

# Our Country Home



Inside  
&



Out

# Our Country Home



**I**n the very heart of Europe are the Tatra Mountains. In late 19<sup>th</sup> century whole artistic world became fascinated with an old Highlander's culture, especially with their architectural designs. A group of famous Polish artists define this style and named it "Zakopianski style". This new style was presented on 1900 World's Fair in Paris. The old cottages are to this day delighting the eye with impeccable proportions and attentions to architectural detail. The beauty of this architectural design lays in great composition of massive logs and traditional elements of folk art, woodcarving, stone and metal art.

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# Our Country Home

## Summer 2004

**T**he growing popularity of creating comfortable spaces for residence in the Upper Delaware River Valley – stimulated partly by the allure of the natural landscape, but also by the fact that living here just makes business sense in the expensive America of today – made the research for this section easy.

But the work was far from plain.

Three writers well known to readers of **The River Reporter** recount their own experiences working inside and out, uncovering the pitfalls of certain styles of gardening and indoor renovation as well as describing their successes.

This section also takes a look at some local businesses and the work of regional contractors, which can both lead you on your way to greater success in home and garden.

We know that the individuals we interviewed and the writers who describe their experiences inspired us to assemble another special section that honors the beauty of this landscape and the people who compliment it with their craftsmanship and handiwork.



*TRR photo by Tom Kane*

**At her home in Mileses, NY, Lynn Elfert takes a moment to enjoy her garden from the comfort of her Emily Dickinson room.**

In the end, the editors hope you find the writing and photography in this issue of "Our Country Home" entertaining and inspiring.

– Charlie Buterbaugh  
Section Editor

*TRR photos by Charlie Buterbaugh*

On the cover are photos of Amy Miller and Peter McGuigan's guesthouse in Cohecton, NY. See story on page 13.

### THE RIVER REPORTER

## Our Country Home

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**Our Country Home**, a special publication of **The River Reporter**, is published by Stuart Communications, Inc. Entire contents ©2004 by Stuart Communications, Inc.

**The River Reporter** maintains an office at 93 Erie Ave., Narrowsburg, NY. Its mailing address is P.O. Box 150, Narrowsburg, NY 12764. Phone 845-252-7414. E-mail editor@riverreporter.com. **The River Reporter** is online at riverreporter.com.

Subscription to **The River Reporter** is \$53.00 for two years, \$30.00 for 1 year or \$21.00 for six months. USPS 354-810. Periodical postage paid at Narrowsburg, NY 12764, and additional mailing offices.

July 1, 2004

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# Self-taught rustic design

By CHARLIE BUTERBAUGH

**R**ay Gonsalvez has a knack for salvaging old pieces others would call throwaways and transforming them into innovative, useful pieces with rustic appeal.

He just finished renovating a space beside Nicolina's Country Place on Main Street in Narrowsburg, NY where he opened Gonsalvez Rustic Design, presenting fine art, custom furniture, select rugs and a place to relax.

An open portal connects the two stores; the new expansion gives the country store some breathing room, Gonsalvez said.

A distinctive piece he recently created is an old door hanging on the wall with attached bookshelves, designed to fit rooms of varying heights. Other, sometimes edgy pieces that push conceptual limits include Gonsalvez' painting on wood, of Christ holding The Bible.

"My art is not mainstream. I'm mostly self-taught," Gonsalvez said.

Visitors aware of the self-taught craftsman's reputation for building rustic, utilitarian furniture won't be disappointed, and Gonsalvez plans to eventually use part of the store as



Ray Gonsalvez recently opened Gonsalvez Rustic Design on Main Street in Narrowsburg, NY.

TRR photo by Charlie Buterbaugh

a workshop so that people can witness his process of building and finishing furniture and other pieces.

Having recently lost his wife, Nicolina, Gonsalvez said his motivation to explore religious themes in his artwork has undergone resurgence.

He has also taken the opportunity to shape the legacy left by Nicolina.

"What was in my heart for her is now here," Gonsalvez said.

"Nicole was very good at creating safe, comfortable places."

Gonsalvez' unique paintings of chickens in the new store represent a story of his childhood.

When he was 12 years old, he was sent from New York City to work on

a farm in Monticello for three months during the summer. It was then that he discovered and grew to love the Upper Delaware Valley.

He worked full time and became attached to the chickens as he fed them and played with them. More significantly, he said, for the first time he became aware of the psychological sophistication of the adult farmers he was working for, and so the chickens became a symbol of cohesiveness, Gonsalvez said.

He has created most of the works in the store, though he enjoys helping other self-taught artists commonly referred to as outsider artists, whose work he plans to display in

the coming months.

He will also sell art supplies, including a particular brand of acrylic paints that can be applied to any surface, handmade paper and kits for silk-screen production, which will be taught in the future at Gonsalvez Rustic Design.

"We need to get art in children's hands early enough so that they become fond of it," he said.

Seating areas are available for people who want to write or just relax in a Main Street storefront, and Gonsalvez plans to serve seasonal teas throughout the year.

