

Complimentary



May09

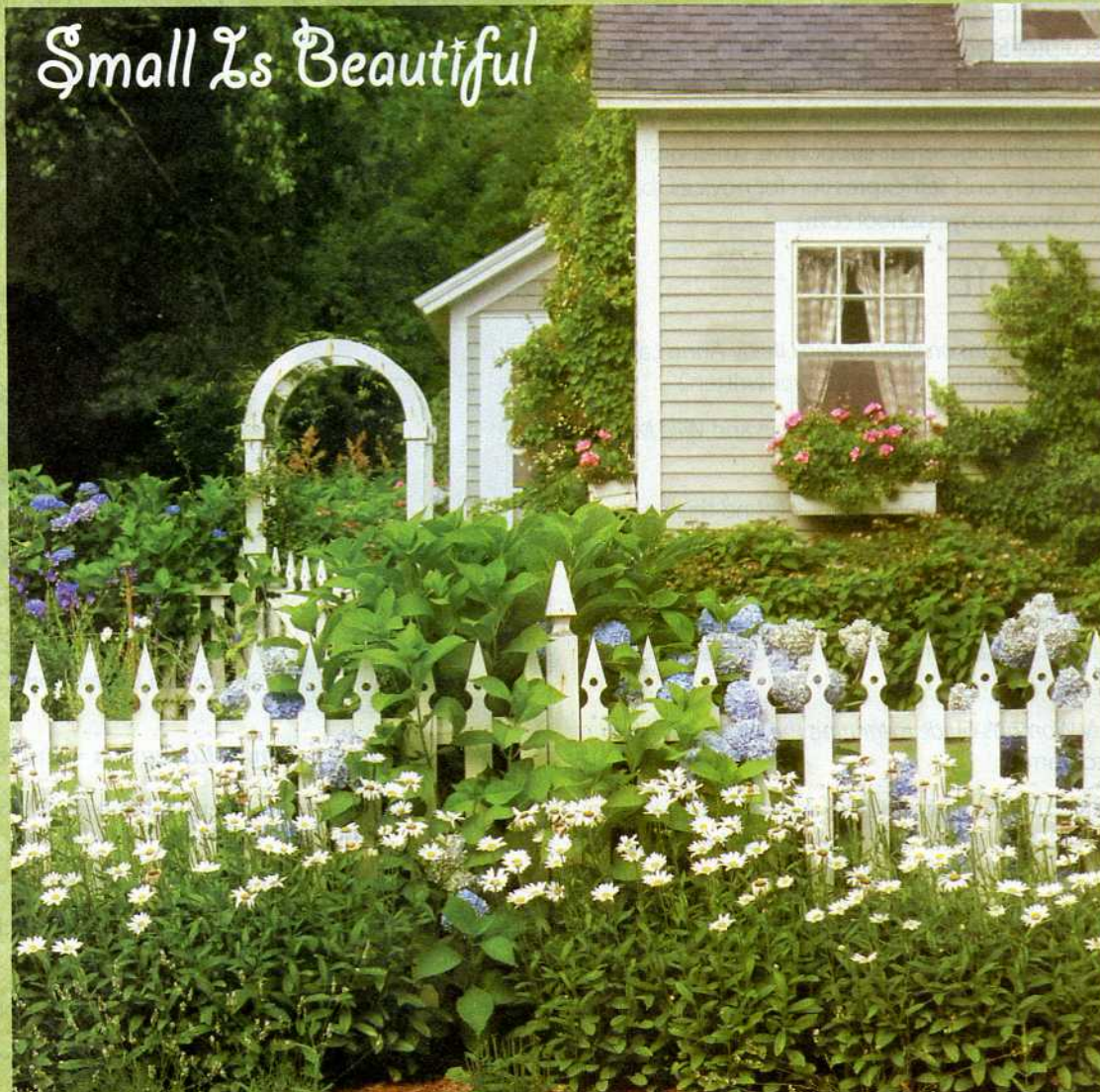
# Maternity Leave Zen

Cottage Living  
Beach Ready Beauty  
Admitting Mistakes  
“We Come To You” Guide

[www.washingtonwoman.com](http://www.washingtonwoman.com)

# Cottage Living

BY CARRIE SMOOT



**THE ECONOMY IS** inspiring people to scale down their home decor. Cottage living—creating your home around a certain style while doing more with less—has taken on new popularity.

