

PHOTOS BY NIGEL VALDEZ

**LINKS:**  
**Tumbleweed Tiny Houses:**  
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**Tiny House Company:**  
[tinyhousecompany.com](http://tinyhousecompany.com)

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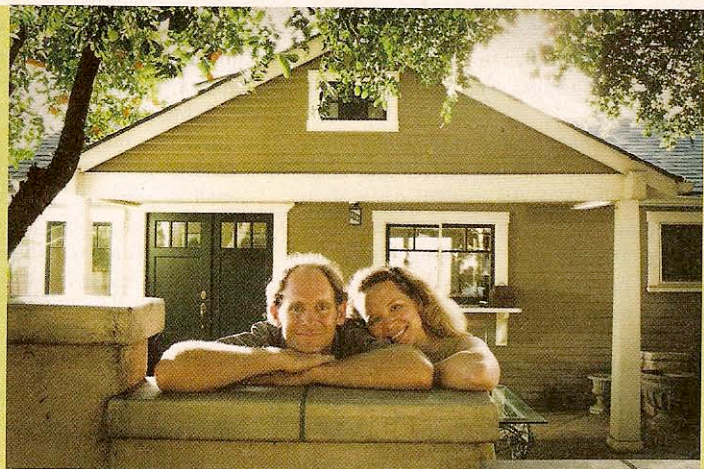


PHOTO BY MIKKI WILLIS

## Big City, Little House

In our sprawling seaside megalopolis where everything seems super-sized—whether it be cars, commutes or egos—Annika and Ty Buxman are bucking the status quo.

In 1998, hoping to shorten Ty's killer commute to his USC job, the couple traded a three bedroom, 2,000-square-foot Altadena home for a much smaller abode in idyllic, tree-lined South Pasadena. They didn't set out looking for a tiny house specifically, but the outrageous cost of Southern California real estate narrowed their options. What they found was a 1920's cottage that—at a mere 640 square feet—lacked space in the usual sense, but was big on warmth and character.

So, one huge yard sale and many expressed doubts from friends and family later, the Buxmans made the move. "The hardest part was taking the plunge and getting rid of things you think you need," says Annika. It was an experiment of sorts: What is enough? They took digital photos to immortalize certain belongings that didn't make the cut, and kissed any lingering packrat tendencies goodbye.

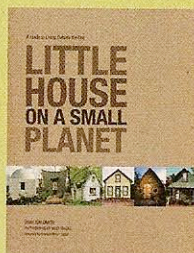
Now settled happily into their cozy quarters, they've learned how to make the small digs work with some creative adjustments. Formerly empty space above the living room is now a sleeping loft. A Murphy bed folds down from hidden shelves in the office (Annika runs a letterpress business from home). A wall-hanging chalkboard opens into a table.

Other space-saving innovations include removing the backs from the couches to make them narrower, installing a slimmer fridge and adding skylights and windows to infuse the space with light, creating the illusion of openness. "It's fun to think of these little things," says Annika, whose compact Dachshunds, Willie and Frankie, fit well with the small house theme.

Their scaled-down space is so inviting that it doesn't deter family from coming for visits. Guests sleep in a petite teardrop trailer in the carport and sign up for bathroom time.

After nearly a decade of small house living, the Buxmans affirm that they don't miss most of the things they got rid of (including monster utility bills). "We fell into it and we're glad we did," adds Annika.

—Jessica Ridenour



For more small home inspiration, pick up *Little House on a Small Planet* by Shay Salmon, with photos by Nigel Valdez, due this September from The Lyons Press.