



ABOVE: Cabernet grapes soak up California sun at Summer Hill Vineyard, the Napa Valley farm of designer Rela Gleason. She holds Laverne, one of her Silver Laced Wyandottes known for laying "designer" eggs. Beyond the vineyard are her two guest cottages. OPPOSITE: "The olive allée is always ready for dining," says Gleason. Vintage garden chairs beneath old olive trees flank table set with dishes specially made in Positano, Italy. Fabrics designed by Gleason for Summer Hill Ltd.



IDYLLIC

NAPA VALLEY ESCAPE

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ABOVE: An old stone sink nestled into the stone walls of the bathhouse provides a temporary nest for Lucy, a Buff Brahma hen. Gleason's favorite roses include pale pink, climbing Cécile Brunner. RIGHT: At poolside, Pottery Barn umbrellas. OPPOSITE: An 18th-c. French stone winepress becomes a tabletop in the shady courtyard. Gloster teak garden furniture. Inside, Boston wing chair designed by Gleason for Summer Hill Ltd. All upholstery in her company's fabrics.





The first thing we do when we arrive at Summer Hill Vineyard is to check on the girls," says designer Rela Gleason. The "girls" are Araucana and Buff Brahma hens that strut about Gleason's forty-acre vineyard and farm in Calistoga, California, a "small town" village in the Napa Valley known for its thermal hot springs, mineral water and world-class wines.

Gleason is so taken with the resplendent fowl that two Orpington hens can be found in a coop, brightened with flower boxes, outside her home on Telegraph Hill in San Francisco. Chickens on Telegraph Hill? "Oh, yes!" she exclaims. Friends and associates are surprised to learn of these unorthodox dwellers in a city where "designer dogs" and cats are



the standard household pets.

Truth is, her city-dwelling Orpingtons are daily reminders of the two separate worlds that Gleason inhabits. One world is her workplace at Summer Hill Ltd., the company she founded in 1985 with husband and CEO Don Gleason. Rela oversees the design of furniture, fabrics and wallcoverings offered at to-the-trade show-

rooms across the country. Don handles production and operations, including Summer Hill's own showrooms in San Francisco, Chicago and New York City. Come Friday evening, however, the Gleasons pack up the car and venture to their other world—one lying fifty-eight miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge.

When the Gleasons purchased the

OPPOSITE: Cedar arbor connects the two cottages—a guest house and a mother-in-law unit. Dutch doors impart the feeling of a stable. Roaming hens lay eggs in surprising places. ABOVE: Antique painted children's chairs lend charm. Basket displays wild turkey feathers collected on the property, where bobcats and foxes are also seen. Antique crock holds salutary olive branches.



TOP LEFT AND RIGHT: Stable theme is enhanced with 19th-c. bisque horse head medallion. Drawing by Carlo Marchiori. Garden chairs in Summer Hill Ltd. fabrics. An 18th-c. English library table. ABOVE LEFT: Carrara marble in bath. Vanity designed by Gleason. ABOVE RIGHT: Gleason designed wing chair and bed and fabric for Summer Hill Ltd. OPPOSITE: Antique lantern on 18th-c. French walnut commode. Cabernet wines by local winemaker Heidi Barrett.

property five years ago, little did they know that the overgrown poison oak everywhere in sight actually concealed dozens of 150-year-old olive trees. Among their first tasks was to preserve each and every tree. Once this was accomplished, the couple set about planting two acres of cabernet grapes on the land's gentle slopes and in and among the olive trees. The

Gleasons anxiously await the 2006 release of wine from their first harvest, now aging in French oak barrels. While at Summer Hill Vineyard, the couple is content to stay in guest cottages. Actually, there is no main house—at least, not yet. “Before we build the house, we wanted time to understand how we really live on the property,” Gleason explains. “So we erect-

ed two cottages with identical footprints in the meantime.” Common to both structures are concrete floors and fabrics that can withstand the wear and tear of farm life—both share a “horse stable” vernacular. Not surprisingly, the idyllic setting provides inspiration for Gleason’s fabric designs. For example, the Anemone colorway for her “Chloe” fabric

was inspired by the brilliant colors of the Japanese anemones sprinkled among the rose bushes. The changing colors of the sky and the endless hues of green vegetation on the farm don’t go unnoticed, either. “We absolutely love it here,” says Gleason. “The roses are in bloom almost year-round, and the kitchen gardens always produce fresh vegetables.

Our lifestyle is oriented around being outside with friends and family. We entertain casually and enjoy the great wines of the Napa Valley.” Gleason sums up, “I can be as creative in the countryside as behind a drawing board in the city. We’re creating memories, not only for our own family but for everyone who visits Summer Hill Vineyard.” □