

Raegan Ricks not only preserves her own pickles, peaches and other foods, she built the shelves on which they are stored.



Turning Trash Into Treasures

Raegan Ricks shares some thrifty do-it-yourself tips for vintage home décor

By Dianna Troyer

Instead of buying an expensive can of chalk paint, Raegan Ricks mixes her own version for a fraction of the cost. She credits her niece's husband with figuring out ingredients and proportions.

"Mix five tablespoons of Plaster of Paris in a quart of flat white paint," says Raegan, while painting a fireplace mantle in her home south of Malta. "It costs about \$11, instead of \$38 a can."

Once the paint dries, it has a durable, smooth finish.

"It's great," she says. "You don't have to strip old paint or varnish from furniture or weathered wood. You just brush this

on, and it makes your piece look like an antique."

Raegan says she will gladly share inexpensive do-it-yourself tips she uses to turn thrift store and garage sale castaways into attractive vintage home décor.

When she and her husband, Rick, lived in Lake Point, Utah, she bought what others considered junk, refurbished it and sold it from her garage workshop.

She also had a small wedding catering and decorating business, and built props and décor for the ceremony.

"I've always loved an old farmhouse style," says Raegan, who grew up on a small dairy farm near the Washington Coast.

Sometimes friends give her a project, including the buffet in their living room.

"A friend gave me the top, back and doors, and a leg was missing, too," Raegan says. "I put it back together and covered it with chalk paint."

Rick supports her furniture makeovers.

During their 32-year marriage, they have remodeled several houses, and Raegan has decorated them.

"We like older houses with character instead of new ones that look like they came out of the same cookie cutter," Rick says. "We laugh at ourselves because it seems like once the fruit trees we planted are established and producing, we decide



Clockwise from above, Rick Ricks adds another rock to a stone border in the couple's yard. Raegan enjoys creating furniture from discarded items, including this table from rusted farm equipment and a drying rack in the kitchen from a wooden ladder.

to move again because we've run out of projects."

Rick says he enjoys the restoration work as much as Raegan.

"Neither of us are the type to sit around," he says. "Watching TV is a waste of time, and you can read for only so long. I've always been a do-it-yourself kind of guy and have had more time than money."

Their last home remodel before moving to Malta was a two-story red brick house built in 1906.

"The front room was once a post office," Rick says. "We really liked living there, and had an acre for a garden, a cow, turkeys and chickens."

They sold it in 2016 when Rick was hired to manage the Deseret Industries thrift store in Burley. They found a cozy farmhouse near Malta.

Soon after they were settled, Raegan began rummaging through sheds and in the fields. She found an old, weathered piece of farm equipment and transformed it into a coffee table.

Raegan searched for her next projects at Rick's work. He introduced her to the staff, laughing and warning them about her.

"This is my wife, and she'll ask you to make her a deal, but don't do it," Rick says.

Wherever they live, Raegan cans, grinds her own wheat, grows a garden, and has a milk cow and chickens. Jars filled with peaches, pickles and other food line shelves in her kitchen.

"I needed shelving that would fit in this space, so I made my own from old weathered wood," she says.

Their five children and five grandchildren never know what project Raegan and Rick will be working on next.

With her fireplace mantle painted, Raegan starts her next project. She picks fresh sage, oregano and basil she has grown in pots and ties bunches together to dry in the house.

Meanwhile, Rick arranges rocks in a decorative border. As he works, his



neighbor bales hay with the mountains as a backdrop.

"Farmers and ranchers feed us and make this country go," Rick says. "We love it here. You have elbow room."

Eventually, Raegan, 53, and Rick, 57, agree they will finish their home improvement projects and start again, probably for the last time during retirement.

"We'll definitely stay in the area," Rick says.

"We really like the Elba and Connor Creek area," says Raegan. "We'll either find a house or maybe build a new one for the first time—with a vintage farmhouse look, of course." ■