

House + Love = Home

Creating Warm, Intentional Spaces for a Beautiful Life



Jenny Marrs

WITH SPECIAL APPEARANCES BY Dave Marrs

CO-HOSTS OF *Fixer to Fabulous*

HOUSE + LOVE = HOME



HOUSE + LOVE
= HOME

CREATING WARM,
INTENTIONAL SPACES FOR
A BEAUTIFUL LIFE

JENNY MARRS

WITH SPECIAL APPEARANCES BY DAVE MARRS

CO-HOSTS OF *FIXER TO FABULOUS*



CONVERGENT
NEW YORK

Copyright © 2023 by Jenny Marrs

All rights reserved.

Published in the United States by Convergent Books,
an imprint of Random House, a division of
Penguin Random House LLC, New York.

CONVERGENT BOOKS is a registered trademark and its C colophon
is a trademark of Penguin Random House LLC.

Photo and illustration credits begin on page 240.

Hardback ISBN 9780593444337

Ebook ISBN 9780593444344

Printed in China on acid-free paper

convergentbooks.com

2 4 6 8 9 7 5 3 1

F I R S T E D I T I O N

Title-page image by Adam Albright

Book design by Barbara M. Bachman

FOR MY LOVES—

DAVE, BEN, NATHAN, SYLVIE,

CHARLOTTE, AND LUKE

The ache for home lives in all of us,
the safe place where we can go
as we are and not be questioned.

—MAYA ANGELOU,
All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes

CONTENTS

	OUR WORK, OUR FAMILY, OUR HOME	<i>xiii</i>
	WARM PLACES & INTENTIONAL SPACES: JENNY'S THOUGHTS ON HOW TO USE THIS BOOK	<i>xvi</i>
CHAPTER 1	INVITING IN THE FRONT OF YOUR HOME, PORCHES & ENTRYWAYS— <i>The Porch Swing</i>	3
CHAPTER 2	WELCOMING THRESHOLD AREAS, HALLWAYS & DROP ZONES— <i>The Paris Suitcase</i>	21
CHAPTER 3	GATHERING EATING SPACES— <i>School Lunches & Dinner Times</i>	41
CHAPTER 4	NOURISHING KITCHENS & COOKING SPACES— <i>Great-Grandma Thelma, Grandma Marrs & Dr. Laure</i>	57

CHAPTER 5	ORGANIZING LAUNDRIES & PANTRIES— <i>Dancing in the Laundry Room</i>	91
CHAPTER 6	LIVING FAMILY ROOMS & OTHER SPACES FOR GATHERING— <i>Christmas Morning</i>	103
CHAPTER 7	ENTERTAINING OUTDOOR SPACES, PATIOS, SCREENED-IN PORCHES & OTHER INDOOR GATHERING PLACES— <i>Movie Night</i>	127
CHAPTER 8	THE NECESSITIES BATHROOMS—SHOWERS, BATHTUBS, VANITIES & POWDER BATHS— <i>The Hundred-Year-Old Tub</i>	149
CHAPTER 9	WORKING, MAKING & DOING HOME OFFICES & STUDIES, SHOPS & STUDIOS— <i>The Sofa & the Shop</i>	167

CHAPTER 10	PLAYING, SLEEPING, LEARNING SPACES FOR LITTLE ONES— <i>Days of Summer</i>	181
CHAPTER 11	RESTING BEDROOMS, READING NOOKS & OTHER RECHARGING SPACES FOR BIG PEOPLE— <i>Stillness</i>	201
CHAPTER 12	DREAMING, CONTRIBUTING & CELEBRATING OUT-IN-THE-WORLD PLACES— <i>The Berry Farm</i>	227
	ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	235
	PHOTO & ILLUSTRATION CREDITS	240



OUR WORK, OUR FAMILY, OUR HOME

I'M JENNY. I'M A WIFE AND mom, a designer, a writer, and a passionate advocate for community transformation. I'm married to the most hardworking, faith-centered, kind-hearted man who happens to build houses for a living. My husband, Dave, and I live in a rescued and restored farmhouse, where we have a life full to the brim with five young kiddos, mud puddles galore, and too-many-to-count farm animals.

