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The dining area doubles as a workstation with the help of built-in bookcases and hidden electrical outlets. A banquette squeezes in extra seating and conceals storage for table linens and holiday decorations.



# Nice Fit

Flexible furnishings, clever storage, and space-expanding colors make an 850-square-foot Victorian just right.

BY SHARON OVERTON | PHOTOS ANGUS McRITCHIE  
PRODUCED BY NICOLA MARC

Bigger isn't always better, even for avid collectors of French linens, vintage canning jars, and stacks of beautiful books. "For us, a bigger house would simply be an opportunity to accumulate more stuff," Jean Stéphane Beauchamp says.

So when Jean Stéphane and Gaëtan Larochelle bought a home in Montréal's historic Plateau Mont-Royal neighborhood, they set out to make the most of its very modest size, starting with a smart paint palette. Off-white walls and warm gray wood floors open up the rooms and create a sense of flow. Pale blue ceilings give the impression of a tiny bit more height.

Against that backdrop, they looked for the best way to stow and show the things they love. In the combined living and dining area, the answer was new wall-to-wall cabinets and a banquette flanked by bookcases. In the kitchen, an old china cabinet

Pale gray walls and lots of creamy white woodwork give a small kitchen character without a cluttered feel. The insides of the cabinets, *right*, are painted apple green, a happy leftover from a previous kitchen incarnation. A plate rack above the sink, *below*, speeds cleanups. “You wash, you dry, you put away,” Jean Stéphane says. An antique spoon makes a charming door handle.



supplied the charm and space they craved—along with a little inspiration. “The beaded-board wainscoting in the back of the cupboard was original, so we repeated that detail on the other built-ins,” Gaëtan says. Narrow shelves mounted above the kitchen windows display a collection of vintage Mason jars, which are used as lanterns and vases.

Life in a small space prompts the couple to weigh the practicality of everything they own, Jean Stéphane says. Upholstered pieces are on wheels so they move easily. A quilted coverlet doubles as a tablecloth. Piles of books sometimes stand in for end tables. Even a collection of antique serving spoons, displayed like art in shadow boxes, can be called into duty “in an emergency,” Gaëtan adds, laughing. “If extra guests show up, you can break the glass.”

Still, the couple has no plans to stop collecting. “People are always asking me, ‘Don’t you want to go more minimal in a small space?’” Jean Stéphane says. On the contrary, his answer is, “You need to be cozy. You need to feel good.”

## Big ideas with paint

Designer Jean Stéphane Beauchamp offers a few simple color tricks for making a small space live larger.

**Painting the insides of cabinets** a darker color gives an illusion of depth. Books and collectibles also blend into a darker background, instead of looking busy.

**Contrast neutral walls** with creamy white woodwork to enhance a room's size. Stark white walls make a room feel "brighter, not bigger," Jean Stéphane says. He used Farrow & Ball Old White No. 4 (walls) and Pointing No. 2003 (trim).

**Don't be afraid to paint over brick** if it's distracting. Jean Stéphane created a seamless look—and bucked local tradition—by painting masonry walls to blend with the rest of the interior. "Everybody screamed that you can't do that," he says. "But when they saw it, they pretty much all ran home and painted theirs."



Touches of black—in picture frames and a lampshade, *above*—add crisp contrast to an otherwise neutral scheme. "If we had gone for bolder pattern and color, it would look busy and crowded," Jean Stéphane says. A 13-foot-long sewing cabinet salvaged from a nearby convent serves as the base for living room built-ins, *left*. An old apple picker's ladder offers access to the top shelves.



“Every inch is at a premium. A bed skirt allows you to hide a ton, including that extra table leaf and roller bins full of coats, shoes, and seasonal clothes.”

Jean Stéphane Beauchamp



The couple added a marble top and new hardware to an old dresser to make the bathroom vanity, *above*. Mounting a bowl-style sink on top and notching the top middle drawer's interior to make room for plumbing leaves the drawers below functional. Off-white paint lessens the impact of a brick wall in the master bedroom, *right*, and makes the space feel larger. Eliminating a tiny second bedroom made room for a walk-in closet, *above right*. ■

