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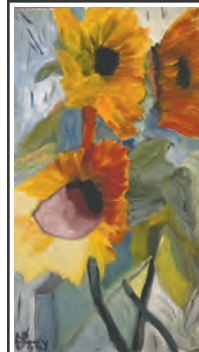
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# Buffets for bees

*Resources abound for pollinator-friendly gardening*

by Frances Marion Platt

**T**HE MONTH THAT has just come to an end turns out to be a crucial one for the plant world, with hungry bees just emerging from their long winter's nap. May being also the time when grasses and weeds spring to life, it's unfortunately the point at which most homeowners begin mowing their lawns. The resulting scarcity of early wildflowers adds an unneeded burden to the survival chances of the insects we rely on to pollinate our food supply. If you have a yard or garden to maintain, there are simple steps you

can take that will go a long way toward helping our friends the bees survive and thrive.

In 2019, a botanical charity in the UK launched a campaign called No Mow May to persuade people to let their lawns grow out during this critical season for pollinators. The Portland, Oregon-based Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation ([www.xerces.org](http://www.xerces.org)), named for a blue butterfly that went extinct in the 1940s due to development in the San Francisco Bay area, brought the No Mow May concept to the US via its Bee City USA initiative (<https://beecityusa.org>). The campaign quickly caught on

in the Midwest, and the mid-Hudson is beginning to get on the bandwagon as well: The Town of New Paltz endorsed No Mow May back in April (<https://hudsonvalleyone.com/2022/04/10/new-paltz-resolution-supports-no-mow-may>). Other municipalities in our region are sure to follow suit.

Why all the fuss about lawns? In case you missed it, honeybees and other essential pollinator species are in trouble. Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD) became big news during the first two decades of this millennium, emerging in the US in 2006 and subsequently spreading rapidly around the world. Whole hives of



PHOTOS BY DION OGUST



honeybees, on which the pollination of about three-quarters of our global food supply depends, began to drop dead en masse. About a third of the domesticated bee population in this country alone perished annually over the next five years.

Entomologists scrambled to identify the cause of the syndrome and came up with quite a laundry list of possible factors. Beehives can be infested by a destructive mite called *Varroa* and a fungus called *Nosema ceranae*. Other suggested culprits include a variety of pathogens, including a newly identified

DNA virus known as IIV6; pesticides and fungicides; stress from moving hives from place to place; and malnutrition caused by the practice of feeding commercial honeybees pollen from monocultural sources or high-fructose corn syrup. Several studies suggest that the immune systems of bee populations are being suppressed by increasing levels of pesticides in the agricultural environment, leaving the bees more susceptible to pathogens, harmful fungi and parasites. Dissections of dead bees from collapsed colonies typically show abnormalities in the digestive

tract suggestive of starvation, even when they're being fed.

In 2015, a group of biologists from the University of Sussex released a report on their analysis of 170 worldwide studies on CCD and stressors for bees, including pathogens, agrochemicals and declining biodiversity. They concluded that "combined stress from parasites, pesticides and lack of flowers" has been the fatal recipe. "The abundance and diversity of flowers has declined, bees are chronically exposed to cocktails of agrochemicals and they are simultaneously exposed to novel parasites accidentally spread by humans. Climate change is likely to exacerbate these problems in the future," the report stated.

While studies of CCD have focused almost entirely on domesticated honeybee colonies, the 2015 report also noted alarming trends in world populations of bumblebees and other wild bees, including the extinction of numerous species. Habitat loss seems to be a critical factor here, both in terms of food sources and nesting sites. The report identified "flower-rich grasslands" as optimal bee territory: the kind of land that is irresistible to housing developers. It's also a fair description for a lawn that has been allowed to grow out long enough for native wildflowers to bloom. So yes, there is something that you can do about this – and it's not rocket science.

Besides not mowing your lawn during the month of May, you have many options for making your yard a feast for bees, butterflies and other pollinator species. And the Internet is brimming with resources for finding out what they are. Some, such as the abovementioned Xerces Society and Bee City websites, the Pollinator Partnership (<https://pollinator.org>) and the National Pollinator Garden Network (<http://millionpollinatorgardens.org>), serve national constituencies and are great places to learn some of the basics. The latter has issued a challenge to establish one million or more pollen forage locations in the US, and has a fabulous resource page geared especially toward educators.

