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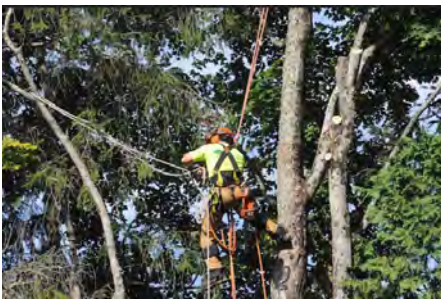


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# Fix it, don't toss it

*Found & Fixed and repair cafes invite consumers to reuse, repair and reimagine furniture, clothing and much more*

by Susan Demark

A DECADES-OLD GENERAL ELECTRIC floor-model radio that looks like it could have at one time emitted the sounds of a Franklin Roosevelt fireside chat is becoming a mobile bar. A thick but damaged wooden doorway is resurrected through refinishing, staining and new hardware to form a rectangular tabletop. A metal sculpture of a sailing yacht with a broken lamp enclosed in its hull is rewired so that it now can light up.

What has become old, broken, forgotten, scratched, out of style or useless can become new, restored, dependable, useful, inventive and stylish. Have you wondered whether that drop-leaf table with water stains that seems ready for the trash pile might have a new life? Each year, Americans throw away more than 12 million tons of furniture according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Perhaps the blender has stopped



COURTESY LITTLE GREEN ART HOUSE

Found & Fixed is incorporated as a worker cooperative. As marketing director, Susannah Bradley, left, leads the marketing and finance teams. Justine Porter is one of the co-founders and a co-owner.



COURTESY LITTLE GREEN ART HOUSE



SUSAN DEMARK

Left, Gabriel Jasmin is a co-founder and co-owner of Found & Fixed. Jasmin finds a lot of satisfaction in diverting high-quality furniture from the landfill and restoring it into new forms and uses; right, Lo Miller, a co-owner of Found & Fixed, works on drawers in the workshop.





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SUSAN DEMARK

When someone left this curved mahogany credenza on the side of a road, its surface was very scratched and in bad repair. The Found & Fixed team saved it from the landfill and restored it so that one can see the grain of this treasure.

working and you're ready to pitch it and order a new one. But wait: consider an alternative.

More people are opting to have their

own old furniture repaired, refinished, reused, and restored or to shop and customize older pieces they find. Similarly, more are turning to places

like the Hudson Valley Repair Cafes to resurrect objects instead of tossing them into the trash. The big-box stores, national furniture retailers and Amazon may capture economic headlines and dominate commercial advertising, but a thriving economy and culture of local businesses and nonprofit groups exist to offer well-crafted, durable, unique, and inventive furniture. To those employed in restoration, it's a purposeful endeavor that's economically wise, supportive of regional communities, creative, and most significantly, sustainable for the Earth.

The circular economy, based on reuse and regeneration of products and materials, has momentum: Globally, it could unlock up to \$4.5 trillion in economic growth by 2030, according to UN Trade and Development. So, it's no wonder that Hudson Valley entrepreneurs and community activists alike are sensing opportunity and affirmation in the economy



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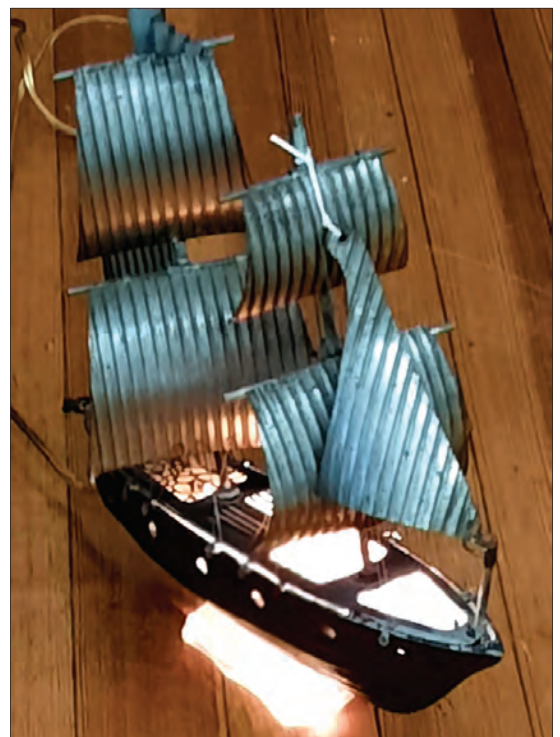


