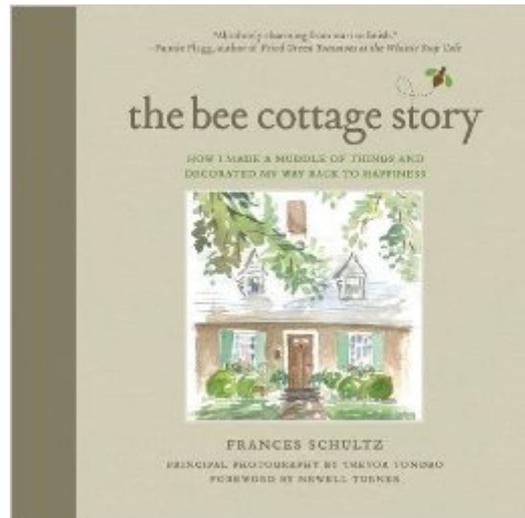


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# The Bee Cottage Story: How I Made A Muddle Of Things And Decorated My Way Back To Happiness



## Synopsis

Inspired by Frances Schultz's popular House Beautiful magazine series on the makeover of her East Hampton house, Bee Cottage, what began as a decorating book evolved into a memoir combining the best elements of both: beautiful photos and a compelling personal story. Schultz taps into what she learned during her renovations of Bee Cottage; determining how each area in the house and garden would be used and furnished; to unravel the question of how a mature, intelligent, successful woman could have made such a mess of her personal life. As she figures out each room over a period of years, Frances finds a new path in life, also a continual process. She comes to learn that, like decorating a home, our lives must adapt to who we are and what we need at different points along the way. The Bee Cottage Story is part memoir, part home decorating guide. Frances discusses the kinds of useful, commonsense design issues professionals take for granted and the rest of us just may not think of, prompting the reader to examine and discover her own truth in decorating; and in her life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I received this book yesterday, and took a quick glance through it before starting dinner. My quick glance turned into full immersion; I could not put it down. My bookshelves house numerous Interior Design books, but this is the first one I have acquired that combines a captivating personal story, alongside terrific design tips. The design suggestions will work for real people, with real rooms, living real lives in those rooms. While clearly Frances Schultz has beautiful things; some purchased

by her, and some inherited from her lovely mother, the rooms pictured here suggest comfort, warmth and a welcoming sense of ease. The rooms are not perfect, just perfect for her, which is the best someone can hope for when decorating a home. I thoroughly enjoyed this book, and would recommend it to anyone who enjoys creating a comfortable, gracious nest.

I can't remember how I became Frances Schultz's online friend, because the process was so effortless it seemed we had always been sassing one another. And I can't recall why it seemed like a good idea to have drinks with Frances and her husband when they were in New York --- I don't drink, and without reading much about Tom Dittmer, I had a feeling he has the kind of political views that drive me nuts, and probably vice versa. But I can't forget that evening, because within five minutes Frances, Tom and I were telling whoppers, gossiping irresponsibly and just generally acting like the old friends we already seemed to be. When I left, promising to read her book, I thought: Is it possible to adore her book more than I adore Frances? *The Bee Cottage Story: How I Made a Muddle of Things and Decorated My Way Back to Happiness* answers the question --- the book is the woman, the woman is the book. Frances Schultz has described her East Hampton hideaway as "a little stucco cottage with pretty blue shutters and a big heart." Works for a description of her as well. Shutters don't obscure anything; they simply frame a window. And as for the heart | Here is Frances, on page 1, buying this run-down cottage as "the perfect place to begin my second marriage." Which didn't happen. Nice guy, bad fit. And there she was, in "a spot that illuminates the space between where we are and where we thought we'd be | in a sea of fear, self-loathing and self-doubt." Well, if she couldn't fix herself, she'd fix the house. It wasn't much of a goal --- "a point of light in a big dark room, but it was something." Why a house? "Start where you are, begin with what you know." Well, she knew about houses. She was a contributing editor to *House Beautiful* and former editor-at-large for *Veranda*. For six years, she'd been the host of a cable show, "Southern Living Presents." She'd written a few design books. And she was Southern. Her mother "had a thing for pilots," so she married one. Her father "had a thing for girls," and left his wife and two daughters. At 22, Frances got married --- "When he proposed, he made it clear in the nicest way that if I said no, he'd move on, and I didn't want to let him go." They stayed together for six years. "Twenty-five years after we divorced, he came to my mother's funeral. God bless him." Twenty years "of mostly serial monogamy spiced with the occasional madcap

