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Wild

Spring Tonics

Spring Ahead

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“Bringing it all back home” is the theme of this Spring issue of **Our Country Home**. As the Upper Delaware River valley slowly grows into its lush summer beauty, there are many ways to find the very best of what the region has to offer. Our featured home showcases a Pennsylvania house and studio lovingly restored by an artist who had the skills, time and inclination to do much of the work herself. The result is a tailor-made space with some inventive touches. We invite you to get to know local Tastemaker — Lars Hanson of Hanson Gallery and Decorium. We offer ideas for easy and colorful spring tablescapes, using goods from local shops or what you already have on hand. We give you the skinny on reupholstering that favorite chair or the sleeper couch with the good bones. Sometimes there is no need to throw it out when you can have it recovered the old-world way, creating an attractive, trendy, custom look. We guide you to a few of the spring tonic wild foods that can be gathered in the region very easily to spice up your menu and give yourself a nutritional boost. And as you get set to go into the garden, we give you some ideas for attractive fencing.

It was an easy winter, at least for those of us living in the Northeast. While some of us missed the snow, the general consensus was: we’ll take it. Now, my friend, fresh ideas are blowing in the wind and the times they are a-changing. As another great poet, Robert Frost, wrote:

“I’m going out to clean the pasture spring;
I’ll only stop to rake the leaves away
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):
I sha’n’t be gone long.—You come too.”

Mary Greene

Mary Greene
Section Editor

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OUR COUNTRY HOME

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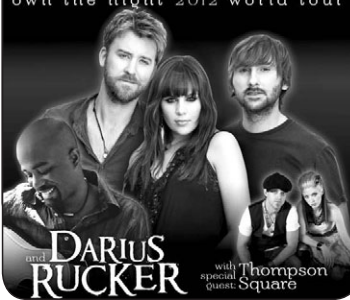
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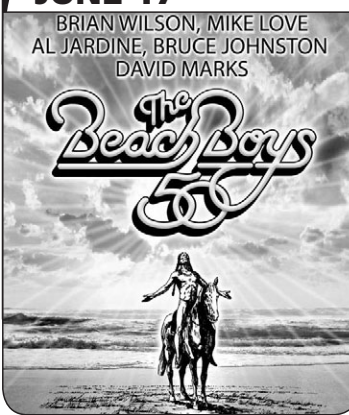
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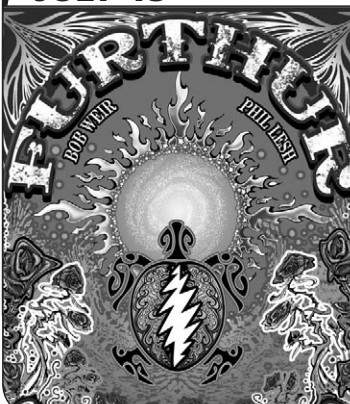
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White to Black, Drab to Fab

Contributed photos

Text | Tina Spangler

How does an artist transform a non-descript Pennsylvania house into a strikingly eclectic contemporary home—without breaking the bank?

It begins with a vision

“I’ve been an artist for over 30 years and have always been fascinated with architecture and space management,” says visual artist Teri Hackett. Since the mid-1980s, she rented a 4,000-square-foot Brooklyn loft in a converted coffee warehouse. She and her husband Ray, who works in the compliance/finance field, spent their weekends out on Montauk where Teri, a Los Angeles native, could surf. After 9/11 they

started looking for a house of their own, but quickly determined that beach houses were out of their price range. So they started looking upstate.

They found an online listing for a house in Beach Lake, PA, and Teri was instantly taken with the “romantic New Orleans look” of the double-decker porches and old gothic setting. What sealed the deal was the detached garage, in which Teri saw loads of potential for an art studio to create her mixed media landscapes.

