandchildren’s toys. “When they were younger and would come across the lawn to visit me, they would go right to it. They knew that’s where I kept special things for them. Now that they’re older, they still come across the lawn to visit, but we usually just sit on the sofa and enjoy favorite television shows together,” she explains.

Hanging above the sofa is a gigantic painting called “Changing Weather” by Andrea Hahn. One might think that such large artwork could overwhelm the room. In this case, it actually helps anchor the space and relate to the large cabinet across the room.

When she scaled down from living in a 6,000-square-foot home to her new carriage house a fraction of the size, Linda gave her children, who were all-too-happy recipients, most of her former furnishings. “I had such fun shopping for my new little home and choosing just the exact right things for it,” she says.

“Choose furniture that serves several purposes.”

- Linda Martin



Linda uses multi-tasking pieces of furniture in her home. Her bedside “table” is a beautiful chinoiserie dresser, which she uses for holding clothes.

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URBAN RETREAT

Photography by Robert Radifera

The owners of Folly Home Furnishings, Victoria Pouncey and Beth Ann Kallen, were commissioned to work on an apartment in The Gleason Building near downtown. Once the site of a farm equipment supply store, The Gleason was converted into luxury apartments and retail space in 2005.

A busy professional woman who recently moved from New York City owns the apartment and had two special requests that drove the design decisions in the den: that Pouncey and Kallen use her indigo blue velvet pullout sofa and that they incorporate an antelope-patterned wool rug by Starck that she admired.

All of the design team's fabric and furniture choices in the den, which is also sometimes used as a home office and even a spare room for overnight guests, prove that small can be chic. Pouncey says they were careful in selecting furniture and accessories so that nothing looks cumbersome or like it is weighing down the room. Reflective items made of glass and Lucite virtually disappear. Mirrors and shiny lacquered furniture reflect light, keeping the room from feeling crowded and heavy.

An antique ebonized campaign desk with a dark green leather tabletop pad is used as a desk or as a bar, depending on whether the homeowner is working or entertaining. Kallen says, "Because it is leggy, it seems to take up almost no floor space."

Of course, one of the most eye-catching things in the room may be its color: a dark, brooding charcoal grey called "Downpipe" by Farrow & Ball. Pouncey explains, "The dark color makes the corners disappear. When a deep color is used as the backdrop, everything else stands out."

The accessories, upholstery fabrics and even the trim on the drapery pull colors from the rug, adding an organic touch that keeps the room from feeling overly sleek. Pouncey says, "It's so important to pay attention to the details in a small space." From the worn leather baseball signed by Mickey Mantle to the acrylic tray showcasing a vintage map of New York, the den is a warm and comfortable place that gives subtle hints about the person who lives here and invites her guests to stay longer.



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This trim by Kelly Wearstler for Groundworks shows how a small detail can help pull a room's look together through the use of color.

"It's so important to pay attention to the details in a small space."

