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This was the winter of our demolition...

...or how I learned to embrace chaos

by Susan Barnett

THERE ARE A lot of constructive ways to deal with anxiety, but I have heard no one talk about construction as a coping tool.

Many articles discuss the sudden uptick in home renovations, but they attribute this to the fact that we've never been home so much before. It was only natural that we began to focus our attention on what we could do to improve where we live.

That is very reasonable. If it's true.

For me, home improvement has been a way to exert some control in a world where I have none. This old farmhouse we bought four years ago became a three story fidget spinner, focusing my attention on something I could do actually do something about.

In the 1960s, a family bought this 1910 cross-gable Victorian and, at great expense, covered every single interior wall with paneling. Good, solid, tongue-in-groove wide plank wood. And then they dropped every ceiling.

My dream of vintage wallpaper and high ceilings died here, because I love this house and I have come to hate moving. This is home. But I had plans to make it better, at least. Someday. Instead, most of it was done this past winter.

I found myself in the happy financial position of being able to pay for it, so long as I stayed humble in my aspirations. And suddenly, our house was a construction zone. It kept me very occupied while Delaware County stumbled along with one of the lowest vaccination rates in the state.

It began shortly after Thanksgiving. The living room, a big, dark, wood-paneled space we never use, was going to lose part of its ceiling so a tub could be installed above it in the upstairs dressing



room (that's two projects, right there). So while part of the ceiling was out, why not rip out the whole thing and sheetrock the walls, too?

Within days, the ceiling was down and the wreckage that had been our living room was a dusty mess. It turned out that a lot of plumbing was running along part of that ceiling, but we loved the look of the exposed upper floor and its joists. So we created a two-level ceiling. Part of it was sheet rocked and hid the plumbing. The rest was left open. And it looked good. It's actually a room I like now.

Because I was on a budget,

The author's living/dining area before (left) and after (below) renovation.



PHOTOS BY SUSAN BARNETT

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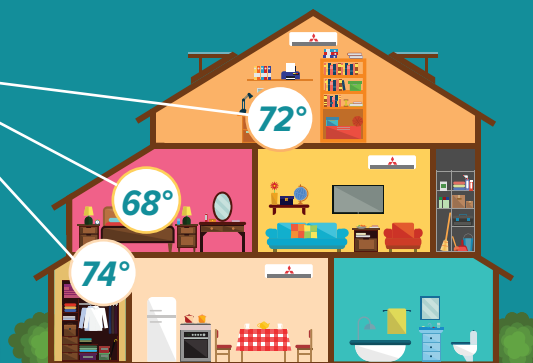
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I did the painting and staining. I painted the ceilings at night after the contractors left. The next night they left the new, wider trim on sawhorses in the garage and my assignment was to have it all stained for installation the next day. I was lucky that the nights weren't too cold, and I was able to work with the garage doors open.

If you've never had contractors work on your house, it's an experience I can only compare to having friends of your kids staying with you. They are friendly, they appreciate you, but they really wish you'd leave them alone. Each morning, the alarm went off at seven, the contractors arrived at eight, the plastic was taped up as though a serial killer was hard at work, and the hum of the compressor drowned out any possible conversation.

And then we got ready for the plumbers.

Our only upstairs bathroom was a textbook case of stupid design, courtesy those owners in the sixties. A small space was



Bedroom renovation included addition of a tub alcove.

divided into two, and the latest in avocado tubs was installed in the dark alcove. We'd already ripped it apart (that story has been told in these pages before), but we'd sacrificed a tub for a large shower.

I found a five foot clawfoot tub online, and it proved to be in excellent shape. It sat in our garage for months. Now the contractors moved to what had been the guest room to get ready for its installation.

The biggest bedroom in the house, the guest room had paneled walls painted dusty green and a ceiling that looked like mushrooms were growing on it. I hated

it. It did, however, have an alcove that was a perfect spot for a tub.

That required pulling up the threadbare wall to wall rug and the plywood underneath it, so the contractors could build a platform in the alcove on top of the original floors. The platform was reinforced to handle the extra weight, and the beams below were shored up as well.

But once that much floor was exposed, why not expose the rest? Why not, indeed? So they did. And they pulled down the mushroom ceiling, too. The plumbers arrived, and spent two days running pipe down the walls into the basement, and tying in to the existing drains.

The contractors were back downstairs, installing trim in the living room. There was now chaos both upstairs and downstairs. And I was busy painting every night.

I will pause here to mention we have pets. Boris, the cat, handled the upheaval by sleeping all day. Violet Wiggins, the dog, barked at everyone when they arrived each day, and looked worried the rest of the day. She was not enjoying herself. But the construction continued.

Two young fellows lugged the cast iron tub up the stairs and into place. The tub is positioned to give the bather (that's me!) a view of the fields behind the house. A few days later, our new dressing/guest/tub room was finished, the furniture put

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The dark bedroom before the ceiling was removed (left) and stained glass previously hidden out of sight in the attic was revealed (right).

back in place, and then guests arrived.

We celebrated Christmas, my granddaughters got to use the new tub, then the tree came down, and the workers returned to rip apart our bedroom.

This is the scary part of the story, reader. Because here is where we entered unknown territory. The room we sleep in is a small one, with huge windows in two directions. It had a dropped ceiling and big, fake beams.

"What if," my partner speculated on

night, "we pulled out the ceiling and went right up to the attic?"

