

Carefree Beauty

Light, fuss-free interiors dressed in clear, crisp colors maintain an easy-breezy vibe all summer long in this Massachusetts beach house.

An old ship's lantern suspended chandelier-style adds a subtle nautical theme to Leslie Sennott and Bill Johnston's dining room. Treasured old Windsor chairs gather round the weathered table.



It may not take long to get there,

but when Leslie Sennott and her husband, Bill Johnston, reach their summer home on Massachusetts' North Shore, they feel like they've entered another world. "It's an easy drive [less than an hour] from our year-round house, but psychologically, it's far, far away," Leslie says.

Originally an inn with 12 bedrooms and only two baths, the century-old oceanside house underwent a complete renovation after the couple purchased it. The 12 smallish rooms are now six spacious bedrooms, and the main level boasts an airy, open layout. New windows and exterior doors welcome in picturesque water views, and five bathrooms keep guests and the couple's three children happy.

The family heads for the house as soon as the school year ends and stays until it starts again. And even though Bill, who is a lawyer, commutes to Boston during the season, everyone savors the chance

to unplug. With that in mind, the couple enlisted Boston designer Christine Lane to put her light touch on the interiors.

"Keep it simple, keep it casual," were Lane's mantras for choosing fabrics, new furnishings, and a smattering of New England antiques for the house. A number of the furnishings, including the side tables and three lounge chairs in the living room, came with the house, and Lane incorporated these items by either painting them white or re-covering the upholstered pieces.

To add authentic flavor, Lane searched for artwork done by local artists and purchased the antiques from dealers who live nearby. She also hired a craftsman in Essex, Massachusetts, to create an antique farm table for the kitchen's casual dining area from old floorboards. Lane handled one of the home's crowning features herself: a stone fireplace surround in the sitting room. She plucked each one of the stones from beaches along the New England coast and worked with a mason to put every stone in its proper place.

In keeping with the home's casual summer attitude, and the bare, sandy feet that come and go throughout the day, Lane selected sturdy floors and floor coverings. "All the floors on the main level are fir, and upstairs they're pine," Lane says. "Most rooms have neutral sisal area rugs. We chose them because they're hard-wearing and also because they're simple and casual."

The driftwood-color floors are paired with frothy fabric colors and lots of feathery shorebird white. Even on cool, overcast days, the house radiates warmth thanks to a cozy selection of furnishings that invite reading, game-playing, and napping. When dining indoors, the family's favorite spot to gather is on the old Windsor chairs that surround the kitchen table. Here they enjoy views of the water and, when the French doors are open, the salty breezes. "The house has such a wonderful, comfortable, summery feel," Leslie says. "It brings us together now, and I'm sure it will continue to do so in the future."



This photo: A graceful arch frames the view of the sitting room as seen from the entry. A pair of new, extra-comfy lounge chairs focus on the fireplace. **Opposite:** Perennial blooms peek through a white picket fence along the side and back of the 100-year-old shingled house.



Below: Casually dressed in wispy whites and seashore blues, the living room says summer house through and through. **Opposite:** At the far end of the living room, a bay window is fitted with built-in seats and furnished with a table and chairs used primarily for game-playing. Sunny yellow fabrics keep the space feeling bright and cheery, especially on rainy days when the table is in high demand.







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Opposite: The pleasant sensation of soft ocean breezes is duplicated inside this crisp yellow and white bathroom, which Bill and Leslie's girls, Katherine and Victoria, share. **Left:** A yellow striped fabric adds charm to an old armchair. **Below:** If summer days spent sailing, swimming, or playing tennis aren't enough to look forward to, two walls of windows guarantee that waking up in the girls' room is a happy affair. Leslie and designer Christine Lane deliberately selected furnishings that were casual and not too precious for the space. The spindle beds were found at a flea market and are topped with easy-to-clean all-white bed linens.



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