Built in the 1920s in an area locally known as Casetown, the house was originally a summer cabin, but had been added onto several times over the next

40 years to create a hodge-podge of styles, both inside and out. The dated knotty pine and boxy rooms did not appeal to Teri—who describes her style as “one foot in traditional, the other in eclectic.” But what did appeal to her were the bones of the house and the storybook setting along the Masthope Creek. Separated from the road by a large stand of old growth hemlocks, the house sits on just one acre, but is surrounded by thousands of acres of protected green space. So, the couple enjoys a natural setting without being burdened with the taxes and maintenance that would come along with owning it themselves.

Continued on page 6

“Teri was instantly taken with the ‘romantic New Orleans look’ of the double-decker porches and old gothic setting.”

The transformation begins

Teri took the reins of the house renovation, acting as designer, architect, sheet rocker, tile worker, carpenter and painter—skills she’d picked up in college classes and from years of do-it-yourself design in her Brooklyn studio. The first order of business was to open up the flow and re-configure the rooms to suit their lives, which include many weekend guests and visiting artists. She hired a retired handyman and set about transforming the dated house into an elegant home.

What Teri lacked in dollars, she more than made up for in time, knowledge and energy. She bartered, traded and bargain-shopped both locally and online for furnishings and materials. Doing the work herself and on a tight budget, she knew the project would take several years. But she was in no rush. “Every May, I had a project in mind that would get a major part of the house done,” she said. She started with the busiest room in the house: the kitchen.



Contributed photo



Contributed photo



Contributed photo



Contributed photo



Photo By Tina Spangler

Brightening up the kitchen

The uninspired 1960s kitchen was a depressing mix of brown plywood cabinets and red vinyl flooring. But worst of all, the walls were cockeyed. Teri knew that had to be addressed first, so that the renovations could be done on a square frame. So she gutted the room and reframed the exterior walls with new plumb studs.

Shopping for sales online and at discount stores like Green Demolitions in Honesdale, PA, Teri created a bright modern kitchen that was on budget. Initially she decided to install a white subway tile back splash, but then asked herself, “Why do something so conservative? It’s your house; who are you trying to please?” She found river stone tiles online for half the price of Home Depot, with free shipping. She installed the back splash herself, adding small stones from her own property to ensure an authentic, custom look. She opted for open shelving instead of upper cabinets, which keeps the kitchen from feeling weighted down, and shows off her dishware and mason jars full of herbs and grains.



Contributed photo

Connecting the house and studio

In order to convert the 400-square-foot detached garage into her new studio space, Teri needed to find a way to connect it to the house. With the input of an architect friend, she decided on constructing a “tower” between the two. The tall square structure provided an architecturally interesting element that a simple hallway or breezeway would have lacked.

It also gave Teri the option to create a laundry room on the ground floor, and a sun-drenched bathroom upstairs. More like a sanctuary in the sky, the bathroom gave Teri ample opportunity to show off her tile skills and her artistic vision.



Contributed photo

Giving the exterior a new life

The final, and perhaps most dramatic change to the house occurred just last year when Teri updated the exterior color from non-descript white to a striking slate black, unifying the old and the new. The dark siding gives the house a more grounded feel, picking up natural outdoor tones of grey tree bark and blue stone.

“White shows everything, but the black hides the imperfections and differences in siding styles to make the house look like one complete concept,” Teri explains. “The new color is organic; it changes as the light hits it.” She punched up the trim with brick red paint—and a matching tin roof skirting on the porch—highlighting details one might overlook. She added a long slatted privacy screen to separate the front entrance from the kitchen.

Now that the house reflects Teri’s vision, she can finally sit back and appreciate all she’s accomplished. “I’m proud that I took over what is usually a man’s domain,” she says. “I don’t have a lot of money, but I have a sense of style and was able to create a beautiful home without buying the best of everything.”



Photo by Tina Spangler



Photo by Tina Spangler



Photo by Tina Spangler

Teri stays in shape by swimming at Woodloch Pines. She may have pictured herself living in a “beach” town, but never imagined it would be over 150 miles from the nearest ocean shoreline. She still visits the ocean from time to time, with friends in Florida, South Carolina and Costa Rica. Closer to home, “the Delaware River helps when I need a water fix,” she says.

