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Summer 2006

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**Ref 5161: \$185K** 2 Acres, 3bedroom, 2bath, open floor plan, stone fireplace, super kitchen, long views, family/summer room, full basement, elevated deck, close to Delaware River.



## Ref 2682: \$429,900

20 Acres, gorgeous custom chalet, 2-3bedroom, 2bath, sunroom, 2-decks, screened porch, family room, huge garage w/full storage, horse barn, sheds, paddocks, trails, fields!



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## Ref 5143: \$269,500

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# Our Country Home

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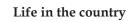
### **Featured Home** Sullivan County treasures

Tony Coscia and Barry Becker renovated and decorated their country home and guest house with treasures from the Sullivan *County area.* 



## Decorate your country home **Outer space**

Blur the division between indoors and outdoors during the summer months. This column takes you on a journey that will help you decorate any of your country home spaces.



## Off to the market we go

Regional farmers markets provide an array of locally grown produce and crafts.



### Cooking with... Farmers market finds

No one needs to spend much time in the kitchen to serve up delicious summer meals.

## Simply entertaining

area's outdoor concert venues.

A tisket, a tasket, the perfect picnic basket Fill a picnic basket with delicacies and head off to one of the

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## **Country crafting**

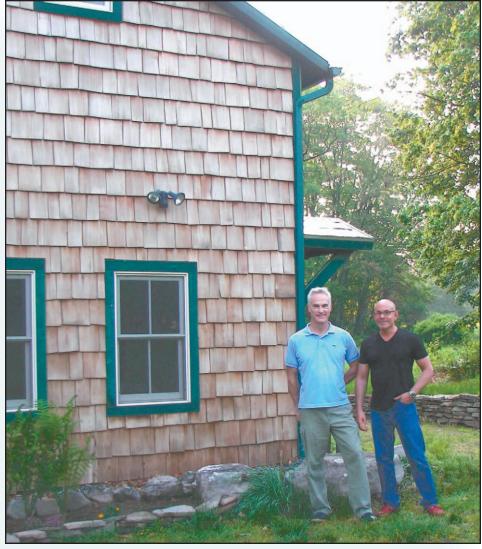
You made it If you can hold a paintbrush, you can make decorative ceramic objects for your home.

# The country garden

Gardening in a changing climate Recent summers have been hot and arid. How can you adapt your garden to these conditions?

Home improvement **Backyard paradise** Create a naturescape of water and stone.

The Art of Living



TRR photo by Marcia Nehemiah

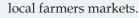
Barry Becker and Tony Coscia stand in front of the renovated barn. All the stone around the property comes from renovation excavations

# Go play outside!

t's finally here. Warm weather and long days in the great outdoors. This issue of **Our Country Home** will help you enjoy all that summer has to offer.

In July and August, your porch is the place you'll find yourself even more than in your living room or kitchen. Porches are for relaxing, eating, reading, bird-watching. This issue's Decorating column will give you ideas on how to make your indoors spaces flow seamlessly

outdoors. Neighbors and friends get together more in the summer months, and of



While you're entertaining those week-long guests, consider exposing them to the art of the area by traveling Wayne and Sullivan

> counties to visit artists' studios.

Water is tantalizing on a hot summer day. The Home Improvement column is a primer on installing a waterscape on your property. On the other hand, gardening in hot weather poses a challenge, but the Country Garden column has an

interesting solution.

Celebrate art with self-guided tours of artists' studios Local artists open their studio doors and welcome guests during

the 11th Catskill Artists' Studio Tour and the Wayne County Arts Alliance Open Studio Tour 4.



### Renovating

### You have the floor

If you're thinking of renovating your kitchen or bath, you'll be surprised at the many eco-friendly flooring options now available.

On the cover: All materials and furnishings for Tony Coscia and Barry Becker's circa 1910 farmhouse are indigenous to Sullivan County. The furnishings in the dining room were bought in local antique shops, house sales and auctions.

course, visitors can't resist a trip to the country. This issue's Entertaining column offers tips on packing a picnic basket with delicacies purchased at

So mix up a tall glass of lemonade, take this issue of **Our Country** Home out to the porch or the hammock, relax and enjoy.

# We want your home

If you have a unique country home and would like to see it featured in this special section, call 845-252-7414 or e-mail copyeditor@riverreporter.com.

Marcia Nehemiah

Section Editor

The River Reporter

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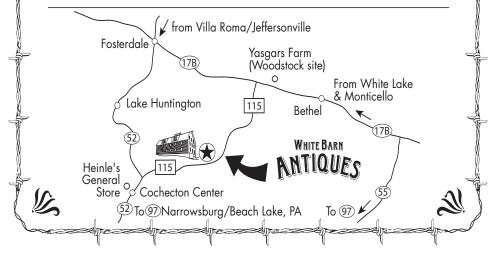


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# **New Construction**

# Renovations

# Excavating



Quality to Remember

# Sullivan County treasures

By MARCIA NEHEMIAH

Ithough Barry Becker and Tony Coscia have traveled extensively collecting artwork, antique furniture and decorative objects, when it came to furnishing their country home, they acquired their treasures from Sullivan County.

They achieved a design aesthetic in their country home that is also reflected in their Narrowsburg, NY store, The River Gallery, by focusing on the elements of wood, stone, water and fire.

Before they could get down to decorating, however, they had to do some major renovations to the circa 1910 farmhouse. Sheet rock was taken down from the walls to reveal bead board. They matched and enhanced molding. They sanded grey paint off the floors to reveal fir board. Exposed, sparking wires signaled the need to replace the electric system. Plumbing was updated. And that was just in the main house.

The eight-acre property, which was once a farm, also had an old barn that looked like a guest house to Tony and Barry.

"Everybody was shocked that we even attempted to revive it," Barry said of the barn, which had to be lifted off the ground while a new foundation was built and a French drain installed.

In the guest house pine flooring with square nails was used for the floor, and wood salvaged from barns in Sullivan County for the staircase, beams and window frames.



The small table in the dining room of the main house can be extended to seat 20 people. Original, built-in cabinets with copper hardware are deep enough to accommodate storage.

Now, friends relax in the warm living room and kitchen area that cows and chickens once called home. A hayloft door has been transformed into a picture window in the master bedroom. To capitalize on the view of fields and woods, Barry and Tony added a room they call the "sun room," where guests curl up on a fluffy daybed and watch the sun set, or at night, view the stars through a telescope in the corner. The room features stained glass windows from an old church in Liberty.

The design evolved as they were working. "We designed it together," said Tony. "We didn't use an archi-



Windows in unexpected places in the guest house bring the natural setting indoors.

tect. Everybody told us, 'You should tear it down. You're crazy,' and now demolition work and painting, taking an active part wherever possible in



Tony and Barry found these burgundy marble bases in Sullivan County and turned them into lamps that grace the circa 1880 red cherry chest in the guest house master bedroom.

they're saying, 'You were right. It's beautiful.'" The guest house has been finished for two years, and a sampler on the living room wall sums up the ambience of the space: "Cheerful company shortens the miles." Tony said of the guests who stay in the renovated barn: "They come and they don't want to leave."

Barry and Tony did all the stone work around the property using reclaimed foundation stones to build walls, create a hearth and fire wall in the main house and veneer the barn's new foundation. They did all the the renovation process.

The primary goal was to "keep it natural so that you feel you are outside when you are inside," said Barry, and to make sure everything was of the period and region.

To keep the architecture as authentic as possible and to unify all three structures on the grounds, an embossed tin roof, to match the roof of the main house, had to be shipped from Atlanta. The main house will be shingled to match the barn and the garage.

