

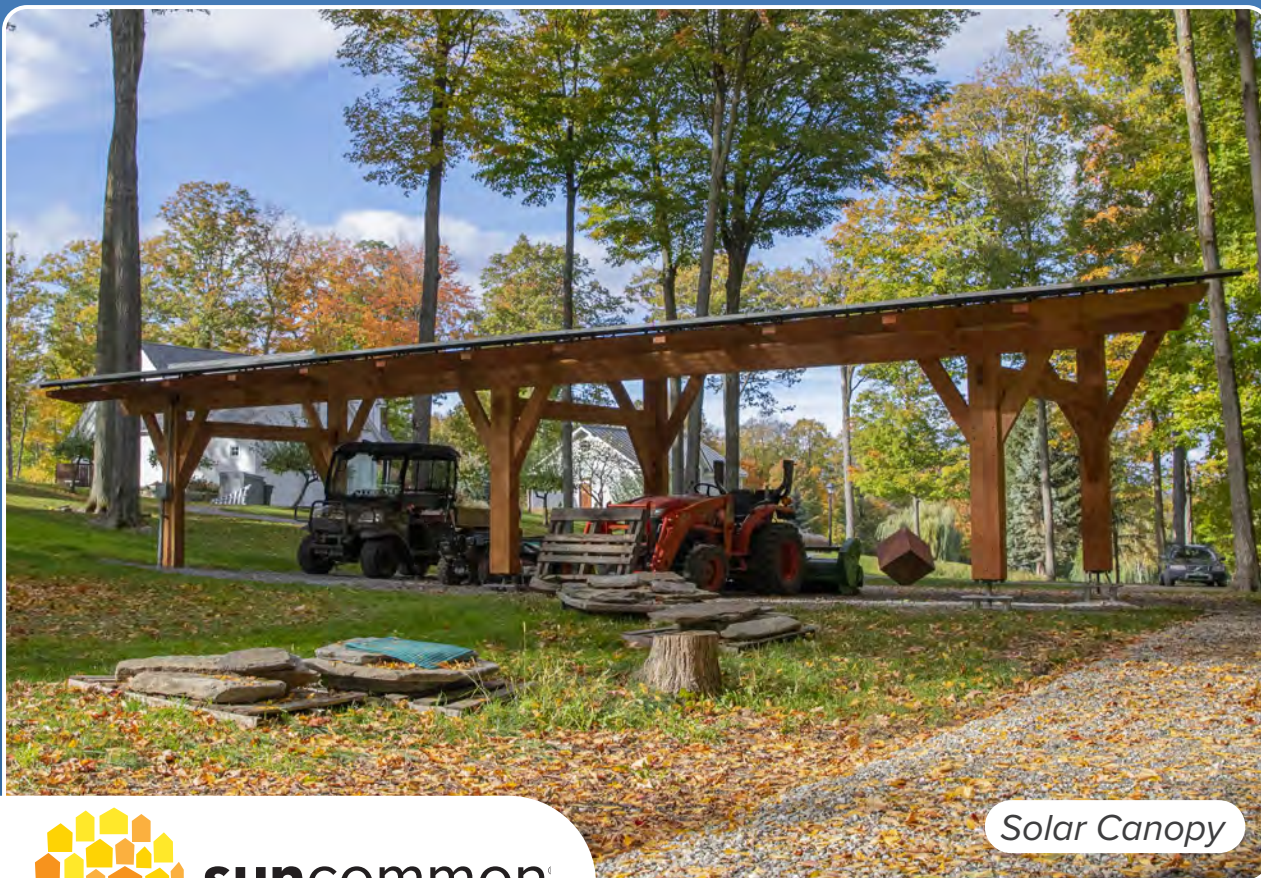
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# Eye of the beholder



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## *Woodworker Stephen Robin is still at it*

by Brian Hollander

**T**AKE A TOUR of Stephen Robin's house and woodworking shop, and your eyes will pop out at almost every twist and turn. You'll find stunningly artistic and strikingly functional wood creations — beds, cabinets, desks, tables — greeting you at almost every corner, much of it built by the hands of this master craftsman. Throughout his long career, some of it fashioned on a giant CNC (computer numerical control) machine purchased partially with forestry grant money.

"I've been in business since 1967 continuously. I think you'll find that I'm the oldest woodworker in Ulster County that's been continuous," said Robin. "There's been a lot of people that came and went, like Harry Sanger before me. Don't forget, I'm 85, and I believe I'm on top of my game. I believe that, and I believe that what I do in the next couple of years will be really cool. At least I'm looking forward to it."

Robin hopes to open a gallery on his property with an entrance on Route 212 near Easton Lane in the next few months.

His guidance of the tour evokes a char-

acteristic fount of enthusiasm. "The sign you see is a temporary one .... You walk up the path there .... We're working on the property until it's pristine ....

"We'll have Ed Martin sculptures outside. I want to show his stuff, so his family can get the money," he says, and then goes on. "This is from the old days. That's going to be our sculpture courtyard over there. This stuff [pointing to sleek pieces stashed in odd corners of the house] is just overflow because there's no room to put it in the shop."

And he points to more. "This is stuff we made a long time ago, and will eventually





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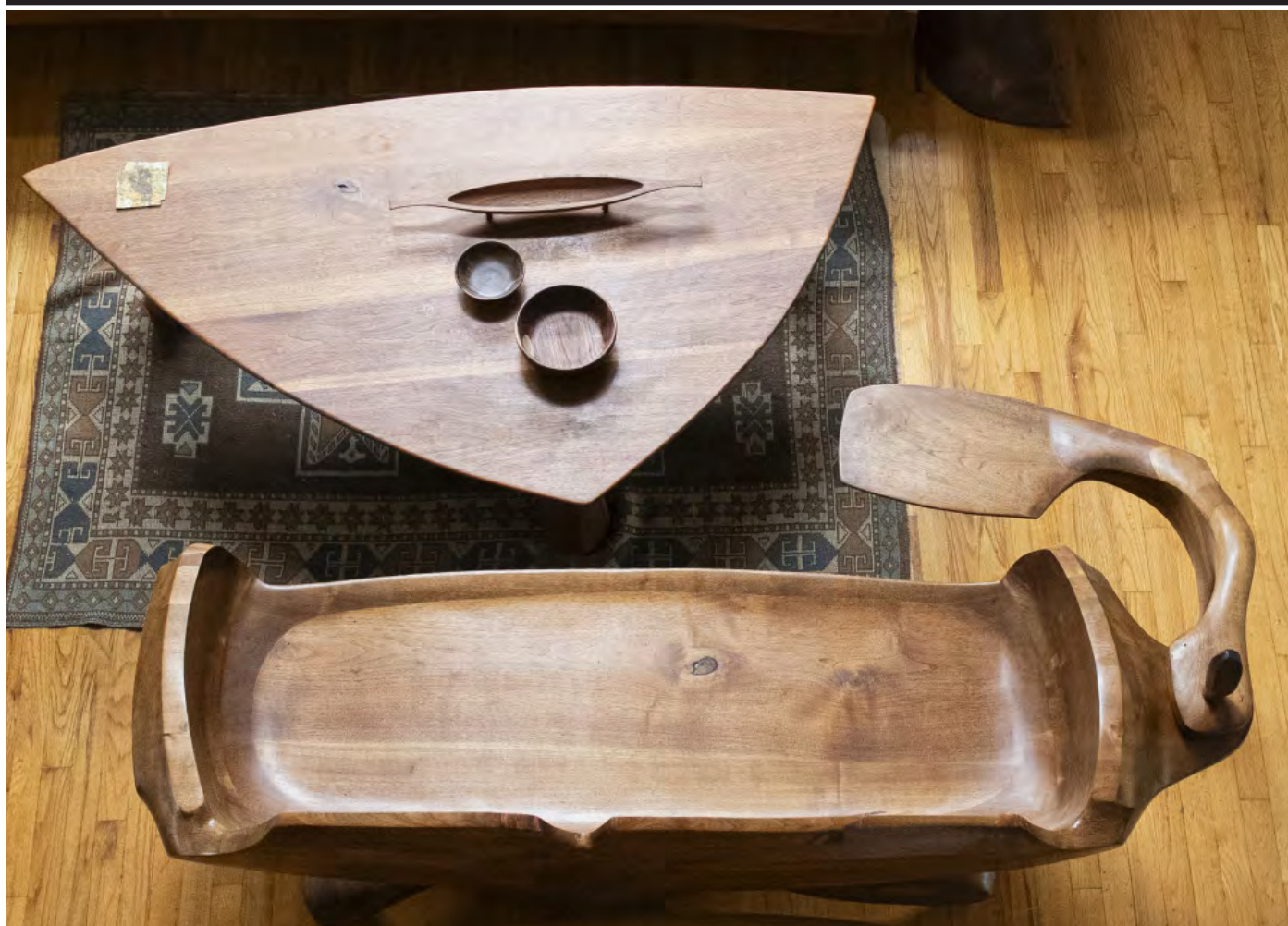


