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Our Country Home

A RIVER REPORTER MAGAZINE

A House with a Past

Historic Skinner House blends the
old with the new

Garden Art

Creating functional, pleasing design
elements for your garden and yard

It Runs in the Family

Hosting a successful family reunion

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Ref# 2668 \$339,000



LOVELY VICTORIAN FARMHOUSE ON 15 ACRES AND POND

Lovely Victorian farmhouse on 15 acres. This property boasts 9 bedroom, 9 bath, a country porch, a patio, a pergola, flowerbeds, a pond, all in a private setting. Potential home business or B&B or country inn.

Ref# 2731 \$590,000



BEAUTIFUL VIEWS AND 8.11 ACRES

A beautiful parcel of mostly open meadow and some woods... A babbling brook along the back and right side of the property. Being a corner lot, it offers access from two country roads. Located only minutes west of the Delaware River!!

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STATELY 1890s VICTORIAN HOME

This stately 1890 Victorian home, has all the original woodwork, doorknobs, and charm, waiting to be brought back to its natural grandeur. This home features 4 bedrooms, 3 baths, a 1st floor laundry room, a huge walk-up attic, a 72 sq ft screened-in porch, updated plumbing & electric, new roof with transferable warranty. The former 2 BR apartment, over the garage, is waiting for a talented handyman. This home has great potential!

REF# 5211 \$159,000



LARGE COUNTRY HOME ON OVER 6 ACRES

This beauty has lots of potential!!! Needs finishing and some remodeling, but listen to this... 5 bedrooms, 3 baths, and a full basement. 3-car attached garage, 100x48 Steel Building with a 24x24 addition, and 2 beautiful ponds!! Nestled at the end of a country lane offering complete privacy. Only minutes to Interstates 380 and 84. This one is a keeper!!

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LOVELY 2-STORY ON 3 PRIVATE ACRES

You'll love this delightful 3 bedroom, 2.5 bath custom designed home nestled on a private setting. The beautifully designed floor-length windows and the beautifully appointed cathedral ceiling in the living room are impressive. Enjoy the cozy fireplace and breakfast area. Come home to gorgeous landscaping with flower beds and dogwood trees on 3 acres and enjoy peace and quiet.

Ref# 2693 \$399,900



DUCK HARBOR DREAM HOME

Nestled in the woods at Duck Harbor, this 4 bedroom, 2.5 bath colonial offers 9' ceilings, center hall foyer, formal rooms, natural cherry stairwell, gunstock H/W floors, all cherry kitchen w/ Corian countertops, upgraded appliances, insulation & foundation w/extra stone & concrete; family room has cherry entertainment center, attic storage, on 6.11 acres, boarders aquatic preserve, also gamelands w/ common private access area, rights to Duck Harbor, private boat slip, gated security, trails, woods, prime location.

Ref# 5222 \$525,000



NEWLY RENOVATED RANCH IN BETHANY

Don't miss your chance to see this beautiful newly renovated ranch home. With 3-4 bedrooms and 3 full baths this home has many exciting features! You will fall in love with the gorgeous hickory hardwood floors in the new kitchen. Relax in the Jacuzzi tub in the master bath. There is a back porch for lounging and a sizable front deck too. Pride in ownership evident in this beauty! The new Beauderas heat system and new roof make this home very desirable.

Ref# 2736 \$199,900



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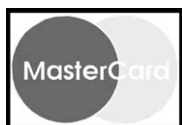
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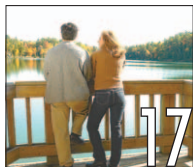
A House with a Past
Historic Skinner House blends the old with the new



Garden Art
Creating functional, pleasing design elements to your garden and yard



Wake-up Call
Simple ways to give the bedroom a whole new look



Room to Move
Adding a porch or deck to your home



Creating Your Own Oasis
Adding hot tubs, pools and beautiful stonework to your back yard



It Runs in the Family
Hosting a successful family reunion



Grill Once, Dine Twice
A smart way to use the grill, and an easy way to enjoy two deliciously different meals



Fruit of the Vine
Growing grapes for jams, juice and wine



Nature Detectives
Creating a nature trail with your children



Smart Moves
Clever tips and savvy strategies for packing, organizing and surviving moving day.



A Homeowner's Checklist
Basic precautions before you leave for vacation



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COVER

The historic Skinner House in Milanville, PA.
TRR photo by Danielle Gaebel

Dear Reader.

"Gardens are a form of autobiography," said Sydney Eddison of **Horticulture** magazine, and in this edition of **Our Country Home**, we invite you to begin your own autobiography in the spring season of warmth and rebirth. This year, it seemed as though spring would never come, but Earth Day did arrive amid sunshine and temperatures in the eighties. People celebrated by planting pansies, turning the soil, cooking a healthy meal and paying diligent attention to the messages our planet earth is sending.

There are many ways to create beauty and sanctuary in your home and in your garden. We offer ideas for upgrading the look of your yard and garden with the addition of trellises, pathways, edging and water features. If you are in the mood for a new adventure, we invite you to plant a grape arbor alongside one of your trellises or garden walls. It's always a good time to bring your children out of doors, away from their ipods, game boys and computers, and teach them the sensual pleasure of creating their own little piece of heaven in the dirt. Folks of my generation lament that children no longer seem to have the knack for playing outside, as we did for hours and hours, inventing our own games and having our own adventures, away from parental eyes. It is a different world these days, with many more dangers, but the yard and the woods are still safe for our children. If you, and they, are so inclined, you could create a nature trail with your children this spring, showing them by your own example enthusiasm for the natural world. All it takes is a bit of imagination and seeing what is already there.

Relaxation is important in these days of stress and hurry, and you may decide this is the year to add a hot tub or a pool to your back yard. Such spots are wonderful for fostering solitary rest or fellowship with friends and family. And, of course, you need a deck or a porch to enjoy the view of your new creations, and nature's beauty, always available to us all.

Everything in life is better when it is shared, and family is precious when it comes to establishing and strengthening connections with loved ones. These days, I think of time spent with family as time invested in the memory bank—all those memories to sustain us in years hence. **Our Country Home** offers ideas on how to plan a family reunion that works for everyone, from the very young to the very old.

At the end of the day, there is nothing more important than the comfort of your bedroom, and we offer ideas to make your bedroom as stylish and interesting as the rest of your abode. This edition of **Our Country Home** also offers tips on how to keep your home safe while you are away, whether for a weekend or a more extended period.

Our region is rich in history, and our featured house this edition was the home of one of our most important settlers, Daniel Skinner, who in the 1800s created the system for carrying hemlock timbers on rafts downstream to Philadelphia, for use in the ship building trade. Skinner's Falls, a popular spot on the Upper Delaware, was named for him, and his original house is perched just north of the falls on a generous green sloping lawn. These days, the house is painted bright yellow and owned by lawyer-turned-poet Sheila Dugan, who has shown her appreciation for her house by maintaining and upgrading its already substantial charm.

We hope you will enjoy the bounty within these pages, and find something new to inspire you.

Mary Greene, Editor
Our Country Home

Mary Greene



Section Editor Mary Greene

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“It was a Skinner woman who first defended her home against invaders.”



TRR photo by Cass Collins

This painting of the historic Skinner House in Milanville, PA was made by Sylvia Wolmuth, who is owner Sheila Dugan's mother-in-law. Wolmuth painted the house on her first visit there in the spring of 1997, when she was 74. The painting shows the back of the house and the large back lawn that slopes down to the Delaware River.

A House with a Past

Historic 'Skinner House' blends the old with the new

By CASS COLLINS

The big yellow house on the Pennsylvania side of the Skinners Falls Bridge that crosses the Delaware into Milanville is tended, this century, by Sheila Dugan, a woman with a welcoming smile that is as sunny and bright as her cheerful home.

Inside, the house has a spacious and up-to-date feel, with lots of comfortable modern touches. The house also harbors a fascinating local history which has been preserved by both current and previous owners.

Built in 1815 for Nathan Skinner, the house was constructed in halves, off-site, near Callicoon, NY, by two carpenters. It was then floated across the Delaware to the Skinner property in Milanville. There, the two carpenters (and first residents of the house), Samuel Hedding and John Ross, built a common roof over the matching halves, with a center chimney and fireplace on each side. At that time, the house had no inside kitchen and outhouses served as bathrooms. Nathan Skinner only lived in the house for a short time before one of his sons, Colonel Calvin Skinner, settled there with his family.

Long before the house was built, the Skinner family had staked its claim to land around Milanville. It was Calvin who named the tiny hamlet after Napoleon's Milan decree, the French general's plan to blockade the British Isles. We can

assume he was no fan of the British.

Calvin's grandfather, Daniel, was the founder of Delaware River rafting. He perfected the skill of running mast-sized hemlock logs down to Philadelphia to sell to the ship-making trade, and the trees around Milanville and much of the region were cut down for this purpose.

But it was a Skinner woman who first defended her home against invaders. In 1867, when a group of envious female neighbors conspired to literally throw Daniel Skinner's wife out of her home with all her belongings in order to make it their own, she and her 13-year-old daughter Phoebe fought them tooth and nail. Finally, the women surrendered, and by the time their husbands returned from business, the wives had made peace with each other, sealing the pact with a meal of dried eels and Johnny cakes at a communal table.

Today, a similar table, eight feet long, occupies the dining room of the Skinner house, now owned by Sheila Dugan. She is often at the head of it, whether to host some portion of her large family (five daughters and five grandchildren) or while offering her spacious digs to the Upper Delaware Writers Collective, of which she is a vital part.

There are two distinct wings to this Delaware Valley manse. One is the historic

original, consisting of a half-dozen low-ceiling rooms mostly furnished with antiques. The other more recent wing, originally called “the garage,” was built around 1966 by a family named Perron. A few years later they added the upstairs. In 1989, the Polands moved in and added a hot tub and bathroom to the new wing. They also constructed the breezeway connecting the two. The breezeway itself is larger than most living rooms, and looks out onto a sprawling lawn, leading down to the river.

