



Spring 2014  
**HomeLifeStyle**

**Potomac**  
**ALMANAC**

PHOTO BY MIRI TALABAC

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## LET'S TALK Real Estate



by Michael Matese

### Techno Luxury

The homebuyer of today is definitely concerned with keeping up—not with the Joneses, perhaps, but with the ever-changing face of technology. A fully appointed den or media room used to be an important selling point in a home—today, these things are de rigueur, standard in nearly every home on the market. In order to increase the market appeal of your home and be competitive with other homes of comparable structure, size and amenities for sale in your area, the new key selling point of a property is the home office. Once a rarity, the home office has evolved into the home's hub and center of operation and activity, often controlling every technological amenity of the house from one room. Modern home automation systems link lighting, heating and air conditioning systems, as well as audio-visual equipment, security systems and the scheduling of television, recording systems, stereo equipment and lighting fixtures. The modern home office isn't just for business professionals, technological connoisseurs, or the higher-earning set, either. Today's home technology features are high-end home amenities that are available across a wide range of budgets, turning an average home into an above-average home when it hits the market, giving tech-savvy dwellings a competitive market edge. Take a look at your home's wiring, routing and see what simple upgrades you could implement that would simplify your day-to-day living while you're in the home, and that could add top-dollar value to your home when it comes time to put it on the market. Ask yourself: Is your home techno-ready?

For professional advice on all aspects of buying and selling real estate, call:

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## POTOMAC ALMANAC

## HomeLifeStyle

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## HomeLifeStyle

# Kitchen Confidential

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

Opening up and adding light were priorities when Guy Hopkins Semmes, partner and founder of Potomac-based design-build firm Hopkins and Porter and Lea Allen, one of

the firm's senior architects, remodeled the kitchen of a Bethesda home.

"The kitchen was small, but we were able to add a lot more space, by making few minor changes," said Semmes. "Before there was an enclosed porch next to the kitchen. We opened the wall between the kitchen and the adjacent enclosed

## From light-filled to dramatic, local designers create dream kitchens.

porch."

Semmes and Allen made another major elimination: appliances. "We got rid of the refrigerator and moved it downstairs," said Semmes. "All of the other appliances are located under the counter and open up like drawers."

Semmes also found a creative way to make the space more light-filled. We took out a stairway wall to the second floor and replaced it with a triangular opening so light from stairwell came down into the kitchen."

The kitchen now has maple cabinetry and white Silestone countertops. "It was done on a budget. It's amazing what you can do when you work with what you've got."

**NICELY DONE KITCHENS** in Springfield, Va., created a kitchen with drama for a Centreville, Va., family. "White semi-custom cabinetry and a contrasting dark island creates a dramatic look," said Stephanie Brick, designer. Brick cited the focus on the vertical, subway tile back splash.

The rest of the back splash in the kitchen is horizontal, which is the standard for subway tile, said Brick.

The kitchen also includes ample, easily accessible storage space.

"The paneled refrigerator helps conceal the appliances and helps them to blend in with the cabinetry to give the aesthetic more continuity," said Brick. The kitchen includes easily accessible

storage space and ogee-edged granite counter tops.

**WHEN ALLIE** Mann of Arlington, a designer and senior interior specialist at Case Design/Remodeling, Inc. was tasked with giving the first floor of a McLean, Va., home a face lift, she had to think free-flowing and airy.

"[The] client wanted to focus on making kitchen feel open and connected to rest of home," said Mann. "[They] needed to have plenty of space to cook and entertain plus lots of storage." Mann said the homeowner was making a cross-country move and settling in Virginia, so adhering to a strict timeline and budget were critical.

However, near the end of the project, the homeowner wanted to make a change.

"At nearly 85 percent job completion, client decided they wanted to completely remove the wall between the kitchen and family room. In the original design, we partially removed the wall," said Mann. "This meant a shift and re-direction of scope, additional engineering [because] the remaining portion of the wall housed a three-story fireplace, relocation of cabinets had already been installed and modifications to counter tops. And still deliver a project close to on time."

The finished kitchen is a light-filled space with cabinets by Crystal Cabinetry, honed Vermont Marble countertops and appliances by Sub-Zero, Wolf, KitchenAid and Miele.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF HOPKINS AND PORTER

**Guy Semmes and Lea Allen of Potomac-based design-build firm Hopkins and Porter removed walls to create space and add light to the kitchen of this Bethesda, Md. home.**

# Whimsy Meets Elegance

Potomac designer creates playful yet polished home for family of five.

