

CENTRAL ONTARIO INTERIORS MAGAZINE

THE SUN KING

TOTTENHAM ARCHITECT JOHN HIX RULES
WITH PASSIVE SOLAR DESIGN

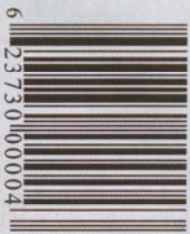
VALLEY VIEWS

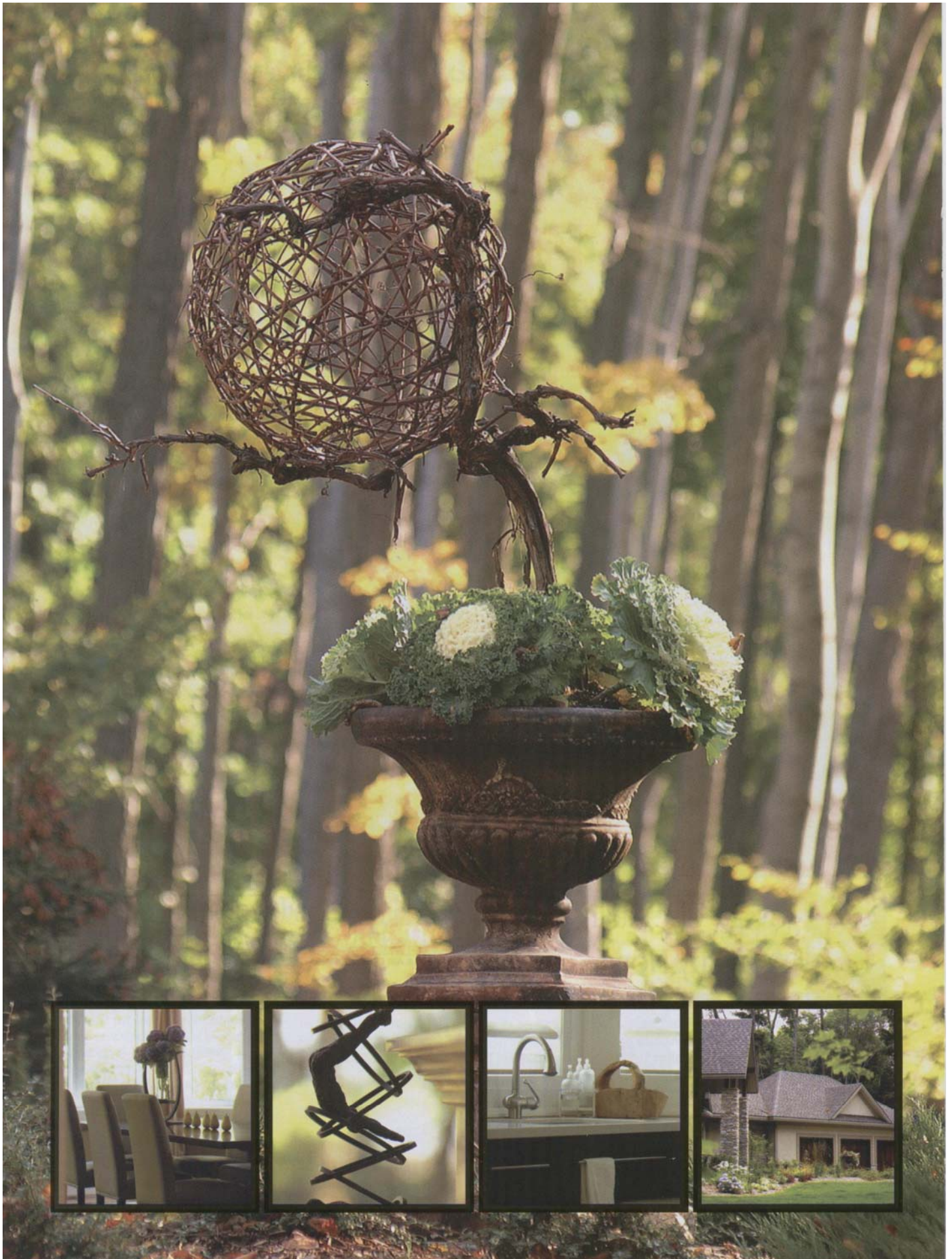
FAMILY HAVEN A NATURAL
FIT IN THE HILLS OF HORSESHOE

OFF THE GRID

INSIDE A SELF-POWERED
WATERFRONT HOME

FALL 2007 \$3.95 CANADIAN DOLLARS







CURVE APPEAL

HORSESHOE HOME
IS BUILT TO CONNECT TO THE RURAL LANDSCAPE

BY LAUREN CARTER

MARK WANZEL PHOTOGRAPHY

In a forest, every season offers a different view.

And at this brand new Horseshoe Valley home, each vista from the thick green leaves of summer all the way to Georgian Bay in winter is appreciated. Avid skiers, hikers and mountain bikers, the parents in this family of five wanted a space that echoed their interests and lifestyle, engaged their aesthetic sensibilities and kept energy costs low with a highly-insulated form of building and in-floor radiant heating.

