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A Perfectly Charming Cottage





Local designer Daniel Keeley fully renovated this historic home — from the garden to the interior

By Nancy Peevy
Photos by Chadwick Turner

Several years ago, exterior designer Daniel Keeley bought and renovated a house on Prospect Street in Fayetteville's historic district. During the 10 years he lived there, he had his eye on a house on the same block and told the owner to call him if she ever wanted to sell. A couple of years ago, as Keeley was in the process of selling the Prospect house, the owner did call him, and Keeley bought the two-bedroom cottage built in the 1940s.

"Other than a new roof, the house hadn't been touched and wasn't good at all on the inside, but I knew what I could do to make it cute," Keeley said. "I had completely redone the house and garden on the Prospect house, and I knew I could do that here — not quite as full throttle or as expensive a version, but I knew I could really transform it, and it would be 180 degrees opposite from what my Prospect house had been."





That house was “brick, dark, formal and moody,” Keeley said. “I saw this as a project that was the opposite of that — for fun.”

Keeley started with completely overhauling the bathroom and the kitchen. In the kitchen, he added counter space and cabinet space. Wanting the stove to be a focal point of the room, he chose the tile around it “to be funky and fun” and the range hood to stand out. He painted it three different times before he finally decided on “Resolute Blue” by Sherwin-Williams. The blue hood “picks up one of the colors in the tile, and that color is repeated on the ceiling of the bathroom and the bench out front in the garden,” Keeley said. He used touches of blue throughout the house and yard to tie the home all together, including the blue linen draperies, a rug and a light fixture in the dining area.

To make the 966-square-foot house feel larger, Keeley widened the doorway to the kitchen and kept the colors mostly light and airy. The large windows bring in natural light, adding to the spacious feeling.

The wooden armoire in the living area had been designed by Keeley and custom-made for the Prospect house. “It was inspired by an outdoor TV cabinet we did on a project,” he said.

The base is powder-coated steel and the detail on the upper part is ipe wood, an extremely durable tropical hardwood, similar to teak. The piece contains the television, and the doors slide open left and right, rather than swing open, which is perfect in the compact space. The credenza in the dining area is one of Keeley’s favorite pieces. Made of teak, it was originally created to go outside.

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All the artwork throughout the house is original. Many pieces were done by Arkansas artists, and the piece over the credenza was done by J.H. Allen — an artist based in Key West, Florida, and a friend of Keeley's. The painting in the dining area of the figure of a man came from France, and Keeley found it at French Metro Antiques on Dickson Street.

As a landscape designer, Keeley was especially interested in the outside of the house and the area surrounding the home. He added the awning over the front door and changed the siding to wide-plank Hardie board. Wanting the yard to feel like a cottage garden, Keeley brought the garden all the way to the street, surrounding it with an attractive white fence and adding a gate. He created an inviting outdoor room in the front yard, which gives the house immediate curb appeal. The front garden now feels like "a more intimate space that belongs to the house and is not so exposed," he said.

The grass between the stones leading to the house makes the garden soft and more charming. The pea gravel on the driveway and in the parking area gives the house a "casual, European charm," Keeley said. "It's very attractive, but it's also inexpensive."

Keeley added window boxes to the house and filled them with purple salvia, ivy, dusty miller and two colors of trailing verbena. The boxwoods around the base of the home and along the driveway give the house an evergreen foundation. At the street, low-maintenance monkey grass fills in the space in front of the fence. Climbing roses and flowering perennials in the beds on both sides of the fence add color, as do the two ornamental cherry trees that bloom in the spring.

The blue theme begins at the front of the home with the blue front door, blue stones on the front stoop and the blue bench, which Keeley added "to seem welcoming."

In the backyard, Keeley added a deck across the back of the house, with a door out of the primary bedroom. "I wanted the deck to expand the whole way across, and that gives two points of access and creates a flow for entertaining," Keeley said.

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The deck has room for lounging and dining, and it provides access to the house from the driveway and the garage. He used an old sugar kettle to create an easy, inexpensive firepit, which becomes a coffee table in the summer when it's covered with a lid. Keeley planted Nellie R. Stevens holly trees alongside the firepit area to provide a privacy screen. He repeated the pea gravel and used monkey grass as a ground cover. The pots, planted seasonally, again tie in with the blue theme.

Using his expertise as a designer, Keeley completely made over his home and created a perfectly charming cottage — both inside and out. ■



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