

# Connecticut

## COTTAGES & GARDENS

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LAKESIDE RETREAT  
NEWEST OUTDOOR FURNITURE  
LUXURY TRAVEL IN IRELAND

A woman in a black and white striped dress and a child in a dark shirt and colorful shorts are walking away from the camera on a wooden dock. The child is carrying a blue and green patterned towel. To their right, a white boat is docked. The background shows a calm lake and distant hills under a clear sky.

SAVORING  
SUMMER

**H**aving lived in Asia for 16 years, Shauna Varvel knew that it would be a challenge to make her traditional New England Greenwich house feel like home for her husband, Eric, and their five children. Her eye for design, developed in Singapore, Jakarta and Tokyo, was accustomed to teak, lacquers and Asian antiques. She had even owned a store in Utah that sold imported Asian furnishings. The 10,000-square-foot shingle-style house crafted by builder John Gioio seemed like a foreign backdrop for the collection she'd amassed.

"We came with a ton of furniture," says Varvel. "We got it unloaded and then found ourselves in this darling East Coast house, trying to make it work somehow. It was so difficult!"

Thanks to an auction at the children's school, Varvel won a consultation with Susan Bednar Long and Christina Sullivan of the New York interior design firm Tocar. "We went through the house together, and they had so many great ideas," says Varvel. According to Long, "She has a wonderful aesthetic, and she wanted modern traditional, which is our style." They struck a accord—a true family affair, design meetings were sometimes rounded out by the kids—and got to work immediately.

Although the family uses every room in the house and kids are allowed everywhere, the layout—the living, dining areas and the family room are in the front—lends some formality. The younger kids can retreat to a playroom above the garage, nestled under a cupola and the gable roof, and the basement is outfitted as a teen hangout area.

One of Varvel's most important requirements was to have a living area where the large family could spend time together, and not just occasionally. "Monday night is family night," she says. "The kids play the piano, we read and it's important that we have an inviting place to be together." Long and Sullivan based this room off an antique Oushak rug and selected a palette that worked with its unusual pastel colorway. Plush sofas were reupholstered in taupe cotton velvet—two flank a silver leaf finish, hand-forged coffee table with a glass inset top—and several chairs provide plentiful



**Study Sessions** | Gold leaf lamps catch the light streaming through the large windows of the study (opposite), accentuating the room's rich colors and textures. Doubling as a coffee table, a square Donghia striped-fabric ottoman by Robert Lighton is an easy focal point among Mariette Himes Gomez's luxurious chairs. **Easy Access** | The clean and sculptural lines of the entry area (above) follows suit with minimal and unfettered design. A brown and beige wool area rug subtly sets the space for an exquisite white Ming vase to realize its full captivating potential. See Resources.



**Hearth and Soul** | A hand-forged glass Saturne cocktail table compliments Shauna Varvel's living room (left) while allowing the pastel palette of a 1900s Cushak rug—the room's design inspiration—to shine through. Varvel worked with the design firm Tocot. **Thought Provoking** | In a quiet corner of the study (above), an antique Louis XV style carved mahogany armchair sits by a Brazilian walnut Jasper writing table in dark ready for any pensive moments. See Resources.

## ASIAN FUSION

A DESIGN DUO UNIFIES EAST  
AND WEST FOR A CLIENT'S  
GREENWICH HOME

BY LIZ ARNOLD  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY DURSTON  
SAYLOR & EMILY MCDERMOTT





seating before the fireplace. The walls are painted with semi-gloss bisque, a finish Sullivan says is "more sophisticated and chic, and a departure from the straw raffia walkovering in the foyer."

Asian elements are worked into the decor throughout the house. "We incorporated a lot of her existing pieces and artwork," says Long, "but they don't overrun the house." In the breakfast room off the kitchen, the designers took a warm red Beijing cabinet—it sat in the living room in the Singapore house—and filled it with dishes, making it a practical counterpoint to the traditional table Varvel found at a shop on Greenwich Avenue. They unified the room with soft tones of blue and red. "I wouldn't have been able to meld those two styles," says Varvel.

The adjacent family room, with a sophisticated but friendly nautical theme, is a nod to the Northeast. In the dining room, Sullivan and Long took cues from the existing wallpaper and added drapery, a mirror and finishing details like a bowl of ostrich eggs as the table's centerpiece and china for the built-in windowed cabinetry. A Chinese oil painting hangs above the table. "We're



**Something Old** | A 19th-century French Louis XVI chair sits in the dining room (TOP LEFT).

**Something New** | In the same space (LEFT), Long and Sullivan utilized pieces from Varvel's extensive collection of Asian furnishings while adding a plethora of personal touches from new drapery to the table's centerpiece bowl of ostrich eggs. See Resources.



**Sea Worthy** | Asian and other elements garnered from world travel combine in the family room (ABOVE) for a unique take on the nautical theme. A starfish lies on top of a New Urban Chinese table, and mercury glass lamps from Baker Knapp & Tubbs shed light on seafaring imagery that adorn the walls. **East Meets West** | Soft blues and reds prevail in the intimate breakfast room (RIGHT). A functional red Beijing cabinet coexists beside a more traditional table found at a shop on Greenwich Avenue. Tying it all together is a Lex stripe Bolon area rug in burdock and the Archetype Pendant light fixture by Donghia. See Resources.





“Our clients always tell us that they’re excited to come home to our spaces,” says interior designer Christina Sullivan of Tocar

**Light and Fitting** | More than simply a place to lay your head, the master bedroom (above), revitalized with new rugs and lighter walls, invokes effortless serenity. The room’s furniture selection was also pared down to align with the more modern traditional design aesthetic. Making the cut is a Ralph Lauren glass cylinder lamp perched atop a custom #767 Rogel chest from Robert Lighton. **Bubbled Over** | Long and Sullivan wanted to create a functional master bedroom with a “spa-like” feel (above). So a cozy corner features a built-in desk and sumptuous drapery draws close to section off an intimate window seat area (above). See *Resources*.





**Private Playground** | No room in the home is off limits to Varvel's five children but the playroom (above), nestled under a cupola and the gable roof, decisively caters to the lively and imaginative young. **Double Take** | From the outside, the 10,000-square-foot, traditional New England shingle-styled house (left) belies the rich and exotic interior, which evolved from Varvel's vast Asian collection of antiques and furnishings from her travels. See Resources.



great with accessorizing," says Sullivan. "It helps make an interior stand out. A home can look bland unless you're doing something minimal, but this house is traditional and calls for those touches." After all, in Spanish *tocar* means to touch or to influence.

In the master, the designers edited out furniture and brightened the room with lighter walls and new rugs, side tables and lamps. "We like our bedrooms to be spa-like," says Sullivan. Still, functionality was important to the couple, so a built-in desk is a cozy spot for managing tasks while a window seat, tucked behind drapery to delineate the space, provides a seating area. Bookcase interiors are painted for interest, and old paperbacks are cleaned up with white-paper covers, sharing space with various mementos: framed postcards the from in India, Cambodian food baskets and lacquered boxes from Thailand. Worldly influences also warm the library, where Indonesian teak tables and carved wood wedding figures mix with enlarged versions of the family's artful vacation photos.

"One thing our clients always tell us is that they're excited to come home to our spaces," says Sullivan. "We never want to design a room that's too delicate. What's the point?"