

As seen in *Small Room Decorating*

# DRAWING ON VERSATILITY



**ARTIST AT WORK:** Sheila Sons creates her “Spindlyville” line of hand-drawn stationery with pen and ink, markers and colored pencils. Her tile-topped worktable also serves as a wipe-clean craft space for visiting youngsters or a convenient breakfast table for overnight guests.

**A**S THE OWNER OF SHE DESIGNS Inc., an established graphic design business in Sarasota, Florida, Sheila Sons loved working on computer-generated designs from her home-based office. But a few years ago, she felt herself drawn back to the pencils and pens and papers she had loved so much as a child. Reminiscing about the backyard playhouse where she had immersed herself in artwork as a child, she

told her husband, Ken Sons, “I think it’s time for me to have an adult playhouse.”

In planning the 12-foot-by-14-foot poolside cottage that would become the new studio, Sheila and Ken also considered other needs the cottage could fulfill—guesthouse, pool house and overflow living space for their main residence.

“We have a small Florida home and it has two bedrooms, but the main living area is kind of an open space,” says Sheila. “So if



An artist’s backyard studio doubles (and triples!) as much, much more.

BY MARY CALDWELL

**MINI ESCAPE** Sheila and Ken Sons’ 12’ x 14’ poolside cottage, designed to match their main residence, serves as an artist’s studio, guest room and storage center. Large windows, a French door and a fanlight over the entrance flood the compact space with great light.

## Put it to Good Use

**SIZE:** 168 square feet

**FUNCTION:** Artist’s studio, guesthouse, pool house, extra living space for the main house and extra storage space

**CHALLENGE:** Ensuring workable layout and flow for the compact, multiple-use space

**SOLUTION:** Tall storage units; use of rafters for storage; daybed that converts to two twin beds; farmhouse table that serves as artist’s desk; wipe-clean craft surface for visiting children and dining

## poolside cottage



**LOFT ACCESS** While the sun is up, the striped daybed functions as a seating area. At bedtime, drawers under the daybed can be pulled out to reveal a second twin bed. The lightweight ladder can be folded into a compact space when it's not needed.

you want to curl up with a book and be away from the TV or away from the hubbub in the central part of the house, this cottage offers that as well." In addition, the couple wanted increased storage space. Older Florida homes such as theirs, explains Sheila, are typically short on storage, as there are no basements and the attics are usually small.

The overall challenge: How to turn a 12-foot-by-14-foot space into a room that would not only meet storage and workspace requirements without becoming cluttered and awkward, but also be a warm, welcoming and fun place to hang out.

Sheila experimented with computer-generated layouts to find the best-functioning plan for the space—to make sure, for example, that there would be enough floor space for the daybed's pullout to open fully.

Storage considerations were key for this multifunction space. By necessity, since floor

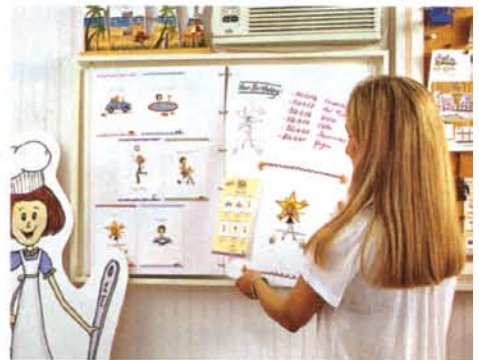
space is limited, Sheila and Ken installed tall shelving units along one wall to take advantage of vertical possibilities. There's not a finished ceiling, which makes the space seem larger, and loft space on each side of the peak holds out-of-season items from the main house as well as supplies that Sheila doesn't need on a daily basis. Another set of drawers, perfectly sized for archiving original artwork, nestles under the worktable.

## Nautical Touches

To achieve the warm, welcoming mood they wanted, Sheila and Ken began collecting nautical-themed accents long before the cottage was built. Notable examples include bottled sand samples from the couple's travels as well as items with seahorse, mermaid, lighthouse and shell motifs. It's a relaxed, don't-worry atmosphere—a little cottage with a big heart.



**TALL ORDER** Light-toned furniture and vertical stripes add a sense of dimension, accentuating the height of the tiny cottage.



**SHOWOFF STYLE** Just like school binders can organize disparate subjects, Sheila's wall-mounted version serves multiple purposes. Here, the book shows the newest additions to her Spindlyville stationery line (visit [Spindlyville.com](http://Spindlyville.com) to see examples of Sheila's work). She also uses the oversized pages for sketching new ideas.

**VERTICAL SPACE** To maximize vertical storage in a room with limited floor space, the Sons installed tall unfinished bookcases along one wall and painted them to resemble built-ins. Cabinet doors added on lower shelves conceal messier items. Rafters accommodate other overflow from the main house—all concealed in attractive containers that fit in with the nautical/cottage motif.