You can see Teri’s artwork at www.theresahackett.com.

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Good fences

Text | Mary Greene

Some gardeners resist the idea of a fence enclosing their flower or vegetable bed. It is true that flower beds with plantings that are deer resistant will be relatively safe, although predation can occur from smaller woodland animals. However, anyone wishing to have a bed of colorful perennials mixed with annuals the deer do like, such as zinnias and cosmos, or a vegetable patch with summer goodies like lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, corn and carrots, should think about investing in a good garden fence.

A serious deer-detering fence should be at least six feet tall. Material that is commonly used for fencing around a veggie garden is wire, mesh or metal. The fencing ideally should extend underground to deter ground level entry by burrowing creatures such as rabbits and woodchucks. Protective wire fencing can be gussied up with a fancy gate. Creative options include a reclaimed door painted in a bright color, a wrought iron gate or a sturdy

gate built from lattice or even natural branches and twigs.

Flower gardens can be enhanced with gazebos, arbors, trellises and benches. A spectacular effect can be created by planting a climbing vine such as morning glory or clematis along an arbor or lattice roof. Some gardeners like to combine flower and vegetable gardens. With a large enough space (and a good fence) this can be a spectacular choice, creating a garden centerpiece for your yard or field that can also incorporate fountains, sculpture, bird baths, rock formations, tables and benches.

Many home and garden centers will assist homeowners in planning how to make their own fence, or assist with installation as well, depending on the homeowner's needs. A wide range of landscapers and expert gardeners are also available in the region for consultation and digging in the dirt.

For those who wish to take their chances on a perennial bed without a fence, the following plants will likely be ignored by browsing deer. It is a truism, though, that deer will shun some plants one year and devour them the next—in a hungry year, deer will eat anything.

Herbs

Deer generally avoid common garden herbs such as lavender, rosemary, thyme, parsley, sage and mint.

Perennials

Astilbe, Bee Balm, Butterfly Bush, Blackeyed Susan, Bleeding Heart, Campanula, Clematis, Columbine, Daffodil, Dianthus, Echinacea (Coneflower), Foxglove, Hellebore, Hosta, Iris, Joe-Pye-Weed, Lungwort, Japanese Anemone, Lupine, Monkshood, Ornamental Grasses, Pearly Everlasting, Peony, Poppy, Lungwort, Yarrow, Salvia, Shasta Daisy.

Annuals

Marigold, Sunflower, Impatiens

TIP

If there is a plant or bloom you really want to include in your flower garden but you know it's a popular browsing choice for deer, try placing it at the center of a grouping of plants that usually repel deer.

Spring Ahead Table settings to warm your heart

Text | Barbara Winfield

As warmer weather arrives, you can give your home—and your mood—a boost with a sunny table setting of fresh colors and natural textures.

Creating an attractive table is an affordable art that anyone can master. All you need is a sense of color, a sense of adventure and a discerning eye. Trust your intuition to lead you where you want to go!



Bridgewater Mercantile — Photo by Catherine Scott, table design by Barbara Winfield



Domesticities & the Cutting Garden — Photo and table design by Barbara Winfield



Willow & Brown — Photo by Barbara Winfield, flowers by Sugar Blossom Flowers



Duke Pottery — Photo by Dana Duke, table design: Carolyn Duke

To get started, I asked four different local home-design mavens to collaborate with me to create a series of spring table settings, each with a different look that reflects the style of their retail store. My first visit was **Bridgewater Mercantile** on Main Street in Jeffersonville, NY. The store, a treasure trove of 19th- and 20th-century furnishings, is co-owned by designer Jaime Stankevicius and his partner Paul Hargrove. While touring the store with Jaime, I was attracted to a set of beautiful floral china dishes labeled Coventry - Secret Garden, made in England in the 1980s. Inspired by the greens, blues, yellows and oranges in the china pattern, I started by framing the dishes with a set of round blue placemats. Jamie suggested we also use a tablecloth to add another element of color and texture. After deciding on yellow and white tulips for the centerpiece, I set off perusing the store for a vase. It wasn't long before I spotted an orange glass vase circa 1970 that fit perfectly with the color scheme. Green terrycloth washcloths tied with bright yellow satin ribbons were used instead of napkins. Assorted colorful salt and pepper shakers adds a touch of whimsy to the scheme. Clear wine glasses, glass candlesticks and glass cake plates, including a crystal Tiffany compote bowl to hold oranges, balanced out the setting.

