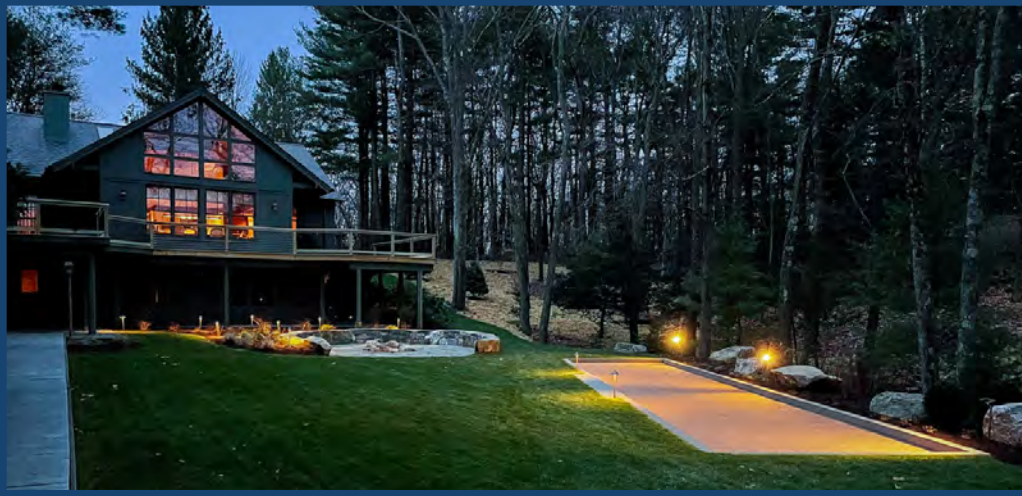


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INNER PEACE

This May issue has had me thinking a lot about inner peace. Wikipedia defines it: "Inner peace (or peace of mind) refers to a deliberate state of psychological or spiritual calm despite the potential presence of stressors." Fitting I think considering that this is our "Home & Garden" issue, because where better to experience inner peace than in your home and its surroundings?

I'm sure we've all read or heard about studies that explain the health benefits of being surrounded by nature. And when it comes to your home's garden or lawn – or whatever you might have – wouldn't that be the ideal place to create your own sanctuary? A place where you are safe? A place you should feel solace? A place where you can breathe a sigh of relief? I think so.

The same goes for your home. I think that your home should feel like your sanctuary, a place where you really feel safe and grounded. A place where you can breathe freely. A place for inner peace. But of course I wouldn't be naive to think that we can all achieve this because life can be messy, and gardening and landscaping isn't for everyone. That said, perhaps this issue will inspire you because it is chock-full of all things home and garden. Our writers took this month's theme and really ran with it. They took inspiration from all over. We have stories about a local home store and about Whitney's continued failures when it comes to keeping plants alive. It doesn't matter if it's a house plant or a garden, her black thumbs continue to prevail. But I pass no judgement on her because I too have black thumbs.

Luckily, our very own Pom Shillingford has the greenest thumbs. This month she shares another amazing story complete with helpful tips from her life and experience in gardening. And can I just make special mention of her creations and the photos? Because, oh my goodness, they are gorgeous! They make me envious. I tell her every month that she makes gardening sound so easy. Perhaps Whitney and I need to get some private lessons from Pom to give us any hope of keeping a plant alive for the long-term. Something to ponder while I examine my back yard on this sunny afternoon.

No matter your starting point, I hope you find a story or two here that pique your interest and teach you something new. Or perhaps they'll inspire you to create your own home sanctuary.

Namaste.

– Thorunn Kristjansdottir



MAY 2024

May flowers are finally here, and we are so excited. This month's issue is our "Home & Garden" issue and we are delighted that our very own Pom Shillingford shared one of her beautiful photos with us to grace the cover.

Photo by
Pom Shillingford

The Home & Garden issue

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PUBLISHER, EDITOR, WRITER, & DESIGNER: Thorunn Kristjansdottir

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS:

Abby Audenino | CB Wismar | Christine Bates | Dominique De Vito | Ian Strever | Jesse DeGrootd | Leora Armstrong | Mary B. O'Neill | Olivia Valentine & Caroline Markonic | Regina Molaro | Pom Shillingford | Whitney Joseph

COPY EDITOR: Viveca Gardiner. **PHOTOGRAPHERS:** Lazlo Gyorsok & Olivia Valentine

ADVERTISING Ashley Kristjansson & Abby Audenino 518 592 1135 or info@mainstreetmag.com

CONTACT

Office 135 Rt. 44, Millerton, NY 12546 • Mailing address PO Box 165, Ancramdale, NY 12503
Phone 518 592 1135 • Email info@mainstreetmag.com • Website mainstreetmag.com

PRINT, LEGAL, ACCOUNTING, & INSURANCE

Printed by Snyder Printer, Inc. • Legally represented by Downey, Haab & Murphy PLLC
Accounting services by Zulch Tax Consultants • Insured by Kneller Insurance Agency

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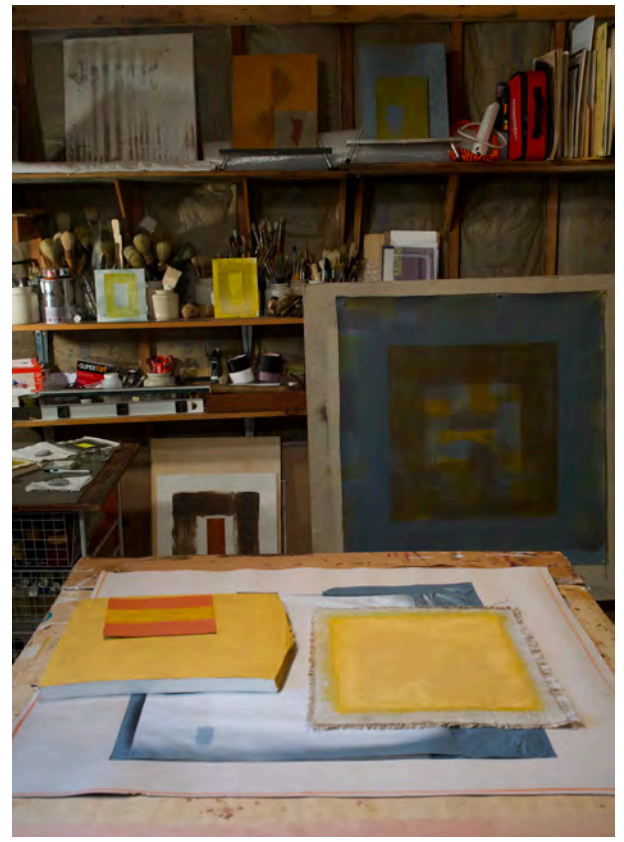
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AN ENCOUNTER WITH CHANGE

- MARTHE KELLER

By Leora Armstrong
info@mainstreetmag.com

Marthe Keller and I had lengthy conversations in both her studios, firstly in her downtown artist loft in New York City and secondly in Falls Village, CT. Her studio loft building originally manufactured sail canvas for shipping; huge bolts ran the depth of the building. Later it provided a space for artists to purchase their canvas. Marthe moved into this unique artist loft in the 1970s. Tall cast iron columns hold up the tin ceiling while old pulleys and tackle remain on the walls, leaving clues to the bones of the place. The energy of creative spirit is embedded in the walls, hand in hand with Marthe's enthusiastic dialogue about an artist's life.

Early days of art

"I am a New Yorker; I was born and lived on Bethune Street, in Greenwich Village until our family moved north, first to Croton-on-Hudson, then onto a communal farm in a hamlet called Roseton. My father, an artist, built his new studio, there and I grew up surrounded by art and artists. My early learning was in a small four-room schoolhouse with the local children of brickyard and farm workers, a simple world where we swam in a clay pond and enjoyed hootenannies with Pete Seeger." Keller continued, "Roseton sadly no longer exists; the central Hudson steam station swallowed it up, and it was relegated to a ghost town. In 1961, we all departed for Rome, Italy, where I was immersed

in Europe's art with my parents as guides. I lived in Rome through high school and revisit annually."

Keller said, "My art career began at Boston University, which was so conservative that we were not allowed to paint an abstract painting. Deeply frustrated, I transferred to the Maryland Art Institute, where we were reminded, 'Women can't be artists; there is no room for you in the art world. Just forget about it. You'll have babies; leave artmaking for the men.' It was so provoking that I sought out an art therapy degree."

"However, still craving my crayons, and acknowledging that creating art was my passion, I escaped. I jumped into my tiny car and headed west to New Mexico to explore America. This vast red landscape, where colored shapes erupted from the earth, felt like a wild abstraction. It was mind-blowing to be in such an expansive space after Italy. I received a grant for costume design at a dance company in Albuquerque, with New York dancers influenced by John Cage and Merce Cunningham. Here, I felt the inspiration of Cage's method of chance, inventing my concepts to allow chance to be part of my practice," Keller shared.

Marthe Keller in her Italian cow barn studio

Returning to Italy, Keller was offered a studio in an artist's old cow barn. This barn's curved door created an

arc shape, initiating a series of early works. *Blind Dream IV*, 1987 from this series hangs in Keller's loft; the light plays on the graphite surface of an arced shape within a square. Baseball fields also became her muse; they also describe a curved shape within a square. Brad, her husband, gave her an actual home plate as a gift.

Another painting hanging in the loft, *Summer Dispersion*, is evidence of Keller's constantly exploring processes with varied materiality. Her abstract practice investigates surfaces, plays with transparency and opacity, and works with horizontal and vertical bands.

A larger version of this painting hung in the Metropolitan Museum for many years.

Who were your key influencers?

"When we lived in Italy, my parents wanted to see everything, I inhaled art: ancient Roman walls, Baroque architecture, Giotto, Piero, the *Arte Povera* movement, Alberto Burri, and Lucio Fontana. In the 1980s, I met Sol LeWitt, and his concepts freed me. I happily became one of his draftspeople; we had fun making wall drawings in private collections, galleries, and museums. Working on such a scale was liberating. His concept was that an idea described in words is the artwork. A collector purchases a numbered certificate describing the

artwork. The instructions in the certificate can be followed to create the artwork on a wall, but the concept exists as an artwork even if the drawing is never made. The value is the concept described by LeWitt. Each rendition differs depending on the site, but the artist's hand follows the directions and should always try to remain the same. In public, these wall drawings stay up for the length of a show, or they may be permanent. Occasionally, I am still asked to make a wall drawing. MASS MoCA has installed 100 Sol LeWitt Wall Drawings for 25 years, which is worth a visit," Keller shared.

She continued, "John Cage's method of chance has remained throughout my practice. Rothko, Burri, and Newman also played roles in my work. More than the dead men, though, many artist friends have been influences, such as Carmengloria Morales, one of the few women of stature given equality to men working in Italy now. I believe the universe will bring what is needed when I need it. After years of painting, I feel free to allow the materials and colors to create the work."

Do you have a routine that is part of your making?

"Tai chi and tidying are part of my daily practice. In the morning, I tend to focus on business. Later, I'll have a cup of tea, get into the zone, work until late, and mess it all up again. I'm also rather stingy and dislike throwing paint away; there are always half a dozen pieces of paper next to me to make smaller versions. I also enjoy making a game of using *Finnegan's Wake* by James Joyce, as many other artists have done, to randomly choose titles for the last 30 years. Joyce's voice offers a hilarious, absurd, and essential trove of added meaning to the work," Keller said. A well-thumbed edition sits on her art table.

Keller sometimes works directly on the wall, on unstretched fabrics, with wood, or by utilizing found objects. Surface is a critical essence of Keller's work. She has pushed boundaries using found earth, pigments, graphite,



Above: Marthe Keller in her artist loft holding *Plantitude of Plenty*, 50" x 50", acrylic and black walnut on linen, 2020. Left, *Fuitfiat!*, 50" x 50", yellow ochre and zinc in acrylic on canvas, 2020. Right, *Fuitfiat! II*, 50" x 50", Black walnut and zinc on canvas, 2020.

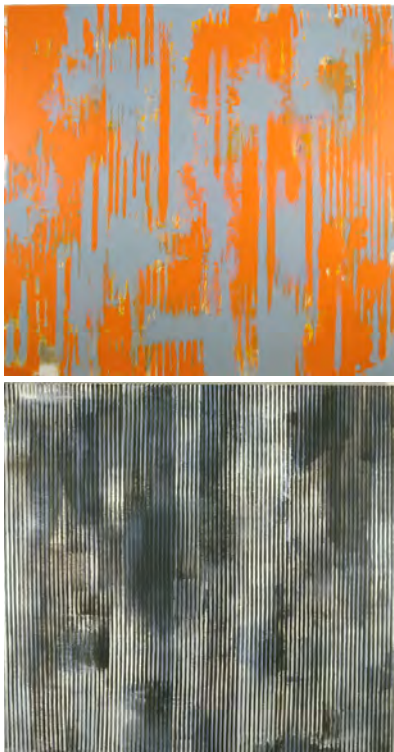
ink from black walnuts, and mark-making from places, continually challenging the surface, the line, and the texture. Incorporating tiny glass beads into the pigments, akin to those for traffic signage, allows light reflection against matte paint.

Her surface qualities embody wax encaustic, matte, shimmer, rough, or smooth. These are often created with a single gesture drawn using her own multiple brushes bound to one handle. A musical staff for chalk can hold two or five brushes; in varied dimensions. The brush holder keeps the spaces between strokes equal and allows a significant gesture to be made with multiple brushes but without the bravado of expressionism. "Repetition comes from my single painting gesture, which takes the ego out of the work."

A similar distancing mechanism employs printing methods using transparent vinyl to transfer shapes onto the painting surfaces. Sometimes, the vinyl image hangs away from the surface to invite 'chance,' incorporating the angle of light to move a shadow drawing throughout the day.

"I inherited my father's Italian collection of cosmetic-grade pigments used in Fresco painting. They remained untouched for years as I found the colors too dull. I wanted a

Continued on next page ..



Left, top: *Raucous*, 48" x 50", acrylic on linen, 2007. Bottom: *Post-Op*, oil, alkyd, zinc, and graphite on linen, 38.5" x 39.5", 1995.

Opposite page, left: *DIVA*, 87 x 65", Earth pigments, oil, wax, alkyd on canvas, 1993 at the MET. Right: Falls Village studio.



Top, left: *F'Atrice A Casa*, 12' x 15', acrylic on wall board, 1993. Right: *Blind Dream IV*, 40 x 44", graphite pencil and dust with wax on canvas, 1987.

Above: *Summer Dispersion*, 39.5" x 37.5". Earth pigments, oil, wax, alkyd on canvas, 1993.

Right: Falls Village studio.

All images courtesy of Marthe Keller.

more electric tone in my earlier work. Recently, it was a joy to rediscover these earth pigments in the studio. Once, I found a nitrogen fertilizer, Blood Meal, in my brother-in-law's garage and used it to make paint. It is also an ancient pigment," she shared.

Keller is undaunted by size, creating extensive installations, from 30-foot wall drawings to intimate pieces that float off the wall on unstretched linen at eye level. Her fearless practice and belief in her work resonates strongly. She holds true to the Italian term for leftovers, *avanzi*, meaning to take it forward.

