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# *Sticks and* **STONES**

MOTHER NATURE HERSELF WAS THE LEAD  
DESIGNER ON THIS MOUNTAIN HOME—AND SHE  
WAS ONE TOUGH TASKMASTER.







Jeff and Susie Noble's house blends an understated, naturally appointed exterior of wood and stone with its lush North Carolina surroundings.





**N**ESTLED IN THE WOODED FOOTHILLS OF NORTH Carolina's Piedmont mountain range is a little house of stone and wood. It's a structure so in tune with the ridge it rests on that it appears to have grown there. Outside and in, the materials, palette, and architecture mimic nature, chosen to integrate the home into its surroundings. It is organic, harmonious, and natural.

But apparently it takes a lot of doing to get to such a natural state. "I tell you, I think it took us 14 tries to get the barn-red stain of the carport ceiling just right," homeowner Susie Noble says. "We had so many meetings about it, the painter threatened to start charging.

"Oh, and the floors," she continues, referring to the home's random-width, white-oak planks. "They were dismantled from a Virginia barn, numbered board by board, and transported here. They had to sit inside for a month to acclimate to the humidity."

Susie, her husband, Jeff, and their talented team—including a designer, architect, builder, and area artisans—toiled for one year to get this three-bedroom lake house looking perfectly natural. Certain decisions were made for them by the lake community's architectural guidelines. The lot itself demanded a low-slung, horizontal layout, which the Nobles found waiting for them in architect Al Platt's book of plans.

Called the "Doghobble" after a native Carolina shrub, the shallow, cantilevered house hangs its main living spaces on the ridge top, while its lower level stacks against the ridge cliff beneath, 16 feet off-grade. More than half of the house's 4,000 square feet are outdoors (mainly a series of decks and screen porches), and every room of the house—indoor and outdoor spaces included—has a spectacular view of nature, either the hemlock woods, Lake James, or Mount Mitchell.

Susie and interior designer Kathryn Greeley chose the background palette—including the carport's barn red, plus green and gold stains—from the chestnut print on the living room's Cowtan & Tout linen drapes. The combination of the soft hues and thinned-down, milk-wash application makes the horizontal wood panels on the walls seem to have been discovered that way.

Greeley took Susie along on trips to nearby Waynesville and Asheville, where they mined the region's rich commune of painters, potters, weavers, and furniture makers to fill the house. "My design

**LEFT, FROM TOP** This jaw-dropping—and elevation-dropping—view of Lake James from the rear of the house is best seen from the screen porch. The porch is appointed with hard-wearing all-weather wicker in brown. Jeff and Susie Noble relax on the dock with son Andrew and dog Levi. Daughter Meghan often makes the seven-hour drive from her home in Pittsburgh with her husband and 1-year-old son. **OPPOSITE** Levi, a Bernese mountain dog, lounges on a vintage handwoven rug from interior designer Kathryn Greeley's favorite local rug importer, Togar Rugs, near Asheville. The stone on the chimney and fireplace surround is the same as the stone used on the house's exterior.











**THIS PHOTO** A screen door permits sneak peeks into Susie's tidy kitchen pantry. **RIGHT** The random-width, white-oak flooring came from a dilapidated barn in Virginia. Builder Gary Boarman explains that the wood used on that barn came from large, old trees, making it the perfect wood for quartersawn floorboards.



“WE REALLY WANT THIS TO BE  
THE PLACE WE KEEP COMING  
BACK TO WITH OUR KIDS, THEIR  
KIDS, THEIR KIDS’ KIDS ....”

—HOMEOWNER JEFF NOBLE







**LEFT** The guest bedroom welcomes with a warm mix of wood tones and textural accents; natural materials link the home's interiors to the spectacular views from every window. **ABOVE** In this small bathroom, Susie tossed a few stones into the vessel sink to enjoy the sound of water spilling over them. **BELOW** Bark water baskets display wildflower arrangements that rotate with the seasons. The baskets are reproductions of Native American water skins. **OPPOSITE** The master bedroom's green-stained walls feature vertically oriented wood paneling in contrast to the horizontal application throughout the rest of the house. Greeley upholstered the headboard on the new Hickory Chair bed in the same crewel fabric used on the bedroom curtains.

PHOTO: BEDROOM, LEFT, BY NANCY NOLAN

philosophy has always been "collected, not decorated," Greeley says. "I want to evoke the feeling of a generational cottage."

On Friday mornings Susie takes the one-hour, 50-minute drive northwest from their main home in Charlotte to Lake James. Jeff joins her Friday evenings, and "he walks in to a warm meal, a glass of wine, and this," Susie says, sweeping the view. Most of their meals they eat on the screen porch.

But the Nobles haven't been taking it *too* easy since the project was completed; they still have to navigate the 133 steps from the dock below up to the driveway, and the driveway itself is so steep, Susie refers to it as "the ski slope." The mere remoteness of the house's location also calls for lots of planning for every trip. "You pack groceries in and you pack 'em out," she says. But they're not complaining; they're enjoying their and nature's handiwork. ❧

RESOURCES, SEE PAGE 142.