Since founding Marris Developing in 2004, Dave has built and restored several hundred houses, and over the past decade we have worked together to design and create spaces that are warm and welcoming. Our company motto is the simplest of equations: *House + Love = Home*. We believe a home should reflect

the personalities of the ones who live there. It should be a place where the people and the things you love surround you. Beautiful spaces are most often imperfect and full of character. Just like people. Perfection is never the goal.

Dave is an expert craftsman, builder, and general contractor. His knowledge of restoring old homes is unsurpassed, and his passion for bringing the unique qualities of historic homes back to life is contagious. His work also includes building new custom homes and renovating spaces, as well as crafting unique and gorgeous furniture. He mills his own lumber, and we partner with local artisans to ensure that each Marris Developing home is built with the utmost quality, care, and integrity.

I support the design side of our busi-



who had recently relocated to this little corner of the world. Dave knew he wanted to build homes, and since his dad had been a builder back in Colorado, they decided to start a business together here.

We arrived with all of our earthly belongings in the back of a U-Haul and immediately got to work scouring the want ads for a place to rent. We quickly found a house and asked to see it. After the owner

ness and spend my days managing the thousands of details that go into the making of a home. I love nothing more than scouring my favorite sources for the perfect light fixtures, cabinet hardware, doors, tile, paint colors, furniture, and art. The list of choices to be made when remodeling or building a home can be overwhelming and feel endless at times. My job is to work with our homeowners to make the decision-making process less staggering. I truly love how important each step in the process is and how each detail is significant.

Although Dave is originally from Kiowa, Colorado, and I grew up in Orlando, Florida, we've called Bentonville, Arkansas, our hometown since we moved here in 2004. I still vividly remember our first home together. We had just moved to Northwest Arkansas to be near Dave's parents and brother,



of the house showed us around, we enthusiastically asked if we could move in. As in, right then. He looked out front, saw the U-Haul in the driveway, and handed us the keys. We spent the sweetest year and a half in that little house. In the almost twenty years since then, we've lived in five different homes. Our most recent move—and our last for a long time—involved relocating an old farmhouse from one side of Bentonville to the other, where we placed it on a lovely piece of land and then restored it. It's now our home and we love it here.

Dave and I are parents to five children—twin boys, Ben and Nathan; two daughters, Sylvie and Charlotte; and our most recent arrival, three-year-old Luke. Needless to say, life is busy, chaotic, and messy. But more than anything, it is abundantly joyful and full of laughter.

After family and work, our primary focus is building community in our own backyard and around the world. Our passion for furthering locally active, globally focused causes led to the founding of The Berry Farm. At its simplest, the U-pick farm and its event-space barn are a place for local families to gather and enjoy community while filling their buckets with fresh local berries.

But the real mission of The Berry Farm is a domino effect, rippling from Northwest Arkansas to Zimbabwe, where our

profits help to support vocational training, farming skills, and food security for orphaned children. We are passionate about orphan care, family preservation, and adoption. Our older daughter, Sylvie, was adopted from Africa. During the lengthy and grueling process to bring her home to us at last, we met many wonderful people who are doing amazing work in Africa. More than a decade ago, we partnered with a couple, John and Orpah Chinyowa, who advocate and care for kids and families in their community in rural Zimbabwe.

In 2018, Dave and I were approached by HGTV about developing a home-renovation show. We were hesitant at first, but eventually decided to dive in, hoping that it might give us an opportunity to talk about the things we value. Together we created *Fixer to Fabulous*, a show focused on restoring homes in our beautiful Northwest Arkansas area. We're now in our fourth season, and it's been a wild ride—one that was unexpected and never on our radar, but one that has brought incredible opportunities and people into our lives, for which we are immensely grateful. We love helping people create houses that become homes with intention. We strive to create family places filled with purposeful, inviting, warm spaces where each person can exhale and rest, away from the chaos of the world.

WARM PLACES & INTENTIONAL SPACES

JENNY'S THOUGHTS ON HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

I stayed up too late last night reading a book. I didn't feel in a rush to put it down because I knew the gift that awaited me in the morning: a gloriously free schedule. However, instead of my anticipated slow-to-wake morning, my treasured sleep was interrupted by a soft whisper in my ear, "Momma, wake up." As I emerged from sleep, the whisper rose several octaves. "It snowed! It snowed!"