I stared at the ceiling.

Above our heads, we knew, was a pair of windows surrounded by stained glass. And suddenly we were both determined to make those windows part of our bedroom. I honestly thought it was a maybe/someday kind of project, but it was a really alluring one.

Our contractor pronounced the idea "awesome," "no big deal" to do, we moved

into the other guest room, and the demolition began. The dropped ceiling came down. They shoveled the attic insulation out of the way. And then the attic floor came out.

I was in the kitchen, hearing it happen, and turned on the oven. I did not know stress baking was a thing, but it clearly is, because I did it. I made maple cookies while I waited to hear if I'd just made a massive mistake. Lots of maple cookies.

When they called me up to see, the wreckage on the floor was up to my ankles. But above me, those stained glass windows winked in the sunlight, and the room suddenly felt huge.

Another thing about construction: it always takes longer than you hope. That

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job was supposed to take no more than a week. It took almost three.

But when it was over, our bedroom was a sunny space with colored lights playing over the walls. And the old floors we exposed weren't too bad. We moved back in after the contractors painted the

ceiling (I was NOT going up there) and woke up to find the room is better than we'd even imagined. Totally worth it.

By the way, each demolition gave us a view of what this house had been before it was "renovated" in the sixties. Every single plaster ceiling was wallpapered.

Unfortunately, it was destroyed by the nailers put in to support the acoustic tiles. So I got my vintage wallpaper. I just didn't get to keep it.

I have heard people claiming that their old house ghosts got upset by construction. I think if we have ghosts, they're pretty happy. Most of what we did just got us back to the basic structure of the house. Except for our bedroom, of course. That one definitely messed with things, but I've heard no objections from the spirit world.

The final big project was the hall. The sixties renovation had added a hall closet and turned it into a dark tunnel. We removed the closet, exposed the old floors, and replaced the rickety attic ladder with something that felt a lot more solid. We added a bookshelf over the picture window, a last minute decision that turned out to be perfect. Our upstairs hall is now a wide open space that even has a sitting area.

It was nearly February, and the house was almost put back together. The final touch involved reopening the floor grates that had been shut and allowing the heat to circulate in the house. The local architectural salvage place had two iron grates that were exactly the right size, and when they popped into place I swear I heard this old house sigh with contentment.

The contractors waved their goodbyes, I closed my checkbook, and realized that somehow we'd just accomplished a good 80% of the changes we'd hoped to someday make here.

And here's where I realized this was about anxiety – we immediately began looking at the kitchen with speculative eye. That ceiling could come up. That counter could move. And that wall over there? French doors. To a greenhouse!

Perhaps therapy would be cheaper after all.



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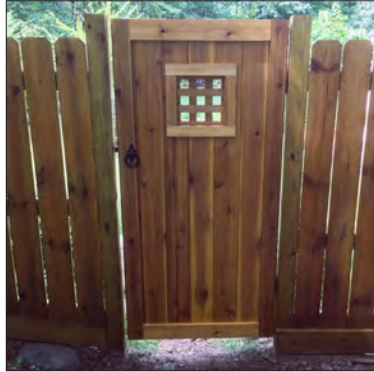
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What's not new for '22

Look beyond the horticultural hype

by Lee Reich, PhD

WHEN THE LISTS of “New Vegetable Varieties for 2022” arrive each year on my computer screen and in my mailbox, I don’t get excited.

Last year I had the same affliction. The introduction of Siam Dwarf, Abigail, and a number of other new tomato varieties didn’t provoke a lust in me. Is something wrong with me?

Not that I’m immune to horticultural hype. Like the car enthusiast is lured by the sleek styling of new models, I am sometimes lured by horticultural promises of productivity, flavor, and pest resistance.

Years ago, the hype seduced me into growing a bevy of broccolis. The labels that I carefully poked into the ground next to each seedling became irrelevant as the season progressed. They didn’t differ dramatically from one another. Sure, slightly bigger heads unfolded atop some of them, more side shoots sprouted from others, and still others matured a few days earlier than the others. These nuances are important to a commercial grower, not to a farmer whose “back forty”



Sweet Italia peppers.

PHOTOS BY LEE REICH

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is forty square yards.

I'm not saying that real change never occurs. Years ago, a substantially different type of broccoli did come down the pike -- purple broccolis. I grew them. They were so tender and tasty that I never grew green broccoli again.

Even when real change occurs, improvements that make a new variety noteworthy in one garden may be superfluous in another. One year saw the introduction of Salad Bush cucumber, billed as having almost everything you'd want from a cucumber variety: early bearing, compact growth, and tolerance to five important cucumber diseases: powdery mildew, downy mildew, target leaf spot, cucumber mosaic virus, and scab. Unfortunately, it's a sixth disease, bacterial wilt, that spells the death knell to my cucumber plants each year.

So I continue to grow Soo Yow (also written Suyo) cucumbers because they're



Gardeners at Colonial Williamsburg.

less prone to wilt. And Soo Yow is no new kid on the block. It's said to have originated in China around 100 BCE. Shintokiwa is another variety that's

always done well, at least in my garden.

The frenzy over new varieties typically reaches its peak with the midwinter lineup of each year's All-America Selection winners. These are new varieties that have been judged superior to the best existing varieties in test gardens at more than 40 trial gardens across North America. In one form or another, AAS press releases reach millions of gardeners.

