

Living room on the lake

Many people dream of living near the water. The draw is certainly the view, but there is also a sense that life is more relaxed in a home on the water. That philosophy was a big part of the decision when architect Rosemary McMonigal's clients overhauled a small Minnesota lake cottage in hopes of paring down and simplifying their lives.

Building on a lakeside lot with no room to add on, combined with unflattering previous improvement attempts and underlying structural problems, made the journey to a dream cottage difficult. Once the major problems were taken care of, however, the fun began. For McMonigal, capitalizing on lake views was the first priority; storage space was second. Along the way, she unified the look of the house and gave it character through the details.

This living room embodies what the remodel was all about: the view. All the pain and the price of construction was worth it once the homeowners could enjoy such a great space daily. The living room proper stayed the same size but was gutted to the frame along with the rest of the house. The trick was figuring out the right way to rebuild the room. McMonigal started with a wall of windows overlooking the lake. The oversize windows not only create dramatic lake views, but they also increase daylight in the living room and the connecting rooms.

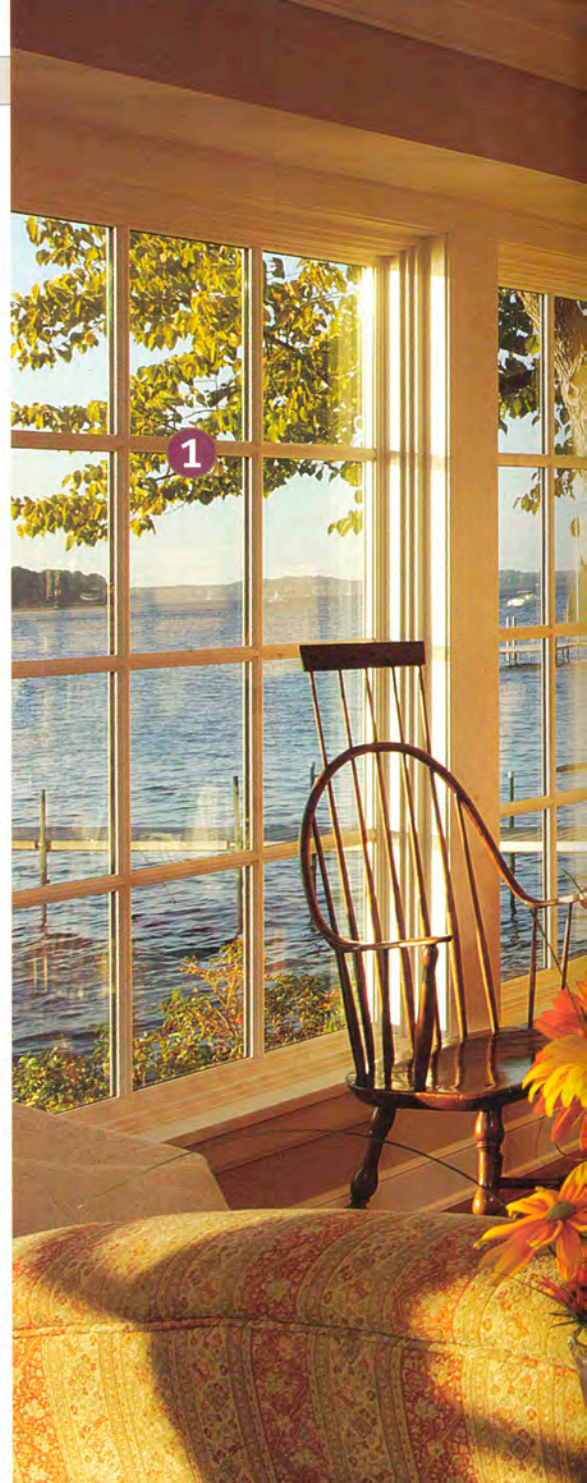
Because this remodel was a downsize for the homeowners, they planned the living room and other spaces by bringing in furniture, carpets, and art work early in the construction process. This strategy influenced what they kept and what they discarded, and

helped to shore up plans for built-ins and lighting.

To harmonize with the furnishings and to fit the cottage style, custom millwork was designed for the trim and built-ins. Adding built-in shelving and cabinets, a deeper mantel, and stylish trim re-energized the fireplace wall. In particular, a handsome granite surround bulked up the fireplace and ensured that eyes would be drawn away from the lake for more than a passing glance.