For more information call Gonsalvez at 845/252-7488.



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# The shape of the land defines the garden and the gardener

By NANNY FONTANELLA

I've built three gardens—one in my native California, the second on the coast of Maine, and my present garden, constructed out of rocky, clay Sullivan County soil.

The one in Sullivan County has been the most difficult to create and maintain. The climate here is erratic; there are years when the garden survives into November and years when a killing frost hits in August.

One spring came in at the beginning of March, and this year plants were frostbitten after Memorial Day.

There are wet spots and dry spots in the garden that appear randomly.

Even though mountain nights are chilly, the insect predators as well as critters that eat everything in sight make growing and harvesting difficult. But I wouldn't trade my garden for anywhere else. Something magical lives here along with the weeds and rocks, and it comes to light as grass or woods gives way to borders, gardens, paths and walls.

Landscaping creates the illusion of naturalness, which is actually a very unnatural art—a cross between sculpture and architecture.

Landscape design chips away at the terrain to reveal its "true" essence, defining perimeters and creating areas that flow into each other, separated by boundaries like a gated wall, an arbor, a hedge or flowing water.

Flat land cries out for formality, symmetry and light. Sloping ground needs a more casual approach, a blending of light and dark, steps down into a shade garden, grassy paths along water or flower borders that dance.

A small orchard provides a fusion of the practical and the poetic. A terraced vegetable patch, each step a raised bed allowing the soil to breathe, can be bisected by a stone path with wild thyme growing between the cracks.

In your mind, walk through your imagined garden. Stop to touch a flower or crush an insect. Immerse yourself in the drama of a bird following you—hip, hop and then suddenly flying high up on a branch.

Deep in your consciousness the garden has already created itself; a fantasy of color, fragrance and seasonal interest.

What is left is the enjoyable task of digging, shlepping, pruning and planting, pouring over catalogs and visiting nurseries, the bare bones of your vision, which will become clothed in living color.

Vita Sackville-West said the garden creates itself if we allow it to happen. She believed in the divine accident. She pruned only to cut away dead branches and enhance the shape a plant had given itself. She allowed



TRR photos by Charlie Buterbaugh

The author cultivates have several shade gardens. Her favorite surrounds stone steps built by her husband Bob. They have been cunningly combined with tree roots. Some of the plants growing in the shade gardens are polonium, ligularia, shredded umbrella plant, primrose, tiarella and toad lily. They are all perfectly hardy here, and the soil has been amended slowly each year with compost to simulate a woodland floor.

plants to find their way next to each other by self seeding, creating moments of pastoral magnificence. She and her husband Harold Nicholson created the English garden, Sissinghurst, and developed the concept of "rooms," like the famous white garden.

He was the architect and she chose the plants. This method of framing and attiring the garden is all there is to landscaping.

Well, perhaps there is one more component to creating a landscape: considering the garden as a macrocosm of our spinning world.

Call it chaos theory. The garden is not static but ephemeral with hundreds of thousands of moments. Shapes, light and color constantly change, shift, grow and die. Therefore, a moment is not merely a particle of time but the relationship between time and space.

Moments are consciously created and sometimes accentuated by planting in layers.

For instance, when bulbs are finished, they become the "floor" for other plants to grow through by tucking down and around nearby trees and shrubs.

Planting cultivars that will tolerate shade under a tree and allowing flowering vines to grow up among them will evolve into a myriad of moments. Vines also can be trained to grow up large shrub roses.

Woody plants that flower at differ-

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Vining plants dress arbors, pergolas or stonewalls but need sun and can be invasive. Clematis, honeysuckle, trumpet vine, climbing hydrangea, kiwi, grape, akebia, wisteria, silver lace vine, hops, batatas and Dutchman's Pipe are all hardy here.

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## The shape of the land defines the garden and the gardener

Continued from page 7

ent times of the season frame perennials and annuals, which do the same. A small pond, even a bucket that holds water, can also be a home for water lilies and frogs.

The landscape is never finished. A tree will grow up and create shade where there was once just sun. Plants will die from disease or bad winters. The decision to add a water feature, a new shade garden or a patio alters movement through the garden. As the garden ages, so do we. The tasks we took for granted 10 years ago are more difficult now.