The breezeway has several conversation areas, and a pellet stove keeps it cozy. A comfy wicker chaise is the perfect spot to curl up with a kitty and a good book.

The original house, as built in 1815, had no indoor plumbing, nor kitchen. In the 1950s, both were added. The kitchen is a large country-style one that Sheila has updated with new appliances. A small bathroom adjoins it. There is a dining area and living room and three bedrooms upstairs, kept in fresh linens for guests and grandchildren.

Sheila occupies the modern wing of the house. The first floor has a modern bathroom and a guest bedroom. Upstairs, a self-sufficient two-bedroom apartment meets all of Sheila’s needs. This is where the lawyer-turned-poet spends her time when the weather doesn’t allow for gardening.

Sheila and her husband, Roger, bought this house in 1996 as a second home. At the time, the couple lived in an apartment in the East Village and longed for a summer retreat on a lake.

When their realtor suggested a riverfront home, they decided to take a look, and when they did, the deal was sealed. Sheila fell instantly in love with the house. Indeed, she felt as though she belonged there.

Roger was less sure. The house had already attained a place on the Register of Historic Homes, thanks to the efforts of previous owners. A historic home sometimes has historic upkeep associated with it. But Sheila’s ardor prevailed and they both enjoyed their riverfront retreat until Roger’s sudden passing in 2000.

Since then, Sheila has made the Skinner house her primary home. Largely retired from public law, she is an active force in her new community.

Outside, there is a small outbuilding that is a children’s dream cottage. Fruit trees dot the lawn and a fenced-in pond is a favorite summertime retreat. A generous hot tub is situated on a concrete patio outside the modernized wing, overlooking the river and gardens. A former perennial bed has been claimed by Sheila for a vegetable garden.

One has the feeling the “Skinner house” is in good hands this century.



And old postcard, circa 1907, shows the original Skinner House. The back of the postcard reads, “Merry Christmas from Florence” and it is addressed to C. Skinner, Milanville, Wayne County, Pennsylvania. Postage was one cent.



A gateway leads to a small pond on the property.



TRR photos by Cass Collins

A spacious, cheerful breezeway, closed in and renovated in 2006, connects the old and new wings of the Skinner House.



Sheila Dugan’s granddaughter, Caitlin Cooper of New York City, spends a happy afternoon in the backyard. A flourishing flower and vegetable garden is visible in the background.

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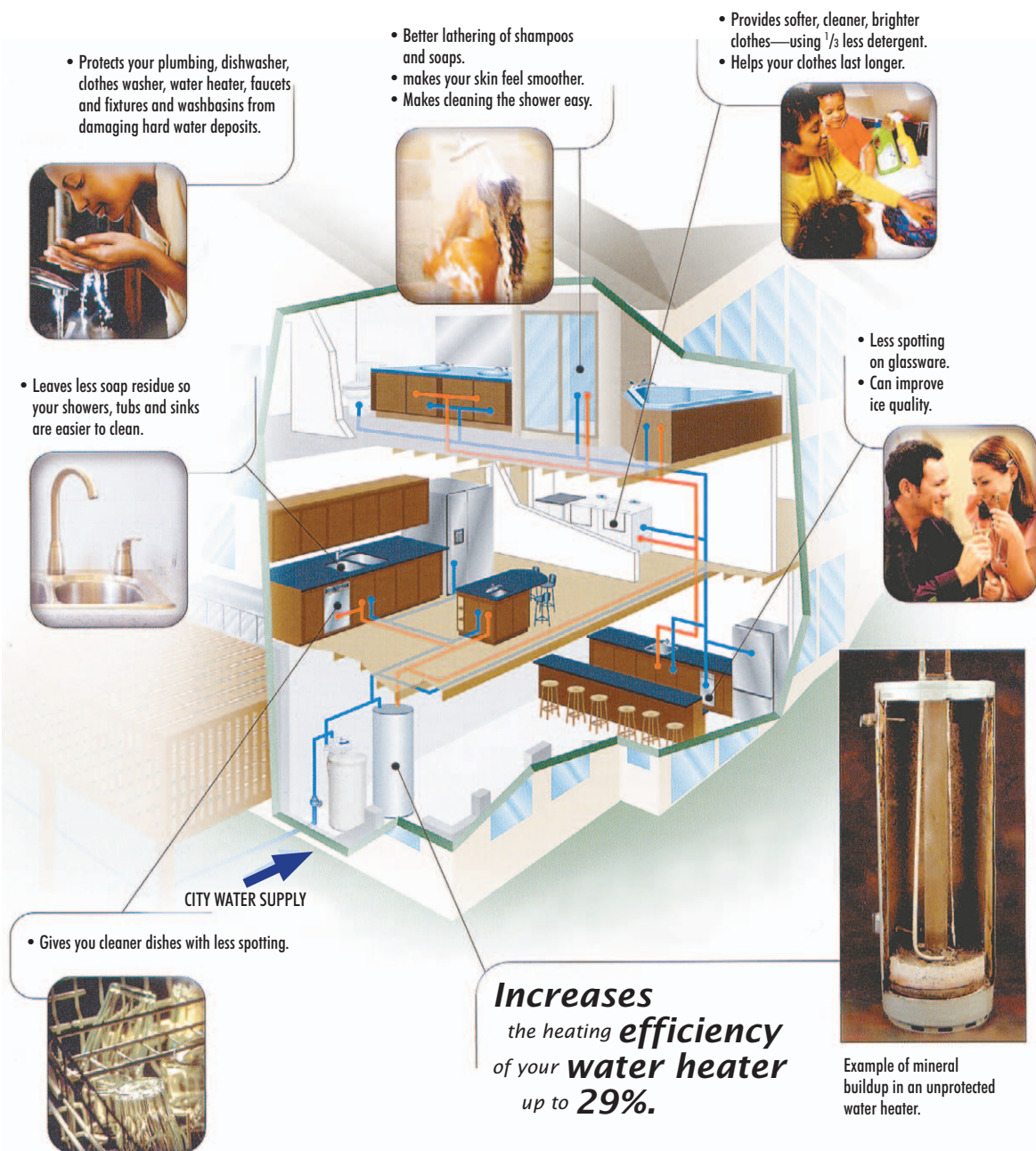
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“The garden pond can become a hobby, just like an indoor aquarium.”



TRR contributed photo

Garden Art

Creating functional, pleasing design elements for your garden and yard

By PAMELA JONES

Last year I visited the Storm King Art Center in Mountainville, NY and was mesmerized by this outdoor sculpture display that “celebrates the relationship of art and nature.” The placement of works of art made of metals and stone against the soft grasses, trees and fields resulted in a magical enhancement, delineating the contrasting beauty of each.

Now, most of us do not have 500 acres of rolling pastures and streams, nor a 50-foot-tall steel sculpture to place in our front yard, but we can certainly employ these design principles on a smaller scale to enhance our outdoor living space, blending varied-textured materials into our gardens for the dual purpose of functionality and aesthetic pleasure.

If you plant flowers, an easy way to start is with a garden path. Garden paths are functional, as they provide an area to work on your garden and also help to contain your gardens and prevent sprawl. It can also be aesthetically pleasing, providing contrast with the flower beds.

You can go very simply with a gravel walkway. If you want to try other materials, flagstone is attractive and low maintenance. Bricks are a classic in the garden. They come in a variety of colors and are fairly easy to install. You could add ornamental stepping stones for variety.

Edging, used either with the paths or alone, can also serve a dual purpose. Decorative cast-iron or wrought iron edging can be functional and attractive. It can add

an old-fashioned appeal, contrasting with the vibrancy of your blooms while helping to keep rocks or other materials from slipping into the garden.

Another garden feature you can add yourself is a trellis. Besides providing support to climbing plants, it serves to lead the eye upward from the garden, perhaps to connect visually with another feature. A trellis can be simple or elaborate. Basically, a trellis is just a grid that can be built in a weekend. If you are using lumber, a good selection would be cedar, redwood or pressure-treated lumber for outdoor use. You may want to seek the advice and selection from a business like Dirlam Lumber in Honesdale, PA, or your neighborhood lumber yard or home and garden store, and browse through their garden selections for ideas. You can use more than

one material, using a wooden frame and stringing wire across it for the grid, attached with screw eyelets, for example. Attractive lattices and trellises can also be made using natural wood from your trees and bushes, although the shelf life of such beauties will not be as long as using treated lumber.

Water features are currently popular additions to the garden. I spoke with Jim Boxberger, president and owner of Monticello Farm & Garden in Monticello, NY. They have been providing supplies and advice for garden ponds since 1991. He said that homeowners can install a garden pond of up to 200 gallons by themselves in one weekend. You can purchase everything you need there, which would include the pre-formed liner, pump, filter and even the fish! He recommends installing your pond between mid- to late-May. The ground is usually too moist in April to get a good start. You will need to dig a hole, place the liner in the hole and fill it with water. The weight of the water will help to settle the liner into place. Install the pump and filter and let the water circulate a day or two before introducing the fish.

The garden pond can become a hobby, just like an indoor aquarium. Although you can feed your outdoor fish, if you go away, the fish will eat bugs, so they will find their food naturally. A garden pond will attract frogs. Birds will use it as a birdbath. You can maintain the pond year-round by adding de-icer for the winter months. This creates a small opening in the surface ice that lets the carbon dioxide escape, while keeping the fish safe below. It will also attract winter birds to huddle around the opening, making use of the available water.

Boxberger advised that using the appropriate pump and filter relative to the dimensions of your pond is key to maintaining a natural balance and removing algae. He warned against buying ready-made garden pond kits, which often come with poor filters and inadequate pumps. He said they get a lot of customers coming in for advice on this type of pond, which often turns into a green swamp of algae after a week or two. Although the algae can be cleared up with chlorine tablets, you would be losing the natural elements of the pond. Any pond chemicals that you use should be mild enough that they will not harm your fish, plants or the wildlife that visit your pond.

