

# Natural BEAUTY

Interior designer Sean Symington drew on botanical inspiration to help owners Jennie and Andrew Tyler put their stamp on this handsome Georgian villa

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**RIGHT** A grasscloth from Phillip Jeffries lines the bookshelves and serves as a vibrant foil to conifer pots sourced from Lorford's Antiques. The Montferrat Leaf chandelier and brass Exton mirror, both from Vaughan, bring a contemporary edge to classic fabrics including Schumacher's Elton cotton check in Sage on the armchairs – which are from Kingcome – and cushions in Colefax and Fowler's Honeysuckle Garden. The Nureyev drinks trolley is by Soane Britain.





*‘We wanted to bring that impression of nature indoors’*

**W**ith its beguiling floral prints and fresh colour palettes, this Georgian villa in Somerset feels as joyous and uplifting as its bucolic surroundings. “The house really lent itself to botanicals,” explains Jennie Tyler, who bought the villa two years ago with her husband, Andrew. “You arrive at the property through an arch of foliage and leafy trees and the surrounding gardens are wonderful, too; we wanted to bring that impression of nature indoors.”

The house, which is Grade II listed, is one of a near-identical pair. “It was built in 1820 for two sisters, which explains why the walled garden surrounds both properties,” recounts Jennie. “In 1890, the two houses became a small boarding school for boys, but some years later, they were turned back into residences.” Jennie had known the house long before she met Andrew: “I brought up my two children in the same village but I sold my cottage when I moved into Andrew’s house in Bradford-upon-Avon. When we decided to look for a home together, I mentioned to a friend that this house would be perfect, although I didn’t think it would ever come up for sale. I couldn’t believe it when I saw it online that same evening.”

The previous owners had undertaken considerable works, including replacing the roof and adding an orangery at the back of the house, which today serves as the dining room. “We wanted to make two changes of our own to the layout, the first being to turn the formal dining room into a study for Andrew. It meant we were able to block off a door between this room and the kitchen, which gave us the opportunity to tweak the kitchen layout,” says Jennie. “The second alteration was to transform one of the four bedrooms upstairs into a dressing room for our master suite.”

The couple enlisted the help of interior designer Sean Symington, who they first met over a Zoom call during the pandemic. “As I began explaining some of my ideas, Sean was pulling up images that I had already earmarked. He seemed to intuitively understand what I wanted,” Jennie says. Born in Canada, Sean cut his teeth with a well-known Toronto-based designer before moving to London and then Bath, where he worked for studios such as Samantha Todhunter and Sims Hilditch. “I’m a product of everywhere I have ever worked,” laughs Sean, who ▶

**TOP LEFT** Plates from Penny Morrison lend decorative touches to the walls. The Padworth Vase table lamp is from Vaughan; the yellow lacquer tray is from De Rosee Sa. **LEFT** Blocking up the door to the former dining room enabled a full length of cabinetry on the back wall. It is painted in James White, while the island units are in Vert de Terre, both by Farrow & Ball. The Shaftesbury pendant lights are from Neptune.



**ABOVE** Andrew’s study is painted a rich hue, Green Smoke by Farrow & Ball. The armchair, footstool and back of the Emma desk chair by The Dining Chair Company are covered in Bukhara by Lewis & Wood. The antique desk is from Timothy Langston Fine Art & Antiques.

**RIGHT** A faded rug and antique bird prints found at Sunbury Antiques Market bring a decorative feel to the utility room, where bespoke cabinetry in Farrow & Ball’s Lichen creates a calming feel. The Kubu storage baskets are from Wovenhill.





*'We like tradition but we wanted an element of modernity'*

brings a fresh eye to classic English country style. "I think that when you use quite traditional designs it is important to 'hip' things up a little."

Jennie and Andrew approved of this approach. "We love florals but we didn't want the interiors to be too chintzy; we like tradition but we wanted an element of modernity," Jennie says. "Every time Sean suggested something I wouldn't have ever considered, such as the fun contemporary mirrors and lighting, I told myself that was the whole point of getting help with the interiors. I haven't regretted any of the braver choices."