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PHOTOS BY SUSAN DEMARK

At the Kingston Repair Café, volunteer repair coach Bill Delozier (left) rewires a small lamp — which had failed to light for years — within the hull of a metal sailing yacht sculpture (right).

sustained by the reimagining of furniture and household objects.

It's rewarding in myriad ways to be able

to turn "an outdated piece into something else," says Gabriel Jasmin, a co-owner and one of the founders of Found & Fixed

Hudson Valley, based in Highland in a recent discussion concerning a renovated sideboard which the business cooperative

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converted into a vanity complete with a vessel sink.

Found & Fixed Hudson Valley evolved from the interest in “flipping furniture” and woodworking that Jasmin and co-

founder and co-owner Justine Porter developed a few years ago. They began working together and then incorporated as a worker cooperative in 2023. Their core aim with Found & Fixed is to divert

furniture that would otherwise go into landfills and instead repair, refinish, reimagine, and restore in sustainable, eco-friendly ways at affordable prices and give the furniture new life. They

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started the endeavor in a Dutchess County workshop and moved into Ulster County in early 2023. It operates from a three-bay showroom and workshop at 10 Commercial Avenue in Highland.

Prospective customers come to Found & Fixed for a variety of reasons. They may differ in their tastes and objectives, but a common thread is the desire for something which was not mass-produced. Some people bring a piece of furniture from their home that appears outdated or is well-built, but damaged. Still others want to figure out how to preserve and possibly refurbish furniture they inherited from a family member and are not sure how to make use of it.

You can customize and tailor a piece to your needs, preferences and style. Customers can shop the “furniture rescue wall” and work with Found & Fixed with a timeframe and budget in mind on a portfolio of options to reimagine that item into custom-made furniture. A popular option is Found & Fixed working with a consumer’s existing furniture pieces to modernize, repair, and refurbish them. “We get a lot of, ‘We have this piece of yellow oak, can you refinish it and put

on new hardware?’” says Lauren “Lo” Miller, also a co-owner of the cooperative.

This is where the transformation begins, as Jasmin describes it. There’s a lot of problem-solving that involves a meticulous examination of furniture with issues that a client may not have been aware of, according to Jasmin. Every single piece of furniture entails its own situation, and thus pricing is not uniform. The price is based on the time required in the workshop, overhead costs, materials, hardware, and eco-friendly strippers and solvents used by Found & Fixed.

“There’s a lot of satisfaction in seeing something in the before and after, in being able to make it into something brand-new,” as Jasmin cites the reimagining, refurbishment, and conversion of an old French door into a horizontal wall piece for pictures.

Porter came to co-creating the Found & Fixed business through her own experience of buying an 1860s home. “Crappy furniture” just wouldn’t fit in, as she says. One of her first furniture purchases was a hutch for \$5 at a Habitat for Humanity ReStore, which she refurbished into an entirely new piece. It was more fun than

sitting in Zoom meetings for her job, she says, and that motivated her to pursue a new, creative line of work. Porter’s experience became a template for a target audience: those who are purchasing their first home.

Quality is a key selling point of repurposing and preserving solid wood. Furniture that is purchased from national retailers is often made with medium-density fiberboard or hardboard and lasts far fewer years than solid wood, as Porter notes.

Found & Fixed’s team expresses a passion for participating in the circular economy in which they find ways to reuse, share, repair, refurbish and recover resources rather than waste and discard them. The latter essentially treats all objects as disposable. The services of Found & Fixed “speak to the problem we are trying to solve,” says Miller. “We don’t have to look for purpose.”

