



**N**UDGED BY THE IMPENDING ARRIVAL of daughter Cory, their desire to live in a walkable town, and prior positive experiences remodeling fixer-uppers, Jane and Howard Turner moved to Ridgefield in May 1986, becoming the fourth owners of 50 High Ridge Avenue, also known as the A.L. Benedict House.

At the time, the 1880 Victorian farmhouse needed serious TLC. Their creative plan of attack: strengthen the original foundation, then carve a modern, circular layout from a traditionally closed-off structure. Thanks to local builders, masons, artisans, and craftsmen, and two-plus decades of renovations, the Turners' vision lives on.

Jane expressed that the home and High Ridge Avenue have come full circle since A. Barton Hepburn initially relocated the house so that his New York and Boston friends could spread out and build a surrounding compound of culture. One could argue that the home's new design embodies this full-circle effect—everything is about flow and a forward-looking preservation of history.

Now, with its understated, quaint farmhouse façade and airy, updated interior, the Turners' whimsical revamp encourages old and new to cohabitate. Open the turquoise front door and you're greeted head on by the kitchen area. To the right is the main living space—containing a ground-to-fourth-floor round balcony staircase—where neutral walls, open arches, and original

[ MOVING STORIES ]

# Gathering Place

A HISTORIC HOME PULSES WITH ALL THINGS OLD, LOCAL, AND NEW

BY MARGARET MAY // PHOTOGRAPHS BY SUSAN FISHER PHOTOGRAPHY

**DOG DAYS**

The front wrap-around porch interacts with the neighborly movement of High Ridge Avenue while the backyard remains a private sanctuary. Jane Turner and daughter Cory, co-founders of Dogly, sit with Zoe and Ozzy.





**AU NATURALE**  
 The Turners widened the original staircase to accommodate a 15-foot Christmas tree. A family room and guest suite seamlessly coexist. The original stone foundation and wood burning stove add a rustic touch. Kitchen couches accentuate livability.

and period-mimicked molding juxtapose the wood furnishings. In the main living room, windowed doors stand tall on either side of the fireplace, framing the backyard like a piece of art. "We kind of saw the outside and inside as a whole. As we were opening up the inside, we were creating spaces outside," says Jane.

Both the ground floor and the deck grant access to the backyard where hydrangeas and peonies pocket the lawn among century-old trees. A step above the L-shaped pool is a patio, and across the lawn sits what the Turners affectionately call the Little House: a multipurpose, functional loft space built on the footprint of the original carriage house, its doorway framed by a pergola climbing with trumpet vines.

Throughout the home, contemporary pieces sit beside flea-market finds—like a coffee table from the Paris Flea Market and porch benches from Santa Fe. Each room contains a burst of color: blue on ceilings and floors, orangey hues in pillow stitchings, rugs, and terra-cotta tiles. Precious collectables also have a special place. On spot-lit shelves in the main living room rests Howard's cross-cultural pottery collection. "I love that some of these really ancient pieces look so contemporary," says Jane. Such an aesthetic influences the Turners' consistently eclectic design.

With its library balcony, exposed beams, and vaulted ceiling, the master bedroom and bath are the most contemporary of the upstairs rooms. The rest of the partitioned bedrooms showcase the original structure in their angled ceilings and slightly slanted wood floors.

Early on, the Turners' property functioned not only as a place to live space but as a vital community space. In the late '90s, their backyard hosted the founding fundraiser for the Ridgefield Playhouse. From their dining room table, a small group of families restarted the Ridgefield Conservatory of Dance after Patricia Schuster's death. That same table also saw the first board meeting for Ridgefield Academy.

