

# Endless Summer

Interior designer Dan Carithers  
pays homage to Mother Nature  
through a masterpiece  
of form and fabric.

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Serene Space: In the living room and adjoining library, as in the rest of the house, a myriad of French doors, large windows, pale fabrics and antiques join harmoniously to create a feeling of summer year-round. See Resources



If there's anything that interior designer Dan Carithers has a penchant for, it is certainly things that are pretty. Reticulated 19th-century creamware, toile, the palest dusty blues. New or old, simple or ornate, he gravitates towards aesthetic grace at every turn, a modern-day Midas whose touch is refined taste. When paired with a client

whose passion for observing nature is exceeded only by her desire to be working in the garden, Carithers' style becomes a study in bright elegance—like a botanical print you can look at for a long time and never quite feel you've examined every detail. Such is the case with the home he created for Elizabeth, a native Atlantan whose main request was that the house have



**Fluid Design:** On the first floor, arched doorways in each room look towards at least two others, inviting exploration. Shown here, the foyer (left) and dining room (opposite). Above: A collection of 18th-century Chinese celadon plates and vases line the stair hall leading to the second floor. See Resources



"a garden feeling, inside and out."

"I wanted it to be like an elegant cottage, like an old house in Connecticut," says Carithers, standing in the foyer on the room's original brick floor. To the left is a 20-foot-tall wall bearing a collection of 11 oversized 18th-century Chinese celadon plates and seven vases. They perch on gilt brackets and hang on Brunschwig & Fils wallpaper, which Carithers had custom-colored to match. "It took two years to find the porcelain, mainly via Paris," he explains, "and one weekend to decide on the layout."

On all sides of the foyer, eight-foot-tall arched doorways invite further exploration into the living room, dining room and garden room, a sunlight-filled space adjacent to the kitchen. It is an example, he explains, of what the French call *enfilade*, or a sense of interconnectedness: from each room, you can see into at least two others. You can also see that there is a distinct connection between the design of those rooms. "The eye will carry a feature in one room to a mirroring feature in another," he explains.

Those features include complementary palettes so harmonious that chairs





Humble and Grand: In the dining room, Carthers has placed an American coin silver tea service in a plain wicker basket atop a French country sideboard from 1730. A nature mural by Atlanta artist Jane Ingols hovers on wall panels near antique mirror sconces. In the center of the room, a circa 1800 chandelier from Provence hangs with delicate grace. See Resources.





Subtle Symphony of Color: In the music room (above), reticulated 19th-century creamware echoes the colors in the wallpaper and 18th-century Swedish chair. Opposite page: In the library (top), pale blue and oyster characterize the rug, sofa and window treatments. In the kitchen (below), white cabinets enhance the sunny space, while dark blue toile adds a punch of color. See Resources





can be moved between spaces without interrupting the visual flow. In this case, Elizabeth specified that she wanted soft colors—no beiges, browns or reds. Pastels figure prominently throughout: soft blues mix with muted greens, rose-petal pinks play alongside almost imperceptible yellows. “People say it’s so serene here,” she notes.

The interconnectedness of images, patterns and hues is expressed in every detail: redouté prints of irises appear on the first floor and in the master bedroom; the lining or trim on window treatments in one room are crafted from the same fabric that dominates the next. “It’s pleasant when you sit in one room and look to another without any abrupt change, without them being in conflict,”









**Natural Connections:** The garden room (opposite page) has direct access to the patio via a series of French doors, and is one of the owner's favorite places to relax. In the two guest bedrooms (above and right), comfortable window seats frame views of the gardens below. See Resources

Carithers explains. "It also makes you want to go into the next space."

Beyond that, it compels you to stroll through one of the many French doors (Carithers made sure that every door leading outside is a French door) into the lush gardens, creating what he calls "a physical and spiritual connection to the outdoors." This house, he says affectionately, is "a flower bower."

It is a genteel home whose décor gives an obvious nod to Southern grace and femininity, with pastoral touches of nature peeking out at every turn. Fabrics are sumptuous—from the floor-to-ceiling waterfall of striped silk window treatments in the living room, to the printed linen on the walls of a powder room, stretched over cotton batting to soften the sound and adorned with images of lavender lilacs and pink roses on a sand-colored field. Throughout are charming touches to entice the imagination—19th-century creamware with a blue botanical sprig in the center; silk Scalamandré fringe peeking out from behind scalloped valences; golden parakeets that replace regular faucets on a pale blue and ivory vanity cabinet, a piece from an old French room.

Even the furniture, which is at times massive, imparts a sense of serenity, often through delicate floral detailing.



## The house has "a garden feeling, inside and out."

Most of the home is furnished with late 18th- and early 19th-century French and British antiques, along with antique Swedish accents that Carithers has selected for their simple grace. Gilt vines and roses spill over the edges of a mirror in the living room; handcarved ivy and flowers twine up the wooden fireplace mantel in the library.

Nowhere is the juxtaposition of nature and elegance more prevalent than in the dining room. There, hand-painted butterflies, bees and dragonflies created by Atlanta artist Jane Ingols hover on wall panels, near antique mirror sconces mounted on

twin sets of pilasters. The owner, who delights in these images, points out a tiny blue bird's nest, her favorite. In the middle of the room sits a round English Regency-style walnut table with a marquetry inlay of flowers in the center. Above it hangs a neoclassical chandelier made in Provence from cut glass beads circa 1800, and around it are 19th-century oval-backed Louis XVI-style chairs, upholstered in a simple cotton fabric with a pink palm tree motif. The chair backs are upholstered in pink plaid taffeta, which matches the loose down pillows of the 18th-century French







# “There are no rules.” —Dan Carithers



**Masterful Design:** In May of this year, Dan Carithers (above) was awarded the “Giants of Design” award in interior design from *House Beautiful* magazine. He is also a member of the Atlanta Decorative Arts Council’s Hall of Fame. Right: The sitting room leading to the master bedroom is an excellent example of Carithers’ talent for pairing elegance and comfort—all in the context of peaceful, pretty patterns and colors. See Resources

daybed that lies in wait beneath two moody oil paintings of landscapes.

In this room, too, is one of the best illustrations of Carithers’ talent for creating vignettes where “the humble and the grand suddenly meet each other,” as he puts it. On top of an informal French country sideboard from 1730 sits a plain wicker basket with an American coin silver tea service resting inside. It is also these unexpected pairings that keep Carithers’ style impossible to define. “I’m not crazy about the word ‘formal’ and I’m not crazy about the word ‘informal,’” he says. “I just don’t know what they mean.”

One of the most sacred areas of the house is the master bedroom and adjoining sitting room, a veritable sanctuary. A collection of flower-stenciled porcelain plates hangs on the

bed wall, and on the bed rests a tiny pillow embroidered with a royal crown and the words “Queen’s Bedroom.” The cream-colored rug, patterned with minty green fleurs-de-lis, sets the room’s color tone, while a raised coffered ceiling pattern is repeated in the bedroom cabinets. This room is another example of Carithers’ talent for mixing the unexpected. On one bedside table sits an 18th-century table lamp

made in China; on the other is a 19th-century glass lamp from England. On the opposite wall, a humble Provençal armoire hides one of the only contemporary indulgences: a flat-screen TV.

“It’s not about breaking the rules,” Carithers points out as he straightens a lampshade that, to the average eye, does not need straightening. “Rather,” he says with a smile, “there are no rules.” ■ See Resources