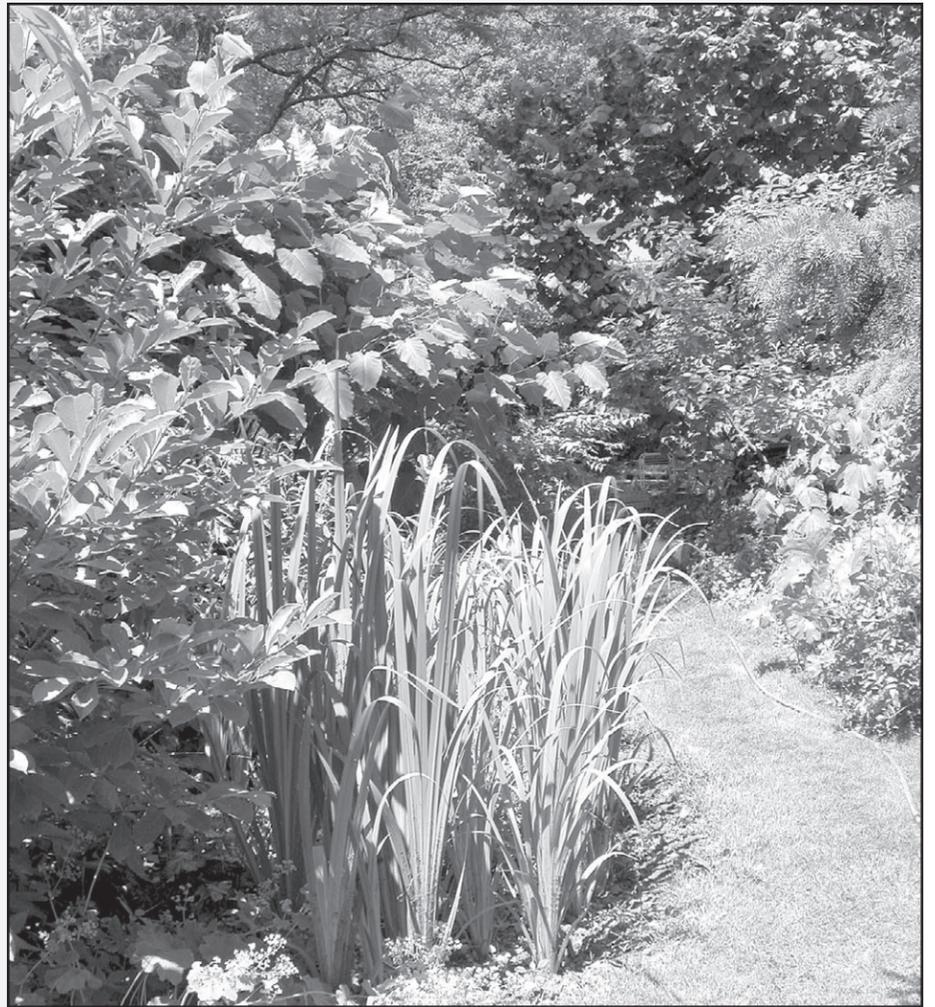
Suddenly, even a small space seems overwhelming, but the garden changes, adapting to human needs.

When we built our garden, there were three acres of grass sloping down to a seasonal stream. Some old locust trees that had volunteered

were allowed to just hang around, and several large areas were taken over by brambles.

Initially, we put in most of the planted areas facing the road because of the sun, but now that the development down the road has created incessant, noisy traffic, we spend more time in the back and have cleared the brambles and built more extensive shade gardens.

The landscape is sometimes cluttered and covered by the constant battle with bramble and weed. In the spring, intruders like grass, dandelion, jewelweed and dock literally pop up overnight, so unless you have a team of gardeners, perfection in the landscape will be like the brass ring on the carousel—forever sought after but rarely attained.



Ornamentals can be combined with fruits and vegetables. Strawberries, low growing blueberries are used as ground covers. Every inch is covered between areas of bare earth. Mulch is a trifle industrial and encourages slugs.



*Photo left:* This rock garden is perched atop a small hill in bright sun, awash with color and the fragrance of roses, conifers, heath, heather, blue flax, lavender, ruta, strawberry, lipstick, all kinds of dianthus, dahlias, balsam, boulders and mounds of small rocks. It's close to the sunny end of the garden, and at its back is a raspberry patch, a Paul musk rose and two young chestnut trees that behave like sentinels at the fence.

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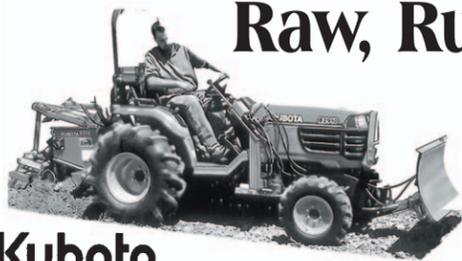
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# Simple barn becomes a charming guesthouse

By CHARLIE BUTERBAUGH

**A**my Miller and Peter McGuigan of Cohecton, NY have taken a simple barn shell with a loft above some old boards and transformed it into a two-story guesthouse capable of hosting at least six people.

The style of the renovated building employs some popular farmhouse trends, though personal touches are noticeable throughout the intimate, yet private living space.

Contractor Robert Laarmann, also of Cohecton, laid bluestone floors over radiant tubing on the first floor, which he said produces an efficient system since the stone will retain heat.

Bluestone is most often used for patios and walkways, but by bringing it indoors, the Millers were able to create a rustic appearance to complement their antique hardwood furniture and simple seating area opposite the kitchen.

Contrasting sections of charcoal and white bead-board wainscoting prevent the first floor from feeling smaller than it should.

Laarmann installed large, glass French doors to allow ample daylight into the kitchen, where bright



TRR photos by Charlie Buterbaugh

French bowls color the shelves above a simple, yet adequate cooking space.