Can you discuss how an artist navigates different studio spaces to work?

"I have an unplanned five-year cycle to change environments and studios; this New York space is my ground zero. Once, I worked for five years in Red Hook, Brooklyn, on the Buttermilk Channel, watching the ships go by. However, when I felt my work shifting towards sunsets – and I'm not a landscape painter despite earth pigments embedded in the work – I returned to the city, where the work transferred to the vertical. I relish new spaces to see what materials they gather. In truth, I am inspired by what's in the moment, and light is probably one of my biggest inspirations, so I am also drawn to working in Italy and upstate, away from the city. In Falls Village, I work in this funky garage that needs renovation, but I love it. I hope to enlarge it with McVoy and O'Neill, excellent architects willing to trade art to work on it! Transitioning between these opposing spaces allows

a pause in the work and a fresh eye," Keller explained.

Can you discuss the Bau residency program you set up?

"Inspired by a life-changing residency at McDowell, I advocated for artist residencies. My architect friend, Paola Iacucci, and her painter husband, with a group of Milanese abstractionists, annually headed to Otranto in Puglia, Italy. Later, Professor Iacucci set up an architecture program for students from Columbia, Cooper Union, and other schools. Derived from the concepts of building, arts, and urbanism, the name BAU was given. The town allowed Paola's group to use the ruined castle of Otranto as an incredible studio within the ancient castle walls." She continued, "In 2004, I collaborated with Paola to transition BAU Institute into an arts and culture residency for creative professionals. Over 300 artists, writers, dancers, and others have enjoyed BAU. When the town became a world heritage site and was funded by the EU, converting our castle into a museum, we retired from BAU Institute in 2015. The Italian residency ceased, however, we navigated BAU Institute to The Camargo

Foundation in Cassis, France, where it still offers a BAU summer residency for artists."

What advice do you have for younger artists today?

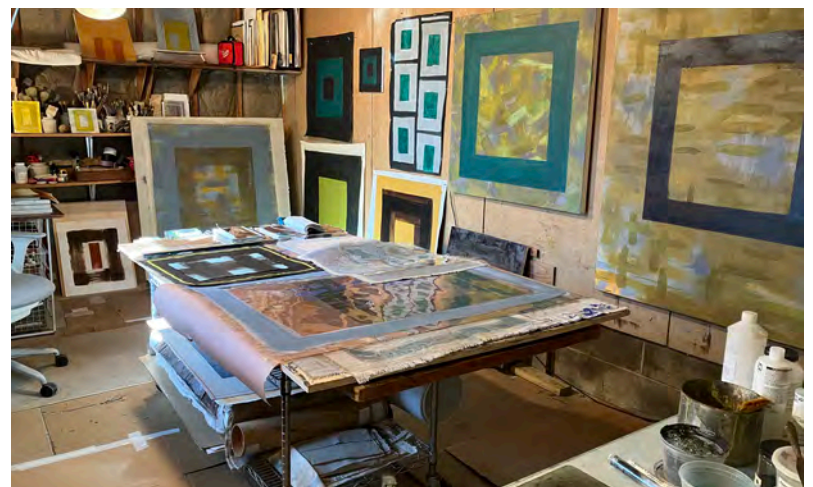
"I've taught painting and drawing at all levels at many universities. Currently, I'm teaching a foundation class at Hunter College. Teaching the beginning stuff is rewarding as you see the light bulbs go on. My advice is not to be an artist if you are ambivalent. If creating art is all you can visualize, if it is what you really desire – go for it, *but* if you can do anything else, don't become an artist. I always stress that artists rarely support themselves with their work."

She continued, "The joy of being an artist is being in the moment, holding onto what you find, and embracing the uncertainty, an essential aspect of painting. Painting teeters between two identities: being a thing itself and being an image of a thing. Ultimately, the meaning depends on the artist's intent. I am so lucky that I can keep making work forever."

While we talk, her cat bounces delicately across the studio shelves, mindful of paint and pigment and possibly in search of some fun.

Keller has shown work in the USA, Italy, and Germany. She is a member of the historic American Abstract Artists group. Her work is represented in the Whitney, the Met, and MoMA, and she has received grants from NYFA, NEA, and MacDowell. ●

To learn more about Marthe Keller you can visit marthekeller.com or email her at marthe@keller-email.com. Also learn more at americanabstractartists.org.



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Alex Athanasiadis is the owner of Demeter Home in Pine Plains, NY. Alex was born in Greece but then moved to New York City where he worked in the luxury fashion industry and held positions with international brands, including Giorgio Armani and Yves Saint Laurent, before moving upstate. “I’ve always loved home decor and had a passion for designing spaces. You should never just live somewhere – make it a home that is welcoming, livable, and a representation of your personality!” Alex enjoys patronizing the local restaurants and bars, spending time with his wonderful husband and three dogs, and collaborating with other local small businesses. His favorite parts of living in Pine Plains are the people and the sense of community.



Rachel Merriam is the owner of Fulton & Forbes, a wine and spirit store in Ancram, NY. Originally from New Haven, CT, Rachel came to the Hudson Valley when she attended the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park. She has been working in the wine business for over ten years and decided that it was time to start her own venture. “With my background in wine, it just made sense.” Rachel enjoys trying all of the new restaurants and bars in the area, too. “I also play a lot of tennis and typically travel to Chatham to play.” Her favorite thing about living in the Hudson Valley is that while it is rural, everything is within reach. “You’re still in the center of a lot here. We’re about 15 or 20 minutes from great things in any direction,” she said.



Renee Wilcox is the store manager at Paley’s Farm Market and Garden Center in Sharon, CT. She has worked at Paley’s for nearly 30 years and thoroughly enjoys helping people with their gardening needs. “My customers are great. I’m very blessed to look forward to going to work each day,” she said. Outside of work, Renee enjoys spending time with her family and friends, and of course, she enjoys gardening, too! She grew up in Millerton, NY, but she currently lives in Salisbury, where she has been “blessed to raise my family for the last 20 years.” Renee gushed about how much she loves her job and interacting with the community on a daily basis. “I’m very lucky to enjoy what I do!”



After a lengthy career in design, **Susan Maloney** opened her home good store, Abode, in Millerton, NY, one year ago. Many of the products in Abode are sourced from local artisans. “I carry a lot of items that I love and would put in my own home. I feel happy knowing that people are bringing home something that they love for themselves or to give to someone else.” Susan also offers interior design services, big or small. Outside of work, Susan enjoys traveling, cooking, hiking, and yoga. While she’s not originally from the area, she’s been here on and off for over 20 years and now resides in Sharon, CT. “It’s so beautiful: the sunsets, hiking trails, and nature – I just love it. The area has so much to offer in terms of community, arts, and culture.”



Kaelan Sprague has been a registered nurse for eight years and has been a registered nurse injector for the past year. “Being a nurse is an incredible honor,” Kaelan said. “We see people at their most vulnerable times, and we help.” Outside of work, Kaelan enjoys spending time with her husband and their two-year-old daughter. She’s originally from Millerton, NY, and her favorite part about the area is the small-town community. “My parents are both local nurses, and I love hearing stories about how they’ve positively impacted someone’s life,” she said. In the coming weeks, Kaelan is looking forward to bringing the world of medical aesthetics to her hometown. “I will be offering Botox, dermal fillers, IV services, and more each month at local salons!”



Jamie Nadler is a vegetable farmer and one of the owners of Dancing Greens Farm in Great Barrington, MA. She has been farming on and off for eight years, and she started Dancing Greens Farm last year. “I love that I get to eat what I produce!” Jamie likes to spend her time outside. She enjoys hiking, skiing, and running, and she also loves to sew, knit, and do anything crafty. While she’s not originally from the area – she grew up in the suburbs of New York – she loves the Berkshires. “My favorite thing is all of the hiking trails!” She also shared that Dancing Greens Farm has a lot of fun events coming up and encouraged folks to check them out this season.

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Mystery business

THE WOODWORKS COMPANY BECOMES DUTCHESS MILLWORK

By Christine Bates
info@mainstreetmag.com

Inspired by the popularity of our series on “mystery houses,” *Main Street* decided to extend the category to mystery businesses whose products, customers, and purposes elude our attention. The Woodworks Company, in existence for almost 50 years, is our first mystery business and, as with so many mystery houses, change is coming.

What's in that building on Route 44 by Troop K?

For 47 years thousands of cars have driven by a nondescript 9,000 square-foot building on their way to the Taconic Parkway. Located at 2599 Route 44 between the former Copperfield's Restaurant and a gas station, the plain brown building disappears on the commercial strip. Almost no one knows what's behind its modest façade, and for the past few decades that's been by design. But that anonymity is about to change.

Repainting, redesigning, new management – including a president – and a refreshed digital media presence will introduce the company's capabilities to a broader audience. Cars passing by and searchers on the Internet will notice it's there.

The Woodworks Company becomes Dutchess Millwork

Dutchess Millwork is the new name of a company that's completed more than 10,000 jobs over its history, including contributing towards many high-profile restoration projects like FDR's home and Migdale Castle in Dutchess County, the Library of

Congress, and St. Patrick's Cathedral. Its former name was The Woodworks Company, and just by looking at the two websites side by side you can see the evolution of the brand. What hasn't changed is the business model: making high-end residential and historical millwork.

“We do the hard stuff!”

Dutchess Millwork has two main business lines. First, it is a highly specialized replicator of high-end custom millwork such as moldings, doors, and windows that are used in renovation projects. They have many customers that want to exactly match a historical element in an old home or building and many others who send an Instagram inspiration picture they want to duplicate.

Their second business line is custom wood turnings, an art that goes back thousands of years. Dutchess Millwork has large CNC lathes, which means they can duplicate newels, spindles, columns, and table legs directly from a computer drawing. Most millworking shops build case work, cabinets, and book shelves and produce standardized moldings usually in pine and soft wood, but Dutchess Millwork doesn't do any cabinetry work. Instead, it “focuses on the hard things” having the space, expertise, skilled craftsmen, and industrial equipment to custom work with any wood species of customers liking, including white oak or African mahogany.

The folks at Dutchess Millwork complete difficult projects, and their capabilities are in demand from the “trade.” Contractors, stair builders, interior designers and architects rely



Continued on next page ...



All images with this story showcase Dutchess Millwork's finished work. The images are courtesy of Dutchess Millwork from its Instagram account, @dutchess-millwork.

on them to custom produce exact, quality details that few other companies can provide. Nothing in this shop is a “stock” item with an SKU.

Increasingly home owners are contacting them directly as they invest in and renovate older homes or add their own personal style to new construction.

What's new

Dutchess Millwork not only wants people to know it exists but wants to give back to the community that's supported it for almost five decades. It plans to collaborate with local groups and schools to host educational workshops and even start a free sustainability program to give local farmers the wood chips and dust to use on farms. It is also planning to put up a sign and paint that brown building.

The name Dutchess Millwork not only represents its home in Dutchess County but also nods to the fine woodworking that makes Dutchess County architecture and interiors so beautiful and classic. “Millwork is the ultimate quiet luxury. And it's getting harder and harder to find spaces and people who can make it well. That's

what we want to be known for,” said Francesco Paoselli, Dutchess Millwork's president, one of three new hires. “We are believers in the value that millwork adds to any project. It's not just about the aesthetic appeal; it's about creating a lasting impression that combines beauty with functionality. Millwork offers a unique blend of quiet beauty with practical benefits – it's cost-effective, requires minimal maintenance, and adds unmatched character to any setting.” Accustomed to working with employees who constantly respond to change, the biggest challenge for Paoselli is shifting the inertia of traditional established manufacturing business to the digital age. ●

Dutchess Millwork is located at 2559 US-44, Salt Point, NY 12578. You can call them at (845) 677-3960 or visit them online at dutchessmillwork.com.



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Blueberry lemon muffins

WITH CRUMB TOPPING AND LEMON GLAZE



By *Olivia Valentine with
Caroline Markonic*
info@mainstreetmag.com

If you've read even a small percentage of our recipes, you already know we love breakfast. Muffins may not be a "complete breakfast," but they sure are convenient. If you're rushing out the door you don't have to pour any milk in your cereal bowl, butter any toast, or fry any eggs. Just grab a muffin and go! No dishes made and no time wasted. Pack one in your lunch for a mid-day treat and have another after dinner as a reward for making it through the day. Treat yourself is our personal policy, and we stand by that always.

I have to thank Caroline for this recipe. We've both made many muffin recipes in the past and they have always been just, well, meh. Because of this, she had been working on this recipe and asked if I would try it. I whipped up the batter and gave it a taste test. The flavors were wonderful. The real test would be if the muffins met my moisture requirement. As soon as I took them out of the oven I could tell they were going to be good and sure enough, they were! I love a moist blueberry muffin with a great crumb topping, and these deliver. The addition of lemon juice and zest put them over the top. Blueberry and lemon is such a perfect combination. We added a lemon glaze, but that's an extra step you don't have to take if you don't want to. They are perfectly

delicious without it.

We always have plenty of taste testers that are willing to try our creations. Muffins received 5 stars from all of them, well, not all – one taste tester said they were a 10! But, you'll of course have to try them for yourselves.

Ingredients

1 cup sugar
¼ cup vegetable oil
¼ cup of melted butter
2 large eggs
½ tbs vanilla
Zest of a lemon
2 tbs lemon juice
2 ½ cups flour
½ tsp baking soda
¼ tsp baking powder
¼ tsp salt
½ cup buttermilk
¼ cup sour cream
1 cup frozen blueberries

Crumb topping Ingredients

½ cup sugar
¼ cup flour
½ tsp cinnamon
¼ cup room-temperature butter

Lemon glaze (optional)

½ cup powdered sugar
2 tbs fresh lemon juice

Directions

Preheat oven to 425° degrees. Oven rack should be in the middle of the oven. Spray a muffin pan generously with cooking spray or use cupcake/

muffin liners.

In a medium bowl, mix sugar with oil and melted butter. Add eggs one at a time and mix until thoroughly combined. Add vanilla, lemon zest, and lemon juice. Mix in the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt until combined. Next, mix in the buttermilk and sour cream. Gently fold in the frozen blueberries. The batter will be thick and will become thicker once you add the blueberries due to the temperature change.

Scoop the batter into the greased or lined muffin tins with a large ice cream scoop or large spoon.

Combine the crumb topping ingredients together and mix until crumbs start to form (do not mix until smooth). Sprinkle a generous amount onto each of the muffins.

Bake for 15 minutes at 425°. Reduce heat to 350° and bake for 10-15 minutes more. They should spring back when gently pressed with your finger. Allow to cool before drizzling them with the lemon glaze.

Muffins for May, muffins for Mother's Day! Bake these for your mom, and she might be just as proud of you as I am of Caroline! As always, enjoy.

Olivia and Caroline are enthusiastic foodies and bakers who are constantly in the kitchen, as well as explorers who create their own adventures in our area – and did we mention they are mother and daughter? Follow Olivia on Instagram to see her many creations at @oliviawvalentine.