Water features can add value to your property. If you think you would like something bigger and more elaborate, you can contact a professional landscaper like Flynn's Naturescapes in Starlight, PA. In addition to walkways, patios and retaining walls, they also specialize in building all-natural waterfalls, water-gardens and koi ponds.

If you don't have the time, energy, inclination or physical ability to work on all of your outdoor areas yourself, you may want to hire a professional landscaper like Flynn's Naturescapes. Another local landscaper is Jason Maciejewski. A two-time winner of the Reader's Choice award, he is the proprietor of Maciejewski Landscaping in Damascus, PA. Maciejewski is a full service landscaper, providing design, materials and construction.

I asked Maciejewski what his guiding philosophies for landscape design were and he answered that he liked to keep things "native and low-maintenance." Pictures on his website, like the dry stone wall and the stone staircase, reveal his vision of harmony with nature. Some other construction projects he offers include cobblestone paths, blue stone walkways, patios and retaining walls. He also installs solar and low-voltage lighting. Maciejewski said that he prefers low-voltage lighting because it is more reliable. If your outdoor lighting is necessary for safety or security, low-voltage is probably the better choice. Any of these features will enhance both the functionality and the aesthetic appeal of your garden. Maciejewski works with a full range of customers, from people who have specific ideas and plans they want to see take shape to those who want to improve their garden, but are not really sure what could be done.

As the weather becomes warmer and the sun and birds beckon us to come outside, it's a good time to turn our attentions to the outdoor extensions of our home. We can work with both nature's designs and artistic designs to turn our yards into pleasing living spaces.



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Cedar chests, which were once placed at the foot of the bed, are a thing of the past. Decorative, upholstered benches are taking their place.



TRR contributed photos

Wake-up Call

Simple ways to give the bedroom a whole new look

By **MARCIA NEHEMIAH**

The bedroom has had a storied history. In the past, kings held court while propped on pillows in their beds. In American one-room cottages, sleeping took place in the same room as cooking, eating and sewing. But as homes grew, the bedroom evolved into a separate room reserved for sleeping. Today people use their bedrooms to meditate, write letters, exercise, watch television and, yes, sleep, too. And the room can take on the personality and style of its occupants.

Technicolor dreamland

Bob Goldberg of Broadway Home in Monticello, NY distinguishes between homes decorated in the city and the Catskills. "You might choose a contemporary streamlined décor for your city bedroom, but in your country home you want a different feeling, more casual and more in synch with the natural environment," said Goldberg. To this end, he recommends decorating in neutral calming colors and medium soft shades rather than jewel tones. "A pleasing palette is soft

yellow or soft pistachio green, tangerine or citrus," he said. He also recommends the use of textures and tones rather than bold prints.

If you are lucky enough to have a large bedroom, large pieces of furniture can make the room more intimate, said Goldberg. "An armoire can add substance to a room. If you watch television in the bedroom and have enough room, provide a seating area."

Goldberg suggests that customers forego the traditional bedroom suite and mix and match furniture instead. Pieces can be individually selected by clients with the help of Goldberg's design sense to bring the whole room together.

Good light

Peggy Harrison of Rasmussen Furniture in Narrowsburg, NY sees trends heading for a more eclectic look, mixing metal, natural wood, painted or stained surfaces. "The biggest trend is in media cabinets and tables," she said. "There

are more options available because of flat-screen televisions. The wood product can be narrower or more open and still accommodate a flat-screen television.”

If you don't have the money or the desire to invest in new furniture, Harrison suggests redecorating around existing pieces of furniture. Small changes can significantly update a bedroom. For instance, Harrison said, “Toile, a popular new fabric, can be used on accent pillows and valances, or even pillowcases.”

Lighting can significantly change the look of a room. Purchase an accent lamp of satin chrome, nickel or bronze, or put a new shade on a lamp you already have. Rather than a traditional silk shade, try a shade of suede, velvet, leather or paper, or a pattern of paisley or giclee art.

“Lighting should be specific to the task you are doing, so you need an overhead light to bring in a lot of light, a bedside lamp for reading, and an accent lamp on the dresser. The key is not to use all the lamps at the same time,” Harrison said, keeping the mood of the bedroom calming and serene.

Mirrors can also make subtle changes to a room. Harrison suggests changing a wood framed mirror for one with a metal or painted frame.

“Another small but dramatic change is to paint the wall behind the bed a contrasting color,” she said. This inexpensive “renovation” can alter the apparent dimensions of a room.

Since second homeowners don't need a lot of storage space, they may not need a dresser or armoire. The trend is to buy one or two pieces and add smaller pieces such as a three-drawer nightstand or bachelors chest later.

The princess and the pea

William Cuttita, owner of Malek Furniture Warehouse in Monticello, NY, sees trends changing in furniture choices for the bedroom. He said his customers are opting to replace five-drawer chests with armoires. Armoires can add closet space in rooms that are lacking built-in closets and they can accommodate televisions, which are becoming more of a staple in the bedroom.

Cuttita also said that customers are choosing darker colors. “Deep cherry and near-black tones are replacing traditional pine and oak finishes,” he said. “Straight-lined furniture is being replaced by furniture with sleeker lines. Intricate designs and curves are being used in place of straight, boxy furniture. Chrome handles and hardware are very popular,” he added.

Another change, Cuttita noted, is that “cedar chests, which were once placed at the foot of the bed, are a thing of the past. Decorative, upholstered benches are taking their place. The ornate bench designs add class and style to bedroom décor.”

Finally, even the all-important bed is being modernized. Customers are increasingly purchasing beds that are lower to the ground, such as platform beds.

“High profile mattresses, such as plush pillow-tops and memory foam mattresses, are just the thing to add a touch of elegance to any bedroom,” said Cuttita.

Stop and smell the roses

Kelly Penford explained the design philosophy at Nest home goods store in Narrowsburg, NY. “We want to combine country with contemporary, mixing in classical elements.” Partner Anna Bern-Penford summarized the trend for spring. “Bring the garden into your room.”

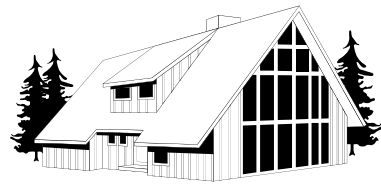
Of course, you want to add fresh-cut flowers and plants to your bedroom. Nest offers other unusual ways to bring botanical scents, such as lemon grass and lavender, into the bedroom.

The store carries an item called a scented bouquet—in this case, the bouquet is a spray of rattan sticks arranged in a gracefully shaped jar, and the water is essential oil from aromatic plants such as verbena, honey, jasmine or orange. The product is made by Durance en Provence, which also makes the heliotrope, vervain and lavender scented candles available at Nest.

The couple is looking forward the delivery of “Leaf Art” prints, one-of-a-kind natural pressed specimens from the 1920s to 1950s framed for hanging.

We tend to associate mosquito netting with climates south of Sullivan County, but anyone who has spent a summer here will welcome Kelly's simple idea. He said, “Because of our experience of living in the country, we put mosquito netting over our bed. It's functional as well as decorative.” Also on their bed at home and available in Nest are “yo-yo” quilts, or, in Brazilian, fuxico quilts. The quilts are constructed by a fair-trade cooperative of women in Brazil of small circles of recycled fabrics sewn together to create one-of-a-kind bedspreads. It takes 2,500 circles to make one quilt. And although many people opt for traditional beds—sleigh beds, four-poster beds, upholstered headboards—Nest's display of a charming wrought iron bed decorated with mosquito netting and a yo-yo quilt creates the inviting picture of relaxation.

Whether you want your bedroom to be spare and modern, romantic and intimate, or cozy and comfortable, it should be a refuge from the world and bring peace to the soul.



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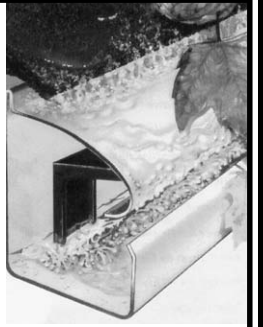
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A deck can transform a backyard into a pleasing focal point.



Room to Move

Adding a porch or deck to your home

By CYNTHIA O. TOLIVER

Installing a cozy front porch or handsome back deck are great ways to increase the value of your most important investment, your home. And they make beautiful additions to the aesthetic quality of your property, especially here in the Upper Delaware Valley region, which abounds with exciting vista points, from the mountains and rivers to wildlife and foliage. If you enjoy working with your hands, and have a weekend to spare, then you are well on your way. These ideal do-it-yourself projects can easily be accomplished, provided you have done your homework! And for the manually challenged, there are plenty of contractors who are just a phone call away, ready to make your vision a reality.

Before beginning any sort of home improvement project, be sure to check for any deed covenants or zone ordinances. There may be limitations on size or types of addition you can construct, and building permits may be required. Have an idea of what you want to do before checking with your town code enforcement officers.

These are some of the key factors one should consider before breaking ground.

What is your motivation for adding on? Do you want a family room that will withstand lots of traffic and activity, or are you looking for a quieter setting where you can read in peace or bird watch with a cup of coffee? Do you truly desire the extra space or are you secretly hoping to increase your return with a quick sale once the project is finished? While a new addition will certainly add value to your home, the resale amount may not reflect the same amount of money (or time) you put into this project.

Are you up to the task for a do-it-yourself project? If words like joist, circular saw or railing post sound like a foreign language, then call in the experts, such as Kurt Construction in Yulan, NY or JMR Construction on the Pennsylvania side of the river. Contractors are always willing to discuss options with you and they bring years of experience to the table. Before meeting with your contractor or deciding to tackle the project yourself, research the subject online, read books, take classes and visit your local lumberyard for ideas. There may be also be deck building kits (if permits allow) at your local lumber yards that will make the project more user friendly. A deck or porch can be used only for recreation, or it can be utilized as extra living space, especially during the warmer months. Do you enjoy watching the deer frolic in the woods? Will you need room for the barbeque grill? Do you like to entertain guests, or is it just for you and your family? A private deck off your bedroom sounds romantic, but if that is the only access, be prepared to stand your ground when guests or family members besiege you with requests to share in the great outdoors.

