

Houzz Tour: A Horse-Country Home Blends Rustic and Modern

Nestled in a pastoral setting that welcomes part-timers, this home embraces nature, versatility and history



Becky Harris September 12, 2012

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Husband-and-wife team Brent and Autumn Simmons have been a part of the Blue Ridge Mountains region around Boone, North Carolina, their entire lives. They both grew up there and studied design at Appalachian State University there (he studied building science; she, interior design).

They wanted to bring the sustainability techniques they'd learned in school to the community they loved, while celebrating the historic style of this pastoral mountain region. After opening their own design-build firm, they built this modern rustic cabin for themselves, keeping in mind they would be selling it a few years down the road. "This house was an experiment in creating the best of both worlds: mountain rustic and minimalist modern," says Autumn Simmons. Take a closer look and see if this style mashup calls to you, too.

Houzz at a Glance

Location: Banner Elk, North Carolina

Who lives here: Its designers, Brent and Autumn Simmons

Size: 3 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths

Year built: 2007



The couple wanted to respect the pastoral site and give a nod to the area's earliest settlers. They accomplished this by incorporating barn-like shapes and barn-red color. "It was an attempt to bottle a little bit of the nostalgia you get from driving through the area, seeing beautiful old barns that have weathered some tough years," Autumn Simmons says. The facade incorporates reclaimed barn wood and shingles made from poplar bark.



"This area is popular with second-home retirees in the summer for the beautiful scenery, great golf and quaint shops, along with arts and culture festivals hosted by the university and surrounding towns," she says. Hikers, bikers, kayakers, skiers and fall-foliage seekers also flock to the area. The house is in a development called "The Farm," which caters to part-time residents and hosts year-round residents.

The house borders several acres of horse paddocks and stables for residents in The Farm who wish to

board horses, which can be accessed just a few yards from the back door.



The bark shingles have a long local history. "Bark in the shingle form first appeared in the resort town of Linville, just a few miles from Banner Elk, in the late 1890s," says Simmons. "Architect Henry Bacon, who designed the Lincoln Memorial, is credited with its formal introduction. Chestnut bark was used on these original structures, some of which can still be found intact in the



area today."

The use of bark shingles halted with the chestnut blight that hit in the early 1900s until 1990, when another husband-and-wife team founded BarkHouse, which brought them back (they use poplar bark). "Tree bark was traditionally a waste product but is now a sustainably manufactured, maintenance-free product with natural beauty that will remain intact for decades," says Simmons.

Windows: Kolbe Push Out Casement Windows in Chutney, Mountain Lumber Company in Boone, North Carolina



"In designing a home, we feel it's extremely important not to design and build independently from the natural surroundings, and we incorporate the area's native materials," says Simmons.

The region and the site strongly influenced the home's shape, orientation and details. The home gives a nod to local and historical architectural traditions, takes full advantage of the views and is composed of elements like the bark shingles and locust posts.

A porch off the side of the house, complete with an outdoor fireplace, provides room to enjoy the beautiful surroundings throughout the seasons. Cable railings leave as much of the sweeping mountain views open as possible.

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Here's a closer look at a locust post. "One of my favorite things about living in the home has been the sight and sounds of birds and squirrels climbing on the bark siding and cracking seeds on the locust posts. It's a great feeling to know you've used a material that blends so seamlessly with nature that animals don't treat it any differently than a tree in the woods," says Simmons.



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"The casement windows create clean, simple lines that complement the shape of the house, and the simple grill pattern reinforces traditional farmhouse style," says Simmons.

Part of the versatility and sustainability of the house is in the attic's potential. Finishing it can add 456 square feet of living space. It was wired for future expansion, and a spot for a future staircase was planned and left open. Additionally, the roof blocks 97 percent of the sun's radiant heat from entering the attic, thanks to the LP TechShield Radiant Barrier Roof Sheathing. This keeps the entire home cooler and lowers energy bills.



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The trimwork around the walnut door also brings rustic logs into the design.

Door: custom, Vaughn Woodworking

"This was the first home we designed and built to live in ourselves, with the intention of selling a few years down the road," says Simmons. "While we were in



our mid-20s and wanted to bring something fresh and unique to the traditional styling of mountain homes, we knew we would not be the long-term residents and were challenged to balance our personal vision with needs of a future owner, who would potentially be in a very different phase of life."



Thus, the Simmonses designed for their own lifestyle but kept in mind that the home's style and functions should be versatile — suitable for retirees living there full time or using the place as a second home, perhaps for hosting large extended family gatherings.

Range: Jenn-Air; cabinetry: Merillat; hardware: Rocky Mountain Hardware

More Bark House bark made its way indoors, in this case as a 4- by 9-foot panel on the wall of the half bath. A live-edge slab serves as the vanity.



"While the interior is simple and not the typical rustic cabin style commonly found in our area, we did incorporate some reclaimed wood," says Simmons. One example is this sliding barn door in the master bathroom. The tongue and groove ceiling adds a dash of farmhouse style.

Hardwood floors: American black walnut; pedestal sinks: Kohler

More examples of rural details: board and batten siding, a live-edge headboard and a tree stump side table in the master bedroom.

Bed, mirror: Bannack Brown Ghost Wood

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"I think farmhouse style goes hand in hand with modern in many ways — simple lines, simple shapes, a sort of common-sense approach to construction that is the basis of design, not so much for appearance but necessity," says Simmons. "Farm homes have never been extravagant, and the purest, simplest forms are their core."

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