



Spring 2017 HomeLifeStyle

PHOTO BY DONNA MOULTON/FAIRFAX GARDEN CLUB

Reston homes and gardens will be part of Virginia's Historic Garden week on Tuesday, April 25. Featured here, a home on Lake Newport Road. See <http://www.vagardenweek.org>

Chantilly
CONNECTION
Fair Oaks ❖ Fair Lakes



BEFORE: Above, owners Jack and Marie Torre wanted square footage for a larger kitchen and dining room, but “set-back” rules prohibited building in the rear, and the front-facing roof overhang limited options for re-designing the facade.

AFTER: Best Whole House Makeover in 10 states, left: Sun Design Remodeling’s conversion of a circa 1960s split-level into a neoclassical style residence has been named a regional “Contractor of the Year” (COTY) winner by the National Association of the Remodeling Industry.

From Split-Level to Neoclassical

Conversion wins regional “Contractor of the Year” award.

BY JOHN BYRD

Converting a circa 1960’s split-level into a spacious neoclassical-style residence has won Sun Design Remodeling a regional “Contractor of the Year” award from the National Association of the Remodeling Industry. The Fairfax residential makeover was named the best whole house remodeling in the “\$250,000 to \$500,000” range in a 10-state area that extends from Maryland and Florida to as far west as Tennessee. Owners Jack and Marie Torre have been so pleased with the outcome that they’ve held an several open houses just to show the changes to curious neighbors. Another open house will be held in the annual Parade of Home, April 22-23.

To accommodate the owner’s requirements, Sun Design added a 300-square-foot addition, introduced a front veranda with a foyer, and elaborated the exterior in a wholly new architectural language.

The Torres had purchased the 3,000-square-foot brick and siding structure in 1984, and found a perfect spot for raising children. As the children moved on, however, the couple recognized that the changes they wanted to make to the house were apparently infeasible.

“We couldn’t add on to the rear because of set-back restrictions,” Jack Torre said. “The bigger problem, though, was a six-foot roof overhang in front, and the seven steps

required to walk from the ground level foyer to the primary living area.”

The couple were actively looking at relocating when a chance visit to a Sun Design remodeled split-level nearby convinced Marie Torre to make an appointment with Bob Gallagher, the company’s president.

In the first meeting, a “wish list” emerged that included a larger kitchen, a formal dining room with a tray ceiling, a family room with a view of the tree-lined back yard, and a spacious first-level powder room.

With these goals in mind, the design team focused on how best to configure the essential components within a well-inte-

grated whole.

Since new space couldn’t be added on the rear, the east side of the house was designated for the new dining room/sitting room wing.

Still more problematic: under the existing plan, one entered the house from a narrow front foyer — ascending to a main level hall that segued in three directions.

What was missing, Gallagher observed, was a “procession” in which rooms unfold in an inviting orderly sequence.

“The structural challenge was finding an optimal way to raise the front door to the main level of the house,” Gallagher said.



The split-level’s former bow window was converted to a set of French doors which overlook the new veranda. Though the execution makes the addition hard to detect, the dining room beyond the fireplace is actually in the home’s new wing.

“This would require extending the front foyer eight feet to get past the existing roof overhang. We also needed to redesign the front elevation to better rationalize the difference between the grade at ground-level and the home’s main living area — a distance of about seven feet.”

What evolved was not merely a larger foyer, but an improved and more appropriate architectural context that allows for a front verandah that surrounds and presents the front entrance to the home.

The resulting interior meanwhile revolves around two comparatively modest additions: a 44-square-foot foyer aligned with the front door; 300-square-foot west wing that houses a formal dining room and an adjacent rear-of-the house sitting area.

The new addition includes a two-sided fireplace visible in the living room. The enlarged kitchen now accommodates a custom-designed banquette, and storage pantries.

The gourmet kitchen, according to Marie Torre, provides spaces for all cooking utensils, even items formerly stored in the basement.

Replacing the roof over and raising the ceiling from eight feet to nine feet has made the living room feel substantially larger.

Better yet, the remade rear elevation — which includes a “bump-out” with divided light windows and French doors — invites abundant natural light.