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sell this furniture. Here's a little gallery entrance, it's fairly formidable ...."

Ah, the old days. That's where I first met Stephen, early Seventies, when I manned a booth for him at a crafts fair. The booth had a magnificent desk taking up most of its space. Of course, everyone wanted to know the price, and of course Stephen, the same enigmatic contrarian he is today, refused to put a number on it.

"C'mon, you gotta know ..." they'd say, and I could only laugh and shrug.

"The trajectory of my life," explains Robin, "in general has been, the first ten years of doing this, I was a furniture maker. Then I was a house builder, had a shop that worked for other builders and other makers, a general guy for hire. In '86 I built my cousin Freddy a house up in Grog Kill .... Built a house in Amagansett for Stanley Diller. I ran this job."

#### Working with others

The elegant quality of his work is on

display in different locales you might run into.

"When you were doing the craft shows," Robin tells me, "I was showing with the best of them, the big names of furniture. After two or three years of making stuff, I

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EDITOR & PUBLISHER: Geddy Sveikauskas

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER: Genia Wickwire

ADVERTISING: Tania Amrod, Jenny Bella, Lynn Coraza, Pam Courselle, Elizabeth Jackson, Tobi Watson

PRODUCTION MANAGER: Joe Morgan

PRODUCTION: Diane Congello-Brandes, Josh Gilligan

CIRCULATION: Dominic Labate

COVER PHOTOS: Dion Ogust

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Ulster Publishing (est. 1972) is a Hudson Valley media company with its office at 322 Wall Street in Kingston. For more info on upcoming special sections, including how to place an ad, call (845) 334-8200, fax (845) 334-8809 or e-mail [info@hudsonvalleyone.com](mailto:info@hudsonvalleyone.com).

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came out like gangbusters. We're talking 1968, 1970. I basically had ten years to do essentially what I wanted.

"I had Eric Brugnani running a frame shop which I owned, and he basically supported me for a good amount of time. I had a show at the Brooklyn Museum. Schenectady Museum. There's something called the DeCordova Museum ....

"I was able to do whatever I wanted to do, independent of making anything

anyone would buy. I was invited around and I had a promising career as an art-furniture maker but no money to support a family. So I went to work for Belmont Towbin, a financier, and I basically had an A-list clientele that had a lot of money, and I built houses and I built furniture. The last ten years we worked for this one guy, who never wants me to mention his name, we're not particularly friendly anymore but we still work for him...

"So I'm not saying I know everything, but I know my way around plumbing, electrical, running people... these people

who work with me, they all like me. I try to keep people happy."

Robin has independent contractors working with him, all of whom run their own businesses out of their own shops. "We're more like a co-op," says Robin.

There's Steven Liebowitz of NY Fab Shop, Matthew Medenbach of Woodstock CNC Woodworking; James Mayer of Mayer Construction; and craftsman Gary Rawlins.

"What I'm going to do is start building furniture that I want to build and load the gallery up and see what I can do, and let

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the business go on. On our website [www.stephenrobinwoodworking.com] there's a portfolio section that shows everything, the art furniture, the art that we made for the Woodstock Jewish Congregation Temple, to everything we made for Bard College's library [to house and display Alan Sussman's donated rare book collection], and it shows the staircase we made last year for Family of Woodstock in Kingston.

"They had an 1850 staircase, very ornate, and it ended on the first floor, and the finance people at Family are in the basement, and Michael Berg [Family's executive director] wanted the basement and rest of the building to be connected, so he commissioned us to build a staircase. So we built a railing and all of those twists and turns. and Jim Mayer was the lead person on staircase design for Family."

### We go into the shop

"It's a conventional wood shop, but it's loaded with every imaginable tool. This is my stash of Japanese stuff. Then over here ..." He pulls open shallow drawers, filled with chisels.

Tools? Robin's stream of consciousness flows as he tests a chisel. "Hundreds. In the best of all worlds, you see, it's not always perfect ... but you can see that it's like a razor ... so we try, and all of them are as good as the rest of them. But generally speaking I would say if I really counted they're all that good ... mostly, not always, but most of them are pretty good. All of what you see here are essentially conventional woodworking tools."

We watch cutting being done by the CNC machine.

"There's a client in Stone Ridge who makes this furniture out of plastic, and



all the pieces are interlocked."

The CNC machine consists of a table, maybe ten to twelve feet long, maybe eight feet wide with a computer-run cutting tool. "What it does is, it takes the material, whatever it is, picks it up and cuts what's in the program. That block of wood [he points] is going to become a three-seat loveseat, curved to fit the contour of your back, and that's all going to be from drawings."

The \$150,000 machine was purchased in 2007 utilizing a \$43,000 matching grant facilitated by congressman Maurice Hinchey from the U.S. Forest Service and the Watershed Agricultural Council's



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(WAC) forestry program.

“Curves are as easy to cut as straight lines. Complex 3-D structures are relatively easy to produce. Even the number of machining steps that require human action have been dramatically reduced by automation,” Robin says in an article in a WAC online posting ([www.nycwatershed.org/forestry/stephen-robin/](http://www.nycwatershed.org/forestry/stephen-robin/)).