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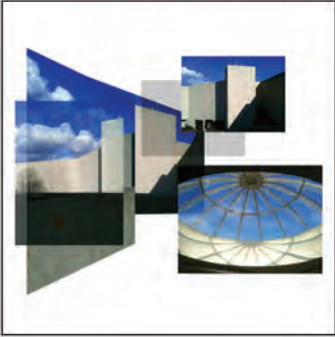

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Roses added to a fence set this house off visually from the road and add dramatic curb appeal. Photo courtesy of Lenore Mallett, William Pitt Sotheby's International Realty.



This lush native garden is in harmony with the Arts and Crafts Stone Cottage. The property owners have actively promoted their landscape as a model for how to fuse historic and ecological restoration. Photo courtesy of Larry Weiner Landscape Associates.

By Christine Bates
info@mainstreetmag.com

A gradual movement away from fertilized, mown green lawn with a band of spirea hiding foundations towards an intentional, sophisticated approach to residential landscaping is happening all around us. At the same time that sellers are “upgrading” bathrooms and kitchens to increase the value of their home and enjoy the improvements themselves, they are paying more attention to their front yard and exterior spaces.

Since COVID, nursery sales have exploded and interest in gardening has been permanently ignited. When a buyer views a home on Zillow or drives by a For Sale sign in the front yard, the exterior of a home is their first impression. It's not just the freshly painted front door but the natural environment that surrounds a home. It may be why houses sell at the highest prices in the spring and summer in the Northeast. Sales results show that appropriate, stylish landscaping can add 10% or more to the price of a house, and that the return

on investment on well-placed plants, shrubs, and trees exceeds 200% of their cost. Done well, a pleasing front yard conveys an elevated sense of design and maintenance that buyers will assume is carried throughout the house. Ignored or executed haphazardly, an uncared-for garden will cause buyers to look elsewhere.

“The story of every house starts at the street. Plants and hardscape can capture the homeowner's personality and help establish a calm space within an urban environment. The front garden is valuable real estate. Why not make the most of it,” states Scott Shrader in *The Art of Outdoor Living*.

Think before digging

Improving curb appeal and your enjoyment of your home with landscaping is less expensive and time consuming than architectural upgrades – plus you can often do it yourself. The first step is to take a look at what exists. That's what Lenore Mallett, a real estate agent with William Pitt Sotheby's, did when she purchased her Victorian home in Lakeville, CT.

“The first project we took on was taking down the neglected hedge that

was sucking all light out of the yard. In total, to take back the yard and to counteract almost 25 years of neglect, we took down close to 35 trees so we could start with a fresh canvas. The house finally felt like it could breathe.” No wonder it took so long for this house to find a buyer!

Next, remove dead or diseased plants, and trim and prune any existing vegetation so you can actually see what you have to work with.

Consider carefully what you want to accomplish. If your house is by a busy road, a screening hedge or a split rail fence with perennial plantings could modify the “too close to the road” perception. Your design approach should be in harmony with the residence, its location, and the neighborhood.

Does the front yard seen from the street relate to the color, architectural style, and size of the home? Traditional, stately homes look impressive with formal, symmetrical plantings, craftsman style homes benefit from an English cottage garden, while contemporary homes might utilize straight edge plantings and ornamental grasses. The overall effect should

enhance the façade of your house, its front door, entrance, and walkway.

Beyond mulch

Although an application of dark mulch is the cheapest, quickest solution for making an existing garden look better for immediate showing, professional landscape architects and garden designers have some basic rules that can help guide you to rethink the front yard for the long term.

1. Avoid both barren and cluttered. Create orderly crisp edges around plantings to signal the intentionality of the landscape design. This could be edging around beds, mulching, or stone or brick borders.

2. Select plants that will thrive in your location by researching light, soil type, moisture, and climate zone. Looking at nearby gardens and examining plant zone information on tags at your local nursery will help narrow down the choices. It's best to buy plants that are grown locally and suited to Zone 5 and below. Think of using native perennial plants, the ones

Continued on next page ...



Top: This Boston Corners house is tucked against the oak woodlands of the Taconic Range. A grove of native stag-horn sumacs frames the house entry and grounds it to the surrounding upland meadow fields. Little bluestem meadows and a tapestry of low native plants and thyme take the place of lawns. Photo courtesy of Architect Demetriades and Walker, Landscape Architect Jamie Purinton and planting by GardenTenders.

Above: These invasive cup plants might not be suitable for front yards but could add color to a native back yard wildlife corridor. Photo by Christine Bates.

that come back spring after spring, to increase biodiversity, and attract birds and pollinators.

3. Consider maintenance and environmental impact. These days people are decreasing the size of lawns and introducing lower maintenance, sustainable areas of native plants.

4. Stick to a limited palette and plant selection. Less can be more. Too much seems overwhelming and a lot of work.

5. Use dramatic focal plantings for emphasis.

6. Remember year-round seasonal appeal. Sequence bloom from early spring bulbs to peonies, summer hydrangeas, brilliant fall leaves, and evergreen species for the winter.

7. Select specimen trees, ideally native species, scaled to your yard and sited appropriately. Deciduous trees that lose their leaves can shade in the summer, offer brilliant autumn color, and allow passive solar heating in the winter while evergreen trees can add interest all year long. Remember the best time to plant a tree is last year.

Plan ahead

Is there a meadow in your future? One increasingly popular alternative to a vast green front yard is a wild meadow. Meadows are a “thing” right now, but creating and maintaining them is not as easy as sowing seeds from a wildflower envelope. The process requires time and expertise and

begins with site preparation, according to Larry Weiner, master meadow maker. “It begins with the elimination of existing growth. The most common methods are repeated applications of short-lived herbicide, mechanical removal, or a combination of the two.”

Next comes the seed layout, selection and planting – even meadows have a plan, according to Weiner. “The best plant arrangements combine the designer’s creativity with the patterns that occur in nature, as naturally occurring meadows rarely have a homogeneous mix of species evenly scattered throughout the area. More commonly, an individual plant or plant group, usually including grasses, will dominate, with smaller colonies of plants occurring in pockets or drifts. Replicating this arrangement can yield a natural and appealing meadow which relies more on the form and textures of grasses interplaying with subtle touches of color, rather than an unattainable constant explosion of bloom.”

After seeding comes mowing and weeding to maintain the meadow. Once in place a meadow is less work than a big lawn, but it does involve commitment and care. An alternative to a meadow or lawn for large acreage, especially in our rural area with large parcels and long driveways, could be a productive field of hay that could also reduce a property assessment for tax purposes.

Going native – not all the way

Native plants have entered the mainstream of gardening as people become aware of the difference they can make to our environment. Doug Tallamy, ecologist and co-founder of non-profit

Homegrown National Park, offered advice to home sellers whose gardens include native plants: “Information on ecological landscaping should be included in the listing, so buyers understand the ‘luxury value’ of buying a home that plays an essential role in biodiversity and, in turn, their responsibility in keeping the property productive.”

Native plants can serve a variety of purposes, and usually an attractive native plant can be substituted for an alien species. It doesn’t have to be all or nothing, and native plants can layer with more familiar ornamental non-natives and established plants. Native plants like grey dogwood may be too wild for the front yard and can effectively be used in the back yard edges to create a wildlife corridor, and decrease the fragmentation of the landscape.

Front yard for now and the future

“It’s become clear that buyers want a space they can enjoy,” commented Mallett. “And although I can’t help but think about resale (at some point) there comes a time that you do have to embrace your home and make choices for your own enjoyment and lifestyle. Luckily, I think the choices we have made will translate to a solid resale value.” Neighbors are thrilled with the rejuvenated garden at their street corner and the flowering native red bud trees that grace the front yard. When the time does come to sell, the landscaping effort, whether pollinator garden, native plants, rose borders, or a meadow should be documented and explained to the listing agent as an asset of the home. And don’t forget to take photos of your garden in all seasons as it grows and changes. •

Christine Bates is a registered real-estate agent in New York and Connecticut with William Pitt Sotheby’s. She has written about real estate and business since Main Street Magazine’s first issue in 2013.

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Trade Secrets

EVENT BENEFITS PROJECT SAGE AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS

By Abby Audenino
abby@mainstreetmag.com

The 24th Annual Trade Secrets event in support of Project SAGE will take place on May 18 and 19 at Lime Rock Park in Falls Village, CT.

Project SAGE is a nonprofit organization based out of Lakeville, CT, that serves northwest Connecticut and neighboring towns in New York and Massachusetts.

History

Trade Secrets started in 2000 when renowned interior designer Bunny Williams' greenhouse was filled with a surplus of primrose seedlings. One of Bunny's gardeners, Naomi Blumenthal, had become interested in propagating rare primrose varieties, and she was so successful in her endeavor that Bunny's greenhouse soon became crowded with seedlings.

In later winter of 2001, Bunny and Naomi came up with the idea to have a seedling sale. They quickly decided that all proceeds from the sale could go to benefit the local women's shelter that Naomi volunteered with – Women's Support Services – now known as Project SAGE.

Bunny and Naomi ran with the idea, and Trade Secrets was born.

The name Trade Secrets evolved from Bunny and Naomi's desire to find garden and antique sellers who were only known by a few in the industry. The Trade Secrets website states, "Bunny and Naomi convinced these sellers to come to this new, special event that was going to happen in a few months' time. All in all, they rounded up 45 vendors for that first year of Trade Secrets in 2001. Bunny graciously offered her pristine fifteen-acre property in Falls Village, CT, as the venue."

The event has only grown and evolved over the past 24 years. It changed venues multiple times as more and more vendors and people sought to attend. After being held at Bunny's estate for the first two years, Trade Secrets moved to the Wake Robin Inn in Lakeville, then to the LionRock Farm in Sharon, CT, and finally, to Lime Rock Park, where they've held the event for the past three years.

Trade Secrets' reputation precedes it. Many vendors come from all over the region, and even the country, and patrons travel quite the distance to stay in Northwest Connecticut for the weekend each year.

What can you expect at Trade Secrets?

The Trade Secrets event officially kicks off on Friday evening with an underwriting cocktail reception. Underwriters are donors who help cover the cost of Trade Secrets – ensuring that all of the proceeds from the event go directly to support the programs at Project SAGE. The reception is hosted by Carolyne Roehm at her home at Weatherstone in Sharon, CT.

On Saturday, Trade Secrets hosts a full day of tours of both public and private gardens in the area. One of the



gardens is Maywood Estate Gardens in Bridgewater, CT. Maywood is a private estate located at the southern tip of Litchfield County with panoramic views of the Berkshire foothills. The gardens are spread across the forty-acre landscape and provide fresh-cut flowers, vegetables, and field crops.

Patrons can also tour Christopher Spitzmiller and Anthony Bellomo's Clove Brook Farm in Millbrook, NY. The garden at Clove Brook farm started in 2014 following a full restoration of the farmhouse on the property. Since then, the garden has quickly grown into a series of interconnected spaces, beginning with a horseshoe-shaped garden near the house that is surrounded by a hornbeam hedge, and anchored by a dovecote – a structure built to house doves and other birds. The garden features tulips, sweet peas, dahlias, peonies, roses, and lilies throughout the season, and continues to evolve as more plantings are added.

Of course, patrons can also tour Bunny Williams and John Rosselli's garden in Falls Village, CT. The property encompasses twelve acres of varied gardens, including woodland,

vegetable, parterre, orchard, perennial, and many container displays that surround the home. In the vegetable and cutting garden, a variety of organic vegetables and herbs are grown with tulips, peonies, and dahlias from spring through fall.

This year, Trade Secrets is also featuring an Underwriter Exclusive tour of Page Dickey's Garden. The seventeen-acre property houses native and non-native perennials and shrubs, a curing garden at the back of the house, and a wetland rich with native shrubs and wildflowers.

"We try to make Trade Secrets a full weekend event, so when people reach out to us about it, we provide local suggestions of places to eat and shop," said Kaitlyn Robitaille, the director of appeals and fundraising events for Project SAGE.

On Sunday, the Trade Secrets Rare Plants & Garden Antiques Sale event starts at 7:30am for underwriters, at 9am for early buyers, and 10:30am for general admission ticket holders. The

Continued on next page ...

event runs until 3pm on Sunday.

“We are particularly excited about this year because we have so many new vendors coming from all over,” Kaitlyn shared.

On the antiques side, they have Showrooms 2220 and Francis J. Purcell coming from Philadelphia, PA; Artifacts coming from Atlanta, GA; and Plain & Elegant Antiques coming from Carrboro, NC, among many, many others.

Of course, we can't forget about the rare plants. Vendors including Atlock Farm from Somerset, NJ; Helia Native Nursery from Alford, MA; and Snug Harbor Farm from Kennebunk, ME, will sell their plants alongside many other farms and gardening organizations.

In addition to all of the vendors, Oblong Books will also be at the event on Sunday hosting a book signing with three authors. Tama Matsuoka will be signing and discussing her book *Into the Weeds: How to Garden Like a Forager*; Barbara Paul Robinson will be supporting her books *Gardening, a Love Story: Creating Brush Hill* and *Rosemary Verey: The Life and Lessons of a Legendary Gardener*; and finally, Bunny Williams will be signing her most recent book *Bunny Williams: Life in the Garden*.

Trade Secrets and Project SAGE

Bunny Williams has noted that the most rewarding part is watching the growth of Project SAGE.

Trade Secrets is Project SAGE's primary annual fundraiser. “We're so fortunate to have such a high-profile event that brings in a quarter of our annual operating support,” Kaitlyn said.

Formerly Women's Support Services, Project SAGE started out in a small rented room in Falls Village with one part-time employee and an all-volunteer staff. Trade Secrets has enabled Project SAGE to expand to Lakeville, CT, increase its services, and double its staff.

The services that Project SAGE offers are both impressive and necessary. They offer a 24-hour crisis hotline, emergency shelter, individual and group support groups and counseling, criminal and civil legal advocacy, training for local professionals, and violence prevention education programs for pre-K through 12 in all Region One schools in Northwest Connecticut.

Pre-K through second grade violence prevention education focuses on using stories and activities to explore empathy, identity, emotion regulation, communication, conflict management, and bystander intervention.

Elementary through eighth grade education focuses on addressing healthy relationships, boundaries, consent, and online safety.

High school education focuses on deepening the discussions that address healthy relationships, consent, relationship violence, gender identity, and sexual orientation. These programs focus on supporting age-appropriate development as students prepare to transition from high school into the wider world.

“Our prevention programs build upon themselves year after year, and they stress the importance of fostering healthy relationships in a variety of ways, such as teaching kids about online safety, naming trusted adults if you're in an uncomfortable situation,



and setting boundaries,” Kaitlyn said.

The Trade Secrets website states that, “many of those involved, including Bunny herself, spoke about how from the beginning, Trade Secrets has been a ‘win-win.’ The growth and expanded services of Project SAGE are a testament to the power of a community uniting for a cause led by people driven to make a difference, encouraged by the passion of a woman with a heart of gold.”

Kaitlyn agreed. “The event is made possible by the community, and it benefits the community. It's supported by over 200 volunteers that come out in a shared passion for gardening and desire to make meaningful change. Domestic violence is an unseen crime, and it's one that impacts one in three women and one in four men. To see everyone join together to end domestic violence for this event is heartwarming.” ●

To learn more about Trade Secrets and purchase tickets for the event, visit its website tradesecretsct.com. To learn more about Project SAGE, visit its website project-sage.org.



