

Decor Maine

ISSUE NO. 2

LIVING BEAUTIFULLY IN MAINE

THE GARDEN ISSUE

5 LANDSCAPE
DESIGNERS
CREATE
SYMPHONIES
OF PLANT

& STONE

NEW YORK
Interior Designer
COMES HOME
to Renew Parents'
Cumberland Cape

Plus!
A SWEET-SMELLING
JOURNEY OF
MAINE'S
FLOWER FARMS

Personal Growth



FOR ONE COUPLE,
RETIREMENT HAS
MEANT BEGINNING
A NEW ADVENTURE—
AND A LIFE
CENTERED AROUND
THE OUTDOORS

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Architect
MIDCOAST HOME DESIGN

Builder
RUSS DOUCETTE CUSTOM HOMES

Landscape Designer
MITCHELL & MITCHELL

Cabinetry
KITCHEN COVE

LEFT: Homeowner and interior designer Marybeth Otterbein chose blues as a color base in many rooms, including the kitchen.

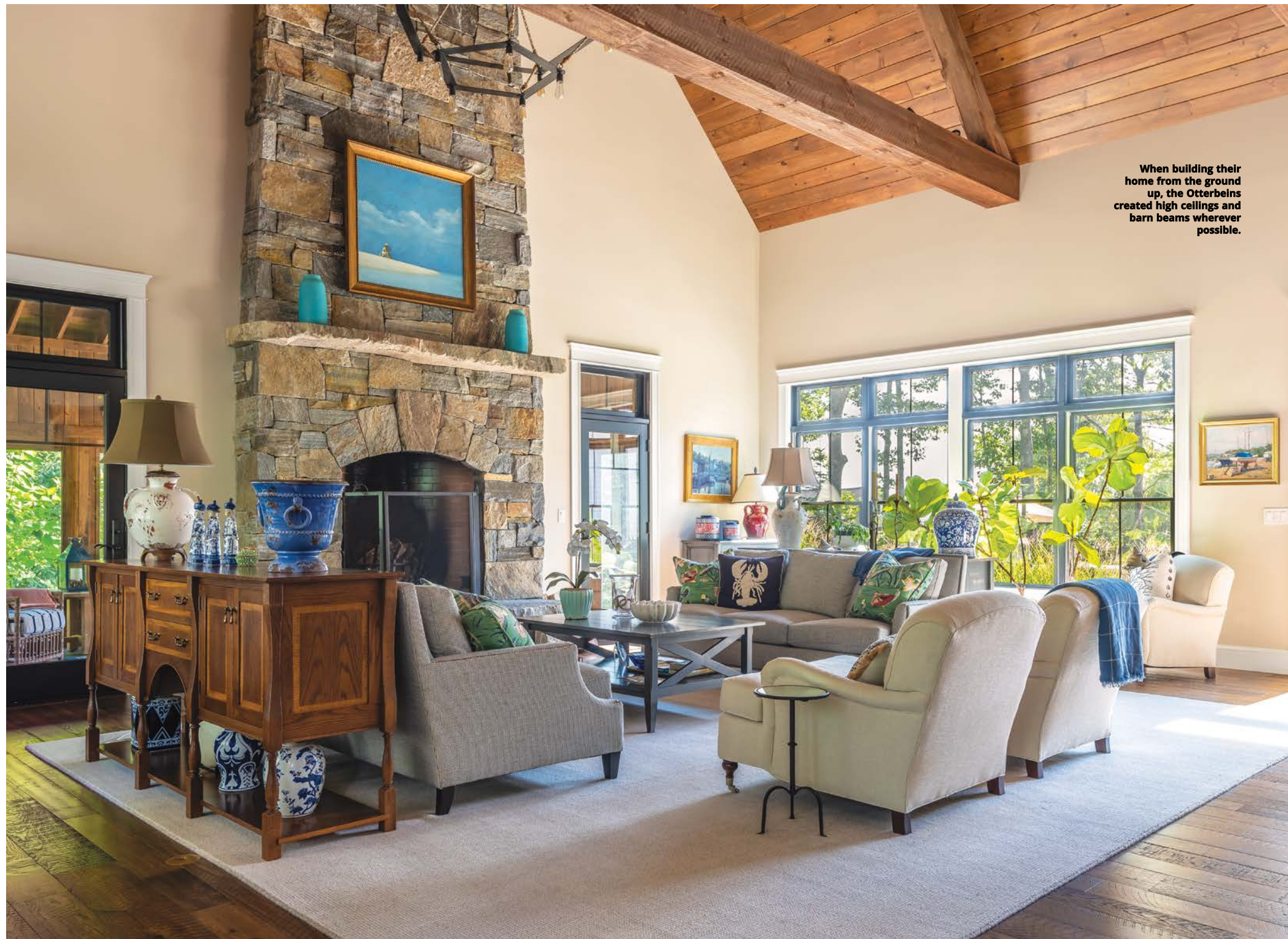
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There's an unresolved debate about who first coined the phrase, "Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end." It's most often attributed to the Ancient Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca. Others credit the band Semisonic—as immortalized in their addictive '90s ditty, "Closing Time." Still others say it's a paraphrase of everyone from Hemingway to T.S. Eliot.

But from whoever and whenever it first came from, it might as well have been said about Marybeth and Greg Otterbein circa 2018, the year the couple built their three-bedroom Cape Elizabeth home—both a monument to their new beginning, and the centerpiece of it.

