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BIRTH OF A
GREEN IDEA

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**THE
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**TRYON FARM'S
NEXT TIER**

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Gary Beyerl and Dawn Heid chose materials and methods that allowed their Tryon Farm home to be developed with minimal disruption of the environment. A view from the porch [opposite] shows the beam timbers of Douglas fir.



natural habitat

AN ECO-FRIENDLY GETAWAY AT TRYON FARM

Rough, smooth, soft, solid—the textures of nature are compelling and complex at the home of Gary Beyerl and Dawn Heid. No matter the season, it's green year-round in the couple's environmentally friendly getaway home.

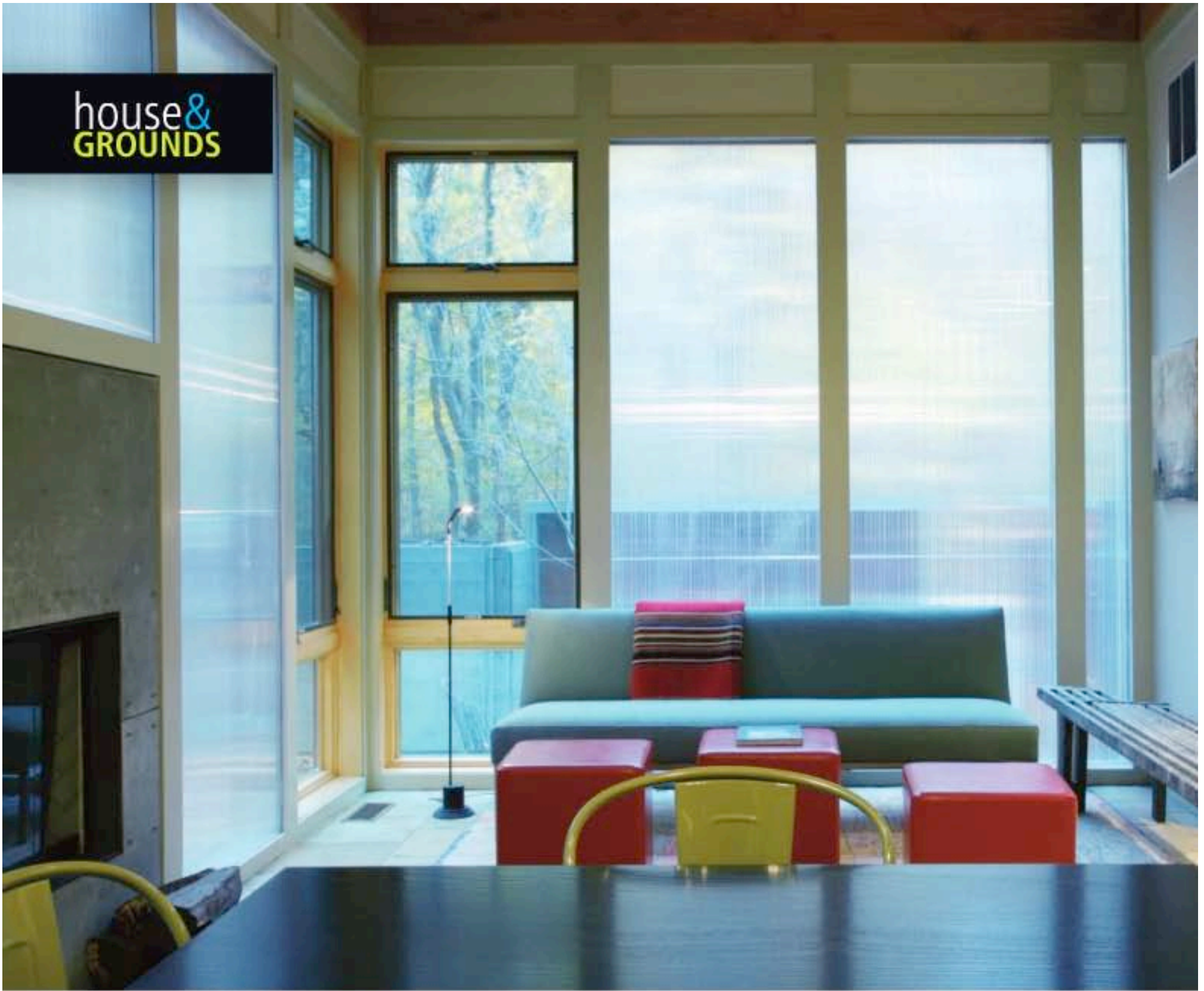
Tucked in the Dunes Settlement area of the eco-sensitive, 170-acre Tryon Farm at the eastern edge of Michigan City, Indiana, the house reflects Gary and Dawn's dedication to preserving the planet's resources. They credit Tryon's developers, Ed and Eve Noonan, with providing opportunities to employ Gary's extensive knowledge of green practices in building. A review of Tryon Farm's social life and commitment to nature-friendly practices and a trek amongst the meadows, trees and dunes convinced Gary and Dawn that they had found the perfect place to build. Dawn favors a social community, while Gary favors seclusion but appreciates a community atmosphere. "Finding that blend is really tough," Gary says, but he and Dawn and their 10-year-old daughter Grace agree they've found it here.

