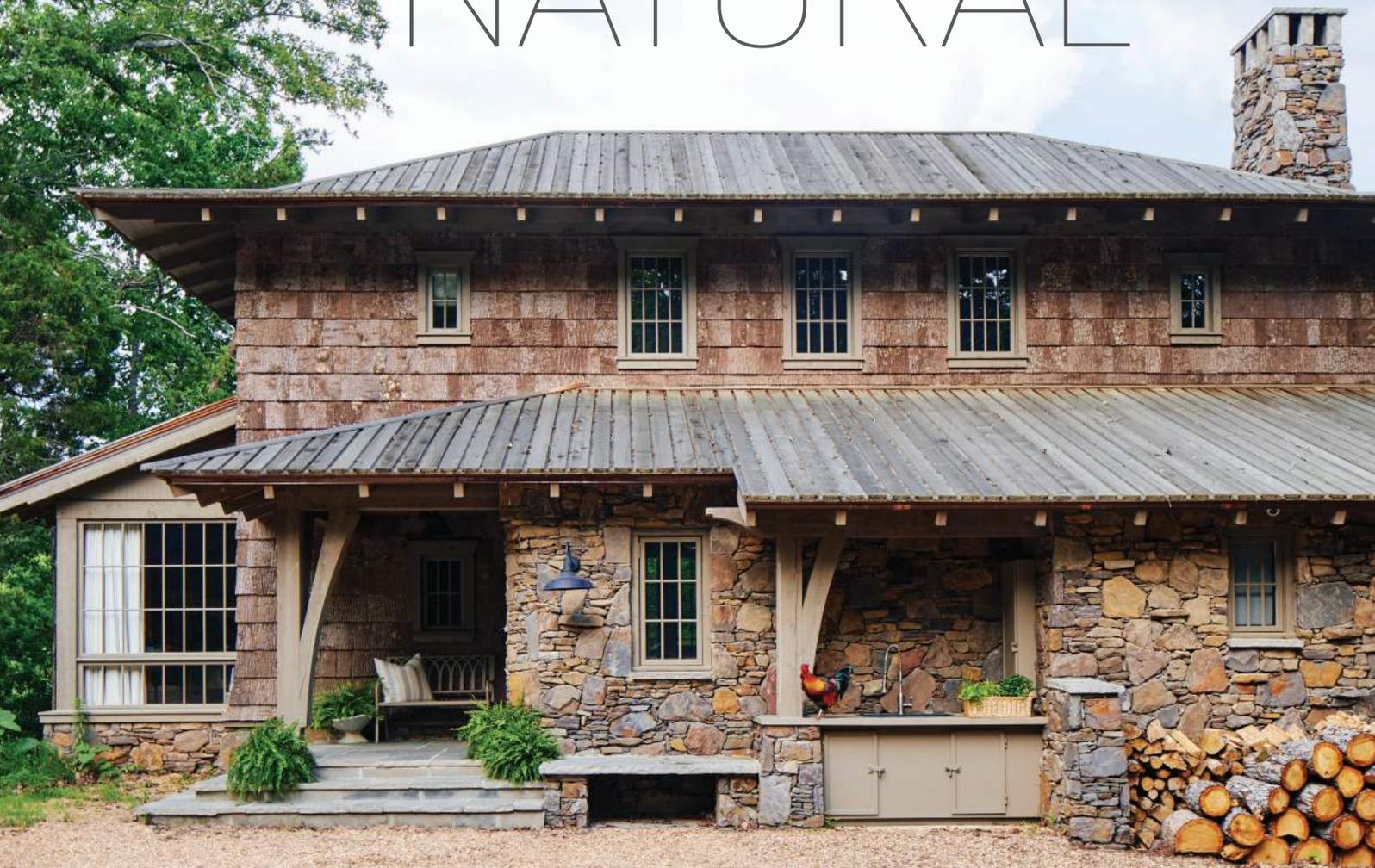


# IT'S ONLY NATURAL



A country retreat blends with its wooded surroundings,  
beautifully blurring the line between the interiors and the great outdoors.

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**OPPOSITE** The house is perched above the river, where it captures breezes and a view. The exterior siding is hickory bark, which gives the structure instant age and protection. "The bark is naturally weather resistant," architect Louis Nequette says. "It helps the house feel like it's part of the land." **THIS PHOTO** A canoe of mahogany and oak draws the eye to the soaring stone fireplace and natural-finish walls. Leather and linen upholstery blends with the space's hushed tones. Large windows connect the inside to the outdoors for a tree-house feel.