Continued on page 9

### The River Reporter





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Reclaimed wood from old Sullivan County barns was used for the window frames, staircase and flooring the the guest house.





# Sullivan County treasures

Barry and Tony have lived in the main house for five years. "The house reminds me of an American version of a little Tuscan villa with its split level and pitched roof of embossed tin," said Barry. They do have plans for it, however.

In addition to shingling the house to match the barn and garage, all the windows of original wavy glass need to be replaced some are cracked. And, said Tony, "We're planning on extending the kitchen" and creating their own "sun room" in the main house on the second story.

"There's a lot we can still do to the yard," said Tony, to create garden spaces. They have planted flowering pear, walnut and apple trees by the road and plan to build a stone fence and plant wild roses to twine along it.

The couple also have a home in New York City but, said Tony, "We're up here as much as we can be. It's nice to be part of something. You kind of get lost in the city. Here we can really sit down and smell the flowers and watch the chipmunks play and the wild turkey and the groundhogs. Everything's here – fox, quail – everything runs through here. It's just a grand piece of property."

A wooden Zen goddess enjoys the view from her perch on the second-story landing of the main house.

TRR photos by Marcia Nehemiah The recently restored guest house and garage face the main house on Tony Coscia and Barry Becker's country retreat.

The River Reporter



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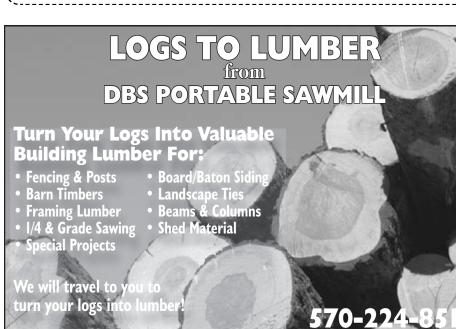
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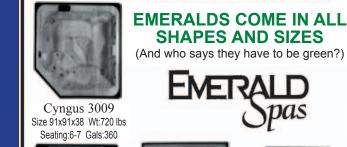
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The River Reporter



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> Model Open Monday, Tuesday and Friday 10 to 4, Saturday 10 to 3, and alternate days by appointment.

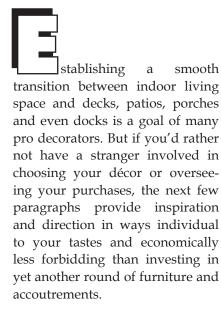




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# **Outer space**

By JENNIFER O'REILLY



### Step outside

The heart of the challenge for outdoor decorating is one of space perception. In design, the concept of space is often ill-applied. Most people, pro decorators included, do not dare embrace space; they simply yield to its immensity. By contrast, in the Orient space is revered as living substance connecting all things. The Japanese word for it is "ma." A typical Japanese garden balances carefully chosen statuary, stone, water, wind chimes, plantings and lanterns. These objects serve space and reflect earth's elements without creating visual clutter. In the following hour-long exercise, you will gain the ability to see space, define your environment, and then reflect it and yourself in the décor of your outdoor space.

### Breathe in, breathe out

Clear the largest table you own. You will be gathering items from around your home and evaluating them outside, figuratively and literally. Also grab a pad and writing utensil. If your outdoor space is furnished, good. If not, grab a pillow or a comfortable chair.

Seat yourself as close to the center of the outdoor space as possible. Inhale deeply, exhale slowly; fully, gently close your eyes. Relax. Let everything go; concerns and preconceptions about how this area now looks or should look. Absorb your environment. Start with sound—what do you hear, the buzz of a motor, a blaring car stereo on a nearby road? Drill down to the next level—what do you desire to hear? Birds, the flow or gurgle of water, wind in the leaves, grasses stirring? Open your eyes and make notes about what you heard through at least five minutes of focused listening. What did you want or expect to hear that you didn't? Make note of that too.

Repeat this task twice, focusing on scent, then feel as your sensory inputs. Where the smells piney, woodsy, grassy, floral? What do you want to smell? Do you feel a stirring breeze or actual wind? Was it damp or dry, did heat radiate from the floor or was it cool to the touch? Again, note your observations.

Close your eyes again, tune back to all you absorbed so far. Now slowly open your eyes. Sit still for 10 to 15 seconds. Imagine a warm, enveloping, fog fills the area around you. Where there are no walls, furnishings, lamps or objects, imagine this fog filling the space. Is light reflected back? What's its source? Is there a corner made dark by your space-defining fog? As your eye travels upward, what would you like to see; soft, glowing or reflected light? Greenery? Color? Record your impressions and any emptiness experienced; what you wanted to see but didn't. This could be a color, a loved print that's hanging elsewhere, a more comfortable chair or chaise, even a paperweight that's been sitting unappreciated for years.

### Let's take a walk

Next, gather your notes and walk into your home-what do you own reminiscent of your observations? Was a scent earthy, citrus, green – do you have a candle, some potpourri that reflects that experience? Is there a lighting fixture or even just a shade (currently relegated to a closet) that conjures the play of the sun off leaves or that would give a soft glow to that fog-revealed dim corner? Take 40 minutes; go through each room finding things to fit your notes. Delve into the recesses of memory for tucked-away objects. Gather them up, weather/temperature-proof or not, put them all on the table.



TRR photos by Jennifer O'Reilly Completely constructed from recycled, weathered picket-fence posts and wrapped with grapevine, this child's chair makes a perfect plant stand or table for a porch corner.



Continued on page 15

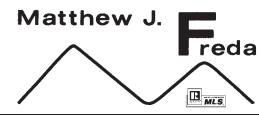
TRR file photo

A porch, invitingly decorated, can become a center of activity in the summer country home.

The River Reporter



Streamfront farmhouse on 37 acres with 2 hay barns and assorted sheds. This nicely renovated house features 4 BR, 2 BA and has a finished attic for studio/office space. Beautiful open fields and woods. \$439,000 MLS # 15829



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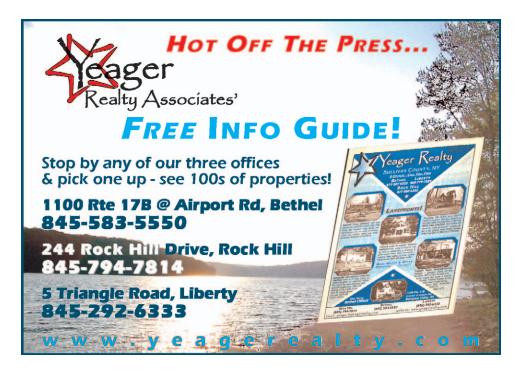
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### steps from area lake! Needs work but worth the effort! \$121,500.



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Wallenpaupack High School, Hawley, PA

The River Reporter

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# Outer space

Continued from page 13

Now, take a 10-minute break. Go outside to your yet-to-be decorated space or on a short walk to cleanse your sensory palette and separate thought processes from things collected. Allow yourself to be distracted, engrossed, at ease again in what you see, hear and smell. No notes this time though.

### Putting it all together

Now you are ready to sort and unify. Since all the things on the table are yours, presumably you liked them enough to acquire and keep them. If you feel tired of them, okay, but let's see if they will pick up new life if used differently. As Anne Hart, of Domesticities and The Cutting Garden



Birdsong is integral to the summer landscape. Bring the sound to your space with a birdhouse. This one, on display at Domesticities in Youngsville, NY, is six inches tall and crafted from branch sections, twigs and recycled roof shingles and barnboard.



in Youngsville, NY, (845/295-0207) said: "There's already so much furniture, so many things made, of real wood, or even plastics or metals that can be reused in creative, out-of-theordinary ways." Hart's shops feature refurbished, recycled, reconstituted items for use indoors and out. Her shop, as well as The Rustic Cottage in Jeffersonville, NY, (845/482-4123) and White Barn Antiques in Cochecton Center, NY, (845/252-7533) are bountiful hosts of inspiration for converting dull or empty space into individualistic, integrated décor.