A bright staircase leads upstairs, where Laarmann used pre-finished oak for flooring. He put three dormers with awning windows in one side of the second floor.

Two bedrooms, each with its own ceramic tile bathroom and shower,

provide guests with the privacy one would expect to be afforded in the country.

Peter built window boxes, now home to bright geraniums that draw the eye outside.

To increase the longevity of the building, after removing the old shingles, Laarmann attached a metal roof with no visible screws except

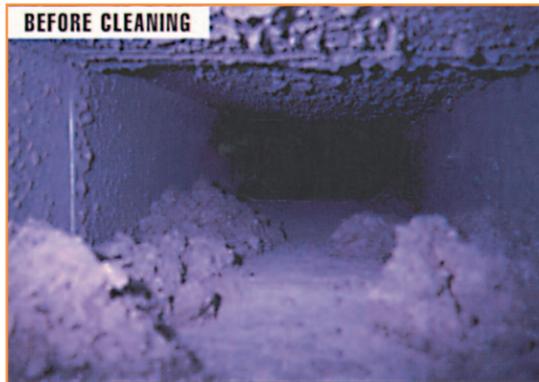
on the eaves. The roof is a little more expensive and time-consuming to install than a standard metal roof, but the contractor said the chances of a leak are greatly reduced.

Miller and McGuigan are currently working with the town to obtain a Certificate of Occupancy.



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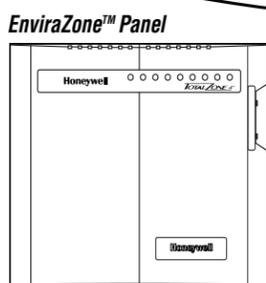
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# Design and value central to La Shed Du Fred

By CHARLIE BUTERBAUGH

**L**n their own quiet way, Michelle Weiss and A. A. El-Kamass have managed to debunk any circulating myths about the shortage of creative design in New York City's freethinking cousin, the Upper Delaware River Valley.

From the initial, sometimes slow-going decisions of interior design to the finishing touches of furniture and accessory selection, their store, La Shed Du Fred, in Callicoon, NY, specializes in the stuff of country homes.

The Lower Main Street business features custom hutches, wine cabinets, tables, chairs, beds and other furniture handmade by Kamass.

Colorful displays offer Italian organic fabrics, and Weiss can outfit an entire home with customized linens. Machine-washable, organic cotton clothes and loungewear, all made in the U.S., hang on a nearby rack.

Glassware, dining accessories, bedding, books, soaps, lead-free candles, body care products and decorative items dress the shelves.

Weiss says her retail interests include "everything someone needs in a country home."

And without the overhead expenses of urban boutiques—which compel city retailers to expect 100 percent profit on each item—Kamass and Weiss are free to sell goods at prices comparable to large, national stores.

Many of Kamass' handmade pieces of furniture make use of weathered barn wood. His practical, one-of-a-kind beds often incorporate stairway spindles or window shutters, celebrating the original purpose of the materials.

The partners wanted to depart from the trend of selling antiques in the country, and yet La Shed Du Fred's collection of one-of-a-kind natural furniture creates an impression similar to an antique store.

"We offer the antiques for tomorrow," Weiss said. "The pieces aren't old, but they already have value."

With his work, Kamass said he aims to elicit the same response people often have when they look at their parents' old pieces of hardwood furniture.

"At some point, a young man will say to himself, 'my father had a great eye,'" Kamass said. Recreating that moment for his clients is one of his objectives as a craftsman.



A. A. El-Kamass

TRR photo by Charlie Buterbaugh

He built the shelves, floors and just about everything in the store.

La Shed Du Fred celebrated its two-year anniversary June 9, and the partners are nearly finished building a bookstore that overlooks the Callicoon Creek Park.

While Weiss has always carried books, the new section of the store will feature **The New York Times'** current bestsellers, a collection of lifestyle books, including texts on home design and cooking, and stationary and watercolor kits.

Visitors will be able to look through books on couches and easy chairs, and complimentary tea will be available.

Gizmo's Place, an entire wing attached to the bookstore, is devoted to children's books. Weiss said she considered each story when she

was making selections. Some of her favorites include books by Vera B. Williams who has a country home in Narrowsburg.

In a gesture of gratitude to the people of Callicoon, Weiss donated 10 percent of the profits she made selling books in May to the Delaware Youth Center, and 10 percent of her gross sales generated during the weekend of the Callicoon Tractor Parade to the Callicoon Fire Department.

She also donates 100 percent of the gross profit earned from selling local author Joe Freda's novel, "The Patience of Rivers," to the Delaware Youth Center.

La Shed Du Fred is located at 39 Lower Main Street. For more information call 845/887-6888.

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### BEACHLAKE VILLAGE CHARMER \$185,000

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# Master Gardener reveals her secrets

By TOM KANE

**L**ynn Elfert has attracted gardeners and potential gardeners from far and wide.

I have visited the garden numerous times over the years, but until now, I never knew her secret.

