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*Foundations for Living*



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FOR AN OLD BARN**

**MODERN DAY  
HOMESTEADING**

**DIY: BUILDING A  
RAISED BED  
GARDEN PLOT**

**HOMEMADE SPRING  
CLEANING  
PRODUCTS**



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Photos by Jack Kucy

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Cover photograph:  
Jack Kucy

At my country home (located on a dead-end dirt road that we share with the bears, wild turkeys and occasionally at night with howling coyotes), we are still waiting for signs of spring. People who live just a few miles away tell me they've already seen robins, but these harbingers of spring must be taking the long way around to find our house where our yard is still covered in snow. That said, we are already turning our attention to those familiar springtime rituals—spring cleaning and deciding what we will plant in the garden.

In this issue of **Our Country Home**, you will find both an article about gardening—how to build a small raised bed garden plot for your yard—plus some sustainable options for making your own chemical-free spring cleaning agents.

Sustainability is also an underlying theme for two additional articles—one about homesteading as a lifestyle and another about a couple who took an old, falling-down barn and set about repurposing it. It is now a modern marvel of a home dedicated to simple living in an uncluttered, open space.

This spring issue of **Our Country Home** is all about how the heart and soul of country living can provide the perfect foundation for life in the 21st century.

Jane Bollinger  
Section editor



## OUR COUNTRY HOME

A RIVER REPORTER LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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# A modern homestead in Welcome Lake

By BILLY TEMPLETON

It was a cold and blustery March morning, and as I made fresh tire tracks through the light dusting of snow, I saw a mink dart across the driveway and under a rock along one of the three ponds at the Augusta Acres homestead in Welcome Lake, PA. It was too cold for the sap to be running yet, but the plastic tubes and hundreds of buckets lining the way to the house were ready for the sap to flow as soon as the temperature rose above freezing. In the distance, a small flock of ducks waddled along the bank of the frozen pond as if also wondering whether the ice would melt soon.

Today was the first day of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Maple Producers Association's "Self-Guided Maple Tour," and Todd and Sue Klikus, the operators of one of 10 local "sugar bushes"\* participating in the event, were busy boiling away in the sap house when I arrived. [*\*Sugar bush: A wooded area where sugar maples predominate*]

Producing maple syrup is the most recent of many projects on which the Klikus family has embarked since building their home in 1993 on the old 20-acre hunting and fish-rearing property once owned by Sue's grandparents, John and Augusta Rickard. What began as an interest in horses, gardening and outdoor projects has today blossomed into a modern-day, diversified homestead that currently produces meat, fish, vegetables, fruit, honey, maple syrup, cut flowers and even some of its own energy.

Todd and Sue grew up in Pike and Wayne counties respectively and spent part of their childhoods working or playing around dairy farms. However, when choosing a career, neither decided that farming was in the cards. Todd became an electrician and now owns Tri-County Inspection Agency, while Sue served as an elementary school teacher in the Wayne Highlands School District for over 30 years. After her retirement, the couple's latent



Todd and Susan Klikus built their country home in 1993. In more recent years, they have become modern-day homesteaders on their 20 acres in Welcome Lake.

*Photos by Susan Klikus*



Free-range Bourbon Red heritage breed turkeys take "free range" literally and visit the front porch at Augusta Acres Farm and homestead.

interest in farming reemerged.

With the encouragement of their family and the help of friends made through a committed group of local farmers (the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, Wayne County group), the couple and their son, Carson, began working to develop a sustainable, diversi-

fied homestead.

In recent years, "homesteading" has experienced a resurgence in popularity as more and more people seek to produce as much of their food and energy as possible. Thanks to many new technologies and the ability to learn and share knowledge and skills easily through online blogs