**W**hen an active family of five approached Potomac interior designer Sharon Kleinman and asked her to give their home a makeover, they wanted a whimsical yet polished space.

"The house itself is a typical Bethesda arts and crafts house," said Kleinman. "It's very roomy, boasting four levels of living space which gets good use from this energetic family with three active children."

The family wanted to move beyond traditional design elements. "The clients wanted to think a bit outside of the box," Kleinman said. "They had no need for formal living spaces, so we took the living room and turned it into a music room."

Kleinman created a design that had a family-friendly feel and incorporated elements of both whimsy and elegance. "We gave the music rooms a bit of drama with the chocolate [colors in fabrics], a bit of glamour was added with the mohair rug, a family favorite for all, including the dog."

Two chairs by Baker Furniture are positioned on either side of the fireplace in the music room. An ottoman, also by Baker, sits



PHOTO BY GWIN HUNT PHOTOGRAPHY

**The large matte-finished tiles on the wall surround the fireplace in the dining room of this Bethesda home designed by Sharon Kleinman is upscale but informal.**

"The clients wanted a family-friendly environment that was a bit playful and whimsical, but also sophisticated."

— Sharon Kleinman,  
Transitions by Sharon Kleinman

between the chairs.

"Rich, fabrics on the chairs flanking the fireplace and in the window treatments add to the luxurious and warm feeling of the room," said Kleinman.

Kleinman also created a casual, but chic design for the dining room. "The clean lines of the dining room furnishings evoke a less formal feel," she said. "The durable dining chair fabric in creams and grays is far from formal, yet it sets a casually elegant tone for the room."

Large, matte-finished tiles surround the fireplace. "[They] are upscale but, informal," said Kleinman. "The chandelier adds a bit of sparkle. The draperies allow in lots of light, yet add to the finished look. The dining table was accessorized with crystal birds inherited from a grand parent."

— MARILYN CAMPBELL

## Getting Your Garden Ready for Spring

Local experts tell you what you should do now, in spite of the cold weather.

BY MARILYN CAMPBELL  
THE CONNECTION

**I**t doesn't feel like spring. Last week's snow made it seem like warm weather might never arrive, so planting a garden might be the last thing on your mind. However, local gardening experts say this is the ideal time to start preparing your landscape to yield colorful spring foliage.

Bill Mann of Behnke Nurseries in Potomac said spring garden preparation plans differ from year to year. "It depends on the landscape beds you have and whether or not you're planning to put in a vegetable garden," he said.

"This is the time to inspect shrubs for damage that might have been broken during the snow load," said David Watkins of Merrifield Garden Center, which has locations in Fair Oaks, Merrifield and Gainesville, Va., Don't go overboard, however: "You don't want to prune plants before they bloom. A good rule of thumb is to prune a flowering plant right after it blooms."



PHOTO COPYRIGHT CAROLINE WILLIAMS

**David Watkins of Merrifield Garden Center says cold season annuals like these yellow pansies can add bright color to a garden now.**

Instead, spend some time tidying up.

"Right now is the time to fertilize your shrubs, remove old mulch, put down new mulch and just clean up," said Watkins. "Everybody is sick of winter, especially this winter. This is the time to clean up old leaves. Because the winter has been so cold, there are going to be some plants that won't have made it."

"In March, a lot has to do with inspecting the yard for winter damage," said Mann. "This is a great time of the year to look for insect damage and deer damage."

Mann expects extensive deer damage this year. "Deer didn't have much to eat except for plants like azaleas and rhododendrons."

Insect damage is less obvious and more

difficult to identify. "This is the time to do damage-control by using safe or organic-based products like neem oil," said Mann. "When sprayed on plants, it smothers insect eggs or some insects in the larva stage. It also kills stinkbugs. If you can see them, you can control them. You can use a higher concentration this time of year and it is a lot safer and easier on the environment. It reduces bad bug populations and is safe over all."

**WHILE EAGER GARDENERS** may be excited to start planting spring flowers in their newly cleaned plots, Watkins offers a caveat: "It is a little early for most annual flowers in pots on patios, but you can plant annuals like pansies, which are cold season annuals," he said. "They don't like heat, so in June they start to wither. Then you can put other flowers in like petunias and geraniums."

