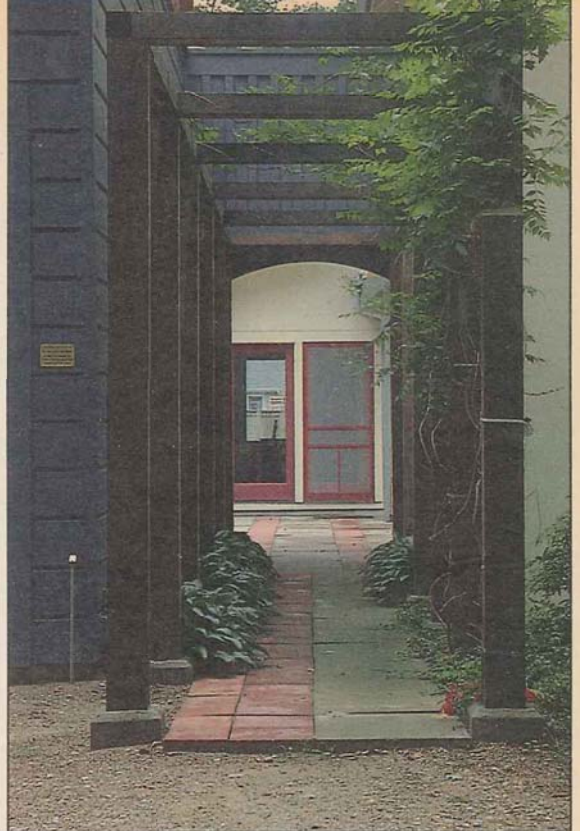


# Avant garden



*Modern touches distinguish a rural refuge*

BY VICTORIA LAUTMAN



*Left: The Idemas' home, designed by Peter Landon, takes the look of a rustic rural farmhouse and adds contemporary zing.*

*Above: Red wood trim, geranium pots, and striped cement pavers give the courtyard the feel of a Mediterranean piazza.*

*Upper left: This view from the roofdeck looks toward the angular screen porch.*

**S**PARE, CLASSIC, SIMPLE, TIMELESS AND COMFORTABLE—those were the five words chosen by Jim and Joyce Idema to describe what they wanted in a dream house. Specific? Not really, considering how many styles could be adapted to those terms. But architect Peter Landon took his cue from the familiar farmhouses of the Midwest when he designed the couple's Michigan refuge, a home that complements its rural surroundings so completely that you might think it was built 100 years ago. "The typical regional style is an old wood frame house with a lot of added protrusions like bays and porches, but this one's designed with plenty of light and space," the architect points out.

Still, this is one house that reveals itself slowly. The initial view of slate-blue garage, trellised walkway and main house all but obscures a secluded inner courtyard paved in pre-cast, red-striped cement. Bracketing one side, a traditional screen porch (updated with oblique angles) provides a breezy shelter, while wood trim on the doors and windows—the color of freshly painted barns—gives a festive visual jolt. Gleaming galvanized metal forms the roof, continuing the homespun farm

metaphor by suggesting silos, granaries and sties.

"We always liked French country houses and were thinking along those lines, but Pete's ideas about vernacular architecture fit our lifestyle perfectly and reassured us that we wouldn't get something too trendy," Jim explains. "And it's interesting that visitors have many associations with this—they say, 'Gee, it looks Italian, or like something in Idaho, or from the south of France.'"

Since informality was a prerequisite, the interior reflects casual ease. Landon's devotion to fine Arts and Crafts detailing is apparent in the abundance of wood used for the exposed beams, floors and trim, while a free-standing brick and stucco fireplace separates the living room from the flow-through kitchen. "I wanted the kitchen at the hub of the social activity so I wouldn't be removed from all the fun," Joyce says.

The dash of color on the exterior gets full treatment indoors, thanks to the bold red fireplace and brightly stained cabinets that were part of Landon's original design. "Some of our friends just don't get our use of color," Joyce admits. "But it's wonderfully light and cheery during the long, gray Michigan winters." ♦



*An aura of craftsmanship pervades the abode, with artworks from the couple's travels, casual furniture, and a radiant red fireplace punctuating the living room.*