



Left: Easygoing decorating at Timothy Whealon's Southampton, New York, home. On the cover: Linda Zelenko and Stephen Piscuskas's terrace. "Connecticut Cool," page 154. Photography by Miguel Flores-Vianna; produced by Anita Sarsidi.





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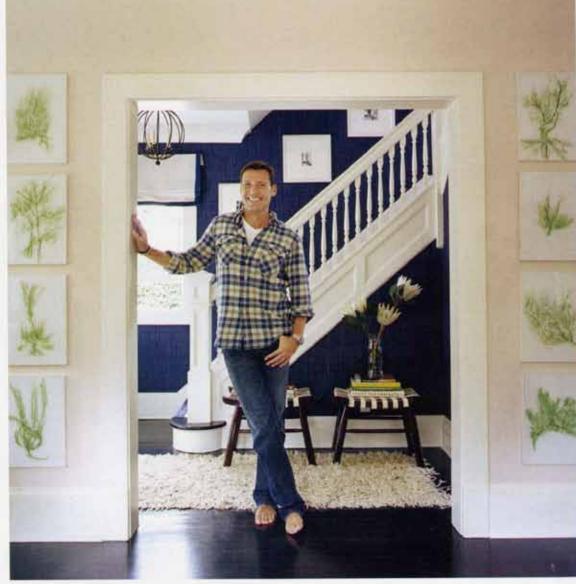
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THE DREAM is of the country, of open fields, glorious deserted beaches, or sweeping vistas of verdant, cooling green. The truth, let's face it, too often means piling into a car and driving for hours on hot, crowded highways, surrounded by fellow exasperated would-be escapees.

So why not take a lesson from New York City decorator Timothy Whealon? When you really sit down with a piece of paper and a No. 2 pencil and make a list of the pros and cons of The Escape to the Country compared with Whealon's Way (and we're getting to that) you will see that, splendid vistas aside, the man has a point.

No, he didn't discover some secret hamlet close to Manhattan that all the really chic people are now flocking to. Or purchase a stately yet rustic pleasure dome with 360-degree panoramas, 18th-century stone outbuildings, and acres of pasture. No, his is a perfectly nice, spacious weekend house right in the village of Southampton, New York, just steps off the

main street and a short bike ride from the beach. The train station is close enough to walk to, so Whealon doesn't have to contend with the hideous summer traffic, and he can leave his beloved old Jeep Cherokee parked in his garage.

"Forme, it just comes down to time," Whealon says.
"I travel so much for work in Europe that when I get back I like being able to get someplace easily."

But we're getting ahead of ourselves. The thing is, Whealon's attitude was totally pragmatic right from the get-go. He had rented summer houses for years in the Hamptons, and 2008 was no different, until on a March day, his broker just happened to show him a place that was for sale.

It was a simple two-story, three-bedroom, four-square shingled 1914 structure. "I loved the light inside, and I could imagine almost immediately what I would do to it," Whealon remembers. "And the lot was big enough to have a real garden. So . . . I made an offer."





This snap decision—and the fact that he looked at only one house—might sound too hasty to be deemed pragmatic, but Whealon had already grown tired of renting. "It got boring, spending money to kind of do up someone else's property every year," he says. "Not to mention expensive."

Of course, doing over the house he purchased was light-years more expensive than any quick summerrental transformation ever was. "It was in pretty bad shape," he recalls. "It needed a whole new roof, and the bathrooms had to be gutted and replaced."

Sometimes when people buy a country house, they go a little haywire. Even if they live a purely modernist life in the city, in an apartment that doesn't have a single comfortable place to sit, they fall in love with the idea of a farm or the sea, and the next thing you know there are old tractor parts or whaling doodads everywhere. But Whealon always stayed on message: His retreat was going to be about ease. Given that he already spends his weekdays designing

fantastic palaces for today's Kublai Khans, Whealon is only too familiar with the potential nightmares involved in building a dream house. And he wasn't about to let them befall him.

"This place has a certain sense of intimacy, which is one of the things I like about it," he says. "It's very manageable, and I tried to keep it that way." He put up ceiling moldings to echo the baseboards and stained all the floors a deep, dark brown. He painted the living and dining rooms pale pink, one bedroom green, one blue, and a third-his own-a moody lavender-gray. In the kitchen, he painted the floor as a big checkerboard, kept the beadboard cabinets and travertine counters, and painted the walls his own ideal white (a cocktail perfected on countless jobs). And, in keeping with his Mission: Possible goal, the charming mix of furnishings is very similar to that in his Manhattan apartment. Twentieth-century artworks and furniture (a suite of Harvey Probber chairs, a Lucite table













by Plexi-Craft Whealon designed) are juxtaposed with a Victorian mirrored console, Bridgewater sofas, and a suite of Giuseppe Penone botanical prints. And a surprising number of summery basics, such as the chaise longues around the pool, came from good old Restoration Hardware. Probably the easiest part of decorating was merely emptying his storage unit, which was full of carpets, artworks, and furniture—a pair of chests in the living room, the killims in the bedrooms—ready and waiting. (That's not cheating—it's thinking ahead.)

Speaking of shortcuts, to get a jump start on the garden, he brought in landscape designer Vickie Cardaro, who planted a hedge of privet and raised beds of flowers and vegetables, ideal for Whealon to vent his weekend-gardener urges upon. And it's in the garden, whether alone with a book or sharing a bottle of rose with friends, that Whealon enjoys the place best. "I don't really go to the Hamptons to socialize. I like to sit outside and not think about anything," he says. "Just appreciate the ocean light and the air."

All of it so easy to get to, deal with, and care for—if that isn't a dream house, what is? ■

