

Marston House Garden Antiques
**FRESH IDEAS ON A
MAINE MAIN STREET**

By Emelie Tolley

When a California family moved into a long-neglected federal house on Main Street a decade ago, the townsfolk of Wiscasset were delighted to see it spring to life with fresh paint and repairs. Sharon and Paul Mrozinski were here for the long haul: The shop in their 1785 house, filled with a fascinating collection of old and new garden implements—as well as other country treasures—is only one of the good ideas this energetic couple has brought to town.



GARDEN



Spruce and inviting, the porch of the Marston House tempts browsers with Sharon's down-to-earth passions. Herbs, old ladders, and garden pots, as well as handpainted signs, meet her standard for "things that combine beauty and utility." So do vintage tickings, with their earthy colors and stripes. "I can't bear to toss even the smallest scraps away," she admits, so these she fashions into sachets stuffed with lavender; opposite left, one of the shop's most charming signature items. As an extra, she tucks in a long-ago photo. Another extra: Bed-and-breakfast guests can stay in two rooms at the carriage house.



As a California antiques dealer, Sharon had seized any excuse for a buying trip to midcoastal Maine, for she'd fallen in love with the area—"its water, farms, and lovely white houses," she says, "and also the hardworking ethic of Maine people. We hoped to retire here one day. But when the Marston House came up for sale, one day became now: We picked up our four children and came."

A similar appreciation is reflected in her garden-oriented shop, where old watering cans, spades, and trowels hold pride of place along with vintage yellow-ware and furniture. "These pots and tools should be used and enjoyed, not just left on a shelf," Sharon believes. Often, she hosts groups of children at the store, "because I want them to appreciate old things made by hand and made well—whether it's a shovel of Sheffield steel with an oak shaft or a hooked rug. Afterward, they'll regard a visit to grandmother's house as a chance to see her treasures."

As for the effect of the move on her own children, she's pleased: "They've learned that, around here, you get your firewood laid in early and lend a hand when a neighbor's driveway needs shoveling. After all, Maine is a place where nature calls a lot of the shots."

The parlor of the Marston House, above, has been turned into the shop's main showroom. Sharon searches for everything that testifies to good use, from children's wheelbarrows to bee skeps and baskets. The collection of birds' nests and eggs (not for sale) came from a turn-of-the-century display case. Her mid-1800's linen workshirts from a French monastery, opposite top left, make wonderful gardening smocks. In the hallway, opposite bottom: Fine contemporary English gardening tools hang amid older ones.



"After children come here, they regard a visit to grandmother's house as a chance to see her treasures."





Anyone who cherishes gardening tools itches to use them—so, naturally, Marston House has an abundant backyard garden, where roses climb a peaked arbor, and red dahlias flare against yarrow and feverfew.

Those who stay in the carriage house tucked away in the garden experience firsthand the pleasure of living simply with beautiful pieces. Paul, an architect, remodeled the hayloft to provide two spacious guest rooms with fireplaces and baths. In June, the breakfast basket, served on the garden patio, might contain a warm rhubarb-and-strawberry cobbler with fresh cream; later in the season it holds cinnamon-basil muffins made with herbs that grow abundantly in the side garden by the kitchen door. Scattered among them stand garden ornaments for sale, many shipped from France and England.

As resident gardener, Paul had to learn which plants do well in Maine; he now relies on old-fashioned perennials, like peonies and plox, and such herbs as lady's-mantle and meadow rue—all picked to brighten the guest rooms and shop. Sharon also sells birdhouses: A flock of finches has made the 1940's one from an old Maine barn, above, their home.



A FRESH SOLUTION

If you catch Paul crossing Main Street cradling a tureen of homemade soup, he's taking it from his kitchen to Treats, his gourmet shop. Here he provides a showcase for such local products as herbal mustards and pestos, organic eggs, and baskets of delectably fresh lettuces, herbs, and heirloom tomatoes.

Much of the produce he sells is raised nearby on a 60-acre farm that Paul and other concerned citizens rescued from development a few years ago. With help from the local bank, they managed to turn it back into a working enterprise that also offers agricultural education programs for people of all ages. The 500 members of the Morris Farm project are currently planning to create a year-round farmers' market as well. Proud of what they've accomplished, Paul says, "When neighbors decide it's important to do something, it can be done."



The Morris Farm produces some exotic vegetables like white pumpkins, top, which are particularly good in soups and pies. Not everything in the store comes from Maine, however. Paul, above, holding a wheel of Stilton, is proud of his stock



of farm cheeses from England and other parts of Europe. One finds excellent wines here too (including a few with Maine labels), and fresh loaves flavored with basil, olives, and sun-dried tomatoes, as well as crunchy baguettes.