“People are choosing to stay in their smaller, 1940s-style homes, like the bungalows and Cape Cods in Takoma Park or Chevy Chase,” says Washington, D.C., interior designer Annie Elliott, owner of bossy color ([www.bossycolor.com](http://www.bossycolor.com)). “My job is to help them create a

style that reflects who they are and how they live,” she says. “A room isn’t working if no one uses it anymore, or if too many chairs, tables and bookshelves have been moved there to try and make it work. Rooms should have only one purpose.”

## Assessing Your Needs & Space

During Elliott's two-hour "bossy basic" service, she and the client go through the house, tape measure in hand, discussing proposed changes and suggestions. Clients then have a realistic mini-plan for achieving their vision. Sometimes a bench or chair works better in another room, rugs are better placed or items are removed entirely. A fresh coat of paint—from white or off-white to muted colors—spruces up rooms and makes older furniture look new.

Take pictures off the walls and arrange them on the floor, planning where you want them to go. "Art should be hung at least 60 inches from the floor, with four to five inches between each piece, and align them by the centers of the pictures. Don't use nails and nail holes that are already there," Elliott says. Eco-friendly appliances and materials and low VOC paints top the list of client requirements. Elliott frequently uses Benjamin Moore's Aura® line.

"I always ask clients what they could live without from their old décor, and sometimes it isn't easy for them to decide. I've had to talk clients out of certain ideas, although we do talk about what their budgets allow them to splurge on. It may seem like reupholstering old furniture saves money. In reality, it can get very expensive. 'Custom design' does not have to mean 'expensive.' Some furniture, such as sofas, can be created to your specifications through stores like Vastu," she says. Visit [www.vastudc.com](http://www.vastudc.com) for more information.

Furniture shopping is challenging, and Elliott offers solutions. "Do online research first to get an idea of what would work in the space. Don't go into a store and browse. Have a mission and bring a picture. Don't be afraid to ask salespeople questions," Elliott says. Another Washington, D.C., furniture store she recommends—particularly for smaller-scale sofas, such as the Tyler and Louisa—is Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams ([www.mgbwhome.com](http://www.mgbwhome.com)).

## Designing and Furnishing On A Smaller Scale

It took Genevieve Ferraro of Chicago, IL, two years to get rid of "big house envy." "I wanted to move to a bigger house, but my husband wouldn't budge. He definitely didn't want to build an addition," she recalls, laughing. The couple, who has one child in college and another in high school, compromised by opening up the space and flow of their existing home, putting themselves on a budget.

A builder created a bay window and larger counters in their small kitchen and an archway between the kitchen and living room. French doors lead to the basement. A local craftsman put together an inexpensive French style dresser from materials Ferraro selected.

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Ferraro never expected all this would inspire The Jewel Box Home<sup>SM</sup> Web site and companion blog ([www.thejewelboxhome.com](http://www.thejewelboxhome.com)) in 2007, or that her quarterly free newsletter and email consulting service would assist people across the United States and Canada with living in, enjoying and entertaining in smaller spaces—or putting the life back into larger homes so that rooms are people-centered rather than things-centered. Ferraro hopes to publish her book, *The Jewel Box<sup>SM</sup> Home: Smaller, Greener, Cheaper, Fabulous*, soon.

"Less is more. More looks bad and destroys the flow of a room. Put your rooms on a diet," Ferraro warns. "It's OK for styles to complement each other, but too many busy patterns or cute details are overwhelming. Make a space personal. Group furniture so that people are brought together instead of pulled apart.

"[A large house] announces to the world that you've made it," Ferraro says. "In reality large houses are often too big, uncomfortable and difficult to clean. A smaller house of 2500 square feet or less is actually ideal for families. It's about people, not things," she says.

Everyday stores like Target, Restoration Hardware, Crate & Barrel and World Market are favorite retailers, including the "Furniture for Small Spaces" collection from Pottery Barn®.