The folks of AAS are performing a valuable service, encouraging breeders and facilitating press coverage of what's new. At the same time, all this focus on a few varieties tends to overshadow,

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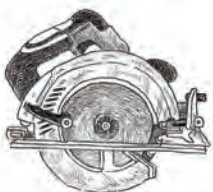
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especially for beginning gardeners, the true diversity available.

One year, for instance, red, savoyed leaves made Red Sails lettuce an AAS winner. But if you wanted to eat red let-



Pea pods on the vine.

tuce, you also could grow bronze-tinged Pirat and Antina, red-tipped Lolla Rosa, deep-red Ruby, Red Romaine, and Four Seasons, or deepest-red Red Salad Bowl -- whatever intensity of red suited you. Because they're not new introductions, these lettuces will never be AAS winners. AAS contenders are limited to varieties that never have been sold previously.

Too many of noteworthy, albeit non-new varieties, will never be spotlighted solely because they are not new. Tomatoes like Belgian Giant, Carmello, Brandywine, Ponderosa or Cherokee Purple have been nestled for years in quiet greatness amongst other varieties in the pages and websites of some seed companies.

New pepper varieties with attractive names and attractive shades of purple,

brown, red, and yellow have been in the spotlight over the years, yet plain old Italian Sweet is, to my mind, a most productive, early ripening, and delicious variety. A new name with more pizzazz, such as Rubicand Italia, might bring more attention to this variety.

You never read about great peas like Lincoln and Green Arrow during the midwinter hype, so I take it upon myself to promote them. Back in 1979, Sugar Snap, another great pea and an AAS winner, entered the limelight as the first snap-type pea. This variety was followed by dwarf snap peas, including another AAS winner, Sugar Ann. Stick with the unwieldy Sugar Snap for flavor.

I fear that the annual midwinter balhoo of what's new in the plant kingdom



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not only will narrow the list of tomato, lettuce, or pea varieties gardeners might try, but also diminish what little focus lesser-known vegetables, most of which are not worth a breeder's time, might have. Mache, for instance, is a relatively unknown salad green in America in spite of its many aliases (fetticus, lamb's lettuce, corn salad). You're not apt to find Dunkelgruner Vollherziger or Ronde Maraichere mache in any list of What's New for 2022." Nor any fennels, cardoons, scorzoneras, groundnuts, or ground cherries.

And what happened to the green thumb? Choosing a good variety is only part of a gardener's skill. I chuckle when I read about the flavor of lettuce varieties. Lettuces differ mostly in appearance and texture. Grow any of them well and they're all, to quote one seed purveyor, "tender, tasty, tangy, delicate, sweet, very

sweet, fine-flavored, delicious, mouth-watering, nutty-flavoured."

Imagine what might happen if the annual national hype of new flower and vegetable varieties were too successful. Just as the McDonald's stand in Albuquerque looks like and serves the same Big Macs as the one in Bangor, every backyard garden might have the same



One view of the author's vegetable garden.

broccoli and tomato varieties, yet no cardoons or tomatillos.

Remember, those AAS test gardens are scattered throughout the country to generally find varieties adapted nationwide. (A few AAS varieties are listed as adapted to one of the six major growing regions.) Yet there still are places where a particular type or variety of vegetable is favored for flavor and productivity.

We need more variety, and not just new varieties, in our gardens. What Liberty Hyde Bailey a century ago about apples applies equally well to-

day to vegetables: "Why do we need so many kinds...? Because there are so many folks. A person has the right to gratify his legitimate tastes ... [and] should be accorded that privilege."

As I peruse seed catalogs and websites, I try to look at, then beyond, the year's horticultural hype to find what is worth growing --irrespective of whether it is new or old, common or uncommon.

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.

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Where it happens

Local artists in their studios

by Dion Ogust

WHEN YOU SEE art or read a book or listen to music, do you wonder where the painting, the words, or the song were created? What kind of space nurtured the artist's creativity? What kind of sanctuary do people need in order to do their work?

I am a photographer and artist with my own studio. I know the value of having a dedicated space where we can be vulnerable, sometimes tortured, and sometimes feel gloriously inspired when what we have been trying to create finally works.

I love seeing where my creative mates do their work. It has helped remind me that even in our artistic solitude we are not alone.

Frank Spinelli, photographer

MY STUDIO IS THE LABORATORY where I can satisfy my curiosity, an integral part of my being.



