The reading nook in Meredith and Rob Good's Bryn Mawr nursery

ROOM TO GRO

BY **ERICA MOODY**

RECENTLY, WE'VE HAD to become creative with how we use our homes—spare bedrooms turning into offices, kitchen annexes working as classrooms, a bathroom with a locking door becoming a spa where Mom could try to escape for just one minute—just one!—of peace and quiet.

In some cases, these projects went from ad hoc to absolutely inspired. As we all think about repurposing rooms to better serve our new normal, let these redos—from an outdoor television room to a newborn's sanctuary—offer renovation inspiration.





JON FRIEDRICH PHOTOGRAPHY



An Elevated NURSERY

A Main Line miracle baby gets an elegant bedroom designed to last.

DESIGNER MEREDITH GOOD jumped feet-first into renovating the Bryn Mawr home she shares with husband Rob—but one small room on the second floor remained on the to-do list for months. "It was the last room in the house to be completed, because we were always hoping it would be a baby's room," says Good, who runs Diff Miller Style & Design. When their "miracle baby" was born after years of IVF, she turned the office/guest room into the perfect space for their newborn son.

To start, they moved what had been her office into the sunroom and focused on classic design for the now-nursery. "We wanted something that would grow with him," Good says. "We didn't want him saying it was too juvenile for him in five to 10 years. I like things to be for the long haul."

Playful and whimsical yet sophisticated wallpaper from Quadrille Fabrics was selected with the baby's development in mind—patterns are believed to stimulate brain growth. An indoor/outdoor star-print rug from Prestige Mills was custom-cut for the room. "It's important to me, whenever I'm doing work where a child is involved, that there is durability," Good says of the rug. This one is 100 percent polypropylene and easy to clean.

She found furniture in local consignment stores, reupholstering an ottoman from the Velvet Shoestring in Wayne. For reliable performance fabric on chairs and windows, she went to Stout Brothers in Colmar. Above all, Good made sure the space would be appealing to her and her husband as well as to their baby. Her advice to other parents? "You end up spending a good chunk of time in there, especially during a pandemic, so make your child's nursery a place *you* want to be. There will be a lot of late nights and early mornings, so having somewhere you feel excited to walk into is an important thing."



DREW CALLAGHAN

An Outdoor OASIS

Redesigned grounds and shade structures let a Bryn Mawr family "live outside."

IF YOU'RE TIRED of being inside all day, why not put an entirely new room outside? That's what Leslie Hayes's clients, a doctor couple with three children, did. "They wanted a multi-purpose outdoor space for activities and spending time together," Hayes says. "They wanted to relax and watch television outside. They wanted a place where they could see multiple vantage points of the backyard. They wanted heaters, to extend their time outside."

Her clients got everything they wanted and more after Hayes worked alongside Gale Nurseries in Gwynedd Valley to execute their vision, reimagining the grounds and redefining the patio. They added two covered "outdoor rooms" as well as a seating area with a firepit. A stylish color palette of grays, yellows and beiges with bronze accents blends perfectly with the lush greenery surrounding the spaces. Instead of typical lawn furniture, Hayes and her clients brought indoor pieces outside: A bronze chandelier that hung in the living area of the main house is now a central feature outdoors; the sofa was repurposed from their previous home.

Of course, durability is key to any outdoor furnishings, so everything is weatherproof. The console tables, black side tables and coffee table are from Made Goods. Further side tables and chairs were found at Century Furniture. Swivel chairs are from Bernhardt Furniture Company, pillows are from F. Schumacher & Co., and the sofa fabric is from Kravet, Inc.

According to Hayes, requests for outside living spaces have increased since COVID-19 hit. "People don't want to feel enclosed," she says. She's pleased that her clients have been making use of their new space: "I came to visit them last fall, and they were sitting outside with hot cocoa and a football game," she says. There's nothing confining about that.



An Inviting Guest BEDROOM

A creative couple's Montgomery County home invites friends to stay the night.

AT THE START of the pandemic, big parties gave way to more intimate gatherings. Jenkintown residents Dennis St. Germain and his partner, Brian Balthazar, took the opportunity to finally transform an empty room into a guest bedroom.

"Our mind-set at the time was that big cocktail parties where everyone comes for a few hours would be replaced by low-key, intimate visits with friends who stay for a couple of days," Balthazar, who runs his own production company, Balthazar Entertainment, says. "For us, that meant 'the return of the guest room' for guests."

But he didn't want just any guest bedroom. Balthazar wanted something "a little untraditional and visually memorable. One that visitors would look forward to retiring to." So often, he says, "Guest bedrooms are the result of the one room that has enough space to accommodate a bed, but little additional thought goes into it."

So Balthazar and St. Germain, a designer, put their heads together and got to work, searching for easily available, budget-friendly finds. Balthazar strongly recommends shopping for floor samples. For instance, the bed headboard and frame were a floor sample at Arhaus in King of Prussia—bought for $800, compared to the $2,999 list price. "When a store is changing their merchandise, they are more than ready to get rid of the old stuff and often open to negotiate," he says.

The wallpaper, Nude Roses, found at Rebelwalls.com, is an oversize modern take on a vintage rose print, but more muted and contemporary. Balthazar installed it on the back wall to make a statement, and guests always comment on it.

