



NATURAL ELEMENTS

It's the GOOD LIFE

If you were to say that Cheryl and Ron Bowler are living in their ***Natural Element*** you'd be right, in all that that implies.

Just under two years ago, Cheryl and Ron Bowler bought their property just north of Barrie in the picturesque, rural setting of Oro Medonte.

www.natural-elements.ca

SlideShow





When they found this house and 3 acre property, they hadn't intended to buy one, but they both had the same, immediate vision of what it could be. This typical 1970's bungalow was rife with 70's icons such as ratty, shag carpeting, a small, dark kitchen lacking cupboard space, two small bedrooms, a bathroom of paneled pine and fuchsia pink tiles, worn laminate flooring, a pink granite fieldstone fireplace, and a dank, dingy 2 bedroom apartment in the basement.

Ron began by gutting the whole inside, right back to the four outside walls. The whole house had to be completely re-wired and re-plumbed with copper. He replaced and relocated outdated doors and windows, and they carefully chose the hardest wood floors available (Brazilian Cumaru) in variegated shades of brown. Ron laid the floors throughout (including the principle bathroom) to accommodate the nails of their "furry children," Yoshi, and Maya (gentle, Bull Mastiffs) and Roxy (their gracefully, aging toy poodle).



Foyer

The original staircase was situated between the kitchen and family room, which Ron relocated to the opposite end of the house, by the front entry. Together, Ron and Cheryl custom designed the staircase into a one-of-a-kind showpiece, by incorporating several, etched-glass panels (bought in China) that Cheryl had brought with her from Jamaica. They added a chandelier above a square of mosaic tiles Ron inset into the hardwood, creating an eye-catching, focal point against the black entryway door.

By moving the staircase, it opened up the areas between the kitchen, family and dining room, leaving only one wall of separation. This allowed light to fill the rooms from both the front and back of the house. Instead of traditional, crown molding; they opted to use 'Dental' style moldings throughout, including the kitchen. Walls were painted in neutral colours; Camouflage, and Cork by Benjamin Moore.



Before



Kitchen

There is nothing typical about Cheryl and Ron's kitchen. After years of living with white ones, Cheryl decided to do something that would be a complete departure, and chose black, maple cupboards, adding contemporary, high-end hardware to upgrade the look she wanted. For continuity, they painted the 'Dental' moldings black. Smoky glass fronts were chosen for the upper cabinets, and were extended to the ceiling for the illusion of height, and additional storage.

Kitchen

To ease Cheryl's chronic, back problems, Ron raised the dishwasher and refrigerator 6 inches. He covered the base of the island with Louisiana, limestone pebbles, but decided (due to lack of expertise in this area) to let professionals install the granite top (called Wild, Wild West) for the island, counters, and back splash. By the time Ron was ready to complete their outdoor kitchen on one of several decks; he felt more confident about his ability to install the granite, and did so with little difficulty.

Cheryl's favourite addition to this 'state of the art,' kitchen was the one thing she refused to compromise on. She researched catalogues and stores tirelessly, before locating her hearts desire. The Italian, stainless steel and opaque, glass range hood from Italy, aptly named Zephyr, is proudly displayed over the island stove top, creating the silhouette of a futuristic, modern sculpture.



Lighting and Window Coverings

Pot lights and/or chandeliers were installed in each room of the main floor, adding sparkle to the slowly emerging, new home that Ron and Cheryl had envisioned that very, first day. As drafty windows were replaced with new, they faced every home owner's dilemma - window coverings. Cheryl recalled hearing that Mary Dobson of Cityline fame (see July issue feature story) was now living in Barrie, and contacted her through her website. They connected immediately, and Mary is working her textile magic for this ambitious pair of home owners, by incorporating custom drapery and Levelor window coverings, wherever privacy and/or sun



Family Room

In keeping with the site lines from the kitchen to the family room they deconstructed the pink, granite fireplace surround, replacing it with the same granite used in the kitchen. To complete the continuity between the two rooms, Ron built offset, wooden shelves, attaching them along the granite chimney wall, and covered them with more of the Louisiana, limestone pebbles.

