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Interiors ideas...



SITTING ROOM
The built-in modular-style sofas double up as beds when the family have guests to stay. Neville Johnson custom-makes compatible fitted furniture. MM Furniture creates bespoke library ladders. For sustainable white oak flooring like this try The Solid Wood Flooring Company, price on application.

UNIQUE



HOME TRUTHS

THE PROPERTY

Traditional 1940s cottage

LOCATION Sauvie Island

in Oregon, USA

ROOMS Sitting room/kitchen-

diner, two bedrooms, bathroom

PURCHASED 2008

PREVIOUS PROPERTY

'Before moving here, we lived in a

two-storey house in Southeast

Portland,' says Jessica.



SMALL *is* BEAUTIFUL

Jessica and Yianni Helgerson converted a compact country cottage into a comfortable and efficient home for their family

KITCHEN-DINER

Just about everything in this characterful area is recycled or made from reclaimed materials. Chesney's Beaumont woodburning stove, £835, is similar. East Sleep Live sells a selection of reclaimed wooden dining tables, from £500. Take a look at the Original BTC Cobb ceiling light, £169, John Lewis. For a comparable vintage dresser, try New England Lifestyle, £908

FAVOURITE ROOM *'We love the main room in the house as it's where we spend most of our time and it connects the whole house'*



A cold November walk by the Columbia River in Oregon proved a life-changing experience for Jessica Helgerson and her husband, Yianni. 'At the time, we were living in nearby Portland and were exploring neighbouring Sauvie Island, which is half nature reserve and half agricultural land, when we saw snow geese flying over the frosty landscape,' says Jessica. 'It was just beautiful – a real ethereal moment. We knew the location was special and shortly afterwards we were fortunate enough to find a farm for sale, complete with a tiny cottage and two barns.'

The cottage has an interesting history. It was built as part of nearby Vanport Village, which was a quickly erected development for shipyard workers. But when it flooded in 1948 and floated down the river to this island, it became a goose-hunting permit station before it was recycled again to a home.

'The previous owner had been squatting here for 27 years and we were in no doubt that it needed a lot of work,' explains interior designer Jessica, a keen advocate of simple living and taking care of the environment. 'It's an experiment in reuse and reduction, and we initially thought it would just be a redevelopment project and certainly didn't anticipate moving into such a small space full time. But it soon began to feel like home and now it's a work in progress, always evolving.'

ENVIRONMENTAL SOUND

Jessica's ideology, both at work and at home, is to create and promote green buildings and sustainability. She was determined not to change the footprint of the structure of the cottage and has cleverly made good use of the available space. 'For any project, my aim is to make sure that the fundamental design and the materials are classic and long-lasting, and appropriate to the building and its period,' she explains. 'As part of the redevelopment, we replaced the existing roof and planted a green one using moss and ferns gathered along the Columbia River Gorge. Not only does it look lovely, but it adds valuable warmth along with the insulated walls, which are faced with reclaimed wood found in the barn, and new high-efficiency windows.'

Inside, meanwhile, Jessica has successfully brought her ethos to life, utilising mostly reclaimed materials to create a streamlined and undecorated look. 'The floors are made from local Oregon white oak and all the walls are painted in eco-friendly white paint,' explains Jessica. 'The main piece of furniture is the dining table, made by Yianni from old walnut, while the bathtub was found on a friend's demolition site. We reclaim and reuse as much as we can, so I prefer to just find things rather than shopping – it's much more satisfying.'



MASTER BEDROOM
This space is so tiny, the Helgersons' choice of a roll-top bath fits perfectly into an alcove. The Davey spot light, £200, John Lewis, is a good all-rounder to this.



BATHROOM
The salvaged roll-top bath fits perfectly into an alcove. Try Victoria Plumb's roll-top bath on wooden stand, from £1,000

FAVOURITE ITEM 'We love the beautiful freestanding bath, which we've added wooden plinths to. Our friends, who were redecorating their home, gave it to us'



CHILDREN'S BEDROOM
The couple's children, Max, 11, and Penelope, 9, share bunk beds that blend seamlessly into the paneled walls. The White Company stocks a range of crisp white bedlinens for kids, from £15 for a duvet cover and pillowcase. Namaste's Indian antique tribal design bag, £15, has a similar look to this

INSIGHT

Single-storey living

Do you like Jessica Helgerson's single-level home? Living on just the one floor has plenty of advantages

Popular in America, single-storey homes are still relatively rare in the UK, but properties like these are fast shaking off their old-fashioned image. Barns, lodges, longhouses, unique conversions and self-built all make smart and contemporary single-storey dwellings.

BACK TO BASICS

There are plenty of advantages to living on a single level, not least the opportunity it gives you to create a sense of flow and scale across one floor. The key is to successfully delineate the space, so that the layout works intelligently, ensuring that each room or area blends seamlessly with the adjacent zone. The trend for open-plan living works well in single-storey properties where space is maximised, like the interior of Jessica Helgerson's

home, which has relatively few internal walls. This kind of property offers many of the benefits of apartment living, but without the close proximity of neighbours and often with the advantage of also having a garden. If you're converting an existing property such as a dated bungalow or a barn, reworking the floorplan so that dining, living and kitchen areas are grouped together, with bedrooms and bathrooms at the other end of the property,

OUT OF SIGHT

One-storey properties need plenty of storage, as traditional attic, cellar and understairs space is not available. If you're considering moving to this type of property, remember to factor in adequate space for storing household appliances, laundry, coats and shoes, as clutter can often look magnified in a one-level home. To maximise available storage, it's worth looking at bespoke solutions, as Jessica Helgerson has done, so consider deep shelving units, concealed closets and hard-working kitchen cabinetry. Bear in mind, too, that simple pared-back decor works well in this kind of space. To increase a sense of flow, try using the same type of flooring throughout, unifying the rooms with a similar colour palette. Low-level, multipurpose furniture, such as L-shaped sofas and modular furniture, suits this kind of space well too.

FEATURE: EMMA PAGE



PROFESSIONAL ADVICE...



- The most obvious advantage of homes that are on one level is the practical lifestyle it offers, coupled with low maintenance. Every room is on the same floor, making family life much easier, especially for young families where it's important to keep an eye on toddlers. Noise issues are reduced too, as there is no one above or below to consider, which is one of the drawbacks of apartment living.
- When designing a single-storey house, prioritise the layout. It's crucial that all the rooms work off each other as best they can; for example, children's bedrooms should be close to the family bathroom as well as the master suite, and connecting the living, dining and kitchen areas simplifies socialising.
- Over the last few years, housing trends have shifted towards open-plan living, with generous windows and high ceilings becoming more popular, mimicking American-style loft conversions. It's a concept that can be produced with much greater ease in a single-storey house because of the reduced number of supporting walls. This also offers more flexible design possibilities.
- Depending on the style of the property, in many ways a house built over one storey can often afford more room than a multi-storey building. For example, no valuable space is wasted putting in stairways, while ceiling heights can be much more generous. Sleek layouts that encourage flow work well, as does underfloor heating throughout.

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This company offers a full interior design service, including reworking single-storey spaces.

You can find vital information on building, renovating and sustainability on this useful website.