Just past a winter of sledding and camaraderie around a fire pit, Gary is enjoying the peaceful setting while his wife and daughter are already looking forward to finding the best blackberries again—last season, Gary says, "They made jam!"

Using nature's resources drove the plans for the 1,150-square-foot home, completed in 2007. Downstairs—basically one room with open access to the kitchen—natural ventilation is created by placing windows higher on the warm side of the house and lower on the cool side, offering the effect of a solar chimney. Double glass doors with windows on either side lead to a screened-in porch. On an adjacent wall, three sets of windows, with the middle sections larger, open at top and bottom for more efficient air flow.

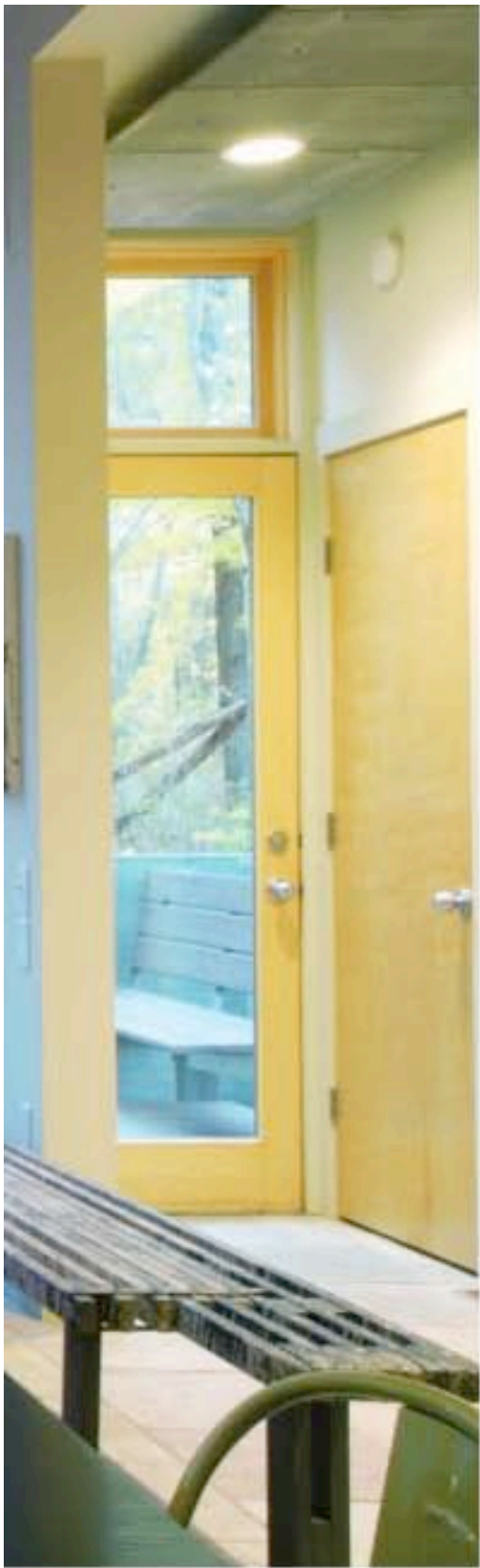
"We realized we had been already incorporating green aspects unconsciously," Gary says, noting the couple's penchant for adapting recycled objects. A long bench in the entryway is actually a painter's scaffolding, about to be scrapped but given a second life with a few changes. With Gary's Chicago office creating green roofs and receiving recognition for incorporating green methods in building, the Tryon vacation home was "a chance to do something unique" with a residence. And Gary really means





Bold, simple lines (above) are softened by the near-ethereal effect of the subtly patterned polycarbonate windows. Rows of trees (right) spared by careful construction echo the windows' vertical lines.





Glass doors and light woodwork (far left) contribute to the home's airy feel. The kitchen (left) is elegant and functional with a breakfast bar. The stairway at left is custom-built from Douglas fir and sided with maple panels.

"we" in planning the home; Dawn's firm is Dawn Heid Architects.