"Our main mission was to create the ideal place for our retirement," says Marybeth, a former interior designer and founder of Dwellings in Falmouth, Maine. "We were planning for a new stage of life for us and our grown children. We wanted a first-floor master bedroom to make life easier as we age, and separate areas that the kids could stay with their future families." They built those areas above the garage and in the finished basement. "I don't want to see it if bedroom doors are open and their towels are on the floor," chuckles Marybeth.

On top of such very deliberate design, there was also the very delib-



When building their home from the ground up, the Otterbeins created high ceilings and barn beams wherever possible.



A corner of the kitchen, as handsome as it is functional. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: A wash-room displays Marybeth's penchant for deep blue tones met with rich tones, like warm woods and a mix of different textures.



Many parts of the home blur the line between indoors and out, as with the screened-in porch.

erate location. The couple moved to Cape Elizabeth from California, where they'd moved from Cape Elizabeth five years prior. "Once we were in California, we decided the place we really want to be for retirement was Maine," recalls Marybeth. So after buying a piece of land sight-unseen while still on the West Coast, they began designing and building with architect Teresa Simpson of Midcoast Home Designs and builder Russ Doucette of Custom Home Builders.

The design immediately started taking the outdoors largely into consideration. "We got this beautiful property with this crazy view," says Greg, who's been retired for more than a year now. They tore down the rotted raised ranch that had stood on the completely overgrown yard, and raised the property by 15 feet to capture ocean views.

And in the process of designing the landscaping, Greg dove headfirst into a passion for gardening. "It's something I've always loved it, but these days I'm a full-time gardener." Last summer he added a new section measuring 100 feet long and 50 feet wide, incorporating two beautiful rock ledges that he uncovered while clearing it out.





TOP, LEFT: Light fixtures set against wooden beams offer a blend of natural textures. ABOVE: A giant fireplace in the screened-in porch is flanked by handcrafted accoutrements. LEFT: A playful runner lives up the entryway. BELOW: Bedrooms are one space where Marybeth eschewed window treatments in favor of views of the garden.



TOP: Marybeth chose blue (but not nautical, she insists) wallpaper as a backdrop to several rooms. LEFT: Greg's hard work in the garden pays off with fresh flowers to decorate the indoors. ABOVE: The couple built separate areas of the house for their grown children to stay in when visiting.



“The gardening is never-ending, and that’s the fun of it,” says Greg, who weeds everything himself, uses no chemicals, and hews to the realm of native perennial gardening; he keeps only flowers, no vegetables. “I have these little visions and they just keep growing.” There are now about 700 flowers in the new plot alone, on top of 35 or so pots. “I love containers,” he says. “That’s where I put my annual flowers and change them out two to three times over the course of a season.”

All of Greg’s hard work is bowed to by the home’s design. “Look out any window and there’s a view of the garden,” says

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Marybeth, noting how her minimalist window design brings the ocean and garden into the home. “In many cases I went with black trim and no window treatments,” she says. “When you’re looking at the ocean, that’s much prettier than fabric.” The screened-in porch with soaring wood ceilings and multiple sprawling exterior patios—all surrounded by lush grasses and punctuated by Greg’s container gardens—further bridge the divide between indoors and out.

“The vision of the house centered on how we wanted to live in it,” says Marybeth, who sold her design company, Dwellings, to an employee when the



RIGHT: Ornamental grasses and potted annuals grown by Greg decorate one of the sprawling and comfortably outfitted outdoor decks.



Every corner of the home looks out to Greg's labor of love, the lush gardens.

couple moved to California. “We were after casual elegance, with our family coming and going, and no formal dining room. You don’t take your shoes off here. People drop things in the house, and it’s fine. Sure, there’s an elegance, but it’s definitely comfort first.” As a designer, Marybeth likes starting with a white and navy, or cream and navy. That said, “Nautical is not my look,” she asserts. “It works with lots of other colors, patterns, and materials.” That means bringing in everything from rich reds to her favorite design elements for as much texture as possible—barn beam, nickel gap, high wooden ceilings, and huge stone fireplaces.

Those layers mirror the ones that Greg has added outdoors—particularly the butterfly garden in the front of the house. Among his favorites: Echinacea Purple Coneflower, Rose Yarrow, Walker’s Low Catmint Nepeta, Autumn Fire Stonecrop Sedum, and Wormwood Artemisia. “I must have always loved playing in the dirt as a kid,” he laughs. “It’s relaxation. It’s peace and tranquility. I had a crazy, high-powered job before [as an exec-

utive in the food services industry]. Now I have freedom from that; pulling weeds and listening to the ocean crash behind me.”

And the whole family is often out there with him. “Our daughter got married out there last summer,” says Marybeth. “Really, whenever it’s beautiful out, we’re all outside.” That begins as early in the season as possible. “Once you can plant in spring, I’m out there,” says Greg. “And I’m the guy at the greenhouse almost every day looking for new ideas.”

And every day, the couple find themselves tweaking something, somewhere on the property. “Gardening is constantly a cool challenge; I’m always learning,” says Greg. The reward is the beauty of it. And at the end of the day, it’s Marybeth and I looking at it. We’ve got this house that reflects all of that.” And as for whether this new beginning is the adventure they’d envisioned? “Everything I thought it could be and hoped it was,” pauses Marybeth with palpable mirth, “it’s turned out to be.” ■