



# Upfront

Restoration and remodeling: The theme of this issue. Spring is the season of renewal. Easter restores the soul. Nature restores itself. Green shoots. New growth.

We clean our spaces. Refresh them. Make trips to the garden center. By tending to our environments, we reenergize ourselves. It's an optimistic time. Our hopes run high.

I snapped the photos on this page with my camera phone minutes before sitting to write these words. The scenes from my courtyard are uplifting. They make me happy. Lemons and mandarins have begun to take shape.

What you don't see: The rats that are tormenting us nightly, climbing our boundary walls to feast on our flowers and herbs before returning to the neighbors before dawn.

We've enlisted our pest control company in the fight. Sadly, their branded snares remain impotently empty. Jenna has lined the perimeter with jagged plastic strips. She's deployed a variety of non-toxic concoctions, from fox urine to who-knows-what, to no avail. Surrendering her soft-hearted animal-loving instincts in service of pragmatism, she set snap-traps baited with peanut butter and cheese. The bait has disappeared, but daily reminders of the critters' persistence hasn't. Not a single spring has snapped.

We devise new battle tactics daily. We have conscripted our neighbors to join in the fight. The entire block is energized and mobilized.

But the enemy is crafty, resourceful, determined. To paraphrase experts in counterterrorism, we must be continuously vigilant; the rats only need to be right once (and your mint – which you foolishly believed was unappealing to invading varmints – is gnawed all the way to the soil line).

I stand in the dark, night after night, holding our infomercial hose, dousing each tree, shrub, and flower until they're soaked. Each morning-after, my spirits soar as the planters seem fuller than they were when I left them. But then, there it is – a cluster of vincas robbed of its petals or a long strand of Dipladenia riddle with tiny dental marks.

It's a metaphor, I suppose. When you think you have things just as you want them, think again. Last week, we agreed on a particular quartzite to replace our maintenance-needy kitchen countertops. For a long time, I resisted the impulse to change, now it excites me. Our kitchen is going green – not in an environmentally boastful sort of way, but its actual colorway. The quartzite is appropriately named "Euphoria Green." And I'm excited. I am also realistic; I suspect the work will take longer than I'd like. But we are doing our part – planning thoroughly, designing prudently, budgeting precisely, and choosing good work partners. When the update is done, our home will still be our precious home, but it will feel revitalized, too.

And, by then, though we've lost the initial battles, we hope to have won our war with the local rats.



## Navigating a Sea Change Begins with A Plan

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