

Southwest-inspired custom interior gives house organic feel

Fairfax Station couple bring Ariz. feel to Va.

By Merlisa Lawrence Corbett
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Inspired by the desert around their Sedona, Ariz., vacation home and hikes through Virginia's Fountaintown park, David and Kathy Cornwell wanted to bring the outdoors into their Fairfax Station home.

To capture the warm hues and textures of nature, they hired interior designer June Shea to transform parts of their two-story Colonial into a wilderness retreat. She began the project with what David Cornwell called "a house-defining master bathroom" — a room so unique, Shea considers it one of her most creative projects.

The original design drawing looked like an enchanted forest from the pages of a fairy tale, with vines creeping up trees and waterfalls cascading over stones.

The Cornwells were blown away. "We didn't ask for any changes," Kathy Cornwell said.



The Cornwells' custom cherry wall unit houses their pottery collection, has vertical and horizontal nooks and an eye-catching centerpiece niche for an antique guitar. COURTESY PHOTOS

To get the look, Shea contracted a cabinetmaker to build stone-shaped vanities and mirrors out of solid knotty pine with a cherry chestnut stain.

She hired an ironworks company to create branch-shaped wrought iron with a powder-coated finish

to overlay on the glass doors and light fixtures.

Even the drawer handles fit: They are shaped like twigs. The glass shower doors, which appear to have jagged edges, are smoothed over with a special buffing technique.



The unique master bathroom has walls made of cultured stone, Indian marble slate floors, hollowed granite sinks and bamboo blinds.



"Everything looks organic," Shea said. "I wanted as few straight edges as possible."

The sinks on the vanity tops are made from hollowed granite. Walls of cultured stone encase the shower, which includes a re-cycling waterfall. Indian marble slate covers the floor.

The Cornwells thought about using stone to surround the soaking tub, but decided on a similar tile instead because of worries about weight in the room. In fact, additional support had to be installed under the floor joists to support the weight of the stone in the master bath.

Bamboo blinds cover the lower part of the window, which allows in sunlight and provides a view of the wooded back yard.

"I just love my bathroom so much," Kathy Cornwell said. "Every time I go into my bathroom, I'm happy. It's like a spa experience."

The resort spa atmosphere continues into the master bedroom.

Doors to the master bath are arch-shaped and evoke an old Southwestern feel. Framed quilts adorning the walls and a fireplace across from the bed contribute to warmth.

In the family room, Shea designed a custom-made cherry wall system as unique as the bath for displaying the couple's pottery collection. Vertical and horizontal nooks house colorful animal-shaped pottery made by artist CJ Buckner using raku, a method that incorporates firing and smoke to generate unique design. The centerpiece of the wall system is a niche for an antique guitar. Even slats made for compact discs were built into the system, which runs the length of the large family room.

Two upholstered chairs and a large Oriental rug provide the only other color in the room. In front of the chairs is a beautiful kidney-shaped wooden table made by David Cornwell's father. An antique grand piano sits on the opposite side of the room.

The Southwest theme continues into the kitchen nook, where light fixtures made of American Indian woodcarvings hang above a rustic family-sized table and chairs.

"They were so open to the creativity of it all," Shea said. "I really had fun. It was a creative thing for me, and we fed off each other."

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