On to **Domesticities & The Cutting Garden** in Youngsville, NY, on State Route 52. The store features a lively mix of antiques, works by local artisans and fair trade goods and accessories. From June through October, The Cutting Garden features “cut your own” flowers and naturally grown vegetables. When I told owner Anne Hart what my mission was, she directed me toward the back of the store to a country kitchen filled with nostalgic items from the early and mid-20th century. Anne pointed out a set of classic 1950s pink and grey pattern dishes. I immediately started to “think pink.” Starting with a green enamel-top table circa 1945 and a crisp white cotton embroidered table topper as the base, we picked out various dishes, glasses and accessories in pink, white or green. Instead of one centerpiece, we went with two: a basket of fresh dill and a green glass vase of Peruvian lilies. As a finishing touch, a set of Siamese cat salt and pepper shakers, along with a glass dish filled with pink eggs, added a bit of whimsy to this charming setting.

Switching gears, I headed over to Livingston Manor, NY to visit **Willow and Brown**, a contemporary retail store with a fresh, focused 21st-century stylishness. Featuring tableware, kitchenware, clothing and accessories, the overall look of the store is extremely articulate. Co-owned by Carolin Brown and David Walton, Willow and Brown carries many “Made in America” and “Made in the Catskills” products, and some of its products also support nonprofit organizations. Walking in, I was captivated by the Waechtersbach collection of brilliantly hued dishes. This became our starting point. Carolin covered a stainless steel table with five gold Danica woven all-cotton placemats and napkins. Next, she set the table with dishes and bowls in four different colors, and added matching Fire and Light glasses (made from recycled glass), and stainless flatware with color-coordinating Silicone handles. A simple piece of twine was used as a napkin ring and knife holder. For the centerpiece, Carolin collaborated with florist Ann Manby of **Sugar Blossom Flowers** in Roscoe, NY to create a floral arrangement featuring colorful Gerber daisies. The centerpiece, with its palette of yellow, orange, white and green, unites all of the elements into a harmonious whole. The result is a simple yet stunning table setting to rival Mother Nature.

When you think of “Handmade in Sullivan County,” one of the first name that comes to mind is Caroline Duke of **Duke Pottery**. Caroline works primarily with pinch pots, which she fires in a variety of ways. Her studio and gallery, located in Roscoe, NY, showcases her work as well as products made by other local artists, writers, jewelry makers and artisans. The gallery has a warm, rustic ambiance and a mix of arts and crafts furnishings by local talents such as wood craftsmen Gary Wegener, furniture maker Peter Galbert, quilter Katharina Litchman and more. Motivated by this rustic, creative setting, Caroline and I began planning the table setting. We started with her newest spring collection of fern and leaf patterned stoneware plates in an ochre stain. After choosing an antique wooden farm table, Caroline chose a set of green cotton placemats to frame the plates. Various white stoneware bowls were added to the setting, each bowl featuring textured decorative imprints from seeds and corncobs. The handmade tea bowls, used instead of mugs, are more than just drinking vessels—they establish a connection to nature while they delight the eye. The stone napkin rings, with their individual impressions, continue the theme of combining tactile and visual appeal. The focal point of the setting was a white stoneware spiral pattern vase with imprints from nature, made even more beautiful with a bouquet of delicate spring flowers.