affair followed. There was some introspection, but mostly there was muddle: "When the road was smooth, I made bumps. But I'm good at tying bows and make a hell of a lamb stew. I can arrange flowers and furniture in my sleep. I can tell jokes. I'm artistic, and I'm a decent athlete. Some days I can even write. All these things are hints, by the way, to Who I Am, but back in the day I sometimes ignored my instincts and natural inclinations." You may guess what followed. Dating New York men, expecting more and accepting less. She needed, she realized, to be hit by a truck. In 2004, she was: breast cancer. Small and caught early, but a wake-up call. The next year, her mother died. Buying Bee Cottage? After all that, how could she not? We've now reached page 50 of a profusely illustrated 150-page book. Some readers will be delighted to learn that decorating stories make up most of the final 100 pages; I was having such a good time following Frances' adventures that I didn't expect to care much about home improvements. Happily, home improvements and self-improvement dovetail for Frances, who is, on page 50, now 50, unmarried and looking for a place to put her love. Bee Cottage is not some spectacular palace. It's small, in the village, not that much of a house. But Frances had energy, creativity and personal need --- she made it a home. Her home. Naturally she married a man with a ranch in California and no great affection for the ocean. She's now bi-coastal, a high-class problem, for sure. The house is too small for her husband, but he appreciates what I've created, and he gets that I need to be there. Which leads her, after decades of searching and not quite finding, to this: "It is one of life's greatest reliefs --- right up there with the ending of your child's school play --- to realize that no one person can fulfill all your needs, much less mirror them. Just as no one person, situation, thing or house will make you happy, as if happiness were an egg that hatches when you pick the right nest." And yet. The ideal of happiness eludes us, the metaphor draws us in. Especially for this woman in Bee Cottage. A house stands for who we are, and how we love ourselves and others. No doubt about it. Frances Schultz always loved others. Now she finally loves herself.

I followed the Bee Cottage Story series in House Beautiful and loved the series. I was delighted when at long last the book arrived. Little did I know, I would devour it in one gulp over 12 hours. It is simply charming. Full of witty, delicious advice on decorating and life. I highly recommend the hard cover version for all "decorating enthusiasts" so that The Bee Cottage Story can join your collection of decorating books.

I really love decorating books, but I never buy them full price. I buy them used from , or my favorite used bookstore in Nashville, or library sales. This was an exception. I used a gift card to run out and buy Bee Cottage as soon as it was released because I was so super excited about it. I had already fallen head over heels in love with the cottage from Frances Schultz's series in House Beautiful and I could not wait to drink in every charming detail. Unfortunately, the book is mostly a memoir of Frances Schultz--who she was sleeping with, her dysfunctional relationships, her "spiritual" journey. Although there are pictures of the cottage and the rooms and some details about the process of decorating it, there was much less of that than I had hoped. There were a few times she would describe in the text something from a room and I would search in vain for a photo of that detail. Blurg! I really wanted to feel like I could see every nook and cranny and hear about every choice she made in decorating, but I finished the book feeling like I had mostly seen pictures recycled from House Beautiful. I was a little disappointed, too, to find out how much help she had from her tony interior design and landscape design gurus. I thought she had done it all herself, and that had inspired me. My favorite part of the whole book was at the very beginning, when she shows the evolution of the sitting room. I liked to see how that room changed and why she moved pieces around. I wish there had been a lot more of that, and a lot less of her personal life. She seems like a charming and interesting person who has lived a colorful and vivid life, but I did not realize I was buying a \$25 coffee table memoir.

Disappointing. I was so looking forward to this book but I am sorry to have to say that it didn't meet my expectations. The house is indeed very nice and her decorating of it is beautiful, however, the book tries to be both a decorating book and a personal memoir and in my opinion, that is where it fails. By incorporating so much personal information, Ms Schultz makes a "muddle". I realize we live in an era where expounding on one's sexual prowess is considered "cool"; I do not agree. There was no need to list affairs and especially no need to repeat the word, f---k.

Tenderly written, full of gorgeous photos, crammed with decorating ideas. Loved the list of suggestions for each area of the house.

I tried I really did!!! After first couple pages it became obvious that this was written by a very self absorbed person. a name dropper who was raised in luxury and has obviously spent her life continuing that practice.. I love House Beautiful and have subscribed for years sowas a real disappointment

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