“This is a completely different house,” said Marie Torre, “One much more satisfying to occupy.”

Sun Design Remodeling frequently sponsors design and remodeling seminars as well as tours of recently remodeled homes. Headquartered in Burke, Sun Design also maintains an office in McLean. Visit www.SunDesignInc.com.

Butterfly Weed Wins Perennial of the Year

BY CAROLE FUNGER
THE CONNECTION



The butterfly weed

The designation Perennial Plant of the Year is awarded each year by the Perennial Plant Association to the perennial that outshines its competitors not only in appearance, but also in its noteworthy characteristics. To be considered, a plant must be able to grow in a wide range of climates, require little maintenance and have multiple seasons of interest. And, it should be relatively pest and disease free.

That's a tall order for many plants, but late last year, orange-flowering butterfly weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) more than rose to the occasion. In November it was voted 2017 Perennial Plant of the Year, becoming the 27th in a distinguished line of perennials to receive such an honor.

What makes butterfly weed so special?

Native to much of the continental United States as well as Ontario and Quebec, butterfly weed grows wild in a variety of climatic conditions including dry forests, along roadsides and in prairies and open fields. A member of the milkweed family, it tops out at about 1 to 2 feet. Its natural preference for average to dry soil makes it an excellent drought-resistant plant.

Butterfly weed's large clusters of flowers are a brilliant orange-yellow, a beacon among other subtler-toned plants. Happily blooming from June through August, they produce copious amounts of

SEE PERENNIAL, PAGE 4

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Kitchen Design Trends to Expect in 2017

Local designer share popular design ideas.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

Those looking for kitchen design ideas have a new source of inspiration: the National Kitchen & Bath Association's (NKBA) list of trends for 2017. Local designers reveal which trends are most popular in the Washington, D.C. region.

NKBA predicts that contemporary-styled kitchens will overtake traditional to become the second most popular design after transitional. Locally, Michael Winn, president of Winn Design + Build expects to see "a strong move towards transitional and contemporary styles, with no fussy designs."

Homeowners are looking for "kitchen spaces that look comfortable, calming and clutter-free," said Shannon Kadwell of Anthony Wilder Design/Build, Inc.

Clean lines, built-in shelving and simple door styles dominate kitchen designs. Megan Padilla, senior designer for Aidan Design reports an interest in custom storage ideas. "We're inspired by our work with clients who often have collections of table décor — everything from antique trays to vintage oyster plates," she said. "By creating custom storage these cherished items



PHOTO COURTESY OF WINN DESIGN + BUILD

White and gray painted cabinets like those in this kitchen by Winn Design + Build will dominate kitchen color schemes in 2017.

can be readily accessible."

When it comes to painted cabinetry, gray is the new white and the popularity of both colors shows no signs of slowing down, according to the NKBA survey. However, blue painted and high gloss kitchen cabinets are emerging, especially in the Washington area, says Winn. "Blues and grays are very popular [and] "White continues to be popular."

For overall color schemes, two-toned kitchens are gaining popularity while blue and black are emerging as sought after colors. "We're seeing a rise in product offerings available in matte black — from appliances to plumbing fixtures to cabinet hardware," said Padilla. "We love it paired with white in a classic black and white kitchen, but also as an accent piece. Matte black also pairs beautifully with brass,

which has been trending for the past couple of years."

Quartz is the most sought-after kitchen countertop material, followed by granite. "Most of our clients aren't really interested in a kitchen that [is] too trendy since they plan to have it in place for 15-20 years," said Padilla. "We've seen an uptick in interest in incorporating color by way of alternate neutrals. Navy blue is probably the top choice, but taupes and lighter blues are also on the list."

An interest among homeowners in incorporating technology in kitchen design is increasing as well. About one third of the NKBA professionals surveyed reported recent projects that included wiring and pathways for future tech integration. "I would also expect the technology side to be a focus in D.C.," said Samantha Klickna, project developer with Case Design/Remodeling, Inc. "The ease and comfort of controlling your home while at the office or on travel is very appealing and convenient for the city dweller."