Now, back to your table treasures. Does a color scheme stand out; do some item's hues blend or contrast pleasingly? Color coordinate and determine which items match . Set 'almosts' and clashing items aside. These can be repainted, re-shaded or even replaced with color-correct versions. Sort through your items again separating styles and time periods. Divide dissonant items from harmonious combinations. Where style might be off, function or feel may be on.

Finally, practicality must win out; sort your treasures into what can and cannot survive outdoors. Don't be alarmed by what's removed; take good notes to guide future shopping sprees. Now take your objects outside. Set them around your outdoor area; determine what fits from what simply looks silly.

Through this exercise, outdoors truly becomes an extension of your overall living space. This 'outerspace' provides for the coupling of your unique tastes and interests with birdsong, breeze and the freshness of the out of doors.

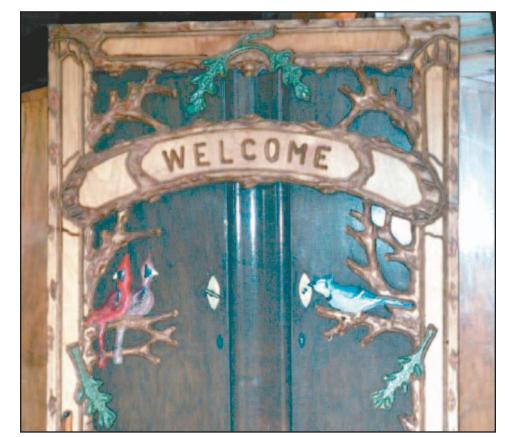
## Where you're standing

When a beautifully decorated outdoor area still feels as though it's missing something, it is generally a rug that pulls everything together. In fact, the most overlooked item, both for function and décor, is floor covering. Rugs stabilize temperature and reduce glare, both of which enhance the experience of an outdoor extended living area.



TRR photos by Jennifer O'Reilly

From the Judy Boisson Collection, this one-of-a-kind custom-dyed, cut and woven rug will add color to an outdoor space. The authentic Amish rocking chair from Lancaster, PA and throw pillows designed and handcrafted by The Rustic Cottage proprietor Colleen Barber compose an inviting spot for relaxation.



Place an arrangement of objects, such as these at Domesticities in Youngsville, NY, in your outdoor space. A ladder-stool by local artisan Funky Sally, fragrant boxes created from orange peel and cinnamon bark, a recycled bottle-glass paperweight and a wrenhouse made from recycled copper and barnboard combine color and scent to fill a porch or patio.

### 0

### A trend toward re-use

Research for this topic revealed a vibrant trend for decorative re-use of virtually any type object. While good, sturdy seating and tables anchor an outdoor living area, there is no requirement for new, other than personal preference. Metal furnishings are "really hot sellers," said Cheri Brasseale of White Barn Antiques, "whether they are '50s circa or traditional wrought iron." Weatherproof cushions, available in every hue imaginable, soften even the hottest, hardest seat.

A welcoming entrance custom fits handpainted and hand-carved wood sections over a reclaimed screen door at The Rustic Cottage in Jeffersonville, NY.

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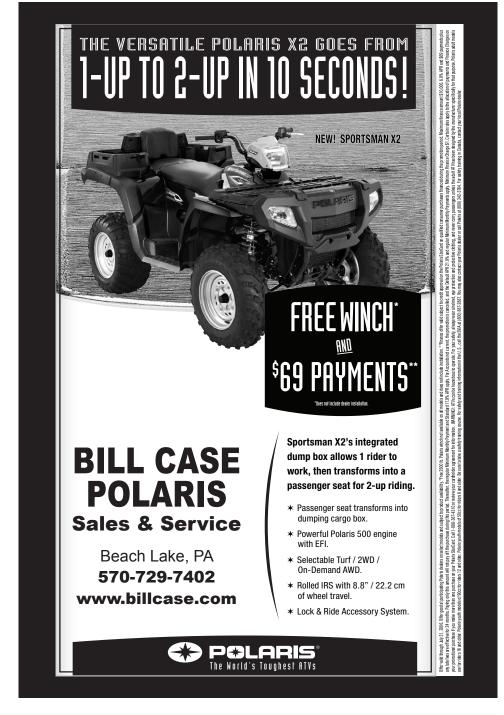
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# Off to the market we go

By MARY GREENE

t's a beautiful summer weekend, and you are preparing a picnic for a rafting trip on the river. Or you're planning an intimate dinner party on the porch. Or you need lots of meals for the company that is visiting from Ohio. Or you just want some good, healthy, summery food around for you and your cat.

The region's farmers markets provide a stunning array of fruit, vegetables, herbs, bedding plants, potted plants, meat, dairy and specialty items: all local, all in season and all fresh. The market is a destination in itself. As you carry your roomy cloth bags from booth to booth, you are outside under the sky, taking in the smells and sights of the season. You watch the parade of colorful people and visit with neighbors. And you have the opportunity to speak directly to the person who produced your food, forging a connection that cannot be had in a supermarket aisle.



## All about choice

Choices at the farmers markets range from all-organic vegetables to free-range beef, locally produced cheeses, farm-fresh eggs and handcrafted soaps. Sullivan County markets commit to displaying products of farms and craftspeople within a hundred miles, to embody the saying, "Think global, shop local."

Most prominent at the markets is farm produce. For all-organic veggies, Lucky Dog Farm is a relative newcomer, beginning its second season at the Callicoon market. Holley White and her husband Richard began the farm in 2000 after moving upstate from Brooklyn. They are based in Hamden, NY where they have a store and a small café. They farm organically to avoid "using herbicides or pesticides which can harm the environment and the people who eat our food," said Holley.

There is always a line in front of Sunset View Farms, where Chris Harmon stands at the ready by his coolers. Chris and his wife raise or procure organic beef, veal, chicken and rabbit, and they also have eggs. Once you've tried this meat, grown and slaughtered humanely, you will never want to taste anything else. Some prepared meats, such as rosemary chicken, can also be purchased here.

A perfect accompaniment to your meal might be goat cheese or a cucumber salad made with fresh yogurt, purchased from Tonjes Dairy Farm. Tonjes is a second-generation dairy farm in Cochecton, NY that began to market their cheese in 2003. "We began with mozzarella," said Mary Tonjes, and they now offer yogurt, buttermilk and a good selection of fresh and aged cheese. You can also find Tonjes dairy products in Peck's markets, at The Good Earth in Ieffersonville and Nature's Grace in Honesdale, PA. Suppose you are not in the mood to

do a lot of cooking. Try a delectable smoked salmon and leek quiche from Pika's booth—"when it has to be special, yet easy." Pika has a wide variety of seasonal quiches as well as appetizers, soups, oven dishes, sweet tarts and a bucket of fresh, fat-free salsa that will turn ordinary burritos into something to rave about.



Red or white? Important choices are made at the Brotherhood Winery at the farmers market.

with Fred Price, who is happy to chat about his products (and other matters of the day). Fred and his wife have a B & B and mushroom farm in Jeffersonville, and they prepare a variety of appetizers and finger foods that will delight your eye and taste buds.

When you have found the perfect meal, don't forget to stop at the Brotherhood Winery for a bottle of Seyval Blanc, New York Chablis or Gingseng Red to compliment the food. Brotherhood, based in Washingtonville, is part of the great wine tradition of the Hudson Valley.

### A shifting palette

In addition to farmers selling what the earth produces, the craftspeople at the market will catch your eye at every turn, featuring homemade soaps, woodworking, pottery and lots of unusual tchochkes perfect for gift giving or keepsakes.