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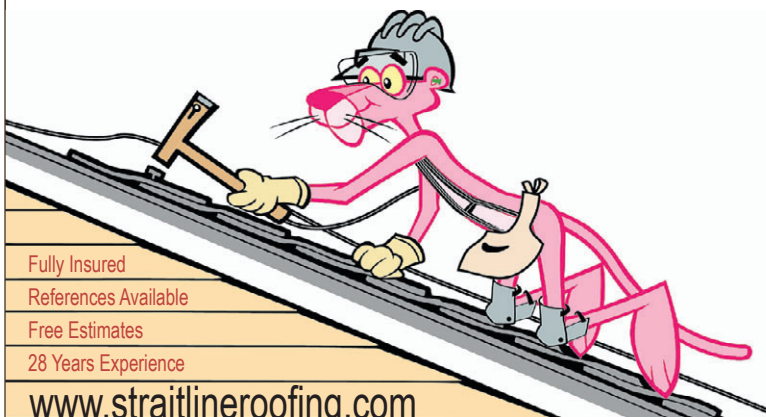
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# A modern homestead in Welcome Lake

Continued from page 3

and forums, modern homesteading has become an achievable, self-reinvented way of life for thousands of families all across the country.

Like Todd and Sue, many seek to reconnect with the land and simplify their lives. “It’s the only way you’ll absolutely know what’s in your food,” Sue said, “and the taste and quality is hands-down unparalleled. There’s something very satisfying about sitting down to a meal that consists entirely of products you grew yourself or raised on your land.”

After attending many farming and homesteading conferences, reading a variety of books and websites, and watching tons of YouTube videos, Todd began modifying the infrastructure at Augusta Acres. With the help of his Kubota tractor, he has plowed, tilled and planted gardens and pastures. He has built a wood-heated greenhouse; raised-bed gardens; an open-air abattoir; chicken, duck and turkey coops; hog shelters; top bar beehives; and, with the help of a friend, a sap house.

“I really don’t have a favorite thing to do around the homestead,” Todd said. “I like it all. When it’s maple time, I like to syrup. When it’s berry season, I like picking berries. Sometimes, I just like to go down and sit on a bucket and watch the bees. I like the variety that homesteading offers.”

When the first guests of the maple tour arrived, Sue left the sap house to take the couple on a short walk through the sugar bush, and Todd added more wood to the fire. The sap rolled to a boil and filled the air with a sweet maple smell.

“It’s not all fun,” he said. “I never look forward to butchering or processing the chickens, but it has to be done.”

According to Todd, Sue has come a long way since they first started processing their own meat chickens. “She’d just



Master gardener Sue Klikus has a green thumb when it comes to both her kitchen garden and her flower gardens. The Klikus’s grow much of their own food and preserve as much as they can for winter eating.

leave for the entire day or not set foot outside of the house.” That started to change after Sue helped plan an educational, backyard chicken processing workshop for the Transition Honesdale Skillshare Project. Now, she recognizes that their efforts to provide their poultry with an excellent, natural environment—healthy, non-GMO feed, plenty of pasture, everything a chicken could want—are part of a reciprocal relationship. “All in all,” she said, “they live great lives and only experience one bad day.”

Because they raise such healthy animals, Todd and Sue are sure that they are eating the most delicious and nutritious food possible. One of their primary focuses has been raising heritage breed poultry and livestock, whose genetic preservation is threatened. Together they have bred and raised Old Spot and Tamworth hogs and hatched out and tended to a variety of heritage chickens, including Buckeyes, Ameraucanas and Australorps. They raise and tend Bourbon Red turkeys and Muscovy ducks and allow a flock of Guinea hens free range over the property to control ticks.

It is important to note that homesteading is an endeavor that should not be taken lightly. “It’s a 24-hour, 365 day job,” says Todd. “Someone always has to be home to take care of the animals every night. We face so many predators that we can’t afford to leave their coops open throughout the night.”

Like any farm operation, the success or failure of the homestead depends on the dedication of the farmer to a lifestyle. The notion that a homestead is “just” a hobby farm or has less of an impact than scaled-up farms is misguided. It’s also potentially disastrous to animals on a homestead if the level of commitment involved is not appreciated.

Even as more people strive to develop self-reliance and a connection with their food source, Sue points out how essential it is to forge a community network to learn from, barter with and offer each other knowledge, feedback and experience. Thankfully, we live in an area rich with farming knowledge and with groups committed to creating a stronger, more prosperous community. As the “sustainable agriculture” movement grows throughout the Upper Delaware region, it is the Klikus’s hope that more families will be inspired to take more control over their homes and lives and to produce as much food as possible at home.

