

keeping it 'honest'



Seth Goldman and his wife Julie Farkas, on their eco-friendly green roof

Seth Goldman and his wife knew right down to a 'tea' what they wanted in a renovation: It had to be eco-friendly and true to the character of the house

By Jennifer Sergent
Photos by Stacy Zarin-Goldberg

Seth Goldman, the "TeaEO" of Bethesda-based Honest Tea, has always been devoted to social and environmental causes. For more than two years, he was the head of sales and marketing for social investment funds at the Calvert Group, a Bethesda investment firm dedicated to sustainable and responsible investing. After he left in 1998, he applied those same values to Honest Tea, the line of high-quality organic teas and beverages that he started with Barry Nalebuff, his former business professor at Yale.

The two men made their first sample brews in Goldman's Chevy Chase kitchen. So when it came time for Goldman and his wife, Julie Farkas, to renovate their 1939 New Orleans-style house, they wanted the project to stay true to the "honest" practices of the company.

"Living space is the most direct connection to how you live every day and how you get your kids to live," Goldman says. ►



The beamed ceiling of the new family room echoes the lines of the original New Orleans-style balcony outside.



“We didn’t need a much bigger house; we just wanted **a house that was greener** and [would bring] the New Orleans feel from the front of the house.” —Julie Farkas

Goldman, Farkas and two of their three sons moved to the area in 1995 (the youngest wasn’t born yet), and they chose the house primarily because it backs up to Norwood Park. Little Falls Trail runs just beyond the backyard gate. In addition to its location, the family was drawn to the home’s unusual styling: Heavy beams support a wrought-iron balcony over the front door, making for an inviting porch in a neighborhood filled with a variety of architectural styles.

However, an ‘80s-era addition off the back of the house, with vinyl siding and

cheap windows, left much to be desired. “It didn’t speak to the old house at all,” Farkas says. “It was just glued on.”

So in 2008 the couple began a renovation, with a mandate that it be environmentally friendly. The project was completed last year.

Instead of demolishing the addition, they deconstructed it, donating the materials to Community Forklift near Bladensburg. Nearly 95 percent of the old addition was reused elsewhere, including floors, siding, windows, insulation—even the stove and a bathtub.

That done, Goldman and Farkas began work on a new stucco addition that includes a family room, a much-expanded kitchen, a screened porch and, above it all, a master suite with its own balcony. They also added energy-efficient heating, cooling and water systems for the entire house.

“We didn’t need a much bigger house; we just wanted a house that was greener and [would bring] the New Orleans feel from the front of the house,” Farkas says.

The couple hired Bethesda architect Anne Decker to handle the design.

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A peaceful tableau in the master bedroom

Decker had designed Honest Tea's industrial-looking office space on Bethesda Avenue, and "she and I worked very well together," Goldman says. "We have the same aesthetic."

Goldman and Farkas also called on Ernie Koutras of Rockville-based Koutras Construction, who had done small household projects for them in the past. Neither architect nor contractor had worked on a completely green renovation before, and Goldman credits Koutras with doing much of the research to ensure that every material used was environmentally appropriate. "He didn't start the project with a lot of green knowledge, but in the end he was an expert," Goldman says.

To enhance the French Quarter feel of the home's original façade, Decker designed French doors to replace windows on either side of the front door, and added classic French Quarter lanterns from Bevolo Gas and Electric Lights in New Orleans.

Inside, Decker incorporated beams across the new family room ceiling to



Even the couple's mattress is eco-friendly: It's made from a type of rubber.

echo those beneath the front balcony. She also repeated the wrought-iron accents on a rear balcony off the master bedroom; they form columns around an outdoor shower and a chin-up bar for the athletic couple. "We were trying to speak to the good parts of the old house and make them more uniform," Decker says.

Goldman and Farkas are proudest, however, of the details that are not immediately visible. The renovation incorporates energy-efficient windows and doors with R-values 50 percent to 100 percent higher than required by code. The air ducts are double—and sometimes triple—sealed. The insulation

is made from recycled blue jeans and newspapers. The roof tiles, which mimic slate, are made from recycled tires and plastic shopping bags.