You can also purchase home-harvested maple syrup and jams.

Observing what's available at the markets will keep you in touch with the flow of the season. In spring, you will find bedding plants, greens and maybe some new turnips. At high summer, you will find beans, beets, zucchini, onions, ripe fat tomatoes, potatoes and the first of the corn. As the season winds down, the colors shift from green to orange as pumpkins and winter squash come into view. All of it is satisfying and wonderful, and can grace your dinner table, picnic or simply your imagination with possibilities of what's in store for the plate and the palate.

# Area farm markets

In Sullivan County... (All area codes are 845.)

**Barryville Farmers Market** Route 97 (behind River Market) 754-0790 Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Callicoon Farmers Market** 

Callicoon Creek Park 292-6180, ext. 115 Sundays, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Jeffersonville Farmers Market Main Street 292-6180, ext. 115 Thursdays, 2 to 6 p.m.

## Kauneonga Lake Farmers

Market Route 55, Firemen's Pavilion 583-4939 Fridays, 2 to 6:30 p.m.

**Liberty Farmers Market** Darbee Lane, Municipal Lot 292-6180, ext. 115 Fridays, 3 to 6 p.m.

**Port Jervis Market** Front Street Municipal Lot Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. 856-6694

TRR photo by Mary Greene A customer soaks in the philosophy (and beautiful foliage) in abundance at one of the area farmers markets.

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**Roscoe Farmers Market** Steward Avenue Sundays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m 292-6180

In Pennsylvania... Wayne Farmers Market Outside Visitors Center, Honesdale 570/729-0401 Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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# — COOKING WITH... — ...FARMERS MARKETS FINDS

# Simply delicious

By MARCIA NEHEMIAH

ummer is an inspiring time both for the experienced cook and the novice. Not only are vegetables, fruits and herbs at their freshest and most plentiful, it is the perfect time for outdoor dining – whether on the family porch, at a picnic table in a park or at a local entertainment venue.

And because the bounty of the earth is so tasty, keep the preparation simple to avoid masking any flavors. Take a trip to the farmers market with some of these easy recipe ideas in mind.

### As easy as 1-2-3

Arrange leaves of radicchio, Boston lettuce or endive on a platter. Lay a circle of fresh goat cheese on each leaf. Sprinkle with chopped walnut halves. Drizzle with a mixture of 3 T of walnut oil, 1 T of red wine vinegar, a crushed clove of garlic and salt and pepper.

Another simple and refreshing salad can be made with slices of fennel bulb topped with shaved Parmesan cheese, extra virgin olive oil and freshly squeezed lemon juice. Garnish with fennel fronds, lots of freshly grated pepper and black olives.

What is more perfect than a tomato fresh from the garden, thinskinned and warm from the sun? Eat it plain and enjoy its intense tomato flavor, or make it fancy by arranging tomato slices on a plate topped with slices of fresh mozarella, salt and basil leaves. Add a drizzle of olive oil and balsamic vinegar if you'd like.

Of course nothing says summer more than corn on the cob. Drop freshly picked, shucked corn into a pot of boiling water just long enough to heat it through. Or wrap the corn, husk and all, in aluminum foil and grill it over red-hot coals.

Nothing could be more simple than kebabs—for vegetarians, place zucchini chunks; whole mushrooms; slices of red, yellow and green peppers; and cherry tomatoes on a skewer. Brush with extra virgin olive oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper and grill until the veggies are soft. For the meat eaters, add chunks of marinated steak or shrimp.

And don't forget fresh fruit, so delicious that it needs very little dressing up. Make a simple fruit salad of cutup fresh fruit and berries garnished with fresh mint. Add a touch of Grand Marnier or peach schnapps, if desired, and mix until the fruit is coated.

Here are two slightly more involved recipes contributed by area farmers market venders who suggested that cooks use ingredients locally grown and harvested.





Summer produce calls for simple, quick cooking to retain flavor and crispness.

# Green Beans with Tomatoes and Basil

-supplied by Lucky Dog Farm

- 1 to 1½ lbs. green beans, cooked (you can also use yellow or purple beans)
- 1 garlic clove
- 1 small onion, thinly sliced
- 1 T olive oil
- 2 tomatoes, peeled, seeded and
- coarsely chopped 1 T chopped fresh basil or 1 tsp.
- dried basil
- 1 T chopped parsley or 1 tsp. dried parsley
- salt and pepper to taste

Cut beans into 1-inch lengths and set aside. Sauté garlic and onion in skillet until soft. Add tomatoes, salt and pepper and cook 2 minutes. Stir in basil and green beans. Cover, reduce heat to low and simmer 3 minutes. Remove from heat, stir in parsley and serve immediately.

## Zucchini Boats with Ricotta-Basil Mousse

-supplied by Mary Tonjes of Tonjes Dairy Farm, from **Cooking Light** magazine

You can use the cheese stuffing with any bell peppers, mushroom caps, baby eggplant or tomatoes. Use the scooped-out pulp for risotto or pasta sauce.

6 small zucchini (about 1½

- pounds) Cooking spray
- 1 cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves, finely chopped
- 1 cup homemade ricotta cheese
- <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> cup loosely packed fresh flat-
- leaf parsley leaves, finely chopped
- <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cup grated fresh Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
- 2 T hot water
- 1 T fresh lemon juice
- ¼ tsp. salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp. freshly ground pepper
- Parsley sprigs (optional)

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Cut

Before you visit the kitchen, visit an area farmers market for the freshest locally grown produce. each zucchini in half lengthwise; scoop out pulp, leaving a ¼-inchthick shell. Arrange zucchini shells in a single layer in a 13 x 9-inch baking dish coated with cooking spray.

Combine basil and next seven ingredients, stirring well with whisk. Divide mixture evenly among shells, pressing gently.

Bake at 450 degrees for 20 minutes or until zucchini is tender. Garnish with parsley, if desired.

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# A tisket, a tasket, the perfect picnic basket

By EMILY BACCHIOCCHI

Summer is the perfect time for a picnic. The beautiful weather and warm breezes, combined with great foods and a comfortable picnic area, make for a relaxing experience.

Getting the picnic basket is the easy part. They are now available in almost any supermarket or kitchen-supply store. Packing the basket requires care. Certain foods can spoil in the summer sun. Other foods can become mushy or runny if exposed to prolonged heat.

For a simple, spur-of-themoment picnic, start with a good loaf of bread and some cold cuts. Add fresh seasonal fruits and a bag of chips or peanuts to make an easy and tasty meal. Local supermarkets have prepared salads and fruit cups for those on the run.

To quench the thirst that is sure to come in the hot summer weather, be sure to pack beverages. Bring plenty of water; the summer sun can be hot and you'll need to drink a lot of non-alcoholic and caffeine-free liquids. Red wines do not need to be refrigerated prior to drinking which makes them ideal for a picnic. Lighter wines such as zinfandels pair nicely with the lighter fare that one would serve at a picnic.

## A catered affair

Whether there are just two of you or you're picnicking with a crowd, if you want a great picnic but don't want to spend time in the hot kitchen, you no longer have to pack your own basket. Many places can prepare the food for you.

Jill's Kitchen in Narrowsburg, NY (845/252-3043) sells foods that will keep at room temperature such as chicken satay with Thai peanut sauce, avocado and tomato wraps, roasted corn and pepper salad in a lime vinaigrette, Moroccan chick pea salad and one of Jill's giant oatmeal raisin or peanut butter cookies (even though they're not so light).

Culinary Institute-trained chef Peter Grillo said, "You can do almost anything with a picnic, from salmon to London broil. But, if you don't have ice, you're really limited to items that won't turn."