As I left the sap house, I took a slight detour through the sugar bush. The sun had just begun to break through the clouds and the snow was disappearing in patches throughout the woods. I peeked into one of the sap buckets and waited until a bead of liquid formed at the end of the tap. With a finger, I tasted the mildly sweet water and, in the distance, heard a rooster crow. This is the life.



With the help of a friend, Todd Klikus built a sap house for processing maple sap into maple syrup.





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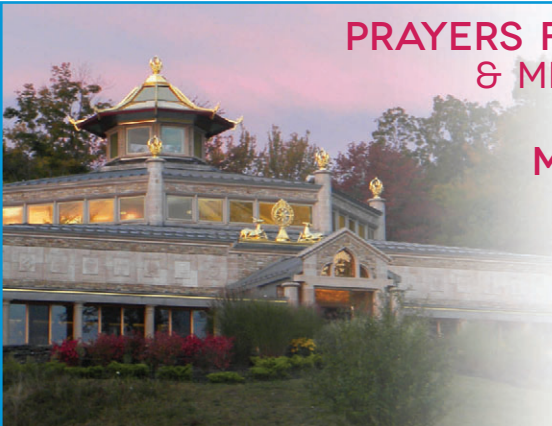
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# If I can build a raised bed garden plot, you can, too!

By JANE BOLLINGER

If I'd known how easy it is to build a raised bed garden plot, I'd have done it years ago instead of having a patchwork, haphazard home kitchen garden.

So, you may ask: Why not just turn over the soil in my backyard? Well, we tried that one, and here's the thing...

The first spring after we moved into our country home, I decided to plant all of my favorite vegetables and try my hand at gardening. It was the first time I'd ever had my own house with my own dirt to dig in. The front yard was the only option, as our woods come right up behind the house, and there's not enough sun to grow much of anything back there—except for a lot of moss that grows there naturally. Besides that, we live on the top of a hill on a rocky ledge, where the soil is thin, poor and, well, rocky. That first summer, the only vegetables that grew were quickly eaten by a groundhog. (What is it with groundhogs? They could have any weed or blade of grass in the yard, but they apparently think that fresh veggies are candy, and candy's better than weeds any day!)

After the first season's failure, a friend suggested growing things in oversized flowerpots with purchased topsoil, and so for many successive summers, I planted tomatoes and basil this way, plus a variety of herbs. This method was sufficient up to a point, but as time went on, I wanted to grow more vegetables.

And then, two years ago, I had the chance to help a local sustainability organization build a community garden with 25 raised beds. I discovered that even I, who grew up in a family with three boys and never had to wield any kind of tool to build or repair anything—even I could build a raised bed garden plot.



I want to share with you how simple it is.

Basically, you're going to build a **four-sided open wooden box** (4 feet x 8 feet x 10 inches tall) and fill it with dirt.

## Here's what you need:

**2 pieces rough-cut sawmill hemlock – 8 feet long by 10 inches wide by 2 inches thick**

**2 pieces rough-cut sawmill hemlock – 4 feet long by 10 inches wide by 2 inches thick**

(Note: Our community garden chose hemlock because it's more resistant to rot and to insects; cedar is also good, but more expensive. Whatever you do, don't use pressure-treated wood that's been treated with chemicals.)

Lay out the wood on the ground where you will build your four-sided wooden box, placing the two 8-foot sides opposite each other (four feet apart) and then placing the two 4-foot pieces at either end to form 90-degree angles to complete the box.

**12 coarse-thread deck screws – 3.5 inches long**

Using a power drill with appropriate screwdriver attachment, use three screws at each corner to connect the pieces of wood. (Presto! You have made a box!)



Photos by Barbara Lewis



Continued on page 9



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# If I can build a raised bed garden plot, you can, too!

Continued from page 7

## 6 two-foot-long road pins

(A good hardware store will have these; they look a bit like rebar, but they have predrilled holes.) These will anchor the box firmly to the ground and will help keep the sides from bowing out during winter's freezing and thawing.