After you've had a look at these, you'll have a good grasp of some fundamentals that hold true no matter where you live: bee-healthy alternatives to using chemical pesticides, fungicides and herbicides in your garden, especially nicotinoids, for example. Removing invasive and non-

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Left to Right: Joseph Belluck, Jordan Fox, Kristina Georgiou





No Mow May aims to persuade people to let their lawns grow out during this critical season for pollinators.

native species is a key early step. All the evidence being gathered among pollinator gardeners seems to be pointing to the importance of planting bee-nourishing flowers in large clumps and clusters of the same species, rather than specimen plants of a wide variety of flowers. So, if

you've got space for a perennial border, you'll want to take that into consideration as you plan the layout.

You'll also want to home in on what works best in our regional biosphere: what plants that bees love will also be easy to maintain in the terrains, soils, climate

and local microclimates of the Hudson Valley/Catskills. Lists of Northeast na-

## Beekeeping resources

ONCE YOU'VE ESTABLISHED your personal domain as a bee buffet, you may find yourself tempted to take up the fascinating hobby of beekeeping. It's quite a commitment, but many find it a deeply rewarding pursuit.

If you want to learn more about what's involved, there are ample resources in our region to get you started. There's an Ulster County Beekeepers' Association at [www.ulsterbees.org](http://www.ulsterbees.org) and a Catskill Mountain Beekeepers' Club at [www.catskillbees.org](http://www.catskillbees.org). Supplies and materials can be purchased at Hudson Valley Bee Supply on Sawkill Road in Kingston ([www.hudsonvalleybeesupply.com](http://www.hudsonvalleybeesupply.com)).

Two of our region's acknowledged gurus of beekeeping, Chris Harp and Grai St. Clair Rice, offer seasonal classes on Honeybees and Organic Beekeeping for beginners, as well as Maintaining a Healthy Hive for established beekeepers. Check out their website at [www.honeybeelives.org](http://www.honeybeelives.org) for plenty of pointers. Cornell Cooperative Extension's Master Gardener Program also presents occasional workshops on beekeeping.

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EDITOR & PUBLISHER: Geddy Sveikauskas

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER: Genia Wickwire

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tive plants that support bee health can be found on most of the websites cited in this article, but we especially like one published by the Natural Resource Conservation Service ([www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE\\_DOCUMENTS/nrcs144p2\\_027028.pdf](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/nrcs144p2_027028.pdf)) that shows a large photograph of each of the recommended plants in bloom, making it easy to visualize and design your beds and borders for harmony of color and form. Timing of bloom should be another consideration, so that your local bees can snack from the time they emerge from hibernation

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until they're ready to overwinter again.

An outstanding resource is Pollinator Pathways ([www.pollinator-pathway.org](http://www.pollinator-pathway.org)), a Connecticut-based organization that is taking the lead in recruiting municipalities – especially in the Northeast – to make a commitment to promoting the creation of pollinator garden corridors. Communities that take the “pledge” not only encourage individual residents and businesses to plant blocks of bee-friendly flowers, but also plant them on the grounds of schools and municipal buildings. Even highway departments can get involved by planting pollen-rich wildflowers along embankments as the final step of road reconstruction.

A long list of Hudson Valley communities have signed onto the Pollinator Pathway campaign. In Ulster County, programs in the Towns of Esopus, Gardiner, Lloyd, New Paltz, Rosendale and Ulster are all being coordinated under the aus-

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pices of the Wallkill Valley Land Trust. Its webpage at <https://wallkillvalleylt.org/pp> is a terrific source for hyperlocal advice and resources, from a “Getting Started” primer to recommended plant lists to links to nearby seed sources.

The Town of Woodstock has its own chapter, run by the Woodstock Transition organization, which offers talks by pollinator gardening experts to interested community groups, in addition to loads of resources on its website (<https://woodstocknypollinatorpathway.org>). There’s even a map of properties in and around Woodstock whose stewards have committed to plant and maintain Pollinator Pathways. You can download and print a sign to post in your garden if you want to brag to your neighbors about it, or recruit them!

Pollinator gardens have also been established on the campuses of SUNY New Paltz and SUNY Ulster. The Kingston Land Trust is in the process of joining up with Pollinator Pathway, and currently working with the “arts-forward” Kingston-based organization Hudson Valley Bee Habitat ([www.hvbeehabitat.org](http://www.hvbeehabitat.org)) on a public sculpture project for pollinator education along the Kingston Greenline, to be called the Kingston Bee-Line (<https://kingstonlandtrust.org/kingston-pollinators>).