Principle Bathroom

To add to the uniqueness of Ron and Cheryl's vision, the 'Principle Bathroom' was given special consideration with every choice, beginning with the marble they chose for the vanities that hold the vessel sinks, and tub surround. In spite of the high-end price tag, there was no question about their choice, once they laid eyes on the ancient stone that had been harvested from under the sea. Mesmerizing, fossilized ammonites (sea life) lie imbedded within the ancient marble, reminding one of starry galaxies placed in the ebony, night sky.

The stand alone shower, designed and built by Ron, holds extras like the multiple shower head he made himself, adding body jets on the opposite wall, and a convenient, corner seat. One of the custom, shower heads allows them to easily bathe the dogs. He used a Kerdy system that totally waterproofs the base of the stall, and placed porcelain tiles up the walls, at a fraction of the price for Travertine marble. This allowed them to spend the savings on the more costly Louisiana limestone pebbles, which Ron applied to the floor and ceiling.



Sanctuary and Serenity by way of Buddha... oh, and a Pool

What's truly remarkable about this outdoor paradise Ron created is that he did it on week-ends while operating his full time business, Natural Elements. This meant working 7 days a week, with only Saturday help from his new apprentice.

Ron started by clearing the rear, one acre of what Cheryl refers to it as swamp bush.' He brought in approximately 125 truckloads of soil, bringing it right up to the house.

The perimeter was then fenced, which would allow the dogs to run safely and free.

They chose the simplicity of a salt water, fiberglass pool by San Juan Pools. A product that impressed Ron and Cheryl so much, they decided Natural Elements should become a dealer. Ron says although it's more costly up front, he personally prefers fiberglass over traditional liners because repairs can be localized, without having to be completely replaced.



Large trees, specimen trees, ornamental grasses, and shrubbery were brought in from as far away as Oakville, while much of the greenery was happily found locally at various garden centres, like Angelo's on Hwy 7. Flagstone, interlocking brick and many natural elements such as granite mulch, have been used to surround the decks, and pool areas. A large, Japanese Koi pond sits to one side, while a gazebo facing the house and decks, is elevated above the flow of a waterfall that spills into the curve of the swimming pool below.

They've also installed an outdoor kitchen complete with granite, a stainless steel bar/sink, grill, etc.

Eventually, it (and the hot tub area) will have an authentic thatched roof, (lifespan 10-15 years) sourced from an importer in Oakville, who brings it in from Africa.

The main patio is a combination of a composite from recycled plastic, and slate tile that's put onto a fiberglass backing. It can be installed off the ground, for above deck applications allowing snow and rain to flow right through. They plan to eventually enclose this area with glass to make it a 3 season room.

Meanwhile, Ron and Cheryl's life sized Buddha carved from a solid piece of teak, smiles from his place of reverence on the gazebo, watching over paradise.

Natural Elements

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Shopping List

Paint and Wallpaper: Cork, Cloud White, Camouflage, Straw Hat, Boardwalk all Benjamin Moore

Granite and Marble: Fossil in bathroom Ciot, Toronto; Kitchen - Wild Wild West; Entryway



mosaic insert - Hiltz Marble/Granite; Outdoors Royal Granite, Barrie; Powder Room - Bath Works; Caledonia Marble (installation)
Toilets: Toto

Plumbing and Fixtures: Vessel Sinks and faucets, American Standard, Soaker Tub (Acrylic), Bathworks, Barrie

Hardwood Flooring: Grand Floors, Barrie

Lighting: Darsco Lighting, Barrie

Appliances: Appliance Canada, Vaughan

Hardware: (kitchen cupboards) Richelieu
Range Hood: Zephyr (Italy)

Area Rugs: Irvine Carpet One, Barrie

Kitchen Cabinets: NHB/CANSAVE, Barrie

Window Treatments: Mary Dobson - www.marydobsondesigns.com; Levelor - www.levelor.ca

Outdoor Furniture: Costco

Fiberglass, Salt Water Pool: San Juan, dealer: Natural Elements