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Reupholstering & Slipcovers

An investment in quality

Text | Lori Malone

Photo by Nanette Schips

Nanette's Custom Interiors created this fitted slipcover using pre-washed white cotton duck fabric. Using pre-washed fabric ensures a good fit even after washing.

The history

The word “upholstery” comes from the Middle English word *upholder*, which referred to a tradesman who held up his goods. Traditional upholstery uses materials like coil springs (post-1850), animal hair (horse, hog and cow), coir, straw and hay, hessians, linen scrim, wadding, etc., and is done by hand, building each layer up. In contrast, modern upholsterers employ synthetic materials like Dacron, vinyl and serpentine springs.

Upholstered furniture became popular in the 18th century and was found in the homes of members of the upper class, who could afford luxurious furnishings covered in velvets, silks and other expensive fabrics. By the early 20th century, mass production of upholstered furniture made it more affordable, and by mid-century upholstered furnishings were found in most homes.

Slipcovers were introduced as a way to protect fine fabrics during summer months from perspiration before the advent of air conditioning. In the 1940s, clear vinyl slipcovers became quite popular, offering protection without hiding

the furniture's pattern. From the 1940s to the 1960s, fabric slipcovers were common place, employed to extend the life of a sofa or chair and also to lend versatility in decorating. I recall that my Aunt Emma had several slipcovers she made herself, which she used seasonally to change the look of her living room.

The popularity of slipcovers began to wane toward the end of the 1970s as furniture companies used more durable, stain-resistant fabrics that rendered them unnecessary. However, resurgence in slipcover use began in the early 1990s when designer Rachel Atwood introduced her “Shabby Chic” style. This fun and original look capitalized on the decorating versatility that slipcovers provided, and appealed to homeowners who enjoy a casual lifestyle.

Today's slip covered furniture, in natural fibers like cotton and linen, typifies a classic American style.

The second-chance solution

Upholstered furnishings are big ticket items that set the tone for the rooms they serve. If you are fortunate enough to own

or have inherited older, well-made furniture pieces, giving them new life rather than replacing them is as eco-friendly as it is practical. Providing that the furniture is made from good hardwoods and has a sturdy frame, there is no reason not to reupholster or have it slip covered to get continued use out of it. “Another benefit is that you can keep your money local,” said Nanette Schips, owner of Nanette's Custom Interiors in Barryville, NY. “Hiring local tradesmen is a way to make an investment in your community that matters.”

Why it's daunting

There is a misconception among homeowners that customized services are expensive and not budget friendly, which is not the case here. Experts point out that—given the cost of replacing a good quality, standard sized sofa (\$2,000 and up)—an investment of much less when you use slipcovers (\$750) and reupholstery (\$1,200) just makes sense. There is the added advantage of being able to visit the shop, consult with the shopkeeper and talk about fabrics and designs one on one.

Continued on page 14

Keeping costs down

There are ways to keep costs down, said Schips. "Fabric is where you spend," she said, and she advises keeping that in mind when selecting your upholstery fabric, which can run \$35 to \$100 a yard and up. If you buy fabric independently, you can shop around for fabric that fits your budget. You would need to purchase from 11 to 20 yards of upholstery fabric, depending on your sofa's shape and size. Consult with your upholstery professional before buying any fabric to ensure that your fabric and yardage is appropriate for your particular piece. Slipcovers cost less than reupholstering, so that may be another way to save for a fresh new look.



Contributed photo

Freshly painted wood details and crisp white cotton brings new life to this reupholstered vintage chair.

What to slipcover, what to reupholster

Traditionally shaped sofas, chairs, and ottomans all look great with a well-fitting slipcover. Slipcovers offer a less tailored look, but their draped edges can suggest a country elegant charm, and they are a less expensive way to achieve a fresh new look. I personally like the look of a slip covered sofa: the casualness of it, the way its silhouette evokes a sense of comfort. Twill slipcovers with a tailored fit, on a traditionally shaped sofa or chair, is as chic as it is casual, adapting well to any lifestyle. And, there's a practicality in using slipcovers made of natural fibers to allow for laundering, ideal for households with pets and children.

