

HOMES & GARDENS



From the front yard, the extended, angled section of Melinda Bruce's home gives the illusion that the house is wider than it is. David Paul Bayles, Gibbs Smith

For the owner of this small Eugene house, 'big enough' is just right

Janet Eastman *The Oregonian/OregonLive*

Architect Jan Fillingner could easily have felt constrained when Melinda Bruce asked him to design a single-level house for her on the smallest residential lot allowed by the city of Eugene.

Only half of that 4,500-square-foot lot could be used for the dwelling, parking, patio and stormwater filtration planter. But those restrictions only broadened Fillingner's imagination.

His plan connects the living room, dining area and kitchen in one open space lined with large windows framing gardens and glass doors leading to the patio.

The private half of the house, with two

bedroom suites, is set at an angle, which adds visual interest at the entry, creates more floor space in the living room and produces a transition through a hallway from the social areas to restful rooms.

From the front yard, the extended, angled section gives the illusion that the house is wider than it is.

"Visitors are surprised when they hear my home is only 1,268 square feet," said Bruce, who left a multistoried house on a woody half-acre to live in this energy efficient house close to the University of Oregon campus.

Her scaled-down property is adjacent to a townhouse development that Fillingner's firm, Studio.e Architecture in Eugene, also

designed. Bruce's backyard overlooks the landscaped common area of the townhouse complex.

She had lived for more than 30 years in a rambling house, but she felt isolated there after her husband died. "There's nostalgia associated with my old home," said Bruce, 76. "But there is a real advantage, as one ages, to living in a smaller home in a larger community. I've connected with neighbors who now are friends."

Shrinking the size of her residence also saves on maintenance and utility costs. In exchange, she invested in eco-friendly features such as layered insulation, Energy Star appliances and sustainable bamboo floors.

With escalating residential real estate prices and property taxes, and rising home improvement costs and upkeep, more people question if they need all the living space and stuff they have.

The National Association of Home Builders reports that the average home size was 983 square feet in 1950. It jumped to 1,500 square feet in the 1970s and is now around 2,540 square feet.

Working at home due to the coronavirus pandemic has some home shoppers wanting even more space indoors and out.

Yet young adults typically can't afford larger homes, retirees are looking for more carefree living, and energy-efficient, **SEE SMALL HOUSE, C4**

KITCHEN DESIGN

Transform subway tile

Turn an ordinary kitchen backsplash pattern on its ear. **C2**

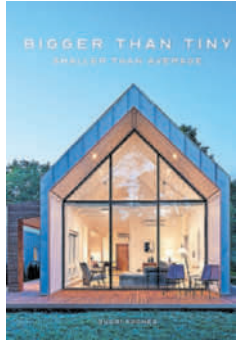
HOUSEPLANT TRENDS

Holy leaves and vines!

Take a look at the plants you can expect to see more of in the next year. **C6**

SMALL HOUSE

For the owner of this small Eugene house, 'Bigger Than Tiny, Smaller Than Average'



'BIGGER THAN TINY, SMALLER THAN AVERAGE'

By Sheri Koones, \$35, Gibbs Smith, March 29, 2022, 224 pages

Continues from C1

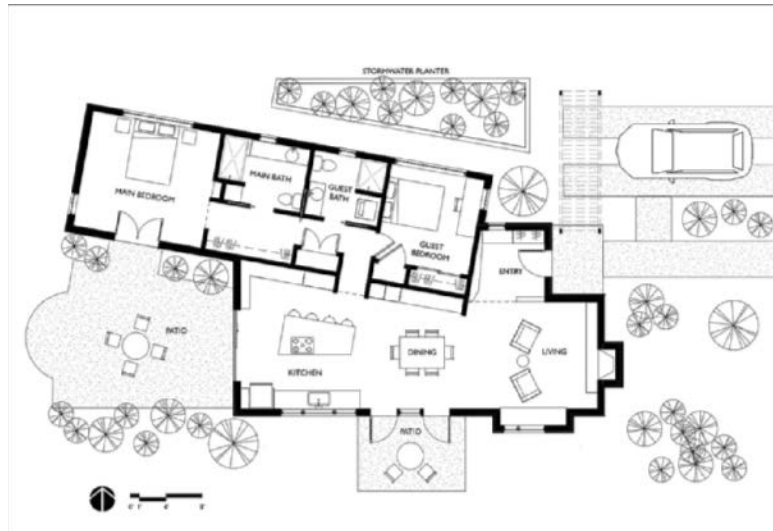
small-scale floor plans help the environment, said Fillinger.

Oregon's climate allows for outdoor living most of the year, he said, and installing an awning to enjoy coffee outside is less expensive than adding a breakfast room indoors.

Fillinger, who is an expert at Passive House building standards, said, "Our philosophy is aligned with people who want small, efficient homes that connect to nature."

'BIGGER THAN TINY'

Bruce's charming, compact house in Eugene is included in "Bigger Than Tiny, Smaller Than Average," the latest book by bestselling "Downsize" author Sheri Koones.