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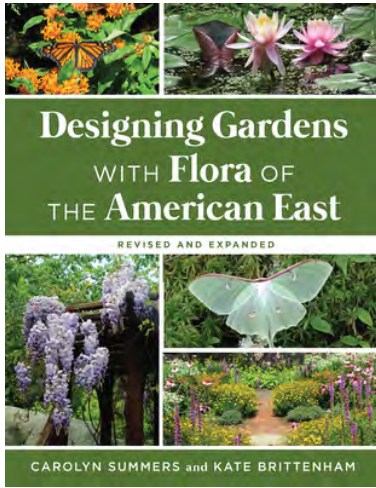
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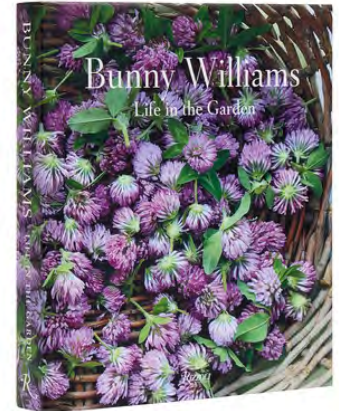
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My Favorite Plant: Writers and Gardeners on the Plants They Love by Jamaica Kincaid

Kincaid gathers a sparkling selection of new and beloved poetry and prose about each author's favorite flora. The passion for gardening and the passion for words come together in this inspired anthology, a collection of essays and poems on topics as diverse as beans and roses, by writers who garden and gardeners who write.



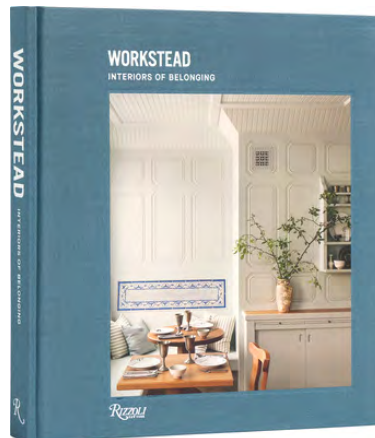
Bunny Williams: Life in the Garden by Bunny Williams, Annie Schlechter

A natural sequel to the seminal *An Affair with a House*, this is Bunny Williams' most ambitious book to date. Inviting us into her impressive grounds with charming personal anecdotes, expert advice, and creative ideas for how to bring natural elements into the home, this book is a testament to Bunny Williams' love affair with the garden and woodlands surrounding her eighteenth-century manor house in Northwestern Connecticut.



Country House Living: Celebrating the Beauty of Life at Home by Nora Murphy

Following the success of Nora Murphy's *Country House Style*, Murphy celebrates a selection of homes and their homeowners, each exemplifying a different style. For Murphy, a country house isn't so much a place as it is a state of mind. Here, she explores the tenets of country house style, as illustrated by her own "new" country house, and the many other striking homes she curated for the book.



Workstead: Interiors of Belonging by Workstead, David Sokol (contributor)

Presenting acclaimed design studio Workstead's trendsetting commercial projects, public places of both beauty and necessity that embrace a distinct sense of place while making us feel almost right at home. Over the past decade, Brooklyn-based Workstead has earned wide acclaim for its signature residential projects, as well as larger-scale projects such as the Wythe Hotel in Brooklyn and the Rivertown Lodge in Hudson, NY. As their projects expand, Workstead's design approach continues to feel very of the moment, rooted in an appreciation of craftsmanship, detail, and materiality.



The Selby Comes Home: An Interior Design Book for Creative Families by Todd Selby

Photographer, director, and bestselling author Todd Selby captures the wildly creative family homes of forty-one artists, writers, makers, and designers in *The Selby Comes Home*. For the past two decades, Selby has traveled around the world, photographing people in their spaces. He has captured the lives of various quirky individuals in three books: *The Selby Is in Your Place*, *Edible Selby*, and *Fashionable Selby*.



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Southern charm

By Regina Molaro
info@mainstreetmag.com

Once you enter House SFW in Rhinebeck, NY, you'll be enveloped by bold pink and yellow floral-patterned walls topped by a deep green ceiling. Upon first glance, you'll notice that the vivid colors, busy patterns, and eye-catching displays at this home furnishings shop are markedly different from other Hudson Valley destinations. Sunshine floods in the oversize windows of the artistic shop, which is adorned with leafy plants, colorful textured rugs, and other stylish home accents.

"We don't try to fit into the traditional farmhouse style or at least what typically comes to mind around that theme. A lot of interiors that are marketed as 'cozy' ultimately lack the feeling of comfort you get when you walk into a well-curated space," said architect Rachael Stollar, one of the co-founders of House SFW.

Along with Stollar, House SFW and its sister company, Studio SFW – an interior design and architecture firm in Manhattan – were co-founded by interior designer Erin Fearins and architect Ward Welch.

House SFW opened its doors in the summer of 2021. Its launch followed the founding of Studio SFW earlier that year. Together, Stollar, Fearins, and Welch employ an approach that imbues lived-in luxury to interiors and lifestyle projects.

Beyond their talents for creating design, another commonality the trio shares is their Southern roots. Stollar, Fearins, and Welch were raised in the rural communities of West Virginia, Tennessee, and Virginia, respectively. While growing up, they all spent lots of time uncovering treasures at local antique shops and auction houses.

"There is a rich Southern history in the word 'hospitality.' At its root, that is what our design practice

and the shop are all about. We are welcoming and want to create a warm atmosphere that is hospitable and reflects true Southern values," said interior designer Erin Fearins.

About the designers

A licensed architect, Stollar is a member of the American Institute of Architects and Design Leadership Network. She earned her bachelor of architecture at the University of Tennessee and holds a master of fine arts in photography from Parsons School of Design, The New School in Manhattan.

A native of West Virginia, Stollar has traveled extensively worldwide to research vernacular architecture and studied floral design and photography as part of her architectural influence. She splits her time between Rhinebeck and Brooklyn, where she lives with her husband, musician Nikolaus Schuhbeck.

Fearins is a member of the American Society of Interior Designers. Raised on her family's sprawling farm in the mountains of East Tennessee, the esteemed designer credits her father – a skilled furniture maker and craftsman – for cultivating her passion for all things design.

After earning her bachelor of science in interior design from the University of Tennessee, Fearins founded Fearins & Welch Interior Design along with Welch. She currently resides in Brooklyn with her husband, architect Jesse Fearins, and their two children.

Along with Stollar, Welch leads Studio SFW's residential practice. As an architect, his focus is on apartments in Manhattan and Brooklyn as well as homes around the metropolitan area and "East End" of New York.

Welch, who has been practicing architecture and interior design in New York City since 1999, was raised on a farm in the rural tobacco market area of southern Virginia. Intrigued by the Victorian architecture of his



Above: The displays at House SFW include a range of artwork from its rotating roster of artists.

once-thriving hometown, he earned his bachelor of science in architecture followed by his master of architecture from the University of Virginia.

He currently splits his time between Manhattan's Sutton Place and Long Island's Amagansett. His Amagansett home, which he designed with his husband, architect Paul Rice, has been spotlighted in multiple publications.

Having renovated homes in Brooklyn, Manhattan, Long Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, the Hudson Valley, and Florida for two decades, SFW's team thrives on the details – from the overall aesthetic down to the most "tactile moments of a space."

That can be in the form of the perfectly scaled swivel chair on SFW's button-tufted dutchess and its coordinating, adjustable SFW bourbon table – both designed by the team – or in

Continued on next page ..

their soft, patterned rug that is rich in color.

At ease establishing a narrative that carries through interior, exterior, and the surrounding landscape, Studio SFW takes a discerning approach to creating spaces that are tailored, expertly layered, and alluring. Recent projects included a Montauk, Long Island home and a townhouse in Brooklyn.

The retail experience

Let's head back inside the captivating shop.

The debut of House SFW marks this trio's first store. Its launch was inspired by the designers' shared desire to showcase a delightful edit of their most favorite things for the home. House SFW was conceived as the "imaginative" retail showcase for the decorative collections of the company's architecture and interior design practice in Manhattan.

The collection spans from furnishings to decor, apparel, and stylish items to entertain with.

Renowned for its Southern sensibility and made-to-order approach to design, SFW's partners have expertly curated an assortment of "choice" pieces from artists and artisans with whom they've collaborated over the years.

Some highlights include furniture by Mario Lopez Torres, furniture by Atelier Delalain, textiles and pottery by Ted Tyler, hand-painted leather goods and glassware by artist Elizabeth Hargraves-Mandy, and furnishings and decor by Raton Laveur, which is SFW's own collection.

"Our unique vintage collection is always a favorite. Those pieces tend to fly out the door the moment they hit the floor," said Ward Welch. The team has also brought in some carefully selected antiques and vintage objects from charming country estates and flea markets far off in Paris. These include a linen table runner with a bold blue-and yellow-striped trim and a vintage French deco nutcracker.

Driven by art

"As designers and architects, we are experts at layering and creating a look that is a translation of our clients' personal style. In the shop, we are the client, so we show what we love, which is the ultimate expression of our style," said Fearins.

The team scouts out local artists whether they call upstate NY home or are just "local" to Stollar, Fearins, and Welch. Stollar has a lifelong love of collaborating with various types of artists, so much of the artwork in the store reflects her outreach and the connections she's fostered. Since House SFW works with its clients to select artwork for their unique spaces, each artist connection has evolved quite organically.

Its rotating roster of recent artists includes Alejandro Avakian, Michelle Mannix, Scott Zimmer, Nigel Parry, Paul Mindell, Vincent Brandi, Frank Spinelli, and Charisma Panchapakesan. Their work spans from photography to ceramics, paintings, and beyond.

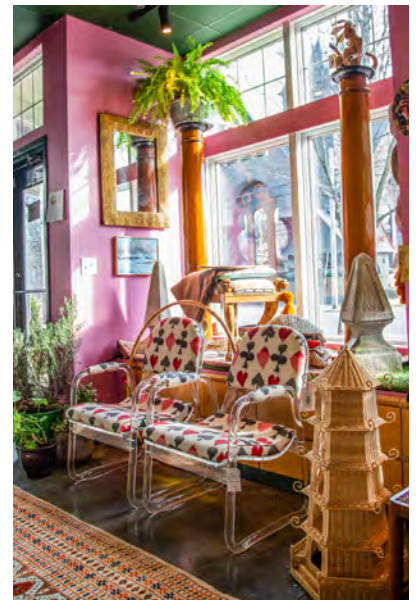
House SFW's also works with a taxidermist in Brooklyn who creates vintage-style pieces. He keeps the shop supplied with delightful birds, insects, and occasionally some larger animals. He's also created custom mini beetle dioramas, which were used as name holders for a local dinner event.

At your service

Beyond the assortment of merchandise and artwork, House SFW offers design services to the Hudson Valley community – everything from hourly consultations to whole-house design.

"From aesthetic concepts to tangible objects, we provide a collaborative, hands-on approach to implementing design. We hope that the people who like our windows or sit in one of our upholstered chairs will realize the value of these pieces and maybe even become our future clients," said Welch.

Speaking of the stunning displays, the shop's merchandising efforts are rooted in the team's approach to interior space. "We want to inspire customers to think about their space with a fresh perspective – layering vintage, custom, and new to create a totally



unexpected experience. Erin, Ward, and I are not traditional shopkeepers, so it makes sense that our shop doesn't feel like your typical retail space," said Stollar.

This dream team enjoys hosting creative events that bring their whimsical style to spaces beyond the retail shop. They consider the Hudson Valley a destination that truly celebrates community building and believe that being part of local events only encourages that spirit.

At press time, House SFW was expanding its online shop's footprint as well as its presence at pop-up events throughout key markets such as New York City, the Hudson Valley, the Hamptons, and beyond. ●

Studio SFW is located at 6423 Montgomery St., Rhinebeck, NY. Call (845) 516-5162 or visit online at house-sfw.com.

Top, left: The displays at House SFW reflect the teams' design approach, which imbues lived-in luxury. Right: House SFW offers an extensive collection of home accents such as these colorful tassels.

Above, left: L-R: Rachael Stollar, Erin Fearins, and Ward Welch. Right: The interior of House SFW is alive with bold colors, captivating textures, and chic patterns.



Photo by Phillip Reed

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Columbia County Recovery Kitchen

tackling food insecurity in Columbia County



By Abby Audenino
abby@mainstreetmag.com

Carole Clark worked in the restaurant industry for over 30 years – 19 of which were in Hudson, NY – so feeding people was something that she was more than familiar with. While she wasn't working in the restaurant business at the start of the pandemic, she had been the chef proprietor of Charleston Restaurant in Hudson for many years previously and felt that she had to do something when the pandemic hit.

"I knew a lot of families in Hudson who were food insecure before COVID, so I knew their lives would be severely impacted. That also included my staff," Carole said. "I had to do something."

Carole immediately went into action. She wanted to provide whole, nutritious meals for the food-insecure community members; all she needed was a kitchen and some help. The first meals were actually cooked in her own home. She reached out to two chefs that she knew were out of work due to the pandemic, and they brought

even more former restaurant staff with them. "We started doing 200 meals a week in a small kitchen that was provided by the Christ Church Episcopal on Union Street in Hudson," Carole said. They are still located there today.

"The whole thing was charmed from the beginning," she further explained. "Every person I called to ask for help said yes."

Thus, the Columbia County Recovery Kitchen was born.

Expansion

Since its start in 2020, the Recovery Kitchen has grown in every way. "The most important part is the enormous number of volunteers that we have," Carole said. The Recovery Kitchen currently has two full-time chefs and over 100 volunteers, and the list keeps growing.

"We've actually had to put people on a substitute list because we have so many regular volunteers," Carole said. "That has just been amazing."

The Recovery Kitchen was able to hire an executive director, Jolene Race, in February. Jolene previously served as the director of the Columbia County Solid Waste Department.

When she retired in December of 2023, she felt that she wasn't done working just yet.

"I had known about the organization, and when I saw the listing, I thought I could be a good fit," she said. "I remember saying to Carole, 'you've got a dream and it's my job to make it happen.'"

The Columbia County Recovery Kitchen works with various agencies for referrals, including the department of social services, schools, clinics and doctors, among others. Self referrals are also accepted.

"Outreach is really what we're trying to ramp up moving forward. We're focusing on how to get the word out to people in need," Jolene said. "I didn't realize how many people are in need in this area. If it's not in your scope, it's not necessarily something you're thinking about."

According to the Recovery Kitchen's website, 11.5% of Columbia County's population of 60,000 struggles with food insecurity and 16.5% of Columbia County children are hungry.

Generally speaking, the criteria goes by need and ability to get food. Many times, Jolene said that elderly people aren't necessarily looking for a free meal, but simply looking for someone

to deliver the meal to them because they can't drive or can't get out.

