

Board-and-batten siding and a wraparound porch give Jennifer Mathis and Mike Cline's modern home a cottage vibe. Jennifer designed the space-savvy house—right down to the open wire fence—in conjunction with Verdi Co., a design-build firm.



JUST the right SIZE

SMALL SPACE
1,730 sq. ft.
A family of four
(including a work-from-home mom), two
dogs, and a cat.

A dream home doesn't have to be an enormous home when it's designed so no space goes to waste.

BY JODY GARLOCK | PHOTOS BRIE WILLIAMS
PRODUCED BY SANDRA L. MOHLMANN



“A no-wasted-space home meant giving a lot of consideration to how we live,” Jennifer says. A small-scale sectional maximizes seating in the living room, left. Roll up the map, and—surprise!—there’s the TV. A wall of built-in shelves extends storage for books Jennifer loves to share. Jennifer’s office, below, snugs into the living room. Concrete floors make life with pets—and family members with asthma—easier. In the kitchen, opposite, shallow shelves and a barn-style door (made from cypress left over from the living room ceiling) create a space-efficient pantry.

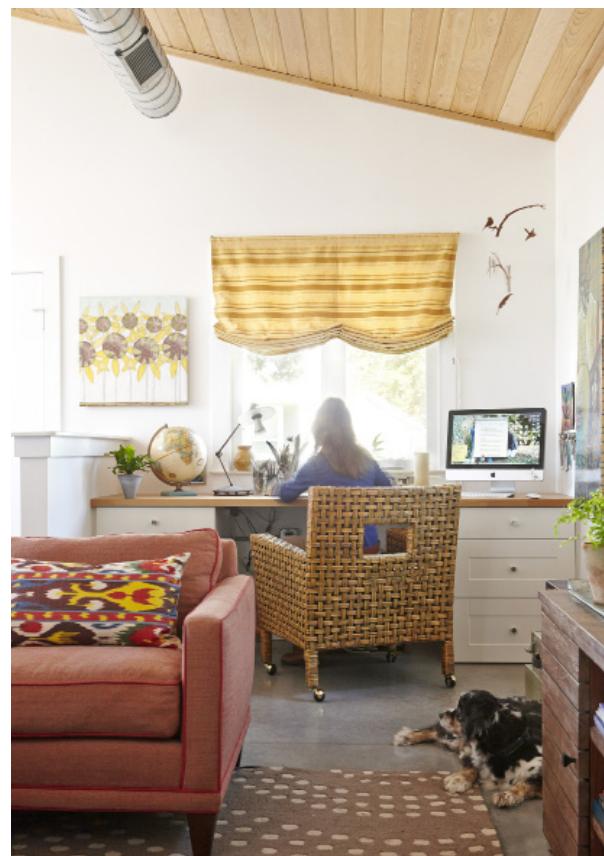


W

aste is a four-letter word for Jennifer Mathis. She cringes at individual-size yogurt cups, preferring one large container that her two teen girls can spoon out. Peek in her pantry, and you’ll see shelves lined with reusable glass jars stocked with bulk items from a small local grocer. “I think our family really believes it’s important to be aware of what we use,” Jennifer says. “If you don’t need something, let it go.”

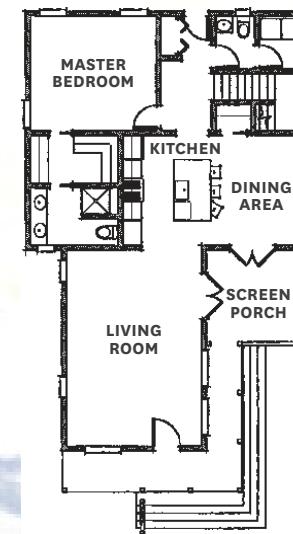
For Jennifer and her husband, Mike Cline, letting go also applies to square footage. The couple built their dream house—a downsized three-bedroom in a sustainable development near Charleston, South Carolina—and have been savoring its handle-everything stealth ever since. “Every space is functional and gets used,” Jennifer says. The open layout provides small escapes, such as a built-in desk on one side of the living room and the screen porch where homework is often done. “We like being around each other, so the flow keeps everyone close even if they’re doing their own thing,” Jennifer says. High ceilings make rooms seem larger, while exposed ductwork that gives the home a modern edge kept building costs down. “You can put a lot of personality into simple spaces,” says Jennifer, who has always had a knack for design.

Having right-sized the house, the family now enjoys the trickle-down. There’s more time for riding bikes, for growing (and picking) greens from the garden beds to make salads for dinner, and for Mike to play his guitar on the patio. “We’re happy with less,” Jennifer says.

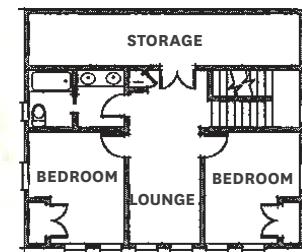




MAIN LEVEL



UPPER LEVEL



Wide doorways give the main level an open feel even though rooms are contained. Jennifer calls the kitchen island, *opposite*, “an everything space.” The quartz countertop and recycled tile backsplash liven up the home’s palette. “Color energizes me,” Jennifer says. With entrances from the living room and kitchen, the curtain-framed screen porch, *this photo*, is always part of the action.





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“I WANTED TO MAKE EVERY INCH OF SPACE LIVABLE. MY GOAL WAS TO LIVE OPTIMALLY, AND WE ACHIEVED THAT. IT’S A GOOD, HAPPY HOME.”

Jennifer Mathis



The master bedroom, *opposite*, is on the main level for easy access when the couple is older. The stenciled wall is Jennifer's low-budget, high-style alternative to wallpaper. Upstairs, the girls' 10x12-foot bedrooms maximize space with lofted beds (doable thanks to high ceilings) and built-in desks. Maya can chill on the sofa in her sitting area, *above left*. A chalkboard wall is an erasable canvas for artistic Elsa, *left*. Jennifer and Mike enjoy quiet moments on the gravel patio, *above*. "Gravel definitely makes it low-key," Jennifer says. "It's permeable, cost-effective, and casual." ■