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higher calling

HIGHLAND HOUSE IN JAMAICA CULTIVATES
BOTH LOVE AND BEAUTY ON ENCHANTING 17-ACRE PROPERTY

THE HILLS OF CONTENT, JAMAICA WERE THE PLAYGROUND OF THE WINDSORS, THE CHURCHILLS, NOËL COWARD AND IAN FLEMING AND NO WONDER, GIVEN THE CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE ULTRA-EXCLUSIVE ROUND HILL HOTEL AND VILLAS.

One of Content's best-known residents was Broadway magnate Oscar Hammerstein, who along with his interior decorator wife Dorothy, became a fixture on the North Coast social scene when they purchased Highland House from English actress Gladys Cooper. Highland House was then and today remains an enchanting 17-acre property with a deluxe six-bedroom villa that overlooks the shores of Montego Bay, St James.

With the panoramic vista, the hills were alive at Highland House and legend has it that the lyrics to the "The Sound of Music" were penned on the main terrace. While Highland House offered the Hammersteins the perfect getaway from their busy New York City lives, it was also a home that was often used to entertain. Many a late-night fête was thrown by the twosome on the expansive cut-stone pool deck, rooftop patio and wraparound terrace with large indoor and outdoor areas.

Today, Highland House is owned by Atlanta resident Brenda Isaac, who has tried to maintain the feel of the villa from the glamorous heyday of the Hammersteins. The exterior has been well-maintained and remains in the original design with its slated shingle roof, balustrades and lattice box windows, which are all odes to classic Caribbean Georgian architectural style.



LEFT Pool area and wraparound terrace are meant for glamorous parties
ABOVE Slated shingle roof, balustrades and lattice box windows evoke classic Caribbean Georgian style



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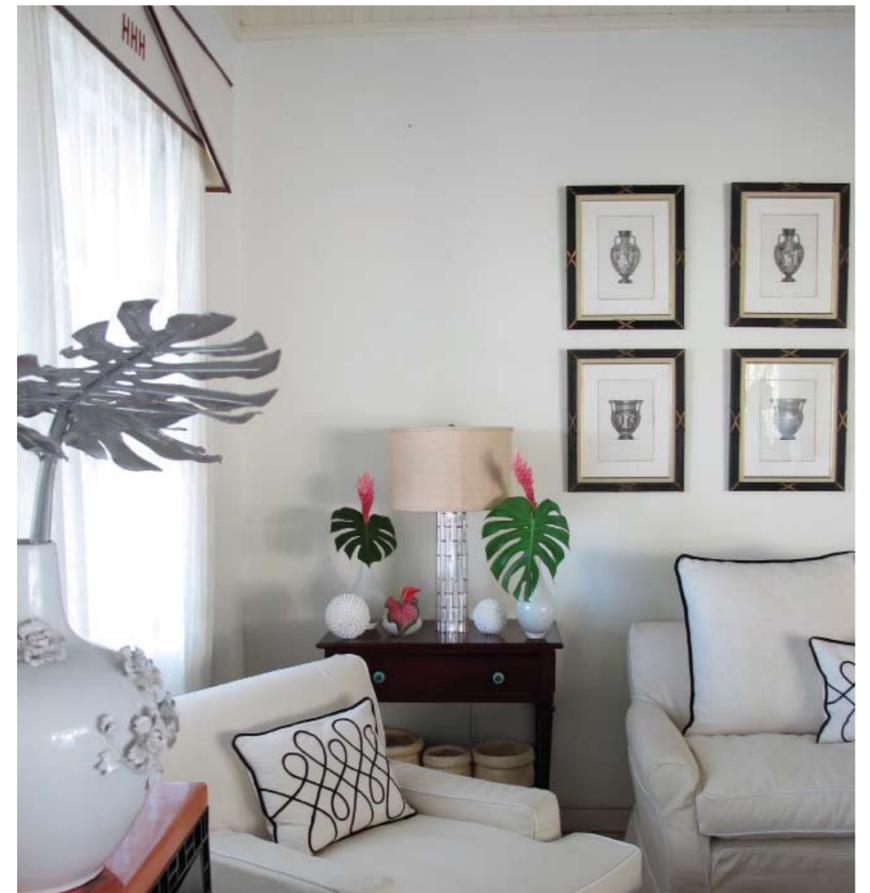




LARGE CEDAR PLANTATION DOORS OPEN OUT FROM THE OUTDOOR DINING ROOM AND THE LIVING ROOM ONTO THE POOL DECK AND ALLOW FOR THE EASY FLOW OF THE CRISP, COOL MOUNTAINSIDE BREEZE

ABOVE The Imelda rule (can't have too many pairs) lends symmetry

RIGHT Tropical details and unique accents define Caribbean elegance



The indoor-outdoor layout of this home makes it a great place for hosting large groups. Large cedar plantation doors open out from the outdoor dining room and the living room onto the pool deck and allow for the easy flow of the crisp, cool mountainside breeze.