"That's where we need to expand outreach because so much of our elderly population is located in rural parts of the county," she said. "A lot of our drivers that deliver meals are guardians in a way, too. They notice if someone doesn't open the door or if they didn't pick up their mail. They lobby for them in addition to delivering their meals."

Carole agreed. "A lot of the rural poor are invisible. Many of them aren't affiliated with churches or social services organizations, they just live out in the country, and they have limited transportation, so they can't get around as easily."

An average day

There are two full-time chefs at the Recovery Kitchen, Tommy Carlucci and Kathy Silliman. Tommy and Kathy work five days a week, typically starting their day around eight o'clock in the morning. Around nine o'clock, that day's volunteers come in to help prep, cook, and package the meals.

Continued on page 35 ...

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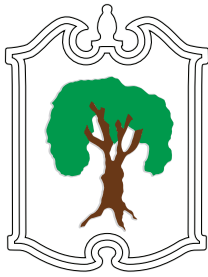
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In addition to the families in need that Recovery Kitchen serves, they also have agreements with the Hudson Youth Department and Columbia Opportunities' Head Start, which means they have to be mindful of the children's food allergies, dietary restrictions, and sensitivities.

Moreover, in addition to volunteers working in the kitchen, the Recovery Kitchen also has volunteers managing the spreadsheets of delivery routes and the 70 drivers who deliver the cost-free meals to people's homes.

"Everybody shows up. It's great," Jolene said. "That just amazed me because coming from government, having employees is quite different from having volunteers. It's incredible to see people in their twenties all the way up to their seventies come in and donate their time."

The chefs behind the food

Tommy previously worked at the Blue Plate in Chatham, NY, and was working four days a week at the Chatham Food Co-op when he started volunteering for the Recovery Kitchen.

"We've grown so much and we're still taking on individuals. We're not saying no to anyone," Tommy said.

On the Thursday that I stopped in, Tommy, Kathy, and the volunteers were busy packing up a hamburger helper-esque meal.

"This is a fun meal. It's hamburger helper using real cream, cheese, whole wheat pasta, local farm beef, and

roasted peppers and onions. So we're making it at a different level," Tommy explained.

The day before, they cooked up a chicken, egg noodle, and broccoli dish with a mushroom cream sauce.

"That's a meal that you're going to pay \$20 or more for in a restaurant, and it's no different from a recipe that I would make when I was working in restaurants. Our goal is to provide high quality, nutritious meals."

Typically, Tommy tries to have Monday's menu planned and shopped for by the Friday before. Then on Monday, he takes time to write out the meals for the remainder of the week.

"Sometimes I only have Monday through Wednesday planned, and sometimes it's rotating meals that we know work and putting a bit of a spin on them. We might make this same meal, but on a different day," he said.

Tommy has some limitation as to how much space he has for storage in the kitchen, which means that he's shopping daily. "A year ago, Carole asked me what I thought I could do here, and I told her that I thought we'd be really hard pressed to do more than 1,200 meals a week. A year later, we're doing 1,600 meals a week in the same space," he said.

For Tommy, this is the most rewarding work he's ever done. "I feel so lucky. I wish I had been doing this for twenty years. This is what I was meant to be doing. It took a fifty-year career to get here."

Kathy knew Tommy from working as a chef. She started volunteering at the Recovery Kitchen one day a week a year ago. "I wasn't happy at my current job, and Tommy said he needed help here. I fell in love with it. We kept growing and growing, so what started as a one day a week volunteer position turned into a five day a week full-time position," she said.

For Kathy, the most rewarding part of working at the Recovery Kitchen is the relationships that she's built with the people that she works with. Oh



Above: The Recovery Kitchen team prepares 1,600 meals every day.

Below, left: Chefs Tommy and Kathy.

Previous page: Tommy and Jimmy prepare nutritious meals, as exemplified in the two photos flanking them.

yeah, and making 1,600 meals a week for those in need is pretty awesome, too.

"I'm a single mom. Sometimes I think to myself, 'oh my god, how am I going to do this?' It can seem impossible. But then I come here, and I see our numbers growing every week, and I realize that I am doing a good job. We meet people who are living in hotels with their children and displaced from their communities and their schools, and I'm very fortunate that we have a stable life," she said. "It's just a no-brainer for me. It's the most rewarding job I've ever had."

At the Recovery Kitchen, Kathy gets to be creative, too. They frequently get donations from farmers, so if one day they get 20 pounds of pork cheek donated, the cooks have to adapt their recipes to accommodate that donation. "What are we going to do with that? We have to figure it out because we have to cook it and move it," she said.

Additionally, if they have any meals left over at the end of each day, they donate them to the community fridges in Hudson. "We used to be

Continued on next page ...



able to do more for the community fridges, but we have extra groups to cook for now. As far as the kids are concerned, a large percentage of them have dietary restrictions, so if we can't feed something to the kids, it'll go to the fridges. We use everything we can."

Echoing Tommy's concerns, Kathy agreed that space and time are the two biggest challenges. Without proper storage, they aren't able to house as many ingredients or to store the food, which means they're working day-to-day and can't necessarily get ahead during the week.

However, she noted that they are not short of volunteers. "We started a substitute list because so many people wanted to help. That's how dedicated these people are to their work, and that just goes back to the most rewarding part. It's the people."

Kathy said she'll never go back to working in a restaurant. "This matters. I will never go back to wanting to make fancy food for privileged people. I would rather make hamburger helper for 293 people that otherwise might not eat anything today."

Jimmy Jagmin started volunteering as a cook at the Recovery Kitchen about a year ago, after he met Carole at the local farmer's market. "A personal philosophy for me is that sharing a meal with somebody is the most sacred thing, so being able to provide food for people that are in need is the way that I feel like I can give back the most," he said. "All of the volunteers are great, and it's a great cause. This community has a lot of people in need. Oh, and Kathy and Tommy are hilarious and really fun, too."



Farm liaison

Nancy Kuster is a friend of Carole's and started volunteering at the Recovery Kitchen at its inception in 2020.

Nancy also serves as the farm liaison for the Recovery Kitchen, which means her primary responsibilities are building relationships with local farms and managing donations.

"I've worked on farms, so I have a lot of connections in the area," she said. "Last year, we had a volunteer program at the farm I work at in which half of what the volunteers harvested at the farm would go to the farm and the other half would be donated to the Recovery Kitchen."

The Recovery Kitchen works with a long list of farms in the area, among them Churchtown Dairy, Fat Apple Farm in Pine Plains, Green Acres Farm in Hudson, and Hawthorne Valley Farm, among many, many others. A full list of farm partners is available on its website.

Currently, Nancy is applying for a variety of grants that would allow the Recovery Kitchen to pay local farms for the food they donate.

"We're working on some fundraising to help pay them as well," she said. "It's harder and harder for farmers to make a living and afford to live in this area, so if we can support them and reciprocate in some way, we want to do that. We want good food, but it's not fair to expect them to just give it to us. Everything is too expensive now."

The most rewarding part for Nancy is getting healthy, local food to people who are hungry and malnourished.

"Carole's always open to different ideas and opportunities. She's a force of nature and it's amazing what she's been able to accomplish," she said. "We just keep making changes as needed. If things aren't working, we try something new."

Looking long-term

Carole and Jolene would like to continue to expand the program and find more space with a bigger kitchen. Additionally, they're looking into expanding into other parts of Columbia County.



Above: Chef Tommy at work. Below: Volunteers hard at work. All images with this article courtesy of the Columbia County Recovery Kitchen.

"We want to serve a larger part of the food-insecure population. Even though we're doing 1,600 meals, we're only serving a fraction of the population that is food insecure," Carole said. "We'd like to be doing 3,000 meals a week."

Another thing they'd like to expand is their relationships with local farms. "This community is agricultural. While we have already built relationships with 26 farms in the area, we'd like to work with others."

Carole also noted that what they do at the Recovery Kitchen is replicable and that they'd be more than willing to work with other counties to help them create their own Recovery Kitchen programs.

The Recovery Kitchen is always looking for volunteers in various capacities including grant writing, scheduling, website design, graphic designers, drivers, marketers, and many more.

"Anyone, really. We'll find something for you to do," Carole smiled. The easiest way to show your interest in volunteering is to apply on the website or email Carole at info@columbiacountyrecoverykitchen.org.

For Carole, the most rewarding part of the past four years has been providing better nutrition for those who truly need it. "That's the most gratifying part. Doing whatever you can to combat hunger is what I feel is most important. Many of these people are nutrition insecure as well, so knowing that we're helping to provide better nutrition and whole foods is key." •

To learn more about the Columbia County Recovery Kitchen, visit its website columbiacountyrecoverykitchen.org, or follow it on Instagram @ccrecoverykitchen.

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THE MUSEUM EFFECT

By CB Wismar
info@mainstreetmag.com

'Tis the season. Winter is now a fading memory. With warmer temperatures, windows and doors open, and the brackishness of closed houses drifting away, it's time to offer up our trinkets and treasures to the annual tradition of yard sales.

Based on the geographic origin of our childhoods, our designation for this rite of spring can be quite different. Call them yard sales, rummage sales, tag sales, or garage sales (we once heard a young contestant searching through boxes of abandoned Lego blocks furtively ask "Why are they selling their garage?"), the effect is the same. Items rescued from attics, the back of desk drawers, boxes relegated to the basement, and dusty corners of the garage appear on tables strewn across the front yards of neighboring houses. Ads have been placed. Signs have been fashioned with colorful cardboard and markers. Fingers crossed for sunshine, the day begins.

Cars with out-of-state license plates magically appear parked along the street and seasoned inspectors with specific agendas move rapidly among the displayed items. Garden tools? Novels? Sets of dishes? Hummel figurines? Retired power washers? American Girl dolls? Ten-speed bicycles? Children's clothes? Hand saws? Paper weights? There is truly no accounting

for the appetites of those who power through the display tables, pick up one or two items, then scurry back to their cars to pursue the scavenger hunt down the road.

Prices, of course reflect the desire of the seller to avoid having to re-pack the loot at the end of the day. The longer grandma's hand mixer sits in the sun, the lower the price becomes until someone appears and, diverting their eyes, asks "Will you take a quarter?"

Sold!

Although the thrill of the sale may overshadow any other sensation at that very moment, the question remains ... often unanswered: Why did we have that thing in the first place? What possessed us to hang onto the chipped bookends from our aunt's house? Did we really think that the slightly warped tennis rackets that were stuffed in a box in the garage behind the half bag of potting soil were important?

How about a "divorce sale"?

Filmmaker Marc Silverstein and actor Busy Philipps documented their indoor, slightly unusual, in-Manhattan yard sale in a recent issue of *The New Yorker*. The two have been divorced for over three years, but objects accumulated in the time they were

together had been silently waiting in a rented storage unit. It was time for the "divorce sale." Out came the useful and the unusual.

Dividing the space between them, books, picture frames, small appliances, and furniture were offered for review and sale. As Busy is quoted, "Once you live without something for three and a half years and you open up a box and look at it, you're like 'Wait, do I need that?'"

It is our nature

Do we need that? No. Do we keep it? Yes, we do. We are collectors. It is embedded in our DNA and evident every time we decide to slip some random memento in a drawer rather than into the trash bin. After all, for some, it is not who we are, but what we have. And, fortunately, for some, it is not what we have, but what we can give away.

Our homes, no matter how modest, have become museums to our nature. The photos placed on tables, the tea set gathering dust on a high kitchen shelf, the football jersey from a (frankly) less than stellar high school career, folded and forgotten in a bedroom closet, are all parts of the museum collection that roughly defines us. Why keep that and not something else? What do the things we have held

on to – our museum collection – say about us?

This is not a screed designed to sweep every piece of memorabilia off of the living room side table and into the trash. It is merely a question. What does our personal museum and its colorful collection say about us?

Moments frozen in time

Passing through the living room and seeing a ceramic bird acquired on a decades old trip to Mexico gives us a momentary reflection of a pleasant time with friends, now lost to history. No matter that there is a small chip out of the figure, the memory lasts without damage.

Moments frozen in time – the intersection of impulse and nostalgia that put that item, that picture, into our personal museum – are the moments that matter. Pleasant memories, homage to long-passed family members, momentary flashes that bring a smile, even a laugh – they are all important.

But that old tennis racket and the power washer that was so cumbersome that we used it only once before pushing it further into the darkest reaches of the garage? Put a price on them – a bargain price – and let the museum archives be better for their departure. •



DIALOGUE: Art in Conversation
Nathaniel (Tate) Klacsmann and Valerie Hammond



Nathaniel Klacsmann, Blue Swallows and a Black, 16x16"



Valerie Hammond, Spectre With Threads

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Brews & Blooms

AT SLOW FOX FARM BREWERY

By Abby Audenino
abby@mainstreetmag.com

In 2016, Matt and Miranda Mobley began their search for land in the Hudson Valley region, looking for a place where they could grow food and create a gathering place for the local community.

Matt, who grew up in Florida, was raised working on his family's cattle ranch and in a number of restaurants they owned in the Tampa area.

When he moved to New York City after college, he met his now-wife, Miranda, and they quickly bonded over their love of food. They spent time working together in various farm-to-table restaurants in the city and honed their vision for what would become Slow Fox Farm.

After looking at land for a couple of years, they closed on their spot in Rhinebeck, NY, in 2018, and Slow Fox Farm Brewery was born.

Well, sort of.

The land wasn't functioning as a farm at the time that Matt and Miranda purchased it, so they quickly got to work getting the ground de-rocked and irrigation systems put in. From there, they redid fencing, and within the first year were growing crops and raising animals on the property. In

2021 they opened their farm store, and in 2022 got the brewery up and running.

In the brewery

When Matt was in college, he spent time brewing beer as a hobby, but got much more serious about it when he and Miranda moved to Rhinebeck.

"It started with years of intense home brewing and refining of recipes. Then it moved to scaling up and getting to know the commercial equipment and processes," Matt explained.

Comparatively speaking, Slow Fox is a pretty small brewery. They work on a three and a half barrel system, which means they only produce about 100 gallons of beer per brew. It all starts with the water. Matt said that they're very lucky to have great water at the farm, which was one of the things that sold them on the land initially. From there, they combine the water with malt, which they get from Hudson Valley Malt, located in Germantown.

"We're lucky to have a locally grown product that is malted in an old-world style. It leads to a lot more complexity and flavor, and it doesn't



have to travel far, which is nice, too," Matt said.

Following the brewing process, the beer goes on to ferment for three weeks to two months, depending on the style. They then keg it and can it for serving and selling in the store.

They currently have eleven beers on tap, including "Bad Helen," an American Pale Ale; "Baby Hippos," a New England IPA; and "Yard Bird," a sour brewed with szechuan peppercorn and hibiscus and aged on black currant and plum.

In addition to its own beer, the tasting room features a fully stocked bar that offers a variety of NY State liquors, wines, and ciders as well as thoughtfully crafted cocktails that change seasonally and feature farm-grown ingredients.

Slow Fox also hosts food trucks every Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. It works with a number of wood-fired pizza trucks, Brooklyn Oyster Party, and a handful of great local chefs.

In the coming months, Slow Fox is moving into wholesaling, so you can

look forward to seeing its beer appearing at various stores and vendors in the Hudson Valley region.