Why do so many people visit her to swap seeds, take shoots and show off a star rose or two?

Elfert is not just a master gardener. She is a mystic gardener.

"My garden is my church. It's my dreamscape," she said. A woman visitor from the "Course in Miracles," a spiritual development program, told her that she was competing with God with such a beautiful garden.

"I told her, no, I was collaborating with God," Elfert said. "Nature makes the weeds; God makes the flowers."

To Lynn, the garden is a never-ending source of wonder. "Every morning I awake after the first bird song and step into awe and wonder. The forms, the variety, the complexity! And it happens every morning in sun or fog," she said.

Something else happens that may be harder to grasp.

"There's a kind of energy exchange that I experience. I put a great deal of energy into the flowers and plants and they in turn give a greater deal of energy to me."

It took several years for Elfert to become aware of the real energy that was being exchanged.

"It doesn't happen to those who hire a gardener," she said with a chuckle.

She recalled a Persian myth about a group of men looking for water in the desert. They kept digging in many places, but to no avail.

"One man kept digging in the same place over and over. They thought he was mad until he struck water," she said.



Gardener Lynn Elfert contemplates her garden from her "Emily Dickinson room."

TRR photos by Tom Kane

Sitting inside, in her "Emily Dickinson room," with a view of her garden, Elfert sits in contemplation of what she has created and, what's more important, what she will create.

She has little benches throughout the garden itself for additional thought and observation.

"Sitting in your garden is important," she said.

You even have to study it, she added.

"Some plants like dark, others like light, others like wet and still others like dry," she said. "You

have to know what a particular flower likes best."

Plants have certain demands. "When those demands are met, they flourish," she said.

By observation, she learned, for example, that Japanese primroses like it black, dark and wet—not too

much sun.

"What the plant wants is the most important thing you need to know," she said.

Elfert spoke about the mythology of certain plants and their histories.

"Lambs' ears, which is called

Continued on page 19



Elfert finds her garden, which she calls her "church," a source of wonder.

## Advice to the new or inexperienced gardener

"Pick a spot on your property that you can see all the time," she said. "Putting your garden way over there is dumb."

To start, pick plants that aren't fussy.

Plant day lilies, fox gloves, also called digitalis, phlox, dam's rockets, primroses, pulmonaria or lungwort. These make easy beginnings.

"Stick to perennials," she said. "It's nice to plant an annual here and there for color, but my mainstay is perennials."

Get to know soils.

"You need to get a good book that speaks about these things when you're first starting out," she said.

Elfert recommends "Taylor's Guide to Gardening Techniques," published by Houghton Mifflin.

"I think it's still in print."

If you can't find a good book, get to know a good gardener who knows the land around you.

"Don't ask them to design your garden. That's yours to do," she said.

There are books called "bloom charts" that tell when certain flowers bloom.

"I have known people who say, 'after June my garden disappears'. That's their fault. It doesn't have to be that way."

"I rarely buy a plant or seeds," she said. "I visit other gardeners and swap some seeds. I have even visited the garden of a gardener who died before the garden goes to seed. The family usually likes that."

# Building with purpose

By CHARLIE BUTERBAUGH

When Chris DuBois is able to stand back and witness a successful marriage between past and present craftsmanship, he is in his moment of glory.

"An addition shouldn't just be utilitarian. It should fit and stay true to the tradition of the house," DuBois recently said at a construction site in Hancock, NY.

His philosophy might not sound altogether contra-current in the company of most builders, but the Upper Delaware Valley, with its many elder houses in town and country, presents a considerable challenge for someone with DuBois' standard for historical refashioning.

The up-and-coming contractor is currently restoring a large turn-of-the-century home on West Main Street in Hancock, NY and building an addition that will double the width of the original structure. Architect Elizabeth Davidson of Hale Eddy, NY designed the project, and realtor Joseph Klimchok is planning to use the first floor of the finished building as a new office and the second floor as an apartment.

With help from three or four of his hired craftsmen, DuBois will complete all of the work from foundation to trim, recreating historical moldings and adding details that fit the prototype.

DuBois prefers dirtying his own hands to dolling out assignments. Sometimes, when he's planning a

project, his wife, Katie, has to step in and draw the line, curbing DuBois' seemingly endless appetite for perfection.

Katie and Chris both grew up in the river valley. After college, she moved to New York City for work, and he lived in Holland and Switzerland and spent some time in Egypt.

But a few years ago, they decided to start a business and buy a house in Chris' hometown, Equinunk, where as a young teenager he helped his father build the family's home.

In the house he now owns, DuBois built cherry kitchen cabinets, uncovered and restored the wide-plank floors, and matched new hardwood columns, window trim and wainscoting with the original elements of the house.

One of his first projects as a professional craftsman involved completing the interior and exterior of an addition on Kurt and Gardie Muller's riverfront home in Equinunk (pictured above). Indistinguishable in form and style from the original building, the addition is a fine example of DuBois' ability to marry old and new forms.

With major renovations in Damascus Township and a new home at Summerset Lake under his belt, DuBois wants mainly to contract addition projects.