Determine where you will place the road pins on the inside of the box, spacing them two feet in from each corner. There will be two along each of the two long sides of the box, and one in the middle of each short side (see diagram). With a sledgehammer or other heavy, sturdy hammer, drive the road pins into the ground on the inside of the box making sure they touch the wood and that the top of the exposed part of the road pin does not stick out above the top of the 10-inch-tall box.

## 12 small diameter wood screws – 2.5 inches long

Note: The diameter of these must be small enough to fit through the pre-existing holes in the road pins.

Screw three of these through each road pin directly into the hemlock.

## 1 roll black plastic – 25 feet long x 1.5 feet wide

Line the inside of the box to keep the dirt away from the wood; this will protect the wood from direct contact with the dirt and will increase the longevity of your raised bed.

## 1 small box of one-inch aluminum roofing nails

Note: These have a nearly one-inch round plastic disc on the head of each nail. Use these to nail the plastic to the inside of the box in this manner: fold about two inches of the plastic over on itself (the double layer will make it stronger) and nail this doubled layer all the way around the inside top lip of the box with the plastic touching all the way to the top (but without sticking over the top) of the box.

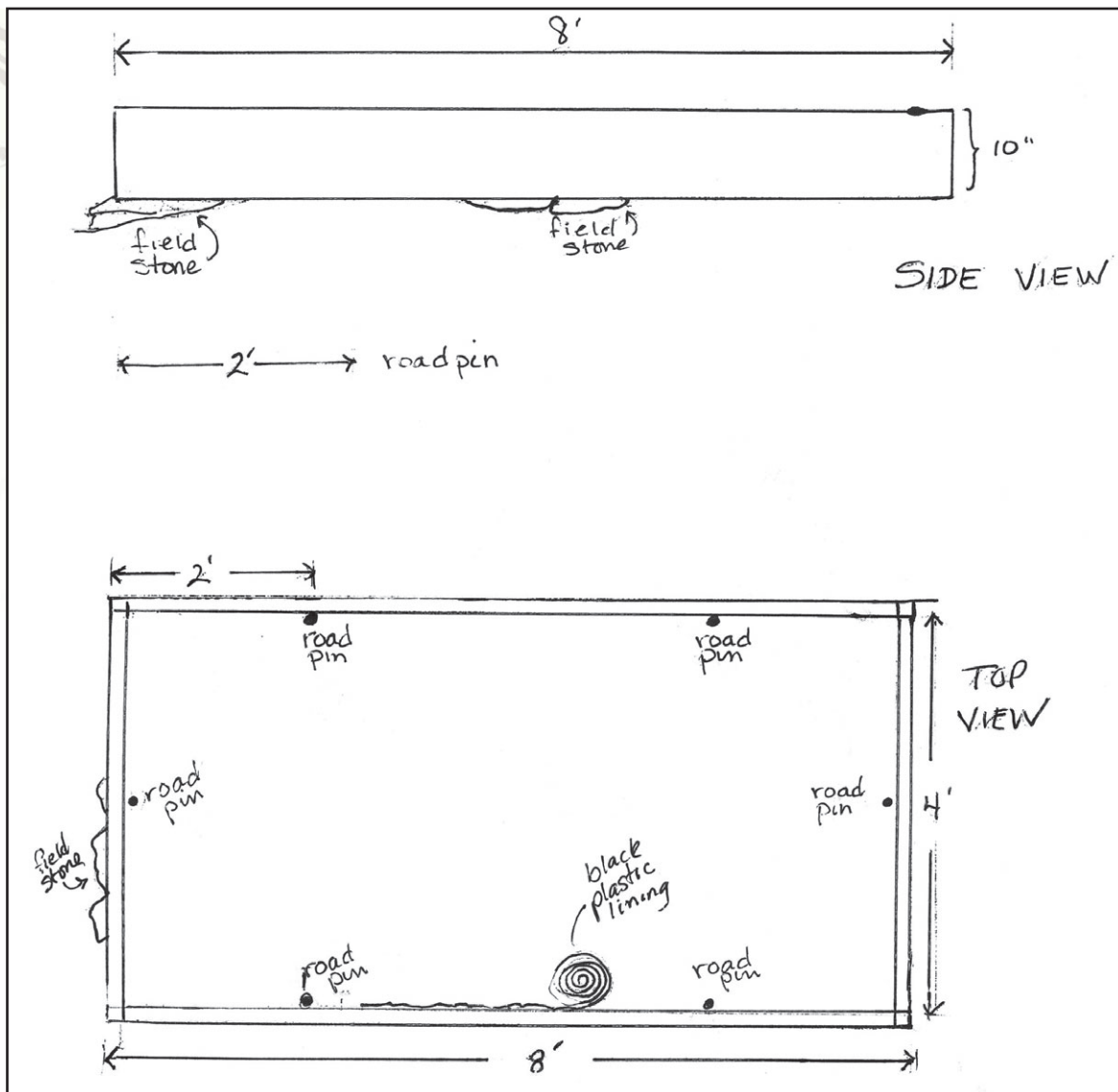
Now, you're ready to buy your topsoil and mix it with compost and other soil amendments.

