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Crisp black and white accents bring a refined air to a Canadian family's sunwashed Florida vacation home.

# southern lights

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY TED YARWOOD





**ABOVE:** The entrance hall is lined in beadboard panels, studded with wooden pegs and topped with a decorative plate shelf. Indonesian stand, Columbus and Cook.

**ABOVE RIGHT:** The kitchen garden gate, surrounded with colourful plantings, leads to one homeowner's sister's vacation house. The patio is paved with cement stones with coral

and fossil impressions.

Teak chair, Rock Wood. **OPPOSITE, TOP:** The stucco house's steeply pitched metal roof shelters a second-floor porch and ground-floor loggia overlooking the pool. Queen palms flank the loggia, planted with climbing Confederate jasmine and mounds of Queen's wreath.

**BOTTOM:** The living room's five tall, perfectly symmetrical french doors with transoms overlook the courtyard garden and pool. Throw cushions on the sofa were covered with hand-blocked Indian fabric in stripes and florals. Raoul Textiles cushion fabrics, Rod Mickley Interior Design.



The antithesis of gilt-edged Palm Beach glamour, this simply elegant Florida house manages to strike a delicate balance between traditional and contemporary design. The two-storey yellow stucco is graced with steeply pitched metal roofs, multipaned windows, a vine-covered loggia and a charming courtyard garden.

Designed by award-winning American architect Scott Merrill and built in 1997 as a vacation home for a Toronto family, the house is located in Windsor, the Anglo-Caribbean-style community near Vero Beach founded by grocery magnate Galen Weston and Ontario Lieutenant-Governor Hilary Weston. A luxurious enclave that strives to blend privacy with a sense of community, Windsor was planned by renowned architects and New Urbanism town planners Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, who designed the ground-breaking community Seaside on Florida's Gulf Coast in 1981.

Rather than trying to over-decorate this house, Vero Beach-based interior designer

The living room fireplace features a simple slate surround. The ottoman is covered in durable woven raffia. The oil painting was a \$3 find at Toronto's Elegant Garage Sale. Antique mirror, Rod Mickley Interior Design.





Rod Mickley chose to let the simple but striking architecture stand on its own. While others might have opted for a more tropical palette and terracotta tiles, Mickley and the homeowners boldly chose to “paint it black.” Black shutters, doors and floors throughout define and unify the space. Much of the classic British Colonial-style furniture — from a Victorian settee to a four-poster bed to wicker club chairs — was “ebonized” to match. “Some people think of black as oppressive,” says Mickley, “but it really makes the other colours seem whiter or brighter.”

Anchoring the simple colour scheme is a cool, polished concrete floor. The first black concrete floor laid at Windsor, it was smoothed and scored to resemble tiles, then stained, waxed and polished to a finish that requires only damp-mopping. “It’s wonderful

**ABOVE:** The living-dining room’s concrete floors and washable slipcovers are well suited to wet feet and damp bathing suits. Panelled walls provide an elegant architectural backdrop. The botanical drawings are by Maria Sibylla Merian, who travelled to Suriname in South America in 1699 to record the insects and flowers of the region. Coffee table, Rod Mickley Interior Design; sofa, K&F European Upholstery.

**RIGHT:** The simple country kitchen, with its butcher block-topped island, opens into a garden lush with potted herbs. Stools, Upper Canada House.



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because it's cool and smooth underfoot, and you can even walk on it with your golf cleats — which I do sometimes, much to the horror of my husband," laughs the homeowner. "Nothing will destroy it." Wooden floorboards on the second floor were stained black to match.

In the spacious living-dining room, coffered ceilings, panelled walls, tall shuttered windows and custom-built bookcases in each corner create an elegant, perfectly symmetrical shell that requires little embellishment. "It's really a one-room house," says the owner. "We live in one big living room. Though it's smaller than our house in Toronto, since we're only here on holidays it doesn't get that buildup of daily life."

The overstuffed sofa and easy chairs, slip-covered in a neutral fabric, create an oasis of comfort, surrounded by an exotic mix of Chinese, Indonesian and African furnishings. Here and throughout the rest of the house, Mickley worked with a collection of Eastern-inspired, hand-printed striped and paisley fabrics. "I went crazy for that Indian bedspread look," says the owner.

Above a narrow Mennonite harvest table hangs a wall of antique botanical prints by 17th-century natural historian Maria Sibylla Merian depicting exotic insects and plant life, simply

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**ABOVE:** Architect Scott Merrill created a vintage-style bathroom with white-painted cabinets, board-and-batten walls and a white-tiled floor. The antique chair was reupholstered in raffia.

**RIGHT:** The second-floor sitting room is shaded with black matchstick blinds and furnished with a Victorian fainting couch and armchair upholstered in beige and cream linen. Pink Indian paisley cushions add colour. The coffee table is an antique kitchen table that was cut down. Blinds, fabrics, Rod Mickley Interior Design; armchair, K&F European Upholstery.





**ABOVE:** The seagrass-carpeted master bedroom is painted a pale pink. The mahogany bed was "ebonized" with black paint, and dressed with custom-made linens. A series of framed Irish lithographs surrounds the desk mirror. Linen gauze curtains frame screened french doors that lead to the balcony. Indonesian desk, Columbus and Cook; bed, Milling Road; lamp, Tubtown Antiques.

**RIGHT:** On the clapboard-sided second-floor porch, an eclectic group of furniture was unified with a coat of black paint. Rocking chairs, L.L. Bean; garden bench, wicker chair, footstool, Rod Mickley Interior Design.