We’d be remiss not to mention the ever-reliable Cornell Cooperative Extension of Ulster County, whose Pollinator Support webpage (<http://ulster.cce.cornell.edu/gardening/pollinator-support>) is dense with links to a plethora of information sources on every imaginable aspect of pollinator gardening, right down to how to make a golf course bee-friendly. If you want to take a deeper dive into ways to create habitat and forage for declining wild native bee species, and not merely honeybees, this is a fertile place to look. One valuable resource, Cornell’s publication Creating a Pollinator Garden for



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Specialist Bees, can be found at <https://cornell.app.box.com/s/vd5plphukjtjrfp-k485q62994cx11akm>.

Upcoming on June 18 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., the Xeriscape Garden on the SUNY Ulster campus will host a free Master Gardener Pollinator Party. To learn more about the event, visit <http://ulster.cce.cornell.edu/events/2022/06/18/-learning-in-the-garden-series>. And these same Master Gardeners have arranged with the New York State Bridge Authority for a flashy local tribute to Nation Pollinator Week: On Tuesday and Wednesday, June 21 and 22, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Mid-Hudson Bridge between Poughkeepsie and Highland will be draped in 27,000 orange and yellow lights in honor of pollinators.



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Newburgh Vintage Emporium Original Flea Market.

# The hunt is on!

*I find flea markets a task, an art form, a hobby and a delight*

by Genia Wickwire

**N**OT EVERYONE CAN appreciate the skill it takes to hunt down a good flea-market find. It takes real effort.

Figuring out where in the world flea markets exist comes first. Then comes driving all over creation to get to them. Combing through table after table of bits and baubles, disorganized rubbish, and bins of junk from vendor to vendor

comes next. Patience searching to find an item is not everyone's favorite pastime. But it's required.

Is that item in your price range? Can you haggle? Etc, etc. Flea markets are a far cry from a sterilized environment with brand-new items ordered by size, with multiples of the same exact product in many colors. However, if you want a piece of history, a one-of-a-kind item, something that has been weathered and appreciated over the years, then flea markets are perfect for you.

Flea markets can range from wildly expensive to incredibly cheap. Price is all up to the attachment and value of

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PHOTOS BY LAUREN THOMAS

### High Falls Flea, a part of history.

a collector who, although at a market presumably selling stuff, may or may not want actually to sell their objects.

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Value is determined by the transaction between seller and the buyer. Either you can come to an agreement or you can't. *C'est la vie.* On to the next table if the offer is not accepted or the seller won't budge.

It is a task, an art form, a hobby and a delight to some and a tiring waste of time to others.

Over the years I have honed my skills. Rusty objects are my jam. Your garbage is my big find. I love a good flea market!

My affection for a good flea market may have something to do with the fact that my home is 200 years old. New objects just don't look right in a house with wood beams and rooms that lead from one to the next in an odd array without a single right angle to be found.

Visitors who cannot understand the value of an old house often say something like, "It certainly has a lot of character."

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Mower's Saturday & Sunday Market is a Woodstock institution.

Yes, it does have character. Objects that are manufactured by the thousands don't look right inside it. Even new objects made to look old come through as inauthentic in my home. My house screams for genuine old stuff, 200-year-old stuff. |

I don't have the money to walk into a posh antique store, throw \$500, \$1000, \$2000, \$5000 down, and buy the items displayed so perfectly that I drool at the



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sight of them. I do, however, like to find similar items at a fraction of the cost by doing the work.

And so the hunt begins.

### High Falls Flea Market

This market, like the hamlet of High Falls itself, is small, quaint and cute. The flea market is in a little nook on Route 213 at the middle of town. History surrounds it with the improved D&H Canal Museum opening this summer a short meander away. It feels right to spend a little time looking to find some old, pos-

sibly historical object in such a setting. It is open on Saturdays and Sundays, 9 to 4 from the second Saturday in April to the last Sunday in October. [www.canalmuseum.org/market](http://www.canalmuseum.org/market)

### Mower's Saturday & Sunday Market

Mower's is a Woodstock institution. For 45 years Janine and John Mower have been holding down the fort at their weekend flea market. This flea market has a little bit of everything so if you are with someone who isn't interested in

antiques they can easily spend time looking through jewelry, clothes and books while you dig for rusty old antiques. Open every Saturday and Sunday from mid-May until November. It is conveniently located in walking distance to the center of town on Maple Lane in Woodstock. [www.mowersaturdayfleamarket.com](http://www.mowersaturdayfleamarket.com)

### Original Flea Outdoor Market at Newburgh Vintage Emporium

There are two huge warehouses: the original Vintage Emporium and then, added a couple years later, the Warehouse Vintage Emporium. Each location is gigantic. Special items can be searched out on any day. They have now added an outdoor flea market to the game, vendors out in the fresh air.

