

# PACIFIC NORTHWEST

PLANT LIFE: GARDEN SHEDS • TASTE: CHEF MAGIC  
• ON FITNESS: CLIMBING THE WALLS

FALL  
HOME  
DESIGN  
2004



simply beautiful

BY DEAN STAHL

PHOTOGRAPHED BY BENJAMIN BENSCHNEIDER

# TAKE TO SPARE

## A Blue Ridge rambler takes the easy route to refined living

BRAD AND DOMINIQUE Harrington's 1959-era rambler has been updated from top to bottom, yet if the builder walked in now, 45 years later, he could easily find his way around.

That's because the good stuff — original hardwood floors, stone entryways and the sensible floor plan that made this style of house so desirable — remains.

The couple had been looking for a larger, family-style home for more than a year and a half when, in May 2002, they saw the house in Blue Ridge, a neighborhood strewn with ramblers in various guises and incarnations. This home's 2,800 square feet of living space and extensive view of Puget Sound were pluses.

The plastic roof and yellow vinyl siding were not. Nor were the main floor's low ceilings. The small windows didn't open for cross-ventilation and weren't oriented to the view.

Factor in its age and need for more closet space, and this was clearly a fixer, though a family-friendly one. The main floor had a kitchen and powder room to the left, living and dining room straight ahead and two bedrooms plus master bath down the hall to the right.

The daylight basement contained two ➤



THIS RECAST BLUE RIDGE RAMBLER has a quiet dignity, marked by frosted glass for privacy, long concrete "bridges" to the front door and cedar siding stained to mimic beach-house weathering. (The tall structure, right, is a neighbor's roof.)





**HARRINGTON** gives his daughter a piggyback view of the beach from the rebuilt deck. Milgard windows with aluminum casings underscore the open, ines of the house and make the most of headroom provided by the shed roof. The light-oak floors are original.

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more bedrooms, a bathroom and a large recreation room, ideal for watching TV or romping. It would do nicely for their two small children, one 2, the other 5.

One option was for the family to squeeze into the daylight basement while cosmetic changes were made on the main floor. Updating the exterior and changing the windows would come later.

They were living in a University District Dutch Colonial with a generally cramped atmosphere not suited to their tastes. They wanted an uncluttered, bright space.

They consulted their friend, Mike Mora, who had introduced them to the neighborhood. Mora, who lives nearby, is a principal at Heliotrope, a forward-thinking architecture firm in Ballard. He strongly recommended that his friends make all their design changes before they moved in.

"Mike stopped us from making a big mistake," says Brad, co-president of Cole & Weber, a public-relations and marketing firm. Dominique, a busy mother and professional artist, agreed.

So the roof, the walls, everything on the main level came down except one exterior wall bracing the fireplace chimney. When the house was completed nine months later, neighbors saw a tasteful facade and a shed-style roof in place of the original hip roof.

Impractical clear windows on the street side were removed. Now, a 7-foot-wide, pivoting door lets plenty of light into the dressing room through frosted glass, in effect creating a window wall. Two windows near the pivoting front door also are glazed for privacy. The exterior is sheathed in vertical cedar boards treated with a gray bleaching oil, a subtle color that contrasts with the Douglas-fir doors' honey-colored glow.

The angled roofline creates a gallery-like feel in the combination dining/living room, adding a modest 6 inches in roof height.

The shed roof is "a good solution in this case," says Mora, who was architect for the project. "It doesn't cause view problems for neighbors, and it allows the use of big windows to transform the living space."

On the main floor, the revamped living/dining room has 6-foot-10-inch sliders that open to a new deck, and a sweep of sleek, 14-foot-tall, low-E aluminum windows that capture the view and are in sync with the rest of the interior.

Open, spare living areas are "just easy," Brad says. "The kids could play tag in here — and do." ➤

## TASTE TO SPARE



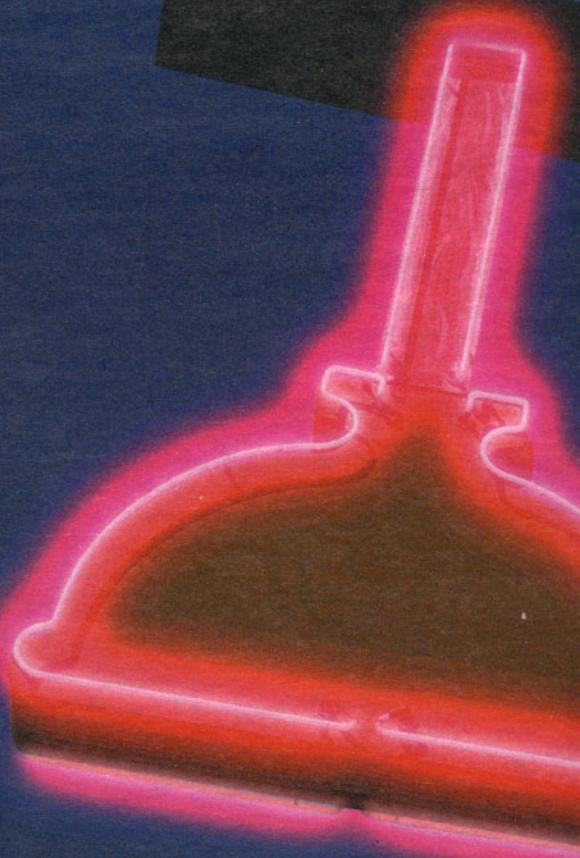
**THE ENTRYWAY** has the original slate floor, though an adjacent wall that hid the dining area vanished in the remodel. The metal banister and railings were custom made by a local craftsman to beautify the undisguised stairwell. The sculpture stand is a structural element incorporated into the design.

