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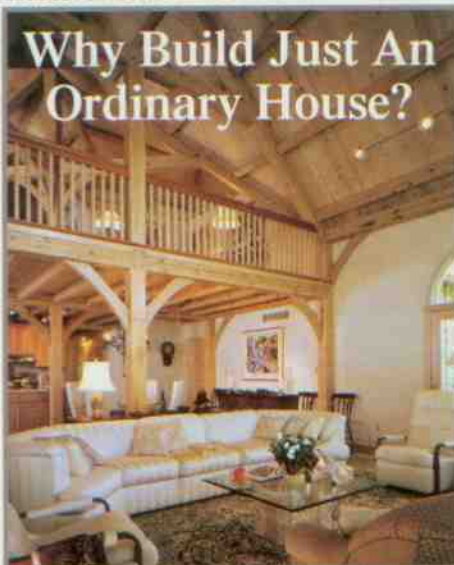
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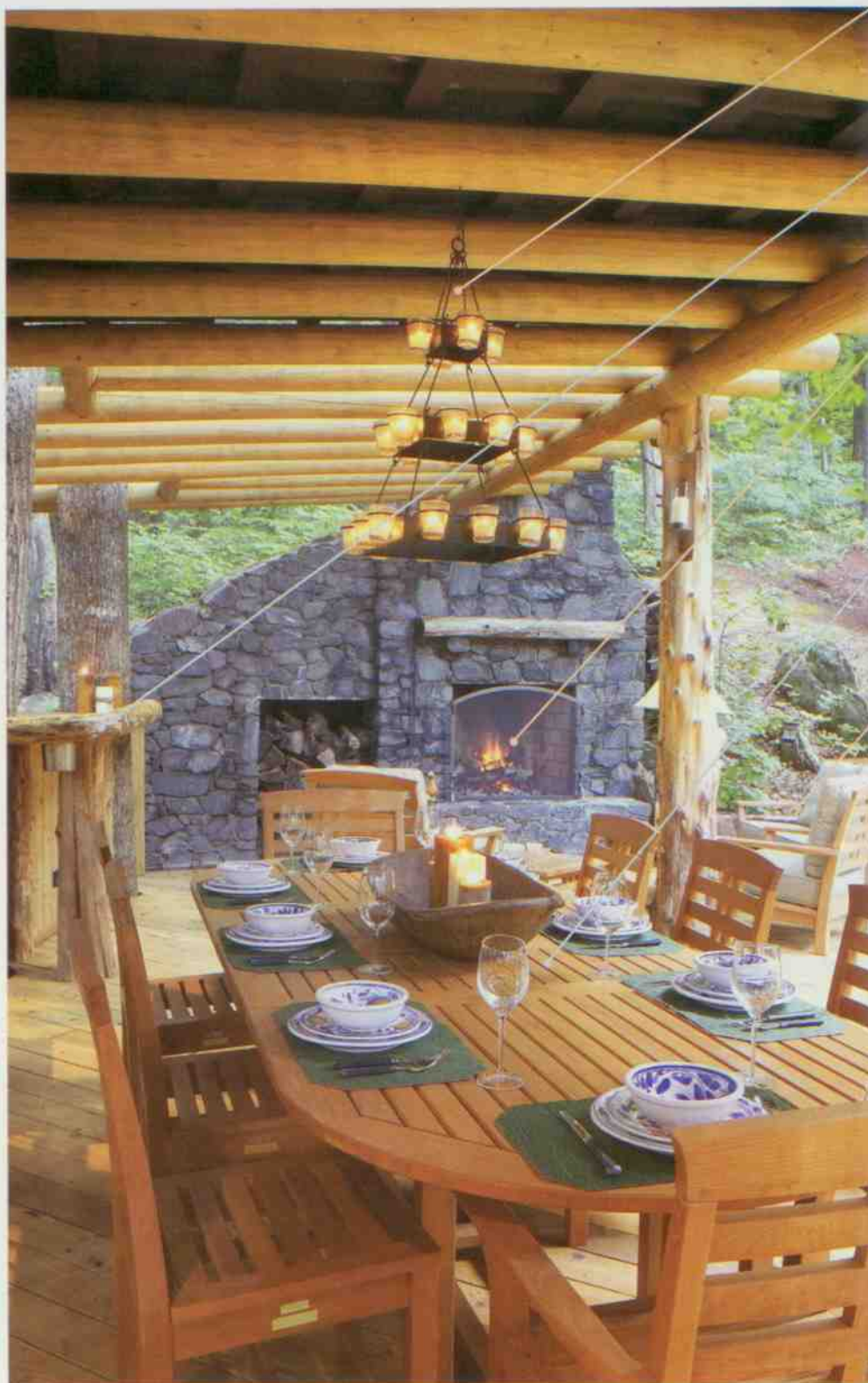