This value forms the foundation of Found & Fixed. It’s not just a culture of fashioning better material goods, but one aiming to be of lasting value to the community and the planet. As such, the original co-owners formed Found & Fixed as a worker cooperative in which there is shared decision-making and there is a pathway for everyone to become a co-owner. It has a team of seven. The co-owners credit Coop Hudson Valley and Seed Commons, which have provided a \$300,000 investment and a program of training, business mentoring and rigor-

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*Spring Home Improvement 2025*

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ous evaluations of eight years of financial projections for the business.

As part of its outreach, Found & Fixed is doing workshops for others to learn skills in repair and reuse such as sessions on rewiring lamps, painting furniture and a traditional textile-mending technique known as Sashiko. Educating consumers is a foundational value. Miller was influenced by the Right-to-Repair Movement which advocates the right of consumers to repair their devices and items. "You can't make that repair if you don't know how," she says. Repairability is crucial for

the circular economy.

### Good as New At the Repair Cafes

On a recent Saturday morning in February, dozens of people were seated at the Kingston Repair Café in the community area of the Clinton Avenue United Methodist Church at 122 Clinton Avenue. They have in tow a variety of possessions – small appliances such as a blender, articles of clothing, wooden objects, electronic gadgets and more.

They waited patiently and chatted, holding their colored popsicle sticks which designate each of the varied categories of objects for repair such as wood, jewelry, zippers, clothing and textiles, digital and computers and mechanical and electrical. All around the room were stations for the different kinds of items to be repaired. It was a beehive of activity, busy and pleasant.

Simply put, Repair Cafes are regularly occurring events to fix things and con-

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A section of the furniture rescue wall, where customers can choose furniture and work with Found & Fixed to customize it.

nect people. Repair Café Hudson Valley is an umbrella non-profit organization for a network of Repair Cafes, including Kingston, Woodstock, New Paltz, Esopus, Rondout Valley, and Gardiner.

As the organization notes on its website, Repair Cafes are free community events, “where you bring your beloved items and volunteer repair coaches help you fix them!” Over 75 percent of the items

people bring to the events eventually get fixed. You can find where and when each of the upcoming repair events will be held by following Repair Café – Hudson Valley on Facebook.

The Repair Café concept was born in Amsterdam and a volunteer organizer, John Wackman, brought the idea to New Paltz in 2013. The sponsors of Repair Café Hudson Valley are Sustainable Hudson Valley and the Lower-Hudson Group of the Sierra Club Atlantic Chapter, and each community often has its own local sponsors.

Watching the recent Kingston Repair Café certainly attested to the stick-to-it, patient nature of the volunteers who restored a wide array of broken items and to the gathering’s social nature. At one table, a volunteer and coach, Bill Delozier, worked painstakingly on a small metal sculpture of a sailing yacht that held a lamp within its hull. A spiritual teacher had given the lamp to its owner and he held onto it for 10 years. Unfortunately, the lamp didn’t light. It was not an easy repair and took more than a few minutes. Ultimately, Delozier successfully rewired it and the lamp lit!

Every repair is a small yet significant

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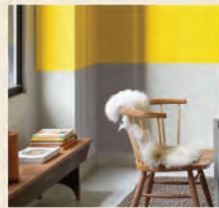
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SUSAN DEMARK

Left, a chest after its painting and reburbishing at Found & Fixed; right, Found & Fixed transforms pieces like this General Electric floor-model radio, which is on the showroom's furniture rescue wall, into new life.

victory over the frequent human tendency to buy something new rather than seek a fix for a broken object. "It saves the environment, as opposed to if you have a new chair and every time your chair gets

wobbly, you throw it away," says Steve Hirsch, a repair coach who was doing wood repairs that day. As a society, we do not encourage people sufficiently to repair and keep an item.

