



Spring 2017
HomeLifeStyle

Local homes and gardens will be part of Virginia's Historic Garden week on Tuesday, April 25. Featured here, a home on Lake Newport. See www.vagardenweek.org

PHOTO BY DONNA MOULTON/FAIRFAX GARDEN CLUB

Fairfax
CONNECTION

Alexandria Prepares for Historic Garden Week

Five Old Town Alexandria homes and gardens will open to the public on April 22 as part of the 84th Historic Garden Week. The homes will feature flower arrangements created by the members of the Garden Club of Alexandria and The Hunting Creek Garden Club, which are sponsoring the tour, open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Reston homes and gardens are open April 25 (See COVER and page 6).

See www.vagardenweek.org for more.

Houses with History

Four of the tour houses were built over 150 years ago, in 1794, 1802, 1820 and 1859

George Washington dined in one of the tour houses in 1797

A young Robert E. Lee was tutored in mathematics in one tour house

Founding Father George Mason's grandson owned another of the houses

Thomas, the ninth Lord Fairfax, lived in one of the tour houses.

Gardens with Distinctive Design and Spring Flowers

A garden designed by landscape designer, Jane MacLeish

A spacious walled garden built on two

levels

A garden elevated from the street and screened from view

The gardens of Mount Vernon, the American Horticultural Society, Green Spring Gardens, Gunston Hall, Carlyle House, and Lee-Fendall House are all included with the tour ticket.

Historic Architectural Styles

What is considered to be the finest Federal house in Alexandria will be open to the public for the tour

The Georgian architecture with an Italianate facade and unusual floating main staircase in one tour house

Original woodwork by the prominent Alexandria craftsman who built the house in 1859.

Alexandria Tour Details

Tickets may be purchased in advance for \$45 at www.vagardenweek.org and at the Alexandria Visitors Center (221 King Street). On the date of the tour, they may be purchased for \$55 at any house on the tour or at the Alexandria Visitor's Center. Group tours of 20 people or more, \$40 per person. Single site tickets are \$25 per person. The Alexandria tour will be held on its scheduled day, rain or shine.



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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.

“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 veranda 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.”



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.

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.

Sow Now, Reap this Spring

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL
THE CONNECTION

One of the most anticipated sights of spring is a garden in bloom. While the project of tackling a yard or garden after a dormant winter can seem daunting, horticulturalist Misty Kuceris of Burke Nursery & Garden Centre says an organized plan will make the task manageable.

“First walk around your yard and look at what’s happened over the winter months,” she said. “Look at your trees and shrubs. Do they need pruning before things really start growing?”

Flower and garden beds should be surveyed as well, says Kuceris. “If you didn’t clean out the flower beds and vegetable beds at the end of fall, you need to do that,” she said. “Take a look at whether you need to add more compost to make the soil better.”

Even after flowerbeds are clean, David Watkins, general manager of Merrifield Garden Center says that homeowners should wait before planting warm season flowers like impatiens and begonias. “You want to hold off until the last frost is gone, he said. “Some nurseries however have tulips and daffodils that are already potted. Those can be planted now. There is also a



PHOTO BY MISTY KUCERIS

March is a great time to plant trees, like these Dogwoods.

Lenten Rose which blooms from February until June and you can add color to your yard that way.”

Kuceris also suggests reestablishing the weathered edging of a garden bed and add-

ing new mulch when necessary. “The other thing that is good to do every two years is a soil test,” she said. “Find out the pH is of your lawn and garden.” Soil pH is a measure of the acidity and alkalinity in soils.

Getting a garden and yard ready for warm weather.

One source that Kuceris recommends is the Virginia Tech Soil Testing Laboratory. Researchers analyze soil samples submitted by the public and perform tests to evaluate the soil’s nutrient potential. The tests also help researchers determine the most beneficial application rates of fertilizer and lime for optimum plant growth.

After the garden is tidy and the soil is prepared, vegetables can be planted. “If you have a vegetable garden, March is the best time to plant potatoes, scallions, onions, asparagus, lettuce, kale, cauliflower, broccoli, and even horseradish because those plants love spring,” said Kuceris. “We call them cool season plants.”

If weeds are an issue, you can apply a weed and crabgrass preventer and fertilizer,” says Kuceris. “For a natural alternative, you can use corn gluten meal as a natural weed suppressant and fertilizer for grass lawns.”

“With anything you plant now, the roots are going to start growing and you’ll have a much better established plant by summer,” added Watkins.

Most trees or shrubs can also be planted now, says Watkins. “Now is a great time to mulch and fertilize your trees, shrubs and lawn,” he said. “That alone makes it look a lot better, even without planting.”

