

# HOMES

& GARDENING



## From garage to backyard bar

By NANCY NGO  
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Harry's Bar features turn-of-the-century accents, as well as parking.

Memorial Day weekend marks the unofficial start of outdoor hangs, which also means more time in your yard. So how do you maximize a small backyard? In the case of Mark Tierney of Minneapolis, add a built-in bar off your garage.

"If you only have a little space you can tie these things together," he said. "It doesn't have to look like a garage from the backyard."

Tierney decided to rebuild his garage, which had a DIY bar attached to it. This time around, he threw in all the bells and whistles to create the next iteration of Harry's Bar, named after one of the family's golden retrievers that passed away.

Tierney enlisted Christopher Strom Architects to create a garage/bar that could serve double duty: store the family's cars as well as hosting backyard soirees. Tierney also wanted the structure to mirror the historic nature of his Lowry Hill turn-of-the-cen-



Photos by AARON LAVINSKY, Star Tribune (top), and ALYSSA LEE (above)  
Mark Tierney, center, hugs friend and bar regular Leon Hushcha while friend Maggie Romens looks on. Tierney's new brick garage matches the historic nature of the main house, while the attached Harry's Bar opens up into the courtyard. The bar features careful details including a custom rolling screen.

ture brick house — something he said the existing detached garage lacked.

"The garage was probably built in the '50s. It was a really low-cost garage with fiberboard slat walls," he said. "I wanted the garage to look like it was part of the original house that was 120 years old. To me, this would not be a typical construction project of a garage; this was an art project."

### Bricks and tracks

In paying tribute to the original house, matching the Roman bricks proved to be the biggest challenge. Architect Christopher Strom said few places make the long, narrow bricks today. "It's beautiful, but it's quite expensive," he added.

But with some creativity and the help of local artisans, they found a practical solution.

They bought utility bricks, which were twice as tall as the originals, then Welch Forsman renovation cut each one into Romanesque-style pieces. See **BAR** on H3 ▶

### HOMEGAIZING

## A 'Lighthouse Keeper's Cottage' on Lake Minnetonka

Orono house became a sanctuary for its current homeowner.

By ALEX CHHITH  
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Jennifer Bichanich fondly remembers every design, curve and bit her late husband incorporated into their Lake Minnetonka house in Orono that became known as the "Lighthouse Keeper's Cottage."

The home was originally two cottages that her husband, architect Blake Bichanich, turned into one — connecting the structures with a three-story "lighthouse."

For Jennifer, the home she thought she would share with her husband for years to come became a refuge after he died in 2015. The property Blake purchased in 1988 sits in the middle of lush green woods and has its own private beach on Stubbs Bay. Jennifer remembers the sun glistening from over the lake into the bedroom in the evenings and the light of the full moon streaming from an overhead window into

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The "Lighthouse Keeper's Cottage" is made up of two cottages that the architect/owner purchased and adjoined with a lighthouse structure.

## Design advice for a less toxic life

By STEPHEN TREFFINGER • New York Times

**Q:** I've heard that some candles can create indoor air pollution and even be harmful. Are there safer alternatives?

**A:** Paraffin, the wax from which many candles are made, is derived from petroleum. When it burns, it emits toxic fumes. These irritate some people's eyes and can also exacerbate asthma and other respiratory conditions. Synthetic fragrances and colors can also produce irritating fumes. On top of that, some wicks contain lead (to make them firmer), which is released into the air.

Alternatives include beeswax as well as waxes made from soy, coconut, rapeseed and other oils. Some vegans do not support the use of beeswax because it is an animal product, and some feel the beekeeping industry is not cruelty-free. Soy wax is certainly more sustainable than petroleum, but its possible negatives include the use of pesticides. (Look for organic soy wax.) The other vegetable waxes mentioned are relatively clean.

Be sure to read the fine print. I was

See **ADVICE** on H3 ▶





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Mark Tierney relaxed with his dog, Luna, outside his garage bar in Minneapolis' Lowry Hill neighborhood.

# From garage to backyard bar

## ◀ BAR from HI

With the help of Dan McMillan Masonry of St. Paul, bricks of varying lengths were carefully layered in a coursing pattern.

"We literally drew every brick on" to see how they would line up before we started," Strom said. "Traditionally when they would put on the brick, they would put it on first because the brick was the structure. These days the brick is a veneer, so we built the whole thing by a wood frame structure and then put the brick on last."

Other nods to the main house include custom garage doors that resemble the home's tuck-under barn doors. Long and narrow in appearance, the doors are accented with old-timey handles that Tierney scored at an antiques store.

For Harry's Bar, a mahogany rolling screen with custom steel brackets on tracks and counterweights makes it easy to open and close.

"It's kind of like a garage door track, but it's a wood track and there are cables that are hidden," Strom said. "It would be really heavy to open otherwise. We wanted to make something that



ALYSSA LEE

Nods to the main turn-of-the-century house include custom barnlike garage doors. Long and narrow in appearance, the doors are accented with antique handles.

was movable, but not fussy."

## Antique and found objects

Tierney, a collector of salvaged and found items, wanted some of his prized possessions with local references woven into the project.

Reclaimed pieces include a curved glass and mahogany wall divider originally from the former

Juster Brothers downtown Minneapolis men's store that Tierney found at Architectural Antiques. The dividers now serve as the bar's backdrop, closing off the view of cars and clutter on the other side.

