



Story and photos by April Cornell

VERMONT HOMES AND GARDENS

As Seen in VERMONT MAGAZINE

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Porch Living

So many ideas for savoring those fine summer days!



Curl up on a dainty chaise lounge with a cup of tea, a blanket, and a pile of bird books to peruse. A thoughtful looking angel adds its quiet personality to the porch and a colorful broom adds charm. How to get the look: Broom and tea-cups: The Green Life. Angel statue and antique fan: Vintage Inspired. Kantha stitched quilt, stenciled cabinet, and embroidered cushion: April Cornell Collection; chaise repurposed with April Cornell fabrics.



QUINTESSENTIALLY VERMONT, a porch represents the epitome of relaxed living. With its beautiful stock of old homes, Vermont has some of the finest porches in the nation; a drive through the state's farmlands or a stroll through its well-kept towns will reveal every size and style of wooden porch and accompanying steps. We in

Vermont may not have the winding iron staircases of nearby Montreal, but we excel with wood! Farmhouse porches with rocking chairs, cottage porches with screens, boarding-house porches with old couches, Victorian wraparounds that are elegant echoes of the past, country-store porches to eat a creemee on, apartment balconies to barbeque on, and front stoops for chatting and sharing a beer on—we have porches of every size and in an abundance of styles.

In Vermont and the Northeast, we love to live outside. And when the win-

ter has delivered its final brisk days, the beloved porch (rediscovered as we finally dare to open the screen door, with a creak of sporadically used hinges) is the first place to sweep and reclaim; it is where we go to recapture memories of summers past. Our housebound winter lives can break free in time to enjoy the long summer evenings and early summer mornings that make living in the North Country worthwhile. I like to say: two days in one, with all that sun!

When I moved from Montreal to Vermont in 1992, the wooden homes, slate roofs, and wooden porches seemed seductive and foreign. They fulfilled a childhood fantasy, memories left over from visiting my grandparents in Cape Breton. I envied the days of my grandfather, sitting in his rocker (with his buddies dropping in to chat) in the front of his clapboard house—on his porch! Magical! But every porch has its own story to tell, and life to share.

I now have my own porch in Ver-

A set of 1950s card trays, a brand-new pewter hurricane lamp, and a treasured tablecloth hum together to create porch style. Repurposed berry baskets become card holders and glass marbles act as fanciful score counters. Onion pewter oil lamp: Danforth Pewter. Card trays: private collection. Checkered tablecloth: April Cornell Collection. Baskets and marbles: Vintage Inspired.



mont. I have parties there, chat, read, have naps, and have seen the slanting rays of late-day sun on my small granddaughter's sleeping form. Here are some of the ways I add magic to my porch:

First, a nap on the porch.

Is there anything better than an afternoon nap on a porch? One peaceful porch nap could nourish your memories for a lifetime. Drifting into soft sleep with the call of birds, the lapping of water from the lake, the hum of nature, and scent of summer, that invisible moment between sleep and awake is one to cherish. Whether you sleep on an old sofa, a wicker couch, or a body-hugging hammock, a nap on the porch has to be one of best parts of living in Vermont. Make your gentle sleep spot, worthy of future memories.

Enjoy a card game.

Whether it is a rainy day, a too-hot-to-venture-out afternoon, or a slow summer evening, a game of cards is a fun way to spend time with friends. I love the way porches hold a sense of the present and the past with their mix of old and new items. Somehow, if something gets placed on the porch, it just doesn't leave. That is why porches can be a great repository for items of the past. I like to decorate them with a mix of fresh new linens and old objects newly found. Be experimental:



Children's games are a timeless way to share fun across the generations. Bowling pins, wire basket, blocks, washtubs: Vintage Inspired.



A mismatched collection of chairs surround a wood table readied for a night of cards. White cabinet and cushion: April Cornell Collection. Cherry glasses: The Green Life.

find a common theme and build on it.

Children and toys are for porches. A nice thing about porches can be their lack of electricity and modern appliances. There is time to share old ways of having fun. Time for children, time for the generations. Time for blocks and dolls, trucks and toys, and making up stories for girls and boys. Porches are all about inclusion and generations learning from each other.

Find a seat, everyone!

I love the random quality of porch seat-

ing—a chair with a woven seat, a 1950s glider, an oversize wicker chair, and an antique baby carriage—or cushions on the floor! Everybody gets to pick their favorite seat; the more novel, comfortable, and colorful the better. This is a fun way to incorporate new ideas into your porch—add an eclectic mix of chairs.

Carpet—outdoors!

Experiment by using unexpected elements with which to decorate: add a favorite carpet to a porch and your porch's look becomes that of a studio or library.



A multipurpose table painted aqua with cut-glass pitchers of cooling lemon water creates a gently aged style and adds vintage cachet to a porch. Distressed table and napkin: April Cornell Collection. Glass holder and pitchers: Vintage Inspired.



A rocker with peeling paint, a re-purposed dé-coupage table, framed textiles, and original paintings create an outdoor gallery for private viewing. Rocker, brown birdcage, teacups, and metal letter holder: Vintage Inspired. White birdcage: Anjou & The Little Pear. Painting of sparrows by Christine Pecsényicki at April Cornell. Blueberries by Linda Thompson Chilmark of Martha's Vineyard. Embroideries: private collection.

Bohemian! Cozy! Contemporary!

Why not add an art gallery? Do you love art? I don't like to be without it. I like to hang artwork outside, too! A few nails and some treasured paintings can create a gallery space on your porch. I like to think in themes: birds, textiles, embroideries, scenes, samplers, or quotations—or mix them altogether for my own personal montage. It's easy, too! I simply use a few nails in the wall, making paintings easy to remove if weather or change of heart makes it necessary. If I am having a special event, I like to display art that celebrates it. Pictures of the birthday girl, photographs of the area, local artists, botanical drawings, even children's art, all create a mood of noticing and attention.

Generally porches are relaxed, not fussy, and by design and function really are not meant to create a lot of work; a good-looking broom can usually do the job nicely.

My advice? Enjoy the season of porches. Make the time for that nap, a chat, and a game of cards! **▼**

Designer and entrepreneur April Cornell lives in Burlington, VT. April and her business, including her flagship store at 131 Battery Street in Burlington, were profiled in the March/April issue of VERMONT MAGAZINE.

Just the facts

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