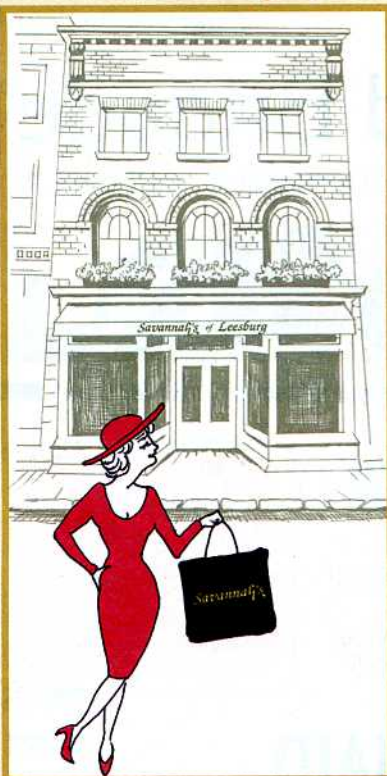
"People are looking for small-scale furniture with high style," says Elysa Stahl of Elysa Stahl Design, who believes in multifunctional furniture for multifunctional rooms. With many clients downsizing, she says they want quality, longevity and storage space in pieces they buy. "Retailers and manufacturers are getting the message that customers don't want big items, and that trend is likely to continue," Stahl says, observing that "assembly not required" is a major selling point. "Sofas have gone from 82 inches to 62 inches, and love seats can now fold out into a single bed. Daybeds are popular. Coffee tables, end tables, accent tables and ottomans have storage options in various models. Desks are narrower, and many have leaning shelves for extra storage. Entertainment armoires are still popular and available in smaller models. One type has rollout storage areas for movies, CDs, video games and equipment. In smaller bedrooms, it may be helpful to use your closet more and have bureau drawers installed."

Stahl frequently picks up and delivers items for clients. Favorite companies include Palecek ([www.palecek.com](http://www.palecek.com)), Stanley Furniture ([www.stanleyfurniture.com](http://www.stanleyfurniture.com)), Crate & Barrel's CB2 ([www.cb2.com](http://www.cb2.com)) and Lee Furniture ([www.leeindustries.com](http://www.leeindustries.com)). She says Lucite furniture has made a comeback.

Stahl often designs for people living in smaller homes, where rooms serve dual purposes. One woman wanted a dining room and home office. "A small desk and a roll-top secretary's desk solved storage and space issues. [Closing] everything at the end of the day gave the room an attractive and peaceful feel," Stahl says. "When I designed a living room and homework area for a family in a smaller home with modern décor, we [added] shelving to a glass-topped desk [with] plenty of storage space. The work area blended with the room and did not overwhelm it."

"Think about how you will use your space effectively," Stahl says. "Create the basement home office of your dreams after you have cleared out clutter. A room doesn't have to have only one look. Mix styles and eras by figuring out what melds together." Check out [www.ElystahlDesign.com](http://www.ElystahlDesign.com) for more information.

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"People are looking for small-scale furniture with high style," says Elysa Stahl of Elysa Stahl Design .... With many clients downsizing, she says they want quality, longevity and storage space in pieces they buy.

## Creating Inviting Rooms

"People are waiting longer to make design decisions, but it all goes back to how you use the space you have," says Roslyn Ashford of ra reDoes rooms, Inc., in Silver Spring, MD ([www.rarooms.com](http://www.rarooms.com)), specializing in standard household rooms, condos and townhomes of 2,500 square feet and under. She transformed a drab basement into a welcoming second living room. A red wall on one side complements the fireplace and white walls. Chocolate brown furniture, including a swivel chair and storage ottoman, with a green accent rug, warms the room. "My clients say that now everyone wants to gather in that room," she says.

Ashford says design isn't without challenges. "Stores in the Washington area tend to be very traditional, and it can be more difficult to find smaller and contemporary furniture, such as platform beds or entertainment units for flat screen TVs. They are here. You may have to look harder."

She notices furniture is being built with additional storage or multiple uses, such as desks with outlets built into them. Mirrors now have hooks for hanging on doors and for temporary storage. Ashford recommends HomeGoods® ([www.homegoods.com](http://www.homegoods.com)).

In addition to redecorating, Ashford helps people with lighting and window treatments that enliven small spaces "Lighting is for people, not the TV, so make sure there's enough of it in the room," she says. "Some people move a lot and find that they're sick of furniture they had in college, or they kept the previous owner or tenant's window treatments because they really couldn't imagine what else to do."

Ashford recommends clean lines, with nothing too fussy, frilly and ornate. "Lowe's and Home Depot have affordable faux woods, and Kathy Ireland Home offers the Alta® line ([www.altawindow-solutions.com](http://www.altawindow-solutions.com)). Hunter Douglas ([www.hunterdouglas.com](http://www.hunterdouglas.com)) has more options, but may be [pricier]," she says.

Make your home cozy while custom fitting your style and budget. (W)

Carrie Smoot is a Northern Virginia freelance writer.

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