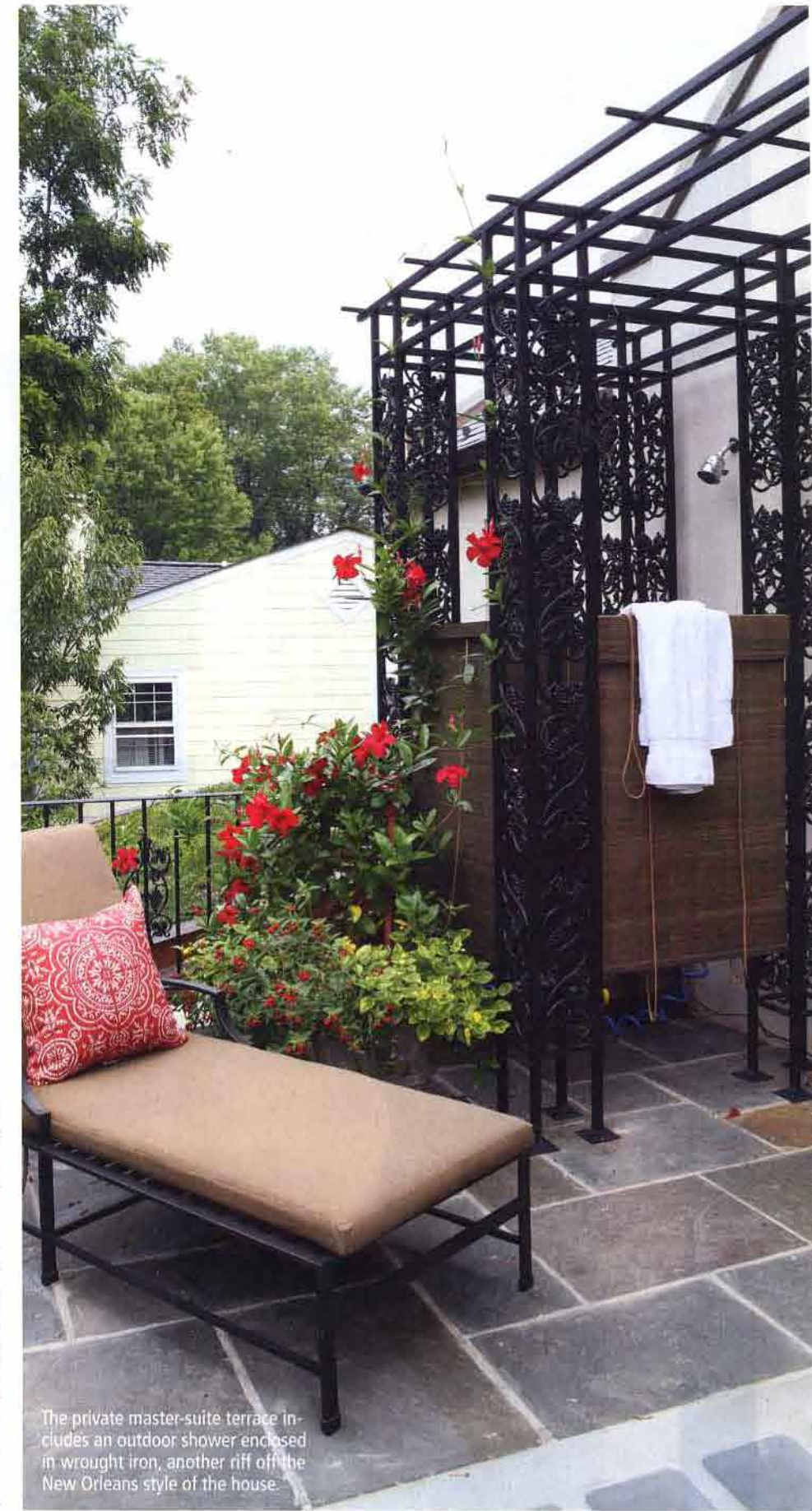
Goldman admits that these measures made the project more expensive, but notes that they deliver savings on energy bills in the long run. To that end, Farkas adds, "we tried to find as many green products as we could."

All the lumber, from framing to flooring to the kitchen cabinets, came from sustainable tree farms that plant more trees than they harvest. The kitchen counters are concrete, a renewable resource, and IceStone, which is made

from recycled glass. Even the couple's Savvy Rest mattress is eco-friendly. Made from a type of rubber, it was purchased from Eco-Green Living in the Takoma Park section of Washington, D.C.

Goldman and Farkas invested in big-ticket green items, as well, including two banks of solar panels on the roof and a geothermal heating and cooling system with pipes 400 feet underground. And one flat portion of the roof is literally green: It's planted with several varieties of sedum, which provide natural insulation and absorb rainwater to reduce runoff.

At the same time, the couple incor-



The private master-suite terrace includes an outdoor shower enclosed in wrought iron, another riff off the New Orleans style of the house.



Julie Farkas wallpapered the basement bathroom with pages from Sierra Club date books, paying homage to nature and the environment.

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The new kitchen includes an island countertop of IceStone, made from recycled glass.

porated elements that would save them from having to use too much artificial light. Glass bricks built into the floor of the master-bedroom balcony allow sunlight into the screened porch below. And a Solatube—a tube that runs from the roof to a space inside where a skylight isn't feasible—directs sunlight into the windowless upstairs hallway. It's so bright there now that a guest once asked how to turn off the light. Goldman says the renovation increased the size of the house by 30 percent, while reducing the couple's utility costs by the same percentage.

After taking a visitor through the rest of the home, Goldman opens the door to the basement bathroom with a flourish. The walls are covered with decoupage pages from Sierra Club date books, which feature dramatic images of nature and wildlife.

This celebration of the environment, he says, "connects the whole concept of this house." ■

Jennifer Sergent grew up in Bethesda and Chevy Chase and now lives in Arlington, Va. She was previously the senior editor of Washington Spaces magazine.

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