PHOTOS BY DION OGUST

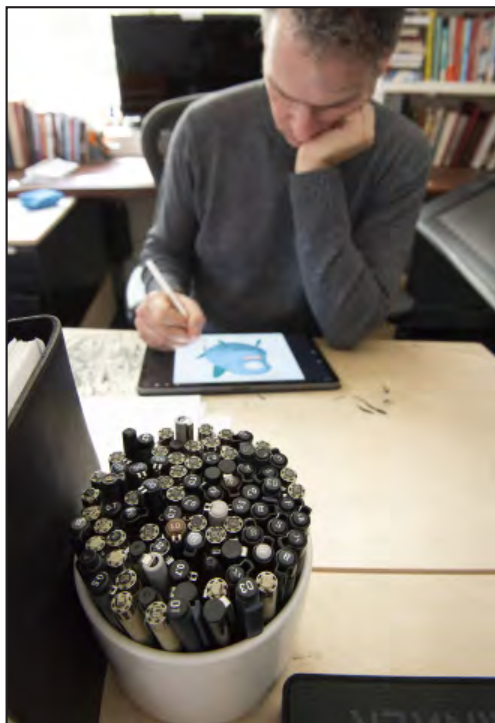


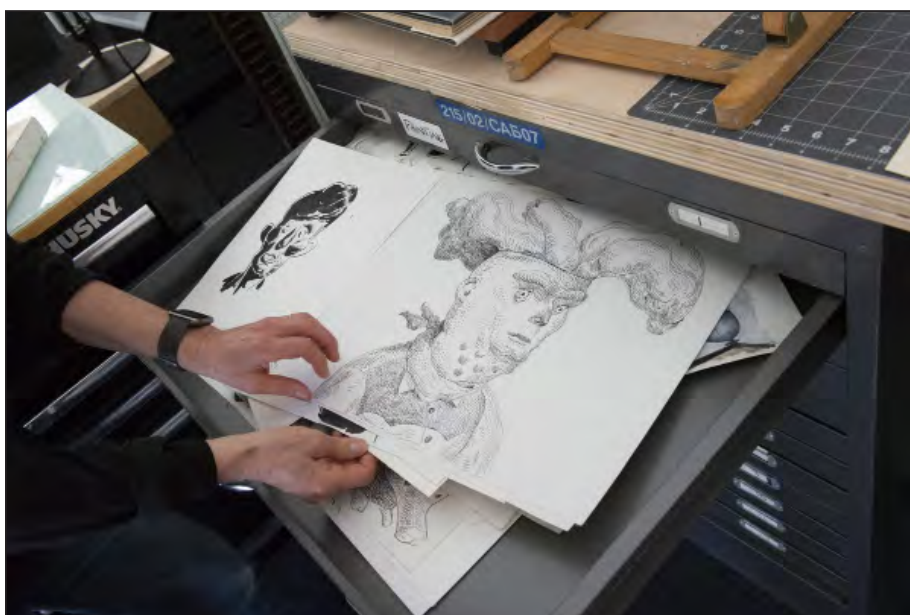
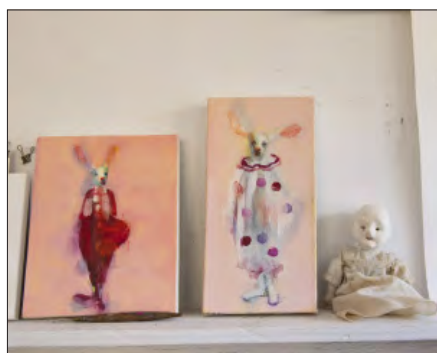
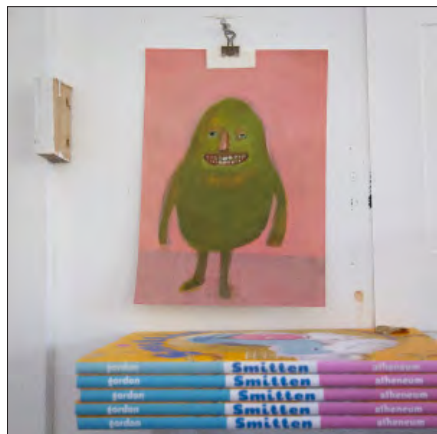


PHOTOS BY DION OGUST

David Gordon, artist and illustrator

MY STUDIO IS A PLACE WHERE EVERY SINGLE THING in it supports my life long commitment to my art practice, and I love it. I have been an artist all my life, professionally for the last 40 years, and I've had many studios. Living in Woodstock has enabled me to finally have a small but separate building for doing all the things I love: drawing, painting, both digitally and traditionally, printmaking and sculpture.

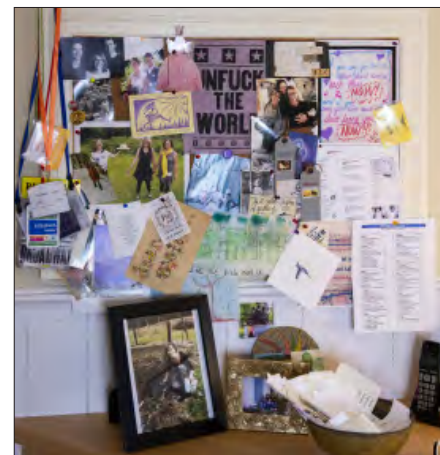




Susan Siegel, artist

MY STUDIO IS MY SANCTUARY. I love being surrounded by all my art supplies, books, inxpiration and projects. When I open the door, it feels like I am visiting an old friend.





Elizabeth Lesser, writer

I BEGAN DREAMING OF THE PERFECT WRITING ROOM AFTER I READ Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* in college. In that book she states in no uncertain terms that if you want to write, or paint, or do anything creative, you need your own space, and if possible one that envelops you, inspires you, protects you. When I sit in the saddle each morning with my coffee, I say a little prayer of gratitude to Virginia Woolf for planting the seed years ago.