Robin offers CNC machining services to other shops. “In the Woodstock area, there are many guitar builders and wood-working studios like mine who will favor a local alternative,” he said in the WAC article. “Craftsmen spend thousands of dollars to ship products across the U.S. to other shops with the CNC technology. Now, they can save time and money by keeping the wood local.”

“Once upon a time to make a desktop like this required a certain amount of skill,” Robin says back in his office. “Now in probably a couple of hours you can glue it up and take it downstairs, and an hour later you have the top, including the undercuts and everything.”

### Keeping life interesting

The tour continues through his living quarters, accompanied briefly by Joany Elliott.

“This is our house. It’s sort of a work in progress, mostly done ...”

Stephen: “We made all this stuff...”

Joany: “He made all this stuff...”

Stephen: “Joany has tons of stuff, tchotchkes .... Occasionally some of it gets used.”

She points out a dining-room table with two leaves. Stephen says, “You look underneath, everything is wood. Everything we build looks as good underneath as it does on the bottom as it does on the top.”

He shows off some expert tile work.

“We copied this from Olana...”

Up more stairs .... Joany’s office, the computers networked...

More tile work in the bathroom. “I’m not a tile guy, I don’t do this professionally, but I can do it. When we were in Italy we copied that, I made that piece by piece.”

Beds, dressers, mirrors, nightstands...

“All this stuff is dovetailed, no nails. Just about everything I make is functionally as good as you can make it. Benches have two mortises, there’s no cheats.”

Robin likes to shoot hoops, so we hoist a couple, though it’s a little muddy outside. And like many old-time Woodstockers, he’s got a couple of Dylan stories to relate,



though he doesn’t harp on them.

His daughter is 52 “in Cape Cod, she has a restaurant, a husband and a child...”

“I own a house in Cape Cod next to my daughter,” Stephen said, “I’m gradually fixing up. Little house and outbuilding ... and if I have time ... well, I find that I have more money than I have time. I’m not going to outlive my money.”

“I swim every day for a half-hour with my cousin Freddy Hand. I like biking, motorcycle riding, kayaking. In the winter I ski .... I have a pretty full life. But in my own house I’m embarrassed I

don’t have dining-room chairs, so that’s my next project.

“I have two weeks to do a project, then I’m free. I’ve decided I’m retired from anything beyond .... Well, I’m the only guy that knows how to spray-finish, so I do that. But I’m sort of trying to back away from the business .... But if people want to make money, the business has to support itself. If we hit a slow period, I’ll hire everybody to work on furniture, and we’ll spend some money and see what happens. Just, you know, trying to keep life interesting ....”



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# Cold comfort

## *Winterization tips for Hudson Valley homeowners*

by Zac Shaw

**H**ERE'S THE COLD truth: Winterization in the Hudson Valley is more than just a seasonal chore. It's a necessity for every homeowner.

Let's examine the long list of important winter preparations, addressing crucial areas from insulation upgrades and draft-protection measures to ensuring roof integrity and the essential gutter cleaning and maintenance.

We'll look at the region's older homes, which often pose unique challenges, especially when it comes to heating system readiness and pipe protection. The Hudson Valley's lush landscape, too, demands its own prep to weather the cold months. Those with detached buildings – common around these parts – face additional winterizing concerns.

And while all these tasks beckon, the mounting pressure of high demand paired with a limited supply of home-improvement professionals adds another layer of urgency.

So, before the first snowflake settles, let's embark on a thorough journey of preparing our homes for the local winter.

### **Better insulate than never**

In the Hudson Valley, where temperature inconsistency is the norm, homes demand thorough insulation. Attics and walls are typical areas of focus, but it's important to insulate crawl spaces and basements to improve a home's overall thermal efficiency.

Blown-in insulation is a practical choice for many homeowners, as it can fill hard-to-reach spaces, reducing gaps where cold air might seep in. Insulating floors, especially in homes with raised foundations, can also make a noticeable difference in indoor comfort during colder months.

Many older homes can benefit from



**Before the first snowfall, homeowners should ensure gutters are cleaned of all debris.**

modern insulation methods without compromising their structural or historical integrity. Techniques like injection foam can boost insulation levels in these homes without extensive modifications. With the region's varied winter conditions, an effective insulation strategy is vital not only for comfort but also

for energy efficiency. Proper insulation ensures homes remain warm during the cold spells and prevents excessive energy use.

Depending on your income level and other factors, you may be able to get financial assistance from New York State for making insulation upgrades, as well





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as some of the other energy-efficient improvements covered below.

### Draft protection

The varied regional topography, from riverfronts to mountain peaks, presents distinct climate challenges, intensifying the importance of draft-proofing. The breezes that sweep down mountains or waft across rivers can lead to unique draft patterns in homes.

For homes at higher elevations, where temperatures tend to be cooler and winds sharper, it's especially important to ensure windows and doors are tightly sealed. Weatherstripping is a useful tool in these areas, helping to maintain a warm interior even in the face of gusty mountain winds. Upgrading to double-paned or thermal windows can also be a boon for homes at these elevations, providing a necessary buffer against the colder external environment.

Meanwhile, homes in valleys or near bodies of water often experience damp, chilly air, especially during the early morning and evening hours. Here, addressing drafts is equally vital, not only for warmth but also to prevent moisture



The Hudson Valley's lush landscape demands its own prep to weather the cold months.

buildup, which can lead to mold or mildew. Ensuring proper door seals and using draft stoppers can keep both cold air and dampness at bay.

Regardless of elevation, it's crucial for all homeowners regularly to inspect their home siding and foundation. Seal gaps

or cracks to optimize insulation, as even small openings can lead to significant heat loss. In the diverse climate of the Hudson Valley, tailoring draft-proofing strategies based on location ensures both comfort and energy efficiency throughout the colder months.

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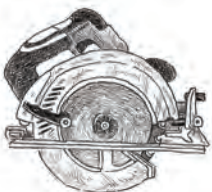
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Consider your windows when preparing your home for the cold winter months.

### Roof truths

In mountainous terrains or higher elevations, roofs often face the challenge of heavier snow accumulations. Such loads can strain roof structures, making regular inspections imperative. Checking for signs of sagging or structural weakening can prevent potential issues down the line. Furthermore, in these elevated areas ensuring proper attic insulation and

ventilation is vital. This setup not only conserves heat but also aids in preventing ice dams — ridges of ice that can trap melting snow, leading to potential leaks and structural damage. Winter wreaks havoc on leaky roofs, with ice changing to water and back again.

For homes nestled in valleys or near water bodies, mixed precipitation poses unique challenges. The layering of sleet

or freezing rain beneath a snowpack can increase the roof's weight burden, making periodic clearing crucial, especially after a freezing rain event.

Roofing material also plays a vital role in winter resilience. Considering materials designed for colder climates can be a game-changer. For instance, metal roofing can facilitate snow sliding off more easily, while specific shingles are crafted to resist ice formation.