Reupholstering, on the other hand,



Photo by Nanette Schips

Nanette's Custom Interiors created this whimsical ottoman using the client's "Beatles" tapestry.

offers less versatility but instead offers the opportunity to have a custom piece of quality furniture in your room. Certain detailing on furniture, such as exposed wood or intricate tufting, dictate that the piece be reupholstered, rather than slip covered. Sofas and chairs with interesting curves may also look better reupholstered to show off their shape. I've seen vintage occasional chairs reupholstered in everything from natural hides to grain sacks to burlap, and even men's suit material. You are only limited by your imagination.

Slipcovers and custom upholstery are a fabulous way to interject your personality and style into a room, something to consider before your next furniture purchase.

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A conversation with TASTEMAKER LARS HANSON

Text | Emily Grillo

If you have ever walked down Main Street in Honesdale, PA, you no doubt have noticed the meticulously restored **Hanson Gallery & Decorium** (1037 Main Street, www.thehansongallery.com, 570/253-2525). You may not know of the multi-faceted past of Lars Hanson, who restored and owns the space with his wife, Cynthia.

As a child growing up in Cincinatti, Hanson developed a few habits that serve him to this day. He enjoyed making things out of wood, and he enjoyed looking at the designs in his mother's home magazines. He built tree houses, forts and fences, and perused his mother's monthly magazines religiously.

Another early passion was music, and by age 14 Hanson was playing R&B on an electric compact organ in a band called The Undecided. Soon, Hanson took up guitar and rock 'n roll.

In 1970, after finishing high school at the private Lovett School in Atlanta, Hanson chose music over a scholarship to Brown University, much to his father's dismay. His love of hard rock led him into several bands and through several band breakups. In 1976, Hanson's former bandmate and friend Greg "Rex" Smith gave Hanson to call to see if he might come play music with him in New York City. Smith had been signed to Columbia Records based on a tape he'd played for the Columbia execs of music by The Tricks, Hanson and Smith's former band. The band performed everywhere from Madison Square Garden to Anaheim Stadium and opened up for acts like Foreigner, Cheap Trick and Lynyrd Skynyrd. While recording its third LP, the band disintegrated as Smith entered acting. A successful movie and a hit LP that Hanson

played on scored Hanson two Gold Records. He continued to tour and record with groups like Ronnie Spector and Bennie Mardones.

Around 1981, Hanson became disenchanted with the music world because gigs were increasingly few and far between. At that point, "in order to make a buck," he began working odd jobs and settled into carpentry. Hanson landed a job with Superlative Interiors, a firm based in New York City that transforms raw space into retail or commercial space.

As a carpenter for Superlative, Hanson constructed items for displays that included flooring, walls and furniture. He also began estimating costs of projects for clients. His skills became apparent to his superiors, and soon Hanson's responsibilities extended to the design of spaces and showrooms. In 1996, an opportunity arose for Hanson to buy the business. He jumped on it.

Hanson has built a reputation and is now a highly regarded—even revered—go-to designer for big name companies that want to showcase their goods. The majority of Superlative's corporate clients are textile manufacturers and "we handle everything, from soup to nuts," said Hanson, who oversees each project. Superlative creates showcase space for kitchens, bedrooms, living spaces and bathrooms. The showroom designs that Hanson creates include elements of carpentry, lighting, flooring, painting, window treatments, furniture and decorative additions. Superlative tackles bedrooms, bathrooms, living areas and kitchens. Each design is unique and each interior has its own special ambiance.

Hanson said the busiest times of the year are spring and

fall. During these months, when clients showcase their seasonal wares, Superlative stays busy completing their clients' wish lists. During down periods, Hanson designs residential homes and attends trade shows for the business.

What Hanson lacks in formal training, he makes up for with his intuitive sense of style and color—his "eye" for design. His creations are rich and modern, trendy and accomplished.