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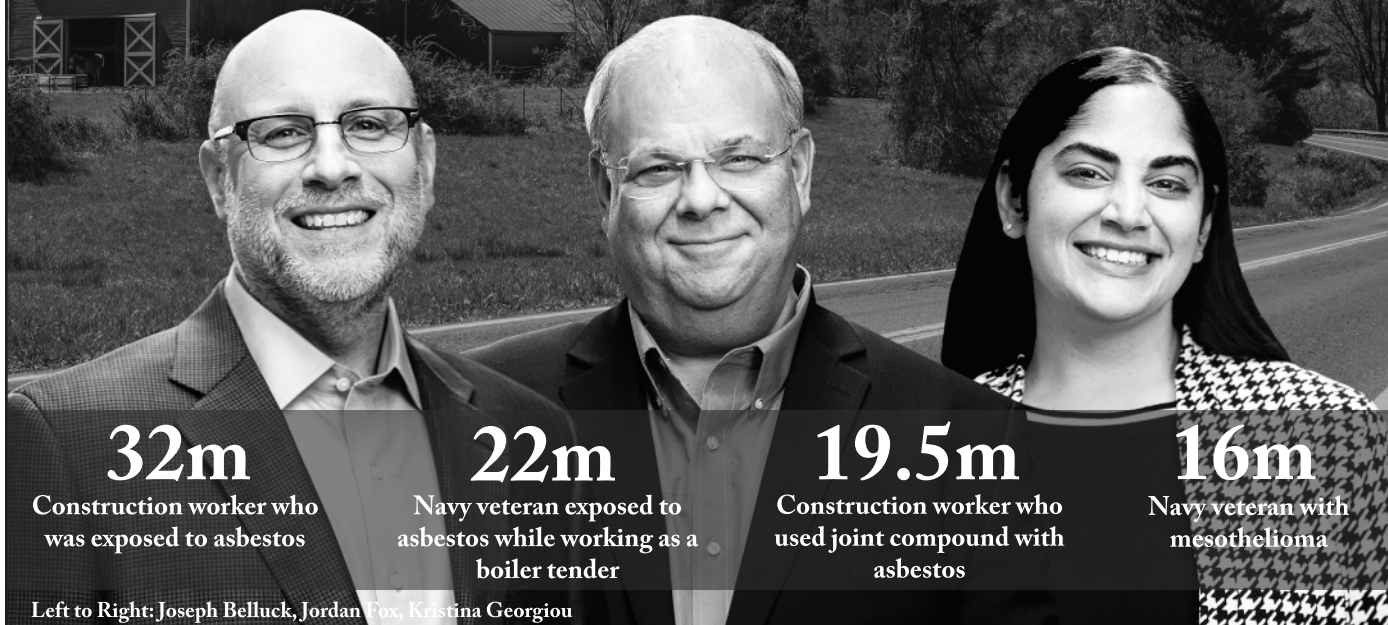
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32m

Construction worker who
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22m

Navy veteran exposed to
asbestos while working as a
boiler tender

19.5m

Construction worker who
used joint compound with
asbestos

16m

Navy veteran with
mesothelioma

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

Power to the people

Anything can happen, and often does

by Jenny Bella

WE LIVE AT the foot of a mountain. Our basement often floods, and our sump pump must run at all times. We learned that the hard way when the power went out for the first time.

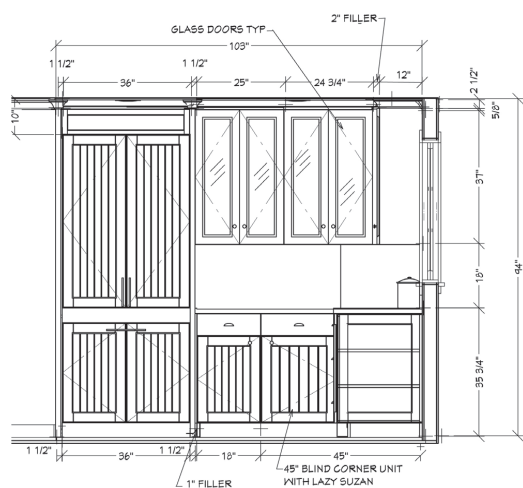
It seemed like it took forever for the water to recede. Not having heat and hot water for days was an ordeal. The mess, the stress, and the huge expense.

It was kind of scary, but we felt better when we got a small generator to work the pump. Weather is a powerful and unpredictable variable. Trouble often began in the middle of the night when it was quiet and we were sleeping.

Anything can happen. Though our advanced technology can predict and alert us when large-scale events are heading our way, it's far from perfect. Devastation can still come out of nowhere. Knowing that



Repair crews have their hands full after an ice storm.



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it is headed your way is small consolation. It does not protect you.

It's around five a.m. The power is out again. There's a heavy freezing rain outside. The wind is going wild. Water is already rising in the basement.

The generator isn't starting, though it started the week before. We try some

parts and troubleshoot a few things. It won't budge.

It is now after seven. The roads are terrible, and only getting worse. My husband and daughter decide to go to Kingston to buy a new generator. I try to move things around the house and dry up the wet floor.

There is a big sigh of relief from all of us

when they get back home. We were able to secure one of only two generators left on the shelf. It cost much more money than we had anticipated.

There were another two trips back to Kingston, one for cords -- we have plenty, but they were connected to the back of our property underneath the snow and

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ice -- and the other for the premium gas needed for the new generator.

My husband is able to lock into gear under pressure. He did all this heavy-duty work in the freezing rain. I was exhausted.

Is our situation sustainable?

Recently I've done some thinking. These occurrences have forced me to look at how sustainable our situation is, and what is really necessary. When you are a mother of a medication-dependent person as I am, you never really sleep. There is always something roiling your mind.

Do we have enough of one thing or the other just in case of an emergency? Some of that stuff requires refrigeration, which requires power. Do we have at least a week's worth of medication on hand?

