

A WILD HARBOR GARDEN BLOOMS WITH A GARDENER'S WELL-LEARNED LESSONS

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HARMONIC CONVERGENCE

THE REINCARNATION OF THE CRANBERRY

by Chris White | Photography by Dan Cutrona





With deep roots in Eastern philosophies such as the Tao, James Redfield's 1993 novel *The Celestine Prophecy* popularized the axiom that, "Where attention goes energy flows; where intention goes energy flows." Perhaps he stated the obvious, but one house in a secluded throwback Brewster neighborhood near the shores of Cape Cod Bay exemplifies these truths to magnificent result. A team of two sisters and their spouses purchased a home in this beloved neighborhood. Along with the neighborhood architect; a builder setting forth on his first solo project; and Falmouth-based interior designer, Jennifer Perini; the team focused their intentions and attention like sunlight through a magnifying glass to craft a gorgeous shingle-style cottage that marries tradition with the future, Cape charm with a plan for contemporary living.

Sisters Kim and Kristen grew up summering in this cozy neighborhood, as had their mother, so their roots run deep. They knew that a rebuild here needed to be done thoughtfully, especially since the first incarnation of the cottage—named The Cranberry—had been a fixture since about 1907. "The previous owners are from a family that's been here longer than ours has," says Kim. "We love this neighborhood. No matter where else we've lived, this is always home, and we always have come back here to spend summers with our families." Despite their nostalgia, however, the house needed major

changes, so after four years of ownership, they decided to get to work on an update. Kim says, "We were very cognizant of fitting into the neighborhood, so we felt strongly about going with the shingle-style and keeping it The Cranberry, sticking with the cranberry-colored trim and windows."

At the time, Kim was living in San Francisco, while Kristen resides in Texas. Jennifer Perini and builder Chris Wood are both based on the Cape, making for a multi-branched team. Kim says, "It's a testament to what a great person and designer Jennifer is that she was able to manage all four of our personalities." Along with one of the sisters' husband Mike—a commercial builder—the family reached out to the neighborhood architect, Tony Pond. Kim says, "He designed many of the homes here, so he understands the aesthetic. He understood how we wanted the house to just blend right in." Pond also impressed Perini, who reports, "Tony did a beautiful job on the house, the scale and the proportions of things, the symmetry. And he drafted all his drawings by hand, which were beautiful." Pond recommended Chris Wood of CW Building & Remodeling, who recently started his own independent business. Wood and Mike quickly developed a rapport. Kim says, "We didn't even hesitate. Mike thought Chris did great work and was certainly willing to support him in this new endeavor. He was a great fit with Mike. They would talk about nails, and wood, and trim, and the mechanical room—just completely geeked out over everything. They still talk constantly."





Key to the partnership was Wood's understanding of the context of the project. He says, "You don't want to be the big toe that stands out. This is a community where the kids all congregate in the summer—there must be fifty of them—and the sisters' father, Tom, sets up and runs events. Just recently, we created a new sign here that asks subcontractors and vendors to drive slowly, to respect the neighbors, and to wave. It's just this simple sign, but it means the world to the neighbors." Perini adds, "It's a really darling area where everyone knows each other through generations of watching the kids grow up. That was really the point of this project—for the sisters to share it with their families and host their friends."

Perini and Wood joined forces after Perini reached out to him from a referral about a small renovation project in Falmouth. While he didn't take that job, he invited her to come onboard with this Brewster project. "It was our first project together. Chris really thinks through the details and wants everything to be well-conceived, thoughtful, and special. As a designer, for me to work with a builder like that is such a pleasure. Now we're on our third project together—in this same neighborhood." Wood says, "Jennifer has an awesome rapport with everyone. She's just a great person, and I like the fact that she was open to other ideas, not just 'It's my way or the highway.' It means a lot because that's the way we run our business here. We ask all our

subcontractors and vendors to give us ideas because it makes us a better company."

Perini has partnered with many out-of-state clients, so the sisters' geographical distances posed no obstacle. Noting their involvement, she says, "They're lovely to work with. Overall, the elements with the most collaboration from both couples were the kitchen layout and finishes. It was great to come up with ideas that were fully fleshed out from all four individuals; and sometimes come up with compromises in order to arrive at solutions that worked. For example, one person initially wanted white cabinets, to pair with the Farrow & Ball Hague Blue in the kitchen. I talked them into going with a natural finish—white oak cabinetry instead of the white paint which would have been starker, lending more of a nautical feel than we really wanted in the house." It helped that Kim and Kristen shared a common focus along with similar tastes. "They really had one vision for the house, especially the main areas," says Perini. "Since they have tons of friends in the neighborhood, they wanted to be able to come up from the beach and hang out in the kitchen with a nearby bar all set up. That's why we have this giant island with the hammered copper bar sink, ice maker, beverage drawers and a built-in wine fridge behind."