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[OUTDOOR ROOM]



The light from your hearth will provide a nice glow after the sun goes down, but additional light sources can make your outdoor room extra cozy. Candle-filled chandeliers and sconces are both luxurious and low maintenance.

Not in the market for a full-scale outdoor kitchen? Create the illusion by pairing a portable gas grill with a small bar that can provide convenient counter space.

A crackling fire that serves as both a focal point and a gathering place is essential for making an outdoor room feel like home. To get the most out of your space, consider an indoor/outdoor hearth that can service your great room or master bedroom, too. (Check with your builder first, though, to make sure this is practical for your climate.)

Before you begin decorating it, consider how you'll want to use your outdoor room. If you envision enjoying as many meals as possible under the stars, bring in a dining table and chairs. Picturing evenings spent chatting by the fire? Furnish your outdoor room with a cozy grouping of lounge chairs instead.

Don't skimp on furniture! Your outdoor room should be a place where you go to relax, and plastic patio furniture won't exactly make it inviting. Consider investing in cushions covered in all-weather fabrics to provide a setting where you can spend hours.

—Clare Martin

Small By Design

The race for extra room should start long before you begin measuring for curtains—if you really want to make every square inch of your home count, first take a critical look at your floorplan. Here are our top five tips for carving out space in your design.

1. CONSIDER WHAT YOU NEED.

Taking an honest look at how your family really lives will help you eliminate wasted space. There's no sense in having a formal dining room if you're just going to end up gathering around the kitchen island. Stick with the spaces you'll use every day, and eliminate the rest.

2. MIX IT UP. While you're thinking about spaces you can live without, also consider which rooms can be combined. Do you really need a guest room and an office? With some creative solutions (see page 46), these two easily can become one. Similarly, a loft can be anything from a library to a bunkroom.

3. THINK VERTICALLY. You've probably heard it before: Build up, not

out. Why is this advice so often repeated? Because building vertically (think putting in a basement) is a whole lot cheaper than expanding your home's footprint. Plus, going the other way (adding height to ceilings) will make small rooms feel a lot larger.

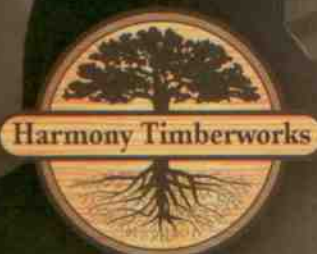
4. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF DEAD ZONES.

Your home's dead zones (nooks, alcoves, spots with low ceiling height) can be major space hogs—unless you use them creatively. Dead zones are prime candidates for storage, especially under stairs or in rooms with sloping ceilings, where drawers can be built into the low walls. And tiny alcoves can be converted into charming sitting areas with built-in benches.

5. GET OUTSIDE. Outdoor spaces can extend the square footage of your home—but only if you actually use them. Consider screening in a porch or including an outdoor hearth on your patio so you can stay outdoors more months of the year. If you have a wraparound deck, include plenty of doors so it's accessible from anywhere in the house. —C.M.

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