You and your family and guests should have easy access to and from

your deck or porch. Will they be walking through your living room or your kitchen? Will you need to add an extra door, or steps? Where do you want to place your new addition? Porches are fairly simple, although you have options that include wraparound porches, railings and awnings. The back or side yard may be more challenging. Survey your property carefully and give thought to how much shade or sun you will desire. Southeast or southwest locales provide great sun/shade combinations. Try to avoid windy spots by placing the deck in an area that is protected by the house or some other structure.

Be aware of possible distractions, like busy driveways or traffic noises. Get a stepladder and take the time to sit in different spots, checking for anything that may obstruct your view. Think about future obstructions too. Will that cute little shrub grow up someday to become a towering bush that blocks the view of the river out back? The view from the inside of your home is oftentimes overlooked. That view from inside should be enhanced, not obscured, by your new addition.

A deck can even be used to camouflage an unattractive part of your yard and transform it into a pleasing focal point. For uneven or sloping property, you may want to have several decks, on different levels, perhaps near the pool or fountain. Nosy neighbors? Maybe not, but you may want to allow for blinds or screens for additional privacy when you take your yoga class, or hop into that Jacuzzi.

By the way, size does matter. A huge deck may dwarf your home. A small one may look out of place next to your roomy floor plan. How will your addition fit in with your home's architecture or landscaping? Think about the materials you will use. The trend these days is to incorporate natural materials such as stone, slate, brick and wood, as well as newer synthetic ones. Joe Riccardi of JMR Construction in Shohola, PA says "choice of materials is always a matter of personal preference, but plastic decking is maintenance free" and might be preferred by some because of our harsh winters.

Weather damage is a concern, so weather-resistant materials are a must. Roland Ward, a long-established contractor of South Fallsburg, NY, said that "while roughly 90 percent of decks are made of pressure-treated wood, cedar or redwood decks or porches last twice as long." Cedar and redwood are pricier, but they are well worth the added expense if it can fit into your budget, due to their long-term durability within our harsh weather patterns.

By giving lots of attention to location, planning and design beforehand, you will minimize any future problems that would result from poorly planned or executed home improvement projects. A well placed and constructed deck or porch will not only add value and charm to your residence, it will also provide you with years of enjoyment.

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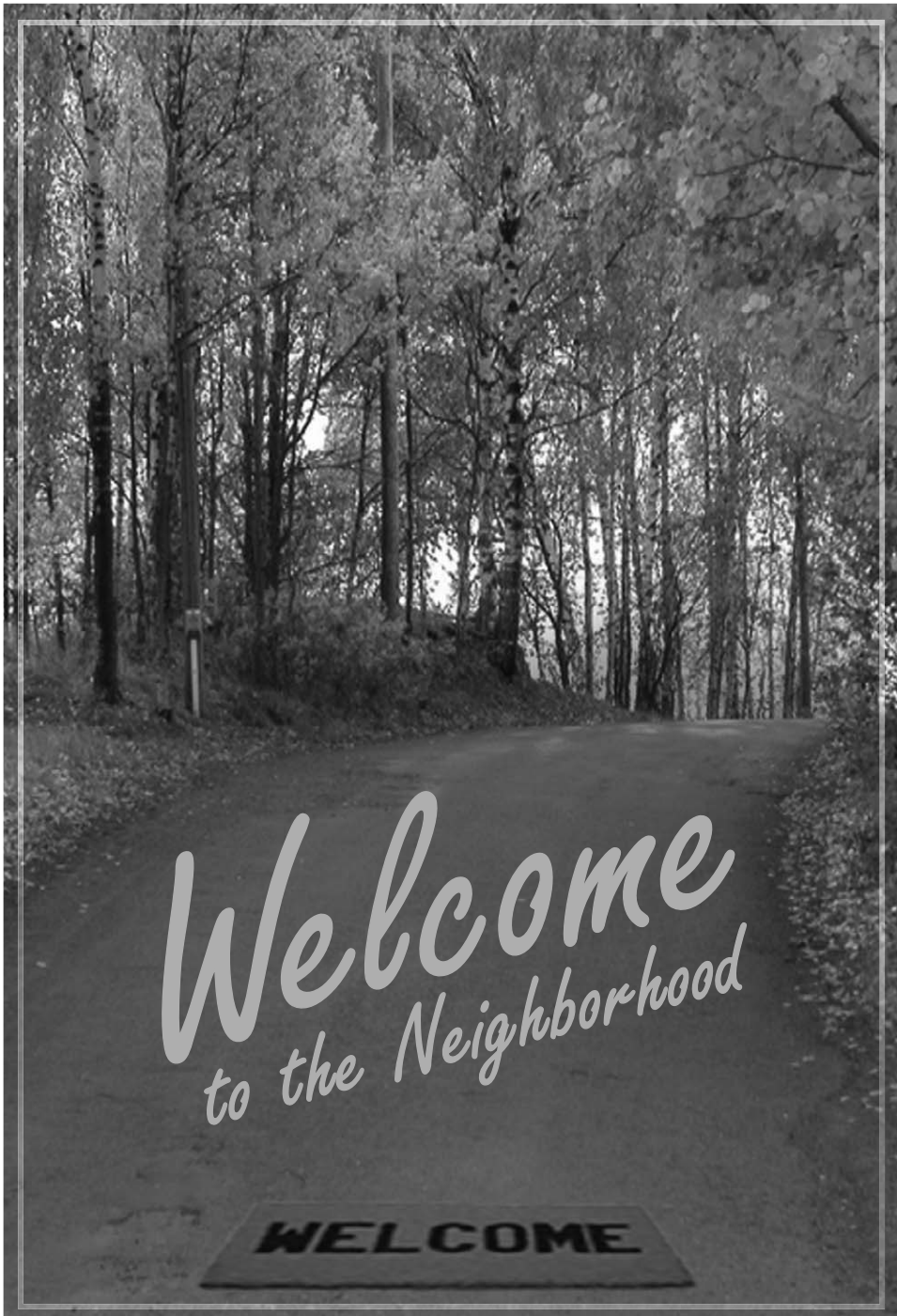
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Creating your own Oasis

Hot tubs, pools and beautiful stonework

By EMILY GRILLO

Ever have one of those days at work where every muscle in your neck and back is so tense that you feel like you’re never going to get the knots out? Wouldn’t you love to be able to step out of your back door and find true relaxation?

If you have a backyard that you barely ever use, it’s time to consider a change. Additions like pools and spas are beneficial to your health and are an investment to your home’s re-sale value. That goes for any type of landscaping, especially stone, which is in high demand.

Here are some simple, easy ways to create the backyard of your dreams.

Rub-a-dub dub, add a hot tub

Installing a hot tub in your back yard is now simpler than ever. Thanks to the new portable spa, you can pick and choose where you want your spa to go.

One great resource is Relaxation Station, located in Honesdale, PA. Owners Ray and Arabella Schmidt affectionately call the mobile spas “plug-n-play” hot tubs. They say that this new generation of hot tub can be used indoors or outdoors. How do they do that?

“Exceptional engineering is used to create a one-piece, totally portable spa, durable enough for every environment,” said Ray. “Spa set-up includes only a garden hose and a power supply.”

Of course, there are more permanent hot tubs as well.

Hot tubs come in a variety of shapes, sizes and colors. Your choice about the size of your hot tub depends on many people will be soaking in it at one time. Hot tubs range in size from two-to-three-person hot tubs to hot tubs accommodating seven or eight. “Over the 18 years we’ve been in business,

we have seen color trends come and go,” said Ray. “Today’s customers are looking for a wide variety of solid, pearlescent colors or natural stone look-alikes.”

Can hot tubs really be beneficial to your health?

Ray says a definite yes. “Hot tubs relieve pain and stiffness. Immersing yourself in the hot water raises your body temperature and causes your blood vessels to dilate, therefore increasing circulation.”

And anyone who has sat in a hot tub on a cool autumn night gazing at the full moon, or watching the snow flakes swirl on a February afternoon, knows that hot tubs are good for rejuvenating the soul. Hot tubs can be used off season as well. Says Texas hot tub aficionado Karen MacIntyre, “I use mine in the summer as a dipping pool. It’s wonderfully refreshing.”

Cool down

Of course, something larger might be desired for use in the summer months.

“It’s a mini-vacation spot right in your own backyard,” said Sylvia Berger of Clear Rite Pools and Spas in Youngsville, NY about the addition of an in-ground pool. “Swimming isn’t just for children anymore.”

The health benefits of swimming are too numerous to list. According to the March 2007 issue of **Health and Fitness**, “Swimming laps in your pool for one hour is equivalent to running six miles.” And an in-ground pool can be a long-term investment to your property, increasing your home’s value substantially.

Of course, there is an initial expense involved, but don’t let the upkeep of an in-ground pool scare you. Berger, who has been in the pool business for almost 24 years, says it’s easier than you think. “All

it takes is weekly water testing, seasonal opening and closing, and occasional vacuuming.”

You can install a heating unit in your pool to extend the season. And, if you don’t want to ever close your pool, construct a building around it. If you can control the temperature of the room, you can swim all year long.

Berger’s most commonly purchased pools are the 16-by-32-foot kidney-shaped pool, and an 18-by-36-foot rectangular pool. Clear Rite pools, said Berger, are easily installed by professionals and can be filled and treated immediately. “All you have left to do is enjoy.”

No worries

Of course, you are wondering how your back yard is going to look after you add your pool or hot tub. Mud all over the place, yuck! Well, as they say on Broadway, “Hakuna Matata.”

Jason Maciejewski, of Maciejewski Landscaping, Inc in Damascus, PA, can create beautiful stonework to compliment anything in your backyard.

“Drainage of lawn stonework is essential to the longevity of your landscaping,” he said. “Done properly, your stonework can last forever.”

Maciejewski, a master of the trade, understands the best type of stone for your backyard patio and will take into consideration budget, design and heat absorbency. Maciejewski can match the stone colors or patterns to your pool or hot tub. He can also create a path or steps leading to the pool. Lawn installations, tree planting and retaining walls are also within his realm.