It is frustrating to be at the mercy of the pharmaceutical industry. They control it all: what you need, how much you get, when, and how much you must pay.

Something unexpected can happen, and you need to have backup. It can be a struggle to get what is needed on a daily basis. Here, in this country, the majority of people need to fight for what they need to

survive. It doesn't seem right. It's not fair.

Goods and necessities vary depending on where you live as well as on the season. A major storm can have a completely different impact from one season to another.

Most of us are connected to the power grid, which controls so many different things. The importance of that connection is completely different in many ways for those of us who don't live in the cities than for those who do.

How much do you and your dwelling depend on electricity? How long can you go without it? Does it control your heat

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source? Have you recently stocked your freezer? Do you have medication that requires refrigeration? Do you have medical equipment that needs juice to work?

Time for a reappraisal

Look at all the major components electricity feeds. We're not living in the wilderness any more. The majority of our devices will not work when the electrical power is out, because they are hooked up through the Internet.

It's time for a reappraisal of who's responsible for what. The present system was fine when people would light a few candles and patiently wait for the electric power to return. In this age of interconnection, though, the social costs of being deprived of power are magnified manyfold.

Most of my neighbors also have home generators now. Immediately after the power has been interrupted, you can hear the hum of their machines throughout our neighborhood.

If I were a member of the state Public Service Commission, I'd be interested in more than standardized generator interconnection regulations. I'd be interested in making the regulated industry share responsibility for the consequences of the service outages which plague their operations.

I don't mean we should punish the utilities for not dealing with forces beyond their control. I mean extending their control. Especially with our economy evolving the way it has, home generators — a radical form of distributed power — have become for many an increasing necessity of rural and exurban life, our decentralized lifestyle.



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Not for everyone. Some people need and want them. Others prefer not to have them. That's fine. People should have a choice.

The power companies, it seems to me, should shoulder the job of either make sure home generators work properly and reliably or hire others to make sure they work properly and reliably. The costs of the additional service should be borne by the ratepayer who chooses it and added to that ratepayer's utility bill.

Until that day comes, I will live by my lists.

Here's my list

I am a listmaker. I start writing things down on various pieces of paper or on the backs of envelopes. I have a mess of lists, recipes, and other things I don't want to forget. So I started keeping track in a notebook. That means different things to different people, but for me the basics are the most important things. I've started to realize that so many things pop into my head that I'd need a small warehouse to store it all. As I said, it's never a perfect storm.

Some of these things are necessities. Others just popped in my head in the midst of the chaos. I never would have thought of still others in the past, but more recently I've decided they may come in handy:

Here's my current list:

Water/buckets/manual water pump/
backup sump pump/purification tabs
Rx's, medical supplies and equipment
Food, ice packs, coolers, perishables,
Rx cooler pack

Batteries, charging cords, charged
power pack, perhaps solar

Fuel and wood

Candles, votives, tealights, matches

Flashlights, headlamps

Toilet paper and towels

Band-aids, Neosporin, aspirin

Peroxide, rubbing alcohol

Aloe vera plant

Essential oils, tea tree, peppermint, eu-
calyptus, bergamot, lavender, chamomile

Blankets, other warmth, window cov-
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Waterproof shoes, plenty of socks

Solar shower, solar fan

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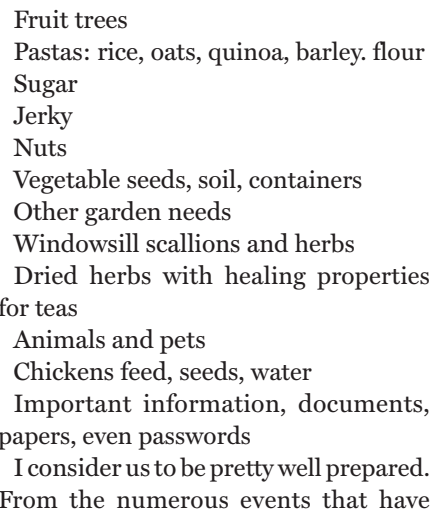
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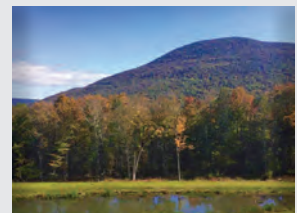
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taken place, we have already learned so many lessons when it comes to having our ducks in a row. The first time our basement flooded was a big eye-opener for us as new homeowners. It was now our responsibility to put things in order for us to avoid costly damage as much as possible.

The last ice storm didn't mean much to some, but it left others without power for days. It meant complete displacement for an unfortunate few.

We all have different circumstances. This craziness from the pandemic entering its third year has left us with delays in shipping, food shortages, inflation, price-gouging, the worry of what could happen next, the angst of getting back to some normalcy, and now a dangerous war. A domino effect is only compounding our problems.

Somehow I hope everyone can have the means to be as prepared as possible. And most optimistically of all, I hope that the signs that we have been getting from this planet can be heard by all.

I know I'm a dreamer.

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Buy local, sell local

Antiques dealers are finding the future in the authentic past

by Erin Quinn

THE GILDED AGE of the antique business may be behind us, but there is a burgeoning new love for old local things. It has only blossomed in the mid-to-post-pandemic times.