### Out of the gutter

The changing seasons in the Hudson Valley bring picturesque foliage color changes and serene snowfalls, but they also present a challenge in gutter maintenance. As autumn leaves drop, gutters can quickly become clogged, posing issues when winter precipitation arrives. Clogged gutters combined with freezing temperatures can lead to ice dam formation, which not only adds weight to the gutters but can also force melting snow and ice to seep beneath roof shingles, risking leaks or structural damage. Before the first snowfall, homeowners should ensure gutters are cleaned of all debris. Equally important is ensuring



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downspouts are clear and direct water well away from the home's foundation to prevent pooling and potential freezing around the base. With the Hudson Valley's distinct mix of thawing and freezing conditions, maintaining clear and functional gutters is crucial for home protection during the cold months.

### Hot stuff

In many older homes, furnaces are a

common fixture. Regular maintenance, such as changing furnace filters and yearly inspections, are crucial to ensure these systems work efficiently throughout the cold months.

Fireplaces, often the heart of a Hudson Valley home, not only add warmth but also a touch of romantic charm. However, they require specific attention before winter use. Chimneys should be cleaned to remove buildup, reducing the risk of

chimney fires. Checking fireplace dampers for proper function is also essential to prevent cold drafts and ensure safe operation. A quick inspection for cracks or structural issues in the chimney or fireplace can go a long way in ensuring safety.

Modern heating systems, found in newer homes or retrofitted into older ones, need their own set of winter preparations. This includes thermostat checks, inspecting for leaks, and making sure vents aren't blocked. Whether relying on an old furnace, a fireplace, or a state-of-the-art heating system, consistent maintenance is the key.

Preparing heating systems for winter is not just about comfort, but also about safety and efficiency. Don't wait for something to go wrong. Anticipate problems – particularly with old heating systems – and be proactive about maintenance.

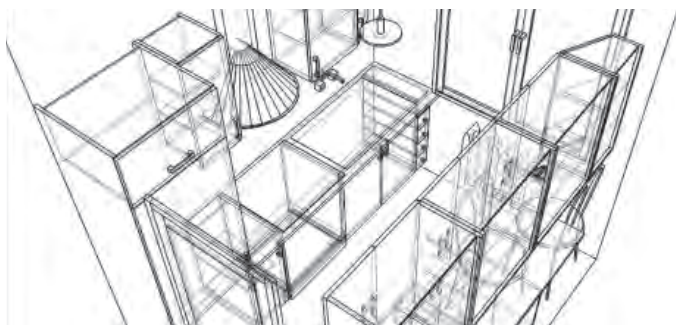
### Pipe up

Temperature variations can spell disaster for water pipes. Exposed pipes need insulation, especially those on the home's exterior or in unheated spaces like garages and crawl spaces. Homeowners can use pipe sleeves or even heat tape to keep them from freezing.

Remember: When your pipes burst, you're not the only one. When weather conditions are just right (wrong?), pipes burst over the Hudson Valley at the same

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time. Plumbers are going to be backed up with tons of jobs. For some, burst pipes are a minor inconvenience, but for many others it can be thousands in property damage. Don't gamble with pipe prep.

### Shrub sweaters

With the region experiencing cold snaps, heavy snows, and ice accumulations, preparing the exterior environment is as crucial as winterizing the

home itself.

Trees, particularly older or more vulnerable ones, can be susceptible to winter damage. Heavy snow or ice can weigh down branches, leading to potential breaks

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that might pose risks to nearby structures or power lines. It's advisable for homeowners to inspect trees for dead or weak limbs and consider professional pruning before winter sets in. This not only prevents possible damage but also promotes healthy tree growth in the spring.

Shrubs and perennial plants can benefit from a layer of mulch applied in the late fall. Mulch acts as an insulation layer, protecting plant roots from severe cold and temperature fluctuations. It also helps retain soil moisture, ensuring plants remain hydrated throughout the winter months.

For homeowners with garden beds close to the home's foundation, caution is required when piling snow. Repeatedly shoveling snow onto these beds can lead to moisture seeping into the foundation when temperatures rise and the snow melts. Instead, it's best to shovel snow away from the home, ensuring both the structure and plants remain undamaged.

Lastly, all irrigation systems or garden hoses should be drained and winterized to prevent freezing and potential pipe bursts. Automated sprinkler systems in particular should be blown out using compressed air to ensure all residual water is removed.

### Throw another backlog in the fireplace

The region's unique weather challenges have led to a boom in demand for local contractors and home-improvement professionals. Starting inquiries early, ideally in late summer or early fall, is key. This foresight allows homeowners to secure quality services before schedules fill up.

### Detached buildings

In the Hudson Valley, it's not just the main homes that need winter preparation. The region, with its rich agricultural history, boasts a multitude of barns,



The region, with its rich agricultural history, boasts a multitude of barns, sheds, and other outbuildings.

sheds, and other outbuildings. For these non-residential structures, it's crucial to check the roofing, as these buildings often lack the internal heat that can melt snow. Ensuring roofs are strong and without leaks can prevent snow-load collapse. Proper ventilation is essential, too, since it prevents the moisture build-up which can degrade wooden structures over time.

What if someone is living in an external

building? This is of particular concern for homeowners looking to build accessory dwellings that take advantage of financial incentives such as Kingston's to do so as a band-aid for the housing crisis.

These living spaces, though separate from the main house, require all the precautions of a primary residence: insulation, heating, and plumbing protection. But it's also key to ensure safe pathways between the main home and these units, as well as adequate snow-removal systems in place. Separate structures often occupy spaces not typically covered by the main home's snow-removal plans. Given the region's shorter winter days, proper lighting for these pathways can also offer safety and security for residents. Whether it's a barn storing valuable equipment or a cozy accessory dwelling, taking extra care for these structures can ensure their longevity and usability through the region's challenging winter months.



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# Care for your companion

*A good petsitter will find ways to connect*

by Violet Snow

**I**F YOU LIVE with an animal, you know how enriching it can be to communicate with a being whose skills are so different from our own. The bonds made across that apparent divide are deep and fascinating.

But what happens when you go on vacation or you land in the hospital or you are called away for some obligation? Who will take care of your beloved companion?

