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In her Sarasota getaway as cool and blithely colored as a tropical drink, Michele Mancini mixes one part vintage Florida with 40's favorite fabrics and a splash of kitsch to lend unrivaled character to her cottage home.



AT HOME WITH MICHELE MANCINI

Cheerful Cottage with More Grace than Space

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Above: Framed samples of Michele's fabrics are a unique dressing for her dining room wall. Top Left: The garden is home to a collection of antique birdhouses such as this one. Top Middle: The front door provides a cheerful welcome. Top Right: Garden accessories lend visual interest. Bottom: The little lavender cottage peeks through the garden's native flora.



Snuggly ensconced amidst exotic flora, the Lilliputian, lavender-colored cottage peeks out onto the garden through the sleepy oval windows of its front porch. With a welcoming arbor clad in the crimson glory of Don Juan roses, a picket fence atumble with flowering shrubs and a scented path leading to the front door, the scene brings to mind the words of E. M. Forrester from his 1920 novel *Howard's End*: "It is old and little, and altogether delightful." Welcome to the hideaway of East Coast designer and part-time Sarasota resident Michele Mancini!

To achieve the romantic mood in the dining room, Michele paired an antique farm table, dressed in a 1900's lace tablecloth (a born-again bedspread), with wicker. She then draped the windows with luxurious lacy layers and, instead of predictable art, added a variety of framed samples from her Full Swing line on the back wall.

The adjacent living room owes its cuddly, cocoon-like comfort to warm shades of browns, reds and vanilla and the rich, contrasting textures of the grass cloth lining the ceiling, a collection of hand colored old Florida photographs and the playful mix of fabrics on the sofa and pillows juxtaposed on a wicker chair. A weathered coffee table piled with books on gardening and designing (including *Fabulous Fabrics of the 50's*, which she co-authored) add to the restful and inviting feeling.

Michele made the most of the ordinary fireplace by painting its bricks a soft green and turned the mantle into a staging area for her collection of curvaceous hula girls and McCoy pottery. With her uncanny sense of whimsy, she transformed an original Blackamore into a floor lamp and had the shades of the table lamps re-made with favorite vintage fabrics. Her passion for a variety of textiles is evident throughout her home. She readily admits that it extends beyond her own fabrics. "I have no problem mixing high-end and designers' fabrics with those from stores like Jo-Ann's and Home Goods." With its 1930's floral window panels and mix of vintage pillows and Ralph Lauren stripes and roses linens on the antique French daybed, the guest room illustrates that concept and is designed for pampering visiting family and friends.

As airy as a summer garden pavilion, the master bedroom decor applies the same principle but in a style that indulges her "inner girl," which she calls "romance and frou-frou." The canopy bed is dressed in sheer organdy and the windows with priceless filigree bobbin-laced curtains. The prettily rumpled linen sheets and pillow cases were found in catalogs, and the little sofa is enhanced with an antique lace tablecloth draped over a 1920's vintage remnant of floral fabric.

Opposite Top: A mix of vintage pieces and favorite fabrics gives the living room a cozy feel. The fireplace mantle is home to Michele's collection of McCoy pottery and hula girls. Opposite Bottom Left: Lace, wicker and wood bring romance to the dining room. Opposite Bottom Right: Michele indulges her "romance and frou-frou" side with panels of sheer organdy and linen bedding. Top Right: The bathroom color scheme, oceanic turquoise, was inspired by the nearby Gulf of Mexico. Bottom Right: Pretty vintage floral fabrics and cozy furnishings are meant to pamper guests.







From the street, the little house seems to smile at you. Inside, like its owner, it gathers you in a warm and joyful embrace. "I have always had a love affair with nostalgia," Michele says. Her passion for anything from the 1920's to the 1950's blossomed in her Newport, Rhode Island, based company, Full Swing. Not only does the unique exuberance of her textiles grace the homes of such celebrities as Barbara Streisand, Bruce Willis, Bette Midler and Bruce Springsteen, just to name a few, but Full Swing also won the Metropolitan Home Design award and has been featured in *Country Living*, *House & Garden*, *Cosmopolitan* and *New York* magazines. Her fabrics, which she describes as "modern classics with Hollywood glamour," have seduced the film industry as well, appearing in *Mambo Kings*, *The Marrying Man*, *A River Runs Through It* and many more.

In spite of her success, Michele remains true to herself and, four years ago, while searching for a home away from home, she succumbed to the charms of a, then, dilapidated cottage in the heart of town. To get the most from her quaint and compact 1920's treasure, she splurged specifically and indulged carefully to create a cozy and colorful nest with more grace than space.

COZY COTTAGE

Never one to take herself too seriously, Michele describes her style as "eclectic with the soul of a purist." "I do group things from the same period by rooms," she confesses. The key to her successful decorating strategy lies in her well-balanced mix of imaginative arrangements, accessories, accent colors and an infusion of her Full Swing playful patterns and textured fabrics throughout the cottage.

She obviously has a knack for mixing hues and knows how to make rooms pop, sizzle, sooth, charm and seduce.

To stretch the visual space, she removed all the interior doors and linked adjacent rooms with the same colors of flooring. She began by replacing the termite-eaten hardwood floors with new red oak, pickled in the palest shade of pistachio (she is quick to credit The Floor Doctor, a Sarasota company specializing in custom wood flooring, for the spectacular results) and unified the color scheme by painting the walls in celadon and celery, creating a soothing repetition.

Top Left & Right: Michele painted her front porch with two shades of lavender trimmed with sage. The garden can be seen through the room's distinctive oval openings. The bamboo sofa, table and chairs contribute to the garden mood.