

CTC&G

Connecticut Cottages and Gardens

COTTAGESGARDENS.COM | JULY/AUGUST 2017



DESIGN
FOR
LIVING

CTC & G

CONNECTICUT COTTAGES & GARDENS • JULY/AUGUST 2017 • COTTAGESGARDENS.COM

ON THE COVER

"GROWING SEASON," PAGE 78.
PHOTOGRAPH BY KEITH SCOTT MORTON
AND ERIC RICHARDS

FEATURES

70

Instant Attraction

It was love at first sight
at this stunning
Sherman property

BY MINDY PANTIEL
PHOTOGRAPHS BY COSTAS PICADAS

78

Growing Season

The long journey to
Dirt Road Farm in Weston

BY ANNETTE ROSE SHAPIRO
PHOTOGRAPHS BY KEITH SCOTT MORTON
AND ERIC RICHARDS

88

Outside The Box

Architect George Dumitru's
design capitalizes on clean shapes,
clear lines and crisp materials

BY EVA HAGBERG FISHER
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DURSTON SAYLOR

*From "Growing Season,"
page 78. Photograph
by Keith Scott Morton
and Eric Richards*

GROWING SEASON

The long journey to
Dirt Road Farm in Weston

BY ANNETTE ROSE-SHAPIO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEITH SCOTT MORTON
AND ERIC RICHARDS

Full Harvest (THIS PAGE) Phoebe Cole-Smith gathers greens from her farm, all planted by her from seed. **Inner Peace** (OPPOSITE PAGE) A marble sculpture by Navajo artist Oreland Joe stands guard by the living room staircase. See Resources.





Room To Relax (ABOVE) A linen-covered George Sherlock sofa and Peter Fasano chairs offer a comfortable place to relax after a day of tending the farm. Linen wool handwoven rug is through Elizabeth Eakins. **White-On-White** (BELOW) A collection of one-of-a-kind ceramic pieces by Frances Palmer fill the dining room cabinet shelves. See *Resources*.



Farm Fresh An antique work table (ABOVE) from Lillian August has plenty of storage space, while also providing the workspace Cole-Smith needs to prepare farm-to-table meals. The Shaker-style cabinets are through Liggett Fine Furniture & Custom Cabinetry. Freshly picked greens (BELOW) get a bath in the kitchen's farm sink. See *Resources*.



PHOEBE COLE-SMITH wasn't exactly keen on the idea of giving up city life when her first husband suggested returning to his home state. She was happy living in Manhattan's Carnegie Hill neighborhood, their young children were thriving, and the couple already had a small country house in Connecticut, albeit a lengthy three-hour commute from the City. Eventually, she realized that a home there, closer to where her husband worked, could also be ideal for them—a good public school system and their own green space were incentives to start house hunting.

After rejecting homes that seemed too suburban for their taste, Cole-Smith continued the search on her own while her husband was traveling. She fell for a house in Weston that was long on charm, but came with an equally long to-do list. The tiny rooms, narrow hallways, leaky windows and dirt-floor basement took her husband by surprise, as did the property's crumbling stone walls, old barn and distinct lack of landscaping. But she rented it on





Earthy Reds (THIS PAGE) The red room's many shelves and nooks are perfect for displaying an extensive collection of New Mexican handmade pottery from several different pueblos. Overlooking the room is a large canvas by Cheyenne/Comanche artist Benjamin Buffalo. **Happy Homestead** The house (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP) and barn (OPPOSITE PAGE, BOTTOM), originally designed by the late Matthew Franjola, underwent extensive renovation over the years. See Resources.



sight, and the adventure began. Three years later, in 1995, they bought the property. With the help of architect Jeanne Stoney-Disston and designer friend Leslie Allen (plus builders Matthew Franjola and Steve Wilson, Martin Schmiedeck of Schmiedeck Construction and cabinet maker Larry Liggett), they finished renovating the house and barn in 2001.

Things began to change in 2009 when Cole-Smith gifted her second husband, Mike Smith, with three maple-tree taps and buckets. What started out as a hobby for Smith, a hockey consultant and former general manager of several NHL teams, became a major maple syrup production, using a wood-fired evaporator in their sugar shack for boiling down the sap from 400 taps. These days, they also keep bees, raise chickens, and grow herbs, fruits and vegetables on five-and-a-half acres. The Town of Weston designated the property a farm in 2011.

Cole-Smith supplements her crops by contracting out to several area organic farms. They never use fertilizer on the farm, just compost kept in four separate bins; and the chickens are only fed leftover bread and plant scraps. She was inspired to pursue a career as a chef after having grown up on her family's farm in Illinois enjoying her mother's hearty, seasonal cooking. "And I was lucky to learn excellent skills in the kitchen at my first job at a macrobiotic restaurant in college," says Cole-Smith.



Down On The Farm (THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT) Cole-Smith uses only seasonal, fresh produce, something she learned growing up on a farm in Illinois. Local craftsman Bill Rowe created the garden gate and fence. Careful labeling keeps the plantings well organized. Chickens are a vital part of the farm and are fed only vegetable scraps and bread. **Dinner's Ready** (OPPOSITE PAGE) Cole-Smith is involved in every aspect of her farm-to-table dinners—flowers, linens, setting the table and the cooking. See *Resources*.





Master Crafters (OPPOSITE PAGE) Built-in nightstands and shelving by Liggett Fine Furniture & Custom Cabinetry flank the bed in the master bedroom. A handwoven Elizabeth Eakins rug provides comfort underfoot in the bedroom and in the hallway (BELOW RIGHT). Larry Liggett also crafted the perforated and painted closet doors (BELOW LEFT). **Bathroom With A View** (ABOVE) The master bathroom's soaking tub has a view of the farm. The mirror above the vanity is from Terrain and was fashioned from a vintage bread board. See Resources.

SHE IS ADAMANT ABOUT COOKING WITH ONLY THE FRESHEST, SEASONAL PRODUCE AND OFFERS A FARM-TO-TABLE EXPERIENCE IN THE BARN

From there, years of front- and back-of-the-house restaurant jobs led to professional studies at the French Culinary Institute in New York City. She is adamant about cooking with only the freshest, seasonal produce and offers a farm-to-table experience with private dinners in the barn, which was rebuilt in 2015 and decorated in an English cottage style. Her collection of linens plus specially chosen lighting and music add up to a very special experience. "I'm obsessed with creating a meaningful space where people are eating," she says, "the whole experience, from cooking the food and setting the table to arranging the flowers and choosing the napkins."

As if running a farm, harvesting produce, caring for chickens, growing a flower garden from seed, and preparing farm-to-table dinners weren't enough, Cole-Smith and her husband have a pop-up sale in early December, offering homemade preserves, pickles and maple syrup. How does she relax? "I start the day with tea in the garden," she notes, "and end the day with a glass of wine, always in the garden." ✨