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

BY CAROLE FUNGER
THE CONNECTION

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 in



The butterfly weed

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HomeLifeStyle Perennial of the Year

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

terest. 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

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*.

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HomeLifeStyle Tour Area Gardens

Garden Club of Virginia hosts
84th Annual Historic Garden Week.

During the last eight days of April every year nearly 26,000 visitors tour homes and gardens across Virginia.

This year, Historic Garden Week features 30 tours organized and hosted by 47 Garden Club of Virginia member clubs. Nearly 250 private homes, gardens and historic sites will be open. For nearly a century the Garden Club of Virginia has been committed to preserving the beauty of Virginia for all to enjoy. Garden Club of Virginia members were early leaders in conservation and environmental concerns. Tour proceeds fund the restoration and preservation of more than 40 of Virginia's historic public gardens and landscapes, a research fellowship program and a centennial project with Virginia State Parks.

RESTON TOUR Tuesday, April 25

Reston was once a summer playground for fashionable Washingtonians during the 1800s. This Fairfax County locality became the first modern post-war planned residential community in America when it was developed in the 1960s, sparking renewed interest in planned communities. Brainchild of Robert E. Simon, Reston was imagined as an urban landscape in a rural setting — a place to live, work, and play, both vibrant and peaceful. Neighborhoods nestled around lakes and intertwined with lush gardens, green spaces, and walking paths are just minutes away from the effervescent hub of Reston Town Center's art galleries, shops, restaurants, and year-round outdoor entertainment. This walking and driving tour features a transitional house and garden, three modern homes with gardens on Lake Newport, and a garden-only site.

Hosted by Garden Club of Fairfax, the tour headquarters and facilities are at The Lake House, 11450 Baron Cameron Ave., Reston.

Tickets, maps and restrooms are available on tour day, April 25.

Tickets: \$40 per person available on tour day, and at homes open for tours.

Advance tickets are \$30. See www.vagardenweek.org. By mail before April 10, send a self-addressed stamped envelope and check made out to "The Garden Club of Fairfax" to Marty Whipple, 11508 Yates Ford Road, Fairfax Station, VA 22093. 703-978-4130. Fairfax@vagardenweek.org.

Google Garden Club of Fairfax for detailed information and a list of local retailers selling tickets.

Complimentary refreshments will be served 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Lake House. Reston Town Center, Lake Anne, and North Point Village Center are minutes away and offer a variety of eateries and lunch options for visitors.

The hospitality center and tour headquarters is located in the Lake House, a newly renovated building. There are two rooms for public use, the Lakeside Room that offers access to the deck overlooking Lake Newport (50 person capacity) and The Lake View Room (100 person capacity) that has



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>

a natural light-filled setting with a fireplace. For more information visit www.reston.org.

The Walker Nature Center, 11450 Glade Drive, Reston, will be open to visitors from noon to 3 p.m. on Tuesday. Resident naturalist will be on hand to answer questions. Tours are self-guided. See www.facebook.com/walkernaturecenter. It features: LEED Gold education building known as Nature House, 72 acres of woodlands, one mile of loop trails, picnic tables and pavilion, pond, trailside benches, interpretive signs, memorial sundial, demonstration naturoscaping gardens, the Glade Stream Valley, and Snakeden Branch stream's entrance to 44-acre Lake Audubon.

Reston Town Center opened in 1990 with the opening of the block between Library

Street and Presidents Street, including the center's hub which features the 20-foot Mercury Fountain designed by the sculptor Saint Clair Cemin. With the open air glass Pavilion added in 1993, this is a community destination for shopping, dining, special events, and ice skating in winter. It has expanded to become an outdoor venue offering more than 50 retailers, more than 35 restaurants, luxury residences, hotel, multi-screen cinema, as well as, host to several festivals throughout the year.

Lake Anne Village Center is home to independently owned retail, dining, and service establishments. Dine in restaurants featuring both ethnic and traditional American menus. Take a picture sitting beside the bronze statue of Robert E. Simon, take a

nature walk around the lake, select a hand-crafted chocolate, pick up a special treat or toy for your pet, or find the perfect gift for your favorite bibliophile. Free wi-fi is available throughout the plaza. North Point Village Center is situated in the heart of this year's tour, offering an appealing variety of dining establishments and specialty stores.

