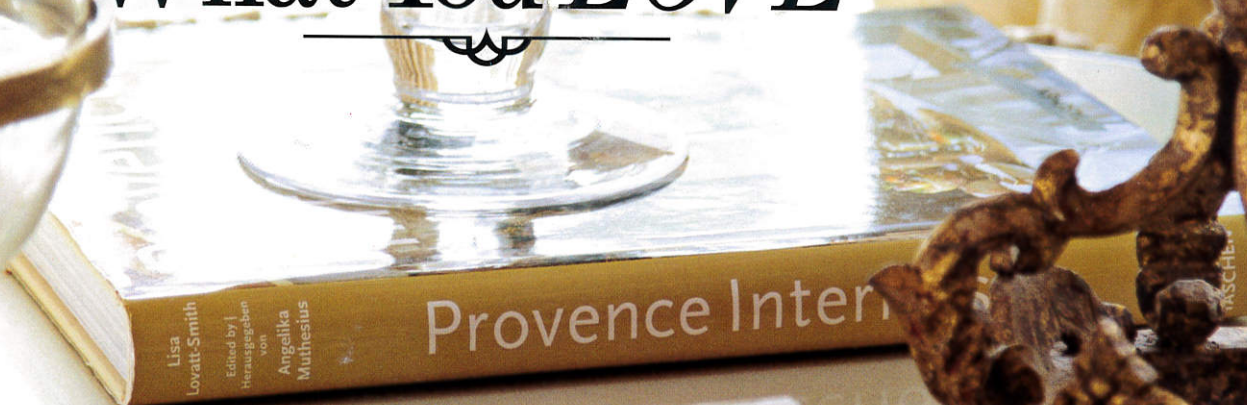


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An airy ambience and picturesque charm
give rise to equally inviting interior
and outdoor rooms in this Houston haven.

writer: KIMBER MITCHELL photographer: TRIA GIOVAN producer: DONNA TALLEY



An iron pergola embellished with graceful scrollwork provides an elegant canopy for alfresco dining in Courtney and Scott Fortney's backyard.

THIS PHOTO: The chalky hue of the family room's limestone fireplace surround is echoed in a painted French chest Scott gave Courtney. OPPOSITE TOP: Antique wood beams, arched black-frame windows, and blue-gray Venetian plaster walls lend the family room a gentle patina. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Boston ivy and star jasmine clamber up the facade of stone, brick, and stucco.





After living in several homes bursting with color, Courtney Fortney wanted to take a more subtle approach when she and her husband, Scott, drew up plans for a French manor-style home in a wooded enclave of Houston. She envisioned an assemblage of antiques and old-world details coming together to turn back the hands of time on the new home, as well as interiors dressed in a soothing rhapsody of muted hues that would speak to the family's love of being outdoors—a luxury they enjoy throughout the year in their temperate climate.

Architect Rudy Colby, childhood friend and interior designer Nicole Zarr, and landscape architect Timothy Adcock considered all the angles on the new build to foster patina along with a light ambience. In keeping with Courtney's zest for the outdoors, the interior rooms



interact seamlessly with the surrounding landscape. The family room is crowned with reclaimed French oak beams and features expansive floor-to-ceiling windows that welcome in lush views. The breakfast room is





OPPOSITE: Creamy antiqued brick walls and reclaimed French oak flooring warm the breakfast room. "We used planks in a mix of three widths to create an older, lived-in look," interior designer Nicole Zarr says. "It doesn't look as contrived as using uniform sizes." LEFT: Glazed cabinetry in cream and blue tones reflects the collected beauty of country French kitchens, where mismatched storage is a mainstay. "We wanted the island to look like it was added over time," Zarr says. Old French lanterns suit the island's scale without blocking views of the decorative range hood.

I've always loved chandeliers and sconces—they make a room. They're not just an *accessory*; they're a focal point."

—homeowner COURTNEY FORTNEY

tucked into a gently curved area crafted with brick-framed arched windows. The master bedroom steps out to a wrought-iron balcony capturing a bird's-eye view of the pool—a favorite hangout spot of the Fortneys' three children. "I love how there's a feeling of being outdoors even when you're indoors," Courtney says.

Zarr amplified that sensation by drawing the home's palette from the sky as well as the soft gray-blue, butter yellow, cream, and pink hues found on a painted antique French chest in the family room. The serene shades inspired the kitchen's cream and French blue cabinetry and raspberry pink island stool covers. In the master bedroom, puffy cloudlike white bed linens appear



ABOVE LEFT: Stone pedestals topped with flower-filled concrete urns anchor one end of the pool. ABOVE RIGHT: Landscape architect Timothy Adcock calls on native, low-maintenance Houston plants to paint a verdant garden portrait. This care-free flowerbed houses *Camellia japonica*, giant walking iris, and ligularia, embraced by a tidy hedge of Japanese boxwood. "Even when none of these are blooming, the shades and textures of green are striking against the nearby stone," he says. BELOW: Symmetry is a hallmark of French garden design, and Adcock used it as his guide for designing the poolside boxwood parterres. OPPOSITE: The loggia is crowned with a dramatic chandelier purchased from a French dealer at a Texas flea market.







to float against Venetian plaster walls dressed in an ethereal blue.

To keep the vintage-inspired architecture feeling fresh, Zarr incorporated modern touches, such as acrylic end tables, contemporary art, and a spirited mélange of textiles that energizes the predominantly blue theme while staying true to the home's French flavor. "Country French homes are known for their mix of linens, soft checks, and small-scale florals," says Zarr, who relied on these staples as well as silk, chenille, suede, crewel, and damask to create layered interest without visual weight. "The fabrics and blue palette bring the sky indoors."

The family's fresh-air views are every bit as idyllic. An outdoor kitchen boasts many of the amenities of its interior counterpart, and a loggia beckons with a cozy fireplace and television. An evergreen oasis of flowering beds framed by manicured Japanese boxwood borders takes its cues from the home's formal bones and the family's relaxed lifestyle. "Our idea of entertaining is grilling steaks outdoors rather than sitting around the dining room table with formal china," Courtney says. "Weather permitting, we're always outside." 🌸





THIS PHOTO: Bleached wood floors and a wrought-iron French campaign bed keep the mood light and airy in the master bedroom. Mirrored urns converted into table lamps impart a hint of sparkle.

OPPOSITE: Whispers of blue in the master bath's mosaic stone border, embroidered café-style sheers, and animal-print upholstered bench echo the calming hues of the adjoining master bedroom.