## 1+ cubic yards of topsoil and one-half cubic yard of compost

Get out your wheelbarrow and shovel and fill your raised bed; stir in the compost before or after you fill your garden plot—it's your choice.

## A pile of fieldstones

Use these where the ground is uneven, and along the out-



side of the box, fill any gaps between the bottom of the wooden box and the ground.

## Landscaper's fabric and wood chips

Around the outside of the plot, put black landscaper's fabric on the grass and cover it with wood chips. Be sure the black fabric goes right up to the wood. The landscaper's fabric will keep the weeds out of your bed for a couple of

years.

And there you have it. You have built your own raised bed garden plot. Buy your seeds; choose your starter plants; and happy gardening.

[The garden construction sketch is courtesy of soil consultant Roger Hill, who can be reached at rogerhill99@gmail.com.]

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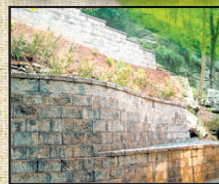
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# Spring cleaning with a green twist

By SANDY GOLDIN

Spring is a time of rebirth and growth, so it's ironic that an activity closely associated with this time of year—spring cleaning—may have the opposite effect on our families, our pets and the environment.

According to the Organic Consumers Association ([www.organic-consumers.org/articles/article\\_279.cfm](http://www.organic-consumers.org/articles/article_279.cfm)), long-term exposure to some chemicals in some cleaning solutions has been associated with illnesses that can lead to mortality, such as cancer. Other chemicals may be toxic to the nervous system or can mimic or alter the concentration of hormones in the body, leading to illness. Still other chemicals may result in immediate, toxic reactions. In 2000, almost 10% of all toxic exposures reported to U.S. Poison Control Centers involved cleaning products, more than half of which involved children under six. These chemicals include chlorine bleach and ammonia, especially when they are combined, as well as fragrances. According to the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health, one third of substances used in the fragrance industry are toxic.

Sometimes, reactions are produced by direct contact, but also, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection agency ([www.epa.gov/iaq/voc.html](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/voc.html)), volatile organic compounds in cleaners can release toxic fumes into the air, from which they are breathed in with the same result. Finally, these chemicals, when washed down the drain, may end up in the environment and can directly affect the wildlife and nature that spring represents, as well as our water supply.

But we need to clean and disinfect our homes. So, what are the alternatives?

There are several commercial green cleaning products on the market. I've had more success with

## All-Purpose cleaner

1/2 cup vinegar  
1/4 cup baking soda  
1/2 gallon water

mix together and use. give a good shake before each use.

*optional:* add a squirt of Dr. Bronner's Peppermint soap or add 10-12 drops of essential oils to scent.

## Glass cleaner

1/4 teaspoon liquid detergent  
3 Tablespoons vinegar  
2 cups water

mix together and use. give a good shake before each use. spray on to glass surface & wipe off with scrunched-up newspaper.

*note:* liquid detergent is included to cut waxy residue from conventional products. be sure to dilute vinegar...if too strong, it may leave streaks.

Recipe graphics courtesy of Transition Honesdale

## Homemade Scouring Powder

1 cup baking soda  
1 cup borax  
1 cup regular salt

mix together and use.