In 2009, Hanson and Cynthia relocated to Honesdale. They opened The Hanson Gallery and Decorium in June of 2009 after five months of renovations including refurbished flooring, windows, interior walls, ceilings, lighting and roofing. In 2010, the Wayne County Historical Society presented the couple with a Historic Preservation Award for their work on the space.

Are they pleased with their new location? "The history of the town is amazing," said Hanson. "We find the people here warm and welcoming, and we've been so well received." Further, said Hanson, "we hope we have brought a new element of retail to the area, joining with the Wayne County Arts Alliance to add to the art scene here."

While Cynthia largely handles the gallery, the Decorium gives Hanson the opportunity locally to showcase his business. The wares for sale there belonged to Prop Central, another business that Hanson owned in New York City where he rented props, such as furniture and architectural elements, to the television and film industry. Prop Central was liquidated, and now discerning shoppers can find an eclectic mix of items at the Decorium.

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Spring Tonics

Text | Mary Greene

Before supermarkets and refrigeration, springtime was an exciting season when fresh greens and fresh foods in general became available again. Earlier generations prized the foods they could gather and cook in early spring for their strengthening and cleansing properties. These foods are still a wonderful way to supplement your spring diet and give your immune system a boost.



Ramps

Ramps, which are wild leeks, are a favorite wild food that appears in April as the ground begins to thaw. Ramps are found in sandy, moist soil and often prefer hillsides or streamsides. They appear in little bunches and the scallion-like bulb is rooted strongly just below the soil. (A digging tool is handy to ensure the tops don't break off from the bulbs.) The leaves are broad and smooth, vibrant green in color, sometimes with burgundy tints. The greenery is tender early in the season, and the bulbs are edible year round, and they dry or freeze well. Some say ramps taste more like garlic than like onions.

Ramps can be used in a variety of ways, but they combine well with eggs and potatoes. COOK 5 or 6 sliced ramps and 2 thinly sliced potatoes in olive oil or bacon grease until tender, seasoning with salt, pepper and paprika. Break 2 eggs over potatoes and stir to mix. Cook a few more minutes until eggs are done.



Dandelion greens

The ubiquitous dandelion is despised by some (who claim a bitter flavor) and prized by others (who don't mind the slight bitterness). The root of the dandelion, which is long and woody, is used by some as a coffee substitute after it has been roasted and ground. Dandelions should be picked from clean areas (no roadsides) before flowers form. Wash them well and add to a green salad for a bit of flavor and a spring nutritional boost. Or, COOK them into a sauce to serve over pasta. Chop a generous amount of garlic and heat in olive oil. Add greens and ½ cup vegetable or chicken broth. Cook until soft. Add a can of white beans and heat through. Serve over elbow noodles or penne.



Garlic mustard

Unlike dandelions, the arrow-shaped stem leaves of garlic mustard become more pungent (smelling of—what else?—garlic) and less bitter as they grow out of their baby stage. The leaves strip off readily, so you can collect a bagful in short order. Garlic mustard grows in lots of places—avoid roadsides or other compromised sites. The clusters of tiny, four-petaled white flowers are edible as well. COOK garlic mustard as you would other greens, by boiling or sautéing and finishing with a splash of vinegar. (Be careful not to overcook the leaves or they will become mushy.) If you find garlic mustard with exceptionally large leaves, harvesting the tap roots will give you a condiment something like horseradish. Slice thinly into salads or grate into vinegar as a condiment. (Collect roots before flowers appear.)



Japanese knotweed

Japanese knotweed is, as anyone who lives in these parts knows, an invasive species that has taken over much of the natural habitat in the Upper Delaware River valley. (Unfortunately, it is possessed of a natural herbicide that kills the plant life surrounding it.) While efforts are ongoing to eradicate this pest, knotweed does have some beneficial properties. When this bamboo-like member of the buckwheat family is very small, it can be gathered and steamed much like asparagus. Look for new growth among the old knotweed stands—it will come up in bunches of pale greenish-yellow stalks with a reddish papery sheath. COOK early knotweed as you would asparagus, by steaming or boiling, and eat with salt and butter or a squeeze of lemon.