Induction cooktops and convection ovens are trending higher, and microwave drawers are surpassing freestanding or built-in microwaves in popularity. "People have been purchasing appliances like steam ovens and induction ovens now more than ever before," said Kadwell. "People have less time, but still want to cook. They want to be able to cook quickly, so they're looking for appliances that can accomplish that."

Educating Customers Is Key to Success

BY ANDREA WORKER
THE CONNECTION

It's been 18 years since Ken Nies co-founded Two Poor Teachers, LLC, but the kitchen and bath remodeling company isn't resting on its laurels. "We always want to earn an 'A+' from our customers," said Nies. "That hasn't changed since Day One."

Nies started the company in 1999 with then-partner Tom Pennell. Both were Fairfax County physical education teachers at the time, and their collaboration was originally meant to be a sideline to their "day jobs,

but before too long, Nies retired from teaching in order to focus fully on the rapidly growing company in Chantilly.

He may have left teaching behind, but his background and devotion to education still comes through when Nies speaks about the importance of educating homeowners on the ins and out of remodeling work, and the "dangers of dealing with unlicensed contractors." He has produced numerous "whiteboards" and videos available on YouTube that explain the local and state laws governing the business and the importance of compliance for the homeowner. Two Poor Teachers is fully licensed, employs

master plumbers, electricians and HVAC experts, is LEED certified and the highest liability insurance license offered in the state.

According to Nies, Two Poor Teachers handles between 200-300 bathroom projects and 25 kitchen remodels per year in their Northern Virginia service area, with much of their business coming from repeat customers and referrals from satisfied clients, but Nies insists that the key to their continued success really isn't a secret.

"Education. Making sure homeowners have all the facts they need to make good decisions," is the foundation for success in Nies' opinion. "Guaranteed start and completion times are really attractive to potential clients," he added. Anyone who has ever undertaken one of these home remodeling projects, only to see the finish deadline move further and further away from the original date promised during the bid proposal, will no doubt agree.

Another attraction for the homeowner when choosing a contractor is the fact that Two Poor Teachers only requires 10 percent down to start the work, and generally "don't ask for another penny until the job is completed." Many contractors require the down payment, and then ask for ongoing "draw" funds periodically throughout the length of the project.

New manager joining Two Poor Teachers after 18 years in business.

Nies also says that the company gives their customers all the discounts they receive at the speciality stores where they have established strong vendor relationships.

It was because of just those kinds of relationships that Nies was able to recruit Jeremiah Klein to take over the reins as Two Poor Teachers' next general manager, when he felt it was time to become "just a little less hands-on." Klein had been associated with the contractor for some five years, when he worked as an agent for a wholesale plumbing supplier and kitchen and bath showroom, after years working in the field.

"I feel great about handing the reputation of our company to Jeremiah," said Nies.

Klein feels just as good about his decision to join Nies and company. Saying he had a choice of outfits when considering his next career move, Klein calls the Two Poor Teachers gang "a different bracket of contractor. It's great working with all of our own employees, professionals who have been with the company no less than 10 years, and some even longer."

Since the arrival of Klein, Two Poor Teachers has expanded the options it can offer customers, including more flexibility on where to procure the project materials. See www.twopoorteachers.com or call Klein at 703-999-2928.

Perennial of the Year

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nectar that attracts hordes of butterflies, birds and a wide assortment of insects. The distinctive flowers are composed of five petals that stand up (called hoods) and five petals that hang down. The hoods enclose a single orange horn that when cross-pollinated, forms a follicle. Later in the season, the follicle opens up along one side to disperse silky-tailed seeds.

Not to be outdone, butterfly weed's foliage has its own attractions. Long and pointed, the 4" leaves provide food for the

larvae of native Monarch butterflies, while also lending a deep green backdrop to the brilliant flowers.

Plant butterfly weed in full sun in well-drained, moderately dry soil. For an eye-catching composition, pair it with other strong-hued perennials like *Liatris spicata*, *Echinacea* 'Double Scoop Raspberry' and *Hemerocallis* 'Stella D'Oro.' Or, let its orange flowers shine amidst subtler toned flowers like lemon-yellow *Hemerocallis* 'Happy Returns', white Phlox 'David' and apricot Cosmos.