They boast of over 30 vendors including "vintage, antiques, local makers & food trucks!" The plan for the day can consist of fueling up at the food truck and then making your rounds through the maze of tables. Sounds like an awesome day out. There are only a few dates, so mark them down: June 18, September 10, October 15, 2022. The market is from 9 to 6 on each of these days. The address is 5006



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### 209 Flea

209 Flea is brand-new this season. While long-standing flea markets provide a sense of familiarity, in that you begin to know the vendors and can head right to your favorites, new flea markets allow for that element of surprise. Sometimes it takes a little while for new flea markets to develop, so it is always fun to stop by throughout the season to see what is new and different.

209 Flea will be open every Saturday and Sunday from 10 to 5. It is located at Route 209 and the corner of Samsonville Road in Kerhonkson. [www.209flea.com](http://www.209flea.com)

### Stormville Airport Flea Market

Stormville Airport Flea Market is the largest around by a mile, meaning they probably have a true mile more of tables. There are several hundred tables of new items from music to socks to jewelry and so much more. There's also an exclusive antiques section, also consisting of hundreds of tables. You can get furniture, tools, old industry, pottery, etc.

If you can dream it, you can find it here. However, it could take hours and hours. You really have to ready yourself for this flea market. It can easily take a full day to wade through the tables.

The upcoming flea market dates are July 9, September 3 and 4, October 8 and 9, and November 5. They also have a gigantic yard sale on June 18 and September 17. They are located at 428 Route 216, Stormville. [www.stormvilleairportfleamarket.com](http://www.stormvilleairportfleamarket.com)

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Updated kitchen and baths. Municipal water and sewer and natural gas. Sold as is.



# High-profile plumbing

*A plumber who gets real and gives plenty of advice*

by Zac Shaw

**L**ET'S GET REAL about plumbing. Many local plumbers are caught in a paradox. Kingston's Chris Armstrong is one of them.

"We're in such high demand," he says. "There's not enough of us to go around."

Beyond the Hudson Valley, he has begun to make a name for himself online as something of a minor plumbing celebrity. Thousands of fellow pros, amateurs and curious homeowners across the world tune in to his social-media livestreams and posts.

Plumbers like Armstrong must fulfill this high demand amidst a broken supply chain, rapidly rising inflation, and a severe labor shortage. The socioeconomic pipes are clogged. A lot of life still gets through, but businesses must wait for these serious issues to be flushed out.

Armstrong does not enjoy having to navigate this turbulent flow, but he rises to meet the challenge with a sense of selfless enthusiasm. Since 2004 he's been on his own, building what is now a well-known business that has served hundreds of area homeowners.

What makes Armstrong the brains and brawn behind so many area bathrooms and basements? And what makes his online plumbing profile a must-follow?

He tells it the way he sees it.

"I don't have a lot of filter," he admits. "I have a lot of passion."

## He gives customers options

As many homeowners facing expensive renovations or repairs will tell you, candor is highly prized in a home-improvement professional.

"The people who call me know that I'm going to give them some options. I'm not out there trying to sell you anything," he says. "I'm giving you the opportunity to be my customer. That may sound arrogant, but I have enough business."

A surge in homebuying has only exac-



Chris Armstrong.

PHOTOS BY ZAC SHAW

erbated the demand for tradespeople in our area. The type of business has been changing rapidly for Hudson Valley plumbers. "Now we see a lot more big jobs, new construction, renovation work," Armstrong says.

The same pandemic that accelerated Hudson Valley home demand has cre-

ated a host of complications. Customer jaws often hit the floor when contractors reveal wait times for service and installation jobs. Material and equipment costs are at all-time highs. Nevertheless, the customers keep coming at a rapid clip.

"Most of my work is installations, renovation, and upfitting new bathrooms. In



between the bigger stuff I'll do service calls," this plumber says. He's constantly on the road, in the workshop, at the supply store, on the phone, and on social media managing a waterfall of jobs ranging from simple repairs to custom luxury bathrooms. It's an understatement to say that plumbers are very popular in these parts.

"A lot of my customers have been the city people and weekenders," he reports. "Since the pandemic stuff hit, a lot of the really expensive, over-the-top jobs where I'm doing bathrooms where the shower valves are \$10,000 ... that changed. An expensive, high-end bathroom was \$70,000 to \$80,000. Now it's \$120,000 to \$130,000."

There's been a recent explosion in costs. "A stick of four-inch PVC pipe ten feet long used to cost me \$18, now it costs me \$52," he says. "A three-quarter-inch copper ball valve from Lowe's went from \$13 to \$45."