--or--

## creamy Soft Scrubber

1/2 cup baking soda  
liquid detergent (just enough to make creamy)

mix together and use.

*note:* to store, add one teaspoon of vegetable glycerine to keep mixture moist. store in air-tight container.

some and less with others, but this is true of traditional cleaners as well. There are many products that, for me, have worked as well as anything else I've ever used for basic cleaning and disinfecting. Many traditional cleaning supply companies also offer green alternatives. It's important to read labels, though, rather than merely trusting the words "green" or "non-toxic." **Consumer Reports** ([www.greenerchoices.org/products.cfm?product=greencleaning](http://www.greenerchoices.org/products.cfm?product=greencleaning)) provides information on how to read cleaning product labels.

Another possibility is to make your own cleaning solutions with common household ingredients—often safer and less expensive. Most tasks can be handled by different combinations of ingredients that include white vinegar (also a disinfectant), baking soda, liquid dish soap, lemon juice, hydrogen peroxide and borax. A few "recipes" for cleaning are provided here. Also, there are many green sites online for finding cleaning recipes, such as those provided by **Consumer Reports** ([www.greenerchoices.org/printProduct.cfm?product=0111home\\_made\\_cleaners](http://www.greenerchoices.org/printProduct.cfm?product=0111home_made_cleaners)), National Geographic (<http://greenliving.nationalgeographic.com/make-homemade-nontoxic-cleaners-3016.html>), blisstree.com and thedailygreen.com, an online consumer guide provided by Good-Housekeeping.com. I can personally attest to the effectiveness of club soda or white wine when used immediately to remove carpet stains of red wine or tomato sauce (lift off or gently dab up solids/liquids first).

Whatever you decide to do will be appropriate to the season, whether it's reading labels on commercial products or making your own. Remember, green is the color of spring.





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# From a barn to a home

## *A dramatic renovation makes a modern living space*

By ISABEL BRAVERMAN

An original structure from an 1840s barn was left standing on River Road in Milanville, PA. Perched on a hill between dense woods and the Delaware River, the barn is rife with history as it was part of an old farm and a stop on the Underground Railroad. The building was on the brink of collapsing. If it fell, it would bring down its beauty and historical relevance with it. It was the perfect project for Joe Levine, an architect from New York City.

"We were all in love with this original barn," said Levine. He and his family, wife Jane Cyphers and daughters Raye and Emma, bought the house in 1996. No strangers to the area, Levine went to camp nearby in his youth and the family often took trips down the river.

When he heard about the barn from friends who owned it, he knew that he wanted it. At first, he was a little wary to come back to the area for fear he'd find it over-developed, but he was happy to discover that it was "pristine as ever."

Work began right away.

The first job was to stabilize the barn so it wouldn't collapse. Next was to respect the original structure and space, which Levine said was the number one rule. The design concept was to put new walls on the outside of the existing post and beam structure, which Levine says is a "less than common approach." There wasn't much left of the original structure—70% of the siding couldn't be used and the frame wasn't square. However, Levine was able to build around the structure and re-use whatever he could.

Presenting an excellent model of repurposing and recycling materials, the siding was reused to make window shutters and what was left of the original floor was made into lofts. All the original bluestone in the foundation was still there, though more bluestone was brought in to rebuild the foundation and create a basement.

A new copper roof was put on and huge sliding glass windows were installed in the front and back, giving open views of the woods and the river. This lends to an "outside when you're inside" feeling, which was the design concept.



The old barn sits on top of a new foundation



The original structure of the barn still stands today



A view of the back of the house and the patio

Even the interior is open, an intentional design that Levine says honors the original space and "makes a one-room school-house out of it." Indeed, technically, there are no rooms in the house. The bathroom is an assembly of cabinets and the bedrooms are open lofts suspended on each side.

The task of building the Levine house went to cabinetmaker Larry Braverman, Levine's next-door neighbor. Levine said he was "extremely lucky" to have Braverman. When Levine asked him if he would take on the task, Braverman replied, "I'm a cabinet maker," to which Joe said, "Let's consider it one big cabinet." Levine said this was just the first of "a long relationship of doing uncommon projects together."