Suzanne Crum Catering of Honesdale (570/253-6273) recommends a menu of southern-fried cornmeal-crusted fried chicken, an orzo salad with sesame dressing, honeydew melon salad with a honey-lime sauce, scalloped tomatoes served with garlic toast, and for dessert, their own bluebarb pie, made with blueberries and rhubarb. Ken Crum, co-owner of the business, suggested this menu because "These items need

no heat source and don't spoil."

He recommended that you stay away from chocolate, beef, fish and potatoes when picnicking. "Potatoes are prone to bacteria growth," he said.

So pack your basket to the brim with good foods and enjoy. A picnic should not be a stressful meal. Instead, it should be fun and flavorful.

## Where to picnic and enjoy music

You can really enjoy the outdoors and food anywhere. How about a picnic lunch going down the mighty Delaware River on a raft or kayak? You can picnic along public access points on both the New York and Pennsylvania sides.

Not only is our area immensely beautiful, it is also filled with summertime non-stop musical entertainment. At a lot of these musical venues, visitors are invited to bring their picnic baskets because there is no concession available.

The Wildflower Music Festival (570/253-5500) in White Mills, PA is just one of those places. The concerts take place on the grounds of the picturesque Dorflinger-Suydam Wildlife Sanctuary. Attendees can relax to the sounds of various musical styles and enjoy their baskets filled with TLC. In 2006, Wildflower offers picnic lunches

for purchase, but don't hesitate to bring your own.

In the center of beautiful downtown Honesdale is its famous Central Park. The well-shaded park is home to many benches, a center fountain and a playground for the children. Most importantly, this summer, like every summer for the past 39 years, the park is filled with free music thanks to the Summer Festival of Events sponsored by the Wayne County Creative Arts Alliance. The park is the perfect place to listen to bluegrass fiddlers, jazz and barbershop quartet singers while enjoying a picnic under one of the many maple trees. The concerts, every Monday and Thursday at 7: 30 p.m., are free, but a good-will offering is taken during the shows. Contact Mae Figura, 570/253-3855.

The Callicoon Center Band (845/ 482-4245) takes to the bandstand at 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday evenings throughout the summer. The quintessential country event features rousing band music like marches, waltzes and polkas along with picnic dinners.

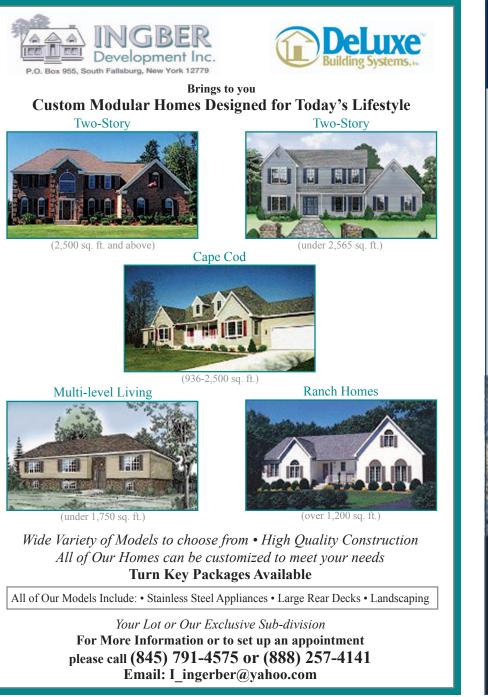
The combination of delicious food and live music is sheer heaven. How lucky we are to be able to enjoy them at great picnic spots in our area.



TRR file photoi

The perfect picnic basket should be filled with all your favorites. However, you must consider your food choices by how much summer sun they can endure.

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TRR photos by Marcia Nehemiah Heart boxes make a perfect gift or bedroom decoration.



Made from green ware, the bottom spike of this plant waterer is not glazed, allowing moisture to seep into the soil of the plant.



African violets thrive in these two-piece pots which allow the roots to receive water from the bottom.

# You made it

By MARCIA NEHEMIAH

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et your hands messy with paint and glaze. Add your own personal touch to your home and garden. Enter the world of ceramics.

Pearl Gain of Catskill Country Ceramics, on Route 52 just outside of Jeffersonville, NY, is an expert when it comes to creating ceramic decorative objects. She has been in business for 13 years and runs a full-service ceramics shop, offering classes, giftware and supplies.

## Pour it

The process of creating a ceramic piece has many steps.

First, a liquid clay called "slip" is poured into a two-piece mold. The piece sits for between four hours and overnight to allow the water in the "slip" to be absorbed into the walls of the mold, creating a shell or hollow shape after the excess slip is poured out of the mold. Then the mold is split and the piece removed. The resulting shell or shape is called "leather ware."

After it has been removed from the mold, the piece takes about three days to completely dry. At this point, the seams of the mold are sanded down and other imperfections removed. Once the leather ware dries, it is called greenware, but it is actually a very light brown-grey color.

At this point, the greenware can be decorated with underglaze and fired in a kiln. Once fired, greenware turns pure white and is called bisque or bisqueware.

## Decorate it

To give a piece color, special ceramic paint is applied. Pieces which are to be all white are "clear glazed" so that the color of the bisque is maintained. If the piece is decorated with an underglaze, it will require a glaze coating on top of the underglaze and fired again. The bisque piece can also be finished or decorated with unfired stains. Different glazes give different looks. In Gain's shop, the customer can choose from over 2000 molds. Because it is the messy part of the job, Gain does the pouring. When the piece is ready, the customer does the glazing and painting. Gain guides each patron in the process, if necessary. "If they say I'm a beginner, I stay with them. I don't leave the room," she said. Gain's greenware and bisque range in price from 50 cents to 20 dollars or more. Her shop has a full supply of stains, glazes, underglazes. Students



Shelves in Catskill Country Ceramics in Jeffersonville, NY are filled with unpainted figurines that customers can purchase and paint to match their home's décor.

can purchase all their supplies and use them on future projects, or they can use the shop's underglazes and glazes for a flat hourly rate. Use of shop brushes and cleaning supplies is free, Gain explained. Classes are two dollars for a two-hour session, not including supplies. The first class is free.

### No experience necessary

many pieces for use on the summer porch or in the garden. Customers can make a plant waterer shaped like a frog or a two-piece violet pot that allows the plant to absorb water from the bottom.

Gain also has an assortment of "garden buddies" – turtles, butterflies, bumblebees brightly painted and standing on sticks that can be

Even though the process has many steps, a patron can leave Gain's shop with a decorative object of which she can boast, "I made that!"

"The easiest and most popular thing that people start with is the Christmas tree. All you're doing is putting the glaze on. The only skill you need is being fussy enough not to put too much glaze on," said Gain. Beginners can choose a simple glaze that won't show brush strokes.

If it's still too early to worry about December, Gain's inventory includes

secured in the soil so that the critter will peek out of a garden.

There are also numerous projects for the home or for gift-giving, including vases, boxes for dressers, plates, candy dishes, piggy banks, candlesticks and a candle shade. A customer can even make her own teapot, sugar and creamer.

For more information about Catskill Country Ceramics, call 845/482-3651 or catskilcntry@aol.com.

The River Reporter



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# Gardening in a changing climate

By ROSEMARY MANDEVILLE

here's been a lot of discussion in the last few years about global warming and changing weather patterns. Last year, England, the land of mists and drizzle, experienced its hottest summer ever. Many areas in this country have been experiencing higher than normal temperatures and drought conditions leading to water restrictions.

Under these unpredictable conditions, what's a gardener to do? Do we forget about flowers and pave over our landscapes? Perish the thought! We may, however, need to rethink our ideas about what an appropriate planting may be besides the traditional English cottage garden or the grassy swards typical of suburban subdivisions, and seek out more drought tolerant ways to garden that puts less pressure on our limited resources.