### Vintage bathtubs, getting help

Local homeowners are paying premiums to beautify trendy homes in trendy neighborhoods. Many Hudson Valley residences are known for their historic charm. It's an area in which Armstrong, like many flourishing plumbers, has gained a lot of expertise.

"I'm very versed in vintage and historical repair and retrofit," he says. "We reinstall the beautiful old Victorian radiators and bath fixtures that were tossed out of these beautiful houses 100 years ago. I also offer a lot of build-to-suit options, meaning we can take heirloom and vintage furniture and materials and build custom bath and kitchen fixtures with and from it."

It's faster these days to grab a nice vintage bathtub or sink from Zaborski Emporium, the legendary Kingston salvage retailer, than to get in line for an in-demand modern model. "A \$5000 tub might be six months out," he says, "but you can go to Zaborski's and get a really nice vintage tub for less."

There are other hairballs in Armstrong's drain. It's nearly impossible to find anyone to hire, let alone someone skilled. There simply aren't the bodies to fill the positions, and training new employees from scratch is a time-intensive process.

"I'm having a hard time getting people to work, like everybody else," he says. "In 2012, I had seven people working for me.



A renovated bathroom.

Now I've got trucks sitting in the driveway because I can't get people. I would love to have a couple more employees."

Meanwhile, the local housing situation makes it hard for those just starting in the trade even to afford to live in the area. Armstrong cites a number of other reasons why it's hard to find help.

"The average age in this trade is 60 years old, so we're not getting the new blood in to have as much availability as we need for people in this area," he says.

Stereotypes about plumbing contribute to a lack of interest in the trade, and a lack of awareness of just how lucrative it can be to have plumbing skills in a hot real-estate market. Armstrong says he would be happy to train staff if he could only find them.

"It is a considerable amount of work to instill aptitude," he says. "Everybody thinks it's more of a dirty-guy job, but there's a lot of math, there's sizing, there's a lot of stuff to know. Heat modes, cool modes, air velocities, water flows.... You're not hauling around dirty toilets."

There are silver linings. Armstrong sees a new interest by women in pursuing the trade.

"I've been plumbing for over 20 years, and there have been two women plumbers that I've worked with on jobs and met," he says. "On Instagram, I know dozens of women who are getting into the trade."

### The plumber influencer

It seems there's a lot of exciting activity to be unearthed in the "online plumber





A Mitsubishi air source heat pump (mini split).

influencer space,” Armstrong’s oddly entertaining posts about pipe fittings and plumbing tools have been appearing in a lot of Instagram feeds (his account is @pstheplumber).

Turns out, Armstrong has built a cult following online, appearing on plumbing podcasts, guesting on other plumbers’ streams, and giving advice out to anyone who seeks to learn from his formidable skills. His videos recommending plumbing tools and materials regularly receive tens of thousands of views.

He has even attracted the attention of Ridgid Tools, which gave him a “golden ticket” all-expenses-paid trip to tour its manufacturing facility, then hosted him at baseball games and nice dinners. Life as a plumbing influencer has its perks.

“The difference between me and most of the people on Instagram, being a person in his forties I’m kind of the older demo-

graphic,” he says. But unlike stereotypes that suggest social media is a bunch of navel-gazing meme-dancers, experts like Armstrong have used the platform to become mentors to aspiring and working plumbers all across the world.

“I have conversations with people all over the world,” he says. “I was on a Face-Time call with a guy in Jamaica telling him how to fix a problem. I helped a guy with piping in a subway in San Francisco.

“There’s other high-profile personalities in the plumbing genre on Instagram,” he continues. “They say, ‘Why are you giving away all your stealthy tricks that make you do stuff faster or easier?’ If someone had told me this when I was younger, that would have saved me a lot of time, money and aggravation. So anything that aggravates me or bothers me, I write it down. I have notes all over my doors.”

Watching Armstrong’s fastidiously detailed and entertainingly blunt videos on social media, it’s easy to see hope that tired stereotypes about plumbing are slowly being shattered. The online exchange of ideas among professionals is being closely watched by an audience of potential plumbing apprentices who are coming to appreciate the technical skill, problem-solving acumen and rewarding lifestyle of helping others.

While he’s not getting paid to create any of this content, Armstrong continues to give back. His business is founded on contributing to solutions, not exploiting problems for short-term profit.

“Do you know how much shit I do for free?” he asks me.

I don’t have an answer. I tell him I don’t think I’m supposed to put that kind of language in print.

He doesn’t care. You can only get real plumbing from plumbers who get real.

