BRENNAN WESLEY PHOTOGRAPHY/PROVIDED

The exterior of the Lowcountry Wharf House on Kiawah Island. The Wharf House and the Node House, both located on the barrier island, were recognized by the South Carolina chapter of the American Institute of Architects in a design category named for Robert Mills, a Palmetto State architect who lived in the early 1800s and designed the Washington Monument.

High praise

Two Kiawah homes recognized by SC architecture association, one for building up, the other for connecting to nature

BY CONNER MITCHELL
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Kiawah Island, home to some of the Lowcountry's most extravagant houses, now has two more in its arsenal which were recently recognized for their architectural integrity.

The Lowcountry Wharf House and the Node House, both located on the famed barrier island, were recognized by the South Carolina chapter of the American Institute of Architects in a design category named for Robert Mills, a Palmetto State architect who lived in the early 1800s and is best known for designing the Washington Monument.

Anderson Studio director Scott Anderson said it was an honor to be recognized with the merit award in the Mills category. The studio, he said, faced a space challenge when designing the Lowcountry Wharf House at the northern edge of the island overlooking the Kiawah River.

The plot of land was under half an acre, but they were still tasked with building a spacious home for a Chicago couple moving to the area that looked as though it had been there a long time and fit in with the homes around it.

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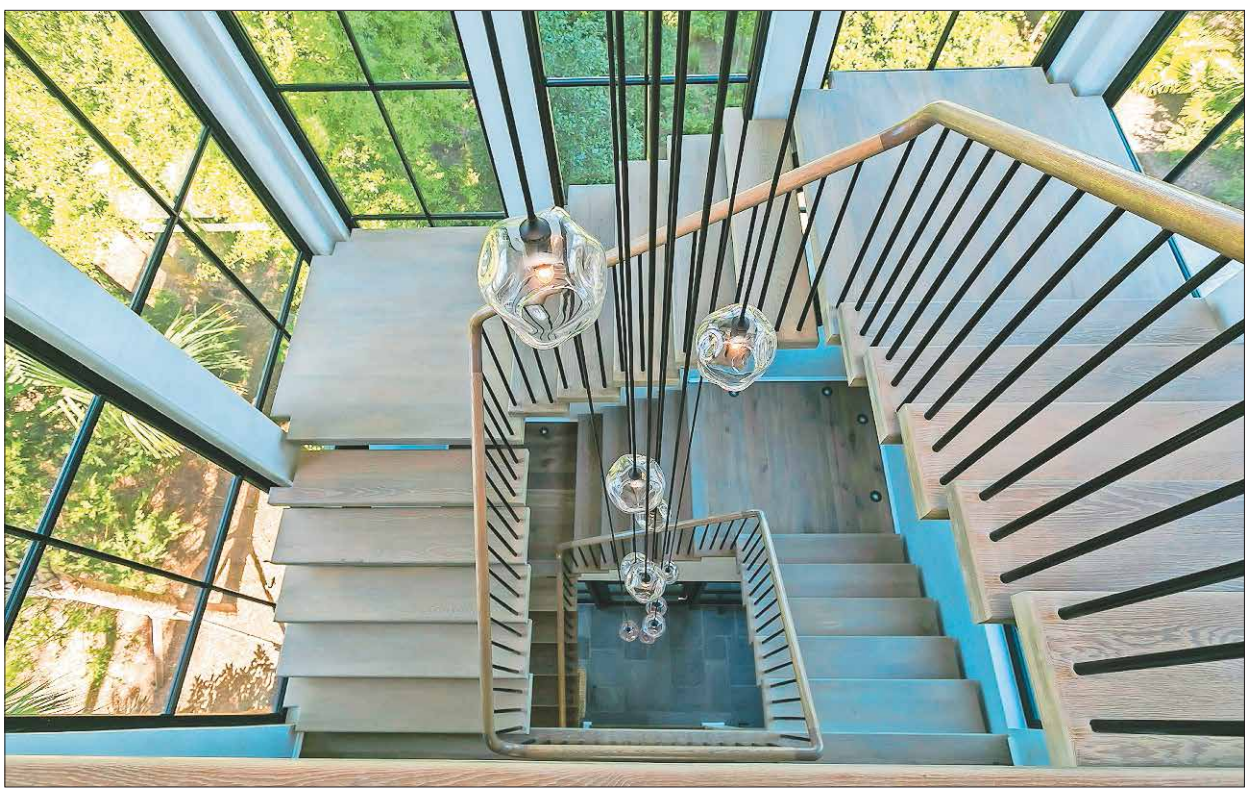

CALLIE CRANFORD PHOTOGRAPHY/PROVIDED

The three-story, 4,800-square-foot Wharf House features a spiral staircase.

Decorating? Use what's in the yard

Add strawberry tree to list of plants that can be used for festive display

TONY BERTAUSKI
Gardening

Our Christmas shrub is decorated. It's a 15-gallon Oakland holly on a pedestal with a few ornaments and lights. It doesn't fill the room like a traditional Christmas tree, but we'll plant it in the backyard in the New Year. All that's left is making the house festive.

My wife is a thrifty decorator. She uses what's in the yard. I'm only there to pull grapevine out of the trees and carry buckets of berries. She has her favorites, but this year we added a new specimen to the list: the strawberry tree. It's an unusual plant that is underutilized in the Lowcountry, but more on that later. First, let's talk about the usual suspects.

Grapevines are a Christmas decoration staple and grow in the woods behind our house. They are flexible limbs that are good for wreath-making or arching doorways. Greenery and berries can be easily wedged into place.

