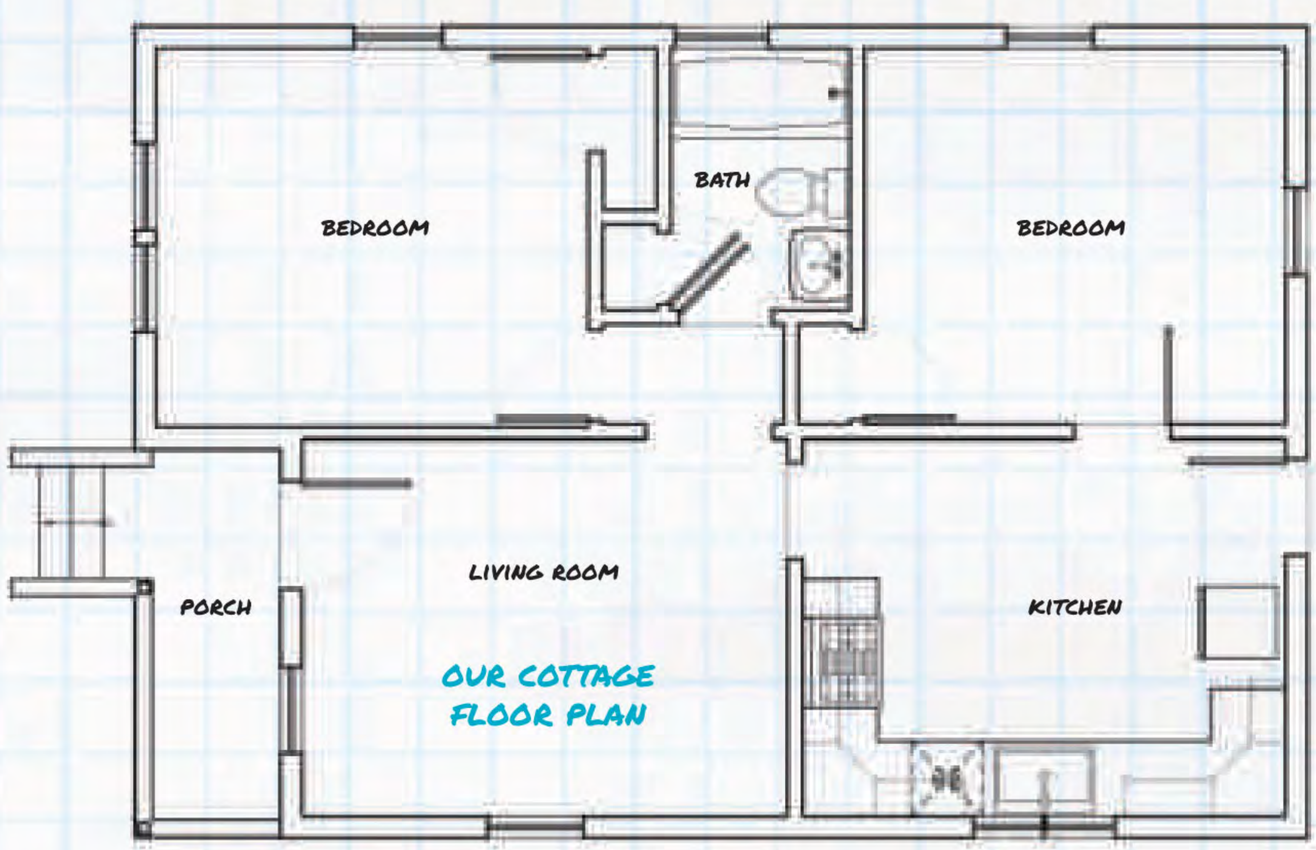
THE FUTURE IS HERE

We show you how to up your home's IQ in 10 steps.

If you're feeling outsmarted by smart-home technology these days, you're not alone. While the Internet of Things is intended to simplify life, the vast number of options can be intimidating. We get it: In fact, we're currently hard at work designing what we're calling the *Sunset* Smart Cottage, a high-tech, high-design space we'll be revealing at this year's Celebration Weekend in Sonoma. From life-changing gadgets to clever decor solutions, here are some of the most genius discoveries we've made so far.

ASHLEY REDMOND OF DECORIST



OUR COTTAGE FLOOR PLAN

1 SIGN ON FOR A MAKEOVER

A truly smart home starts with good design—and a newish crop of virtual decorating sites make that a possibility for almost anyone. These budget-friendly services will match you up with an interior designer who will tackle your problem rooms by offering 3-D renderings and product recommendations. For the *Sunset* Smart Cottage, we're working with Ashley Redmond of San Francisco–based Decorist. *Plans start at $299; decorist.com.*