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# Where the heart is

*Home prices reflect economic shifts*

by Geddy Sveikauskas

**C**OULD THIS BE the lull before the storm?

People are still buying lots of homes in Ulster County in 2022, though in smaller numbers than in 2021. And real-estate prices are still rising, though at a slower pace than in the record year of 2021. Despite the considerably smaller number of home sales in 2022 compared to 2021, more houses in the range of \$500,000 to a million dollars sold this year through May 15 than in the comparable period last year.

Figures from the Ulster County Multiple Listing Service (UCMLS) show 540



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single-family homes sold from January 1 to May 15 of this year at a median sales price of \$350,000, as compared to 711 sold in the same period of 2021 at a median price of \$326,000. That's at least keeping up with inflation.

What's going to happen next?

The rest of 2022 may be a little tougher for the real-estate marketplace. With the national bank, the Federal Reserve, already raising interest rates and begin ning to reduce the money supply to fight

inflation, home mortgages will cost more. Buyer qualifications are sure to tighten, which will have an outside impact on disadvantaged people and first-home buyers.

## New York loses ground

Take your choice between optimism and pessimism. If the 2022-2023 economy glides to a slowdown without a serious recession, real-estate prices are likely to plateau. With a significant recession,

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they may well dip into negative territory.

The Federal Reserve Bank of New York has kept track of single-family home sales by county in this country for a couple of decades. Prices have been rising more in the rapidly growing South and West during that period. That differential seems to have accelerated during the pandemic.

The Fed says home prices in the nation went up 20.9 percent in the year ending this March. They went up 16.5 percent in Ulster County, the highest one-year hike since the 17.8 percent recorded on 1992.

There is a growing price gap between home prices in most big American metro areas and prices in metro New York City. The respected Case-Shiller 20-city index showed a 222.9 score in March 2020 and a New York City-only score of 204.5. By February 2022, the 20-city index had reached 300.0, a score increase of 77.1. The New York score had increased by only 53.9 to 258.4. That may not sound like much, but it's a startling differential considering it's happened only over the past two years.

### More jobs are portable

A lot of people left New York City in those two years of pandemic. The data shows that most of the businesses that deserted the Big Apple moved to Stamford and Westchester or Nassau counties – still within the greater New York metropolitan area.

Many employees of New York businesses, like employees elsewhere, have been working from home at least part of the time. The nine-to-five five-days-a-week pattern is a lifestyle of the past in many occupations and industries. Knowledge jobs are more portable than they used to be.

The balance between work in the workplace and work at home has shifted. With that change, more people have been moving further away from the central city

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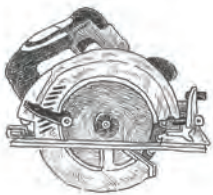
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to exurbia – places like Ulster County. Some are destined to return to Gotham, but others will remain steadfast in their determination to build their lives in the new location.

### Rings around Gotham

To gauge Ulster County's changing relevance in the market for housing, let's look at what's been happening within New York City's consolidated metropolitan area, from where most immigrants to Ulster come.

In the early 2000s, New York City home prices grew like gangbusters, with 20 percent annual growth not unheard of. Everybody wanted to live in the big city. By 2010, however, the boom was over. New York City has not seen those kinds of increases since.

Don't count the United States' largest city out. It's the center of the world for too many industries for us to do that. Lately, there's abundant evidence that New York City, with its four million jobs increasing by almost 300,000 in the past year, is once again on its way back. City rental prices are way up this year – to pre-pandemic levels, many say. It's one consideration that people who moved to exurbia recently will keep in mind when considering return.

The New York Association of Realtors (NYSAR) keeps close track of recent real-estate prices. Confirming the New York Fed's findings, the NYSAR data shows virtually no pandemic price growth in New York City until this past year, when prices perked up about five percent. The data shows moderate increases in the suburban inner ring around New York City. And it shows considerable price gains in the exurban outer ring of counties on the periphery of the New York metropolitan area during the pandemic.

Ulster's definitely one of those counties.



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# Artistry in motion indeed

*“It’s just a great place to disappear to for a while”*

by Erin Quinn

**T**OM MAGANARO WAS mesmerized when he visited Opus 40, the mind-bending 6.5-acre stone sculpture made by Harvey Fite in High Woods in Saugerties. “I couldn’t believe that one guy did that entire thing by himself!” said Maganaro. “We had just purchased this home in New Paltz, and I was inspired.”

To say he was inspired is an understatement. Maganaro, who has no formal masonry training and taught himself the art of stone work, has hand-built a patio, fountain, sculptures, a moon-window, and an almost medieval-styled gazebo next to a stream in his back yard.