HOMES AND GARDENS ON RESTON TOUR April 25

Round Pebble Lane Garden only: This 20-year-old garden completely surrounds the home and provides the owners with the space for both sun-loving and shade-loving plants, shrubs and trees. An experienced master gardener at a local garden center, Kate Buschelman inherited her mother's love of gardening. Solely planted and maintained by the owners, this property expresses their love of color, foliage and their vision of serenity among relaxed wandering paths. The walkway to the front explodes with a myriad of color and texture from numerous spring annuals and bulbs, many in blues and whites, and sun-loving flowering plants. On the corner lies a bank of showy seven-foot-tall budding "Lime-light" hydrangeas. The tranquil back garden beckons a meandering walk through a sun-dappled, woodland setting in which foliage predominates. Kate and Gary Buschelman are the owners.

Stones Throw Drive: The stone and brick path to the house features an English cottage garden with colorful annuals and perennials planted to provide interest year round. This 1998 home incorporates traditional elements with an open floor plan and lofty ceilings that allow for an abundance of natural light. The first floor includes an array of furnishings, from 18th century English antiques to 20th century American Impressionist art. The landscaped backyard is a private retreat, highlighted by a waterfall and pond, multiple patios, a stone bar area, fireplace complete with pizza oven, and a hot tub surrounded by a trellis.

Lake Newport Road: This updated 1989 modern home welcomes visitors with a light-filled foyer. Neutral faux-painted walls, vaulted ceilings, skylights, and a wall of glass across the rear of the home offering a view of Lake Newport and the home's landscaped gardens create a contemporary and airy interior. The outdoor patio and garden include an array of colorful annuals and perennials, a gas fire pit, recirculating waterfall, and a dock shaded by a willow tree. Cindy and Richard Beyer are the owners.

The Deck House, Lake Newport Road: Built in 1988, this three-level, mid-century modern home is reminiscent of the Frank Lloyd Wright style. Construction is post-and-beam with high ceilings of solid cedar and fir beams. The wall of windows

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Tour Area Gardens

FROM PAGE 6

with expansive lake views and rich, natural wood floors, walls and ceilings, bring the outdoors in. Taking advantage of the dramatic south-facing waterfront setting, natural energy sources are used for cooling and heating with a thermal reservoir in the limestone floor of the conservatory providing heated air released into the heating system. The deep roof overhang and energy efficient windows promote cooling in summer. The solarium houses the owners' bonsai and orchid collections. The garden's two ponds, waterfall and fountain attract many varieties of birds. A brick patio framed by two large willows leads to three lakeside flower beds providing habitat for birds and butterflies. Lezley McIlveen and Donald Wright are the owners.

Windchimes, Lake Newport Road: Indoors and out, this multi-level contemporary home with views of Lake Newport from almost every room reflects the homeowners' love of waterfront living, art and the Southwest. Built in 1986 with an open floor plan and soaring ceilings, light streams in through large windows and skylights; the two large round windows are the signature feature of the 1980s Reston CP1 architectural style.

Mature trees shade the deck, providing a perfect setting for outdoor dining, entertaining and enjoying sightings of bald eagles, hawks, herons, native songbirds, ducks, geese and large turtles. Colorful blown-glass spikes are found throughout the garden, along with blown-glass balls in the courtyard pond. The woodland garden has Japanese maples, redbud, mature oaks, grasses, hostas and rhododendrons, with native water plants along the lake. Robin and Steven Greenstreet are the owners.

Leesburg and Oatlands Sunday & Monday, April 23-24

Oatlands is one of the last of the great houses built by the descendants of Robert ("King") Carter. Construction began in 1804.

Conveyed to the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1965, the Garden Club of Virginia completed its first restoration project there, of the north forcing wall, in 1992. Two years later, English boxwood that had fallen prey to "boxwood decline" were replaced on the affected terraces using proceeds from past Historic Garden Week tours.

Old Town Alexandria, Saturday April 22
See www.vagardenweek.org



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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



PHOTO BY STACY ZARIN-GOLDBERG

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

décor — everything from antique trays to vintage oyster plates," she said. "By creating custom storage these cherished items 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, ac-

ording 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 offer-



PHOTO BY JOHN COLE

Clean lines, built-ins and neutral colors, such as those in the kitchen of this Potomac, Md. home by Anthony Wilder Design/Build, Inc., are expected to be popular in 2017.

ings 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 free-standing 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."



PHOTO BY STACY ZARIN-GOLDBERG

"I would also expect the technology side to be a focus in D.C.," said Samantha Klickna, project developer with Case Design/Remodeling, Inc.



PHOTO BY ANGELA SECKINGER

Design trends for 2017 include kitchens with rustic and reclaimed woods, such as this one by Aidan Design.