The sloped ceilings and roofline of the third-floor space posed a challenge. Balthazar didn't want tipsy dinner guests to be bonking their heads before sleep. So he and St. Germain found creative ways to prevent that. There's a hanging chair from Wayfair in one corner, plus a series of bird mobiles by Flensted Mobiles that resemble an art installation. "They look like they're flying when the fan is on!" Balthazar says.

PHOTOGRAPH BY REBECCA McALPIN

A Seamless SUNROOM

A vaulted space in Bucks County makes entertaining effortless.

DAVID FIERABEND, principal of Groundswell Design Group, the firm behind Spruce Street Harbor Park and Independence Beer Garden, brought his expertise as a landscape architect to the renovation of his New Hope property. Fierabend and his husband aimed for a "treehouse effect" with the addition of their multi-purpose three-season sunroom, providing more space in which to entertain, work from home, and feel connected to the landscape.

The topography of the house, elevated above the surrounding landscape, gave the living spaces the unique appearance of being situated in the trees. Fierabend emphasized this connection to nature by adding glass-panel walls, vaulted ceilings and rustic accents to his new sunroom, which expands on the home's existing living room, for convenient entertaining.

"We wanted to stay true to the green colors and natural wood tones of the exterior," Fierabend says. "Anyone that sees the room can't believe it wasn't there before." He brought in green velvet from France and added warm leathers to restored and repurposed furniture. He went to Provenance in Kensington for some of the wood treatments on the walls and the lighting. He added plants that thrive year-round and asked friend Christine Edmonds, owner of Newtown's Trove, for help sourcing vintage items. Fierabend, who loves vintage and flea-market shopping, found treasures at the Golden Nugget in Lambertville and Porte de Clignancourt in Paris, the site of the largest antiques market in the world.

Fierabend loved having a tranquil spot to work during the early days of COVID. Now that the world is opening back up, the space has been ideal for dinner parties. And on Sunday mornings, Fierabend loves nothing more than to sit with a cup of coffee and the paper, his four rescue dogs at his feet, enjoying a front-row seat to the changing seasons.



JASON VARNEY


THE NEW Paris
TOTAL DESIGN
EVERGREEN
The Gardener's Garden

THE ULTIMATE BONUS ROOM:

Transforming Your Garage

Already using every spare inch of your home? Meet your garage, an oft-overlooked space that can realistically be transformed into an extra room. Here's how to start.

BY CARRIE LOCKLYN

1 DECLUTTER
This is step number one. The clearer and cleaner the space, the easier it is to start reimagining.

2 SPLIT INTO SECTIONS
Garages are the OG multi-use rooms and will likely need to stay that way: a long tool bench to create an open workspace; a designated workout area that houses weights and other related equipment; possibly a corner chair with a side table and lamp to delineate a quiet spot to read. By defining the purpose of each area in your garage, you'll get much more out of it.

3 FOCUS ON FLOORING
With stuff cleared out and all areas defined, start at the bottom—flooring. Laying luxury vinyl planking (LVP) or even just a large outdoor throw rug quickly turns a concrete box into a living space.

4 REVAMP THE WALLS
Those four walls are the key to your serenity. If yours have drywall, break out the paint. If not, hang floor-length drapes to cover them up. Now we're really starting to bring in some personality!

5 ADD LIGHTING
Adding a floor lamp, taking out the generic overhead lights for a chandelier (why not?), or even putting up some string lights further softens the space, giving good vibes you never knew could exist in a garage.

6 SAVE SPACE
Of course, you'll still need to store some belongings, so go vertical with ceiling and wall-mounted storage. Reserve that precious floor space.

7 CONTROL THE CLIMATE
Install fans to get the air moving in the summer and floor heaters to keep you cozy in the chillier months. You can't create a welcoming environment without them.

8 DON'T RUSH IT
Personal spaces are exactly that—personal. Take your time, and relish the process of creating your new multi-functional bonus room.

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RACHEL MCGINN

A Small-Business START-UP

A mudroom becomes an office for a Gladwyne-based cake company.

FORMER TEACHER MEGAN GENKIN used quarantine to finally build the business of her dreams—a custom bakery called Sweet Yums Cakes. But to really succeed at her new venture, the industrious mother of two and her husband, Matt, needed to rethink the layout of their home.

With the help of John Milner for architecture, D.F. Sheridan for construction, and Shophouse Design for interiors, they soon came up with a solution. Their formal dining room adjacent to the kitchen, which they had been using as a kids' playroom, was portioned off to include an informal office, a homework room, a proper mudroom, a laundry room and a walk-in pantry. The former mudroom/laundry room would become the office for Sweet Yums Cakes. The walk-in pantry would stock baking necessities. And the playroom would be moved to the finished basement, since the kids were now old enough to go down there by themselves.

"Megan and Matt had some unused real estate to allow for areas they actually needed in their home," Shophouse's Betsy Helm says. For the clean design of Megan's office, "We went with classic, timeless materials with a hint of prep, like Sister Parish wallpaper, Stark carpet, a Knoll table, Rogers & Goffigon fabric, and a Lee Industries chair." The Philadelphia Woodworking Company provided millwork and built-ins, and Main Line Window Decor helped with the bench seat and window treatments. For a hint of playfulness, Shophouse placed *Golden Girls* bobbleheads (it's one of Megan's favorite TV shows) on the shelves above her computer.

Considering undertaking your own bonus-room makeover? Helm has a helpful tip: "Think of the areas that aren't serving the lifestyle you lead and what would make your life easier and more enjoyable. Chances are, those areas are already there and just need to be repurposed."