Yet he's also making strides on another local front. He recently bought 96 acres just a few miles southwest of



TRR photo by Charlie Buterbaugh

DuBois completed interior and exterior work on an addition to Kurt and Gardie Muller's riverfront home in Equinunk. The addition begins to the right of the high gable.

Equinunk, where he plans to build homes that complement the natural landscape.

Surprised?

In addition to the lengthy stone-walls that once divided the property, the land is loaded with fieldstone, piled neatly by early farmers. DuBois plans to use the piled stones to build two-story houses, also designed by Davidson, who has worked full time in the region for about eight years.

Modeled from the studio Davidson built by the railroad between Hancock and Deposit, NY, the four-wall stone houses will be reasonably sized and efficient.

"Every corner is designed to save space, yet the building feels very spacious," Davidson said.

"Chris is going to bring progressive trends of building into this area. These aren't builder-type homes. They're homes that fit the area," she said.

Working against the drive to make top dollar on land development by

dividing and packing homes densely into the landscape could only come from conviction.

"When I build houses, I want to keep the land beautiful," DuBois said.

Without a doubt, his building style would fall under the obvious trendy label, "building green," but the phrase fails to describe DuBois' work adequately.

He plans to take natural, scenic and historic areas of the parcel and separate them from the land intended for sale and development.

And to content his love for early builders who constructed homes with purpose, he plans to implement a unique, efficient method of tilt-up wall construction, which involves lifting massive stone walls—that are built on a flat surface—into place.

To contact Chris DuBois call 570/224-2713. Elizabeth Davidson Architect can be reached at 607/467-4626.



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# Master Gardener reveals her secret

Continued from page 17

Stachys Byzantium, is a healing plant and was used in one of our wars—perhaps it was the Revolution or the Civil War—as a styptic to stem the flow of blood,” she said. “The army carried it and would place it on a bleeding wound.”

So, some plants were cultivated for a reason other than beauty.

By design, Lynn arranges to have a profusion of color every two weeks.

“You can have flowers and plants in bloom all through the summer if you plan it right,” she said.



## Deer watch

Elfert has some experienced advice about deer.

“I lay out chicken wire flat on the ground surrounding my garden,” she said. “For some reason the deer don’t like to put their hoofs on it. They get stuck in the holes and

they move away quickly. It works.”

Deer don’t like to eat anything gray, she said.

“They dislike artemesia, lichtis coronaria, lamb’s ears, digitalis, monk’s hood, yarrows and castor beans.”

A garden is a constant source of wonder—even in the winter when you plan for next year.

“Gardening never ends,” Elfert said.



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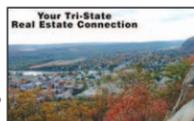
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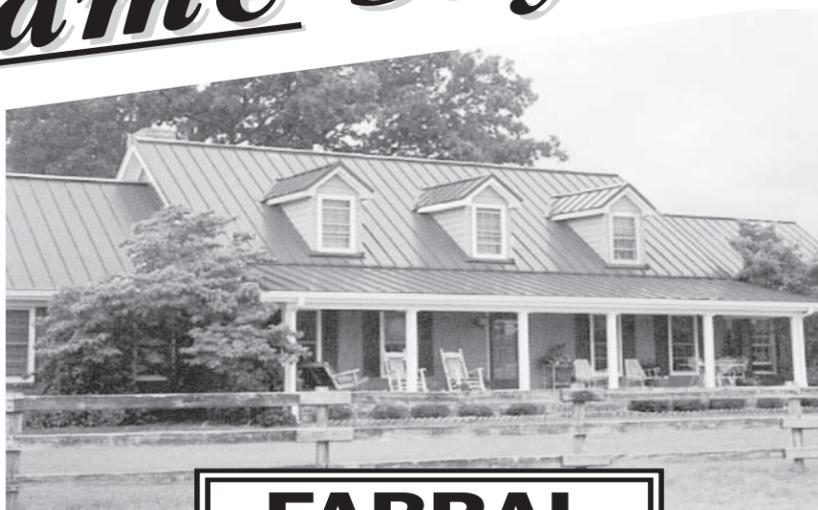
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# Put on a new coat

By MARCIA NEHEMIAH

**N**othing changes or refreshes a room like a coat of paint. Whether you are painting a room for the first time or renewing it, the basis for any decorating scheme is the paint you choose for your walls.

## Choosing paint

Color and finish are two important considerations when it comes to choosing paint.

Don't be afraid to try bright colors. Rather than playing it safe with beige and white, experiment by buying a quart of paint in a bold color and painting a section of a wall (with two coats).

Live with the color for a few days, looking at it in different light. You might consider painting one wall of a room a different color from the others. Some hardware and paint stores have pamphlets of paint chips grouped in complementary shades to help you make decisions.

Paint comes in four different finishes, from flat (no shine) to high gloss. I prefer satin for walls, which is recommended for high traffic areas like children's rooms, bathrooms and kitchens because it is easily washable and more durable than eggshell finish. I like it because of its sheen.