If we choose to prepare our gardens for drought, when it comes our landscapes will continue to look great, while other gardens dry up and go dormant, at best. In a year with adequate rainfall, our gardens will still look great. And either way, there will be less maintenance.

In the 1980s the word "xeriscape" was coined to describe this type of gardening (xeros is Greek for dry). The concept was developed in the more arid areas of the Midwest, but the principles make sense in any area. Converting the garden to be more water-wise does not mean starting over from scratch. Just making a few small changes can make a big difference.

### Begin with the soil

As with any other type of gardening, xeriscaping begins with the soil, and matching the best plants to the existing soil conditions. A good loamy soil with lots of organic matter (peat moss, compost, etc.) mixed in will do the best job of holding onto any water that becomes available, but there are also a great selection of plants that prefer the sharper drainage of sandier soil, like herbs, heathers and alpine (rock garden) plants. It's probably best in the long run to choose plants that best suit the soil type instead of trying to amend the soil to suit the chosen plant.

moisture from evaporating. Although I usually think of shredded bark or wood chips when I think of mulch, in hot dry areas, a stone mulch may look more appropriate, especially with thyme, lavender or other Mediterranean-type plants, which may rot when surrounded by wood mulch.

### Instead of grass

Reducing the lawn area saves time, effort and water. On dry slopes that are difficult to maintain, plant drought tolerant daylilies or creeping junipers. Instead of grass, plant more areas of ground covers that are suited to the existing conditions. Eliminate narrow strips of turf and other awkward areas. Not only are they difficult to maintain with grass, but they can look so much better planted with things that relish the less than perfect conditions. In those areas in which a lawn is preferred, a lawn of chamomile is drought tolerant, fragrant, step-able and mow-able.

Group plants according to their water needs. Place the plants needing the most frequent water nearest to the house or other water source to make life easier. The more drought tolerant plants can go further away where they will flourish with little care. Grouping plants in this way insures that no plant gets more or less water than is necessary for good growth.



Daylilies, a drought-tolerant plant, will grow well on dry slopes.

TRR file photo

In areas where you must water, do so only when absolutely necessary with soaker hoses under the mulch if possible. This will reduce evaporation and allow the water to slowly soak in instead of running off to other areas. Water deeply when you do, to develop deep root systems that are more able to fend for themselves between watering.

Eliminating excessive watering will reduce lush, soft, plant growth, which

will reduce the need for fertilizer and make plants less attractive to pests, thereby reducing the need for pesticides.

When we learn to work with our existing conditions instead of pretending that we live in an area of mists and drizzle, we can have a beautiful, colorful garden that is easier to maintain and better for the planet than one being grown with extensive life-support.



Regardless of what type of soil you have, good mulch is a must. Mulch will cool the soil and keep

TRR photo by Rosemary Mandeville

Higher than normal temperatures and lower than normal precipitation this summer may require "xeriscaping" your garden.

The River Reporter



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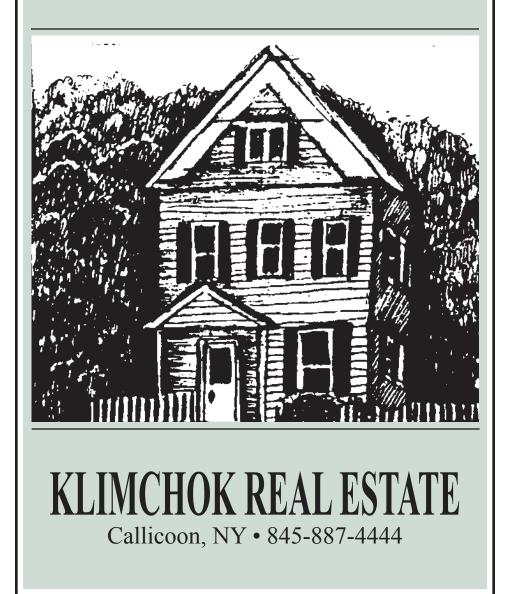
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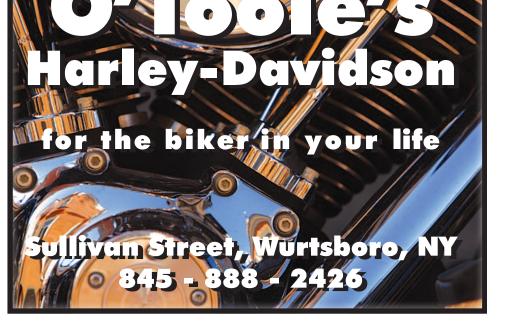
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# Backyard paradise

By JENNIFER O'REILLY

he source of our enchantment with water flows from our basic instinct to survive. Thousands of years ago, people settled on the fertile banks of rivers, lakes and streams to avail themselves of life-giving water. Canals and ponds allowed developing societies to channel water and transform inhospitable landscapes. While necessity was the mother of invention, as people beautified these channels and pools, water's functionality naturally broadened. This precious resource became a significant spiritual and symbolic link shared across religions and cultures.

The blistering sands of historic Isfahan, which is now Iran, host ruins of the remaining example of man's earliest installed water gardens, Pairidaeza. Created by Cyrus the Great, founder of the Persian Empire in 546 B.C, waterscaping continued to evolve through Persia's fall to Alexander the Great and subsequent Roman then Muslim invasions. These spectacular sites, verdant with fauna and foliage in the midst of the desert, invoked images of the Koran's paradise garden and powerful symbols of fortune and life itself.

Over hundreds of years, as Muslims and Genghis Khan's Moghuls tore across the continent conquering ancient Europe, the practice of water gardening was transformed from formal, symmetrical design to the familiar informal 'naturescapes' of today. As we seek to create our own slice of backyard bliss by adding a landscaped water feature, it is easy to understand why Pairidaeza came to be the root of the English word, paradise.

### Planning and installation

Installing a pond is a two-stage process. The first stage, pre-construction, consists of planning and making decisions so that all the elements in your vision of the pond merge. The second stage, construction, is exactly that—the actual physical excavation and installation of supporting materials and aesthetic details that will comprise your real-life water garden. An explanation of costs, risks and benefits of various placements will help define the most suitable location, your first pre-construction decision. Jason Maciejewski, of Maciejewski Landscaping in Damascus, PA, (570/224-6405) stressed professional consultations with a plumber and an electrician. Maciejewski installs ornamental pools and ponds of all sizes as well as functional livestock waterholes. He said that secure, insulated connections for both water and power are of utmost priority for all ponds.

Brandon Flynn, of Flynn's Naturescapes in Starlight, PA (570/635-5000) said that regardless of your desire for various features-fountains, waterfalls and lighting – or your preference for still or flowing water, you will need to circulate, filter and supply fresh water to maintain a healthy, attractive pond. Though you may use solar-powered decorative features and pumps for water circulation, filtering and oxygenating require electricity. Obviously, the longer the distance to channel and insulate between source and outlet, the more significant your cost and risk. Since water supply lines must run below the frostline and electric lines are safest installed above the water table, it is easy to see how the factors of water and power play such a dominant role in location.

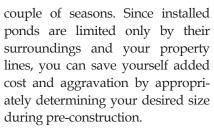
Additionally, application and proximity of structural and natural elements play vital roles in deciding where your pond goes. Floating plants and other water foliage struggle in windswept ponds. Water-table depth several feet below the pond's base prevents the bottom from ballooning upward from force exerted by ground water. Your location should also host a balance of sun and shade from



Creating a water-and-stone naturescape is an ancient tradition that can be updated for a modern setting.