“I had a pile of rocks and thought, ‘what am I going to do with them,’ and this is what I did,” he said. He is sitting inside his stone meditation room, decorated in a primitive way with a few animal skulls, a pipe, a walking stick and two handmade cedar chairs that are pieces of art themselves. “Everything that’s here I found in the woods,” said Maganaro. “The deer antlers or the turtle shell. It’s a way to pay homage to nature and the gifts it leaves behind. This place is sacred.”

How was he able to construct an eight-foot-by-eleven-foot stone turret featuring piles of oddly mismatched stone by himself? Maganaro sat back in one of his pair of red-cedar chairs and paused before he replied..

“I didn’t have any training, it just comes to me,” he said after reflection. “I look at the rocks and the land, and then I start to see the flow of lines and how they might connect. When I get stuck, then I just have to problem-solve and figure it out.”

While little beside massive prehistoric monuments like Stonehenge can be compared to Opus 40, the work Maganaro



PHOTOS BY ERIN QUINN

**Tom Maganaro and some of his work.**

has done around his home in New Paltz is breathtaking. The driveway has a long rock wall that forms into a perfect circle. “I call that a moon-window because it’s perfect to view the moon from,” he said.

There are fountains and planters and even a small room built under a massive backyard stone fountain which he had to reinforce with steel and concrete. “It’s just a great place to disappear to for a





**Water fountain.**

while and relax and listen to the water flow," he explained.

Maganaro's stonework includes stones that others might toss aside. "I love the oddball rocks," he said, pointing to a few that had greater texture, lighter color, striations or iron -- anything that did not blend with the rest of the stones. "I like to highlight those stones and set them apart because there's something beautiful about them," he added.

The rocks come from quarries, from geologist friends, from old river beds, from his own land -- wherever he can get his hands on them. "This wall was made from a lot of fractured cobblestones that they were selling for almost nothing because they didn't have perfect lines," he said, pointing. "I picked them right up and hauled them home."

It's hard to take in Maganaro's property and its earthwork in only a single visit. There are so many details, bridges, and patios that blend into fountains that become retaining walls. The rocks seem to move and then shrink back to smaller, more intimate showcases.

Maganaro's stonework is complemented by his wife Lorrenda's gardening skills and his son Preston's cedar work.

Lorrenda's honeysuckle weaves up the corner of the stone gazebo. Irises highlight white, cobbly conglomerate stone sculp-

tures as well as bleeding hearts in the shade next to yellow corydalis. "My peonies and spring flowers have all just about bloomed," she said. "There's a momentary, earthly suspension before the summer blossoms begin to unravel. I read an article about how good 'earth walking' is for you."

She pointed to her well-manicured but bare feet. "They tell you to walk around on the earth for several minutes without your shoes on. Well, I do that all day, every day," she said with a laugh.

The cedar benches, both poised in little stone and garden pockets, are distinctive in shape and size. The roots of the old red cedar in one of them hover over the top of the bench like a natural roof or trellis where the clematis began climbing.

"My son Preston has the gift," said Maganaro proudly. "He made this one for me for Father's Day," he said, gesturing toward a bench that had armrests that moved through the air, like curtains attached but billowing at the same time.

Maganaro also uses driftwood to make chairs or raised garden beds. There are trellises, arbors and patio designs that would leave anyone, particularly a homeowner with a barren lawn or backyard, in awe.

The New Paltz stone worker and red-cedar craftsman is already a well-established



**Red cedar bench**





Toms creek side chapel.

lished restoration artist who has worked at the A.J. Snyder estate in Rosendale, at the film set of Road to Wellville filmed at Mohonk, and at several of the historic mansions that line the Hudson River. Whether the job involves reproduction of the masters, faux finishes, trompe l'oeil, or stucco veneziano, Maganaro is proficient and meticulous.

"I'm an artist, my mind is always working," said Maganaro, as he conducts a tours through his home and studio. He's a modern Renaissance man. The stone edifice that he built is where he goes "to breathe and to get my creativity

going." It's quiet and peaceful, he said, "and there's just something special in the design."

His meticulously restored vintage cars stand next to his moon-window rock

wall and archway. Anyone looking for outdoor artistry, stone masonry, patio, fountain or bluestone work can contact Maganaro, owner of Artistry in Motion, at 235-6754.

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# Lunacy?

*Ignore the phases of the moon at your garden's peril*

by Lee Reich, PhD

**F**OR NO APPARENT reason, my seedlings sometimes take longer than usual to poke up through the soil. Or one day's transplants get off to a rousing start right after planting, while another day's transplants sulk for a while before they grow. Fickle plants, or is the problem perhaps with the moon?