I jumped out of bed, grabbed my glasses, and ran hand in hand with my sweet girl to the windowsill. We peered over the edge and gasped at the unexpected thrill of freshly fallen snow. I grew up in Florida, and as a child never once had the joy of waking to a blanket of white covering the earth. To this day, I marvel when I catch the first glimpse of snowflakes swirling out of the sky. I doubt I could ever tire of the wonder and beauty of freshly fallen snow.

Dave, a natural early riser who truly

doesn't understand my affinity for sleep, brought two piping-hot cups of coffee over to where Charlotte and I sat at the window. As we sipped the coffee, Dave and I talked through what needed to be done now that the snow had surprised us: There were hungry animals to feed, new hay to deliver to the pastures, and ice to be broken. I pulled down our winter coats and gloves from the closet and we set out.

My boots landed softly in the snow and a cold north wind whipped across my face as I made my way to the first pasture where our little farm menagerie lived: nine sheep (with two babies on the way), Alfie the Alpaca, Larry the Llama, and Daddy Donk the Donkey. Buckets of feed in hand, I tried to unlock the pasture fence and found it frozen. Undeterred, I climbed over the fence. Just as I set my second foot down in the pasture, I slipped on a patch of ice. I quickly grabbed hold of the fence, releasing the buckets, allowing small pellets of feed to sail through the air and scatter all over. Teddy, one of our two rams, ran my way. I smiled. *He senses something is wrong and is coming to check on his favorite shepherdess*, I thought. As I bent down to greet him, he ran past me toward the feed sprinkled over the ground. Immediately, the rest of the herd followed, and I was suddenly surrounded by animals pushing their way through to breakfast.

Daddy Donk stopped beside me for a neck rub as if to say, “I see you,” before heading off to big-brother nudge Teddy out of his way.

I smiled, content. This full pasture, this farm we have cultivated, and our beloved old farmhouse are much like the overnight snow: unexpected and beautiful. Yes, the snow will eventually turn into a slushy mess. Most assuredly it will bring extra work for Dave and me. Yet, it brings so much joy: memories of sledding and building snowmen and racing inside to drink hot cocoa, warm hands, and dry boots by the fire.

The life we have built here can be messy and is certainly a lot of work, but, *gracious*, it’s full of joy. Our memories have seeped into the walls, and these floors echo with the thrill of first steps and kitchen dance parties. Just as the biting cold of winter will eventually give way to the gentle warmth of spring and the sticky heat of summer, our home will continue to grow and change and evolve with the seasons of life.

Over the years, our family has grown and this home has expanded, baby gates have come and gone from the staircase, rooms have been reoriented, spaces have been carved out to accommodate homework stations and toy nooks and cushions for reading by the window. As a family of

seven in a 1903 farmhouse, we are busting at the seams. But I know the day will come—much sooner than my heart would like—when we will watch each of our babies step through the door to go build a life of his or her own out in the world. Then, our home will be quiet, and we will once again rework the spaces inside.

From the first moment I set foot in this old house, I could feel the stories it held. On that day, years ago, Dave excitedly led me from room to room, and we started dreaming about restoring her former beauty and breathing life back into her walls. For more than a hundred years, these walls have stood witness to celebrations and sorrows and first words and last breaths. That’s the beauty of a home: It stands steadfastly as the whirl of life inside unfolds.

If you’ve lived long enough, you know antonyms like joy and sorrow coexist. The same is true for remarkable beauty and normal life. Seeking beauty is an intentional choice: We can choose to bemoan the handprints on the windowpane, or we can pause to watch as a curious toddler pounds out a rhythm on his newfound makeshift drum. We can choose to close the door, lamenting over the unused room where clutter has piled up, or we can reimagine the space and create a writing room or an art studio or a play-

room for the kids. We can choose to give a foothold to shame—*our home is too small, our dishes are chipped, the bathroom remodel is still half-finished*—or we can throw open the door and fill the table with friends and serve take-out pizza on paper plates.

Dave and I have built and remodeled hundreds of homes throughout our careers, and we believe that first and foremost a home needs to function well. It needs to serve you and your family's needs. We also believe your home should be beautiful. The tricky thing here is that beauty is most assuredly in the eye of the beholder. Everyone has a different take on what makes a space appealing, and there is only one person who matters when it comes to whether or not your home is beautiful: you. If you smile while you're stirring a pot of soup on the stove, then you have a beautiful kitchen. Your home shouldn't be a reflection of the latest trends or of what I think or of what Pinterest tells you it should be; it should simply be a reflection of who you are.