“The 1980s, 1980s, 1990s, early ‘00s — that’s when an antique dealer could throw up a hundred-dollar bill and have it come down as a thousand-dollar bill,” said Dan Seldin of Saugerties. “There were antique stores, and dealers and flea markets popping up everywhere. There were 45 just in Saugerties. Then we had the stock market crash in 2007, and most of them fell by the wayside.”

Seldin’s shop in downtown Saugerties, the Saugerties Antique Center, stood tall along with one other neighboring dealer during what he calls the “cleansing of the soul” period for the antiques business, which is now in the midst of a renaissance.

For Jay Werbalowsky, owner of JMW Auction Gallery in Kingston, the antiques business has changed drastically in the



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18th century Hudson Valley ball foot kas. A good example of early furniture made in the Hudson Valley.

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40 years he and his family have been running auctions. “We’re now 100 percent online,” he said. Like Seldin, he’s seen a huge influx of business in the past two years. “The pandemic has really helped our business because we’ve had so many Brooklynites move to the area who are looking to purchase antique furniture and fine art,” he said. “We have 200 registered bidders with Brooklyn addresses.”

He agreed with Seldin about when the business flourished. “In the early 2000s it started going soft, and then recently it has just skyrocketed,” reported Werbalowsky. “Younger people are getting back into it. They have houses that they want to furnish with authentic Hudson Valley furniture, décor, fixtures and fine arts.”

Those breathing new life into the antiques business are not just looking for anything old, they’re looking for Hudson Valley old.

“The new buyers are interested in items that have local attributes,” said Seldin. “They want Hudson Valley primitives — cupboards, stoneware, wood bowls, farm

want to furnish and decorate them.”
Iron Victorian patio furniture is as hot

as it’s ever been. “Victorian garden furniture is a timeless classic,” said Seldin,

“Younger people are getting into it...”

tables. Everyone wants a farm table!” he said. “But there is something that has people rediscovering the organicness of things that have been around a long time and passed down from generation to generation. They like that natural patina that comes with an old piece of furniture, and brown wood is making a big comeback.”

“Brown wood” is an industry term for the darker woods like mahogany and walnut. “The dark walnut furniture that your grandmother used to have is now being appreciated because it lasts, it’s sturdy, and it has history,” Seldin said.

During the pandemic, people were stuck in their homes, spending more time around their stuff. They wanted to focus on renovating or reimagining their living spaces. “Everyone is working from home now,” Seldin noted. “And many of them have left the city and have bought homes up here. Old farmhouses and Dutch stone houses and Victorian homes. And they

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Above, a bag from Rosendale Cement, which was in operation from 1871 to 1970; right, Crocodile Inn sign sold by JMW Auctions for \$247,500.

“but now people are spending more time outdoors, having a glass of wine on their deck or having a barbecue on their patio,

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and they want this decorative but sturdy outdoor Victorian furniture.”

A nostalgic return to the home has people gardening, growing their own vegetables, and sometimes raising backyard chickens for eggs. It's the same drive that has them looking to buy historically relevant antiques Seldin thought.

“They want to furnish their homes with items that are true to the period. They might add a flourish of mid-century modern, but they also love any sort of local nostalgia like Washburn bricks from the Saugerties Brick Factory or old trade insignia like blacksmith shop signs.”

Buyers are looking for local apple crates, Rosendale Cement bags, road signs and remnants of long-gone inns, pubs and restaurants.

JMW Auction Gallery recently sold a tavern sign for a remarkable \$247,500. It was an old sign painted with a crocodile against a blue background that had written, in gold lettering, “G. D. Witt's Inn.” A man from Kingston was fascinated with the history of the sign, as well as its aesthetic appeal.

According to the story told by Werbalowsky, the Crocodile Inn sign was purchased by Jack Whistance, who traced the inn's history to 1800. The original



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Dutch house, built circa 1776 by a colonel in the Revolutionary Army, had a stone in the basement that was said to look like a crocodile tail. Hence the name of the inn.

Sanford Levy, owner of Jenkinstown Antiques in the historic stone Hallock House circa 1792 in New Paltz, confirmed that relics, postcards or signs with local history are in high demand. "Rosendale Cement bags are collectible as are anything related to our railroad

"...They also love any sort of local nostalgia"

and agricultural history," Levy said. "Besides collecting things, when people move here they often become interested in the history of the region and want to research different aspects of it."

Reading materials, artwork, postcards, signs, letters and other items become valuable. Handcrafted Hudson Valley stoneware, pottery and furniture from the region are always sought after.

Levy opened his shop in New Paltz in 1974. For many years, he operated out of his 18th-century stone house and a small outbuilding. The shop is now located in a 1792 building relocated to the property from Orange County in the 1980s.

Though there appears to be no ceiling to demand, there is a limited supply, a phenomenon that will support higher prices for the best antiques.

Antiques & auctions



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Making friends with trees

Our stately neighbors offer wonder, taste, sensation

by Violet Snow

ONE OF THE Hudson Valley's most abundant resources is trees. But how much attention do we pay to them, aside from their cooling shade, their autumn colors, and the leaves they litter on the ground? Spring is a good time to get to know the trees personally, as they wake up and stretch from their long winter's rest.

If you have kids, they may enjoy the following tree activities, from brewing tea to twisting string to learning how to tell a birch from a beech. Even if you don't have kids, you may find yourself intrigued by these ways to interact with nature.