Beyond its architectural sophistication, what makes Highland House special is how the home is able to emphasize the raw beauty of the West Indies. With its lush gardens, beautifully cascading lawn and backdrop of the nearby sea, a home like this is a rare find these days and would make the ideal setting for a Caribbean novella.

The interior of Highland House is decorated in a distinctly eclectic style, which plays upon the bright colours and patterns of the tropics. The walls inside the home are lined with contemporary oil works from Jamaican and Haitian artists and the rooms are filled with a collection of antiques from the famous couple, including marble top tables and mahogany side boards.



FAR LEFT Asian and Indian elements blend with Jamaican heritage

LEFT Striped cushions and monogrammed details with white sofas refine chic classic look

BELOW Bright accents bring tropical flair to bedroom

“THE HOUSE REFLECTS JAMAICA’S COLONIAL HERITAGE; EACH ROOM HAS A DIFFERENT FEEL BUT THEY ALL WORK TOGETHER AND ARE AN EXPRESSION OF THE BRITISH, INDIAN AND ASIAN MAKE UP OF THE ISLAND”



“The house reflects Jamaica’s colonial heritage; each room has a different feel but they all work together and are an expression of the British, Indian and Asian make up of the island,” Isaac said, adding, “I would like to think that the feel of the house is refined beauty with modern luxury.” In the living room classic accents such as the monogrammed curtains reflect this, as do striped throw pillows and white sofas.

It’s hard to pick a favourite bedroom at Highland House, as each is unique. With no formal training

in interior design, Isaac did all of the decorating on her own, using publications such as this magazine, *Verandah* and *Architectural Digest* as her inspiration. The Zen room, as its name implies, is Asian inspired while the Jamaican Suite, the Mahogany Suite, the Owner’s Suite and the Bird Suite draw heavy influence from the Caribbean with louvre windows, french doors and grand four-poster beds.

The essence of Highland House evokes tranquillity and apart from being a retreat for vacations, the villa has become popular for destination weddings. Isaac recently expanded the facilities of the villa to include a yoga pavilion, which is often cross-utilized as a wedding chapel, massage cabana and table tennis hut.

As the villa sits on a vast amount of land, it was Isaac's dream to have a farm on the property that would feed the guests and the staff. And, after learning that many Jamaican children were sent to school without any lunch or lunch money, Isaac established the One Love Learning Foundation, a non-profit organization, which supplies a school in the neighbouring town of Anchoy with a twice-weekly harvest.

With the help of Mark, a local farmer, the One Love Garden at Highland House reaps over two acres of organic produce, including scotch bonnet peppers, pumpkin, tomatoes, basil, sorrel, cabbage, arugula and carrots. Isaac has integrated the harvesting of the garden's crops as a part of the villa experience, as guests are encouraged to visit the One Love Garden, reap the crop, and if they choose, go on the delivery route to drop off the produce.

Liz Solms, an agricultural consultant who has been working with Isaac on the expansion of the One Love Garden, said, "This programme that Brenda has established is great as it really encourages guests to taste what the island has to offer, as well as give back to the community." The project is funded through a percentage of the accommodation costs paid for by guests of Highland House, as well as by individual guest donations. In the start of 2010, the foundation expanded the project to include a nearby orphanage and so far the foundation has been able to buy a public address system, an industrial stove, tables and chairs and some computers for the school.

Brenda Isaac herself describes Highland House as a "villa with a difference". From its glamour days of the Fabulous Fifties to its fresh One Love beauty, Highland House has all the elements of a sweeping epic story—history, drama, colour, and most of all, a lot of heart and soul. M

BELOW The 17-acre property overlooks shores of Montego Bay

BOTTOM One Love Garden reaps two acres of organic vegetables