Moreover, finding repair places for household items and small appliances (just as one category) can be quite challenging. The list of the kinds of items that are repaired on the Repair Café Hudson Valley site is extensive and includes lamps, vacuums, clocks, chairs, electrical items, small appliances, digital devices, clothing and textiles, dolls, stuffed animals, tool sharpening, jewelry and more. This capability helps explain a gathering of more than 50 people around noon, awaiting aid with repairs during the four-hour Kingston Repair Café on Feb. 22. "It's been really very busy," says Martha Hill, who volunteers for the Kingston Repair Café and helps ensure the event runs smoothly. "People don't know where to go to get things repaired."

Many of those who come to the Repair Cafes are motivated by the promise of repairing an object, be it a treasured piece of jewelry or a relied-upon electronic device, for free. In addition, they often have a sense of community and something larger at stake. As Jake Straus, who is co-facilitator of the Kingston Repair Café (along with Melissa Iachetta), put it, "We're building a community that is part of the circular economy."

This is something people committed to a circular economy have in common. In each one of these hundreds of actions that add up to reusing, repairing, restoring and reimagining furniture, objects and yes, ultimately, homes and other buildings, people see a purpose and connection to sustaining our Earth.

As Gabriel Jasmin, the co-founder of

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Found & Fixed, says, he thinks about the tons and tons of furniture that gets dumped each year and he considers the ultimate possible detriment to his children. He finds it very worthwhile

to work on a furniture piece that is “far gone” – though it still has good bones – and feels affirmed in restoring it and diverting it from a landfill. For Lo Miller, it’s a deep sense that objects have value.

“It’s acknowledging the value of something that gets to live into the future,” Miller says. “Objects have value. If we have a sense of the value of objects, we will value people more.”

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PHOTOS BY LEE REICH

Peas in the pod.

# Peas reign supreme

*Getting your peas on the table first takes the prize*

By Lee Reich

**I**N SOME GARDENING circles, a gardener's skill is measured by how soon he or she gets the first mess of shelling peas on the table. Peas are a good choice for such competition, because raising a good crop demands the best soil you can muster up as well as timely sowing and harvest.

Peas are a cool weather crop (50 to 70 degrees F. optimum) so must be planted early. Not too early, though, or the seeds are apt to rot. Not too late either, for the plants languish in hot weather.

The earliest possible crop of shelling peas is also a worthy goal because peas

are such a quintessential garden delicacy. Sugars in fresh picked peas start changing to starches just as soon as the pods are picked. It's impossible to buy fresh, frozen, or canned peas that match the flavor of homegrown ones.

I admit to having a competitive streak. Cheating a little could up the chances of my getting the first peas on my table. Well, not exactly cheating, but taking some measures that I, at least, consider not to be in the spirit of the competition. For example, growing

smooth-seeded shelling peas, such as the variety Alaska, which are the earliest to ripen. They don't taste as good as wrinkle-seeded types, whose seeds wrinkle up

because they are so high in sugars. I also won't use fungicide-treated seeds, which can be planted earlier with less danger of rotting. Handling poison coated seeds takes the fun out of pea planting. And I

won't start peas indoors in pots because it would be impossible to manage enough transplants to get a decent meal. They yield

Peas are such a quintessential garden delicacy.



is low from individual plants, but plant a row of pea seeds two inches apart and you get a mess of shelling peas.

As far as when to drop those first seeds into furrows, too many gardeners bow to



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tradition and sow them -- or try to -- on St. Patrick's Day. St. Patrick's Day may be the ideal date for planting peas in Ireland, but sometimes January is more on the mark in Florida and May in Minnesota.

Here in New Paltz, I plant peas on April 1, which is 7 weeks before the average date of our last killing frost.

Pea seeds germinate as long as the soil temperature is above 40 degrees F. I have

been known to account for the vagaries of a season by sticking a thermometer into the soil to find out exactly when the soil hits that temperature in spring. Another option is to watch for crocus blossoms, which begin to unfold at about the same time.