Investing in your property is investing in a return. In terms of both health and aesthetic appeal, as well as adding to the fun, pools and spas offer pleasure and enjoyment to every household.

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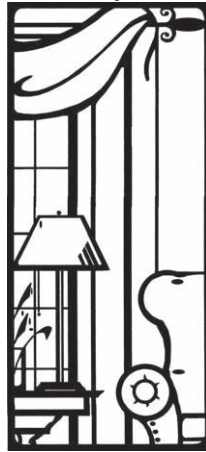
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“Such is the magic of family reunions, when those at all levels of the family tree can be together for a time.”



TRR contributed photos

It Runs in the Family

Hosting a successful family reunion

By MARY GREENE

You are young—very young, too small to peek over the top of the picnic table. Your sturdy legs have recently begun carrying you and you love the freedom and speed of moving about. The air crackles with excitement and a lot of people are in the yard. Suddenly you're looking up at a face creased with age. It is a man, dressed in faded flannel, seated in a straight-backed chair. You have never seen a face like that—soft and wrinkly, like wax paper. His eyes, you can see, are a faded blue, twinkling like sun on water. His hands rest on his knees until one lifts toward you. Your mother says, “Child, meet your great grandfather.”

Such is the magic of family reunions, when those at all levels of the family tree can be together for a time.

There are as many ways to host a successful family gathering as there are types of families. Many take place at home, or at least use that as a base. Some families rent a hall or other spot for a special meal. Some families take advantage of the local bed and breakfast to visit in comfort and style. And lots of families do a combination.

What is right for you, says James Campistrous of J-Angelo event planners in Milford, PA, depends on your budget. “That’s the biggie,” he said. “That’s where you start.”

Next, you determine your guest list. If you are hosting over a hundred people, said Campistrous, plan for a buffet or picnic-style meal. Again, numbers are determined by your budget, and “small doesn’t mean it’s going to cost that much less,” he said.

Another important consideration in the planning phase is to be considerate of the various age groups attending. “For the older population,” said Campistrous, “accessibility is a must.” Plan some quieter games for the older adults, and some active games for young adults and kids. Croquet, volley ball, softball, badminton and horse shoes are all simple-to-plan outdoor games that most everyone will enjoy. Charades, four-in-one games and circle games (such as “Telephone”) will keep everyone occupied and laughing around the living room or dining table. Campistrous recommends a place for the little ones to burn off steam, “such as a jumping room,” he said.

Of course, with an outdoor party, planning for the weather is a must. Campistrous recommends a tent with sides. “For a hundred dollars more,” he said, “it’s worth it.” When planning the menu it’s important, again, to take needs into consideration. Salty and ultra-sugary foods could create hyperactive children or older folks who then are ill the next day. Ethnic foods are a great way to tie the meal together, said Campistrous, as are foods reminiscent of the past—old family dishes or foods typical to an era.

If your family is like most families, a little family drama and squabbling is to be expected, but a family reunion is not the time or place. “Bury the hatchets,” advises Campistrous. “Completely. Negative vibes are out,” he said. “Be positive and make it fun.”

Even if there is one major planner in your family that is taking charge of the event, it might be helpful to give everyone a role in the work. Having to send out invitations, coordinate the potluck supper or plan the games can give adult siblings a vested interest in the event, causing everyone to communicate and work together, and keeping competition at a minimum. Cameras and video cameras are a great idea—in the hands of one or two avid shutterbugs or a professional photographer—for documenting the day. It’s also a nice idea to create a keepsake of the event, such as a big white linen tablecloth that everyone can sign, or a story board of old photos documenting family history and commemorating family members who have passed on.

Campistrous said the key to a successful family reunion is good planning and an emphasis on fun. “The smarter and safer your family reunion is, the more fun you will have.” Themes can really tie it together, he said, and he is available to help with this and also to come in at the last minute with décor ideas to “pop it up.” CryBaby Creations in Barryville, NY also offers event planning and a wide selection of party supplies.

Campistrous said the purpose of the reunion is to bring the generations together, to give a sense of family roots and where we come from. “This connection to our roots sometimes gets lost,” he said. Family reunions are a way to preserve and deepen those connections.

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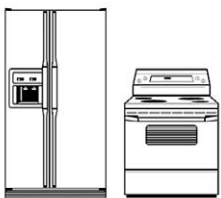
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“Grilled burgers and onion slices become a yummy pasta supper, while steaks with red onion wedges make a spectacular salad.”



Family Features Contributed Photo

Grill Once, Dine Twice

A smart way to use the grill, and an easy way to enjoy two deliciously different meals

Family Features

Take two perfect partners — beef and onions — and grill twice the amount you need for one meal. Enjoy half — save half!

For each bonus meal, just add a few simple ingredients. Grilled burgers and onion slices become a yummy pasta supper, while steaks with red onion wedges make a spectacular salad — each ready in minutes.

Beef on the grill

Trim visible fat from steaks before grilling to help prevent flare-ups. Grill beef over medium heat. Too high heat can cause the exterior to char before the interior is cooked. Charring or overcooking beef is not recommended. Use an instant-read thermometer, inserted horizontally into the side of steaks and burgers, to check for doneness. The thermometer will register 145°F for medium rare, 160°F for medium doneness. Always cook burgers to medium doneness (160°F), turning occasionally with a spatula — no pressing, please! Turn steaks occasionally with tongs. Forks pierce the meat, and flavorful juices are lost.

Tasty onion tips

Onion slices and wedges are perfect for grilling. Simply brush with olive oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper, a favorite herb or prepared seasoning blend, and grill over medium heat.

For grilling, cut onions ½ inch thick to help keep slices together, and for easy turning with a spatula.

Onions can be divided into two categories: fresh and storage. Thin, light-skinned fresh onions are available March through August. Storage onions, harvested in early fall, are marketed through April. Both are available in yellow, red and white. The higher water content in fresh onions gives them a mild taste ideal for enjoying raw or grilled.

Beef Top Loin Steaks With Balsamic Red Onion Relish

Total preparation and cooking time: 35 to 40 minutes.

4 boneless beef top loin (strip) steaks, cut 1 inch thick (about 8 ounces each)
½ cup balsamic vinegar

2 teaspoons garlic-pepper seasoning
2 medium red onions, each cut into 12 wedges
2 medium yellow squash, cut lengthwise in half
2 medium zucchini, cut lengthwise in half
2 tablespoons olive oil
2 teaspoons garlic-pepper seasoning
1 teaspoon chopped fresh oregano or thyme
Salt

Bring vinegar to a boil in small saucepan. Reduce heat; simmer 6 to 8 minutes or until reduced by half. Set aside.

Press 2 teaspoons garlic-pepper seasoning evenly onto beef steaks.

Soak four 10-inch bamboo skewers in water 10 minutes; drain. Thread onion wedges onto skewers. Brush onions and cut sides of squash with oil; sprinkle with remaining 2 teaspoons garlic-pepper seasoning.

Place steaks in center of grid over medium,

ash-covered coals; arrange onions and squash around steaks. Grill steaks, uncovered, 15 to 18 minutes for medium rare to medium doneness, turning occasionally. Grill squash 8 to 12 minutes and onions 12 to 15 minutes or until tender, turning occasionally.

Remove onions from skewers; toss ½ of onions with 2 tablespoons reduced vinegar, oregano and salt, as desired. Carve 2 steaks into slices. Serve with onion mixture and ½ of squash; season steak and squash with salt, as desired. Cover and refrigerate remaining 2 steaks, onions, squash and reduced vinegar to use in Grilled Beef & Onion Salad below.

Makes 4 servings.

Grilled Beef & Onion Salad

Total preparation and cooking time: 15 minutes

- 2 leftover grilled boneless beef top loin (strip) steaks
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 2 tablespoons leftover reduced balsamic vinegar
- 1 large clove garlic, minced
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper
- 4 leftover grilled squash halves, cut into ¾-inch pieces
- Leftover grilled red onion wedges
- 8 cups mixed salad greens
- Salt and pepper

Whisk oil, vinegar, garlic, salt and pepper in small bowl until blended. Set aside.

Arrange squash and onions over greens. Carve steaks into slices; season with salt and pepper, as desired. Arrange over salad. Drizzle vinaigrette over salad and toss.

Makes 4 servings.

Grilled Onion Cheeseburgers

Total preparation and cooking time: 35 to 45 minutes

- 2 pounds ground beef
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh thyme
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 2 large yellow or white onions, cut into ½-inch-thick slices
- 1 to 2 tablespoons vegetable or olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- 4 white or whole wheat hamburger buns or Kaiser rolls, split
- 3 ounces crumbled or shredded cheese.

Combine ground beef, thyme and garlic in medium bowl, mixing lightly but thoroughly. Lightly shape into eight ½-inch-thick patties. Brush both sides of onion slices with oil.

Place patties and onion slices on grid over medium, ash-covered coals. Grill patties, uncovered, 11 to 13 minutes to medium (160°F) doneness until no longer pink in center and juices show no pink color, turning occasionally. Grill onions 15 to 20 minutes or until tender, turning occasionally and brushing with oil. Season patties with salt and pepper, as desired.

Top burgers with desired cheese about 1 minute before removing from grill. Place cheese-topped burgers on bottom of each bun and top with ½ of grilled onions. Close sandwiches. Cover and refrigerate remaining 4 burgers and onions to use in "Meatballs" & Pasta With Grilled Onions & Fresh Tomato Sauce below.

Makes 4 servings.

"Meatballs" & Pasta With Grilled Onions & Fresh Tomato Sauce

Total preparation and cooking time: 20 to 25 minutes

- 4 leftover grilled burgers
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- Leftover grilled onion slices, cut in half
- 3 cups chopped fresh tomatoes
- ½ cup chopped fresh basil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 4-½ cups uncooked regular or whole wheat penne pasta
- Salt and pepper
- Shredded Parmesan cheese

Cut each burger into 6 equal pieces. Heat oil in large nonstick skillet over medium heat; add burger pieces, onions and tomatoes. Cook 8 to 10 minutes or until burgers are heated through, stirring frequently. Stir in basil, salt and pepper. Set aside.