The concept of home has always intrigued me. Several years ago, before moving to the farm, we lived in our town's historic downtown district. In the evenings, we would often head out our door, pushing the twins in the double stroller, and walk to the town square. I'm not sure if it was because of my natural

curiosity, my obsession with all things home, or just a tendency to snoop, but I loved to walk past houses that had their curtains open and lights on, getting a glimpse of life bustling inside. It was an added bonus if the windows were ajar and I could hear the sound of laughter floating in the air or the unmistakable clink of forks on dishes. I could conjure up elaborate histories for the family inside and imagine all the characters seated around the dinner table.

Dave and I both, when drawn to a particular place while traveling, will seek out the real estate office in town and scan the homes for sale. As we look over the possibilities hung in the window, we imagine what daily life could look like in a foreign place. Because to us, home is so much more than four walls and a roof. Home isn't tied to a specific town but can exist anywhere in the world. Home is simply the collective memories created inside the walls. The old saying "Home is where the heart is" is remarkable in its simplicity and accuracy.

To me, home should feel like a warm blanket wrapped around you in the night, the place where you can feel safe and held and loved regardless of the dark world outside the window. Home is the place you are always excited to return to, even after an amazing adventure someplace new. Home beckons the soul.



I didn't want to write a standard how-to guide for decorating or renovating your home. There are enough beautiful and well-written books on the subject out there already. And, honestly, I don't believe there is a one-size-fits-all guide that accounts for personal style and preference. Instead, I want this book to encourage you to be creative with your home.

Throughout, I will share examples from our own home, as well as projects we have completed. Some of the ideas within these pages might inspire a creative Saturday afternoon project, while others may help you rethink entire spaces. I want to give you permission to step outside your comfort zone and make your home a reflection of what you love: paint the walls, tear up the carpet, install the wallpaper, buy the antique desk, hang the painting . . . take a risk.

It is important to understand the intention behind a home and each space within it before you start any remodel project. I've learned that the questions below are a good place to start when planning for any remodel, renovation, or redesign:

How do I want to feel in this space?

How do I currently use this space versus

how do I hope to use this space?

*How do I want my family, my friends,
and my guests to feel in this space?*

In the book, I've included what we call "Transformational Tips"—big-picture approaches for how to think about remaking or creating a space with intention. For some of these tips, you may need outside help, more time and/or resources. I've also added in "Jenny's Tips," which are easier to accomplish, are smaller scale, and can more quickly and inexpensively transform a space.

As you'll see, Dave also makes many special appearances, adding his own take on our life and work here in Bentonville. In "Dave's Corner," he outlines some of the more creative solutions he has developed regarding how to think about spatial and structural challenges in a home. He also shares some of the amazing things he's made over the years. We've included a few fairly simple DIY projects in case you are handy or feeling inspired.

Whether you're remodeling an entire house, redecorating a space, or building a new home from the ground up, simply remember: In your home, you should be surrounded by the people and things you love. Your people should feel welcome and safe. There should be intentional spaces carved out for the ones you cherish. And you should display the things that bring you joy. The pieces that tell your story are meaningful and beautiful and deserve to be seen. Don't overthink it. It really is that simple.

My goal for this book is not to help you turn your home into a place intended for a picture-perfect magazine or Instagram-worthy photos. Perfection is impossible when it comes to home. Because perfection is actually the antithesis of a real, well-lived-in home. But intention is very much possible. If you address each room in your home with thoughtful intentionality, you can transform any space from a place of chaos into a place of peace.

Intentionally planning a space allows it to work better for you and your family. And, most important, you can bring more personality and joy and love into the four walls of your home.

I always say that a home should be a reflection of the family that lives there, and my hope for this book is that it will inspire you to make a few simple changes that allow your home to reflect your heart.

