



The owner
 Claes Wengstrom,
 who is a garden designer.
 Previous home 'I moved here from
 a much smaller property,' says Claes.



The property
 Timber house, built in 1911
 Rooms Sitting room, drawing room,
 diningroom, kitchen, study, 2 bedrooms,
 bathroom and shower room
 Purchased 2000

'I like to find and restore pieces, rather than
 go into a store and buy something that everyone
 else has - this way the look is unique'



The chairs and table
 in the kitchen were
 rescued from a
 pigsty; for similar,
 try Chic Shack
 (020 8785 7777)

NATURAL CHOICE

Claes Wengstrom enjoys the best
 of both worlds - a smart townhouse
 design in an idyllic country setting

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When Claes Wengstrom moved into his house, just outside a pretty village an hour from Stockholm, it had been empty for 40 years and was in a complete mess. Foxes lived under the dining room floor, ceilings had collapsed and where the roof should have been 'you could see the stars and also the snow,' he explains.

The architectural style of the house is unusual in that it is a townhouse but in a rural location - at the end of a windy lane surrounded by woodland - but Claes loves the sophisticated style, while at the same time being so close to nature.

Restoring it took 18 months and an extension was built at the same time to house a small office and a shower room. 'After gardening, I can go straight in ▶

1 The kitchen features the original stove, which Claes uses to heat the house. The clay pots on the shelf above date from 1800

2 & 3 For that traditional country-kitchen look, The French House (08709014547) sells rustic earthenware and egg baskets

'You don't need to spend lots of money to create a beautiful interior – find furniture that has been neglected and restore it. These pieces often end up



In the drawing room, lamps from Ikea (0845 355 1141) sit either side of the 19th-century-style sofa. For similar seating options, try Interior Supply (020 7352 0502)

and shower and don't have to traipse dirt through the house,' Claes explains.

Claes is an antiques lover as well as a natural host. 'I wanted space to entertain and cook for my friends – I love cooking,' he says. As in the rest of the house, Claes has strived to decorate the kitchen in keeping with the period of the property, which dates from 1911.

'I like to style the interior in a way that's sympathetic to the period of the house – it's like restoring the soul of my home,' he explains. The green-painted walls are similar to how they would have looked originally. The stove is original, and as well as using it for cooking, there is also a place for an open fire – 'I have central heating but much prefer to use a real fire,' says Claes.

The dramatic dining room leads off the kitchen – minus the former resident foxes. This is Claes's favourite room and looks

out over the potager garden that he has created. The light streaming in through large windows on two sides makes it bright and airy during the day and in the evening, as there is no electricity in this room, it is lit by candles, creating a perfect atmosphere for entertaining. The deep red colour of the walls provides a striking backdrop for the white-painted antique furniture, which includes a late-19th-century dining table and chairs that Claes inherited from his grandmother and then repainted. He found his 'decadent' chandelier in the attic of a castle he had been working on, and persuaded the client to part with it.

The elegant drawing room is a mix of styles, with Ikea lamps flanking a Carl Johan-style 19th-century sofa, and chairs and coffee table dating from 1900. On the wall behind, a painting of an English scene creates a focal point. 'I like to ▶

1&2 Deep red walls – try Farrow & Ball (01202 876141) for similar – and white-painted furniture create a stunning effect in the dining room. Julia Foster DecorativeAntiques (07973 146610)

specialises in 18th- and 19th-century Swedish furniture

2 Tongue-and-groove panelling lines the staircase. Try Really Linda Barker (0870 242 0651) for wall sconces



1



2

'My favourite items are the dining table and chairs, which I repainted white'



3

1 The white fully tiled en-suite bathroom features a 100-year-old roll-top bath; for a modern version of this, try CP Hart (0845 600 1950)

2 Claes has made imaginative use of

space in the guest room with a bed tucked into the eaves. For floral bed linen, try Cabbages & Roses (020 7352 7333). Nordic Style (020 7351 1755) supplies pretty painted furniture



1



2



All the furniture in the master bedroom was originally from a castle in southern Sweden. Willis & Gambier (01799 510170) sells a white cane-backed bed

mix periods and styles, and I love different woods together,' he says. 'Sometimes, I collect things from clients that they no longer want. I do deals with them – for example, I'll create a flower bed and they will pay me with a chair,' he says.

In the master bedroom, the wallpaper was a reworking of a 1907 design using modern technology, while an en suite was created from a walk-in wardrobe. Another wardrobe was converted into a guest room, with beds built into the eaves. 'It's very cosy,' Claes says, adding

that it is a traditional Swedish design most often used in summerhouses.

Outside is Claes's real pride and joy, the garden. 'I started working on it as soon as I moved in. All of the grass was waist high – it has been hard work,' he recalls. He is planning several terraces that will lead down the steep hill to the lake. One will be a fruit garden, one a wild patch, and the rest of the space will be for his 30 chickens and 50 sheep to roam around in. 'I love being so close to nature – I could never live in a town,' he says. **BH**

SWEDISH-STYLE PROPERTIES

Many companies offer a design-and-build service for homes in a Scandinavian timber style. Close consultation with your local planning office is required, but there is a huge choice, from cabin to large detached houses...

Timber-clad houses with Border Oak (01568 708752, borderoak.com) start from £75,000.



This Arta Alforesthomestarts from £160,000, available from Woodco (01847 821418, woodco.clara.net).



Mbarkk (0114 290 3652, mbarkk.co.uk) offers this solid-timber home with a guide price of £150,000.