Meanwhile, cook pasta according to package directions; drain and return to pot. Add beef mixture; toss to coat. Season with salt and pepper, as desired. Sprinkle with cheese, as desired.

Makes 4 servings.

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“Whether there’s room for a small vineyard or just a single vine on a fence or trellis, a homeowner can enjoy their own fresh fruit.”



TRR contributed photos

Fruit of the Vine

By ROSEMARY MANDEVILLE

It was one of those unusually warm, spring-like days in March when I went out to prune the grapes. The vines are still in their initial training stage. Eventually, they will have a single trunk with two “arms” at two different heights—a style known as the 4-arm Kiffen system. At this point, the grapes are beginning their third year, and I’m pleased to see there are some one-year-old canes that look strong enough to bear fruit this year. I can’t wait.

Grapes are easy to grow—far easier than tree fruit. Whether there’s room for a small vineyard or just a single vine on a fence or trellis, a homeowner can enjoy their own fruit fresh or in jams, juice or, of course, wine. Closely related to our native fox grape, the Concord grape has been the most vigorous and fruitful for us. Be that as it may, I am more partial to the pink-skinned Canadice and Reliance varieties. They are so delicate and tasty that they often don’t make it into the house, let alone into juice or preserves! The seedless varieties are easier to eat, but the fruits will be tiny, similar in size to the champagne grapes sometimes available at the store. The seeds in grapes produce a hormone that causes the fruit to swell. Seedless grapes lack the hormone; therefore, they stay quite small. Commercially, seedless grapes are sprayed with the hormone, stimulating them to grow to the familiar size. Size doesn’t matter to me, though, when I can fill my mouth with so many tiny fruits at once, all bursting with flavor!

Choose a sunny spot with good air circulation to plant your new vines. Supplemental watering is probably necessary for the first couple of years, but not usually required after they become established. A yearly side dressing of compost is all they require for fertilizing. Too much fertilizer will result in excessive soft leafy growth that will be more prone to insect and disease attack. They also need to be pruned each year in late winter to increase air circulation and improve fruit quality. Flowers are borne on new growth with the best fruits coming from growth originating from one-year-old canes. Those canes are easy to recognize. Good ones tend to be slightly thicker than a pencil with smooth bark, while older canes will develop rougher, darker brown bark. Whether you choose to train the grapes in some formal style, or prefer to let them scramble over a fence or trellis, it is best to cut out the older wood to encourage younger, more fruitful canes to fill the allotted space.

As with any cultivated plant, grapevines can get into trouble with some insects and diseases. The biggest problem I’ve had is with Japanese beetles. Almost overnight the leaves at the top of the plants are skeletonized. Being that grapes are so vigorous, it

probably doesn’t affect the health of the vine, but it is unsightly in an ornamental setting. They are also susceptible to leaf and fruit spots of several varieties, especially if the vines are overgrown and without sufficient air circulation. Fungicidal sprays, organic or otherwise, along with good sanitation and selection of resistant varieties help to control disease problems. Consult the local cooperative extension service or a good book for specific recommendations.

Those who just don’t have the room for grapes can still enjoy the fruit of the vine. Tucked away in the rolling hills just outside of Honesdale, PA is a vineyard complete with tours of their underground storage cave, glimpses into the winemaking process and, of course, wine tastings. Mike Stone, the owner of Calkins Creek Vineyard, is a recently retired airline pilot embarking on a second career as a wine master. The 1,800 American and French vines were planted in 2000, and have been in production since 2003. Several wines are now ready for tasting and for sale at reasonable prices. The vineyard is open daily from May to October, and the rest of the year by appointment. It would be hard to imagine a more pleasant way to spend a hot summer or fall afternoon.

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This impeccable cedar contemporary is within walking distance to pristine mountain lake. Situated on 5 private acres this wonderful home is the perfect artist's retreat. \$399K



This spectacular 4000 sq. ft. river valley home sits on 5+ acres complete with 45x70 Koi pond with waterfall, a smaller pond in front, and a deeded half-acre parcel on the Delaware River. \$629K



This magnificent home built with 18" Canadian logs sits atop one of the highest pinnacles in Sullivan County features views, views, views. Large fieldstone fireplace and oversized deck overlooks pool which is set into the mountainside and adjoins 3000 acres of state land. Fairytale setting. \$725K



This award winning home with serene lake views offers distinctive custom features. The home was built with a creative flair that is guaranteed to please the most discriminating buyer. \$525K



This adorable cottage-style home is just a stone's throw from one of the areas' largest motorboat lakes. Enjoy evening sunsets from the expansive deck. This is the perfect recreational getaway for your family. \$174K



With this old-style farmhouse you have the best of both worlds. It has the character and charm of old world craftsmanship but has been newly constructed with all modern updates and conveniences. A must see! \$369K



This impressive colonial-style home is deceptively large and beyond expectation. The grand foyer leads to a period style sitting room w/ fireplace, formal living room and chef's kitchen w/breakfast nook w/bay window. Privately set on 5 acres which borders 1,200-acre preserve. Call for private tour. \$399,900.



Move right in to this completely remodeled home located in the areas most sought after four season amenity-filled community. Whether you walk to the ski slope or enjoy a short drive to the private beach, you are guaranteed to love this three bedroom two bath home. A must see for the price \$189,900.

“With just a few simple tools you can begin your adventures.”



TRR contributed photos

Nature Detectives

Creating a nature trail with your children

By KRISTIN BARRON

Every backyard, no matter how small, is a great place to be a nature detective where parents can introduce their kids to the beauty and excitement of the seasons in some very easy ways.

As spring unfolds this year, why not consider creating a nature trail for your children. This can be accomplished simply by making a path with fallen branches you have collected and marking stations; for example, a tree, a special plant, a unique rock, a bird feeder or bird bath, and so on, that can be observed throughout the year. Maybe post a birdhouse to watch in winter. With a quick visit to the local hardware store, you can also make a trail with wood chips or gravel. (I'd recommend using naturally colored chips instead of those weird ones that have an alien-looking, red color.)

With just a few simple tools—a magnifying glass, a net or jar, identification books and maybe a notebook and pencil to record your findings—you can begin your adventures. And as every good detective knows, you should be quiet and careful as you explore. It is important for young nature detectives to learn respect for life and habitat. Exploring does not mean destroying!

Here are some possible way stations to include on your nature trail:

- Consider the rotten log—a rich world of its own. Just find out what's under there. Maybe a red eft—a type of salamander that we see traveling our roads after a rainstorm—or a sow bug or centipede scurrying out like a Chinese dragon. Look for ants, crickets, beetles and the spec-sized bright red velvet mite. A spider relative, these tiny creatures can be found in decaying wood and under rocks. Look also for lichen—these beautiful lacy plants are a combination of algae and fungi and often grow on tree bark and stone.
- The mud puddle—all kids want to stomp through them whatever their footwear—but before the plunge, take a look for worms and animal tracks. Of course, if there is a local pond or stream or if you can create a small pool, you can watch the water's edge all year. In March or April, collect frog spawn and raise tad poles or observe the life cycle of dragonflies. Look also for the aquatic stages of the red eft salamander, which begins its life in water and returns in maturity.

- Watch a tree through the seasons—observe its history—the buds in spring, summer's leafy fullness and autumn's decline. Maybe tap a maple for sap and remember to look for nests and other animal and insect homes. Remember the maple's winged seeds (samaras) which make great “helicopters.” (Kids also love to peel them apart and stick them on their noses.) Make a bark rubbing with paper and crayon to see the pattern of the bark.
- Look for ant hills. Some have been here for generations and have become huge mounds that are fun to watch. Look for mole holes and tunnels in your yard. Find a toad in the shade.
- Plant a small garden—watch your beans and cabbages grow. Also plant flowers. Butterflies (and hummingbirds) like bright colors, especially red. Consider lupine, beebalm and butterfly bush. Children can later make collections or unique cards from arrangements of pressed flowers. Plant lilacs and watch tiger swallowtail butterflies nectaring there in the spring. Look for common lawn wild flowers like dandelion, ox-eyed daisy, red clover and mouse-eared hawk weed. Make a compost heap for insects, spiders and small mammals. (Snakes like it, too.)
- Remember spiders. Early morning, when the grass is wet with dew, is the best time to see spiders and their webs. Look for the large yellow “writer” spiders (*Argiope*) like “Charlotte.”

For a wonderful example of a nature trail, take a ride to the children's park located in Long Eddy along Route 97. The park, which has been the result of a prize-winning community effort, includes children's swings, a basketball court and an access to a brook that runs into the Upper Delaware River. The nature trail at the Long Eddy park runs on the edge of the field and features a range of berry bushes complete with signs. It's the perfect sort of trail for pre-school children and only takes a few minutes to traverse. It just goes to show what you can accomplish with some paving stones, a trip to a local nursery, a good nature guide book and some creativity.

So, when the warm winds blow, visit a local nature trail or better yet, make one yourself. All you really need to do is get out, enjoy the sunshine and take a walk.

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“Before filling that first box, gather up the essentials so you’re ready once the serious packing begins.”



Smart Moves

Clever tips and savvy strategies for packing, organizing and surviving moving day

Family Features

Thousands of Americans move every year. They pick up their belongings — ranging from dorm room digs to entire estate furnishings — and find a way to transport them from point A to point B. Whether they’re moving down the street, across the country, or around the world, these individuals all face the same question at the outset, “Where do I start?”

Enter the three P’s of moving: planning, preparation and packing.

Planning

If you have a lot of excess clutter, plan to clear it out now. Host a yard sale or garage sale if you have the time. Not only will this clear out the excess items, but it’s also a nice way to earn a little extra cash. Or, if you’re short on time, donate unwanted items to a local nonprofit organization. Many even offer free pickup service.

