

Porches MAKE THE PLACE

Simple changes turn a small country cottage into the perfect spot for informal entertaining.

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When designer Linda Constable of Ambiance Interiors in Asheville, North Carolina, married Blair Jones 20 years ago, she acquired more than just a new husband. She also found herself with a tiny Depression-era farm cottage that sits on a little more than 2 acres of beautiful woodlands just 30 minutes north of the city.

The two-bedroom, one-bath structure was a fairly typical rural dwelling with a front porch “so narrow it could barely hold on to a rocking chair,” says Linda, who has always loved old houses and their inherent charm—though bringing that charm to light may often

require plenty of imagination and elbow grease.

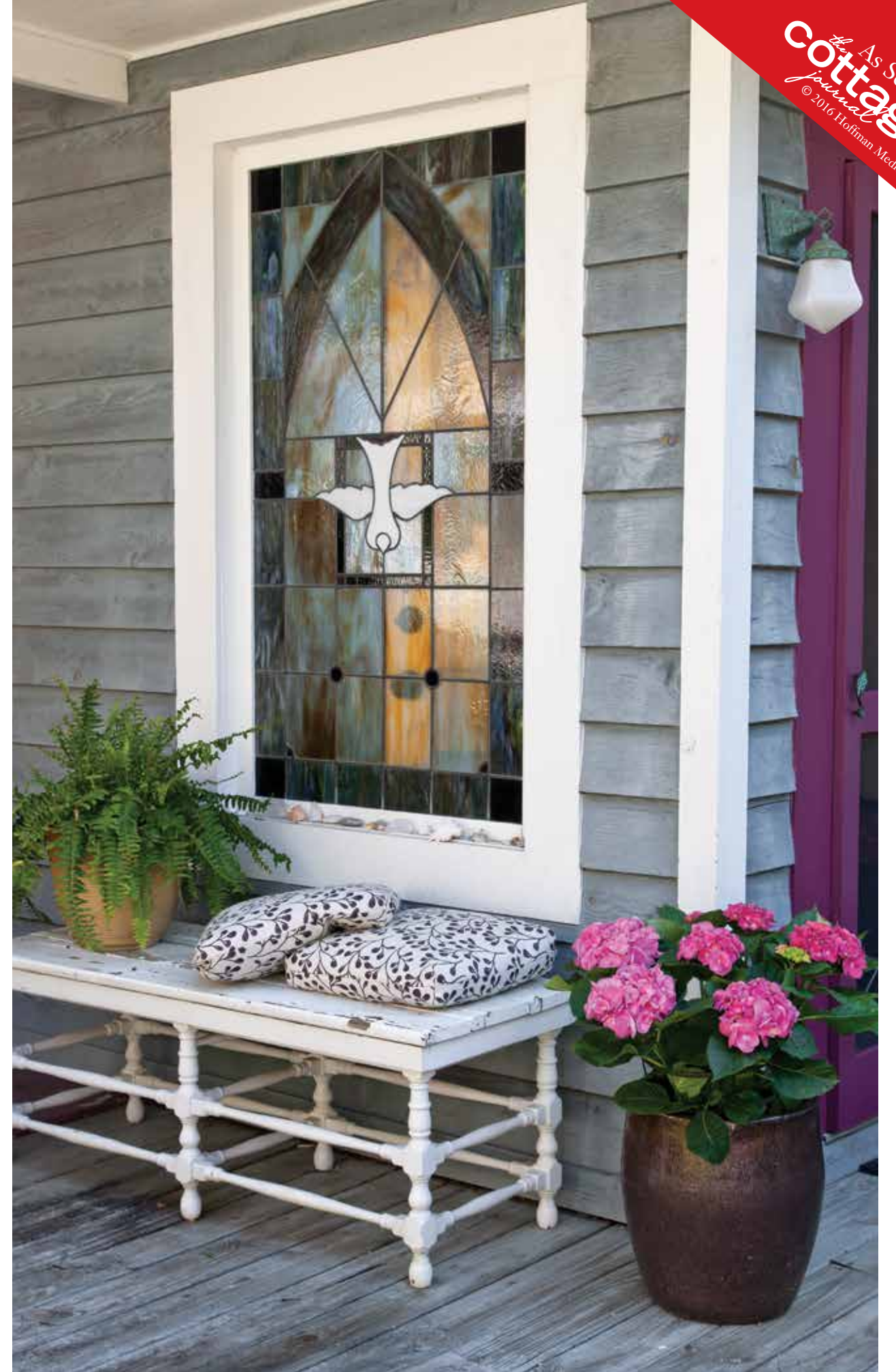
First on the agenda was to combine the two small bedrooms into one large master space. Then they expanded the porches to create a series of outdoor living rooms while preserving the existing roof angle. “We wanted to keep the bones and the true spirit of the house,” Linda explains. To that end, the couple took great pains to remove and reuse the beadboard on the ceilings and to retain much of the original wood flooring. But just because it was a restoration project doesn’t mean they didn’t add new and unexpected elements for plenty of personality.

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SIT A SPELL

Linda laughs that she and Blair have more living space outside than in, and it's true. The porches more than double the Carolina cottage's footprint, offering plenty of room for entertaining, as well as cozy spots to simply sit and enjoy spring breezes. (Opposite) The dove-motif stained glass window that originally illuminated a church now allows sunlight to stream into the mudroom by the kitchen. The chipped-paint bench tucked beneath it was a freight-damaged find that complements its rustic surrounds.



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Color takes center stage in this bright, cheery kitchen, where red-quartz counters and flower-print fabrics play off white beadboard and soft ivory-hued walls. Artwork hangs from picture rails here and throughout the house.



For starters, the wood siding is a weathered gray, but exterior doors and accents under the eaves are painted in a Benjamin Moore hue, cleverly named Bottle of Bordeaux. The kitchen sports a purple and radish color scheme with counters topped in brilliant red quartz that Linda calls her “ruby-slipper counters.” The insides of the cupboards are painted a deep shade of violet, while the ceiling is a grayed-out version of the same color. The pantry is accessible via a pocket door to conserve precious space, and a trio of stools sporting ruffled skirts encourages guests to sit at the counter and chat while Linda and Blair—who both love to cook—tend to culinary duties.

But no matter how congenial the indoor ambience, it’s the porches that prove to be the most irresistible draw. Almost any gathering spills out onto these open-air retreats, where friends might enjoy a casual dinner or listen to Blair play a few riffs on his guitar as the sun sets over the hills of North Carolina. And though this winsome little cottage might be a bit short on square footage, there is no doubt it is long on good old-fashioned hospitality. ☐