Regenerative farming + taking care of the animals

Slow Fox Farm comprises a total of 53 acres of land with 23 acres of cleared fields and 30 acres of woods. It currently grows all flowers and vegetables on a little over one acre of usable ground.

Matt manages a small herd of Scottish highland cattle and raises pigs and broiler chickens. "We're also adding some ducks this year just for entertainment and because we love duck eggs."

As far as the horticulture side of things, Slow Fox grows a wide variety of vegetables, but it specializes in bagged salad greens, cooking greens, tomatoes, and peppers. It plants a



Continued on next page ...

half an acre of pick-your-own flowers, which will most likely open to the public in June.

This coming season will also see the very exciting addition of a Hops yard. Matt plans to install trellising poles this spring/summer and plant around 200 cascade-variety hops in the fall.

Matt and Miranda employ fully organic practices, which means they don't use herbicides or pesticides. They weed everything by hand and for insect control, they love to use predatory pests and beneficial nematodes in their soil. This naturally combats the insects they don't want without spraying any organic pesticides. They also utilize plastic mulch to cover and protect the soil, which they roll back when it comes time to plant. Matt and Miranda employ rotational grazing techniques and make sure all animals are raised as humanely and naturally as possible.

As far as preparation goes for the upcoming season, Miranda just finished seeding the spring plants, while Matt has been catching up on projects and ramping up production in the brewery.

As the season progresses, the garden is a daily activity. Miranda spends most of her time planting, weeding, and harvesting while Matt manages the animals and brewery.

They typically have up to five different beers fermenting or needing to be packaged at any time.

"And of course, there's always weeding to be done and fences to repair," Matt laughed. "We're also getting pigs in another three to four months, and they're always a handful."

Creating connections

For Matt and Miranda, the biggest reward has been getting to know everyone in their community and making so many new friends.

"Farming is oftentimes a very isolating job, you're out there 95% of the time not talking or interacting with the people who are enjoying what you're growing," Matt said. "We centered a lot of our work around the store so that we get to meet our neighbors, and it's been really great."

On Saturday, May 4, Slow Fox will be hosting its annual spring fest. There will be craft tables set up for kids, food from Chef Misto, and plenty of beer. Additionally, it also hosts a cascarones egg smash. An Italian tradition, eggs are hollowed out and the shells are filled with confetti. Getting one broken over your head is supposed to be a symbol of good luck.

This season Slow Fox is offering two community-supported agriculture programs, which are available for purchase online – one for produce and one for pick-your-own flowers and herbs. The produce CSA starts the first week in June and ends the last week in October. The subscription consists of an array of vegetables that Slow Fox grows and will change



All photos with this article courtesy of Slow Fox Farm.

as the season progresses. The flower and herb CSA also starts around the first few weeks of June and concludes either the last week in October or the first week in November – weather dependent. Both CSAs are offered on a weekly or bi-weekly basis.

Slow Fox partners with a handful of other local farms to keep its store stocked with great products from around the region. It has fresh sourdough bread delivered weekly from To Have and Have Not Farm in Clinton Corners, farm-raised steelhead from Hudson Valley Fisheries, and various vegetables it doesn't grow from Thousand Leaf Gardens and Mx Morningstar Farm. "When we don't have our own pork we get that from Kinderhook Farms. They practice great animal husbandry, and we love their products."

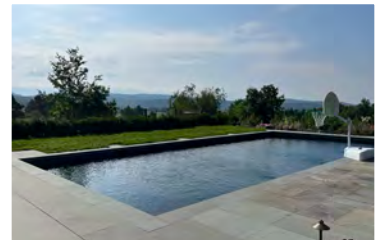
"We have a casual, laid-back, relaxed vibe here at the farm, and that's the feedback that we get from customers, too," Matt said. "We're very accepting and we want everyone to feel comfortable here. Come on a weekend and check us out." ●

Slow Fox Farm Brewery is open on Fridays from 3-8pm and Saturdays and Sundays from 12-8pm. Visit in person at 41 Lake Drive, Rhinebeck, NY, or online at slowfoxfarm.com. Follow Slow Fox on Instagram and Facebook @slowfoxfarm to stay up to date on special events and food truck schedules.



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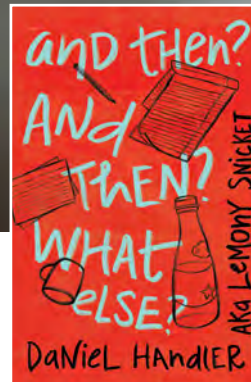
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BRINGING THE *Outside in*



For the two years I have been writing this column (how time flies), the focus has always been on sustainable seasonal flowers: how to grow them, where to source them, and why they are so important in our quest to reduce our great environmental clod-hopping footprint. Today is no different; although this month we are going to talk about the absolute joy of bringing the outside in, of why and how to bring all this seasonal beauty inside, as well as some tips on arranging and conditioning our flowers so we can enjoy them for as long as possible.

*By Pom Shillingford
info@mainstreetmag.com*

Granny's hall table

One of my earliest and most consistent memories is of my grandmother's hall table. Without fail, a simple vase sat on this table, full of flowers freshly picked from her garden. Sometimes it would be an exuberance of summer blooms, sometimes a sparse cracking blossom branch, and sometimes, in

the depth of winter, a forced spring bulb. It wasn't just possible to tell the month of the year from my granny's hall table but even the week of the month. From the first snowdrops via camellias, narcissi, tulips, roses, and dahlias through the last of the fall chrysanthemums and finally to sprigs of holly, it was a week-by-week conveyor belt tour of the floral year.

In the interim decades I feel we have been through a couple of not-so-welcome flower fashion cycles – the sterile yet ubiquitous white orchids, single-stem, pomander-style arrangements, and the horror of dyed flowers, all of which seemed to reject the very idea of seasonal local beauty. I'm happy to say that now – thankfully – the pendulum has swung back our way. We may still be subjected to the occasional Kardashian travesty of 10,000 red roses flown from afar, crammed into floral foam on a beach for an Instagram engagement photo, but these atrocities are becoming fewer and less admirable as the joy of celebrating real flowers where and how they grow returns.

A renewed enthusiasm

The combination of two things I don't normally celebrate, COVID and social media, have played a large part in this. Access to information and inspiration in how to grow and arrange, coupled with the importance of creating a home that appeals to us both aesthetically and emotionally, and represents our values, has created a renewed enthusiasm for bringing the outside in.

Our understanding of the environmental cost of grown and flown flowers has increased along with a genuine desire to celebrate the uniqueness of the season at hand. Few and far between are pictures of holiday tables decorated with lilacs and peonies. Likewise, spring weddings with dahlias and fall ones with narcissi and tulips are rarely seen. Aside from emotional resonance, a large part of this is our growing understanding that flowers in season, and even more so locally grown flowers, look better,

Continued on next page ...

smell better, and last better. Think how you feel after a long-haul red-eye flight, and you'll understand why!

Every kind of beauty

The original proponent of bringing the outside in was Constant Spry, a trailblazing, formidable English woman who managed to arrange the flowers for both Edward Windsor and Wallis Simpson's wedding and for the Queen's Coronation. Clearly her diplomatic skills were something to behold as well! The first proponent of using not just traditional flowers but foraged foliage, vegetables, and even 'weeds,' Spry was responsible for reinventing floristry in England and really the rest of the world in the 1930s. Her mantra was, "Learn, learn, learn. Open your eyes to every kind of beauty." Advice as relevant today as it was nearly one hundred years ago.

Certainly, it has been revered, revisited, and revived by several of today's leading floral and garden designers, all of whom focus on bringing the outside in. Like Spry, they too are keen to share their knowledge and expertise so that we mere mortals can practice their art too. (A note here: flower arranging is like everything else: when you have little or no experience, it can seem very daunting. But just like with rocket science, there are

basics, fundamentals, and rules that you can follow to get you started. The more practice you get, the better you will become, the more your confidence will grow, and the further you can push this. Unlike rocket science though, even your earliest and easiest arrangements are likely to bring you great joy. So, start small and simple, but do at least start.)

Garden gurus

Today anyone with half an ounce of interest in flower arranging is likely to have heard of Ariella Chazar. Her 2019 book *Seasonal Flower Arranging: Fill Your Home with Blooms, Branches, and Foraged Materials All Year Round* is somewhat of a bible for me. With step-by-step instructions, it explains how to create a series of arrangements that 'celebrate the splendor of flowers, the bounty of the changing seasons, and the wild beauty of nature in your home.' Her latest book *Home in Bloom: Lessons for Creating Floral Beauty in Every Room* was published in March and takes this even further, again encouraging us to harness the transformative power of flowers in altering the energy within our homes.

Another guru of mine is Sean Anthony Pritchard. He is a god on Instagram, where his still images of his Somerset, UK cottage adorned



with the fruits of his garden capture the absolute joy and simplicity of bringing the outside in – vases of kale, anyone? I have been waiting with such bated breath for the publication of his first book – guess what – titled none other than *Outside In* – that I might have paid for international shipping rather than wait an extra month for its US publication date. If ever there was someone to convince you that there is always something thrilling that the garden can offer up, it is Pritchard. Flower, garden, interior lovers, one and all, this is a definite 'Add to Cart.'

For those of you who want bite-sized week-by-week confidence-building mini-tutorials on bringing the outside in, may I recommend Willow Crossley's Sunday morning Instagram tutorials @willowcrossleycreates. I'm not entirely sure I would want my floristry clients knowing this, but I have learned 90% of my arranging knowledge from these weekly snippets. Even if you are not into arranging flowers, Crossley's five-minute-or-less lessons are a dose of such joy and enthusiasm they are an instant pick-me-up for even the most jaded amongst us.

Flower arranging 101

A few tips and tricks for tip-top flower arrangements:

Stage of bloom. Some flowers are best cut at a stage when they've barely cracked open – tulips for example. Others such as daisy-types and single stems – sunflowers, dahlias, and chrysanthemums – need to be just coming to full bloom when cut.

Time of day. Ideally first thing in the morning is best as the flowers

have had the previous night to fully rehydrate. Never cut in the middle of a blazing hot day.

Sharp snips. Make a nice clean cut across the bottom of the stem so the flower can easily draw up water. Repeat every time your flowers are out of water – you do not want the stems sealing over.

Clean vase. If your flowers are going to be drinking from it, you should be happy drinking from it. Crystal clean please!

Foliage. No leaves or buds allowed beneath the water line. Take them all off.

Arranging mechanics. Do not use floral foam. If your arrangement requires any kind of support within the vase or vessel, invest in some floral frogs and/or just a scrunched-up ball of chicken wire. Both are easy to use, are absolute game changers in elevating an arrangement, and can be reused time and time again with zero cost to the planet. Unlike those evil green plastic blocks!

Post arrangement. Keep your flowers out of direct sunlight and away from fruits and vegetables. Top up or change the water every few days. And, to extend the enjoyment of your flowers, remove any stems as they go over or even reuse any long-lasting blooms in a second arrangement. •

Pom Shillingford is an obsessive gardener originally from England and now based in Salisbury, CT. She offers seasonal cut flowers through English Garden Grown. Find her on Instagram @english_garden_grown.



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Your future home

By Jesse DeGroot
info@mainstreetmag.com

Well, huh. Nothing like the Law of Unintended Consequences to gouge a hole in the boat. The initial plan here was to proffer a rash of innovations that would coalesce into what any reasonably lucid individual would consider a Dream Home, when, honestly, this should really be billed as the quest for the Home of the Future.

What exactly is a Home of the Future?

Well, okay, near as I can figure, this place is going to be and/or feature:

All-electric. Automated everything. High-IQ thermostat. A home gym. Hypervigilant home security. Environmentally beneficial. Everything up to and including the toilet brush connected to the internet. Blah-blah-blah ... yawwwwwwn. Then, as I researched this story and began compiling something of a list, it rather quickly dawned on me that the Home of the Future has, as we speak, become the Home of Now.

Freed of such restraints, let's dream a little, eh?

When it comes to domiciles, personally, I am a simpleton. If it keeps me warm and dry, and there are places to keep my cold foodstuffs cold and places where the cold things can be

made warm, I am a happy simpleton. The phrase, “needs almost no maintenance,” is scintillating to my ears. That would mean, as defined by yours truly, any Home of the Future would be self-healing. Leak in the roof? No sweat. Before you can locate the number to the roofing peeps, the house has taken over and fixed it up good as new. How? That's not our job here! Do I look like some kind of engineer?

One thing to determine is what it is we're trying to do here. Is the goal to erect a domicile the size of which would turn Jay Gatsby green with envy? Are we looking for a place that satisfies basic human needs? Or do we want something in between the impress-onlookers and that basic-human-need thing?

Reduced to the basics, one learns early in one's homeownership life that things are either trying to work their way inside the structure, or trying to get out, wherein lies the ultimate battle. In this case, provided access to unlimited funding, thanks to the largesse of *Main Street Magazine*, it occurred to me that was likely to not be my most immediate conundrum to resolve. I decided it was time to shed that happy simpleton thing and go for it. To heck with all this fidgeting around. I was going to have me a Gatsby-style chateau.

Let's talk 2075 here

Would it be untoward of one to think that we shoot right by this AI thing and introduce a dose or two of extra sensory perception into the equation? Picture this. It's half-past six on a Thursday evening and I'm traveling up the street to my new home. My new, new home. How new is it? It is so new that it knows I'm headed home before I head home. It is so new it knows what I'd like for dinner tomorrow evening and ensures the proper ingredients are on hand. Things will be cooking at the ol' casbah, thanks to this new wonder of nature I now call home.

When I walk through the door, a favorite Grateful Dead show should be in the process of cranking up, preparing itself to wail out of my concert-quality speakers.

Okay, we all know some of this is ridiculous. In 2075, if anyone is working in an office setting at an address separate from their domicile, I'm pretty sure they should be reported to the missing persons bureau.

The Jetsons did it best

You know, the instant I hear the phrase Home of the Future, I think “Jetsons,” which debuted on American TV screens in 1962. Set in 2062 Orbit City, the home of George, Jane, Judy, Elroy, Rosie the Robot, and

Astro the Space Mutt sure seemed to be ensconced in the lap of luxury.

Setting aside flying cars, it seems to me, as noted earlier, we've reached that future in 2024, with one other major exception: automatic food preparation. Isn't that something AI should be good for?

But here, then and now, remains a sticky wicket: humans. Despite the technology the creators dreamed up in *The Jetsons*, *Digital Trends* notes, “the future still had some of the same human experience themes we see in our lives today. George's boss was a jerk, Elroy hated doing his homework, and the Jetson family often grew annoyed that the technology they had in place sometimes malfunctioned.” What happens when AI successfully identifies these issues and sets about rectifying them?

