

East Meets West

Japanese architecture influences a serene timber home tucked into the woodlands of Rhode Island.

STORY BY HOLLY O'DELL | PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICH FRUTCHEY

Tumbled Italian marble tile in the foyer transitions to mahogany decking. The front door is made of Spanish cedar and features vertical strips of bamboo on its lower half.

OPPOSITE: A cascading landscape behind Carl and Jackie Ecklund's house offered the perfect opportunity to introduce plants such as Japanese ferns, azaleas, heavenly bamboo and irises, along with stone pathways and circular wooden steppers.



Known for its ability to create serene spaces, Japanese architecture features many desirable factors: natural materials, a strong connection to the outdoors, numerous windows, asymmetrical details, verandas and modest roof pitches. For Carl and Jackie Eklund, all these elements organically and effortlessly blend in their Asian-inspired home in South Kingston, Rhode Island. “The location and dimension of the house led the way,” Jackie notes. “It was almost as if the house dictated what was appropriate.”

Such synchronicity was the norm from the moment the Eklunds decided to build. Carl first considered Far East-influenced architecture for his home after seeing a home built

in the tradition of a post-and-beam Japanese teahouse. Carl and Jackie had already purchased a 6-acre parcel situated on a knoll brimming with mountain laurel shrubs. “After studying the architecture and considering the site, it just seemed like we should put the two together,” Carl recalls.

The couple used Kingston-based South County Post & Beam’s in-house team to design and construct their 2,900-square-foot, four-bedroom, three-bath timber home. They wanted the Japanese influence to be present in both the shape and overall layout of the structure, along with the relationship of the main roof and shed roofs to the wrap-around veranda. They had no trouble accomplishing their goals. “At the first design meeting, one

ABOVE: Jackie, who handled the interior design in the home, chose leather woven chairs and a tinted-glass table for the dining room. The lighting fixture is from Cherry Tree Design of Bozeman, Montana.

OPPOSITE: A door in the bright south-facing living room leads to a terrace, while the pine-trimmed windows overlook a bog. Split half-round cedar logs in the roof system bring depth to the room, which is a replica of a Japanese farmhouse.





The kitchen features a mixture of woods, including the Eastern white pine framing, tongue-and-groove pine ceiling, red maple cabinetry and wenge trim outlining the frosted glass on the cupboards. Modern appliances and granite countertops complete the look. "The kitchen has a great layout," Carl says. "It works like a champ."

of the designers did a doodle based on my ideas," Carl says. "When the home was built, we went back to that sketch, and it looked really close to the finished product. It's nice to see something like that happen. It means you're onto something good."

Undeniably, the thoughtful design details contribute to an overall feeling of openness, tranquility and lack of pretention in the fin-

ished home. The primary framing is eastern white pine with a natural finish, chosen to enhance the Japanese-style architecture. "It's fairly small," Carl explains. "We wanted it to be not only light in size but also in color."

The Eklunds used a multitude of wood species, most of which came from within a 25-mile radius. They selected native white oak for the exterior framing, hand-split Western

red cedar shakes for the roof and Western red cedar siding. A matching set of split white cedar logs on either gable end of the living room helps define the space, while red maple is stunning in the kitchen cabinetry, interior doors, stairways, treads and balusters. Exotic woods like paduk and wenge make a strong statement in the master suite, while bamboo flooring pervades the main level.



The stairs and posts are made of native maple, with the balusters turned to simulate bamboo. The staircase leads to two upstairs bedrooms and a bathroom.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Two 45-degree bump-outs equipped with windows in the master bedroom are a clever design touch. These bay areas “take a rectangular room and creates a little interest,” Carl says. An antique Chinese armoire with an intricate floral pattern is one of many pieces that Jackie acquired for the home.

The master bathroom features more bump-outs with windows, but these are trimmed in paduk, one of the darker woods used in the home. “I’m not big on stains,” Carl says. “I like woods to have their own natural colors.”

Shoji screens slide to reveal the master bedroom closets. Sandwiched in between the screens is a built-in unit made of lima wood. The door to the right, made of wenge and inlaid with vertical bamboo strips, leads to the master bathroom.



In the summer, Carl and Jackie spend a lot of time in the outdoor dining area, located on the veranda between the kitchen and dining room. The railing’s swirl pattern, adopted from Chinese design, creates interesting shadows on the deck.



Other features that evoke Far East sentiments include sliding shoji screens; original art and antiques from Asian countries; a deck railing designed with a Chinese pattern; and the use of bamboo, Japanese ferns and stone pathways in the landscaping. The living room, which is modeled after a Japanese farmhouse, is a favorite of both Carl and Jackie’s. “It has nice proportions,” Carl says. “The vaulted ceiling is comfortable without the feeling that there’s too much space.” Adds Jackie: “We have a beautiful perspective of the outside and can look far over the veranda, into the valley and back up to a stone Buddha. It’s an expansive view with no break in the vision.”

For the Eklunds, all the features blend flawlessly to create a home that’s just as much a feeling as it is a dwelling—appropriate for an architectural style that emphasizes balance and serenity. “The house is more of an experience,” says Jackie. “Rather than coming across as big or bold, it subtly suggests peacefulness.” ■

Home Details

SQUARE FOOTAGE: 2,900

TIMBER PRODUCER: South County Post & Beam