Architect Jan Fillinger of Studio.e Architecture designed a comfortable, compact house for Melinda Bruce in Eugene.

The 224-page "Bigger Than Tiny" (\$35, Gibbs Smith) showcases 26 houses, some newly built like Bruce's, as well as accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and existing homes that have been remodeled to be more space efficient, easier to maintain and more aesthetically appealing.

A Seattle couple profiled in the book built an alley-accessible ADU in the garden by their Craftsman house. Their intention was to rent out the small home. But they found they preferred living under high ceilings and in only 800 square feet of space.

Koones, who has written about downsized housing for a decade, reports in her latest book, "The trend toward smaller homes is not limited to one specific generation, and, while economic considerations are a major factor, they are not the only ones."

She said a clever, compact home appeals to parents who have fewer children or are empty nesters, people with active lifestyles who don't want to be tethered to chores as well as those who are concerned about the environment and want to reduce their water and energy use.

They want, Koones writes, efficient homes that are simply "big enough" with practical spaces that serve several purposes.



Melinda Bruce's living, dining and kitchen areas open to each other, allowing the transfer of heat and ventilation through the large windows and doors. The floor is made of stranded bamboo engineered hardwood. David Paul Bayles, Gibbs Smith

The well-designed dwellings in her new book have tightly sealed windows and doors, tankless water heaters, and native and edible landscaping among other green features.

A single-level, modern house in Bellingham, Washington, was oriented to take in the view of Bellingham Bay and the Canadian islands as well as best position the metal roof for solar panels.

The photovoltaic panels produce more energy than the owners need to heat, cool, cook and illuminate their 1,634-square-foot home.

For Bruce's house, Stonewood Construction in Eugene followed Fillinger's plan for blown-in fiberglass, continuous exterior foam board and other insulation that exceeded code requirements.

"I rarely need the heat on," said Bruce, who pays about \$150 a month for gas, electric and water. "My old home, built in the late 1960s, leaked heat like crazy."

A heat-recovery ventilation system (HRV) in her new home keeps the indoor air fresh while conserving a comfortable temperature.

She also hired Studio.e Architecture to plan the interior design and lighting for her contemporary-style home.

Custom-laminated birch cabinets, large drawers and display shelves in the kitchen give Bruce, who likes to cook and entertain, easy access to dishware, tools and pantry items.



Sliding doors in Melinda Bruce's home open to a patio. Aaron Montoya, Gibbs Smith

She has the midcentury Danish furniture from her former home, but there are new pieces too. She can slide a desk out from the closet to change the guest room into a home office space.

When her grown daughter came to visit, there was privacy for both.

"It's an easy house to live in," said Bruce, who moved here three years ago. "And since it has universal design features for aging in place, I plan to stay in my own home."

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'big enough' is just right



ation. The flooring is highly sustainable



"Bigger Than Tiny, Smaller Than Average" by Sheri Koones showcases 26 houses, including this 1,100-square-foot house in North Branch, New York. *TJ Simon, Gibbs Smith*



In Vancouver, B.C., a garage was converted into this 650-square-foot ADU. *Brett Hitchins, Gibbs Smith*



A 1,300-square-foot house in Nova Scotia, Canada, is included in "Bigger Than Tiny, Smaller Than Average." *Acorn Photographs, Gibbs Smith*

10 WAYS TO MAKE SMALL HOUSES FEEL BIGGER

Large windows, high ceilings and easy access to the outdoors are three ways to make an enclosed space feel expansive. But if remodeling is not in your budget, Sheri Koones, author of "Bigger Than Tiny, Smaller Than Average," and other experts offer do-it-yourself and decorating tips to give the illusion of more space.

- Start by decluttering. "Appreciate the calm and simplicity of time spent living with all the comforts you need and nothing extra," writes Koones.
- A neutral color scheme and light-colored cabinets and walls can help give a home a more open and inviting look.
- Strategically placed lighting is key to a space that feels bright and open.
- Dual-purpose furniture lets you eliminate duplicates. The 430-square-foot Micro Home profiled in Koones' book has a couch-daybed to seat and sleep guests.
- Built-in furniture like workstations and cabinets can make use of otherwise wasted niches. A South Carolina family of five included in the book has built-in beds and dressers to save floor space in the small bedrooms.
- The right type of storage and cabinets can provide a designated place for everything. The South Carolina home has floor-to-ceiling cabinetry and library ladders in the pantry, laundry room and main bedroom.
- Keep materials simple and light. For one home, maple flooring was cut in short lengths and laid perpendicular to the view, giving the floor a water-like texture that makes it feel expansive and tranquil, writes Koones.
- Pocket doors and rolling barn doors conceal without needing space to swing open.
- Consider if there's a way to expose framing in the ceiling to increase the room's volume.
- Create outdoor spaces as an extension of the home. All of the homeowners in Koones' book constructed comfortable, al fresco places to entertain and enjoy private time.



A panelized house in Bellingham, Washington, is 1,634 square feet. *TJ Simon, Gibbs Smith*