Harmony lies at the heart of Perini's design for The Cranberry's interiors, and Wood's approach centers upon how elements "pull" one through the home. He explains, "We want something to grab your attention, then when you turn, we want something else to grab you. Working with Jennifer, she loved that vision. For instance, you walk into the side entry, and you're blown away by this alleyway of a kitchen, all this brass and the beautiful wine fridge. Next you see the ocean view. Toward the fireplace, you get a view of the beams, the concrete fireplace with vertical shiplap." These focal points draw the eye throughout the home, in part because, Perini explains, "The open floor plan is effectively harmonious in its sweep from left to right. So, the kitchen's blues tie in with the over-dyed vintage blue rug under the dining table, then carry through to the living area where blue appears again—with some teals mixed in. The dark blue of the lower cabinets is kind of a punchy color, but it's in harmony with the whole space because there's not too much of it. I like to design in big spaces by layering with texture, but not so much color and pattern. It's calmer that way." In contrast, she often chooses colors that pop for more confined areas. "I love to create a special moment in a small space, like we did in the powder room with a bold, graphic wallpaper by Kelly Wearstler," she says. "In the larger living spaces, I use bold colors intentionally, but sparingly."



For much of her design, Perini chose natural materials such as the brass and copper elements that recur throughout, from the exterior gutters to sink legs and plumbing fixtures to brass shelving suspended from the ceiling. "The brass comes from Palmer Industries in Rhode Island, and the bar sink in the woodtop is hammered copper from Native Trails." Additionally, she says, "We have the white oak cabinetry and hood, the natural stone quartzite and walnut countertops, a Zellige tile backsplash. The beams are fashioned from reclaimed wood by Cataumet Sawmill. I was able to go and choose them specifically; they help delineate the three main spaces of kitchen, dining, and living. Again, adding natural elements and extra detail in the features, but it's the mix of materials that make it interesting." The variations in textures also tied into a blend of



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different styles, starting with the traditional exterior shingles and the region-specific cranberry trim. Kim says of the resulting blended design, “We decided to make the outside very much like a home that looks like it should be on Cape Cod, but I just love that California beach aesthetic, and my sister lives in Dallas so she likes the Texas farmhouse look.”

One achievement in terms of both design and practicality occupies prime real estate in the kitchen. Perini says, “Initially we started with a design for two islands—one for prep and another to serve as the bar—but it laid out better as one large area. With almost a

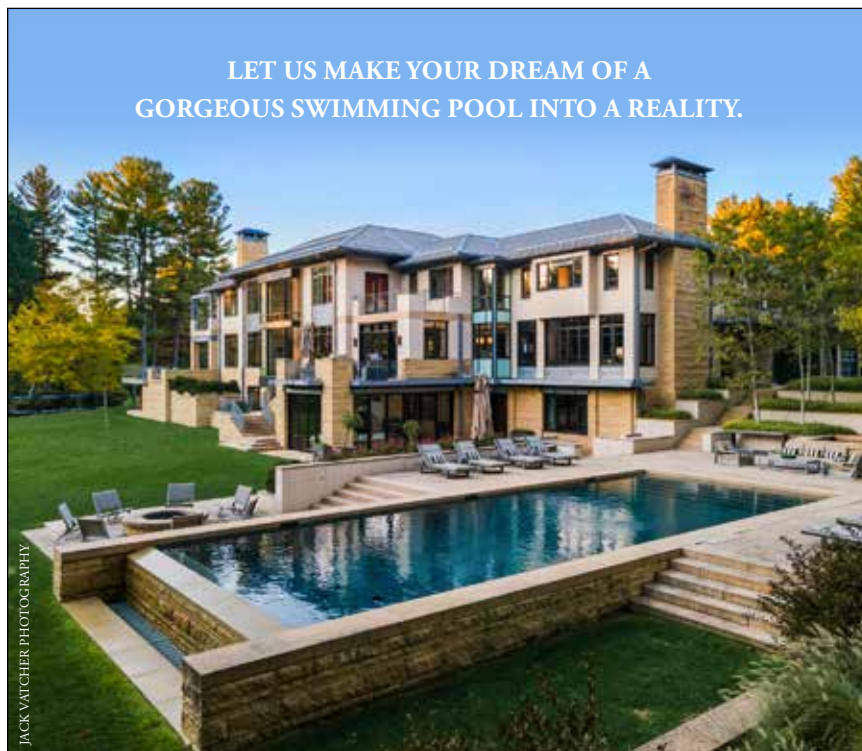
full slab of quartzite on one half, we decided to soften the look by adding the wood countertop, which is nicer to sit at and a little more elegant. And then we have the beautiful, oversized pendants from Visual Comfort, with a concrete finish that picks up on the fireplace across the room that was crafted by Elements Concrete.” This massive island allowed Wood to solve some plumbing and electrical puzzles as well—ideas that he worked through with Mike. Wood says, “We made a dog cubby that slides out. Then you can access all the wiring, all the piping and mechanicals for the dishwashers and appliances.”

On projects such as this, Perini works closely with clients for quite a long time. “When it’s over, you’re all kind of sad,” she says, “but uniquely to Kim and Kristen, as soon as this house was finished in 2022, we began working with their parents on a rebuild in the same neighborhood, again with Chris Wood and Tony Pond. So, the involvement with the family and the team continues.” Kim confirms the tight-knit team and couldn’t have been happier with Perini, “Working with her was just seamless from day one,” she says. “She’s super collaborative, lovely, and obviously a great designer. I feel like I might be the person that



says, ‘Oh! I knew her when she designed our house!’—like when she’s famous and charging a million dollars for her design services. I can’t say enough great things about her. If I rewind my life to when I was twenty-five and newly married, I would never have dreamed this big. Our house is literally beyond our wildest dreams, and we were lucky that the family we bought from trusted us to keep The Cranberry’s legacy alive.” 🏠

Chris White is a regular freelance contributor for Cape Cod HOME.



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