Trim is painted in high gloss or semi-gloss paint, usually in a color that complements the walls.

Last, you need to decide if you want to use latex or oil-based paint (see sidebar). I use latex simply because it is the easiest to clean up.

## Supplies

Of course you need brushes and rollers to apply the paint. I have an array of synthetic and natural bristle brushes for edging and woodwork and foam brushes for touch up. Buy a sturdy roller tray rather than a disposable one. Disposable trays are flimsy and hard to maneuver when they are full.



Marcia interrupted her edging and feathering for this photo op.

Nowadays, you can purchase a myriad of applicators to help make the paint job neat and easy: edgers, gizmos that help paint in corners, two-inch rollers for ledges or sills, devices to place between the window and the trim so that you don't get paint on the window.

You must have one or more drop cloths depending on the size of the room you will paint. I use old sheets for drop cloths.

## Getting down to business

- Remove electric plates. Place all screws in a plastic bag to prevent loss.
- Use removable (usually blue) "safety" masking tape around moldings, doors and windows.
- Sand or scrape loose and flaky paint with sandpaper and paint scrapers, exposing bare surfaces if

necessary.

- Using a putty knife, fill all nail and screw holes with spackling compound; fill cracks with caulk.
- Dust and vacuum the walls if you are applying paint over existing paint. In the kitchen, use a trisodium-phosphate (or TSP) solution to remove grease and grime.
- Remove small items from the room and move large pieces of furniture to the center. Protect everything with drop cloths.

- Make sure to aim strong lights wherever you are working.
- Good ventilation is essential. Open lots of windows and doors.
- Wear old clothes and a hat, especially if you are using oil-based paints.
- Have plenty of rags handy to catch drips. Wet latex paint drips on a smooth surface can be wiped away with a damp rag.

Continued on page 23



TRR photos by Pat Carullo

Marcia Nehemiah chose the color for her study because of its calming affect.

## Paints

Interior paints are sold in various formulations: oil-, alkyd- or latex-based.

Flat paints usually have an alkyd base that thins with turpentine or mineral spirits, or a latex base that thins with water.

Alkyd flat paints hide better with one coat than will comparable latex flats, but brushes and other tools must be washed with turpentine or a similar solvent.

Latex paints seldom require a primer. Compared to oil-based paints, the advantages of latex paints are:

- Less odor
- Water cleanup
- Nonflammable
- Rapid drying
- Easy touchup
- Easy application
- No yellowing
- Less likely to crack and peel

Oil-based paints consist of a pigment in a vehicle made up of resins and thinners. When thinners evaporate, the resins form a hard coating while the pigment forms the color.

Major advantages of oil-based paint are:

- Better penetration of the surface
- Better adhesion
- Better durability
- Smoother finish with fewer brush or roller marks

The disadvantages of oil-based paints include odor, cleanup with solvents or thinners and longer drying time.

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## Put on a new coat

Continued from page 25

### You're finally ready to paint

Use a stain-blocking primer to cover any dark marks you can't remove (stains, knots, ink, dark paint); otherwise, that area will bleed through. Always use primer on patched and unpainted surfaces; raw surfaces suck up paint like a sponge.

Paint a room from top to bottom, starting with the ceiling, then the walls, and finally the trim. Start by edging where the ceiling meets the wall and vice versa. Then fill in the corners and edge around the windows and doors, wherever a paint roller won't fit. Feather (thin out) all edges as you go; this will also help reduce ridges.

Pour a small amount of paint into the roller pan. My father taught me to make five or six nail holes around the rim of the paint can; that way, when you pour the paint, it drips back into the can rather than down the sides.

Roll out paint in the form of a W about three feet wide and then fill it in, ending with up and down strokes of your roller.

Two coats will be essential to get the true color. Apply the second coat after the first coat is thoroughly dry. Follow the drying time on the back of the paint can.

### Clean up

If you use anything other than water-based latex paint, never put paint-soaked or cleaner-soaked tools or rags in an enclosed area of any kind, even a trashcan with a lid. This is a recipe for spontaneous combustion.

Paint can be highly toxic to the environment. It harms fish and wildlife and contaminates the food chain if poured down a storm drain. It can

also pollute groundwater if dumped on the ground. Pouring excess paint down the drain disrupts microbes and causes sewage treatment to be less effective and more costly. If thrown into the trash, it can contaminate other recyclable materials, thus wasting valuable resources.

In some states, it is illegal to dispose of paint in the trash or down storm drains or sewer drains. Check

with your state's environmental protection agency.

To clean latex paints, soak used brushes and rollers in a pail of soapy water. Then rinse them thoroughly until all the paint is gone. The first two rinses of applicators must be collected and treated as hazardous waste. Shake out excess water on the brushes, dry them with an old towel and hang to completely dry.



### Shopping list

- Primer
- Paint rollers
- Paint roller pans
- Light-grit sandpaper
- Ladders
- Paintbrushes
- Household rags
- Drop cloths
- Interior paints

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# Roses are worth the effort

By DAVID HULSE



rowing roses is at once one of the most rewarding and frustrating things you can do in your yard.