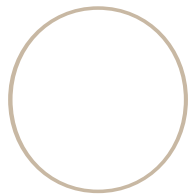


HOUSE + LOVE = HOME





INVITING IN

THE FRONT OF YOUR HOME,
PORCHES & ENTRYWAYS*The Porch Swing*

OUR OLDER DAUGHTER, Sylvie, is adopted. Her birth country is in central Africa and her journey into our family was tumultuous to say the least. Dave and I had to fight bureaucracy, red tape, and political posturing for two very long, very hard years to bring her home. During the wait, I spent countless hours sitting on our front porch swing, praying for her health and safety and for the miracle to take place that would finally bring her home to us.

Our porch swing was the site of every photograph that marked an important milestone during those difficult years of waiting. We have a photo of her brothers sitting on the swing, holding a sign announcing Sylvie's adoption, which we shared with the wider circles of our families.

A year or so later, Sylvie had still not reached us. Another photo: her brothers sitting on the swing, holding up a photo of her in Africa alongside an ultrasound photo of the joyful, albeit unexpected,

pregnancy of her soon-to-arrive younger sister. Only three years old then, Nate and Ben were so excited by the idea of these two new sisters whom they had not yet met. Months later, as we continued to wait for Sylvie, we all sat on the swing again for a photo, this time holding our newborn daughter, Charlotte, and another updated photo of Sylvie. Finally, after 602 days of clinging to hope, our daughter arrived on U.S. soil and came to us, by which time we had moved to our current home, where we had a large porch swing built by Dave, perfect for more photographs.

As long as I live, I will never forget the thrill of that first morning with Sylvie. She and I were both restless. I eventually gave up on sleep and scooped her up, tiptoeing to the front door. I quietly turned the knob and we stepped out together onto the front porch. The sun was breaking through the horizon, as she clung to me. I took a seat on that much-used swing.

The rays of sunlight warmed my bare feet. The air was still, and the world was hushed. It seemed as if the

birds even refrained from their typical morning chatter. Time felt suspended as I held my girl and gently rocked her back and forth. We didn't speak. We simply sat together holding on to each other. She hadn't been in my arms since the summer before when I had had to leave her behind at the end of a visit. In the many months since, I had been haunted by the memory of her tears as she was ripped from my embrace in the dark, sweltering summer night back in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I had often wondered if I would ever feel the weight of her toddler frame again. That morning, under the glow of a summer's sunrise, I rubbed her back and my tears fell. She was indeed here: This was real. The porch swing that had held so many tears of sorrow and grief and utter helplessness now held tears of sheer joy and unimaginable gratitude.



To me, the front porch isn't a space to overlook on the way into a home, it is an extension of the home itself. It's the place where I start my day, on my beloved porch swing, piping-hot coffee in hand, watching the world awaken around me. It's the place for midsummer afternoon naps, the soft breeze gently lulling me to sleep. It's the place where our family gathers at the end of a long day, our very own watchtower from which to witness the sky shift from soft hues of blue to vibrant pinks and burning reds as the sun dips below the horizon. It's the place where Dave and I will sip a glass of full-bodied red wine and listen to the high-pitched tune of the cicadas' song after tucking all the kids into bed. The rhythm of my day is calibrated by stepping out my front door and onto my front porch. I begin and end most days here and find myself exhal-

ing with gratitude as I look out above the handrail.

Of all the beautiful places I've seen in the world, the view from my front porch will always be my favorite. I've witnessed so much change from here. We created a farm where there was once wild, unruly vines and brush. We now have a pasture full of animals and a pond they meander to throughout the day. We marvel as we watch brand-new mommas coax their shaky-legged newborn lambs to their feet. After growing up in Florida, where the seasons consisted of hot and very hot, I am constantly in awe of the beauty of this place; my view changes with the four seasons. The vibrant green of spring turns to the deep, lush landscape of summer. Fall brings golden light and changing leaves before the magical, soft, white hush of a winter's snow appears.



Yes, the kitchen is often called the heart of the home. Yet I believe the front porch is the soul. It's often more still. But if ever there were a space to represent hospitality, it is the front porch. It is the

first welcoming place, a threshold to cross when entering a home. It's also a place to gather. I couldn't possibly count the number of deep, authentic conversations about community or parenting or faith we have shared with friends on our front porch.

When Dave and I first moved to our farmhouse, I felt isolated. We had been living in our town's historic downtown area, where we could easily walk to friends' houses and guests would spontaneously drop by while on a walk in the evening or for coffee in the morning. I loved it. I loved every unexpected visitor and the constant presence of our little community within the walls of our home. When we moved to the farmhouse on the outskirts of town, we were too far away for walking-past, dropping-by friends to pop over.

