

HOME

PLANNING IDEAS

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HOUSE**
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23 tips for
the perfect
family room

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New Trends in Window Design

Fall/Winter
2004

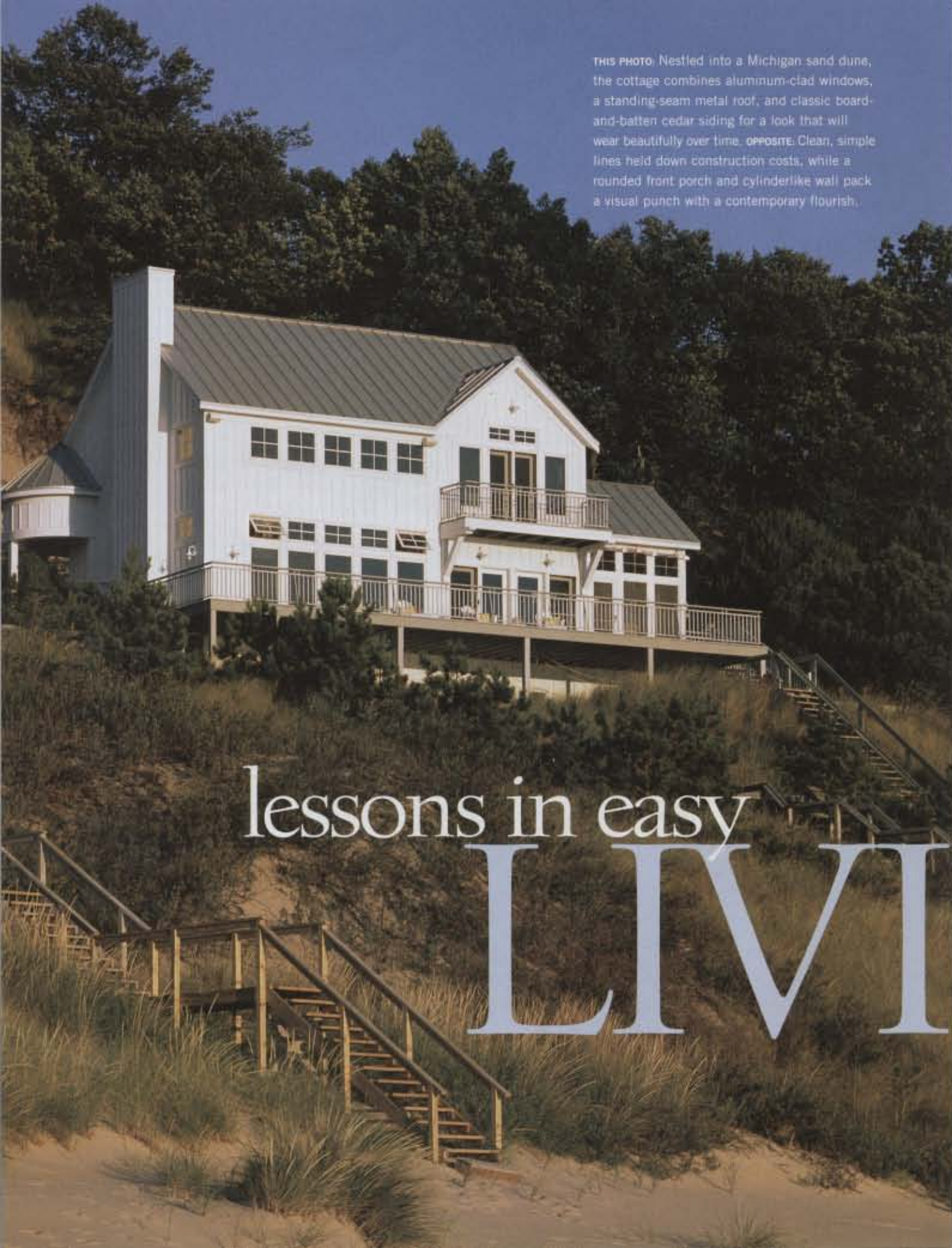
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THIS PHOTO: Nestled into a Michigan sand dune, the cottage combines aluminum-clad windows, a standing-seam metal roof, and classic board-and-batten cedar siding for a look that will wear beautifully over time. OPPOSITE: Clean, simple lines held down construction costs, while a rounded front porch and cylinderlike wall pack a visual punch with a contemporary flourish.



lessons in easy LIVING

This low-maintenance waterfront retreat is rugged enough to endure Great Lakes weather—plus a boatload of boys—without sacrificing good looks.



When he designed this elegantly simple lakeside cottage for a family of five, architect Jeff Visser had the image of a farmhouse in mind.

"[Viewed] from Lake Michigan, I wanted the house to look like it belonged on this site, as if it had been here long before the area was developed," Visser says. "Since we were working with a relatively small footprint, the simple form of a farmhouse seemed appropriate."

By playing with the massing of the house—breaking into the steep sloping roof with a dormer gable, butting cylindrical forms up against boxy shapes—Visser also gave the home a contemporary spin.

"Certain views of the house have that Michigan farmhouse look, yet [the home] has a look all its own," Visser says.

ABOVE LEFT: In the entry, transoms and oversize sidelights bring sunshine streaming in from the east. Square pillars subtly define the entry and living room without closing off either space.

ABOVE RIGHT: A tongue-and-groove maple ceiling brings the height of the vault down a bit, making the living room feel warmer and more inviting. White, nonload-bearing 2x12s give the appearance of exposed rafters.