Fiddlehead ferns

Fiddleheads are one of the earliest spring wild foods, ready for gathering when the earliest spring flowers appear. They are actually the curled sprout of the ostrich fern. Fiddleheads grow anywhere ferny areas contain the fiddlehead variety. Look for a curl at the top to insure tenderness, and use as much of the stem below as you can collect (six to 10 inches is ideal.) A distinctive feature to look for is a brown papery material adhering to the curl.

COOK as a nutritious side dish. Soak in salted water for a few minutes to remove any bugs (which will float to the surface of the water). Saute in a pan with butter or a mix of butter and olive oil until tender. Add a bit of white wine, Dijon mustard and chopped chives if desired. Serve hot.

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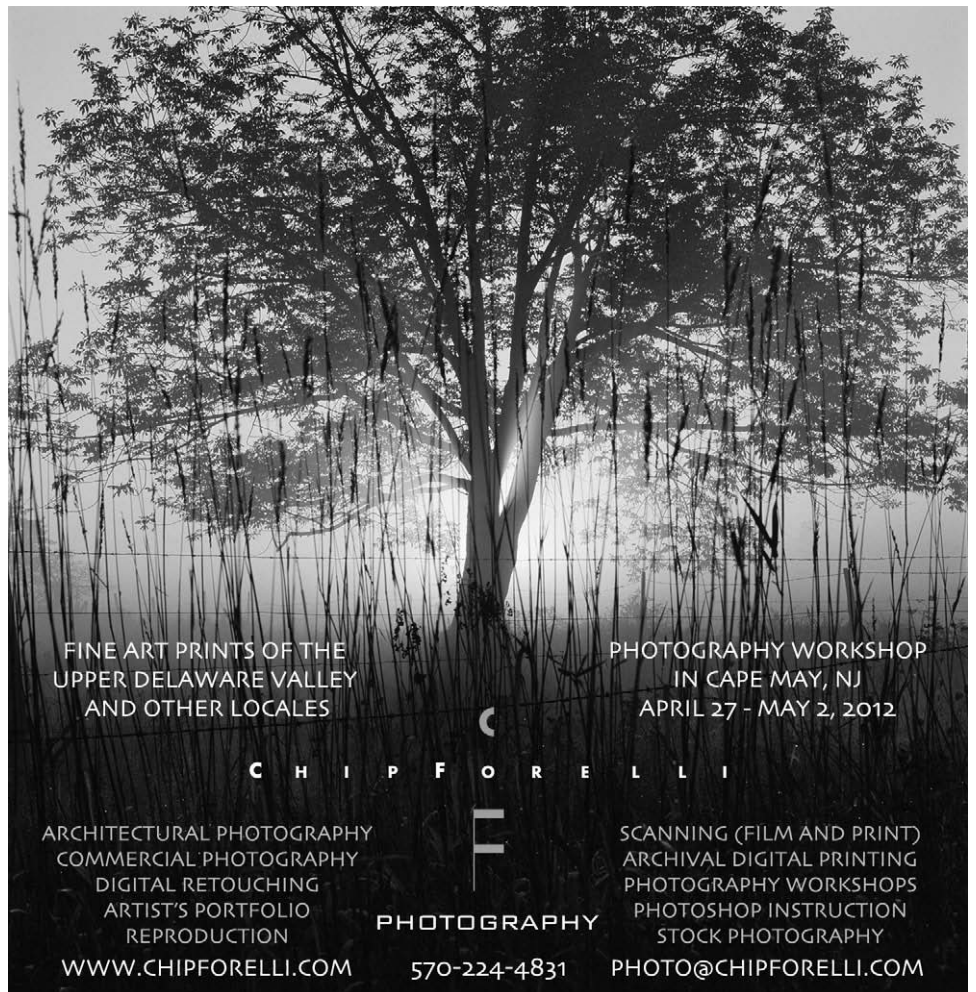
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