

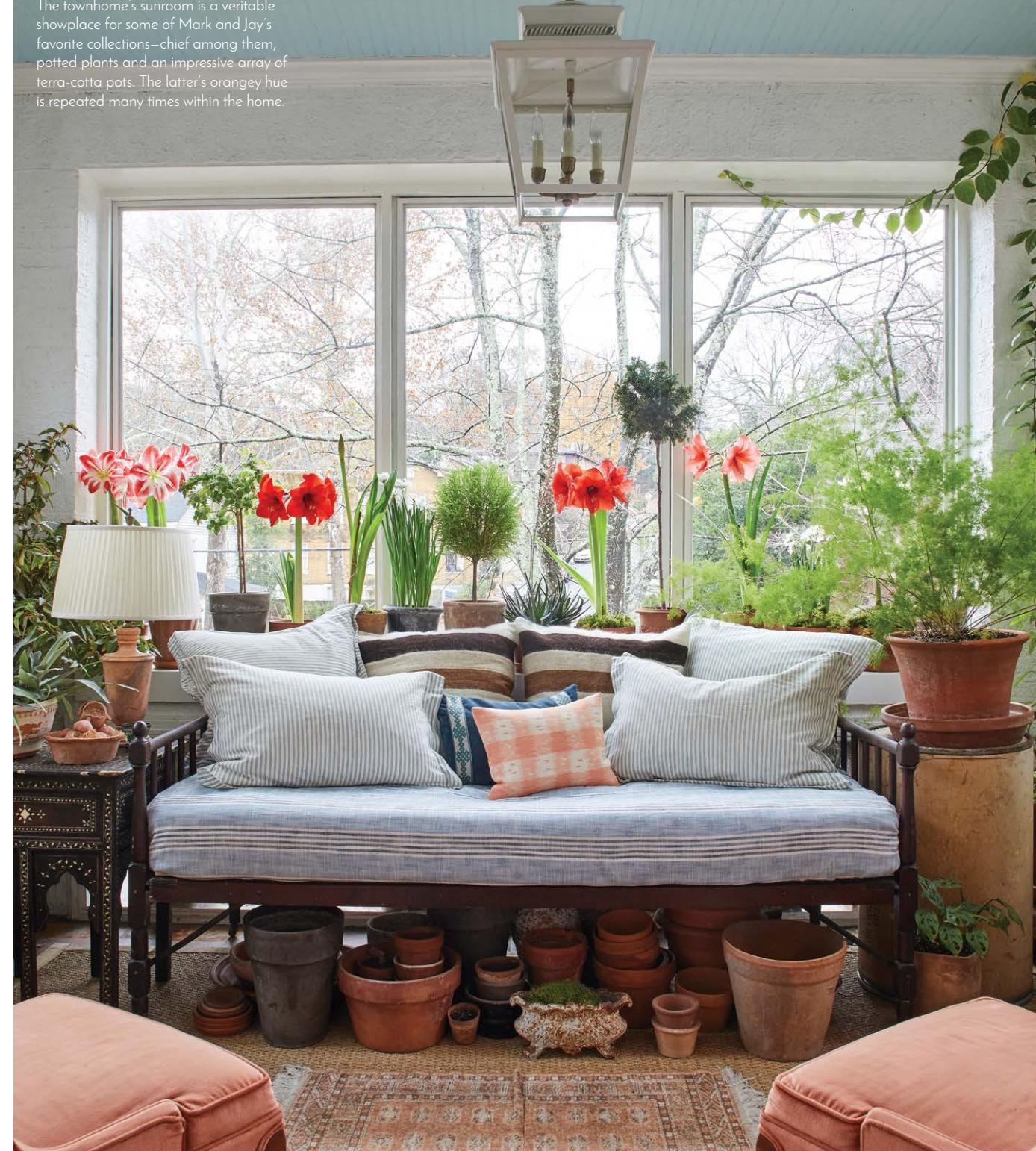
Have an unused alcove? Mark worked with a local metal worker to create a frame "that fits like a glove" within a wall recess on the front stoop. Built to hold 40 small terra-cotta pots, it provides an artful spot to display seasonal plants and clippings.

Ever Green

This Forest Park townhome comes alive each holiday season with an abundance of greenery and lush florals.

*Text by CAROLINE MCKENZIE
Photography by JEAN ALLSOPP*

The townhome's sunroom is a veritable showplace for some of Mark and Jay's favorite collections—chief among them, potted plants and an impressive array of terra-cotta pots. The latter's orangey hue is repeated many times within the home.



Some people dream of Christmas presents. Then there are Mark Thompson and Jay Draper, who dream of something altogether different—Christmas plants. The partners co-own Shoppe, the impossibly stylish garden-and-home store located on Forest Park's Clairmont Avenue. It's a venture that was a long time coming for both. "Jay has been working in nurseries since he was 14 years old," Mark says. "And I've been knee-deep in gardening just as long. I was that neighborhood kid who would help all the old ladies in their yards. It was always, 'Sure, I'll take some of those daylilies' and 'I'd love a few hostas.'"

