

house
and garden

at ease



Equal parts manicured
country club and breezy
beach house — with a dash
of French château thrown in.

California

— it's a state of mind: relaxed, sunny, youthful, individualistic. And the owners of this new house were likely California dreaming when they worked with architects Brian Lee and Marilyn Lake and designer Steven King to realize it in a neighbourhood that offers Toronto's only facsimile of a West Coast lifestyle, the Beach.

"They lived nearby and wanted their new house to fit into their casual neighbourhood," King says. "But this didn't mean recreating something old; it meant building a new house that was in tune with the scale and ambience of the location."

The California mood starts the minute you see the house. It has a welcoming look, with cream-painted clapboard and shingle siding, and a natural cedar shingle roof that's stained so it will always look new. Even the planting has a lush, West Coast look, which is complemented by a Wiarton stone walk and driveway.

Inside, the dining room doors open to a pergola and the front garden, which is animated by a fountain and screened from the road by a yew hedge



The inviting entryway is floored in random-set Wiarton stone and topped with a pergola supporting wisteria and a planter box overflowing with Boston fern, English ivy and vinca.





The dining room looks out onto the front-yard terrace, which features an American 19th-century iron planter transformed into a fountain. Pots of Boston ferns punctuate its corners. A Hicks yew hedge and row of Bradford pear trees screen the road.



BELOW: Following feng shui principles — used throughout the house — the kitchen is oval in shape so it seems closed and protective. Bare maple floors, a maple-topped island and painted Shaker-style cabinets give the room a casual mood.

and a row of Bradford pear trees. Both the dining room and the large, gracious living room, which spans the rear of the house, have “rooms beyond the room” — terraces that enhance the beach house feel. The guiding principle, says Brian Lee, was the desire for a seamless join between indoor and outdoor spaces. The living room terrace borders a garden punctuated by 150-year-old oaks. “It was important that nothing happen to those trees during the construction,” King says. “They’re one of the main reasons the house looks so settled.”

How do you give a northern home a California mood? Large windows are imperative. As well, the garage was sited at the rear of the yard, rather than attached to the house, leaving the side of the house open “so light washes in,” explains Marilyn Lake. “It’s open, airy and bright. It doesn’t feel like a city house.”

ABOVE: The dining room is situated on the west side of the house to catch the afternoon light. It opens out to the front-yard terrace, which in spring affords views of Lake Ontario. The architects gave the room a rich look with a coffered ceiling and faux-panelling, which was toned down with a coat of creamy paint.



The master bedroom's sitting area offers ample places to kick back, as well as computer desks (not visible) for each owner. The whimsical chandelier adorned with a bird's nest with wooden eggs plays off the room's treetop view. The 19th-century French side tables are made of satinwood; the curtains are cotton damask.



RIGHT: A built-in "armoire" gives the master bath a relaxed French-country ambience. In keeping with this mood, the floors are clean, pale maple, and the vanities have simple traditional hardware and honed-limestone tops with arched backsplashes. **BOTTOM LEFT:** The driveway at the side of the house was also paved in Wiarton stone so it looks like another terrace. In summer, the hydrangea standards and impatiens here are

dotted with white blooms; in spring, the magnolia in the boxwood-lined bed between the drive and back terrace explodes with a profusion of blooms. Curved shapes, like the eyebrow windows here, are used throughout the house. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** The cheerful guest bedroom takes its vivacity from the French bedspread, pashmina-clad pillow, and cosy chair with gingham pillow. A shutter on the window is a distinctly Californian touch. Photograph, Absolutely Inc.

There's lots of white, used for upholstery and cabinets. In the summer, many pieces of furniture have their jewel-toned upholstery, which coordinates with the carpets, covered with shipshape white cotton sailcloth. You know it's spring when the slipcovers come out.

Charming, mostly French antiques add character and contribute to the "always been here" quality that the owners wanted, not to mention imbuing some of that *individualism* that distinguishes the California psyche. The effect of the antiques and the traditional details, however, is not formal. The kitchen has a cottage feel, Lake says, with soft, honed-granite counters, an island topped in curly maple, and beadboard-pannelled cabinetry painted creamy white and glazed for an aged finish.