No matter when peas are planted, there are tricks to getting the sprouts up quicker and growing better. Pre-sprouting the seeds indoors gives the seeds a slight jump on the season once they're in the ground, and planting less deeply than recommended or in raised beds gives them warmer soil, which also speeds sprouting and growth. Take note, though: because of slow growth in the early, colder part of the growing season, dramatic efforts at getting peas going will not translate into equally dramatic early harvests. A few days earlier planting might translate to only a few hours earlier harvest.

## Harvest while the pods are plump and still vibrant green.

If peas have never grown before in your garden, sprinkle the seeds with a bacterial inoculant, available in stores, so plants can make use of atmospheric nitrogen as fertilizer. Make sure it's the inoculant for peas, because other legumes — beans, for example — have their own bacterial inoculant species.

Correct plant spacing and propping the vines up off the ground are other yield enhancers. Rather than single rows, I sow double rows about six inches apart, with two inches between peas in a row. If you plant in beds, run a double row up the middle of the bed.

Peas reign as king in British gardens, and for traditional staking there are pea twigs -- tree and shrub prunings trimmed so their branches lie in one plane, then pushed into the soil between each double row with their butt ends down and branches fanned out down the row. Even before the vines start their ascent, the row of pea twigs can be attractive -- and oh so British. I forego the twigs and the accent with a temporary fence of chicken wire, which is quicker to erect.



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Pea plants on the trellis.

Dwarf varieties and so-called afile types, with tendrils instead of leaves, can support themselves in a double row or mass planting without any trellis. Then again, being short or having less leaf area makes for lower yields.

Planting practices for snap peas and snow peas are the same as for shelling peas. The only difference is when

to harvest them. Harvest snap peas -- and the lanky Sugar Snap is my favorite -- when the pods are fully plump, and snow peas while the peas are just starting to bulge within the

.....  
**A few days earlier planting might translate to only a few hours earlier harvest.**  
 .....

pod but the pods are still flat. (I have no favorites among snow peas.)

A m o n g  
w r i n k l e

seeded shelling peas, you'll find some — but not a whole lot of — differences in flavor from one variety to the next. Therefore, also factor into your variety choice vine size, which determines how big a trellis you need, and days to maturity.

As long as I am going to have to reach to pick a pod, I also want it to be stuffed with as many peas as possible. That said, two varieties stand out as my all-time favorites: Green Arrow and Lincoln. I actually can't tell them apart.

No matter what the variety, though, timely harvest -- which may mean every other day, or sooner, in hot weather -- is all-important to best quality. Harvest while the pods are plump and still vi-

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Just-sprouted pea plants.

brant green.

If shelling peas have one fault as compared with snap peas or snow peas, it's that they, of course, need to be shelled. Which takes time, too much time for some gardeners.

In the interests of science, I once decided to quantify the actual time involved. To my surprise, I was able to pop open about six quarts of pods to fill a two quart container of shelled peas in only thirty minutes -- not really a bad rate, and not really an awful a job when it's June, you're sitting outside in the shade, and a warm breeze is caressing your back.

For their delectable flavor when fresh-picked, I highly recommend growing some shelling peas, even if you don't compete!

.....  
*New Paltz writer Lee Reich is the author of A Northeast Gardener's Year, The Pruning Book, Growing Figs in Cold Climates, and six other books on a diversity of gardening topics. He is also a garden consultant specializing in organic growing of fruits, vegetables, and nuts. He hosts workshops at his New Paltz farm. For more information, go to [www.leereich.com](http://www.leereich.com).*

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# Time to smell the flowers

*Magic window boxes and other mood-boosters*

by Dakota Lane

A FRIEND PAINTED HER house that certain chic shade of almost black, and chose a radiant pink for her front door. They've enjoyed the house like that for many years, but this summer they will add something new: a window box on the second floor to bring the bright color up.

I can imagine pink geraniums with a bit of feathery dill, or tangerine pansies. Perhaps some lime green sweet potato vine, or maybe some big fun poppies. It's not my window box, but a girl can dream and I often do, especially about window



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boxes, as I have a magic one and know their power to change a room.