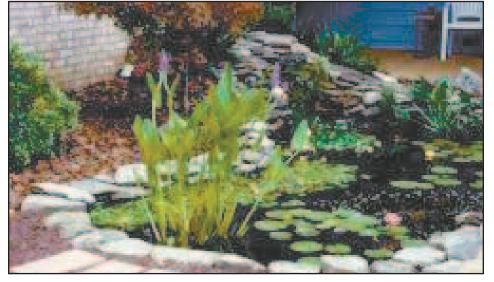
peripheral structures and/or trees that will not compromise the pond with excess debris or root intrusion.

In pre-construction, equal time should be spent between sketching and laying out the design and defining desired and necessary materials. Smaller ponds require more maintenance than medium to large ponds. Fundamentally, ponds are microenvironments. The smaller quantity of water in an environment, the more, not less, impacted it is by temperature, plant and animal byproducts. Both Maciejewski and Flynn recounted installations that started small and progressed into much larger projects. Flynn added that many customers so loved the small waterscapes he built, they requested expansions within a



This necessarily brings to the forefront preferred shape and size of your pond. After your electric and plumbing consultation(s) determine distance and resource routing feasibilities, use garden hoses to simulate different pond shapes in varying sizes. Place a filled child's pool in the heart of your design. Allow each sample design to sit for a day to settle in and provide you time to observe the impact of the sun's passage across the sky.

Important observations include: do you get horizon, reflection or glare as a visual effect? Does the pond's surface get the minimum 4 to 6 hours of direct sunlight necessary to maintain healthy plant life and stable temperature? Does the scale of the project fit with its sur roundings? Photograph or sketch each design and make notes about your preferences. Now you are at the demarcation point, and perhaps the most important individual decision to be made. Given the scope and size of the project, will you contract help or excavate/install on your own?



Naturescapes draw on an ancient tradition of beautifying outdoor areas with water gardens.

Continued on page 31

The River Reporter

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# – HOME IMPROVEMENT –

# **Backyard paradise**

Continued from page 29

## DYI or pro?

If you hire pros such as Maciejewski or Flynn, they will work a budget to include all the mechanical contraptions and materials needed. If you want to do your own installation, there are hundreds of resources to guide you through the process. Your design photos will help you approximate the shape you preferred if you use a prefab pond shell. Shells can allow for reduced installation time but come in limited sizes and shapes, and there is no opportunity for the fine-tuning free-form liners permit. Most professionals prefer liners for large jobs because they allow for the inevitable adjustments needed once 'the dig' is underway. Either of these containment methods are readily available through retailers, catalogers and online.

Many items, like pump size and quantity, depend on the pond's size and your desired level of aesthetic enrichment, but the supplies you will require include water containment method such as a liner or prefab shell; water circulation features such as waterfalls, sprays or bubblers; heavy debris handling; pond edge treatment; liner under/over bottom treatments; lighting; and plant and fish selection.

Both Maciejewski and Flynn estimated a soup-to-nuts installation including a standard selection of plants and fish for a medium size, 10-foot by 14-foot pond, three to four feet deep, to run \$4,000 to \$5,000. One of Maciejewski's largest projects involved a 10-foot by 15-foot pond, six feet deep. Flynn's largest scale pond was a 38-foot by 52-foot pond, four feet deep. Both said costs for projects this size are less affected by excavation than by special features and quantity of required materials.

The last of the pre-construction decisions focuses on the type and quantity of materials used to secure and decorate your pond's banks. Grass can be planted or the banks can be overlaid with rocks, woodchips, stone of any type or sand; the choices are virtually endless.



This waterscape uses plantings, stone and water to create an overall visual effect.

### Dig in

You are now ready to commence digging. Trite as this may be, there is simply no way to predict every obstacle in the construction phase. Be prepared; there will be several onthe-spot adjustments as you progress from groundbreaking to compacting the base, laying in bottom treatment

then finally the liner or shell. Before you add water, be sure to read up on how to establish an appropriate in-pond environment for plants and fish. Understanding and maintaining suitable good bacteria growth is an important aspect of maintaining a healthy pond.







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Publication date: July 13, 2006

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# Celebrate art with self-guided tours of artists' studios

By NANCY DYMOND

magine the fun of interacting with artists as you observe a potter crafting a bowl from a lump of clay, hear a woodturner describe the qualities of different woods as he turns a piece on his lathe or experience the whoosh and clang of a metalsmith working with torch and hammer at his anvil.

In Wayne County, PA and Sullivan County, NY, artists are tidying tools, dreaming up displays and preparing to emerge from their creative cocoons for their annual open studio tours. Both the 11th Catskill Artists' Studio (CAS) Tour and the Wayne County Arts Alliance (WCAA) Artists' Open Studio Tour 4 boast a diversity of talent including potters, painters, photographers, print makers, sculptors and more.

Art lovers can navigate their way from studio to studio with a tour map provided by the arts organizations.



# Utilitarian concepts of art add beauty to function

"Every wood turned object I create, be it useful or decorative, can have beauty, elegance and function," said Ted Sokolowski, who will be demonstrating wood turning and metal spinning. His hardwood salt and pepper mills, door knobs, jewelry boxes, bowls and other fine art wood items make great gifts for people who appreciate fine art in crafts that are not mass produced.

Potters and ceramicists on the tours, such as Ellen Silberlicht, Cecily Fortescue and Jill Wiener are remarkably different in their approaches to their art. Silberlicht's focus is sculptural pottery. Fortescue's approach is artistically utilitarian. Her large concave pieces are formed by draping hand-rolled slabs over diverse shapes such as cloth bolts and balloons. Wiener delights in quirky functional objects. Her animal cookie jars convey her whimsical sense of humor.

At Nocera Art Tile Studio in Milanville, Anne and Ed Nocera combine striking art with basic utility to enhance every domestic environment, both indoor and outdoor. Their distinctive collection includes galleryquality glaze paintings on a single large tile, specially framed relief tiles, tile-topped boxes, murals, fountains, tabletops and more. "Our artistic vision is to put emotion into art that has classic beauty," said Anne.

## Deck the halls: Photos, paintings, mixed media and prints

What provides more impact on a room than a wall hanging? View photographer/musician John Rocklin's gallery of musicians and performing artists like B.B. King, Clarence Spady and Mavis Staples. Photographer Kit Jones said that the fascinating shadows and reflections in his fine art photography are a reminder that what we take to be "real" is only an agreed upon interpretation of an agreed upon reality. For a mood of peaceful tranquility, hang one of Jim Morgan's photographs of covered bridges or country scenes.



Jill Weiner creates some of her unique, whimsical pottery at the wheel.

Contributed photos



This table top is made by Anne and Ed Nocera at Nocera Art Tile Studio of Milanville, PA.

feeling that tantalizes the imagination. Another multimedia artist, Erica Hart, presents visionary collages, and William Landau makes bold graphic assemblages that bring image and symbol together in new ways. In Jeffersonville, The Blue Victorian's Greg Brooks whimsical acrylics of "wacky animals, landscapes, and architecture" engage the inner child in adults. Preview Trix Render's show of flower paintings now at Lisa B, 1023 Main St., Honesdale. Abstract expressionist Madelon Jones's paintings and prints are eagerly sought by private and corporate collectors. Recently the National Archives in Washington, D.C. purchased The Printmaking Workshop's permanent collection including Madelon Jones's etchings.

This art object by Nancy Wells is called Earth Spirit.

