



# SMALL WONDER

DESPITE ITS PETITE FOOTPRINT, A ST. HELENA JEWEL BOX-LIKE RETREAT OFFERS BIG STYLE AND COMFORT WITHIN ITS TEXTURED WALLS AND CUSTOMIZED INTERIOR.

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INTERIOR DESIGN / JENNIFER R. MACDONALD, JENNIFER ROBIN INTERIORS  
ARCHITECTURE / LUKE WADE, WADE DESIGN ARCHITECTS  
HOME BUILDER / ANDY BANNISTER, EARTHTONE CONSTRUCTION  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE / CLAUDIA SCHMIDT,  
CLAUDIA SCHMIDT LANDSCAPE DESIGN





A guesthouse, created by architect Luke Wade and designer Jennifer R. Macdonald, is tailored to its St. Helena site. The structure, complete with a veranda, was constructed by builder Andy Bannister. Landscape designer Claudia Schmidt utilized stone from the site to create exterior walls.

**B**igger isn't always better, as a Southern California family discovered during visits to their St. Helena vacation retreat. "We wanted to build a second structure for guests while we stayed in the main house," says the wife. "But as we spent more time on the site, we realized we wanted a smaller, more efficient structure for us to stay in." With that idea, their focus shifted to using the guesthouse for themselves. Working with architect Luke Wade and designer Jennifer R. Macdonald, the couple had requested a structure that "felt like it came from the land," says the wife. And with that concept, the 1,200-square-foot building began to take shape. "A lot of times when you're in the wine country, things can turn into a barn or an agricultural building form," says Wade. "This is more of a woody cabin wrapped with a veranda. It's cozy, yet expansive; nestled into the site, yet embracing of the views."

Although those views—encompassing the property's working vineyard and mountains beyond—were unlimited, the building size allowance was not. Because the county had

strict guidelines for square footage, Wade opted to create a feeling of spaciousness by encouraging as much light inside the house as possible. Within textured exterior walls crafted of patinated board-on-board red cedar, Douglas fir and native stone excavated from the site, the architect maximized the use of glass, specifying 12½-foot-tall Jada windows and doors. In addition, he designed a light monitor, made of high clerestory windows, to bring dappled light down through the canopy of trees and into the house along its central spine.

Within that light-filled shell, Wade and Macdonald, who are longtime collaborators and worked together closely on this project, chose the basic interior materials palette. "It was important to bring interior design in early so that all of the finishes and colors flowed seamlessly," says Macdonald. To that end, the duo wrapped the interior shell—walls, trim and the nearly 24-foot-tall vaulted ceiling—with reclaimed wood and then grounded the space with integral color concrete floors. Steel elements, including a massive central fireplace surround, play off the textured wood.

A prime corner of the veranda features a suspended daybed designed by Macdonald and built by Statsky Design. The piece has a reclaimed-wood frame and steel backs, which can be repositioned to take in different views of the property.





Wide opened the central living area through Jada doors to the verdant surroundings, and Macdonald designed a custom sofa and chaise, upholstered with velvet by Pindler and built by Kroll Furniture, for the space. The custom console, made from reclaimed wood and iron, is from Dos Gallos in Los Angeles. Slatky Design crafted the custom coffee table.





In organizing the layout, Wade kept the main public spaces in one great room with distinct kitchen, dining and living areas; a ladder leads to an open sleeping loft above. As the floor plan progressed, Wade consulted with Macdonald on her furnishings and interiors concept. "Hearing her ideas helped enrich the architecture and knit the project together," he says.

Given the open nature of the design, throughout the house Macdonald worked with a color palette of various hues of green and silvery gray inspired by the landscape. She chose a deep green Farrow & Ball paint—which is picked up in the fireplace plaster—for the kitchen's cabinetry and paired it with an Ann Sacks mirrored-tile backsplash. She also took great care to select or custom-design furnishings that worked with the scale of the room. "Careful attention to proportion allows a smaller space to feel spacious," says Macdonald. "But things also had to be laid out to address

the views, the fireplace and the TV, as well as be functional for the family." To help meet those goals, she designed a sofa and chaise to anchor the living area and further defined the space with a wool rug by Stark. A built-in dining bench does double duty as a reading nook, and for the upstairs sleeping loft, Macdonald had two custom twin beds made on casters to accommodate the couple's teenage boys or visiting guests.