The days were long with a newborn, a toddler, and twin four-year-olds at home. Dave was working, building our business, while I had left my career to focus on our littles for a season. I craved adult interaction and missed having impromptu company. Our eldest daughter was newly home from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and most days our home felt like a triage center. I was juggling Sylvie's needs with the constant demands of newborn Charlotte, along with our preschool boys who had just had their entire world flipped upside down. I was burned out and certainly didn't shower consistently. Our

house was never clean and laundry piles were the only constant.

The thought of inviting friends over for a dinner party seemed exhausting and absurd. Yet, one Sunday afternoon I ignored the absurdity and sent out an SOS text to three of my dearest friends. They showed up with the makings of dinner—Corrie brought a Caesar salad, Erin brought chili and fresh bread, and Melissa brought her mom's famous fudge pie and a bottle of wine. Their husbands and kids came along and, before I knew it, our home was full of laughter and the sounds of glasses clinking. We pushed aside the craft projects on the kitchen table, lit a few candles, and ladled soup into bowls. The kids went to eat on the porch while the adults sat around the table. As I lowered myself into the chair, I exhaled a sigh of deep gratitude to be gathered again with our people. That Sunday became the first of a long-standing series of Sunday dinners that lasted for years.

After dinner, we would carry our plates of dessert out to the front porch swings—we now have two—and rocking chairs. A few of us would spill over onto the stoop. The kiddos would run around in the yard, chasing after the flickering light of fireflies. Sometimes they'd be entertained by the baby lambs leaping in the pasture or by tumbling down the hay bales that they fruitlessly tried to ascend.

After the adults had settled into our seats, we would dive into stories from the past week. Most often, laughter echoed off the front wall of our home as we rehashed the latest anecdotes of our lives. We never shied away from authenticity: Our lighthearted chatter often turned to sharing our parenting struggles or work conflicts. We were a safe space for tears when the clutches of grief gripped one of our own. We wrestled with questions of faith and prayed honest and desperate

prayers together. Often Erin's husband, Zach, would strum the guitar, as together we lifted songs of praise into the star-filled night sky.

Yes, Dave and I love the look of a front porch and the character it adds to a home. But, even more, it's our attempt to recapture the spirit of slowing down and making time to nurture relationships. When Dave and I restore an old house, we always preserve the front porch.



Intention

CREATING AN APPEALING ENTRY





THE COOPERS WANTED TO transform their home from a small Craftsman into a Creole cottage, inspired by their New Orleans heritage. To do so, we removed the existing gabled front porch overhang and substituted a low-hipped front porch, spanning the full width of the house. We replaced the old, rotting siding, and, most important, added four pairs of narrow French doors with custom-built shutters across the front of the home to capture the Creole cottage feel. Quintessential New Orleans-style accents like handcrafted copper gas lanterns (complete with details like a vintage fleur-de-lis locking piece), a historic front door, a blue-painted ceiling, an antique brick walkway and skirt along the house, and custom porch swings completed the look.

