

**HIGH-END
ALTERNATIVES**

Ellie Summers buys most of her furniture at flea markets and midrange retailers. But if money is no object, consider these fabulous finds.



TRY THIS! ←

Pharmacy Floor Lamp
Hudson, 312 Shawmut Avenue,
Boston, 617-292-0900,
hudsonboston.com \$515



TRY THIS! ←

Macassar Armchair
D Scale, 520 Harrison Avenue,
Boston, 617-426-1055,
dscalemodern.com
\$3,250

KEEP IT CLEAN

Ellie Summers prefers a simple color palette and spare design. "I don't like clutter," she says.



← LIKE THIS?

← LIKE THIS?



YOUR HOME
Luxury
for
LESS

Road to the **WHITE HOUSE**

*Decorating on a budget is easy
if you follow Ellie Summers's vision
for peaceful, pure,
and plenty affordable design.*

BY MARNI ELYSE KATZ

Like many homes stuck in the '70s, Ellie Summers's house was plagued by dark cabinetry and gold shag carpeting. Today, her cottage-style house in a modest West Newton neighborhood is light, airy, and timelessly chic. But the transformation didn't happen overnight. Summers, who has lived in the home for 41 years, started making the changes about 20 years ago, as her three children were growing up and out. It didn't require a hefty budget. Almost everything in Summers's home was recycled, refurbished, found at flea markets, or purchased at low-end and mid-range retailers.

Fifteen years ago, a friend introduced Summers to Kelly McGuill, an interior designer in Walpole, and they've been collaborating ever since. "I don't make a move without consulting Kelly," confides Summers, 69. The two have become close friends, and even though McGuill is the designer, she says she's learned just as much from Summers as she's taught her. Summers "started doing things 20 years ago that have only recently become trends in the design world," says McGuill. One such example is the home's white palette shot with green – Granny Smith apples piled in wire baskets, grass planted in low wood-

Marni Elyse Katz is a writer in Boston. Send comments to magazine@globe.com.



Bakery Cabinet
Hudson
\$5,985



A FINE MESS Summers (with her two grandsons) swears her house is kid-friendly. If something gets wrecked, she simply repaints it. "I've learned to always keep a can of white spray paint around," she says.

KELLY MCGUILL HOME
275 High Street, Walpole,
508-850-9779,
kellymcguillhome.com

en crates, urns crowded with moss.

"The clean bright space works for me," says Summers. "I've had friends come in and say, 'The house will look great once you get some paint on the walls,' but me, I like it. The white makes me feel peaceful. I don't like clutter. And that's been tricky over the years, as this house does not have much storage space."

Summers and McGuill tackled this age-old problem with storage boxes purchased at The Container Store ("They're the only ones I could find that were white," explains Summers) and trunks acquired by McGuill at the Brimfield Antique and Flea Market Shows, the largest outdoor antique show in New England (summer show, July 8-13; brimfield.com). The trunks in the living room, which cost \$300 for the pair, hold serving platters and Christmas decorations. "This way I don't have to carry ornaments up and down the stairs every December," says Summers.

Summers finds that too many accessories overwhelm her. "Mirrors are my art," she says, referencing the Gothic-style glass cabinet doors (the glass was replaced with mirrors) that rest on a long trestle table in the living room. "They were originally very, very dark," says McGuill. "Ellie was skeptical, but once they were whitewashed, she loved them. We left the hinges and knobs on them, for additional interest." For the living room's built-in shelves, Summers experimented over the years with books and knickknacks, but found that only white and glass items worked, like votive holders and

jars purchased at Brimfield for as little as 50 cents. One of her favorite finds is a sculptural piece of lacy grillwork, which is actually an old structural support spray-painted white. "I've learned to always keep a can of white spray paint around," says Summers.

The theme of white palette and minimalist cottage decor is carried throughout the house. Summers fills the glass cabinet in the dining room with an assortment of plain white and chunky glassware from Brimfield and the China Fair in Newton, a discount housewares and party supply store. Other treasures include her collection of ironstone pitchers (bought at Brimfield for \$10 and up), which line the shelf below the mirror at the foot of the stairs. The shelf, originally from a neighbor's cellar (it had held laundry detergent), was refinished by a friend. To personalize the simple space Summers keeps stacks of family photos on rectangular white platters throughout the house. When her children and grandchildren visit, they love sifting through them.

Children? Not a problem. "The house is completely child-friendly," insists McGuill. The sisal rugs are virtually indestructible, and the beige twill sofas can withstand a lot of wear and tear. "When the kitchen table gets too wrecked," adds Summers, "my daughter slaps another coat of white paint on it."

There is another upside to the pristine white palette. Says Summers: "My house looks good no matter what, in every season . . . with kids or without, during Christmas or Halloween. I always love coming home." ■

HIGH-END ALTERNATIVES



TRY THIS!



TRY THIS!

Slat-Back Chair With Wood Seat

Antiques on 5,
Boston Design Center,
South Boston,
617-951-0008,
antiqueson5.com
\$675

TIPS FOR TIGHT BUDGETS

- ◆ Sisal, jute, and rattan are inexpensive and durable, and they add color and texture.
- ◆ Orchids, moss, topiary, and apples add long-lasting life and color.
- ◆ Buy multiples of items, like jugs or votive holders, for added impact.
- ◆ Almost everything looks great painted white.
- ◆ Stay away from sets. Instead, mix and match brands and styles.
- ◆ A pile of family photos displayed on white platters is a perfect conversation starter.
- ◆ Simply framed black-and-white family photos look clean and elegant.
- ◆ Live sparsely. Don't clutter rooms with unnecessary objects.
- ◆ Find creative storage solutions - chests, baskets, handsome boxes, and ottomans with tops that open go a long way in tidying your space and life.

FOR TIPS ON PAINTING WITH WHITE, TURN TO PAGE 74



LIKE THIS?

LIKE THIS?

WINNING MATCH In the dining room, Summers painted the walls and furniture a mix of crisp white and creamy off-whites to create subtle contrasts and give the room depth. Grass planted in a low wooden crate offers a splash of color.