

Nest Building

by KATE BRIDGER

Cottage Industry

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Setting off for the summer cottage on the weekends used to mean packing up the car with a few basic items and leaving behind the stresses, conveniences and technology relied upon during the



rest of the week. Evenings at the cottage were spent dodging mosquitoes, reading in the dim light of a hissing propane lamp, burning our tongues on charred marshmallows and, after a quick trip to the outdoor biffy, curling up in a damp, sandy sleeping bag to outdo one another with the telling of scary stories right before bedtime.

Cottages were furnished with flea market treasures and other once-loved items no longer 'good' enough to be used at home—chipped cups and plates, threadbare rugs and rickety wooden chairs that gave you splinters in your behind if you didn't sit still. Art on the wall was anything that could be hung on a nail—stained embroidery samplers, lumps of driftwood, faded old family photographs and paint-by-number copies of works by famous



Dutch masters. No one worried about grit on the floors and fishing tackle in the living room until Sunday evening when it was time to give the place a good old sweep, pack up the car and get home in time for another Monday morning.

But ... things have changed. Many cottages now have electricity, indoor plumbing, screened-in porches, hot tubs, Internet and even satellite dishes. No one can survive a whole weekend without Blackberries—and I'm not referring to that juicy little fruit growing along country lanes.

An entire industry has evolved to support and encourage cottage culture and décor. There are numerous glossy cottager magazines available showing readers everything from how to maintain their septic system to stitch the perfect country pillow sham. There are specialized designers eager to help you choose a style—'French country', 'American rustic', 'English quaint'—so you can decorate your picture-perfect cottage with just the right furnishings and accessories. Before you know it, you're headed downtown in search of new dishes, furniture covers and curtains, 'proper' art, bedding, towels and floor coverings ... and so on and so forth ... no more trips to the flea market or noble attempts to rescue tired furniture from the dump.

In the designer cottage, sandy feet propped up on the coffee table and wet dogs recumbent on the imported chenille floor rug are not welcome, nor are fishing poles leaning against the sofa, or swimming togs hanging to dry from nails hammered randomly into the wood paneling. You'll be far too busy to sit and play cards or paddle about in the canoe; there may be a dishwasher to load, a lawn to mow, beds to make and furniture to polish ... just like home.

What happened to the good old family cottage that was so appealing because of what it *didn't* have? Perhaps we didn't always love the cobwebbed outhouse, the trek to the lake to fetch water and the long empty evenings stretching out before us; on the other hand, however, there were some great stories and family lore born and shared over those weekends when there was no phone to ring, no game to watch and no 'Facebook' to keep up with.

Photo credits: Top – Blue moon in her eyes
Bottom – Posh Living