It's no surprise, then, that during the holidays, their townhome, located a short walk from the store, becomes a showplace for decadent displays of seasonal flora and fauna. Everything from mantels and windows



The antique Oushak carpet inspired the living room's scrumptious palette of rusty oranges and mossy greens. The combo is a perfect complement to the Fraser fir tree, which is bedecked in citrine-hued ribbons.





Seeking
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Beautiful Blooms? Visit
Mark and Jay at

Shoppe

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to doorways and chandeliers is twirled up with boughs of boxwood, magnolia, fir, pine, and more. Meanwhile, winter blooms such as amaryllis, paperwhites, and poinsettias punctuate tabletops and shelves at every turn. "We're less about glitz and more about bringing the outdoors in this time of year," says Mark.

That philosophy also wonderfully sums up the design aesthetic the couple has applied to their home's décor. Built in 1915 as the Clairmont Terrace apartments, the townhome boasts they-don't-make-'em-like-they-used-to details such as high ceilings and handsome millwork. And to showcase those old bones, Mark and Jay developed a simple, whole-house palette of mossy greens, rich browns, and rusty oranges. The earthy scheme makes an elegant backdrop for a bounty of inherited antique furniture and old family photos. As Mark says, "There's nothing like creating rooms that remind you of where you've come from."

And while the home oozes sophistication, much of it was pulled together (surprisingly!) with bargain finds. "I'm

ABOVE: Art imitates life in the study, where Mark and Jay's extensive collection of coffee table books (a job hazard when one owns a décor shop) has become a wall-to-wall, ever-changing installation. The display's cacophony of color is balanced by neutral furnishings, such as the pale peach sofa and linen-upholstered armchairs. TOP RIGHT: Apple Blossom amaryllis in a silver planter adds a pretty pop of color to the formal dining room. Setting the display against a mirror doubles the impact of the blooms. RIGHT: Seasonal flora and fauna abound in the petite kitchen. Black granite and white subway tile make an obliging backdrop for fresh greenery and a bounty of clementines. Designed with efficiency in mind, the hardworking space features thoughtful details such as a pullout prep space above the dishwasher drawer (perfect for plating party trays) and open shelves that keep pots and platters at the ready.

"My style is very casual and Southern. Jay's is traditional and masculine. Our personal aesthetics have come together to create something very layered, relaxed, and inviting." —MARK THOMPSON



"It took a village." That's how Mark describes the striking mural lining the dining room walls. The artwork began, ever-so-humbly, with him creating a template using an X-Acto knife and a cast-off refrigerator box. He then worked with friend and Birmingham artist William McLure to add details to the fig tree motif. Finally, Shoppe employee Caitlin Lawler embellished the piece with flourishes of bold color.



Joy to the world—or at least the neighborhood. Each year, Mark and Jay add festive flair to Clairmont Avenue with a twirled-up front stoop that includes lush magnolia garland (measuring nearly 2 feet in diameter!) and fruit-lined topiaries.



HIGH-LOW STYLE



Choose similar finishes.

In the dining room, we paired a hand-me-down dining table and an inexpensive sideboard with serious-investment dining chairs. The combination feels seamless thanks to similar wood tones.

Rethink humble materials, and go wild with pattern.

The kitchen floor looks stylish but is merely vinyl tiles laid in a graphic stripe. The striking design definitely holds its own amongst the room's niceties such as hand-glazed subway tile and performance appliances.

Shoppe owners Mark Thompson and Jay Draper share tips for mixing designer pieces with bargain buys.

Consider a whole-house palette for a more refined feel.

Choosing a cohesive color scheme and using it from room to room brings a level of sophistication and also elevates thrifty finds. In our case, we chose shades of green, orange, and brown.

always looking for a deal, while Jay is always pulled toward more expensive items," says Mark. "Striking a balance has been important at this house."

Mark's drive for a bargain has led to numerous late-night internet searches and some very savvy second-hand purchases. Case in point: the elegant Baker sofa that anchors the study. "Jay told me I could do peach on anything but a sofa," he says. "Wouldn't you know I found the most perfect peach sofa the very next week?" There have also been times when Mark took design matters into his own hands, creating the large abstract artwork displayed in the living room (created from two-by-fours and drop cloth canvas) and hand-painting the dining room mural.

But that artful handiwork really has nothing on the couple's aforementioned holiday creations. Together, Mark and Jay string garlands, craft wreaths, and arrange luscious florals. "We have a habit of one of us starting a project and the other finishing it," Mark says. "It's our form of teamwork." Mixed into the already cozy, layered rooms, the decorations seem to beckon guests to sit and stay awhile, which is exactly what Mark and Jay want friends and family to do—especially during the holidays.