One of those uncommon projects was creating the guesthouse to the home, built from a salvaged redwood water tower from New York City and made to look like the original tower.



The completed barn



This free-standing kitchen island is made out of steel and wood

The structure is two-level, with a bathroom and sauna on the first floor and a bedroom on the second floor, all of which is sitting on the foundation of an old chicken coop. It has a copper roof and an outside shower.

The interior décor of the barn is minimal. Cyphers said that when she is decorating she keeps it simple. "The internal structure is so beautiful," she said. "The post and beams are like a sculpture in itself; it's a celebratory piece that is giving gratitude to the natural environment. I'm careful not to put anything in here that would detract from that."

Levine agrees, saying, "I don't feel like we've decorated."

It's simple, clean and contemporary. The kitchen is the largest piece of furniture. It's an island that is a combination of wood and steel put together by Braverman. The staircases are steel, with a spiral stair going to one loft and a



This steel staircase leads to one of the lofts



A view from one of the lofts

Photos by Jack Kucy



A detail of the sliding doors on the front of the house

straight stair going to the other. The bathroom is made from yellow pine and cement, and the sliding bathroom door has a yellow pine frame with a translucent fiberglass panel. Everything was made off-site and installed in an effort to make everything moveable and freestanding, such as the kitchen island and the entire bathroom. This was an intentional part of the design concept, giving the owners the option to rearrange and restore the barn to its original space.

Much of the furniture is by Danish architect and designer Arne Jacobsen. The dining room chairs are from his famous Seven Series. The large dining room table was designed by Levine and built by Braverman. Other furniture was collected over the years from flea markets and auctions.

The barn has been renovated and complete for many years, but some big changes are about to come. The house is currently heated by oil and a wood stove, but in the spring, the couple will install a pellet boiler and solar panels. These will replace the need for oil, and Levine recently made the call to cut off their oil. "It's an exciting thing to sever our oil pipe," said Levine. "That was one of the best calls I've made in a long time."

The Levine family has enjoyed their second home for years, coming here every weekend and vacation and taking time off from their busy schedules. The house not only serves as a living space, but as a gathering spot for friends and a place to hold meetings. Levine said, "Escaping up to the country has been our salvation. It's been such a privilege to be in this environment."



This guest house is made from salvaged redwood from a water tower



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# Tastemaker: Theresa Allen

*No special taste buds required*

Theresa Allen is a tastemaker, literally. She's the owner/operator of the Hancock Liquor Store in Hancock, NY, and she loves helping people choose the right wine or alcohol for whatever their occasion. In the process, she believes her patrons learn to educate their taste buds and expand their horizons.

"When people come in and ask for a recommendation," she said, "I always look to them for their taste, and then we work from there. I always ask, 'what do you like?' Red or white, sweet or dry? I ask if they're adventurous and also how much they want to spend."

Knowing what wine to pair with what food is a skill Allen has learned over the years. She's worked at the shop since 1985, when her mother and father-in-law owned it, and she's been running it on her own since 1995, after they retired.

**Q:** Theresa, how did you learn this skill of pairing wine and food?

**A:** It was a lot of trial and error. And, of course, there was tasting involved. Whenever a salesman would come in, I would learn by tasting samples.

**Q:** Does someone need special taste buds to learn this skill?

**A:** No, you don't. Anybody can learn. Just start with what you enjoy and go from there. Now, let's say you're at a wine tasting and someone says a particular wine has chocolate or spice flavors to it, or black cherry flavors. You have to think about those flavors. And it may take some practice. The truth is that everybody's tastes evolve over time. Customers who only drank sweet wines, if they keep trying new things, then their taste buds do change.

**Q:** What about rules for pairing wines and food?

**A:** I always tell people, if you're serving a heavy dish, serve a heavier style wine. You don't have to match red wine with red meat or white with chicken and fish. Match the hardness of the wine with the dish. Also, a lot of people think Champagne or sparkling wine is just for a special occasion, but just about anything matches very well with the bubbly, with Champagne or Prosecco.



*TRR photos by Amanda Reed*

Allen chose a 2010 Cotes Du Rhone from Vidal Fleury to pair with a Calkins Creamery/Highland Farm "Daisy," a cave-aged Tomme-style semi-hard cheese.