When I downsized, I left behind a beloved garden and moved into a tiny apartment. I took along a window box of herbs straight off my porch and plopped it down in front of a lovely picture window with gorgeous all-day light. I didn't expect my purple African basil to, not only





PHOTOS BY DAKOTA LANE

last through the winter, but carry on for years morphing into an iconic Goddess crowned with lavish purple blossoms. I planted two lemon cedar trees right in that same planter, put two potted Norfolk Pines nearby, affixed a plastic bird feeder to the window and voila --I was living in a forest and nature sanctuary with pink

## Decorate with colors and textures that appeal to your senses.

finches and red-headed woodpeckers and the occasional butterfly and hummingbird.

The best improvement you can make to your home is to uplift your own mood! For very little money you can decide to treat yourself like a guest. Stage your own place, curate a mini collection of books or toys, always including elements of nature in each tableau: smooth pieces of driftwood and river stones, feathers from your special walks.

Decorate with colors and textures that appeal to your senses, with organic candles and natural essences, to sink into a sensory bath. Add playlists for every mood, paint your walls in simply white, or something warm and earth-toned. Decide to keep the bathroom spotless and spa-like. Next thing you know, you'll have a haven with hours of peace, a space



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on in the outside world, it's satisfying to be the director of your own environment.

As for my indoor garden, everything continues to grow! I go with my mood,

adding herbs and flowers from local farm markets. One year I had a rose garden. Another year lemon-colored anemones. Little clay pots hold white flowers, and







I'm always on alert for things that smell beautiful, like jasmine, basil, chocolate mint, rosemary and my finicky gardenia. Tending to my potted garden, moving

**The best improvement you can make to your home is to uplift your own mood.**

from window box to the potted trees, while a pink finch couple I know perches on the window feeder--I have that same sense of flow as when I had my outdoor garden--only this one has no weeds and no critters, except for my cat who is one happy camper.

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# The tale of My Doom Piles

*Simple hints for handling one's accumulated papers (or not)*

by Sparrow

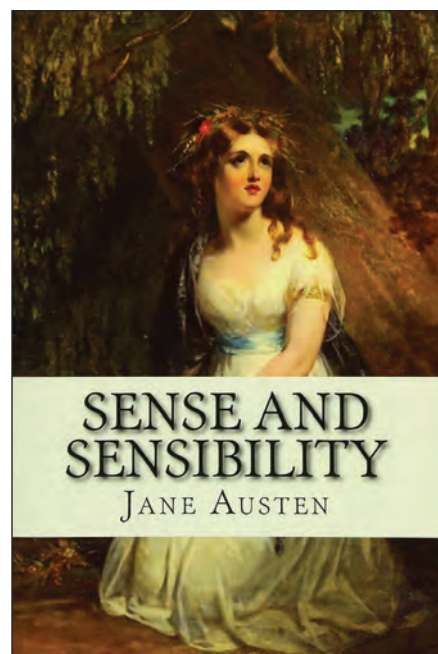
**A**TOP THE PILE of papers next to my computer is a note that says simply “piles.” It’s a reminder to look through all the piles of magazines, unopened mail, newspapers, and handwritten notes that decorate my house: two on chairs in the dining room, one on a seat in the vestibule, one on the floor of my study, and the one beside my PC. These are technically known as “doom piles,” which is actually an acro-

nym for “didn’t organize, only moved.”

It all started with Jane Austen. When my mother went into a nursing home in 2014, I found a copy of *Sense and Sensibility* in the recreation room, and started reading it to her – one chapter at a time.

It was hard for Mom to follow the plot (and hard for me, as well) but she liked the prose. Once she remarked to her nursing home boyfriend, Stuart: “It’s fun to listen to these sentences because they’re enjoying themselves so much.”

Unfortunately, my mother left this earthly plane before I could finish the



PHOTOS BY SPARROW

My Doom Piles all began with *Sense and Sensibility* by Jane Austen.



Piles of books yet to be read.