Since living in Ridgefield, Jane has served as president of ROAR (Ridgefield Operation for Animal Rescue) and of the Ridgefield Playhouse. She is also on the board at the Ridgefield Conservatory of Dance where hus-





**LIVING LARGE AND SMALL**  
Built-in closeted drawers panel the walls of the master bedroom. The deck overlooks the L-shaped pool. The Little House has served as the CT HQ for Dogly.



band Howard is the current chair; he is also the founding chair of Ridgefield Academy. "All of these organizations were things we care about. We wanted to see them be what they could be, and then let someone else carry on," says Jane, who also authored and illustrated a children's book set in Ridgefield titled *The Dog Who Went to Main Street*. Most recently, Jane and daughter Cory co-founded Dogly: a curated website pooling local pooch products from small business. Although a need to downsize has prompted the Turners to move away from this beloved house, Howard and Jane plan to remain close, to stay involved in the organizations they've nurtured. "I feel about Ridgefield the way I feel about this house," remarks Jane. "It has a very happy heart." Howard smiles. "There is a spirit in this town that is a consistent spirit of optimism," he adds. The Turner property—currently listed by Laura Freed Ancona of William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty—waits for new residents who will make it their own by inviting and entertaining the energy of the vibrant community that surrounds it. ■

# Organic Appeal

*Hoffman Landscapes experts hope to redefine organic lawncare*



*Hoffman Landscapes has been a leader in property management and design/build for over 30 years. We recently sat down with horticulturist and arborist Rick King to talk about the Hoffman difference, his passion for organic treatments and property maintenance, and how he hopes to help Hoffman revolutionize residential lawncare.*

**What do you feel sets Hoffman apart from other landscaping companies?** I've worked for a few other companies before and can honestly say Hoffman's expertise is unmatched. As employees, we are encouraged to constantly continue learning and honing our crafts. This allows us to provide a much higher quality of service to our clients which, at the end of the day, is our ultimate goal.

**How might clients benefit from working with a horticulturist, such as yourself?** For starters, we are trained in the right way and the wrong way to do things horticulturally, so we are better equipped to lead clients toward the best possible solution for their property. Without that training, we could potentially agree to

provide new plantings that may not survive in that particular landscape.

**What is the first thing you do when you meet with a new client?** New clients are always excited to talk about their needs and wishes for their property, but I also like to dig a little deep-

er. Whether or not they have children or pets, if they like to entertain friends and family, those little details help me focus on how I can enhance their experience with their outdoor spaces with maintenance or design.

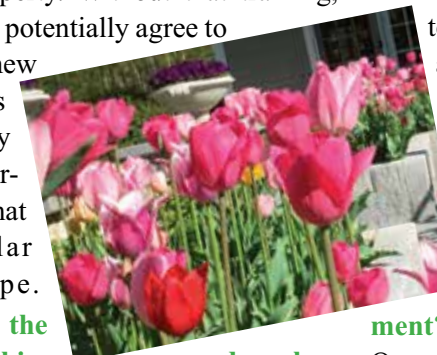
**Do you currently offer organic property management?** Absolutely! In fact, most of our clients' properties are maintained using some level of organic solutions to control pests and/or increase plant vigor. We aim to expand our use of organics by educating clients and ourselves on the subject. We all have a deep understanding of plantlife as

horticulturists so this is a matter near and dear to us. I myself am an arborist and as such have been a vocal advocate of the importance of organics within the company and beyond.

**What is the best advice you've heard in regard to organic property management?** "Feed the soil, feed the plant!" Organics is a process of building up beneficial bacteria and microorganisms in the soil which will aid in the health and vigor of the plant. A healthy soil means a healthy plant!

**What is the biggest mistake homeowners make when trying to go organic with their landcare routine?** I

think there is a misconception that "going organic" is a piece of cake. There's much more to this process than simply purchasing an organic fertilizer from the hardware store and spreading it over your lawn. The biggest mistake would be trying to navigate the process alone - even seasoned DIYers can use a hand! If you are a homeowner interested in fully or partially organic landscaping options, I encourage you to give the team at Hoffman a call and ask for a no-cost property consultation. We're happy to come out and answer any questions you may have!



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