Today’s time of the month is reviewed by Wendy Redfield, associate director at N.C. State University’s School of Architecture. This month, a collaboration with N.C. State’s School of Architecture shows possibilities in constructing a living space that is well thought-through and built with the homeowner’s living patterns and preferences in mind.

The Szostak residence is designed to take advantage of its natural environment. A large porch on the south side provides a great view of the meadow that slopes to Bolin Creek. ‘We live outside in the summertime,’ says homeowner Rhonda Szostak. The doors and windows are all open.

Starkly modern design lets family preserve a connection to the landscape

BY WENDY REDFIELD

It was difficult for Philip and Rhonda Szostak to leave the 1845 farmhouse with 20 acres and a stable that they occupied until 2000. Raising horses had been part of Philip’s life since childhood, and Rhonda appreciated the warmth and charm of an older home. But their family — which includes three children — was outgrowing the farmhouse and one child was allergic to horses.

So, in the summer of 2004, they moved into the starkly modern, one-story, 4,000-square-foot house, which they called the Szostak residence.

The new house is one story, with white-painted masonry and a flat roof. Though it looks nothing like the two-story farmhouse that it replaced, the architecture of their new home actually strengthened many aspects of the life they enjoyed on the farm.

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The ‘Peace Rose’ is a solid performer with staying power.

Long before Orson Welles whispered “Rosebud,” hybrid tea roses were popular with gardeners. The list of selections has grown longer each year. However, this season, instead of opting for the latest and greatest, maybe consider a classic, “Peace.” Discovered in 1935, this timeless beauty has double blooms dipped in light pink and edged with a soft yellow that have yet to lose their appeal. With an exceptional production of persistent flowers on tall, stout stems, it’s worth giving ‘Peace’ a chance.

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by selecting the green slate tile (all countertops in the kitchen and deal on extra-thick Carrera marble materials from overstock items and on the budget by selecting materials to make something beautiful. We bought tools and welders. We bought things for a better deal, trying to make something beautiful instead of simply buying cheap," Szostak says. But he also started shopping on certain high-quality countertops and elements, such as a Dornbracht faucet set in the kitchen. Being the homeowner, architect and contractor all rolled into one presented interesting opportunities and challenges. Both the design and construction processes were grueling, Szostak says. "The first house was crippled by my friends who are architects, and my family and I ultimately abandoned it. It would've been exciting architecturally but could have been impractical for the people who actually had to live with it." Construction of the house took two years from start to finish — and, Szostak says, when he felt like money. Jesse Green and Jeremy Hauch, who were at the time students of NC State’s School of Architecture, worked as paid architectural interns on framing the house and welding some of the steel structures. "That was the framing crew," Szostak says. "Five guys from five states. We didn’t tell me. ‘Just make it work.’" Szostak says. "I’d like to do another one. My wife says, ‘Just don’t tell me.’"

"I grew up in a creek with crawdads. We live with me." Philip Szostak recommends simplicity. "Pick a simple palette," Szostak adds. "Pick one flooring material and use it throughout. Pick one countertop material and use it throughout. Pick one bathroom material and use it throughout. Pick one window treatment and use it throughout. And get the best material you can afford."