BEFORES: THOMAS J. STORY; PEN, FABRIC, AND PUSHPINS: JEFFERY CROSS; PORTRAIT: JULIA SPERLING

2 CREATE A COMMAND CENTRAL

If you dream of a house that will anticipate your every need, start by choosing your smart hub. For many people, the Nest is the gateway drug into home tech; its thermostat, smoke and carbon-monoxide alarm, and security cameras are easy enough for a DIYer to install, and it works with 100s of other smart products. If the prospect of any kind of installation makes your palms sweat, consider the Vivint Smart Home system. This complete security setup is also compatible with other devices—and professional installation is included. *Nest thermostat, $249; smoke detector, $99; and indoor or outdoor security cameras, $199 each; nest.com. Vivint Smart Home system, prices vary; vivint.com.*

NEST THERMOSTAT

3 MAKE IT HACKPROOF

Passwords may not be the sexiest things in the tech world, but setting a strong one is vital to your privacy since most smart products connect to Wi-Fi. Be sure your router's network name doesn't use your name or address. Then, set a password that's a long, preferably random combination of numbers and letters.

AMAZON ECHO

4 HIRE AN ASSISTANT

Siri and Alexa are becoming household names for good reason. In the world of voice-controlled assistants, Amazon Echo was first on the market and it shows, with impressive "skills" that range from coaching you through a workout to controlling smart lights. But Google Home is catching up fast, with a stylish, customizable exterior to boot. For HomeKit, no extra speaker is required—only your iPhone. *Amazon Echo, $179; amazon.com/echo. Google Home, $129; madeby.google.com/home. HomeKit, apple.com/ios/home.*

5 GET PEACE OF MIND

Prone to forgetfulness (or paranoia)? With the August Smart Lock, you can make sure your door is locked even when you're in the middle of a meeting. Add on a tricked-out doorbell like the models from Ring or SkyBell, and you can virtually tell the mailman he can leave the package at the door. *August Smart Lock, $229; august.com. Ring Video Doorbell, $199; ring.com. SkyBell, $199; skybell.com.*

6 SET THE MOOD

Smart lights go way beyond clap on. Connected LED bulbs emit light that mimics the sun to help you wake up in the morning and shift to a warmer, calmer hue to help you fall asleep at night. These lights also work together with other smart devices, such as security cameras. *Philips Hue bulbs, from $15; meethue.com. LIFX bulb, $60; lifx.com.*

7 HAVE SOME FUN

While your smart home can't pour you a glass of wine (yet!), it can do just about everything else before you've uncorked the bottle. Entertainment hubs like Logitech's Harmony make it easy to control your TV, Roku, and Sonos speakers with a tap of your smartphone. *Logitech Harmony Hub, $100; logitech.com. Roku Streaming Stick, $50; roku.com. Sonos speaker, from $199; sonos.com.*

8 PUT EYES EVERYWHERE

Whether you're looking to keep an eye on your front door or catch your dog in the act of lying on the couch when you aren't home, there's a security camera for you. Both Nest and Canary offer indoor and outdoor models that stream live video to your phone. *Nest camera, $199; nest.com. Canary camera, $199; canary.is.*

9 DON'T TACKLE IT ALL AT ONCE

"Pick a room where you spend most of your time and start with a device or two. Then you can gauge how you like it and build your experience up from there."
—John Torres, designer at Mosaic (tech contractor for the *Sunset* Smart Cottage; *saymosaic.com*)

JOHN TORRES OF MOSAIC

10 LOWER YOUR BILLS

Tricking out your home can benefit your wallet—and the Earth. Investing in a smart irrigation system (see page 43) will make the most of your water using local weather data. Plus you can keep your electricity in check by monitoring its use with a WeMo Insight Switch, which tells you exactly how much energy a device you plug into it is pulling. *$50; belkin.com.*

THE VISION

In redesigning the *Sunset* Smart Cottage, Redmond isn't planning to hide the tech, noting that it's perfectly acceptable to style your Amazon Echo, say, alongside a potted plant. But she is planning to offset the sleek pieces with an organic palette. Here's what's on her mood board.

OLD MEETS NEW

ATGStores.com (All That's Good) is a virtual one-stop shop for home remodels, stocking everything from pillows to the kitchen sink. Redmond, who plans to decorate in a neutral palette, has her eye on vintage-inspired pieces such as a tufted sofa and library-style cabinet. *atgstores.com.*

SUPERPOWERED TEXTILES

Sunbrella is known for its ability to resist extreme sunlight outside, but designers like Redmond love this innovative fabric for indoor upholstery too. *sunbrella.com.*

DREAM CLOSETS

California Closets has taken the task of organization to the next level: In addition to working with clients one-on-one, they'll let clients test-drive their custom closet with a virtual model before committing. *californiaclosets.com.*

HI-TECH PLUMBING

Someday a simple voice command will be enough to turn on the faucet. Until then, Delta's chic Innovations Series faucets are the next best thing, allowing users to control the tap by simply by waving their hands underneath the fixture. *deltafaucet.com.*

DIGITAL BONUS Keep your smart home secure from privacy hacks with these tips: ***sunset.com/smartprotection.***

By Nena Farrell, Chantal Lamers, and Stacey Higginbotham