

# facelift

*Attention to detail and some professional help made all the difference in transforming this Madison home.*



THE LOCATION WAS GREAT BUT THE HOUSE WAS A WRECK—THE PERFECT situation for a husband and wife who love a challenge. “I used to give people directions to our home and tell them once they got to our street they couldn’t miss the house. It was the ugliest house on the street and a bad shade of blue to boot,” says the Madison homeowner. “It had everything we needed spacewise, so we didn’t think we’d have to change the footprint. But it definitely needed a makeover.” Located in an area of large older homes, the couple wanted their 1950s house to blend in, like a cottage or mini-version of its neighbors. After sketching their ideas, the couple contacted architect Maria DeCosimo of Westfield to help make their vision a reality. DeCosimo incorporated their suggestions into a plan and suggested contractor Kevin McCormick for the job. “We inter-



*before*

*TOP: Without altering the footprint of the house, the owners transformed it by adding architectural details, new windows, French doors, and a new roof.*

viewed several contractors, but Kevin was so positive and came in at a price we thought was fair. After seeing examples of his work, we knew he’d be right for us,” says the homeowner, whose husband is a stickler for meticulous woodworking.

To give the house as much character as possible, McCormick suggested using products that would provide the architectural dimension of natural materials. The CertainTeed roof shingles mimic the look of the slate used on older homes. Wooden shutters and divided-light windows add to that image. The garage doors were designed to look like old barn doors but maintain the convenience of overhead automatic doors. When it came time to paint the house the owners consulted a Benjamin Moore book. “It gave us some ideas about color and working with already existing materials like the roof and stone,” says the

owner. After trying many samples, they chose a light gray with creamy trim and a splash of orange for the front door. It’s a subtle combination that works well to emphasize the pergola and French doors from the living room while providing a pop of color at the entrance.

“Kevin and his team were really great to work with,” says the owner. “We actually missed them if they didn’t need to be here on some days. The only problem we had during this renovation was with the first stone mason we used for the walkway and outcropping under the pergola. We didn’t go through Kevin; we found someone to do the job inexpensively. Less than halfway through, we knew that was a big mistake. We kept getting failed by the inspector. Then one day the mason just didn’t show up. And it’s hard to get someone in to clean up someone





*LEFT: These garage doors, made to look like old-fashioned barn doors, disappear into the ceiling just like conventional overhead doors.*

*BELOW: Window boxes are planted with nasturtiums, sweet potato vine, herbs, and petunias. The boxes, which get sun all day long, are replanted according to the season. A butterfly bush planted underneath adds even more color.*

*OPPOSITE PAGE: The cream-colored trim and soft grays of the house and stone walkways create a soothing color scheme. Planters beside the front door, in yet another shade of gray, hold boxwood. All paint colors are from Benjamin Moore.*

else's mess." Their landscape architect, Anthony Sblendorio of Back to Nature Landscaping Associates in Oldwick, came to the rescue by suggesting John Spano of Spano Masonry in Brookside. "The difference was like night and day," says the homeowner. "They came in, did the job in no time, and were a pleasure to work with."

Back to Nature devised a landscape plan for the front yard incorporating New Dawn climbing roses around the pillars and a bed of lavender bordered with boxwood and climbing hydrangeas near the front door so that flowers bloom all spring and summer. Window boxes, planted with herbs, nasturtiums, and petunias for the summer, are changed each season. "We gave the house as much age and character as we could with building materials, but you can't rush Mother Nature," the homeowner says. "In a few years the roses will be all over the pergola, and it will truly look like the cottage we envisioned."