The "Queen of Flowers" can delight you if you tend to its year-round demands, or it can abandon you in a New York minute if you don't.

On a dreary, early spring day about 37 years ago, a photograph of a beautiful, yellow, bi-color hybrid tea rose on a cardboard box in a supermarket caught my eye. In the box was a dormant rose bush, whose glossy green canes were guaranteed to "bloom this season."

To make a long story short, it did bloom that season...once, and then it died.

I might have gone about my business at that point, chalking up the effort to experience, but that didn't work for me for a couple of reasons.

First, my dad, who loved to grow annual flowers, zinnias to be specific, too quickly laughed off my amateurish effort.

"You can't grow roses here," he said with a dismissive wave of his hand.

That pretty much was a catalyst for the second reason, which is that I am admittedly stubborn by nature.

Dad's dismissal prompted me to do some research. I found that my first effort was probably doomed by the location where I'd planted

the bush, a spot that only got a few hours of morning sun, and by the fact that the plant's glossy green canes were pretty much dried out under all that wax, having sprouted and lost most of its new buds before I bought it.

Books and magazines then provided a good deal of information about cultivation. Roses need lots of sun, water, fertilizer and air circulation.

The single most important part of starting a rose garden is selecting the site. You need to have a place that gets at least a half-day of sun, is well drained, and is open to summer breezes but not overwhelmed by winter winds.

Roses are subject to variety of insect and animal pests. Their blooms, leaves, stems, and juices are on the preferred menu for almost every pest nature provides, so don't pick a place that provides comfortable cover for wildlife. If you live in the forest, you will need fencing.

Roses are heavy feeders which do better separated from other plantings. They will tolerate nearby trees and some shade, but good air circulation is vital as roses are also subject to a variety of plant diseases that multiply in stale, damp air.

Plan for winter protection, too. Extended zero-degree weather and wind will kill unprotected hybrid roses. Pick a garden site that has



TRR photos by David Hulse

Heritage is an "old-fashioned" styled hybrid.

some windbreak on the northern and western sides and be prepared to provide some winter insulation for your hybrid roses.

Next, you need to decide what kind of roses you want to grow. There are many kinds, but we're talking about hybrids, which include:

- hybrid tea roses, the classical long-stemmed varieties that usually grow two to three feet in height.
- floribundas, which are usually lower growing and provide more blooms on shorter stems.
- grandifloras, which as the name implies, are taller and more vigorous variations of hybrid teas.

• miniatures, which do well in box and pot plantings.

There are also climbing hybrid tea roses, but they are a problem locally as they flower on canes from the previous year, and it is difficult to protect those canes from winter weather.

In these parts, hardier shrub roses, which are often used for landscaping and hedges, are often used where more tender climbers won't survive.

The safest and easiest way to buy roses is to buy plants in either disposable or plantable pots. Bare rooted roses are cheaper and often

Continued on page 27

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## Roses are worth the effort

Continued from page 25

good quality but require more care in planting.

Good potted roses vary in price from about \$8 to \$25 each, depending on the quality and the merchant's volume. When you select them, always look for robust looking plants with three or four heavy canes. These are usually graded as "number one quality." Plants with lighter canes will often do well but may take several seasons to produce with the same vigor.

Look for plants that are on our seasonal schedule. In the early spring, they should still look largely dormant, perhaps with red or yellow buds swelling on the green canes. Plants that have dead or dried new growth have expended a lot of their strength. Later in the season, you can buy plants that are leafed-out, but they require more care in planting.

Follow the directions on the package when you plant. Dig a hole slightly larger and deeper than the pot, and if it's a removable pot, take care to disturb the roots as little as possible when you remove the plant.

When you plant, make sure the bud union, the knob at the end of the rootstock, is several inches below ground for frost protection. New plantings need thorough watering and daily watering until the plant is established. After that, water thoroughly once or twice a week in dry

weather. Water in the morning if possible and at the soil level as wet leaves can quickly develop disease.

In my garden, the primary nemesis is a fungus called black spot, which prompts the plants' glossy green leaves to develop black spots and fall. The fungus appears with over-watering or prolonged damp or rainy weather. It spreads like wildfire and can defoliate a rose garden in a matter of weeks.

Many products promise to "control" black spot, but I have not found one that truly does. The best advice is to use a preventative fungicide/insecticide spray (there are effective environmentally friendly ones available) regularly and remove any infected leaves you find.

There are many choices for fertilizing, from fresh manure to processed fertilizer. My choice is a good water-soluble mix designed for roses. Several good ones are available at any good garden store. These often have garden hose applicators, but I prefer the old garden sprinkler can with the sprinkler head removed. This provides the most precision in the application.

For more help, the American Rose Society and other sites on the Internet provide advice and suggestions. Cornell Cooperative Extension of Sullivan County can also put you in touch with a local Master Gardener, who can help with questions.



Christian Dior is one my favorite red hybrid tea roses.



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