


# Tropic

FLORIDA LIVING & DESIGN

DECEMBER, 2012





# little house, big impact.

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Being truly “modern” means using only what you really need and nothing beyond that. Respecting the environment. Conserving resources. In the case of architecture, modern once meant a house big enough to live in comfortably but small enough to keep tidy and maintain without the help of a staff. “A machine for living” in the words of Le Corbusier.

Somewhere along the line, an erroneous notion took hold: Bigger was better (and completely necessary to one’s life) and the race toward grandiosity commenced. The “machine” swelled from the size of a lawnmower to a tank.

The recent, real-estate fueled economic debacle in the U.S. has changed the attitude of many homeowners, convincing them that smaller can actually be better. That when it comes to owning a home, it is perfectly acceptable — even preferable — to go from oversize to fun-size.

A modest house in a tropical setting was just fine for the snowbirds from Toronto, Canada who bought this property in Poinsettia Heights. The east Fort Lauderdale neighborhood, developed after World

Stacking sliders from PGT,  
ripplefold sheers by High  
Tech Window Design,  
Miami. Ficus alii and sanse-  
vieria cylindrica from The  
Plant Boat, Fort Lauderdale.  
Marcel Breuer's *Laccio*  
nesting tables from Design  
Within Reach, Miami Beach.  
Egret throw pillow by Kelly  
O'Neal from Acacia,  
Fort Lauderdale.





Calcatta gold marble from Opustone was used for the full-height backsplash. All cabinetry was custom made by Downsview Kitchens at DCoTA. Miniature garden of succulents from The Plant Boat, Fort Lauderdale.



Breakfast table is located just beyond the home's bar, which doubles as serving buffet. An integrated ice-maker, left, and wine cooler, right, both by Sub-Zero. Antique glass fishing float centerpiece with coral and sea fans from Acacia, Fort Lauderdale. Vintage 1969 Duplex coffee service is by designer Ben Seibel.

War II, is distinguished by its smallish, low-scale homes, some located on the Middle River or on Lake Melva.

Originally designed in 1952 as a 2-bedroom, 2 1/2-bathroom, approximately 1700-square-foot structure, this home also follows that diminutive pattern. Perched on an 8,963-square-foot lot abutting the river, it seemed a candidate for demolition at first. But its owners were happy with the floor plan and just had a couple of changes in mind, says developer Andrew Zahn. They wanted an extra bedroom, plus some modifications to the existing kidney-shaped swimming pool, master bedroom, and living room.

Working with Broward-based architect John Garra of Square One Architecture and with Zahn, whose company is known for environmentally-conscious development (they built Broward County's first LEED-certified house), the couple got their wishes.

The result, at 2,483 square feet, is slightly larger than before. But all in all, it is still a little house with big impact.

Airy and light-filled, the structure shows off the quintessential indoor/outdoor lifestyle that is the real allure of a Florida home. And while contemporary materials such as energy-efficient glass and sustainable hardwoods are used throughout, there are still clear nods to the past. Take the front door with its clerestory windows just above. A clever device for adding brightness, they also hark back to the midcentury era. In typical Florida fashion, the back of the house also invites the sunlight in. Sliding glass doors line the bedroom, living room, and kitchen. All open and lead to the tastefully landscaped patio and the enormous kidney-shaped swimming pool, part of which was transformed into "a beach hangout area," says Zahn. Brazilian ipe wood topping each set of glass doors adds an organic embellishment.

Although the house wasn't torn down, it got nearly "new everything" says Zahn. "When we finished the demo, the only thing left was the slab and the garage!" The slab was extended a bit to accommodate a new bedroom. The master bedroom and living room were expanded. And, oh yes, the roof was raised about four feet! Hence, that spacious sense and the room for those clerestory windows.

Walls were redone. Porcelain floor tiles were replaced with large slabs of marble. And more than one modern ceiling fan was installed in strategic spots. Two can be seen twirling lazily in the living room. Another can be spied immediately outside of the kitchen to make al fresco dining even fresher.



**Easily accessible from the pool, an outdoor shower was crafted of ipe wood and fitted with Axor showerhead and valve from Decorator's Plumbing, Miami. Sansevieria in cast stone planter from The Plant Boat, Fort Lauderdale.**



**All windows and doors are clear impact glass. A low-e coating for energy efficiency gives them a pale green tint. Ipe wood detailing adds emphasis over each exterior door. The home's original kidney-shaped pool was refinished.**

the bank of horizontal, glass-fronted cabinetry suspended above them. Lit from inside, they mimic clerestory windows. A calacatta gold marble backsplash adds drama. Save for the sleek range hood and drop-in cooktop, appliances are mostly hidden. The roomy island offers a deep sink and extra seating for three. A bar area features another sink, wine fridge, and concealed ice maker. That pleasant, organic design element comes into play once again via the narrow strip of wood that runs atop the kitchen.

For some, though, the home's most satisfying spot is not inside but outdoors, in the backyard. Clad in ipe wood, a corner of the house has been fashioned smartly into an outdoor shower. A must for rinsing off after a dip in the pool or for cooling off during an unbearably steamy South Florida day. It's a component every true Florida home — large or small — should contain.