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Best home and garden social media influencer

SHAVONDA GARDNER

BY DEBBIE ARRINGTON  
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Home design maven Shavonda Gardner took an unusual route to social media influencer. Growing up in a military family, she learned design by doing, one room at a time. Through making a drab space come to life, she could make it her own.

"My parents were both in the Army; we moved a lot!" Gardner said. "We lived in military housing, just temporary. We never put down roots. We lived in Louisiana, Georgia, Texas, North Carolina, Germany, all over. Wherever we were, I always loved to make my room as much mine as I could."

Filling spaces with familiar things, she used color, pattern and texture to make each place distinctly hers—the bolder, the better.

Before getting serious about design, Gardner served in the military herself, as an Air Force MP, "the least creative job you can do," she said.

But she continued her habit of room makeovers. "I could get orders to move the next day, but I still wanted to reflect my style," she said.

The military brought her to the greater Sacramento area, where she decided to stay. "It was the first place I ever felt in my entire life that I could make a home," she said. "Sacramento has a small-town feel, but it's still a big city. People are so nice here! I love the sense of community and the weather is amazing."

Gardner, 37, started blogging seven years ago, just after finishing her studies at the Art Institute of California. It wasn't the best time to launch a career in home design; the economy was still recovering from the Great Recession. She worked in property management while honing her design, photography and writing skills online.

"I knew I had the flair for interior design, but I also knew at that time people were not ready to make over their home; people were losing their house," she recalled. "Blogging was a way to stay connected to design and keep that creative outlet while putting food on the table."

Now, Gardner is a full-time blogger and social media influencer. Her popular blog, SG Style (sgstyleblog.com), has earned her an audience far



PHOTO BY SERENE LUSANO

beyond Sacramento. Her Instagram page (@SGardnerStyle) boasts 56,000 followers.

Gardner lives in Sacramento's Arden Arcade neighborhood with her wife and two children. Providing plenty of fodder for her blog: Her family downsized from a 2,400-square-foot tract home to a 1,200-square-foot bungalow. "We have less house now, and way more life," she said.

That 1940s cottage became her current canvas. "I love old houses," she said. "I wanted to have this relationship with this home and let it come back to life again."

Her motto: "Creating a home is a marathon not a sprint." To that she adds this corollary: "Just because you live small, it doesn't mean you can't have big, bold style." □

Shavonda Gardner is on Instagram (@sgardnerstyle) and has a blog at sgstyleblog.com.

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