At the start of the project, Andrew showed Sean a book of beautiful botanical paintings by his great-great-aunt, Caroline May. "She lived in Surrey and Cornwall and painted in the mid-1800s," Andrew explains. "My uncle, who curates the originals, had a hundred or so of the paintings published in a book that included the story of her life, with a foreword by the naturalist Richard Mabey." Sean suggested framing around 70 of the bookplates in order to display them throughout the house. "It was wonderful to include something so personal to Andrew's family, and there was so much choice, I was able to select prints in colours that worked with the different room schemes," he explains.

A case in point is the drawing room, where the framed botanicals share the same green and yellow hues as the fabrics. "The starting point for this scheme was a classic honeysuckle embroidery by Colefax and Fowler," explains Sean, who countered this traditional design with pieces such as a sculptural white metal chandelier and a leaf green grasscloth, which lines the backs of a pair of bespoke bookcases.

In the kitchen, Sean redesigned much of the joinery, painting it in tones of fresh green that beautifully offset a blind in a hand-printed trellis pattern. The same fabric and tonal green paint colours flow through to the adjoining utility room, where more bespoke joinery maximises the available space. "I added open shelves with wicker baskets to give the room more warmth and character," Sean says. ▶

**TOP LEFT** An Acerra ceramic vase lamp with a Fearnle Tribal lampshade, both from Vaughan, sits on the custom-built breakfast buffet by Arcadia Antiques.

**LEFT** Botanical prints by Andrew's great-great-aunt, Caroline May, are hung in a grid formation for an impactful display. "I suggested simple wooden frames painted a greyish-taupe, Shadow White by Farrow & Ball, for a more modern feel," says Sean. The Zurich lantern is by Vaughan.

**RIGHT** A pleasing sense of symmetry is created in the dressing room with a pair of Genevieve chests of drawers from Sweetpea & Willow. The curtain fabric, seen here reflected in the mirror, is the same Indienne print by Lewis & Wood as the wallpaper in the adjoining bedroom.



**ABOVE** A shapely headboard in Nereid Sage by Sophie Coryndon at Soane Britain creates a focal point against the backdrop of pretty Indienne wallpaper by Lewis & Wood in the principal bedroom. The ottoman at the foot of the bed conceals a television. The scalloped bedside tables are from Sarah Vanrenen.

**RIGHT** The 18th-century bird prints were found at Lorfords Antiques while the chair from Vinterior has been reupholstered in a gingham fabric from Chelsea Textiles.





**ABOVE LEFT & ABOVE RIGHT**

A punchy print for the headboard and blind, Haveli Pink, teamed with a chair in Ashok Pink – both by Penny Morrison – lends a playful feel to this bedroom in the converted coach house. The Kareli Check rug is from Birdie Fortescue.

**RIGHT** Wallpaper and fabric in Leaf Trellis in Sage on White by Paolo Moschino works beautifully with the grey-green vanity unit and panelling. The flooring is from Mandarin Stone. To see more of Sean Symington's interior design work, visit [seansymington.com](http://seansymington.com)

The handsome staircase features two walls with botanicals by Andrew's ancestor which set the tone for pretty florals in the bedrooms. The principal bedroom, which is hung with a beautiful chintz-inspired wallpaper, gives Jennie the impression of waking up in a luxury boutique hotel. "Having the adjoining dressing room means that the bedroom is completely free of clutter; it's so incredibly peaceful," she says.

Between them, Jennie and Andrew have six grown-up children, so the second phase of the works entailed converting the coach house. Sean designed a layout to incorporate a gym on the entrance level and two bedrooms, a bathroom and a tiny kitchenette on the floor above. "I tried to balance the 'newness' of these spaces by adding character such as tongue-and-groove and shiplap board, which I used for the ceilings in the bedrooms," he says.

Jennie and Andrew now have a home that responds to their needs, and is decorated in a manner that respects the heritage of the house without being pastiche. "It has been an amazing process," reflects Jennie, adding, "I feel that we have made this place really ours." ■