Watkins recommends planting hearty, ornamental shrubs in patio flowerpots and surrounding them with flowering plants to ensure year-found foliage. "A nice thing to do in pots is plant a woody ornamental,"

he said. "It is nice to have plants in the pots that stay year round. I put a Japanese maple in a pot on my deck. In another pot I put *ilex verticillata* [winterberry] and I had red berries all winter long. In the spring, I'll put petunias in the soil around it, and around the edge I'll plant a flowering plant that will trail down over the pot from April to October. Then the rest of the year I'll get red berries."

Sowing grass seeds is also an ideal project to begin now. "The seeds won't germinate until it gets to be 52 degrees," Watkins continued. "So even if we get another snow storm, it helps work the seeds into the soil."

Randee Wilson of Nature By Design in Alexandria encourages the use of indigenous plants. "Look for sources for native plants — they help sustain our local wildlife. If we didn't have local plants, butterflies would be gone."

Native plants also require less maintenance. "Some native plants are cardinal flower, which is bright red; bee balm, also bright red; blue cardinal; iron weed, which has purple flowers, and native wisteria vine," said Wilson.

If a new patio is in your plans this spring, Watkins says to get started now. "We've been putting down putting patios all year long," he said. "A good garden center is going to get backed up when the weather is warmer. The sooner you start getting your job in the line, the better."

# Potomac REAL ESTATE

IN JANUARY 2014, 26 POTOMAC HOMES SOLD BETWEEN \$2.675.000-\$293,000.

## Top Sales in January, 2014



1 10840 Stanmore Drive — \$2,675,000



2 12504 Sycamore View Drive — \$2,330,000



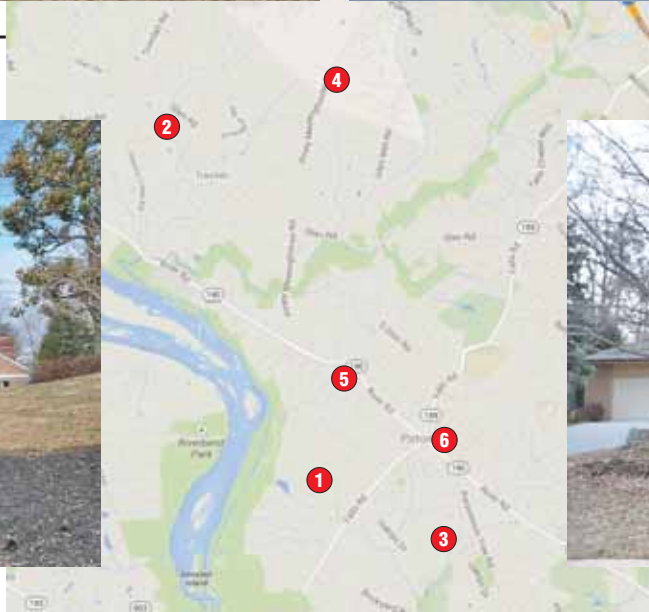
4 13111 Piney Meetinghouse Road — \$1,378,100



3 8946 Abbey Terrace — \$1,630,000



5 10825 Fox Hunt Lane — \$1,315,000



© Google Map data



6 9909 Bluegrass Road — \$1,160,000

Address	BR	FB	HB	Postal City	Sold Price	Type	Lot AC	Postal Code	Subdivision	Date Sold
1 10840 STANMORE DR	6	8	1	POTOMAC	\$2,675,000	Detached	2.08	20854	GREAT FALLS ESTATES	01/21/14
2 12504 SYCAMORE VIEW DR	7	7	2	POTOMAC	\$2,330,000	Detached	5.28	20854	STONE CREEK FARM	01/28/14
3 8946 ABBEY TER	6	5	2	POTOMAC	\$1,630,000	Detached	0.33	20854	AVENEL	01/06/14
4 13111 PINEY MEETINGHOUSE RD	6	6	2	POTOMAC	\$1,378,100	Detached	0.69	20854	GLEN MILL KNOLLS	01/31/14
5 10825 FOX HUNT LN	5	4	0	POTOMAC	\$1,315,000	Detached	2.38	20854	POTOMAC OUTSIDE	01/03/14
6 9909 BLUEGRASS RD	5	4	2	POTOMAC	\$1,160,000	Detached	0.49	20854	POTOMAC VILLAGE	01/21/14

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