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**THE CLUTTER-FREE LIVING ROOM** works well for this modern rambler family. The Harringtons value a home environment filled with movement and ideas, rather than things. Black basalt frames the fireplace.

## TASTE TO SPARE

"The structure is pretty basic," Mora explains. "This project was mainly moving doorways, shifting walls to bring them forward or push them back, finding ways to bring in more light."

Carpenters peeled away a doorway that had been between the dining room and entry, and opened a vertical slit in part of the new wall separating the dining room and kitchen. Hallways shrank and room sizes grew, including the master bedroom, which now has a fireplace and access to a deck.

Mora designed a space-efficient kitchen that has light Carrera marble countertops and stainless-steel work-island surfaces. The Harringtons say they regard stains and scratches as family history. White cabinets contrast with those of rift-cut dark walnut. Brad and Dominique had the last word on materials and appliances.

The master bathroom was reconfigured to accommodate a glass shower stall, soaking tub and wall mirror inset with lights.

Metal craftsman Steve Brown made railings and other fittings. His work, combined with top-quality plumbing fixtures, door hardware and kitchen appliances — and Dominique's powerful paintings — give this unadorned house a refined personality. Brad, who has been influenced by stays in four-star European hotels, appreciates how the design and workmanship of a simple object, such as a door handle, can add substance to a room.

Likewise, "a bold feature can have a great impact" when spaces are otherwise understated, he says. For example, the pivot-mounted exterior doors, custom-made by NorthStar in Ferndale, Whatcom County, ➤

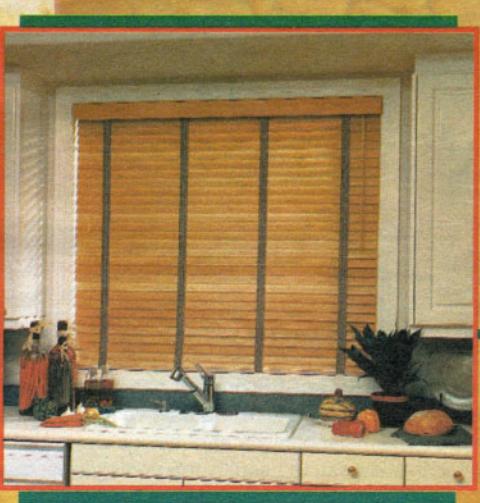
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## TASTE TO SPARE

### THE MASTER BATHROOM

mirror's small, inset lights can be dialed to dim when it's time for a relaxing soak. Those distinctive Axor bath fixtures are from the Philippe Starck line. Cabinets are walnut.



**MARBLE COUNTERTOPS** and a stainless-steel island surface mean scratches and stains, but the Harringtons think of marks as history. Dark-walnut cupboards (right) and light-oak flooring add contrast. The small oven inset under the cook-top is sold as a hanging unit; Brad devised a more subtle way to use it.

are highlights in a subdued façade.

And inside, the original flagstones, cleaned and waxed, look great, as do the refinished light-oak floors.

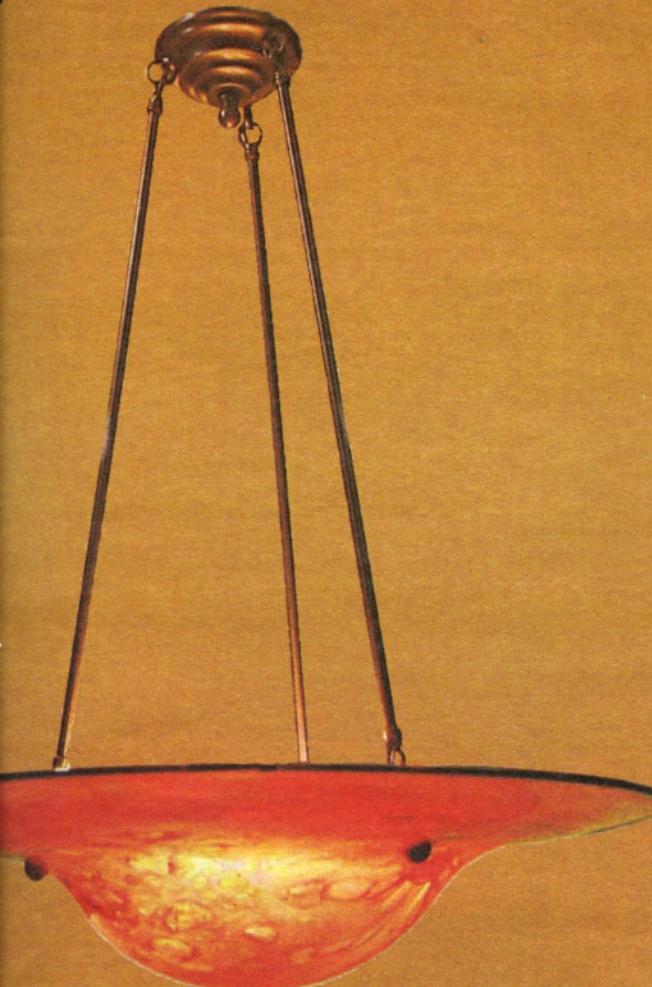
Contemplating a similar remodel?

Brad has this advice: "Find an architect who likes the things you like, someone who shares your aesthetic. Look to things they've done, but more important, find out what they aspire to, because they don't always get to

actualize their ideas."

Mora cautions that your remodeling budget should remain flexible. An architect can't guarantee the floors can be saved, for example. "If it rains when the roof is off, the floors are goners."

*Dean Stahl is a Seattle free-lance writer. Benjamin Benschneider is a Pacific Northwest magazine staff photographer.*



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