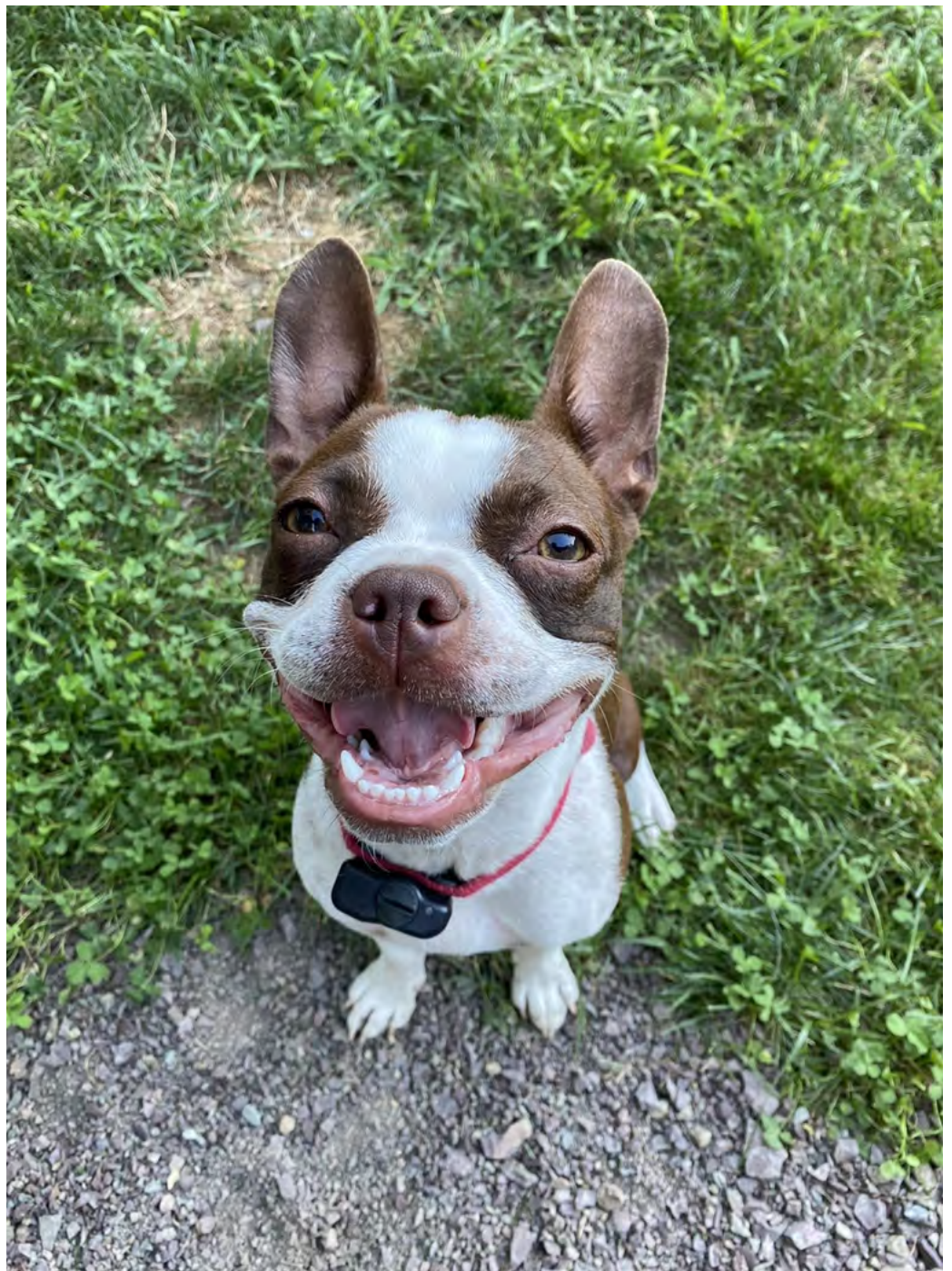
It can be difficult to find the kind of person you'd want looking after your pal. You need someone reliable, calm, and sensitive to the needs and variations of individuals. Good options are someone you know personally, who has proven their abilities, or a reputable and experienced professional.

We collected advice from two local pros, as well as a few stories from neighborhood sitters.

Kylla Delisio lives in Woodstock, but will travel to take care of pets. "People have mainly found me by word of mouth. Having lived here forever, I have a reputation around town, which has helped tremendously with my business. I was a waitress for 15 years, which helped me to meet a lot of the community, too."

She also leaves business cards at local pet shops and has advertised in the newspaper.

When Mia Erichsen, who also works as a veterinary assistant,



Ginger's been a very good girl and deserves some attention.



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posted her pet-care business on Facebook, she had to team up with a friend to cover all the jobs that came her way. Erichsen now takes care of Ulster County, while Sophia Valentia accommodates customers in Orange County. Their posts have appeared on the Facebook pages of local towns, as well as on animal-related Facebook groups, such as Hudson Valley HorseSource.

A petsitter might visit your home two or three times a day, live in your home while you're away, or take your pet into their own house. Delisio, however, does not board animals at her home. \

### Exploring the bonds between animals and people

"I feel like it's best for the pet to be comfortable in their own space while their family is away, so I stay with them at their home," she said. "I can also do check-ins, but that is usually with cats, who don't need as much attention or hands-on care. Each animal is different, so it depends on their specific personality and need."

Erichsen has her own farm in Highland, so she's rarely available for live-in pet care. In addition to caring for cats and farm animals, her business includes a lot of dog-walking, stopping in twice a day to feed and exercise her charges.

### Written lists are important

My own petsitting experience began when a friend asked me to take his dog into my house while he was away. It



Kylla Delisio and one of her petsitting charges.

worked out fine because his Jack Russell is elderly and easygoing enough for my husband and myself to handle. When I was asked to take a young, lively pit bull

for a week, I declined, lacking the skills for a more challenging canine.

Though my neighbor JK has a cat, she was able to take in a calm older dog for a short time. A young, frisky dog, already accustomed to living with cats, was a successful guest after one threatening swat from JK's cat put the pup in her place.

To prepare for a petsitter, make sure to schedule time in advance for the sitter to meet your animals. Go over the feeding and other care procedures. Write down the amount and kind of food each animal gets, and don't forget to specify where the food is stored, where the clean dishes and spoons can be found, and where the dishes are to be placed at feeding time.

Although you will be showing these details to the sitter, don't expect her to remember them all. She has other clients, and you may have multiple animals.

I recently took care of a friend's horses, goats, chickens, cats, and dog. I had intended to take notes at the advance visit, but I saw she had a written list, and I figured I could concentrate better

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if I wasn't writing. Big mistake. When it came to feeding, I couldn't find some of the food or the dishes, details that had only been communicated verbally. Luckily, the owner was available the moment I texted her, and soon I was up to speed.

Obviously, write down your cellphone number or the number where you'll be staying, as well as any vets you use. My horse-owning friend added the phone numbers of neighbors to contact if the horses got loose, but luckily I didn't need them.

If your pets require medication, write down how it is to be administered and how often. Let the sitter know if she is expected to clean up pet waste, what tools to use, and where it should be placed.

If your pet is exceptionally shy or temperamental, you might need to arrange a few get-acquainted visits. "There are some animals who I have to get to know months in advance," said Delisio, "so we can ease our way into spending more time together."

JK suggests showing the sitter your pet's favorite toys. "I always spend a lot of time playing with the cats," she said.

### Something new each day

It's good to offer any other tips about your animal's preferences, although a good petsitter will find a way to connect. Delisio has cared for dogs that didn't like to eat when their parents weren't home. "I have to find out what I can do to help them feel more comfortable, whether it be sitting with them while they eat or singing a little song. You never know until you try."

Asked what she likes about her job, Erichsen replied, "I love meeting all the new animals and all their personalities, getting to hang out with them, and taking a weight off the owner's shoulders so they can go away and enjoy themselves."

Delisio explained, "Animals are my



**It's hard for Zucko to say goodbye to his family, but a good petsitter makes it easier.**

people, and it gives me an opportunity to learn something new each day. Working with beings who don't speak verbally but in a much deeper and visual way is mind-blowing to me. It's all about truly paying attention and listening with your eyes or your heart. The bond between human and animal feels so important to me and has become my passion."

For a home visit and dog-walking, a petsitter in our area may charge anywhere from \$20 or \$30 to \$60 per visit, depending on the number of animals and the

length of the walk. Delisio likes to take energetic dogs on hikes, but she charges extra for the amount of time required.

