



1,000  
SQUARE  
FEET

The most recent efficiency-minded addition to the guest cottage are solar panels, installed just a few months ago but in the plan from the beginning.

## FUN-SIZE GUEST COTTAGE

Photography by Robert Radifera

Karen and Dennis Johnson had one of their first dates on the picturesque farm they now call home. The 80-acre property in Keswick has been in Karen's family for as long as she can remember and was always one of her favorite places.

Karen explains, "My dear cousin lived here until she died. We were very close. We used to come out all the time with our children." When the Johnsons had the opportunity to purchase the property, Karen says the timing was perfect. "We were living in Hershey, Pennsylvania but were ready to move back to Charlottesville. It was meant to be!"

There was only one problem: the 200-year-old farmhouse was so badly infested with termites that it had to be torn down. Karen says, "It wasn't a total loss, though. Some of the old doors and porch railings were saved and are used in the new structure."

With the help of Doug Lowe of Artisan Construction, the Johnsons broke ground on a new-but-looks-old farmhouse and guest cottage. Their children live far away and often stay for extended periods. Karen says, "We built the cottage so they will come often, be comfortable and maintain a sense of independence when they're here."

The exterior of the 1,000-square-foot cottage is a miniature version of the main house. Inside are two small bedrooms and a loft, a kitchen, full bath and laundry, and a living room—everything you need for a comfortable stay.

Karen credits her friend Amy Turnage, a designer, for helping her with the home's design. Karen says, "The key to working with a small space is planning and thinking through all the ways it can be efficient."

For instance, the hot water heater and HVAC system are in the crawl space under the house, instead of in a closet or an attic, where you usually find them. "That space-saving trick is how we were able to include the laundry units and the loft with the wall-sized flat-screen television."

Lowe adds, "The efficiency of the cottage goes beyond a space-maximizing design. It's energy-efficient, too." Lowe explains that they used a special kind of spray foam insulation and other energy-efficient building materials that aren't commonly used in construction because they tend to be pricier than other options. Lowe says, "Energy-efficiency is important to the Johnsons, so we selected materials that suited their needs."

This welcoming cottage has all the amenities of a much larger house, thanks to its well-planned design. From the space-saving stacked washer and dryer to fantastic views of the farm thanks to an abundance of windows, guests who are lucky to stay here will love calling it their "home away from home."





*"The key to working with a small space is planning and thinking through all the ways it can be efficient."*

— Karen Johnson



When you're ready to tackle your small space, think about how you will be using it and what you'll need for the space to work. With proper planning and a little bit of design magic, you can create the illusion of having more square footage than you actually do, letting color unify it and the furnishings serve many purposes—all tricks that can help you live large in any small space. 

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