

ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE

[RDB Wins Award](#)

[Featured Project](#)

[Employee Spotlight](#)

[Energy Efficiency](#)

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[RDB Website](#)

RDB Wins A National Award



Last [newsletter](#), we highlighted the Meija-Ham Remodel. This project involved transforming a plain and staid brick ranch into a modern and inspiring space. We displayed it this past May in the NARI Tour of Remodeled Homes to an enthusiastic response from the local community. You can see the entire construction process on our website [here](#).

We are proud to announce that the project has gained nation attention as well. [Qualified Remodeler](#) has selected this project as a winner in the 2010 Master Design awards. The Meija-Ham Remodel was the Bronze award winner in the Whole House \$200,000-\$500,000 category. We would like to thank Qualified Remodeler for this prestigious recognition.

Featured Project: Wayman/Schwartz Tea House

Not all remodeling projects need to be large and extravagant. If done correctly, even a small project can improve your daily life. The key is proper attention to the details.



The Wayman/Schwartz family had a simple request for us: build them an attached screen porch so they can enjoy their backyard without being harassed by insects. While just about any contractor can build a screen porch, here at RDB we take pride in the design half of our name as well. Through a series of simple details, we took the family's desire for a porch and turned it into a beautiful Japanese-inspired tea house.

The first detail is a practical one: keeping out the insects. The screens in the walls of the tea house are obvious; the challenge comes in with keeping them from coming up through the floor. A common solution is put screening beneath the floor boards. Unfortunately while this keeps out the insects, it also keeps in anything that falls from above. Ideally, crumbs, dirt, etc should simply fall between the boards. To facilitate this, we installed the insect screen at the base around perimeter of the tea house. This is then covered with a wood lattice, creating a pleasing appearance with a practical purpose.



Our clients also wanted to maintain their existing sliding glass door and preserve existing views out their kitchen as much as possible. RDB designed the wall of the tea house to hit on the center of the door, connecting with the fixed panel. This allows the sliding glass door to operate normally, opening directly between the kitchen and the new tea house. The most desirable views out of the fixed panel remain unobstructed.

Traditional Japanese tea houses were designed around the tatami floor mat whose regular rectangular shaped dictated the layout. While the mats are impractical for the harsh Michigan elements, we wanted to incorporate them symbolically. This led to the trim details of the tea house ceiling. The ceiling is broken up into rectangular shapes of a similar proportion, layout in a traditional pinwheel pattern.



Continuing with the Japanese theme a small Zen garden was nestled into the corner. Our clients filled this area with the proper stones, a water feature, bamboo screening, and we installed a copper rain chain from the gutter above down to the garden floor.. This spot is relatively isolated from the rest of the house, creating a place of quiet reflection.

The tea house is more than simply a screened porch. The style reflects the owner's love of Japanese culture, while still functioning as a practical space. It is an extension of the house itself.



Employee Spotlight: Brian Mills

Though most people reading this know Brian Mills, we wanted to highlight him this month. Brian has been a Lead Carpenter with RDB for over 12 years now and is a core part of our company. He has talent and passion for building and construction, a meticulous eye for detail, and is a great communicator. Our clients love having Brian on their jobsites.



Brian grew up in Los Angeles, and has been in Ann Arbor for 22 years. His family includes his wife Laura and his children Kyle (senior at Huron High) and Courtney (sophomore in college). Before joining RDB Brian ran his own remodeling and handyman business for many years in Ann Arbor.

In his spare time Brian is currently building a large addition to his own home (he doesn't get enough construction during the daytime we guess). The other side of Brian that not everyone knows about is that he is a magician. He and Laura have been performing together for many years under the stage name of [The Derringers](#), and do an amazing show of grand illusions. And of course, being the guy he is, he builds his own illusions!

Brian has been able to build anything Gary has designed, even with curved walls, barrel vaults, large trussed structures, or an octagonal ceiling with a cupola. Our written feedback from clients explain his work the best:

"He showed an integrity and commitment to our project which seems to me quite exceptional."

"Brian is a diligent hard worker. He is pleasant to work with and went out of his way to accommodate our family."

"I am convinced that Brian could build anything put in front of him."

"Brian was like part of our family!"

Brian- Thank you for hard work and dedication!

Keep Up On Energy Efficiency

Here at RDB, we pride ourselves on being a resource to our clients: past, present, and future. We try to keep up on trends for you, such as the current one toward greater energy efficiency. Being energy efficient has both big picture, global environmental impacts and practical, monetary considerations. As such, we want to share a few links we think you might find useful:

Tax Benefits

There are still quite a few tax credits and rebates for making energy efficient upgrades. This include both housing upgrades and product purchases like hybrid automobiles. These change year to year, so it's best to take advantage while you can. The Department of Energy has a nice list of what's currently available [here](#).

Product Information

[Energy Star](#) is a government program focused on providing the public with information about energy efficient process and products. If you are look to [improve](#) your whole house or simply replace your [refrigerator](#), Energy Star can provide you with information on how to make good product selections.

Energy Provider Offers

In an effort to help their customers reduce energy costs, DTE has several programs available. Upgrade to an Energy Star refrigerator? DTE will give you a [rebate](#) and haul the old one way. Similar rebates exist for [other appliances](#). They also offer rebates on [buying compact-fluorescent lights](#), [getting an energy audit](#), and [improving your insulation](#).

We hope you find this information helpful in making future decisions. As always, RDB is ready and willing to help you implement your energy efficiency improvements.



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