

LOWCOUNTRY RAMBLER

Along the South Carolina coast, a cottage compound inspired by the history of its island setting

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PETER FRANK EDWARDS
STYLING BY GINNY BRANCH

A tongue-and-groove pine breezeway leads to the main cottage (opposite). The Shaker-style front door is mahogany with paneled sidelights.

GENIUS MOVE
Rather than a grand entry hall, the welcoming element here is a 113-foot-long breezeway that unites the four buildings.

Fishermen on the Colleton River, in South Carolina, can barely make out the contours of the house through a screen of live oaks swathed in Spanish moss. What lies half-hidden in that tidal estuary is a low-slung compound of three cottages and a carriage house, joined by a covered breezeway running parallel to the river. Architectural designer James Strickland modeled his ideas after the scattering of barns, smokehouses, and sheds that accrues on plantation grounds. “It’s a tin-roof kind of place—nothing like the grand plantation house,” the homeowner says. “We wanted something that reflected Lowcountry traditions.”

SQUARE FOOTAGE 6,800	BEDROOMS Six
THE TEAM	Builder John Clements
Architectural designer James Strickland	Landscape architect Donald Hooten
Interior designers Shelley Wilkins and Joni Vanderslice	



A tall, metal-framed skylight pours light into the kitchen. The countertops are Carrara marble.



GENIUS MOVE
Unpainted reclaimed boards panel many of the ceilings, emphasizing cottage character and reinforcing the beauty of the natural landscape.

Large casement windows line the river side of the main cottage, including this cozy sunroom and the adjacent sunken dining room. The walls are painted White Dove by Benjamin Moore.



The blue ceiling in the guest cottage breakfast room was inspired by an old Lowcountry belief that the color (typically used on porch ceilings) keeps evil spirits away.

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BUILDING BLOCKS



LOWCOUNTRY RAMBLER

THE DREAM: A part-time haven by the water for eight months of the year—a place for fishing and easing into the relaxed Lowcountry pace. Conceptually, it needed to reflect the land’s history. “We wanted the house to feel as though it had been built in stages over time,” the homeowner says, “just as plantations evolve as a series of linked shacks.”

THE WATERFRONT SPOT: On the shaded shore of Spring Island (a former cotton plantation) where the winding Colleton River empties into the Atlantic. “We knew the relationship to the water was the most important element,” says architectural designer James Strickland. “When you’re there you can feel your blood pressure dropping.”

THE CHALLENGE: Creating a home with ample room for guests—the home would need six bedrooms—while still making it appear modest in scale, more in line with a cottage than a manor. Also, because the lot is situated among a stand of live oaks, the floor plan would have to be designed to protect the trees.

THE DESIGN SOLUTION: A multicottage compound that

is composed of low-scale structures including a main cottage, two guesthouses, and a carriage house. It was designed around the existing live oaks; workers shoveled the foundation by hand and worked around the tree roots to ensure their survival. The design works to highlight “the great romantic Southern character of the site,” says landscape architect Donald Hooten.

THE CHARACTER BOOST: Buttboard walls, tongue-and-groove ceilings, and reclaimed woods, including hand-hewn beams salvaged from an old mill and vintage timber with residues of old paint used for ceilings. A metal roof also pays homage to buildings that arose there in centuries past.

THE CONNECTION TO THE OUTDOORS: A patio with a black-bottomed lap pool and hot tub at the heart of the compound, between the main house and guest accommodations. The flooring is Savannah Grey bricks, an antique variety with mortar handmade from ground oyster shells. “On a lot where the environment is the star, we needed a pool that would blend in,” Hooten says. “The darker pool bottom and locally sourced materials give it a real sense of belonging.”



Interior shutters in the master bath ensure privacy without blocking the sunlight. The flooring is 4- by 4-inch Cayman Blue Silk tile by Lunada Bay.



Shiplap walls wrap this bunkhouse bedroom. The copper sconce is by Georgia artisan Eloise Pickard.

GENIUS MOVE
A deep, screened-in sitting room offers access to the outdoors without the nuisance of bugs and helps keep the bedroom shaded and cool.



The studio above the garage is “like a waterfront man cave,” says designer Joni Vanderslice, noting the salvaged barnwood walls and ceilings.



The whitewashed flooring and colorful Land of Nod quilts and life ring pillows give the bunk room a youthful, beachy vibe.



Local bricks made from ground oyster shells strengthen the patio’s connection to its surroundings.