Bottom line, I have a batch of questions, and here are a few. What can “being connected” actually mean to the function of a home? Is the vision of the Home of the Future more utopian or dystopian? How will people function in the world of their home? Will things skew more urban or rural? Maybe we'll find out by 2075. ●





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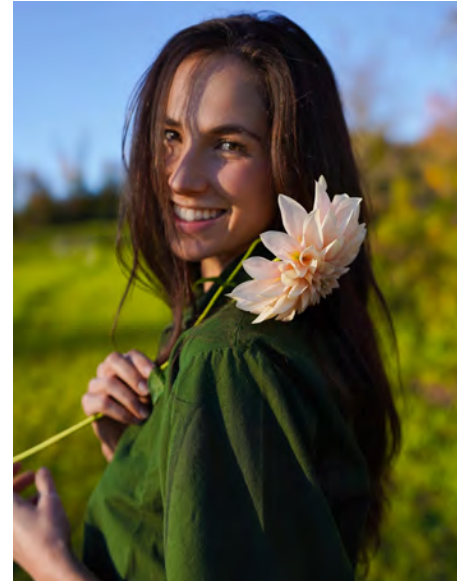


Photo courtesy of Le Jardin

By Abby Audenino
abby@mainstreetmag.com

Originally from France, Romane Recalde moved to the United States to pursue a career in modeling. After the pandemic, she and her husband moved upstate and planted their roots – pun intended – in Amenia, NY.

“We moved here because this area reminds me so much of home,” Romane said. “I grew up in the remote French countryside outside of Bordeaux. The nearest village has a population of 600 people. Our garden at home was wild and natural, so when we moved here, I found myself wanting to recreate the garden I grew up in.”

The only problem was that Romane had never gardened before and didn’t know where to start. “My parents were more of the ‘plant it and cross your fingers’ type,” she mused. When she and her husband first moved into their home, she decided to plant a few flowers and start small.

“I planted things that I remembered surrounding me as a child. I’d never paid much attention to the plants

back then, but now, they felt so comforting to have by my side, thousands of miles away from where I grew up.”

Romane shared that her mother would pick lilacs and red roses, so those were the flowers that she planted first. Very quickly, she got the hang of gardening and became addicted to the process. The following year, she decided to start a flower farm and named it after her childhood garden: Le Jardin.

“I realized I knew nothing and wanted to learn as much as possible about growing flowers, so I started helping at a local farm for the summer. I took intensive online courses on flower farming, read every book on regenerative farming and soil health, and decided to give it a go!” she said. “I killed a lot of plants, but I was also rewarded by arm loads of incredible blooms. The satisfaction of seeing something grow before your eyes had me hooked!”

Services offered

Le Jardin offers floral design for weddings and events, and they also host workshops at the farm, private workshops at people’s homes, and frequent

farmer’s markets in the area.

Romane also sells her flowers to florists in the area. Additionally, Le Jardin offers weekly flower deliveries to people’s homes for various events, such as centerpieces for dinner parties.

“We underestimated how large of a demand there was for this and it’s become a big part of our business,” she said. “With that in mind, our business is growing and we’re looking to hire – so if you love flowers and working with nature, reach out!”

Regenerative farming and the weather

At Le Jardin, Romane’s goal is to disturb the soil as little as possible. She practices a no-till method and adds plenty of organic matter to the beds through cover crops and compost. She also doesn’t use synthetic or chemical fertilizers.

When terminating crops, she also leaves as many roots as possible. “I cut everything at the base, which takes a lot longer, but it’s important to leave the roots in the soil because they help feed the microbiome.”

She did an experiment a few seasons ago where she pulled roots out of half of the field and left them intact in the other half. The side where she didn’t pull the roots had an abundance of

worms – which is indicative of healthy soil – whereas the other side of the field had very few worms throughout.

“My goal is to leave the soil in a better condition than I found it,” she said.

Right now, Romane is busy sowing seeds, prepping the beds, and getting plants in the ground. If she’s not working in the field, she’s typically doing weekly flower deliveries or arranging flowers for dinner parties, weddings, or other events.

As the weather gets warmer and spring transitions to summer, she’ll be busy harvesting all of the work that she’s putting in now. “It’s high season for weddings too, so weekends are busy! On top of that, we also do farmer’s markets and workshops.”

The weather has been a learning curve for Romane. The first year she started the farm, the Northeast suffered from a lengthy drought that left her dahlias looking wilted and sad. Last year, however, with all of the rain, they grew to be over seven feet tall and were very healthy and vibrant.

Continued on next page ...

“You can’t control the weather. You just have to do your best with it, which is why I believe in regenerative farming: it helps the soil retain that moisture. Investing in the soil is the best way to adapt to weather change,” she explained. “Some things that worked last year didn’t work the year before. It’s about learning to let go of what you can’t control.”

Events and workshops

During the summer, Romane hosts a variety of flower-arranging workshops at the farm, where she teaches her naturalistic approach to floral design.

“I love arrangements that feel wild and whimsical, like they’ve just been picked from the garden – because they have!” she said. “My favorite workshops are those we host at the farm in Amenia. Guests can experience the magic of this place, walk amongst the flowers, and say hi to the donkeys.”

She’s also currently in the process of renovating a floral design studio on Main Street in Amenia where she plans to host workshops and meet with clients to design their dream weddings and events. The studio, also called Le Jardin, is set to open some-

time in late spring.

Romane is also hosting a Mother’s Day flowering-arranging workshop at the Kent Flower Market on Saturday, May 11, and a dahlia workshop at the farm on August 18.

For Romane, the most rewarding part about being a flower farmer is seeing people’s reactions to the flowers. “Whether it’s a simple bunch of fragrant sweet peas or a giant dahlia as big as my head, people’s eyes light up with a special twinkle that brings me so much joy,” she shared.

She also values working outside and spending time in nature. “It helps me space out and calm my nervous system down.”

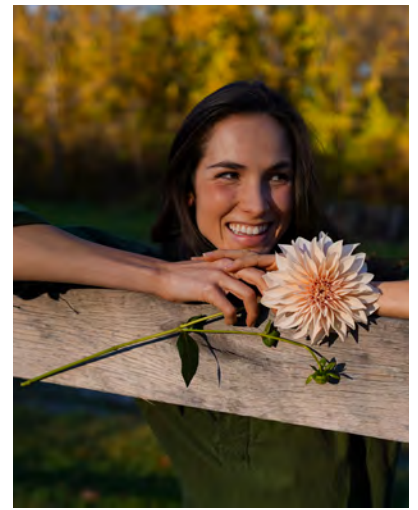
Working with nature is hard in any capacity. Romane notes that the most challenging part of working with flowers is that they are delicate and perishable. “Sometimes it can feel like a rush to get everything picked at the perfect stage and into the customer’s hand,” she said. “But that is also the beauty of it – the journey and love that goes into each seed until the time it blooms for that one week we enjoy it.”

Floral design

Romane approaches floral design with an organic attitude. She prefers wild and natural designs that look airy and effortless. She wants her designs to be a reflection of how things grow in nature, with lots of movement and texture, and even occasionally incorporating fun elements like unripe raspberries or small green tomatoes.

Her approach is anything but traditional, and she likes it that way. “You’re making something out of nothing and creating art out of these living plants. It’s a little moment of time, and then it’s gone,” she said. “I use whatever is available to me in the garden and what is in season. I like my designs to feel textured and natural.”

Taking a more effortless approach also allows her to utilize flowers with “wonky” stems or an unusual shape that otherwise wouldn’t be included in a traditional arrangement. “Our attention to detail is reflected in every



All photos on this page courtesy of Le Jardin

aspect of what we do, from the daintiest flower crown to a show-stopping arbor.”

Looking ahead

Romane plans to continue growing the floral design aspect of her business for weddings and events by creating natural florals that “you can’t find with any other designer.”

“We grow 95% of our flowers, which is what makes us special,” she said. “It gives us an advantage in always having access to special materials that we wouldn’t be able to find otherwise, and that makes our designs stand out.”

Long-term, Romane also wants to open a flower shop, ideally in Amenia, as well as host retreats at the farm that blend wellness with floral design.

“I’m super into wellness and spirituality, and I think that flowers encompass that feeling. They have a very healing energy when you’re around them or working with them.” •

To learn more about Le Jardin Flower Farm, visit its website lejardinflowerfarm.com, or follow it on Instagram @lejardinflowerfarm.



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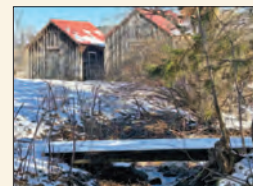
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Plant & Sip to soothe the soul

"Life begins the day you start a garden." – Chinese proverb

By *Dominique DeVito*
info@mainstreetmag.com

It was a Tuesday night in March, before daylight saving time, so it was dark at 6 pm as I headed for the Plant & Sip event in downtown Troy, NY. And it was cold the way it can be in March. But when I stepped into the room where the event was being held, there was a sensation of sunshine and life.

At tables scattered around the room were groups of two, four, and six people, chatting and sipping in anticipation of planting. At each person's spot was a colorful tray with the supplies that would be needed to create a terrarium: a couple of small plants, a container of fine gravel, another of potting soil, the glass globe-shaped terrarium, and a clear set of instructions for making the piece and also for caring for it. In the center of each table was an aquarium with compartments of decorative materials: pebbles, shells, fake grasses, and flowers. The displays were organized and inviting.

On fertile ground

At the front of the room was the source of the sunshine, Mari V. Mari is the owner of The Planter on Remsen Street in Cohoes, NY,

and the creator of the Plant & Sip terrarium-building workshops she conducts at her store and at other places in the Capital Region. I was at the one being held at Bard & Baker Board Game Café in Troy, NY, a popular hang-out with a menu as eclectic as the variety of games people can come in and play. The place was packed, so it was good Mari's workshop was in a private side room.

Mari was there with her children, Josh and Aliah, who I later learned were both five years old though they were born ten months apart. They were clearly practiced at helping their mom with the workshops because they knew just what to do when, and as the terrariums were being built by the 20 or so of us in the room that night, they quietly and contentedly busied themselves with games on a table while mom did her thing.

The class started with Mari explaining what the plants were and why she chose them for us. She spoke about their care and keeping the way you'd explain to someone how to care for a beloved pet. "You have a strawberry begonia and a fern," she said. "When you get them



Above: Mari explains to the class how to get started with the terrarium.

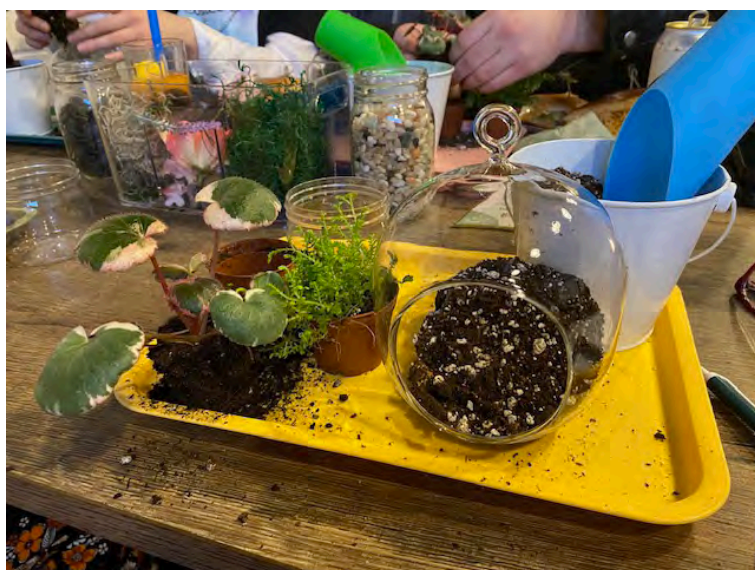
Left: All the supplies are provided on a colorful tray.

home in the terrarium, remember that they like an environment that is as tropical as possible. These plants thrive on heat and moisture," she explained, "and while they like light, direct sunlight will dry them out, so indirect light is best. A bathroom is usually a good place for them, because of the moisture from the shower."

Mari told us what to look for to keep the plants happy and healthy, and there was a QR code on the instruction sheet she provided for more detailed information. It was time to build our terrariums.

Getting started

From the front of the room Mari demonstrated how to position the ground layer in the terrarium so that the plants would be supported for maximum visibility at



Continued on next page ...

the front of the container. Then we added potting soil, and she came around to show us how to carefully transition the plants from the tiny containers they were in to the terrariums. They were delicate but hardy, and it was somewhat of a challenge to settle them so that their roots were in the right place.

Once the two featured plants were in place, we were given the go-ahead to play with any and all of the materials that would decorate the terrarium. This was where things got creative, as each person chose things that most appealed to them. My tablemates and I had lots of conversation about textures and colors and arrangements – and also about ourselves and our lives, what brought us there that night, and what we had in mind for our terrariums when we got home. I sat with Emily, Sarah, and Jack. It was Sarah's birthday, and the event was a surprise gift from Jack. Emily was going to come with a friend who had to cancel at the last minute. Getting to know them a bit was an added bonus to the evening.

Care and keeping

The group asked lots of questions about how and how much to water the plants, and Mari's answers were practical and to the point, but also

charming. "Once the top layer turns light brown, give them some more water," she said, adding, "The plants will talk to you. They do in my shop all the time."

As people started to trickle out with their terrariums, Josh and Aliah happily set about collecting the materials left on the tables. I had a chance to chat with Mari about what she does and why. She moved back to the Capital Region from Florida to be closer to family. She was taking care of her kids and getting adjusted and situated. She explained that when she was growing up in upstate New York, her grandparents had big gardens, and she got interested in plants by spending time there. When she came back to the region, she tapped into those roots. "I started planting terrariums as a stress reliever and hobby," she said, "and that turned into doing pop-ups as plant and sips. The plant store became available on Remsen Street in Cohoes, and it was a way to bring everyone together who was interested in creating a special place there. It's not just a plant store, it's also where we hold workshops and other special events."

The pop-ups give her an opportunity to work with other local businesses to bring a special offering



to their places. She goes everywhere from craft beverage producers to restaurants to country clubs. She does private parties, too. She works with air plants, succulents, cacti, and tropical plants, and she mixes and matches the kinds of arrangements she chooses to do at the pop-ups so there's always something new.

When you love what you do

When I ask Mari what her favorite part is she stops to consider, then says, "It's all pretty neat. Meeting new people through the plants and seeing the different arrangements they come up with is really fun for me."

I carefully put my terrarium in its box to carry it back to my apartment in Troy. When I took it out to put it on a shelf in the bathroom next to another plant that seems to benefit from the warmth and moisture from that small space, I turned the opening toward me and told them I hoped they'd be happy here. I told them Mari said they would talk to me if they needed anything. So far, so good. ●

Check out Mari's line-up of workshops, events, and pop-ups on her website, theplanter.com.co. Follow her on Facebook and Instagram, too.



Mari's workshops are well attended and each terrarium is unique.

Emily (left) shared a table with Sarah and Jack, who were there to celebrate Sarah's birthday.

Left: Mari is assisted by her children Josh and Aliah.



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SPRING OFFERS HOPE

even for those with the black thumb of death

By Whitney Joseph
info@mainstreetmag.com

Ahh, spring.

Every time I utter the word my body instinctively takes a profoundly deep breath. You know the kind I mean, the type of breath doctors instruct you to take while sitting on their exam table waiting for your annual physical.