Buds: It used to drive me crazy that I'd wake up one morning at the end of April, look out the window, and see baby leaves on the trees. *How did that happen? The last I noticed, the twigs were bare.* Then one year I started the habit of examining the tree buds in late March and throughout April. Every few days, I'd go back to the same trees in my yard, and I'd see how the buds were expanding and lengthening.

Buds are actually formed in the summer, when the tree is growing, and they stay on the twigs all winter. The covering of one or more waxy scales serves to protect the embryonic leaves and flowers within. As the weather warms, and the daylight increases, the tissues inside the bud begin to grow. At the bases of the bud scales, which are usually brown or gray, you'll see the green of new growth. The shape of the bud will change, and at some point the tips of the leaves will peek out. Soon they will begin to unfurl.

Each species has its specific bud style. Oak twigs have clusters of buds at the end of each twig. Basswood buds are dark red, with a bulge on one side, and they turn gooey if you chew on them. Elm buds open early, in late March, and



PHOTOS BY VIOLET SNOW

Clockwise from top left: Willow leaves emerge early, covered in silky hairs to protect against the cold; as beech leaves unfurl, the pointed bud scales fan out; young sugar maple leaves; Sweet birch bark.

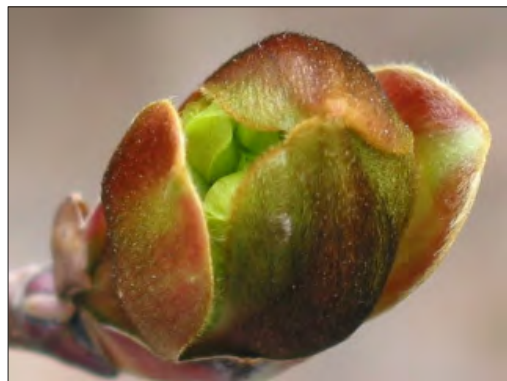
before leafing, they produce little floppy pink and greenish flowers that don't look like flowers. Here is one of many online resources to help you identify tree buds: <http://www.trees-id.com/buds-1.htm>.

String: Once you have identified basswood or elm, you can harvest a few twigs and learn how to make string, also known as cordage. In spring, when the sap is rising, it's easy to peel the bark from the twigs. You want the green, moist inner bark, which has to be separated from the dry, grayish outer bark. Handrolled cordage is beautiful to look at, pleasant to handle, and surprisingly easy to make, once you get the hang of reverse wrapping. Here are details: <https://www.wildwoodsurvival.com/survival/cordage>

Sap: Speaking of sap, by the time you

read this, it may be too late to tap a maple tree, but you can prepare for next year. In the Hudson Valley, maple sap tends to run in March, as long as it's freezing at night and above 40 degrees in the day. Boiling down syrup is an arduous task, so I have generally stuck to drinking the sap, which tastes very faintly sweet and thrillingly alive. Native Americans are said to have used sap as a nutritious spring cleansing drink. Tapping a single tree is a simple process, requiring a drill, a spout (available in local hardware stores), and a plastic bottle to fit over the spout. For tapping instructions, see <https://tapmytrees.com>

Pine needle tea: Evergreen conifers have needles high in rot-resistant Vitamin C. You can easily harvest



Norway maple bud scales reveal flowers about to blossom.

them to make a fragrant and tasty tea. White pine has a mild flavor, and it's easy to identify, with its long, slender needles, arranged in bundles of five along the twigs. Pick a big handful of needles, place them in a cup or jar, fill with boiling water, cover, and steep for ten minutes to half an hour. Adding chunks of twig will produce a stronger, somewhat resinous taste.

Sweet birch twigs: Both the sweet (or black) birch and the silver (or yellow) birch have inner bark that tastes like wintergreen. Sweet birch can be identified by its smooth, largely unfurrowed, dark gray bark with raised horizontal lines. Silver birch has shiny silvery-yellow bark that curls off the trunk in narrow shreds. If you can reach a twig, scratch a section down to the green inner bark, and sniff. The minty scent is unmistakable. Chew on the twig for a burst of flavor.

Identification: It's a long-term project, but learning to identify trees is an absorbing endeavor that engages the mind and the senses, providing a sense of intimacy with nature. You can, of course, get the app that identifies plants when you aim your camera at them, but getting to know the bark, buds, leaves, and growth patterns of trees will bring you closer to these splendid creatures.

For identification, I recommend buying a physical book rather than relying on the Internet. Audubon's field guide to trees is good for beginners, with a mix of photos and detailed descriptions.

Meditation: If you have a spiritual practice, you might enjoy meditating with your back against a tree. There's something about the upswing of the trunk supporting you that adds depth to the experience. If you don't have a meditative practice, you may still find

it soothing and strengthening to lean against a being that weighs thousands of pounds yet manages to stand upright, as we do.

Here is a visualization that will help you bond with the tree and bring a taste of nature into your bones:

Imagine your torso is the trunk of a tree. Picture your legs and toes extending into the ground, sending out roots that anchor you while absorbing water and minerals from the soil. Feel the nutrients rising up through your body and flowing through your

arms and head, out through your fingers and hair, which are like leaves drinking in the mineral-rich water. Let the sunlight soak into your leaves and manufacture glucose, which then pours down through your trunk to the roots, enabling them to grow. Envision the steady repetition of this cycle, and then let it interact with the rest of the natural world: the birds nesting in your branches, the soil fungi helping your roots communicate with other trees, the wind pruning away dead branches, the humans coming to sit reverently at your feet.

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