After you’ve decided how to handle your surplus items, consider the rest of your belongings. Plan to pack items you use the least first (out-of-season clothing, holiday décor, fine china, and crystal, etc.), then work your way to the most essential items (kitchen utensils, everyday decorations, and appliances).

Preparation

Before filling that first box, gather up the essentials so you’re ready once the serious packing begins. New, strong, moving boxes in a variety of shapes and sizes, bubble cushioning, packaging peanuts, good-quality packing tape, and labels are a must.

It can be difficult to estimate how many supplies you’ll need and which boxes will work best for what items, but there are professionals who can help. Packaging experts can recommend a kit based on the number of rooms to be moved and their size, and, it takes only one to three days to ship boxes and supplies either to the store or directly to your home.

“It’s the convenience of being able to take care of all your needs in one place that makes the moving process much easier,” said Thomas Haug, The UPS Store franchisee in New Jersey. “Customers can come in to mail a package to grandma, order moving supplies, and even arrange to ship their baby grand piano.”

Once the packing supplies are in hand, designate a spot for “Packing Central.” This is where you will consistently keep your tape, boxes, paper, bubble cushioning, markers, etc. Place smaller items that you’ll need to take from room to room (like tape, packing paper, and markers) in a basket or caddy for portability.

Packing

Now that you’ve laid the groundwork by creating an overall plan and lining up your resources, you’re ready for the real work. Utilize a few smart packing strategies now, and you’ll reap the benefits later.

Start by keeping like things together. Keep kitchen pots with kitchen pans. Place tablecloths with other linens. Also, be sure to label boxes clearly and be as specific as possible. For example, don’t just write “books,” be more detailed, like “reference manuals.” This will be invaluable as you unpack.

Proper packing technique can’t be overstated. Take the time to pack your boxes carefully and securely. A new moving box provides the strength you need for the inevitable stacking that occurs as boxes are loaded and unloaded on moving day. Line boxes with at least two inches of packaging peanuts on all sides and use bubble cushioning to protect anything fragile. Use quality packing tape on all seams (avoid masking, cellophane, or duct tape).

Another way to ensure that moving day goes smoothly is to label boxes with color-coordinated labels. Designate a color for each room and place that colored label on the appropriate box. Then, place color labels on the doorways in the new house to provide a clear visual cue for where boxes go.

When moving day approaches, keep a few things in mind for those final boxes. Think survival mode. What will you need first in your new home? Cleaning supplies, paper towels, toilet paper, garbage bags, a first aid kit, snacks, and drinks are key items, but everyone’s must-have list will be a little different. Also, don’t forget to pack overnight bags for each member of the family with toiletries and a change of clothing. Finally, if you have children, pack a special box for each child to open upon arrival. Include favorite blankets

and stuffed animals, family photos, a few toys, crayons, coloring books, and any other essential belongings.

Congratulations, you just elevated your moving IQ! Equipped with these tips and strategies, you’re ready for the ultimate test — moving day itself.

Making the right moves

A survey recently commissioned by The UPS Store asked Americans a few key questions about moving. Consider these simple solutions to common moving conundrums.

Worst moving nightmare: broken or missing items after the move.

Easy fix: Use new boxes and packing supplies made specifically for moving, pack items securely with plenty of padding (or have a packaging or moving expert pack them for you), and label boxes clearly.

Item(s) you wouldn’t want to move yourself: Moving a piano topped the list with 52 percent of Americans not wanting to move it alone; electronics, such as a flat-screen TV followed with 38 percent of respondents stating it was too difficult; and one-third of Americans (33 percent) would be hesitant to move antiques or heirloom furniture without the help of experts.

Simple Solution: Utilize a freight service offered by vendors. This is a great option for do-it-yourselfers who want to move the majority of their own items but have a large or fragile item they want to entrust to a trained professional for expert packing and handling.

Items used to protect belongings when packing: More Americans use newspaper (78percent) to cushion their belongings, followed by clothes, towels, sheets or blankets (66percent), and finally bubble cushioning (56 percent).

A better choice: While those who use bubble cushioning get kudos for packing savvy, the rest of us should strongly consider saving the newspaper for the recycling bin and the clothes for the wardrobe box. Professionals recommend unprinted packing paper (newsprint can stain items) for non-fragile items and bubble cushioning or packaging peanuts for anything that’s breakable.

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MLS # 19582

Lovely Victorian style home in Callicoon could be Bed & Breakfast with views of Delaware River. Large home is currently 2-family. Main living area has 3 bedrooms, 3 baths. Apartment area 1 bedroom, 1 bath. House has been extensively remodeled; new kitchen, roof, siding, driveway and so much more - **\$329,000**



MLS # 19354

3 bedroom, 2 bath ranch home is located at end of dead-end street-Village of Jeffersonville. Walk to stores, restaurants, bank, etc. Overlooks beautiful stream - **\$149,500**



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Manificent Custom Contemporary \$374,900
To be built on fabulous private acre in very desirable area. Near "Bethel Woods" Performing Arts Center, Racino and crystal clear lakes and rivers. Has deeded rights to motorboat lake. Fireplace, hardwood floors, tile, radiant heat. Top Notch! Model pictured, open for viewing! #14202



"Home Sweet Home" \$129,900
Adorable home with central air and glistening Canadian maple floors is the perfect place to call home. Deck in rear overlooks lovely yard. Excellent commuter location. Three bedrooms, a mud room, open floorplan with a fresh and sunny feel. Has been well maintained. #16844



Hillside Gem \$134,900
Completely renovated and rustically updated seasonal hom in lake community, that offers lake access for fishing, boating, swimming, sport courts and much more! This 2 bedroom, 1 bathroom home features a large deck and stone fireplace, magically set "in the trees" #17369



Near Quaint Village \$69,900
Nice mobile home with over an acre of land, huge yard, and large detached 2-car garage. Offering 2 nice bedrooms, 1 bathroom, an enclosed porch, and lovely deck in the back for those summer barbeques. Just outside the village, close to dining, shopping and more! #18588



Walk to Lake! \$349,900
Spacious 6 bedrooms home with 2 full bathrooms, short walk to lakes for FUN FUN FUN! hardwood floors, large master suite with deck and a full basement excellent for entertainment/game room. Two-car attached garage, decks and much more! #19039



Natural Splendor \$374,900
Ten Mile River runs through...natural wonderland to behold. This 1800's five bedroom farmhouse has been enjoyed by the same family for many years. Beautiful land, with some great views, a two story barn, and a separate 2-car garage. Great spot for a private estate. #15625



Private Home on 5+ Acres! \$224,900
Sweet and comfortable home, beautifully set on 5+ acres of magnificent property. Updated with newer kitchen, baths, floors and more! Downstairs offers more space partially finished; make it yours! Near lovely artsy river village with alot to do all year round. #17241



All The Comforts of Home... \$399,900
This newly built 4 bedroom, 2.5 bath home is privately set on 2.34 acres, featuring a huge wrap-around porch, a large eat in kitchen, a gas fireplace in living room and finished third floor, perfect for family room, office or playroom. In a fabulous location! #1950



Immaculate and Private... \$284,900
Warm and inviting country home, nestled in natural splendor, on 12.85 acres of beautiful woodland, with an apple orchard, hiking/atv trails, berries, peace, tranquility and fresh air. Features hardwood floors, stone fireplace, deck, covered porch and large closets. #19573



NEW Custom Ranch on 6.5+ Acres! \$224,900
Set off the road on 6.5+ acres with seasonal pond and privacy this 4 bedroom, 2.5 bathroom, home features a Jacuzzi tub, comm. stove, fireplace, radiant heat throughout. Also with full basement that features high ceilings, and sliding glass doors, ready for finishing! #19162



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Storybook Charming \$174,900
Charming interior with "designer's loft" Huge private deck overlooks a splendid yard at the end of a dead-end street. Smallwood Lake Community offers lake access with beach, dock and sports courts. Enclosed porch, fireplace, and skylights. Really a sweet home with tons of charm. #18338



96 Acres, Farmhouse, Pond, Barn... \$499,900
Magnificent piece of property for the equestrian, hunter or one who appreciates the beauty of nature, early farmhouse with lots of potential, sits off the road amidst pastureland overlooking pond, with mountain views, berries, fruit trees, with barn and detached garage. #19652



Absolutely Adorable \$153,900
Smallwood sweetheart! A wonderful place to live. Warm original woodwork throughout. 2 bedrooms, enclosed porch, new bathroom, cozy country kitchen with part-quet floor in dining area, and attic with pull-down stairs for storage! #16075



Brick Beauty w/ Fabulous Layout \$234,900
Cozy/charming spacious lake community home. Living room features cathedral ceilings and stone fireplace. Master suite with bath. Breakfast nook looks onto deck. Lots of closets, wall to wall carpet, washer/dryer hookup. Two-car attached garage and circular driveway. #18074



Value and Privacy! \$199,900
Fabulous location in desirable Smallwood lake community, not far from Racino and "Bethel Woods" Performing Arts Center. Adorable 2 bedroom home features loft, large deck and detached garage. Yard overlooks magical wooded setting at the end of a dead end street. #1867



Cozy Country Log Home \$294,900
Privately set off the road on 10+ acres. This three bedroom home features a massive brick fireplace and soaring ceilings in the living room, warm woodwork and country accents throughout, sparkling wood floors, loft, open porch, a basement that could be finished and det. garage. #18185



Lovely Village Home \$156,500
Immaculate and convenient three bedroom village home offers hwd floors throughout, a warm and comfy layout, with space for a family room and much more! Lovely, level yard with fruit trees and shed. #19268



Lakefront Dream Home \$799,900
Custom made lakefront home in a Fabulous Location! Pick all of your features, very open to "green" designs, Home to be built on 3/4+ acre lakefront lot on crystal clear motorboating lake. Close to "Bethel Woods" and The Racino! What more could you ask for? #18240



3 Bedroom Ranch on 5.9+ Acres \$174,900
Sited in a nice private setting on a great level parcel of 5.89 open and lightly wooded acres. Almost new (2003) manufactured home offers open floorplan, skylights, utility room, mudroom, large living room with a beautiful fireplace, deck, and new carpet. #18258