Live-in care is usually charged by the day, \$80 to \$100, depending on the number of animals and the complexity of the responsibilities. Caring for an animal in the sitter's home would cost somewhat less.

Kylla Delisio of Woodstock may be reached at [kdpetwatch@gmail.com](mailto:kdpetwatch@gmail.com). Mia Erichsen of Highland is at [miaerichsen@yahoo.com](mailto:miaerichsen@yahoo.com).

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# Growing from seed

*Techniques for sexual propagation of trees and shrubs*

by Lee Reich

**P**LANTING SEEDS IS a satisfying way to grow trees and shrubs. Gardeners often have a special affection for plants produced in this manner. Don't be put off by the length of time required to grow trees and shrubs from

seeds. Unless you are interested in flowering or fruiting (which may take a decade for some plants), you can expect plenty of new growth from many species of young tree and shrub seedlings. And even if years are required, shouldn't some aspects of gardening be long-term propositions?

Seed-grown plants, unlike cuttings and

grafts, are not genetic replicas of their parents. With some species, such as green ash, each seedling may be noticeably different in form or leaf color. At the other extreme is Amur honeysuckle, seedlings of which are almost identical to each other and their parents.

In the case of a tree or shrub with a wide natural range, starting with collecting or purchasing seeds from plants grown under similar weather and soil conditions will increase the likelihood that the seedlings will adapt well to your property.

Obtaining seed is just the first step. I remember one autumn day decades ago, when with high aspirations I dropped an apple seed into some potting soil in an eight-inch flowerpot. No, that seed hasn't by now grown into a majestic old tree.

It germinated, and the tree started to grow. Then it stalled at about four inches in height. Apple seeds, like those of many other hardy trees, need special pre-treatment before they will germinate and grow.

Tree seeds planted as I planted them often do not grow at all. This behavior is not without logic. If an apple or sugar-maple seed germinated as soon as it touched ground in late summer or early autumn, the life of the tender young seedling would be snuffed out with the first frosty autumn night. Seeds that ripen in autumn usually have an innate mechanism that prevents them from growing until they have become

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convinced that winter is over.

The way to fool such seeds into behaving as though winter were over is by keeping them cool and moist for a couple of months. By packing seeds into plastic bags along with slightly moist peat or sphagnum moss and then putting the bags into a refrigerator, I've successfully grown many trees from seeds. Creating this artificial

### Chilling requirements vary with the species.

winter for seeds is known as stratification, because nursery workers chill large quantities of seeds by packing alternating layers (strata) of seeds and moist sphagnum moss into boxes.

Seeds could be sown directly in the ground outside, but this imperils them to squirrels, birds, flooding, and other

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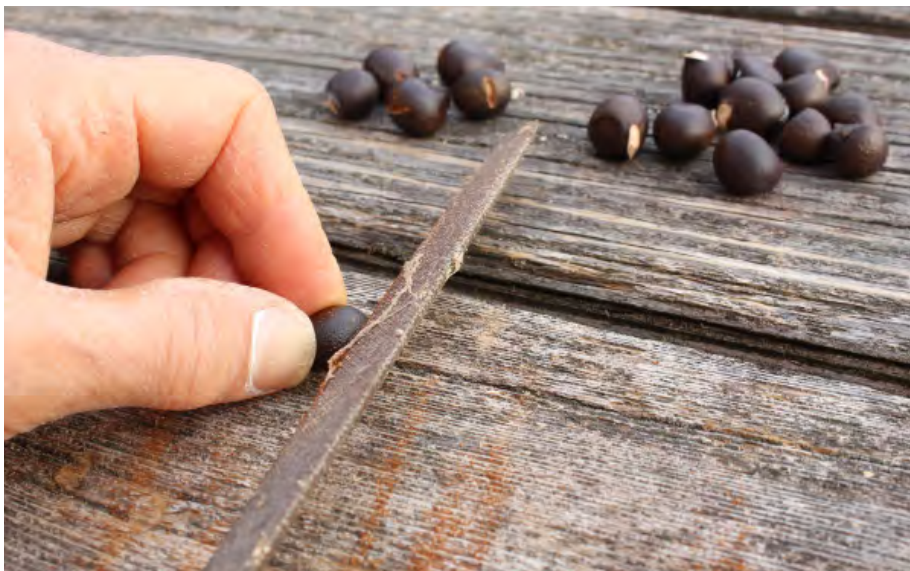
natural hazards.

Seeds kept cool and moist sprout once they have accumulated a certain number of hours of chilling. The chilling requirements vary with the species as examples, one month for Chinese elm, two months for apple, two to four months for hemlock, and four months for dogwood. The optimum chilling temperature is 32 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit, and no time is put into the chilling “bank” when the temperature gets too cold, below about 32 degrees, or too warm, above about 50 degrees Fahrenheit.

A hard seed coat that water cannot penetrate is another common roadblock to germination. To make such seeds permeable (a process known as scarification), either nick them with a file or pack them in plastic bags with non-sterile soil or compost for two or three months, so microorganisms can chew away at the hard coating.

Some seeds -- silk tree, honeylocust, locust, and Kentucky coffee tree are examples -- germinate as soon as they are scarified. Others, such as redbud, juniper and hophornbeam, need stratification following scarification to germinate.

Not all tree seeds need any sort of treatment before they'll germinate. Catalpa and sycamore, for example, germinate as soon as they are sown. Their seeds hang on the trees through winter. The evolutionary logic in their germination



PHOTOS BY LEE REICH

Top to bottom: seed scarification; stratified seeds, sprouting; planting sprouted peach seed.

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behavior may be that by the time their seeds drop to moist ground temperatures are too cold for germination. Or else it's spring, and just the right time for germination. Seeds that ripen in the spring, such as silver maple and red maple, also need no treatments.

Once seeds are ready for planting, perhaps already sprouting, I either pot them in containers in regular houseplant potting soil, or else plant them in the ground outside. Plants with taproots, such as hickories, pawpaws and walnuts, need deep containers. Or I make them from sections cut from four-inch-diameter plastic pipe with screens wired to their bottoms.

The length of time I grow a plant in a container varies, depending on the type of plant, but I check the roots periodically to make sure to either repot or transplant to open ground before the roots become potbound.

Before planting a seedling in a permanent location, I try to picture the tree or shrub 30 years hence. That special affection one develops for woody plants raised from a seed makes it especially hard to cut such plants down, even if they are in the wrong place.

"Tall oaks from little acorns grow." Likewise for maples, sycamores, junipers, and other trees.

In addition to collecting seed myself from local trees, I turn to [www.jlhudsonseeds.net](http://www.jlhudsonseeds.net) for more obscure tree and shrub seed.

My own book, *The Ever Curious Gardener*, offers details and techniques for growing a wide variety of plants from seed. *Plant Propagation: Principles and Practices* by H. Hartmann and D. Kester details principles and practices of propagation for all sorts of plants.

