Vineyard Bath Retreat



Curving stainless-steel and teak partitions create distinctive quarters with a nautical theme

BY MARK A. HUTKER

Here on Martha's Vineyard, outdoor showers are as much a part of experiencing the island as hooking a bluefish or eating breakfast at the Black Dog. Just about every beach house has an outdoor shower, where a bather can hose off the salt and the sand and feel the sea breezes blow. Even though this little bathroom remodel started as an ordinary upgrade, the image of the outdoor shower over wooden deck boards set the tone of the new room (photo right).

The client's request was simple: Replace the existing double vanity, stall shower, whirlpool tub and commode while adding a bidet. The challenge was to fit each fixture into a 10-ft. sq. room, allowing each area some privacy while making the bath seem larger as it focused on the Vineyard Sound view.

Curved partitions create distinct quadrants

Part of the solution was to divide the bath into four roughly equal quadrants using a simple shower curtain and two slatted-teak partitions. As seen in the floor plan (drawing facing page), all the partitions have a wave-like shape, but the two teak partitions separating the shower/toilet area from the tub/vanity area create distinct spaces while maintaining natural light and ventilation. Also, the partitions are different heights and aren't physically or visually connected to each other or to the ceiling. Because you can see over the partitions, the idea of borrowing space through extended views is a key element in making the bath feel larger.

Outdoor bathing experience inside

Working with project architect David Johnson and interior designer Susan Bielski, contractor Andrew Flake and I tried to create an outdoor-bathing experience inside by taking cues from boat builders who routinely work with curves and tight spaces.

The bath floor, which is cleft-faced slate, appears to slide beneath the shower and provides better traction underfoot. The soaking tub rests on a generous platform tiled with ocean-green tumbled-marble mosaics (photo facing page). Big windows over the tub overlook the water. To get the most from this view, we placed mirrors over the toilet, bidet and lavatory to create reflected ocean panoramas. □

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An outdoor shower brought indoors. *A durable, rich brown, slatted-teak floor creates a familiar, tactile surface for outdoor-shower lovers. A curving stainless-steel frame supports laminated-teak slats, allowing the passage of air and light. Photo taken at A on floor plan.*

Natural, reflected and artificial light animate the space. *The large window over the tub bathes the room in natural light. Touch-latch mirrors disguising hidden storage reflect natural and incandescent light from recessed and wall-mounted fixtures. Photo taken at B on floor plan.*

Sources

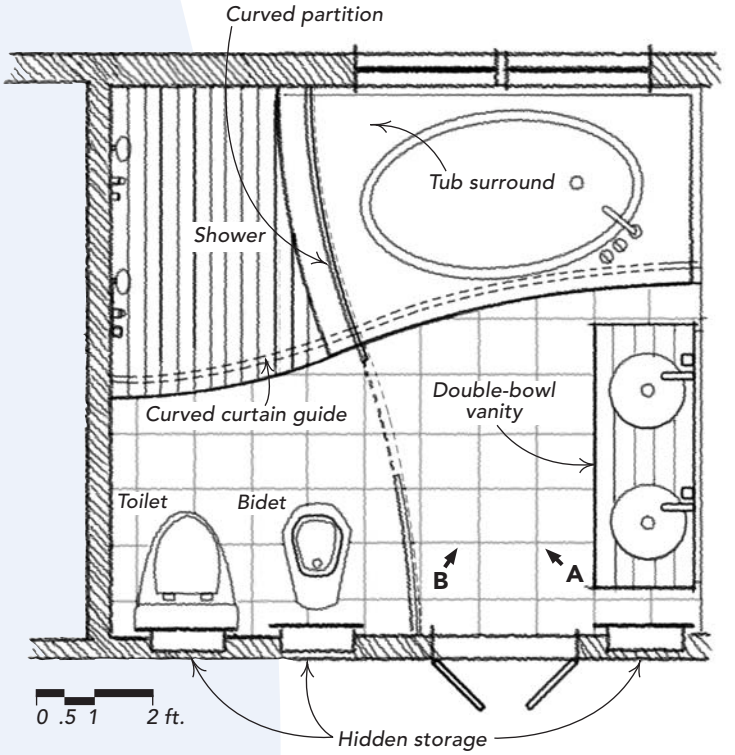
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Curved quarters separate functions



Originally a simple bathroom upgrade with the addition of a bidet, this 10-ft. by 10-ft. square was dramatically altered when wavelike curved partitions divided the space into each of its essential functions. Mirrors over the toilet/bidet and lavatory hide storage as well as reflect an ocean view, which enters through a large window over the tub.

Drawing: Paul Perreault