**P**INE TREES SOAR ABOVE ROCK OUTCROPPINGS ALONG ALABAMA'S CAHABA RIVER, and deer and turkey flourish in the dense foliage. It's the ideal habitat for hiking, hunting, and fishing—and for a home that serves as an indoor-outdoor retreat. Built in 2016, the 3,200-square-foot house appears to have risen from the land. In a way, it did exactly that. The stone base was built from fieldstone unearthed on an adjoining property, and the interior wood is as local as it gets. "We could have chosen any number of materials," says architect Louis Nequette, "but the obvious answer was to take the fallen trees—and the ones we had to cut down—mill them, dry them, and use them in this house."

Sealed but not stained, the wood's warmth carries throughout the living area and is expressed in open beams, floors, and stair rails. In the master bedroom, whitewashed oak allows the wood grain to show through; more raw texture is found in barn planks lining the walls of a camp-style bedroom. The liberal use of natural materials gives the home a casual, lived-in feel without going over the top. Nequette says, "We wanted to be very respectful and true to the land and the purpose of the cottage—not let it get out of hand."

"Honesty" became a watchword in designing the space. For instance, the kitchen is a galley layout with a farmhouse dining table. "It's true to an old-school cottage or farmhouse," Nequette says. "There's no kitchen island, no going overboard." That same straightforward approach extended to the color palette and furnishings. "The colors are natural and neutral, picking up tones

**OPPOSITE, LEFT** A compact galley kitchen opens to the living area, and is integrated into the woody design with natural hickory cabinets. **OPPOSITE, RIGHT** Leather chairs, locally crafted pottery, and pillows made of rescued woven textiles add to the natural integrity of the home's design. **THIS PHOTO** Crafted by a local artisan, a zinc-top table and a bench softened with a gray wash join sturdy wishbone chairs with rush seats. All are modern yet functional, ideal in a camplike setting. Pendant lights allow an unobstructed view of the kitchen across the living space.





**ABOVE** Designed with camp-style beds for sleepovers, a bedroom is finished with barn planks. Upholstered nightstands and natural linen shades deepen the rugged ambience. **BELOW** The main bedroom's whitewashed walls are a light touch in otherwise wood-toned interiors. Simple linen draperies blend with the walls. The bed is upholstered in cocoa-color mohair for extra texture—no pattern needed.



from the land,” interior designer Liz Hand Woods says. “We wanted the fabrics to blend with the wood.”

Textural hand-woven rugs and upholstered pieces—such as a mohair-covered master bed frame and cushy coffee table with nailhead trim—add interest without busy motifs. “We wanted to keep it more rustic without introducing pattern like florals or damasks,” Woods says. “That’s why the decorating is totally about texture play.”

Nature served as the ultimate decorating guide, even for the smallest of details. “The blue pillows on the sofa are reflective of the sky,” Woods says. “We wanted it to feel like we were bringing the outside in.” In that vein, the countertops and backsplash in the kitchen are a deep charcoal soapstone that “feels like it could have been found somewhere on the property,” she says. And the two-story fireplace—a towering structure that adds drama to the living area and balances the large corner picture window—is built of the same fieldstone as the foundation.

Rustic in feel and elegant in execution, the home’s simplicity nods to its sense of place. Case in point: The custom-built canoe hanging from the living room ceiling serves as a reminder of the home’s proximity to bluegill and bass. The philosophy behind touches such as this one could easily speak for the house as a whole: “They’re a layer of delight on top of pure functionality,” Nequette says. □

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**THIS PHOTO** In the guest room, a lacquered console table, crowned with a deer rack from out West, provides desk space. Simple, natural accessories are chosen to reinforce the home's connection to its raw, natural surroundings.





**TOP LEFT** Interior designer Liz Hand Woods hits pause on the screen porch's custom daybed. **TOP RIGHT** The open stairwell is elegant in its simplicity. **BOTTOM LEFT** The front entry welcomes with a mix of stone and natural woods. "We used materials that came from the surrounding area and that can age honestly and naturally," Nequette says. **BOTTOM RIGHT** A crowing rooster and vintage pickup cue the rustic, country charm. **OPPOSITE** In this location, the screen porch sees a lot of living. That's why it's outfitted with a fireplace and flip-down grate for cooking. A custom table with steel base and teak top is ideal for dining.

“THE FEWER THE MATERIALS AND TIGHTER THE PALETTE,  
the more successful the outcome.”

—ARCHITECT LOUIS NEQUETTE