Glossy magnolia, blue-green cypress and holly make good fillers. We have a cardinal holly and liberty holly in the yard. The cardinal holly regularly produces clusters of red berries which are great for color. Technically, they are drupes not berries. Nonetheless, holly berries are poisonous in large quantities so they'll stay high on the mantel when used indoors.

Our liberty holly is a real jewel. Slow growing in the shade, the growth habit is naturally pyramidal.

Please see **GARDENING**, Page D4

TONY BERTAUSKI/PROVIDED

This strawberry tree has been growing for more than 20 years on the campus of Trident Technical College.

Two Kiawah homes recognized for architecture

HOMES, from D1

So their strategy was to make the three-story, 4,800-square-foot, four-bedroom home taller, rather than wider — without it feeling too vertical.

"There was a question of modernism (we had to address)," he said. "The exterior is vertical, but we don't make it feel so tall, so what does modern form look like?"

The answer came in the form of emphasizing the nature around the property. The home has finishes of plaster, steel, natural wood and stone, and the first floor was constructed so that during the day, natural light would illuminate the home rather than artificial overhead lights.

"It's about services and tactfulness," Anderson said. "It's really simplified."

The overall goal of the project was to create a modern space that would promote a sense of wellness through the architecture, interior design and nature surrounding the home.

"When you can achieve that, you've really gone a long way in advancing wellness of the people that live there," he said. "The inspirations are relatively simple, but the details are where it really comes to fruition."

CALLIE CRANFORD PHOTOGRAPHY/PROVIDED

The interior of the Lowcountry Wharf House on Kiawah Island is designed to be illuminated with natural light during the day. The Wharf House and the Node House, both located on the barrier island, were recognized by the South Carolina chapter of the American Institute of Architects in a design category named for Robert Mills, a Palmetto State architect who lived in the early 1800s.

Judges commenting on the Wharf House said it "nestles a large program onto a challenging site without overwhelming the sense of place along this stretch of waterway."

"Open and airy upper floors help to diminish the sense of the size of the house while capturing the incredible prospects of the site," judges said.

Joel Wenzel, an architect with Charleston-based Thomas & Denzinger, said receiving a Robert Mills citation for the firm's designing of the Node House was special because of the group that awarded it.

"It's a jury of our peers, so it's very high praise indeed," he said.

The house itself was focused on taking the client's desire for a long-term retreat for his family and making it fit their needs. His wife, Wenzel said, was a college swimmer — so the home was designed with a pool that could accommodate lap swimming, and every room in the house flows in a way that gives easy access to the pool.

"It's a unique lot with northern views, but we wanted to allow the southern sun to light up spaces as well," Wenzel said.

After taking into account the needs of the client and their hope to be able to entertain guests, materiality became the firm's next focus. The 4,000-square-foot home and the corresponding 1,200-square-foot guest house emphasize glass work and concrete elements that connect the main and guests house. The interiors use softer woods to give the homes a more human feeling, Wenzel said.

"The resulting harmony of element intends to connect the home to nature at a physical and visual level," the firm wrote in its awards submission.

The recognition for Anderson Studios and Thomas & Denzinger doesn't come with a monetary prize, but both firms said it was fulfilling to be recognized by fellow architects for their work.

Contact **Conner Mitchell** at 843-834-0419. Follow him on Twitter at @ConnerMitchell0.

Use what's in the yard for decorating

GARDENING, from D1

In 10 years of growth, it's barely 10 feet tall. The foliage is large, glossy and dense. However, it rarely produces berries.

Hollies are dioecious, which means they have male or female flowers but not both on the same plant. Male plants are often called pollinators. They provide the pollen that needs to get to the female plant. If that's successful, the red berries will develop. Our liberty holly doesn't produce nearly as many berries as the cardinal holly even though they're only 20 feet apart. But the liberty holly foliage is so outstanding that it's still quite a prize.

Other berry-producers good for holiday decorations are nandina and pyracantha. Both are loaded with berries this time of the year. Nandina, however, tends to drop the berries once picked. It gets a bit messy when used indoors and they're known to be toxic to animals, so they're primarily an outdoor decoration.

Pyracantha has large clusters of orange or red berries, depending on the species or cultivar, and are quite showy. The berries don't have noted toxicity, but the stems are loaded with sharp spines. Given its prickly nature and large, irregular growth habit, it would need enough space to avoid bumping into it. A distant area where you can see it but don't have to prune it would be ideal.

We have pyracantha at the horticulture program at Trident Technical College where the strawberry tree is located. The strawberry tree (*Arbutus unedo*) has been slowly growing on campus for more than 20 years. We've pruned it up into a small tree form. The trunk is twisting and the peeling bark reminiscent of grapevine. The evergreen foliage is lush. The form and foliage makes for an exciting specimen that's relatively pest-free. The real bonus is the flowers and fruit.

FILE

A wreath featuring natural materials can be made from magnolia leaves, holly and cedar.

In fall, clusters of bell-shaped white flowers hang from the ends of the branches, similar to a pieris shrub. While they are mildly fragrant, they won't get your attention like a tea olive shrub. Pollinators, however, love them.

The small strawberry-like fruit is what gives the plant its name. More globose in shape than a strawberry, they have an almost fuzzy texture that is yellow at first. As the fruit matures, they turn strawberry-red and grow in clusters alongside flowers.

The fruit is said to be edible, but the taste can range from sweet to bland. It's not something you'd use to make jam. But it's a wonderful candidate for the yard with a holiday treat for decorating.

Tony Bertauski is a horticulture instructor at Trident Technical College. To give feedback, e-mail him at tony.bertauski@tridenttech.edu.

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