A soaring 20-foot vault in the living room calls for a fireplace that can hold its own. Crisp white paint sets off the grid pattern above the stone surround and mimics the four windows surrounding it. Driftwood-gray stain on maple cabinetry works well with the beach setting.

A deep, L-shape deck overlooking the lake, screen porch, and vaulted living room offer family members comfortable places to congregate—inside or out—while lounging or entertaining. The owners love the home's easy maintenance and casual style, and its not-so-sprawling size.

"It's not a real big space, but we wanted it to live big," Visser says. "With all of the windows on the lake side of the house and the volume of space in the living room, it feels much bigger than it really is."

Built on a sand dune overlooking Lake Michigan, this getaway makes the most of the arcing sun. From the oversize sidelights at the entry to sliding doors across the back and French doors on one side, creative placement of glass captures maximum sunlight throughout the day. The back (western) wall is essentially glass, with carefully lined up sliding doors topped by strategically located gridlike windows. But light was only one reason for the window and door placement.

"The house perches on the edge of a bluff and has some really phenomenal views," Visser says. "Designing the house itself was all about capturing those views."



Build a Low-Upkeep Hideaway

If you're considering building or buying a part-time home, look for features that minimize routine maintenance.

► **Go with the least square footage you comfortably can.** You'll spend less time on cleaning and maintenance tasks.

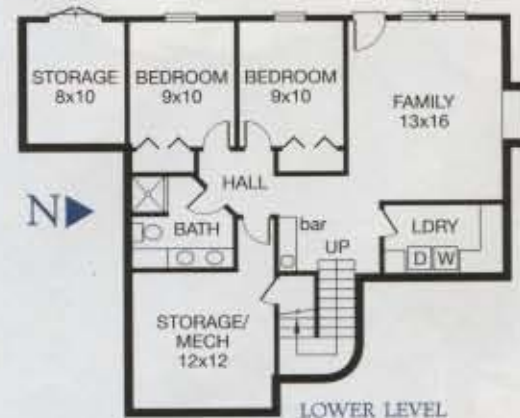
► **Landscape with indigenous plants and avoid mowing.** The dunegrass surrounding this cottage makes outdoor yard chores obsolete. While this grass requires a sandy soil, most regions have eco-friendly plants and natural vegetation that help lessen soil erosion.

► **Find flooring that withstands abuse.** The maple flooring used here reflects sunshine into the main level, and its finish prevents damage from tracked-in sand. Avoid high-gloss wood floor finishes; even durable premium finishes show nicks and scratches. Tile is another wear-resistant choice for a vacation home but may require periodic grout cleaning and sealing.

► **Pick rugs over carpeting** where you need a soft surface, especially if tracked-in sand is a problem. Rugs can be cleaned off-site or simply replaced in cases of severe damage.

IN DETAIL

location: Muskegon County, Michigan
square feet: 2,650
bedrooms: 4
bathrooms: 3
footprint: 46x46' (without deck)
 63x48' with deck
est. cost: \$220/sq. ft.
building time: 8-9 months



ABOVE: A simple, uncluttered dining room maximizes southern and western views of the lake. French doors open onto a screen porch. The homeowners keep the doors open most of the summer to capture cool Lake Michigan breezes.

LEFT: The kitchen's gray granite counter is a great place for quick breakfasts and easy meals. The family also uses the island as a buffet for entertaining.



Making the Final Cut

Invest in quality materials that will make your home last longer. The right choices will withstand time, weather, and generations of rough-and-tumble get-togethers.

▶ **Select practical, durable materials.** Hardwood floors on the main level, industrial stainless-steel sinks in the bunk-room bath, and concrete walls on the lower level make this lake home a low-maintenance jackpot.

▶ **Find an exterior material that stands up well to weather.** The board-and-batten cedar siding here may require painting every five to seven years, but cedar resists moisture damage that can lead to even greater headaches.

▶ **Choose a roofing material that lasts.** The standing-seam metal roof on this home should last 50 years or more. With no gutters, the metal also resists ice damming and is less affected by strong winds off the lake.

“Certain views of the house have that Michigan farmhouse look, yet [the home] has a look all its own.”

—architect Jeff Visser



Ultimately, the vacation starts when the family shows up for some rest and relaxation, so the home needed practical amenities that relieve the owners from chores and upkeep. It also needed room to allow the owners' three sons to invite friends along on weekend sojourns. With that in mind, Visser created a lower level with two small side-by-side bedrooms featuring pairs of no-fuss bunks. The idea for the bunk rooms came from a magazine page the homeowners had saved. Each pair of bunks is built around a window with a view and includes storage below the bottom bunk. A three-quarter bath, family room, and separate entry on this level afford the younger set a refreshing degree of independence. The laundry room is on the lower level as well, so messy beach clothes can go right into the wash.

“The whole lower level of the house was laid out for the kids,” Visser says. “They’re able to come and go as they please. It’s practical and very user-friendly, yet has a little design flair to it as well.”

Immersed in the Michigan farmhouse look, and totally comfortable, this home was designed and built for the way this family lives. **HPI**

OPPOSITE: When they want to enjoy sunsets over the lake, family and friends gather on the west-facing deck. A tiny balcony opens onto this vista from the upper-level master bedroom.

ABOVE LEFT: With their integral backsplash and stainless-steel countertop, deep restaurant-style sinks in the lower-level bath are perfect for washups after a day at the beach.

ABOVE RIGHT: Putting two sets of custom-built bunks in each of the lower level’s two bedrooms supplies enough beds to easily sleep eight.

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