"They had a definite image in mind. Through their ski trips and their own travels they had seen places that they liked and they wanted a house which was a bit formal but also had a sense of rural to it. They didn't want it to be a urban house but they didn't want it to be something which was too cottage-y either," says their architect, Steve Charron from McKnight, Charron, Laurin Inc. Architects.

Set on the side of a forested hill in Horseshoe Valley, the approximately

7,000 square foot house had to connect with the landscape. While this understanding came quickly to both the couple and their architect, it also posed some tricky initial questions, Charron explains.

"They spend a lot of their recreational time either skiing or at the cottage and the idea of the interior of the house having that same sort of open and spacial sense was certainly part of the early design initiative. How do you do that within the normal confines of wood construction, square pieces of wood which go together? The challenge was trying to, I guess, think outside the box."

Outside the boxes of what we typically think of as 'house' are rounded edges like meandering garden paths and trunks of trees. The first step was bringing some of these features inside. They did this by introducing subtle curves primarily through the main floor. A curve on the ceiling wanders its way through the kitchen and dining room. A staircase curves upwards from the entrance foyer to the family's bedrooms on the second floor. Subtly curved



walnut railings and window frames also echo the theme.

"The curves give you a sense that you aren't necessarily indoors," says Charron.

In the great room, a huge window with a curve at its top, puts the astonishing view on display while accentuating the vaulted ceiling that also, in its own way, encourages a connection with the outdoors.

"The barrel vault seemed to again give it a sense of 'where does the ceiling really end? It's almost like looking up into the sky, there's no definite point you can actually fix on."

Curves are also, of course, commonly used to provide flow and in this case, they bring together rooms that might otherwise be stuck far apart. Located at one end of the main floor, the kitchen could have been detached and disconnected from the rest of the rooms. Instead, a wide curved counter sweeps into the dining room where the family eats dinner together every night. Stools along the counter give the family a breakfast bar and invite guests to sit and chat,

wine glasses perched, while a meal is prepared, thereby reinforcing the sophisticated cottage feel they wanted.

In this household, the kitchen was especially important. With clear ideas of what she wanted, the cook in the family worked with Norcab Kitchen and Millwork, an company that did custom woodworking and cabinetry throughout the house, to create an environment highly conducive to creating fine food. Above the sink, a window overlooks the forest. Plenty of deep brown cupboards - stained maple with ash-burled veneer - ensure lots of space for pots and pans and the countertop is CaesarStone, a quartz product more durable and more hygienic than granite or marble. And true to a kitchen that sees some action, the top of the centre island is a solid maple butcher block imported from the U.S. and covered in a food-safe oil.

Apart from terrific food and company, an atmosphere of casual elegance also needs a warm fire crackling in the hearth. In the great room,



off the entrance foyer, comfortable custom-designed furniture, constructed by Creemore's Dovetail Interiors, faces a fire that has no distractions.

"The gas fireplace is all glass," explains Jeff Becker, owner of Redwood Homes, the home's award-winning builder. Instead, a very small vent runs along the edge of the glass while the control panel is hidden.

"(On) a normal fireplace, you have all these vents at the front (that) fold open so you can get to the controls. That's all to the side of the fireplace."



The unique hearth isn't the only interesting heat source.

Throughout the house, in-floor radiant heating runs through the floors.

"There's nothing like having nice warm feet. The best way to heat your body is to heat your feet," says Becker, whose company uses in-floor radiant heating and builds all their homes using insulated concrete forms, a method that allows for a much higher insulation value (see sidebar) and more soundproof walls, thereby ensuring a more comfortable house with decreased energy consumption.

In this home in Horseshoe Valley, comfort comes in many forms.

When they aren't on the nearby slopes or traipsing through the spring forest, the family can spend some time in the walkout basement – an area focusing on further relaxation and fun. A wine room features glass shelving to show off the couple's collection while a home theatre entertains the kids. After working out in the indoor gym, family members or guests staying in either of this level's two guest rooms can step into the steam shower or enjoy the outdoor hot tub while gazing up at the stars.

Underneath the open sky, this special house fits both the landscape and the family that brought it into being. It is exactly what they wanted, says one of the owners, a place where people can comfortably relax in understated elegance while enjoying the spectacular view.



COI



MONEY TO BURN

Even on the coldest winter day, this house won't be burning money. Instead, it will stay snug and dry and save its occupants spending on the monthly heating bill.

The secret, says Jeff Becker, owner of Redwood Homes, is in three simple letters: I.C.F. Short form for insulated concrete forms, the style is becoming all the rage in these energy-conscious times, says Becker. The method was previously used only for basements but more builders

are beginning to see the value in using the insulated forms all the way to the roof.

"It's a method of building that's really becoming very, very popular." Styrofoam forms fit together to create a kind-of empty wall that the cement is poured into.

"(The forms) hold the concrete in place until it cures and they also create your insulation," says Becker.