*New Paltz writer Lee Reich, also author of The Pruning Book, Weedless Gardening, Growing Figs in Cold Climates and other books, is a garden consultant specializing in growing fruits, vegetables and nuts. He hosts workshops at his New Paltz farm. For information, go to [www.leereich.com](http://www.leereich.com).*

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Hudson Valley Wine & Food Festival, Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 9 & 10.

# September festivals

*Choose from 10 in the Hudson Valley this month*

by Frances Marion Platt

## Friday-Sunday, Sept. 8-10

### Meadowlark: A Hudson Valley Music Festival

Stone Ridge Orchard, 3012 Route 213, Stone Ridge

[www.meadowlarkfest.com](http://www.meadowlarkfest.com)

Described as a curated three-day celebration of American roots and independent music, this year's Meadowlark lineup will blend storied names in Americana, indie rock and experimental music – including legendary bluesman Chris Smither – with a roster of local and emerging artists, within a secluded

and intimate setting. What they all have in common is a creative spirit that pushes the boundaries of traditional and independent music. A portion of event proceeds will be donated to causes that support local farmers in the Hudson Valley region and nationally.

The festivities begin on Friday, September 8 at 5 p.m. with a VIP dinner and cider-tasting under the fabled 400-year-old oak tree in the middle of Stone Ridge Orchard. The music, dubbed Meadowlark after Dark, will include Lizzie No, Beccs, Cloudbelly and others to be announced.

On Saturday, the music gets underway

at 1 p.m. and running until 9:30 p.m. Performers will be Clap Your Hands Say Yeah, Jolie Holland, Chris Staples, Babehoven, Kaia Kater and an unidentified “special guest.” (Locals who know which publicity-averse, very famous female singer who often supports good causes happens to live in Stone Ridge might venture a guess.) Some limited overnight camping will be available. Sunday's lineup, from 1 p.m. until 8:30 p.m., includes DeVotchKa, Kacy & Clayton, Chris Smither and Quintrón & Miss Pussycat. Meadowlark will also feature performers from the Bindlestiff Family Cirkus and video art by Preston Spurlock.





Woodstock Film Festival, Wednesday-Sunday, Sept. 27-Oct. 1.

Ticket prices as of press time ranged from \$100 for single-day entry to \$520 for VIP all-access for the full three-day weekend. Camping access costs extra.

#### Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 9 & 10

**Hudson Valley Wine & Food Festival**  
Dutchess County Fairgrounds, 6550 Springbrook Avenue, Rhinebeck  
[www.hudsonvalleywinefest.com](http://www.hudsonvalleywinefest.com)

Hundreds of wines from New York wineries, more than 100 gourmet specialty foods, lifestyle vendors and food sampling from some of the region's best restaurants plus live entertainment are the attractions at the 23rd annual Hudson Valley Wine and Food Festival. Visitors can learn about wine and food from the event's many cooking demonstrations and food and wine seminars throughout the weekend, and also enjoy the opportunity to meet and speak to vintners from some of the state's best wineries.

The Hudson Valley Wine & Food Festival opens at 11 a.m. and closes at 6 p.m. on Saturday, 5 p.m. on Sunday. Tickets cost \$50 (\$99 VIP) per day, \$90 for the full weekend. These include a tasting

glass and all the wine/beer/cider/spirits sampling. VIP tickets add early entry to the festival, access to the VIP tent with

free refreshments, and a gift bag. Designated drivers get in for \$25 per day, \$45 for the weekend.

#### Friday-Sunday, Sept. 15-17

##### Drom30

Various venues, Kingston & Catskill  
<https://dromedary-records.com>

This weekend-long festival celebrating indie rock was initially conceived as a party to celebrate the 30th anniversary of Kingston micro-indie label Dromedary Records, including a number of longtime Dromedary performers. The lineup from 6 to 11 p.m. on Friday at Tubby's in Kingston includes Yung Wu and Speed the Plough.

On Saturday from 1 to 11 p.m., at the Avalon and Left-Bank Ciders in Catskill, the bands will be Antietam, Sleepyhead, Flower, Cathedral Ceilings, Joy Cleaner, Sad Nemaad, Guy Capecelatro III with Carrie Bradley, French, Nick Berry and Civic Mimic.

Sunday's bands, playing from 1 to 11 p.m. at the Avalon and Spike's Record Rack in Catskill, include Lotion, Monsterland, the Mommyheads, Jenny Toomey & Friends, Stuyvesant, Overheard and Dipper, plus a reading from Bela Koe-Krompecher.

Ticket prices are \$25 for Friday night's events and \$60 for Saturday and Sunday combined. A VIP pass available for \$70 includes a Dromedary sampler CD and

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Hudson Valley Garlic Festival, Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 30-Oct. 1, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

a \$10 donation to local food banks. Visit the website for ticket links and more information about the performers.

**Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 23-24 & Sept. 30-Oct. 1, 11 a.m.-5:30 p.m.**

#### **Grape Stomping Festival**

Robibero Winery, 714 Albany Post Road, New Paltz

[www.robiberofamilyvineyards.com](http://www.robiberofamilyvineyards.com)

Admit it: You've always wanted to try your hand – errr, feet – at stomping grapes to extract the juice, in the old-fashioned way of making wine. Robibero Winery gives you the chance to make that wish

come true at its Grape Stomping Festival. Attendees are asked to bring blankets or chairs to use on the lawn and a towel to dry your feet. (Douglas Adams would approve.)

Tickets cost \$25 in advance, \$35 on the day of the event. That price entitles you to participate in the grape-stomping, plus a wine-tasting or one glass of wine or sangría. Kids under 12 stomp for free, and for \$15 non-drinkers can purchase a ticket for the grape-stomping only.

This event also features live music from 2 to 5 p.m. Caramel apple sangría available by the glass, wine-tasting, wine by

the glass or bottle, New York State craft beer and cocktails, wood-fired pizza, lawn games, and a bonfire. It goes on rain or shine.

**Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 23-24, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.**

**Saugerties Fall Fest**  
236 Market Street, Saugerties  
[HUDSONVALLEYEVENTS@OUTLOOK.COM](mailto:HUDSONVALLEYEVENTS@OUTLOOK.COM)

The Saugerties Senior Center welcomes in the autumn with a free indoor market featuring 30 different categories of vendors. There will be hayrides, live music, an apple-pie contest, farmstands, raffles to support the Andrew Mullen Scholarship

Program, a photo booth, apple cider, doughnuts, facepainting, baked goods, maple syrup, honey, candles, and more.

**Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 23-24**

#### **Woodsist Festival**

Arrowood Farms, 236 Lower Whitfield Road, Accord

<https://arrowoodfarms.com/music>

The Woodsist Festival returns to Arrowood, with a lineup that showcases the largest number of artists to perform at the festival to date, while ticket prices will reportedly remain the same as in past years (not yet listed on the website, though). This year's festival features Kevin Morby, Kurt Vile and the Violators, Avery Tare, Woods, Cass McCombs, Bombino, Natural Information Society, Scientist, M. J. Lenderman, Water from Your Eyes, Alabaster DePlume, Taper's Choice, Daniel Higgs, Tyvek, Anna St. Louis, Aquarium Drunkard DJs, and Tubby's DJs. Check the website for details as the event date draws nearer.