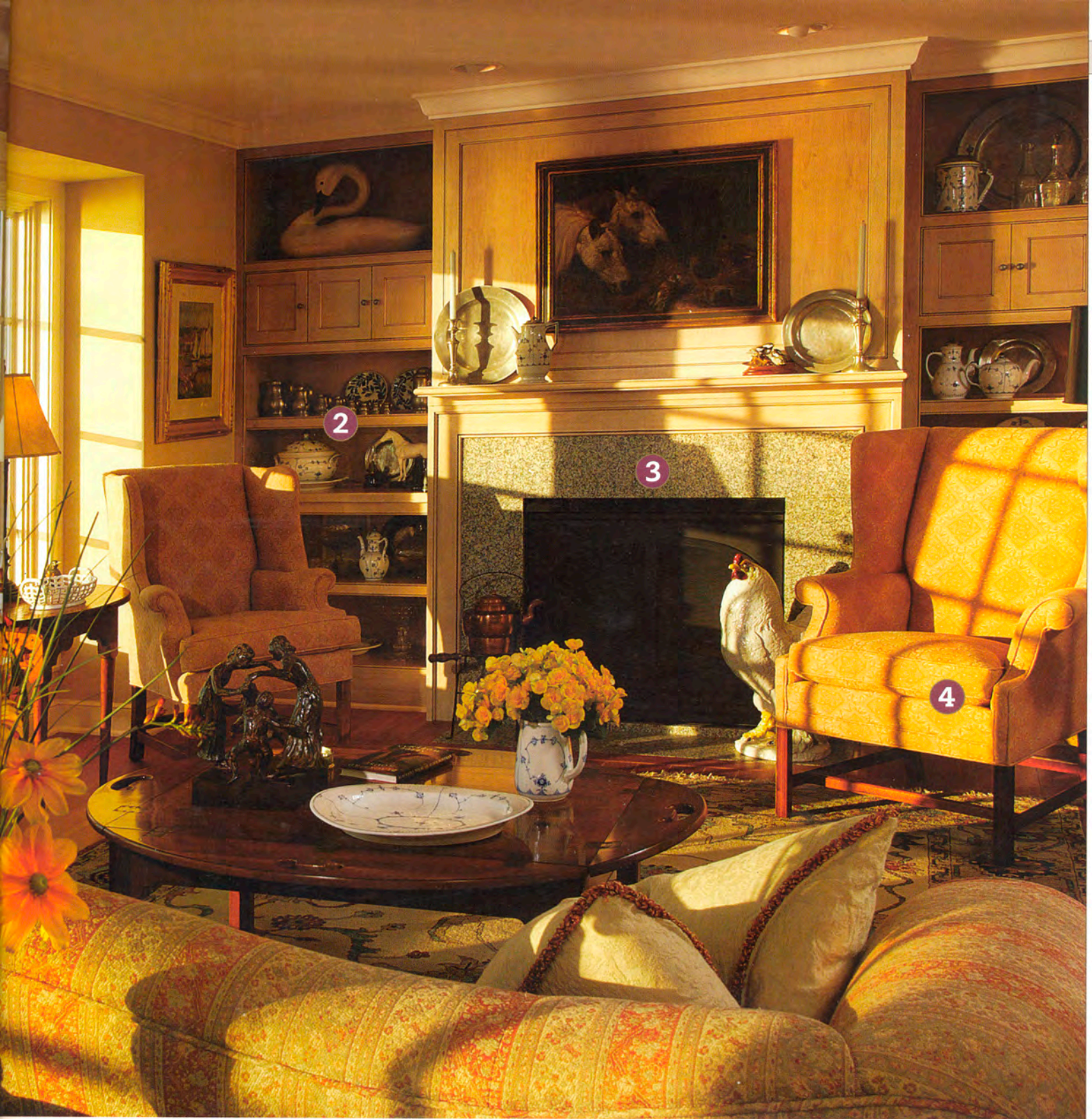


"Most people add window seats, but with a large window just 8 ft. from the lake, I couldn't resist the opportunity to run the windows close to the floor," says architect Rosemary McMonigal about planning for the living-room windows.



BEFORE





BETTER

1 Large windows that reach close to the ceiling make for sweeping views of the lake. The windows also bring loads of natural light into the living room.

2 Floor-to-ceiling built-ins provide display space for collections and cabinets for storage. The built-ins are also a great visual frame for the fireplace.

3 The updated surround adds more heft to the fireplace's presence. The choice of granite gives the surround style, and the color complements the light wood cabinetry.

4 By trying out furniture, artwork, and rugs during the construction phase, the homeowners were better able to shape the final design of the room.