- Victoria Pouncey



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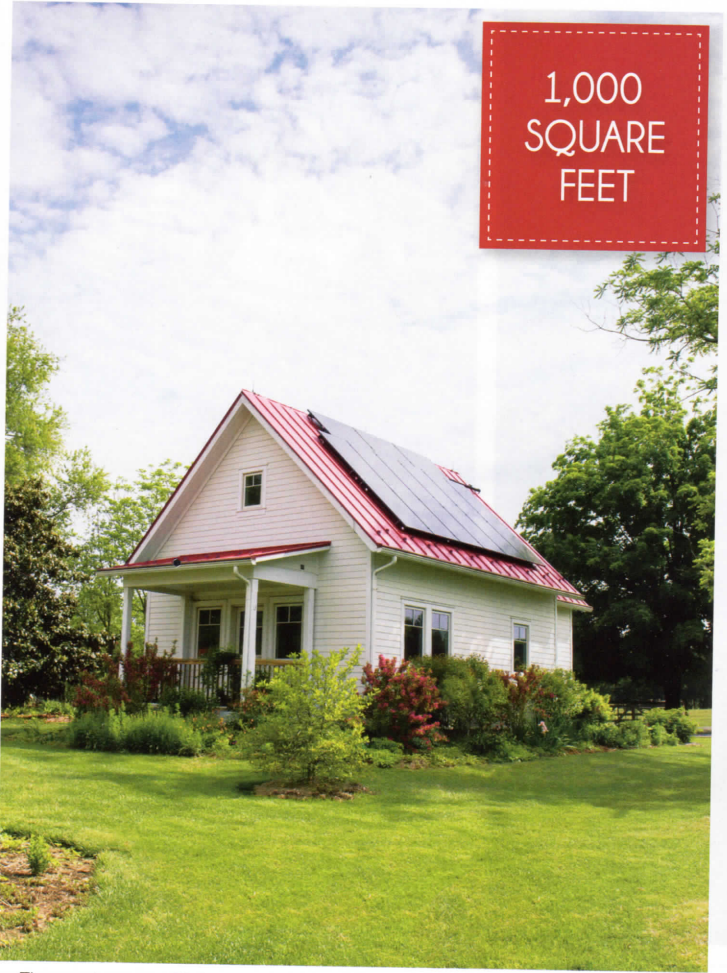
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The most recent efficiency-minded addition to the guest cottage are solar panels, installed just a few months ago but in the plan from the beginning.

FUN-SIZE GUEST COTTAGE

Photography by Robert Radifera

Karen and Dennis Johnson had one of their first dates on the picturesque farm they now call home. The 80-acre property in Keswick has been in Karen's family for as long as she can remember and was always one of her favorite places.

Karen explains, "My dear cousin lived here until she died. We were very close. We used to come out all the time with our children." When the Johnsons had the opportunity to purchase the property, Karen says the timing was perfect. "We were living in Hershey, Pennsylvania but were ready to move back to Charlottesville. It was meant to be!"

There was only one problem: the 200-year-old farmhouse was so badly infested with termites that it had to be torn down. Karen says, "It wasn't a total loss, though. Some of the old doors and porch railings were saved and are used in the new structure."

With the help of Doug Lowe of Artisan Construction, the Johnsons broke ground on a new-but-looks-old farmhouse and guest cottage. Their children live far away and often stay for extended periods. Karen says, "We built the cottage so they will come often, be comfortable and maintain a sense of independence when they're here."

The exterior of the 1,000-square-foot cottage is a miniature version of the main house. Inside are two small bedrooms and a loft, a kitchen, full bath and laundry, and a living room—everything you need for a comfortable stay.

Karen credits her friend Amy Turnage, a designer, for helping her with the home's design. Karen says, "The key to working with a small space is planning and thinking through all the ways it can be efficient."

For instance, the hot water heater and HVAC system are in the crawl space under the house, instead of in a closet or an attic, where you usually find them. "That space-saving trick is how we were able to include the laundry units and the loft with the wall-sized flat-screen television."

Lowe adds, "The efficiency of the cottage goes beyond a space-maximizing design. It's energy-efficient, too." Lowe explains that they used a special kind of spray foam insulation and other energy-efficient building materials that aren't commonly used in construction because they tend to be pricier than other options. Lowe says, "Energy-efficiency is important to the Johnsons, so we selected materials that suited their needs."

This welcoming cottage has all the amenities of a much larger house, thanks to its well-planned design. From the space-saving stacked washer and dryer to fantastic views of the farm thanks to an abundance of windows, guests who are lucky to stay here will love calling it their "home away from home."



“The key to working with a small space is planning and thinking through all the ways it can be efficient.”

– Karen Johnson



When you're ready to tackle your small space, think about how you will be using it and what you'll need for the space to work. With proper planning and a little bit of design magic, you can create the illusion of having more square footage than you actually do, letting color unify it and the furnishings serve many purposes—all tricks that can help you live large in any small space. [H](#)



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