TRANSFORMATIONAL TIP

Doors—Colors & Materials

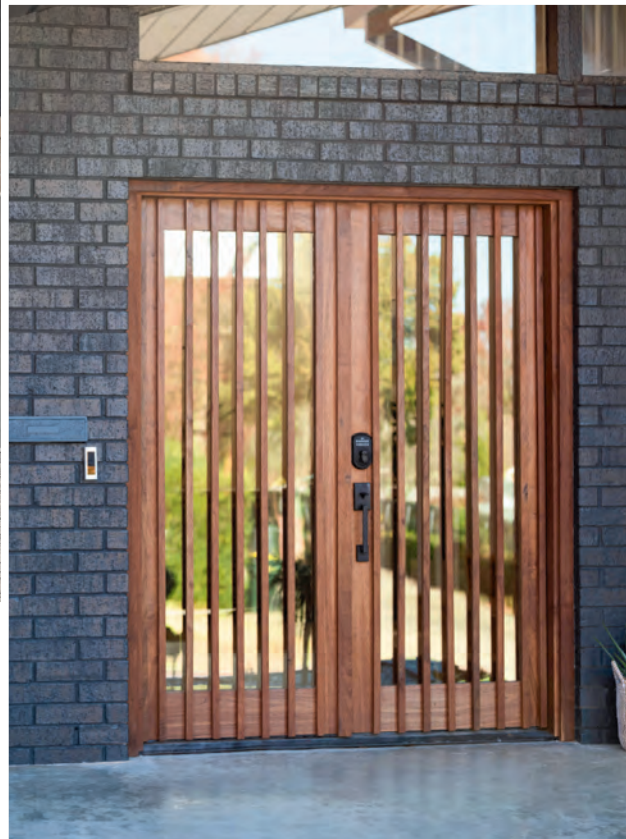
A front door makes a statement and is an opportunity to create a beautiful focal point for a home. A wooden front door adds warmth, while a painted front door can add contrast to the color of the exterior siding. I personally love to find an old door, strip the layers of paint off, and seal it with a water-based clear coat to preserve its natural look. Then the simple addition of a mail slot can add further character. To save money on a new front door, I like to use a less expensive fiberglass option and paint it an interesting color. A pop of color on the front door and window shutters creates instant charm.





THE OWNERS REALLY WANTED to keep the design integrity of their house's mid-century aesthetics, which we loved, and which gave us a fun creative challenge. Dave and our craftsman friend Derek built a new front door, using vertical wood slats that felt true to the house's original 1970 construction date. We then repeated the verticality throughout the entryway, even echoing it in the hallway staircase. I love when elements tie

in with one another to make a space feel cohesive. Even though these elements were all new, they complemented the aesthetic of the house, adding authenticity to the entryway.



DAVE AND I WERE honored to restore this 124-year-old home for friends of ours, the Newberrys. The house has been a part of our town for more than a century and we fell in love with its quirks and character. Restoring its original charm while updating it to accommodate a young family of five was a wonderful challenge. Dave and I wanted to incorporate as many original elements as possible back into the home, while also freshening it up. The exterior



trim had long been a bright yellow—earning the house the name “the yellow house on the corner.” The house also had two front doors—one leading into the kitchen and one leading into the master bedroom.



Jenny's Tip

REUSING OLD HARDWARE AND OTHER MATERIALS



One unique feature of this house was the original hardware on the doors. The door-knob contains a built-in doorbell that still works. Our friend, local artisan Adrian (from Olde World Door & Sunshine Glass), was able to restore the original door knocker and doorbell and reinstall it on the front door. It's probably the coolest front doorknob I've ever seen.

You simply push the button that reads "push" and the internal doorbell rings. I'm sure the family's kids have had a lot of fun with that feature. For the walkway, we repurposed the brick from an old fireplace inside the house.

WE REPLACED THE ROTTING front porch, tore out the cement staircases leading up to the multiple front doors, and installed a brick walkway and entryway. I really wanted to keep a little yellow on the exterior. We retained one of the original front doors (the one that had led into the kitchen) and gave it a fresh coat of a prettier yellow paint. The yellow front door felt like a good compromise from the previous bright yellow trim.



Intention

ENCOURAGING COMMUNITY



Dave

Front Porch Living

ONE OF MY FAVORITE TERMS is “front porch living.” Many of us live in beautiful parts of America where we have eight to nine months a year to comfortably be outdoors. Front porch living is a way to bring the living room outside—to create a welcoming place for community, a place for stories, and a place for memories, whether you’re gathered around an outdoor table, sitting in rocking chairs, or relaxing on a beautiful porch swing. It’s a place where life happens. You can have different conversations. You can engage in different activities. So many things can take place on a front porch that will enrich your family life and build a stronger community.

Jenny's Tip

FURNITURE PLACEMENT AND SYMMETRY TO CREATE MULTIUSE SPACES

Determining seating and how to organize space on a porch is so important. We make sure there are areas for the many ways the homeowners hope to use their porches, whether it be for sitting, rocking, napping, lounging, or dining. We match those wishes with furniture designs that also make the most sense for the style of the house by bringing in rocking chairs, porch swings, benches, or even oversized pillows. Oftentimes just trying to figure out how we can maximize seating, while still having a porch that looks spacious and welcoming, is the biggest challenge.