**Wednesday-Sunday, Sept. 27-Oct. 1**

#### **Woodstock Film Festival**

Various venues in Woodstock, Kingston, Saugerties, Rosendale, Rhinebeck  
<https://woodstockfilmfestival.org>

Tickets for in-person and virtual events, as well as festival passes, are for sale now

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online and at the box office. It's always a don't-miss event, so keep checking the website for announcements.

**Saturday, Sept. 30, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.**

### Gardiner Day 2023

George Majestic Memorial Park, Gardiner

[www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064858265623](http://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100064858265623)

You don't need to be a Gardinerite to feel welcome at this low-key, family-friendly annual street festival, though it's organized by locals for locals, with every single activity free of charge. Gardiner Day's motto is "Celebrating Family, Fun and Friends," and that's about what happens, with live local bands, dance and karate demonstrations, games and vendors. Some years there are even free pony rides or a petting zoo. For a genuine experience of small-town homeyness, just show up.

**Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 30-Oct. 1**

### Handcrafted Octoberfest at Rhinebeck

Dutchess County Fairgrounds, 6550 Springbrook Avenue, Rhinebeck

[www.quailhollow.com](http://www.quailhollow.com)

This family harvest celebration is an open-air event honors that harvest time and slips in a few Germanic traditions, but is centered around the concept of handmade. And there's something for every generation, taste and tastebud, from the Hudson Valley's best craft beer, wine and spirits to one-of-a-kind goods by the nation's finest makers and artisans to seasonal grub, live musical performances and expert-led harvest activities.

The festival offers a carefully curated collection of handmade goods in more than ten media categories, complemented by a diverse selection of autumnal extras: fine-art pumpkin-carving by a nationally acclaimed master of the niche craft, one of the state's largest pumpkins (likely weighing in over 1700 pounds), an educational petting zoo and animal show, family lawn games, carriage rides, craft demonstrations (fiber-spinning, woodworking and more), a drop-off children's craft tent (with programming and creative free play). You can even go to the Quail Hollow website and register for a needle-felting or paper-quilling workshop led by Hudson Valley Atelier.

The hours are from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, September 30 and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Full-weekend tickets

cost \$13 at the gate, \$10.50 in advance for adults, \$11/\$8.50 for seniors, \$6/\$4.50 for children aged 6 to 16.

**Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 30-Oct. 1, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.**

### Hudson Valley Garlic Festival

Cantine Memorial Complex, Saugerties  
[www.hvgf.org](http://www.hvgf.org)

Long before Saugerties became a hot destination for equestrians, its claim to fame was being the nerve center of garlic cuisine for the East Coast. The Hudson Valley Garlic Festival has been around since 1989, and it draws tens of thousands to Cantine Field every autumn to pay homage to the Stinking Rose.

You can buy braids of garlic of every conceivable variety and sample every imaginable garlic-flavored food (including ice cream). Culinary talks and demonstrations are also an integral part of the two-day event. There are hundreds of vendors, live music all day long, and, for some inexplicable reason often a Morris dance performance. (Not that I'm complaining; we don't get many of those around here.)

Daily admission at the gate costs \$15 for attendees aged 13 and up. Tickets purchased online in advance cost \$10 for adults, \$8 for seniors, and must be printed out. Only paper copies will be accepted at the gate.

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# Ten quick fixes

*How to create curb appeal when you're selling your home*

by Francesca Ortolano

**Y**OU NEVER GET a second chance to make a good first impression. That's why improving curb appeal is crucial when selling your home.

The first impression buyers will have of your property is how the exterior looks when driving up to it. Is the lawn manicured? Do overgrown bushes cover windows or block pathways? Is there a garden growing out of your uncleaned gutters? Are weeds growing into the siding? Are the windows dirty?

Here are some quick fixes I recommend to my sellers in order to enhance the curb appeal of their property:

1. **Landscape maintenance:** Trimming overgrown bushes and shrubs is a good place to start. If you have flower beds, make sure they are weeded. Add a few bags of fresh mulch. Depending on your budget and the season, add some colorful potted plants or flowers near the entrance. Manicured lawns, trimmed bushes and colorful flowers show pride in ownership. They always put a smile on people's faces.

2. **Clean exterior:** Remove any dirt, cobwebs and debris from your front porch. Showing buyers you care how your entrance looks can speak to your overall care for the house. Make sure you clean all windows, inside and out. Clear away cobwebs around window frames.



A nicely painted door adds to the curb appeal of any home.

Clean windows make a house sparkle, especially if you have any kind of view to a stream, meadow or mountain range, or just a view of a lovely yard. Depending upon what kind of siding you have, you may want to consider power washing, a way to brighten up the house without painting. It is not expensive, and can help create the kind of curb appeal that can sell your home quicker.

3. **Front-door upgrade:** Can your front door use a fresh coat of paint? Walking up

to a freshly painted door with an updated door knob and a decorative door mat or wreath is a sure way to add curb appeal. Buyers find a clean, freshly painted door with new hardware very welcoming and inviting.

4. **Exterior repairs:** Are there cracks in the driveway or walkways that can be easily repaired? Are there trip hazards that should be addressed? Replace or repair broken or damaged siding, roof shingles and gutters. These eyesores





Above, pruning hedges and overgrown bushes is a good place to start; below, replace worn-out house numbers with fresh new modern ones.

should be removed. As buyers look around, their eyes are drawn to positive elements of the property.

If there is exterior lighting, be sure they function properly, and all the bulbs are working.

5. Paint touch-ups: Touch up paint can really brighten up peeling or faded trim and shutters. Again, the goal is to remove as many eye sores as possible in order for the buyer to have as positive first impression. You would be surprised how a little touch up can go along way in adding curb appeal.



6. Fencing and gates: Make sure gates operate properly and fencing is freshly painted or touched up. Repair broken parts. Don't overlook their contribution to curb appeal.

7. New house numbers: Be sure to replace worn-out house numbers with fresh new modern ones. Ensure they are visible from the street. This is a quick fix that really makes a difference.

8. Upgrade mailbox: Replace an outdated or damaged mailbox with a new one. Your mail carrier will appreciate that, too.

9. Hide trash bins: Too many times I have pulled up to show a property and have found stinky old garbage bins stationed right in front of the house, sometimes right by the front door. Try to put them out of sight, perhaps behind a screen or in the garage. They are unsightly, and should be hidden from view.

10. Garage-door touch-up: If you have a garage, be sure the door works properly. Touch up any peeling paint. Like painting your front door, going so far as to paint the garage is like painting your front door. It adds greatly to the curb appeal of your home.

Remember, the goal is to create a welcoming and well-maintained exterior that entices potential buyers to explore further. Removing as many eyesores as possible ensures buyers will see pride in ownership as they look around. These quick fixes can significantly boost your home's curb appeal and make a positive first impression during the selling process.

If you start with a great first impression before your guests even enter the house, you are on the right track. If you did nothing, your house will still likely sell. How long will that take? At what price point?

Creating and maintaining curb appeal is a must if you want the best chance to sell at your price point to the right buyer and as fast as possible.

.....  
*Francesca Ortolano is a salesperson for Coldwell Banker Timberland Properties.*





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