Some gardeners believe that the phases of the moon dictate the best times for gardening. No one has told me that my garden will be a flop if I ignore the moon, but paying attention to it as I go about my gardening activities will “take advantage of the impetus provided by nature” (as one moon-gardener has stated). Old-time gardeners used to say, “Plant potatoes by the dark of the moon.”

For some moon-gardeners, instructions are more refined, taking into consideration the sign of the zodiac along with phase of the moon. Planting is not the only activity covered. There are ideal days for fertilizing (with different days for organic or synthetic fertilizers), for mowing the lawn (depending on whether the goal is for quicker growth or slower growth), for harvesting, and even for making pickles. One year, to get the most beauty from my flowers I was supposed to set transplants out on June 6.

Detailed instructions can be simplified for those who merely want to dabble in moon gardening. The period from two days before to seven days after the new moon is the best time to sow seeds whose germination times are either very short (broccoli, for example) or very long (parsley, for example). In the month or so that the latter seeds require to germinate, they will start to grow just as the moon has gone full cycle and is ready to enhance growth.

Between the time of the full moon and seven days thereafter is the time to transplant seedlings and sow seeds such as



LEE REICH

## Arbor in moonlight.

peppers and eggplants that require a long (but not very long) time to germinate.

INFLUENCES OF THE MOON'S GRAVITY, light, and magnetism are the foundations for all these guidelines. Lunar gravity, for example, is said to promote leaf growth and inhibit root growth. Hence, seedlings should establish well if transplanted during the third quarter, when decreasing moonlight and tidal pull slow leaf growth and stimulate root growth.

Is there any scientific basis for reckoning with moon phases when gardening? Yes and no. Yes, when it comes to the light cast by the moon. It's well known that many seeds need some light to coax them to sprout. Lettuce, for example, as well as many weed seeds. Typically, its tiny seeds that need light, which makes sense, because tiny seeds germinate best when sown on or near the surface of the ground. Planted too deep, a sprout burns up what little energy it has before emerging and

capturing sunlight to make energy via photosynthesis.

Moonlight isn't bright enough for good plant growth. No matter. A lot less light is needed to wake up a seed than to grow a plant. Years ago U. S. Department of Agriculture scientists investigated the influence of tillage on weeds. They determined that tilling the soil, which brings buried weed seeds up to the surface, was best done at night by a new moon (when there was as little light as possible). Tilling in the dark led to less weed-seed germination and thus to fewer weeds in the garden.

My approach has been to forgo avoid late hours and purchase of night-vision goggles and instead to avoid ever tilling my garden. I wrote about this system in my book *Weedless Gardening* (available from the usual source or signed from me at [www.leereich.com/books](http://www.leereich.com/books)).

LET'S TURN NOW TO THE OTHER EFFECTS, or possible effects of the moon on plants. Blaming lunar gravity for good



or bad seed germination presents some fundamental weak points. For instance, ocean tides occur because gravitational attraction is a function of distance, resulting in a differential pull of lunar (and solar) gravity between the side of the earth closest to, and the side farthest from the moon. But the two sides of a seed are only a fraction of an inch different in distance from the moon, so tidal effects in seeds are negligible.

On the other hand, there is no question that the moon has an effect on such phenomena as barometric pressure, temperature, and cosmic radiation flux. Carefully controlled experiments have detected periodicities in plants, such as water uptake by seeds, shoot growth, nutrient uptake, and respiration, coincidental with the lunar day of 24.8 hours and the synodic month of 29.5 days.

The periodicity of these responses is rarely in simple harmony with only lunar cycles. There seem to be other cosmic influences at work. The zodiac, perhaps? Scientists concede that influences from the heavens affect plant growth, and these "pervasive geophysical factors" (a catchall phrase from one scientific journal) probably are mediated via radiation to the earth and/or water in the plant or the environment.

A large gulf exists between an experiment showing water uptake by beans varying over the course of a month and instructions that tell me that the best day to sow bean seeds is on May 17. With that said, some time around mid-May is when I drop bean seeds into furrows in my garden.

The whole area of moon gardening seems worthy of further investigation, and perhaps backyard experimentation. It's a good thing our planet has only one moon.

*New Paltz writer Lee Reich, PhD is a garden consultant specializing in fruit, vegetable, and nut growing, including using these plants as ornamentals. He*

*also does consulting and hosts workshops at his New Paltz farm and webinars,*

*via zoom. For more information, go to [www.leereich.com](http://www.leereich.com).*

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