I love symmetry, so whenever I can, I'll have at least two of a type of seating: two rocking chairs, two loungers, two dining chairs, two porch swings. Maximizing porch space to create beauty and symmetry, while also making the pieces adaptable enough for all sorts of front porch life, helps to create an immediate welcoming stage for the front of a home.



THIS BELOVED FARMHOUSE has been in the Crowder family for generations and is now owned by granddaughter Lisa. Lisa's dad was born and raised in the house, and she spent her childhood visiting her granny here. Preserving the essence of the home and its family history was of utmost importance. Lisa wanted more space for time with family, and a comfortable spot from which to watch storms roll in, so we expanded her outdoor living space.



TRANSFORMATIONAL TIP *Window Shutters*

A smaller project that can pay big dividends is adding window shutters. By adding, stripping, and/or painting window shutters, you can bring visual interest, symmetry, and charm to the porch and entry area of the house.



IN LISA'S WORDS, "The porch is much more functional now and super comfortable, but one of my very favorite parts about the porch . . . is just looking at it as I drive up! It's good for my mental health. We have draped outdoor lights on the porch and over our outdoor table; it is so cute at night . . . so inviting!"

THE OUTSIDE OF THE existing house had the potential to be adorable—it just needed a little sprucing up. After we stripped and stained the doors, added new cedar shutters, power washed and stained the deck, and updated the landscaping, the exterior was almost completely transformed. We also installed new brick steps and a new brick chimney and, most important, we extended the front porch to create an expanded outdoor dining space. As Lisa later wrote, what "was an unsightly spot in the yard is now valuable new porch space to use for our family dinners."



THIS 170-YEAR-OLD HOUSE predates the Civil War. The owners, Amy and Eric Duca, loved its history and character, but really wanted more of a modern style. I worked with them on design decisions that blended new ways of thinking about space and style while retaining much of the house's old charm. The house held treasures within its walls that could be found only in the craftsmanship of the nineteenth century. Its magnificent exterior Victorian details were somewhat hidden behind overgrown landscaping. We freshened up the outside to reveal the entryway and porch area. We tidied the landscaping and painted the exterior. The house already had a wonderful wraparound front porch; we rethought the seating, adding an intimate



area for eating or having tea, as well as an oversized porch swing, big enough to nap on. The period details, including the original glass-and-wood door, bell, and pocket stained-glass window, worked wonderfully with the new elements. When we were finished, the porch had become a historic treasure with a fresh update, offering a place where Amy and Eric could welcome family and old and new friends.

Oversized Porch Swing

THE DUCAS' PORCH called not only for a porch swing, but a porch swing big enough for two or three (or more) people to sit on comfortably—the one we built was twin-bed-sized! We preserved a piece of the house's history by repurposing the wooden handrails from the back porch to make the sides and back of the swing. You can take a nap on it. You can listen to the birds on it. You can hear neighborhood kids at play while swinging on it.

Dave



Jenny's Tip

PLANTERS AND WINDOW BOXES

Landscaping the front of a house can be an expensive and time-consuming project. One quicker, more affordable way to invite the natural world in to the front of your house is to add window boxes, where plants can be swapped in and out seasonally to provide color and character. Planters by the front door, whether you live in a

freestanding house or an apartment building, can also bring a lovely dash of greenery and color to your entry.





ABOUT THE AUTHORS

JENNY MARRS is a designer, writer, and passionate advocate for community transformation, family preservation, and orphan care around the globe. She is married to Dave, and they live on a small farm in Bentonville, Arkansas, with their five kids and too-many-to-count animals.

DAVE MARRS is an expert craftsman, furniture builder, and general contractor. He is also a self-taught farmer, co-founding The Berry Farm along with his wife, Jenny.

In partnership with HGTV, Jenny and Dave developed *Fixer to Fabulous*, a home renovation show focused on restoring historic homes in their beautiful Northwest Arkansas area.

Instagram: @jennymarrs
@dave.marrs
@daveandjennymarrs
daveandjennymarrs.com

ABOUT THE TYPE

This book was set in Caslon, a typeface first designed in 1722 by William Caslon (1692–1766). Its widespread use by most English printers in the early eighteenth century soon supplanted the Dutch typefaces that had formerly prevailed. The roman is considered a “workhorse” typeface due to its pleasant, open appearance, while the italic is exceedingly decorative.