The fireplace is surrounded by natural wood-pulp-and-cement panels, normally used for underlayment for exterior tile. This fireproof piece was a throwaway, left over from another project. Large polycarbonate windows combine beauty and insulation: used in various areas of the house because the family wanted to experience the changing seasons yet still have privacy, the glasslike material is plastic. In the summer, the vertical, close-set line pattern of the polycarbonate "gives you a green, diaphanous movement of the tree leaves, which in sunlight seem to scintillate," Gary says. Trapped air between window layers provides 4-1/2 to 5 times the thermal efficiency of a glass window.

Lighting over the dining table is "quirky," befitting a vacation home, Gary says, and makes a statement in favor of simplicity: five black electrical cords hang straight down in differing lengths, with bulbs screwed into exposed lamp sockets for a "cool and funky" look. A few feet away is the breakfast bar; on the other side, the far end of the long kitchen has a recessed L that hides the refrigerator.

Gary insisted the roof be in place before the flooring of No. 1 grade Douglas fir was installed. Balloon framing utilizing long studs for walls extending from the first floor up 20 feet up to the roof actually made the process go faster, Gary says. Protecting the wood was all the more important because of the unusual

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Going green in construction ranges from simple alternatives to sophisticated techniques. Dawn and Gary's 10-year-old daughter Grace is fascinated by the "ghost wood" story: People were ripping "ghost wood" from Montana's historic ghost towns for new projects. But plenty of wood was available from forest fires—massive timbers charred on the outside but inside dense and hardened from the heat. Now Montana Ghost Wood sells the good wood from charred timber. "It was a matter of educating people to use that forest wood and preserve the ghost towns," Gary says.

At Tryon Farm, all pond houses have green roofs that can include planted moss, sedum and grass, cutting down heat gain and controlling and filtering water runoff. Gary explains that a green roof can absorb as much as 100 percent of the first inch of rain, depending on the diversity of plants used and the depth and make-up of the soil; flash flooding from overwhelmed sewer and water systems occurs from that first inch of rain. Plant material filtering out such heavy metals as lead and copper and reducing nitrogen runoff means those pollutants are reduced in the Earth's waterways.

On the roof of Gary's firm in Chicago, Burns + Beyerl Architects, Inc., raised beds feature ornamental trees up to 16 feet tall; Chicago is working towards a mandate of green roofs for 50 percent of all buildings.

The ReUse People of America is a not-for-profit that deconstructs buildings and salvages the materials for use in new buildings. Beyerl's firm uses as much of it as possible. Another salvageable: lannon stone foundation walls dating from use in the 1800s, headed for a landfill, is great for garden walls. Gary says,

"It's beautiful!"

But a concerted national effort may be the way to educate the public and professionals to expand such green efforts. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) is a nationwide environmental building standards initiative developed by the nonprofit U.S. Green Building Council. Originally for commercial use, the concept has also evolved into a system devised for residential construction that promotes energy efficiency, water and materials conservation, quality of the indoor environment, and other categories.

So why doesn't everyone know about LEED? "The program is essentially all around us, but encompasses an overwhelming amount of information for the professional to absorb," Gary explains. Still, he says, "Awareness for the public is the bigger challenge, because it too comprises so much. Hybrid cars, wind farms, solar panels, fluorescent light bulbs, water conservation, and CO₂ emissions are all part of the bigger picture of trying to mitigate the detrimental impact of civilization and consumption upon the natural balance of the planet."

What's new in green building?

THE HAPPENINGS OF TRYON FARM



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construction: the downstairs ceiling, supported by beam timbers, forms the upstairs floor, cutting the construction elements there from four to two.

On the wall behind the sink in the downstairs half bath is another throwaway—a stunning onyx remnant in rich colors, Dumpster-bound from another project.

The paintings throughout are one-of-a-kind—all Dawn's artwork in oils.

A bog and meadow outside provide a unique setting. "One of the things Ed has done exceptionally well," Gary says, "is choose a site and give it a wonderful view." Gary and Dawn did their part and more: a single 40-foot access lane limited machinery movement, and only two trees were felled during the build; selected roots of other trees were saw-cut and treated. The humus was saved and put back down to a depth of 30 inches, encouraging indigenous regrowth.

With about three-fourths of Tryon Farm being preserved as natural habitat, Dawn and Gary's natural getaway is protected, serene and "rejuvenating," Gary says. ♡

[Counterclockwise from upper left] Recycled wood-pulp-and-cement panels are a fireproof wall for the fireplace; slate floors and clean lines add to the restful ambience of this getaway home near Michigan City; the 1,150-square-foot home has natural ventilation from strategically placed windows; an upstairs bedroom opens out on a sitting area with a view; and a rescued remnant of onyx provides a dramatic accent in the bath.

