



BY **CARLY BAILLIE**
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MARTIN TESSLER**
STYLING BY **HEATHER CAMERON**

charmed, I'm sure

VINTAGE STYLE AND WARM WOOD TONES
HELP CREATE MAGIC IN THIS
ONCE NONDESCRIPT WEST VANCOUVER HOME.



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ive steep blocks up from the ocean, nestled in the skirts of Cypress Mountain in West Vancouver, is a house perched perfectly between the sea and the sky. A peek behind the high hedge of cedar concealing it from curious passersby reveals a small home surprisingly lacking in grandeur. And that's just fine by its owner.

"You can do anything with a house, but you're stuck with the lot you get," says Sandy Mathiesen of her

Left: An Albertine climbing rose creates a country cottage out of a prefabricated shed that's gone grey not with age, but instead with a lack of finish and the West Coast's wet winters. Sandy Mathiesen's collection of her grandfather's tools hangs on the shed alongside an old window frame.





Previous page: Couches from Ikea in creased off-white cotton provide modern-day comfort. Vintage throw pillows pick up the dusty pink of the rhododendrons in the front yard. Sandy Mathiesen is drawn to simple pine pieces (like the little side tables shown here) she finds at junk shops, flea markets, Memories Antiques in North Vancouver, or Country Furniture in Vancouver, where she works part-time. *Throw pillows, Elizabeth Cameron.* The river-rock fireplace and hearth is the handiwork of Sandy's husband, Gary. An old fishing creel holds Queen Anne's Lace. The embroidered stool, like most of Sandy's treasures, was "picked up at a junk store." *Vases, mirror, votive holders, all The Potting Shed.* **Above:** An old library ladder is draped in vintage linens in the kitchen. A vintage scale from a long-gone cheese shop cradles fresh vegetables. **Opposite, clockwise from top left:** Sandy (with Molly at her feet) considers the yard just another room in the house. *Basket, The Potting Shed.* A pine harvest table with mahogany legs is set for a spring tea - French doors are thrown open to enjoy it in the garden. *Lavender pots, side plate holder, The Potting Shed.* Sandy's collections, which run the gamut from blue and white china to pewter to clocks, are part of what makes the Mathiesen home so warm and welcoming. ■ ■ ■



incentive in buying the unassuming 1960s greyish-green bungalow. The quiet, cloistered one-third of an acre lot surrounded by lush West Coast greenery overrode any of the home's shortcomings – which Sandy and her husband, Gary, would spend most of the next nine years transforming.

First a front hall, complete with a closet and skylight, was created from a door overhang. Two years later, the master bedroom, left torn to its studs by the previous owner, was fitted with a wall of windows and a French door leading outside, opening up the small room. Then, in the living room, Gary's stonemason skills helped convert an uninspired brick fireplace into a wood-burning, river-rock focal point, while more floor-to-ceiling windows took the place of their tiny predecessors.

Finally, after putting up with it for five long years, Sandy tackled what she calls her nemesis – the “apartment-sized kitchen.” Now expanded to three times its original size, with six-foot-high wraparound windows, another French door, granite countertops and an island, this cozy space is the family's centre of activity.





Renovations aside, it's Sandy's self-described "old and comfortable" sense of style that creates this charming country cottage out of '60s suburbia. A mix of passed-down family pieces and flea market finds account for the inviting decor. English pine is prevalent, bought initially due to its affordability and later because Sandy fell in love with its "simple warmth." Sandy's many collections – including one of more than two dozen old clocks with tired

and tarnished faces, hands forever stuck in the past – are scattered throughout, creating impromptu vignettes on every available surface.

But true to Sandy's initial instinct, it's what's outside that draws you in. The walls of glass create wallpaper from the surrounding gardens, with the inviting pattern constantly changing according to weather and season, and the comfortable interior drawing on it all for inspiration. Vintage throw pillows

on the sofa pick up the same dusty pink as is seen in the rhododendron blooms in the front yard. An antique pewter collection sitting on the pine shelves echoes the misty glow of the often grey, fog-soaked mornings. And the well-worn patina of vintage fir boards is the ideal fit for flooring in this home surrounded by British Columbia's forest. In the end, it all comes full circle says Sandy. "The outside flows in and the inside flows out." ●

Above: Antique moulding from France stands in for a headboard in the master bedroom. A matelassé coverlet strewn with red roses provides punch to the white colour scheme. *Mirror, vase, The Potting Shed; throw pillows on chair, Elizabeth Cameron.* **Right:** A circa-1870 oil lamp with original shade belonged to Sandy's grandmother. Two clocks from the beloved collection perch atop an old book. A vase made from vintage tin ceiling tiles holds a colourful mix of wild roses and honeysuckle.



Sandy and Gary Mathiesen's originally charmless West Coast home now has warm country style to spare.

The couple's personal style features an emphasis on displaying collections and using textural details. Pewter, blue and white china, vintage linens and antique clocks are arranged in artful vignettes around the house, lending an air of time-worn comfort and effortless ease to the space. A mix of finishes takes the home out of the ordinary. The "simple warmth" of pine furniture is a favourite, while retro-looking subway tiles, marble countertops, vintage fir floorboards and beadboard cabinets complete the comfortable country look. *Tea towels, plates, Williams-Sonoma; subway tiles, Country Floors; phone, small clock, Pottery Barn; paint chips, Pratt & Lambert; marble countertop, Avian by Coni-Marble; pewter vase, drawer pulls, large clocks, all Restoration Hardware; quilted boutie, Feather Factory; wood flooring, West Lincoln Barnboard. Photograph, Yvonne Duivenvoorden; styling, Lara McGraw.*