You won't want to miss multimedia artist Nancy Wells's Big Lizard Woman. Eight feet tall and wrapped like a mummy, it exudes a primal

Continued on page 35

The River Reporter

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# Celebrate art with self-guided tours of artists' studios

Continued from page 33

## Locate wellsprings of creativity and transformation

Because of their proximity to NYC, Wayne and Sullivan Counties have had the good fortune to become home to artists of world renown. "I like experimentation," said noted sculptor Raymond Rocklin, who takes great pleasure in showing his metal, wood and clay sculptures to studio visitors. "I always want to create something that hasn't been seen before," he said. With awards too numerous to mention, Rocklin's works grace galleries in the Chrysler Museum, the Whitney Museum and many private collections.

Can a painting heal or save a life? Ask former art therapist Katie Reinhardt about the power of color. Her Matisse-like bold colors layered on background patterns enliven the senses.

Sculptor Jerry Samson said, "Most people who buy what I do, buy it to give someone a message." Samson's small steel sculptures portraying human dynamics at the moment of change have a profound impact on viewers.

The artists' studio tours provide a delightful way to get to know area artists, and perhaps to purchase that perfect piece to grace your home.



TRR photo by John Rocklin

Visitors to the Wayne County Arts Alliance Artists' Studio Tour will be able to see sculptor Raymond Rocklin at work.





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WCAA Artists' Open Studio Tour 4

Aug. 25-27 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. each day www.waynecountyartsalliance.org wcaa@waynecountyartsalliance.org 570/253-6850

If you're not sure what studios you'd like to visit, stop at the Central Park Gallery, 914 Church St., Honesdale to view a sample piece from each artist on the tour. Volunteers will help you plan your route. Printed brochures with a map and descriptions of the artists are available at the WCAA office on Main Street in Honesdale or you may request that a copy be mailed to you. The brochure can also be downloaded from the Web site. The event is free.

## 11th Annual CAS Catskill Art Society Artists' Open Studio Tour

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\$10 per person. This is a fund raising event. Tickets are available for purchase at any studio, at CAS (265 Main Street, P.O. Box 319, Hurleyville, NY 12747) and at a variety of businesses throughout the area. Tickets are

Contributed photo

Utility meets art in these salt and pepper shakers by Ted Sokolowski.

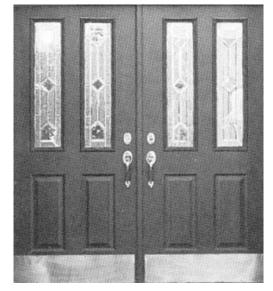
Sculptor Jerry Samson defies the stereotype of the artist as he welds sculptures in his Wayne County studio.

The River Reporter



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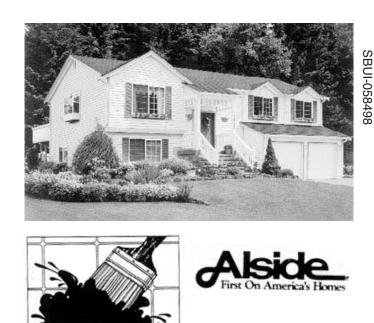


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# You have the floor

By KAITLIN CARNEY

ccording to the National Association of Home Builders, every year forty percent of Americans remodel their homes. In addition, the top two projects are kitchen and bathroom remodeling. The choice of these rooms is understandable: the kitchen is the center of a family home and the bathroom is one of the common rooms. When remodeling, many people start from the bottom and work their way up. In kitchen and bathroom remodeling, the bottom is flooring.

Gone are the days of cookiecutter flooring options for kitchen and bath. These days, consumers can choose from traditional linoleum, ceramic, slate and marble or from the untraditional and environmentally friendly options of cork, bamboo, rubber tile and recycled options. Consumers who once wanted the classic look of hardwood were previously limited to the option of traditional hardwood flooring in woods like oak cherry, maple, ash and beech, with an average price range from three to eight dollars per square foot. Now consumers can select similar wood finish laminates at an average price range of \$1.50 to just over four dollars per square foot.

Homeowners looking to remodel with eco-friendly materials now have many options. These flooring options for kitchen and bath are made from renewable and recyclable resources or waste products from other materials. For example, cork floors are manufactured primarily from the waste product created in wine cork production. Cork is a renewable resource because it is made from the bark of the cork tree that is harvested without harming the tree. Options like bamboo are renewable because bamboo has a three-to-five-year harvestand-growth cycle, unlike the fifty to one hundred years it takes to grow a harvestable hardwood tree. Cork and bamboo, when properly installed and maintained, should last 25-50 years. Companies throughout the United States are able to reach consumers through the Internet and ship various options nationwide. These companies, like Green Floors in Fairfax, VA make tile flooring



If it's time for a new floor, there are endless options including eco-friendly materials.

from recycled rubber tires and carpeting from recycled plastic bottles. Another company, Building Value, LLC, has created a Work Resource Center, located in Cincinnati, OH, which provides jobs and job training for disadvantaged and disabled people and offers recycled materials such as kitchen and bathroom cabinetry and flooring for sale.

## Getting it down

With every flooring option comes a different requirement in price, installation and maintenance. Ecofriendly flooring is more expensive in the initial cost for material and installation. Cork is on average five dollars a square foot and bamboo an average range of four dollars to six dollars per square foot. Cork is not only environmentally correct but also is anti-microbial and resilient, making it a viable option for many homeowners because it will age with the home. The maintenance of a bamboo floor requires it to be swept, and vacuumed. Humidity should be kept at 30-50%, and while bamboo is more resistant to moisture than most woods, it should not be wet mopped. Cork flooring may fade in direct sunlight and can expand or contract with extreme fluctuations in humidity. It should not be wet-mopped.

All flooring should be protected in the kitchen by properly covering the bottoms of furniture and chairs. Bathroom flooring should be protected in high moisture areas (right outside the shower or bathtub) with a throw rug or breathable mat.

Hardwood flooring is susceptible to scratching and should be swept regularly. Also, a vacuum should be used on a bare floor. On hardwood, because it is susceptible to moisture damage, a dust mop should be used and oil soaps should be avoided because the soap residue can build up and affect the sheen of the floor. Instead, you can damp mop a properly finished floor with a neutral pH wood cleaner and some water, wringing about half of the water from the mop before using it on the floor.

Laminate flooring, a more kidand pet-friendly option for people who desire the look of hardwood flooring, has fewer maintenance requirements than hardwood. Laminates should be swept and vacuumed regularly because dirt and grit will act like sandpaper on most flooring surfaces. Laminates can also be damp mopped. Acrylic or wax finishes should not be used.

Hardwood, laminates, cork and bamboo are commonly used in kitchen flooring. Other options for kitchen flooring include slate, linoleum, ceramic, and the untraditional poured concrete floor. These options are also commonly used in bathroom flooring. Ceramic flooring is easy to care for and durable and is rated with an abrasion test from the Porcelain Enamel Institute that is recommended by the American Society of Testing Materials. Generally, a rating of two would be used for a residential bathroom floor. Ceramic tile is in a high price range, but is a durable and eyecatching option.

Sheet vinyl is a cheaper option with very little maintenance required. Slate is alluring because of its naturally occurring imperfections and variations. It is also low maintenance. Both ceramic and slate can be cold to feet, and radiant heating (heat underneath the flooring) allows consumers to enjoy the beauty of ceramic and slate without the early morning shock factor.

A big box store is not your only option to find remodeling assistance and products. Local retailers like Monticello Wood Floors (845/ 791-9930), Catskill Custom Floors (845/482-3988) and Blair Carpet and Floors (845/856-5723) have friendly sales associates and com fortable retail showrooms. Jackie Parkinson at Catskill Custom Floors said that they "carry a little bit of everything" from carpet, hardwood and ceramic to bamboo and cork and that "everything sells." She advised people to pick their flooring based on preference for style and durability and said that there are a number of options at every budget.

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