For years, Tierney had been hanging onto ornamental wrought iron panels he scored at Bauer Brothers Salvage in Minne-

apolis. The intricately designed panels were pieced together with the help of a welder and used as accents on the garage.

"It's kind of an unusual installation, but it really lightens up the building because, otherwise, it would kind of look like a big vault," Strom said. "I think it's a nice way of adding a finer grain

detail to the building."

## 'Inviting courtyard'

These days, Tierney enjoys having neighbors and friends over to hang out at Harry's Bar.

"It's created this inviting courtyard," he said. "Because the yard is small, you're making use of this wall that's not just the wall of your garage, but you can actually occupy it."

For friend, former neighbor and Harry's Bar regular Leon Hushcha, who stopped by on a recent evening, the quaint environment means he rarely walks away without having had a great conversation. "It's a very intimate space," he said.

Friend Maggie Romens agreed. "It's like 'Cheers,' but way better," she said. "Because it's outdoors, it's in the elements."

Tierney appreciates that, despite being shiny and new, the garage/bar design makes it seem as if it had been there all along.

"It looks like it's from the early 1900s, when the house was built," Tierney said. "To me, that's what makes it so special."

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## ◀ ADVICE from HI

recently lured in by a candle from a well-known brand that was "formulated with vegan-friendly ingredients" only to find it also contained paraffin. So make sure you're getting 100% of whatever alternative wax you seek. Also, check to see if artificial scents or other chemicals have been added. (Choose candles scented with nothing but essential oils.) Look for wicks that are made from cotton, wood or hemp — and glass containers that can be recycled or reused.

Organic Savanna candles, poured in Kenya, are handmade from organic soy wax and locally sourced ingredients. One hundred percent of profits from the sale of the candles helps create jobs for Kenyan women and fund children's education. Les Crème candles have pure organic coconut wax and cotton wicks. Hive to Home candles incorporate locally sourced beeswax, organic coconut oil, cotton wicks and sustainable packaging. Rapeseed wax candles are harder to find, especially in the United States. But plenty of places sell the wax itself if you're a candle maker.

**Q:** My kitchen feels like a toxic waste dump filled with plastic bags and storage containers, plastic wrap and more. Are there better choices?

**A:** Indeed there are. Plastic containers have gotten a lot of negative press, especially those that contain Bisphenol A, or BPA, which has been discovered to be an endocrine disrupter linked to all kinds of potential health issues and is banned in many states. Now we are swimming in BPA-free

# Design advice for a less toxic life



KLAS FAHLEN • New York Times

plastics. Unfortunately, these can contain Bisphenol S (BPS), which is chemically similar.

An alternative is glass or metal storage containers with silicone lids. (Silicone isn't perfect because many communities don't recycle it, but it is primarily made from a naturally derived material, silica, and lasts much longer than plastic.)

Brands include Ikea, Pyrex, and Public Goods.

You can also reuse screw-top glass jars. (If the original housed something aromatic like garlicky dill pickles, you'll want to run the lid through the dishwasher first.)

Plastic wrap and even some wax paper also contain materials derived from petroleum. Also, they are (gen-

erally) one-time-use products, so they keep your bowl of guacamole fresh for a day before off to the landfill they go.

But there are plastic-free wraps, typically cotton fabric coated with some sort of wax, that can be used repeatedly to cover a jar or bowl, or wrap a piece of cut fruit or a wedge of cheese. They don't last forever but they are typically compostable (or can be used as fire starters). I find they sometimes pick up odors, but a thorough wash in cool water and mild soap, followed by a thorough air dry freshens them. Bee's Wrap has two versions — one coated in beeswax, the other in a vegan-friendly soy-coconut wax blend.

Another clever product is Food Huggers, which are a set of five sizes of colorful, stretchy discs made from food-grade silicone. They are dishwasher-, freezer- and microwave-safe. You can use them as jar lids or slide them over the cut end of a lemon, onion, apple or other produce. The company also makes silicone "Hugger Bags" that take the place of plastic food storage bags.

**Q:** I'm interested in trying natural fabric dyeing but am afraid it's really complicated. Where can I find out more?

**A:** Making dye from plants and animals goes back to ancient times and has been done by nearly all cultures. Today there is a community of dyers you can tap into for information,

ideas and supplies.

I've long been a fan of indigo, a plant in the bean family whose leaves — when soaked and fermented — produce a beautiful deep-blue dye. Other colors can be produced using flowers, roots, berries, fruit and vegetable peels, wood, even insects.

The Bible mentions a particular blue dye color, called tekhelet, whose exact formulation has been lost but is thought to have come from a secretion of sea snails.

But you're right. It's often more complicated than simply boiling some flower petals and dunking in a piece of fabric — especially if you want the dye to be durable and stay uniform over time.

Botanical Colors, based in Seattle, offers education and natural dyeing materials. They support farmers and organic and regenerative farming, organizing workshops locally and sometimes in other parts of the country, on topics including dyeing with mud, indigo, persimmon tannins and more. They also have a biweekly online show called "Feedback Friday," which began during the pandemic. The group's president, Kathy Hattori, and sustainability and communications director, Amy DuFault, speak with artists, writers and scholars about natural dyeing and color.

Maiwa, based in Vancouver, British Columbia, sells a large range of materials for the natural dyer as well as downloadable instructions, books, and fabrics. They also offer classes, many of them free, through their School of Textiles.