“Now inhale deeply,” my doc will say while placing an ice-cold stethoscope on my chest and back, checking that my lungs and heart are clear. I assume after repeating those words and motions so many millions of times they’re now rote, with my physician functioning on autopilot. That’s not to insinuate there’s a lack of caring or compassion, just an absolute automation of the process, which of course wraps up with directions to “slowly exhale.”

It’s not as if I have much choice after gulping down so much oxygen it feels as if my chest will explode. Nonetheless, I’m happy to oblige, for I know my doctor has good intentions. I give a gentle nod and slowly let the air exit my lungs. As the carbon dioxide seeps from my lips, it makes a slight squeak. It sounds like helium escaping from an errant balloon.

Signs of spring

These thoughts fly through my brain in a flash. The instinctive inhalation I take each time the word spring leaps from my lips is just as quick. It’s not by design. Yet thinking about the season of renewal has a visceral effect on me. It conjures up vivid images, including of me in an ill-fitting robe with my doctor hovering above, stethoscope in hand, listening to my

beating heart and pounding lungs.

The word spring also brings other images to mind. Memories flash before my eyes like a slide show of seasons past, and I’m reminded how glorious it is to witness barely green blades of grass break through those stubborn, lingering remnants of frozen, sooty snow. I marvel at the strength of grass, crocuses, daffodils, and other flora as they break through and shatter those random veneers of paper-thin ice – reminders of harsh winters nearing their end – still glossy from the mix of sun and wet dew.

As the word lingers on my mind, my thoughts of spring become more focused. I think of the joy I feel when stumbling across young flowers in a field. Oftentimes, crocuses appear first. If I can catch sight of the first buds sprouting on a tree, that’s another lovely precursor to spring – and a sign of much pollen and many allergy attacks to follow. Of course, when juvenile wild animals start to appear, whether in the fields or in our gardens, that, too, is a sure sign spring is in the air. This applies to our feathered friends, our furry fellows, and everything in between.

Some chipper and chirpy tidbits about that fauna, according to the US Fish and Wildlife Service, “the great horned owl is one of the earliest harbingers of spring,” while red-tailed hawks and woodpeckers also fly about when things begin to thaw in the Northeast. Of course, other critters wait to make their springtime debuts, like the famed weather forecaster who boasts many monikers: the groundhog – also known as the woodchuck, Canada marmot, whistlepig, and by some less-patient people, as a mere garden pest.

While I hope those reading this will find all of the above both interesting and entertaining, it’s but a long

introduction to what this piece is truly about: my lifelong record of massacring every houseplant, flower garden, vegetable garden, container garden, or any other garden I’ve ever attempted. Yet despite my tragic history, I remain optimistic, because springtime will forever represent the season of renewal and hope to me.

To give up, or not to give up?

I know, with my track record of killing pretty much every living bit of vegetation that has ever come under my care, perhaps the wise thing would be for me to give up. Maybe I should just resign myself to the fact that I have what I’ve deemed “The Black Thumb of Death” when it comes to gardening.

My immediate family was not blessed with a green thumb gene. It must have skipped a generation. My maternal and paternal grandfathers were brilliant gardeners, and my maternal grandmother was pretty great in the garden as well; I don’t have much information about my dad’s mom on that front. My immediate family never tinkered around in the garden much, though in high school my mom and I tried to plant some impatiens. I grew up in North Miami

Beach, FL. It’s very, very hot – and the sun is very, very strong. Impatiens, if one knows what they’re doing (we didn’t), need shade to survive. Long story short, ours didn’t (survive, that is).

A very pretty azalea bush we planted did manage to do so by some miracle, and lovely pink flowers bloomed annually. I think that was our one and only gardening success.

Valiant attempts

Throughout the years, I continued to make many attempts. During college, I lived in Boston’s Beacon Hill. I had a great, though tiny, apartment. A small fire escape outside my kitchen window was perfect for an herb garden, plus a few potted plants. I tried and tried to keep those plants alive. However, every few months everything died. I did my best: I watered them; I made sure they had sun or shade as needed; I even talked to them. I would “deadhead” dead flowers and leaves. It was all for naught, because no matter how hard I tried, none survived. It got kind of depressing after a while.

Continued on next page ...





Above: So far, Whitney has only managed to keep two plants alive – the last two photos are of the same plant from different angles.

When I moved to New York's Hudson Valley for my first job, I loved my new apartment. It reminded me of Mary's apartment in the *Mary Tyler Moore Show*, but mine had a bonus balcony where I could place plants in renewed hopes of growing fresh herbs and fragrant, beautiful flowers. Well, suffice it to say those hopes were dashed as my plants all met the same fate as their predecessors. I figured there was a learning curve with taking care of plants, so I experimented. I gave more water, then I gave less water. I moved them to get more sunlight, then to get less sunlight. I would bring them inside, then outside. No matter how hard I tried, all greenery under my care eventually wound up dead.

If I didn't know any better and was of a suspicious mind, I might have asked myself if my cat could have poisoned those plants, just to amuse herself. She did love puzzles and might have chuckled watching me try to unravel exactly what was happening to my plants time and again. Hmm, now that I think about it, did Cleo have access to the cabinet where I stored my cleaning supplies?

A final attempt

Okay, no time for tangential pondering: the point is, I'm no gardener, as evidenced by my last attempt to garden at my former home in Wassaic.

There I planted a proper garden in the ground, as the gods intended. Yes, I thought, this was finally my chance to get it right! I could dig in the dirt, put shovel to soil, remove old roots, and happily plant whatever I wanted: herbs, vegetables, flowers – my choices were limitless! I was thrilled at having a fresh start to plant an authentic garden – the right way.

I went all out. I planted multiple mini-gardens throughout my property: some had tulips, some had wildflowers, some had roses, some had vegetables. I got compost, topsoil, mulch, I even fertilized the soil and put a banana peel under the rose bush (a trick I remembered from a home and garden show I had seen years earlier but never had the chance to try until then), and myriad other materials I no longer remember. I was extremely excited to see what the results would yield.

And so I waited. And waited. And waited. Let's just say the results were mixed. Of the dozens and dozens of tulips I planted, I believe maybe two or three grew. The rest, I surmised, became breakfast for some hungry deer. At least I hope so, because otherwise all those bulbs were a complete waste of money. The wildflowers were a mixed bag. My black-eyed Susans grew for a while but petered out after a couple of years; by the time I pulled out the garden three or so years later, my grape hyacinths had never materialized. However, about a decade later, they decided to sprout and would

bloom randomly in the vicinity where they were planted in the very early weeks of each spring, right before it was time for the lawn to be mowed. I would be so thrilled to see those tiny purple flowers, I wouldn't let the lawn be mowed for weeks each year until it became so shaggy it could be delayed no longer.

The rose bushes I planted actually did well. One produced hundreds of fragrant flowers for about three to four years, until it didn't and died; the other also had bountiful buds, but its thorny branches became so entwined with nearby plants that it had to be cut back. Afterwards it was never the same, and it shortly met its demise.

The vegetable garden, I'm sorry to say, was not a success. I was able to grow one zucchini and about two ears of corn – with partial kernels. There were a few other veggies that gave me hope but never fully matured. I did not have success with any of my tomatoes, cucumbers, or pumpkins. Most of my herbs became diseased or were eaten by local wildlife. Let's just say I still needed to shop at area farmers markets.

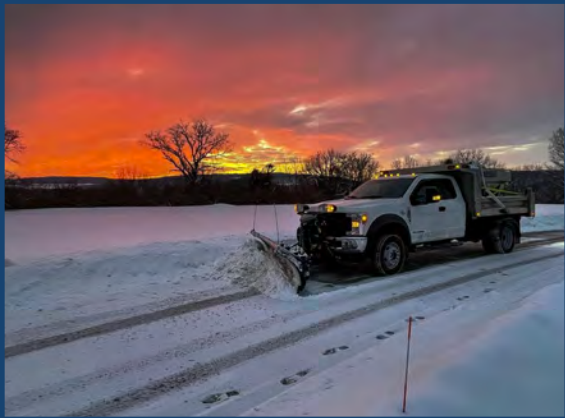
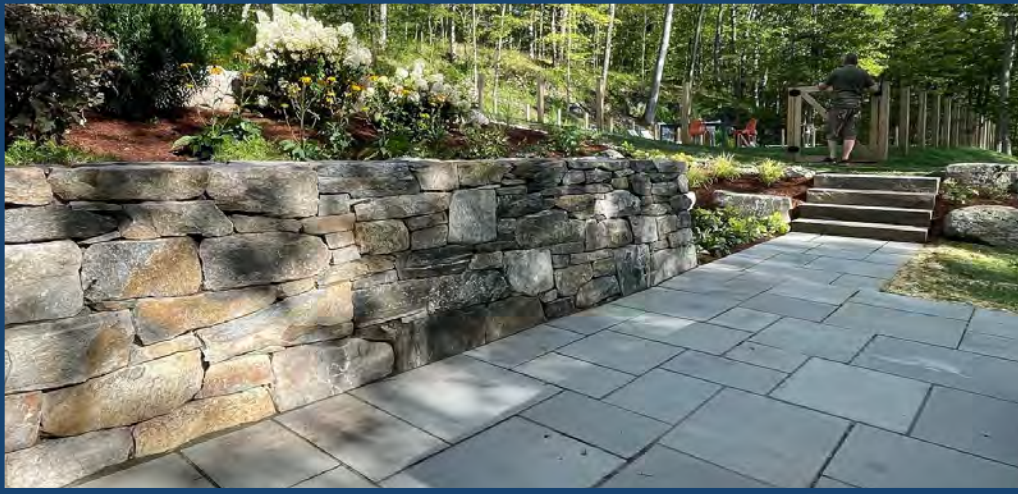
House plants?

Today I'm back to house plants. I've managed to keep a couple alive, but most are, uhm, not. A few of those are orchids, which are famously persnickety. I'm hoping their lack of leaves, flowers, and all signs of life are nothing more than the cyclical pattern they go through before bursting forth with vitality, new foliage and luscious blooms in a display of color and beauty. I've been waiting and watch-

ing closely for months now, so while it seems to be taking an inordinate amount of time, I remain hopeful.

That's one of the best parts of gardening – and of spring. Both rely on people keeping the faith and offering humanity an incredible amount of hope. Because no matter how terrible we may be at the task at hand, spring is a time when it somehow seems safe to believe in second chances, to believe in miracles. I mean, what word describes nature as perfectly as miraculous?

I am among those who believes in the impossible. Perhaps my orchids will bloom again. Perhaps my plants will survive. Perhaps I'll finally learn to garden. Even if none of that happens, it's okay, because through each iteration of gardening that I've attempted – and with each failure – I've learned, and that in itself has given me an amazing takeaway. •



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Rural Center Refillery

2881 Church Street, Pine Plains, NY. (845) 867-6557
 ruralcenterrefillery.com

The Rural Center Refillery is a bulk refill store in Pine Plains, NY, that focuses on cutting back on plastic consumption while offering cleaner, healthier products. Owners Nicole and Corey Clanahan cultivated the Rural Center Refillery around three pillars of value: community, sustainability, and access to a variety of quality brands that care about practicing environmental responsibility just as much as they do. “We’ve been focusing on refining our products to focus on the things that our customers are really love and whittling down on some of the extras that aren’t purchased as often,” Nicole said. At the Refillery, they’re also focused on offering products that are cleaner and better for people overall. “The essence of the products is so much cleaner. There are no toxins, synthetics, or plastics in them. We try to do organic whenever we can. It’s not just good for the environment, but for your body, too.” The most rewarding part of the business is undoubtedly the relationships that they’ve built within the community. “This is a labor of love for us. We love getting to know everyone and building connections with neighbors.”



Fulton & Forbes

1415 County Rt. 7, Ancram, NY. (203) 952-4051
 fultonandforbes.com

Fulton & Forbes is a wine and spirits store located in Ancram, NY. It focuses on classic and traditional wines and offers a rotating spirits selection. The name is a callback to owner Rachel Merriam’s grandfather, who opened his first business at the crossroads of Fulton Street and Forbes Street in New Haven, CT. Now, more than seventy years later, it’s the name she has chosen for her wine store. “I knew I wanted to start a business, and it had to be something that I could do by myself. With my background in wine, it just made sense,” Rachel said. Fulton & Forbes currently carries a variety of wine and spirits from local wineries and distilleries, and Rachel is looking forward to building her array of local products. For Rachel, the biggest reward of being in the wine business is providing hospitality to her customers. “I love offering hospitality in a retail setting. The educational aspect of it too has been great. Getting a chance to talk with people and create connections is probably the biggest reward.” Going forward, Rachel is looking forward to building out the cellar, hosting events and workshops, and even expanding to additional locations.



Whitetail Landscaping & Excavation

23 Route 7N, Falls Village, CT. office@whitetailct.com
 whitetailct.com

Taylor Ford started Whitetail Landscaping and Excavation in 2014 as a small lawn-mowing business. This month, Whitetail celebrates its tenth anniversary, having expanded to become a full-service landscaping and excavation company. Whitetail proudly serves the northwest corner of Connecticut and the surrounding towns in Massachusetts and New York by providing excavation, hardscaping, property management, snow and ice management, and a gardening department led by Taylor’s wife, Shelby. What sets Whitetail apart from other businesses? “Maintaining a strong and long-term relationship with our customers by customizing where necessary and providing detailed attention to their requests and every need,” Taylor said. Taylor loves that he is able to combine creativity, connection with nature, physical activity, client relationships, and the environmental impact of improving the overall aspects of a property. Whitetail stays apprised of current and future trends in the landscaping industry, including sustainable practices, continuing to educate its dedicated team, and offering additional services to its valued clients. “We plan to keep building a strong business foundation for our children to proudly take over Whitetail Landscaping one day.”



Sprout Small Business Consulting

PO Box 604, Pine Plains, NY. robert@sproutsbcc.com
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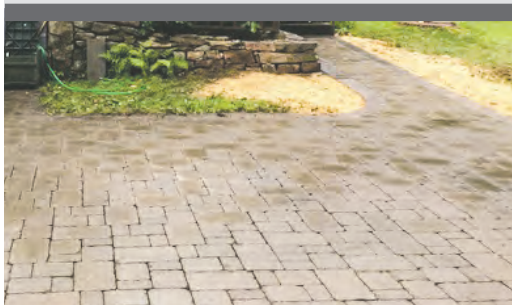
“Small businesses make our communities the special places they are,” says Robert Burden, founder of Sprout Small Business Consulting, “and sometimes even the smallest businesses need a little help.” Providing support for every small business is Sprout Small Business Consulting’s mission. From helping aspiring entrepreneurs navigate starting a business, to offering industry-specific support to more established businesses, Sprout can help by utilizing a fresh and modern approach to consulting. Its approach is specifically tailored to small businesses. Sprout looks at each business holistically and prioritizes actionable, common-sense, easy-to-implement, and cost-conscious solutions. Whether a business has a specific need or just wants to talk through some questions, Sprout is there. Reach out to Robert for a free discussion and follow the Sprout “Tips & Tricks” blog for interesting insights into topics impacting small businesses.

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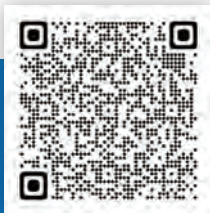
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