In addition to the roomy spaces, builder Andy Bannister also had to deal with everything happening behind the scenes. "Part of the challenge with a smaller house is that it still has all of the components of a larger house," notes Bannister, who worked with project manager Jesse DeBaca and field superintendent Dustin Deason. "We had to harmonize and synchronize, to make sure electrical components, like wiring, worked with all of the exposed-beam ceilings."

**Above:** The structure's light monitor—consisting of clerestory windows running the length of the building—crowns the upstairs sleeping loft. Two custom twin beds are dressed with blankets from Summer House. The bedside table is from RH.

**Opposite:** The great room fireplace features a custom-fabricated darkened-steel surround crafted by Fabworx. A ladder ascends to a sleeping loft, while barn doors lead to a guest bathroom on one side and a hallway to the master suite on the other.





The kitchen showcases cabinetry—fabricated by Leonardo's Casework & Design and painted with Farrow & Ball's Studio Green—topped with a counter by M. Teixeira Soapstone. The barstools are by McGuire.



Another departure from the open concept came with the design of the master bedroom. There, the room is enveloping, and Wade added a peaked sub roof above the bed that creates a room-within-a-room effect. Macdonald carried the nature-inspired color palette into the bedroom, and included accents of pale amethyst to “give it a jewel box effect,” says the designer, who had a bed custom-made for the space and upholstered the headboard with a tactile fabric by Dedar. As in the master bedroom, Wade and Macdonald’s seamless working relationship is apparent throughout the house. Their holistic collaborative approach “creates projects where the interior design doesn’t overlay onto the architecture,” says Wade. “Instead, it becomes embedded within it.” Adds Macdonald: “When the interior materials, finishes

and furniture complement the architecture, the line between architecture and design is blurred.”

Blurring the line between the house and its surroundings fell to landscape designer Claudia Schmidt, who incorporated a combination of boulders, native grasses, shrubs and perennials into the sloping property. “I used low grasses and perennials to give a meadow feel that left the house open to the view,” says Schmidt. “We also added native dogwood trees to parts of the existing forest for seasonal interest.”

As for the owners, the guesthouse, which they’ve dubbed the cottage, is working out better for them than they could have imagined. “We prefer the smaller footprint, and it’s not so much to take on when we come and open it up,” says the wife. “It’s made us focus in on what you really need to live simply and comfortably.” ■

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The dining area’s reclaimed-wood-and-copper dining table was crafted by Statsky Design and is paired with chairs by McGuire. The banquette is upholstered with fabric by Perennials, and the Etienne ottomans by Gregorius Pineo were purchased at Kneeder-Fauchère. The light fixture is by Palmer Hargrave.

In the master bedroom, a custom bed designed by Macdonald and fabricated by Kroff Furniture features a headboard upholstered with a Dedar fabric and an accent pillow made with an Ardecora textile. A bench by Cisco Home pairs with a rug from RH.





**Above:** Draperies made with Great Plains linen from Kneeder-Fauchère frame the bedroom's unobstructed view. Furnishings from Janus et Cie's Boxwood Collection sit on the veranda just outside.

**Left:** A quiet corner of the room showcases the textured reclaimed-wood siding, from Urban Evolutions in Appleton, Wisconsin, used throughout the residence. Vases from West Elm, Coup D'Etat and Heath Ceramics rest near the window.





Schmidt worked to blend in new plantings with the site's natural backdrop. Ferns are just off the veranda, and vineyards can be seen in the distance. Antique pendants from Obsolete in Culver City, California, light the outdoor space.