## Happy Spring

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book. About a year ago, I decided to return to the novel.

I finished *Sense and Sensibility*, and immediately moved on to *Emma*, the last book Jane Austen published in her lifetime. I found both novels delightful, but somehow after reading them, I lost all desire to read a book.

"What will I read now?" I wondered. Then I noticed the piles of useless periodicals and papers lounging around my house. "That's it!" I decided. "I will finally start reading these."

One "scrolls" through a file, but one "sifts" through a pile. I began sifting.

Delving into piles of printed pages is a kind of archaeology. The same way the famed archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann discovered seven levels of Troy, I probed seven levels of useless paper.

Here are some of my discoveries: a copy of *Jewish Currents* (Spring/Summer 2014), a Leftist magazine my friend Larry Bush used to edit, a copy of *The Marijuana Report* (December/January 2022/23) with a review of the marijuana recipe book my friend Pesha Sloane

wrote. The Bethel Woods calendar for last fall. The cover of the book of short stories by Saki that I'm reading, which fell off. The envelope – but not the letter – from my friend Fred. Do you know those end-of-the-year letters families send with their Christmas cards? I found one written by my friend Emily Dutcher (not her real name) from January 15, 2019.

And an interesting Seasons Greeting card – of course it's not a Christmas

card – from the Democratic Party. It shows a town populated by donkeys (the Democratic symbol) in winter, including one who's building a snow-donkey (the Democratic equivalent of a snowman).

I'm always looking for ways to sneak my poetry into my essays, and here's an easy opportunity. One of my piles contained a folder of poems left over from a reading I gave, including:

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### Mystic Truth

In a past life he  
was my cousin;

Now he's my  
postman.

I'm very scrupulous in other areas. If I buy a new pair of pants, I give away an old pair. Every day I scan the refrigerator for produce that might be wilting. Broccoli never goes yellow in our house. But unfortunately, there's no expiration date on a magazine.

But there is a publication date, so I know exactly when the periodicals I'm reading were printed. For example, the issue of *The Believer* I just finished is 11 years old.

My problem is that I have too many interests. The other day I went to the doctor, and started reading the *Reader's Digest* in the waiting room. I had barely



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begun an article about an undercover cop – a former “exotic dancer” – infiltrating white supremacists in Arizona, when the doctor came. I complained to the nurse, and she said: “They’re my magazines; I bring them in. Just take it!”

I’m reading the magazine now, and it’s fabulous. Did you know that there are deeply religious people who literally beat swords into plowshares? Well, not quite literally. Rather, they disassemble guns

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that are confiscated by the cops and turn them into gardening tools! (The group is called Swords to Plowshares Northeast.) This is my problem. Just when I finish a copy of *n+1*, the literary journal, suddenly an unpredictably “woke” version of my grandmother’s favorite magazine (i.e. *The Reader’s Digest*) surfaces. If only I could read one article from each periodical, then toss it in the recycling, like a normal person! But I am cursed with an insatiable thirst for educative essays.

One step forward, two steps back – that’s the way the hoarders attack.

Incidentally, the word “piles” also refers to a troubling condition of the anus. How did hemorrhoids get that name?

Here’s what Google says:

Hemorrhoids are called piles because the name comes from the Latin word *pila*, which roughly translates to “balls”. This Latin word referred to the appearance of swollen hemorrhoids, which can resemble small, round balls or masses

around the anus. Over time, *pila* evolved into “piles” in the English language, and the association stuck.

An article like this should include simple hints for handling one’s accumulated

papers. I have an idea, though perhaps it’s cheating. Take one of your piles and simply merge it with another file, thus making a pile twice as high.

It’s a start.

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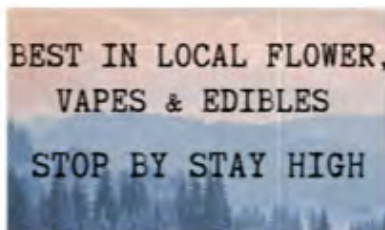
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