Country Home on 8+ Beautiful Acres! \$218,500
Bright and open living room, with wonderful stone fireplace, hardwood floors, full basement, 2-car attached garage, large decks front and back, with hot-tub. Near hunting, fishing and golf. Won't last at this price! Perfect for weekend getaway or primary year-round use! #19073



Country Cottage in Magical Setting... \$269,900
With sparkling crystal clear lakes nearby this charming home has been restored/renovated yet still retains charm from earlier days. Featuring hwd floors, enclosed porch, tiled bath, stone fpl, guest quarters/studio w/det. garage. Set on 2.5+ acres w/ total 8.5+ acres available. #18655



Two Homes, Gorgeous Land... \$674,900
Two homes, each with detached garage, on 30+ acres of absolutely gorgeous land, perched overlooking a large stocked swimming pond, both feature decks and magnificent 180 degree views. Fields, stone walls, fruit trees, and more! Magical Property, Very Subdividable! #14659



Cute & Cozy... \$124,900
Lovely quaint river town home; an adorable 2+ bedroom home offers great open floorplan, enclosed and rocking chair porches. Finished attic, basement and game/bar room. Moments walking to shopping, antiquing, movies and dining. Great for get-away all year round! #18363



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Prime Location - Near Bethel Woods \$549,900
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Bethel Commercial! \$384,900
Fabulous business opportunity! Two bays, three separate units. Presently rented. 1+ acre, with high visibility on State Route 17B. Close to The NEW "Bethel Woods" Performing Arts and Cultural center and The Racino in Monticello (Proposed Casino Site). #19990



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Great location with high visibility in Village of Monticello, all village services included. Near banks, stores, gym, schools, offices, walking distance to EVERYTHING! Fronts on two roads. As an added bonus, a 2-family is included on property. Seller considering all offers! #17332



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3-unit farmhouse in quaint river village. Glistening hardwood floors, new kitchens and tiled baths. Loaded with country charm and flooded with sunlight. Consists of 4+ BR, 1.5 BA two-story apartment, a 2BR two story apartment and small commercial/storefront unit. #1727

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#18940 - 66+ Acres - Livingston Manor, 180 degree views... \$698,800	#16980 - 3+ Acres - Commercial lot near Racino \$899,900	#19052 - 113+ Acres - Walk to Bethel Woods! 2 ponds... \$3,499,000


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Covering the Basics

A homeowner's checklist

By CHARLES PETERSHEIM

As a homeowner of an old or new house, it's always a good idea to take a few basic precautions before you leave your house for an extended period of time. Whether you are going away for a week's vacation, or for an extended period of time, following these precautions can mean the difference between annoyance and tragedy, between inconvenience and disaster. More often than not, house disasters stem from human error.

Every time you leave for longer than a few days:

- Turn the well pump off at the electric panel—if, for some reason, you spring a leak in the plumbing system, the leak will only be as bad as the quantity of water in the holding tank (inconvenience), as opposed to continuously drawing water from the well until you return (disaster).
- To be even more proactive, switch off the well pump and turn on all the faucets, thus quickly and without much hassle draining the water from the living space of the house. This process takes less than five minutes when you leave, and less than five minutes on your return.
- Check your oil tank for adequate fuel.
- Lock your windows. Install an alarm decal on your door, even if you don't have an alarm. The sticker alone wards off most thieves.

- Install a timer lamp, so the house doesn't appear completely unhabited.

A few basic house checkup exercises on a yearly basis will go a long way toward ensuring your safety and health, and will protect your house and property as your most precious asset.

Once a Year:

- Check furnaces to ensure top efficiency and safety. Cleaning your furnace on occasion will keep it in good running order.
- Hire a chimney sweep to clean your fireplace and wood stove flues.
- Have your water tested at a local hospital. Since many in the region use private wells, an annual water purity test protects your family against unsafe, unsanitary or contaminated water supply and consumption.

In General:

- Install a basic "low heat" alarm, wired directly to your security alarm system or to your local oil company. This will alert you in plenty of time should, for any reason, the heat in your house drop below a predetermined temperature.

Charles Petersheim is owner of Catskill Frams in Kanoza Lake, NY.

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2006 Winner, Category C—Swan Lake Renaissance Group

Located on Brisco Road, across from the Swan Lake Resort Hotel in Swan Lake, NY, this once forgotten parcel was covered with weeds. Now it's a beautiful lakeside park complete with gazebo for all to enjoy.

Photos by NANCY LEVINE

Have you renaissanced today?

“While you might start out hanging banners or planting flowers, you just never know how big your idea might grow, infused with a contagious spirit of community.”

By PAM JONES

While there are many agencies and programs that provide project grants, it would be difficult to find a more user-friendly and grassroots-driven program than Sullivan Renaissance. This organization provides seed money to community groups in Sullivan County for varying levels of beautification projects, ranging in scope from planting a garden to a three-year community development plan, and then holds a competition to award cash prizes in each category.

To get a sense of the organization, I attended its grant-writing seminar held on March 7. The session got underway with program director Glenn Pontier providing an overview of the program and the process. He extended a positive aura of support for the applicants. If you have ever felt intimidated by filling out a grant application, this was the place to be. All applicants are provided with step-by-step, individual attention on how to complete the process of applying for grant money. The organization even makes house calls. If your group cannot come to Sullivan Renaissance, they will send someone to help your group prepare their paperwork.

At the seminar, I met Cheryl Hendrickson, representing the Light and Life Christian School of Liberty. Her group applied for a mini-grant in 2006 to plant a garden on the grounds of their school. They involved the students in both the planning and the planting of the garden. Hendrickson said that the kids loved it, and their attendance at the Sullivan Renaissance Awards Ceremony at Bethel Woods last August gave them a sense of pride, appearing on stage to accept their “Spruce up Your School” award. At the ceremony, the students saw pictures of their garden projected on the wide screens at Bethel Woods Center for the Arts in Bethel, NY, along with the pictures of other Sullivan Renaissance projects. Hendrickson said the experience gave them a larger sense of community, seeing how their project worked together with all of the others, contributing to the improvement of the whole county. She was back this year to apply for the larger “Category A” grant.

This is a perfect example of the fulfillment of the mission statement of Sullivan Renaissance, “to enhance the community while building a sense of pride.” Just like the garden, if you plant a little seed money, the projects, the pride and connection with

community will blossom and grow.

Sullivan Renaissance started in 2001 with an idea from Sandra Gerry, chair, to hold a contest for improving the appearance of the county. I asked Pontier, who has been with Sullivan Renaissance since its inception, if the program has evolved over the years. “Yes, on all levels,” he replied. They started out, a bit unsure of what kind of response they would get, with 20 initial grants leading to a competition with a first- and second-place cash prize. When 40 applicants responded, they felt that people were really ready for this concept. “People were hungry for it,” said Pontier “and we have been running to catch up with the volunteers ever since!”

After the first year, they realized that they would have to expand the program into different category levels of small, medium and large, so that a community garden was not competing with the installation of 60 new streetlights. After a couple of years, the vision of the volunteers drove the large “Category C” level into its present expanded form. People had dreams that were too big for the four-month window of time that the original categories allowed for, and it emerged as a three-year community development plan and commitment.

Other improvements were added along the way. They initiated a program that hired student interns to help work on the projects, providing summer jobs with good pay and a good learning experience for local youth. During this process, they realized that kids felt intimidated by job applications and encountered difficulties filling them out. In typical fashion, Sullivan Renaissance responded to the need with workshops for the kids on how to complete a job application. Continuing to evolve, this year they are working on expanding the environmental awareness element of beautification.

In addition to fulfilling their mission statement, I asked Pontier if he had seen any unexpected benefits from the Sullivan Renaissance experience. What has impressed him over the years is “the remarkable ability of people, citizens and residents to respond and do the right thing, the realization that it takes a village to be a village.” Explaining how a small idea can grow, he pointed to Livingston Manor, where they started out with banners on Main Street. They added hanging flower baskets, and realized that the sidewalks needed repair, so they involved additional



Swan Lake Fire House

A volunteer works on beautifying the Swan Lake Fire House.



Route 55 near Stanton Corners, Swan Lake, NY

This row of boarded-up stores are cleverly camouflaged with a mural of Swan Lake, a welcoming sight as you enter town.

agencies for repaving. They installed park benches and got local business people involved in fixing up the storefront facades. As their Main Street became more attractive and invited more traffic, they worked on a park as a place for the kids to hang out in. While working on the park, they started a knotweed eradication program, improving the environment. They opened their summer Cineart series, showing free movies in the park, which led to the stores staying open later. So while you might start out hanging banners or planting flowers, you just never know how big your idea might grow, infused with a contagious spirit of community.

The spinning gears of Sullivan Renaissance have greased projects in all 15 towns and six villages of the county. It has involved local municipalities, Sullivan County Community College, The Center for Workforce Development, Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Department of Planning and Community Development. Through the Chamber of Commerce, it has secured a list of participating local merchants providing discounts on supplies and services to project volunteers. It provides grants for schools and for our seasonal communities, like summer camps and bungalow colonies, to improve their appearance. It offers special awards for historic preservation and environmental impact. Its Municipal Cleanup Program provides matching funds for a municipality to remove an unsafe structure or for roadside cleanups. The county contributes by waiving its tipping fees for these projects. It's hard to think of an aspect of our communities that has been overlooked by Sullivan Renaissance because they have expanded in direct response to the heart and will of the volunteers.

From his vantage point of program director, Pontier said he has borne witness to a greater vision. He refers to his experience with the program as a “good civics lesson.” From the microcosms of each garden to the renovations of the county's downtown areas, he has received the answers to the basic questions of our democracy. “Can we shape and define the communities we live in?” he poses, “are we capable of creating the world we want to live in?” The answers come back to him again and again with an affirmative “Yes, we can!”

For more information on how to get involved in your area, visit www.sullivanrenaissance.org or call Sullivan Renaissance at 845/295-2445.

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