## Theresa Allen's suggestions

We asked Theresa to suggest what wines she would pair with two local cheeses, a special Fair Trade chocolate and a main course beef dish. All the wines can be found in Theresa's store. Here's what she recommended.

### **Wine and cheese pairing**

**The Cheese:** Calkins Creamery/Highland Farm "Daisy," a cave-aged Tomme-Style semi-hard cheese

**The Wine:** Vidal Fleury Cotes Du Rhone 2010, \$12.99

This wine is from France and is a blend of 65% Grenache, 20% Syrah, 10% Mourvedre, 5% Carignan and others. In this vintage in the Southern



*Contributed photo*

*Continued on page 19*





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*"Wine makes a symphony of a good meal."*

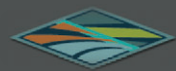
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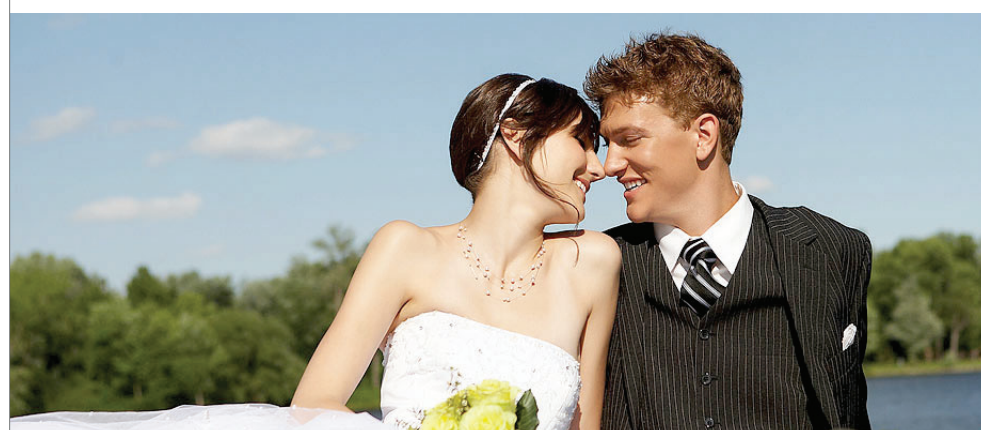
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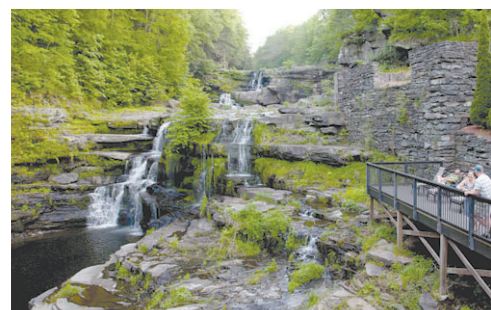
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# Tastemaker: Theresa Allen

Continued from page 17

Rhone, Robert Parker rated it 97 points overall and said, “The dark ruby/purple, medium-bodied, attractive 2010 Cotes du Rhone reveals lots of black currant and raspberry fruit intermixed with hints of pepper, spice and earth. Because it is medium bodied it does not overpower the cheese and compliments it quite well.”

**The Cheese:** Tonjes Farms Dairy “Beechwood Blue” Cheese

This cheese is best served at room temperature with some nuts and maybe some dried fruits. There are a few wines that pair well with blue cheese and they should be on the sweeter side with very little acidity.

I am going to recommend two different wines for this cheese, both white wine and a red port wine. Both of these will pair wonderfully with the blue cheese. The port wine also will go with the dark chocolate.

**The Wine:** Schmitt Söhne Riesling Auslese – Sweet & Luscious, \$14.99

This Riesling is produced from individually selected overripe grapes, resulting in a full-bodied, luscious wine with hints of apricot, nectarine and honey. It has intense flavors and a lingering aftertaste. The sweetness in the wine clings to the fat in the cheese and creates an amazing taste sensation.

**The Wine:** Quinta Do Noval 2005 Single Vineyard, \$25.99

This wine has a rich, ruby color with an intense nose of crushed berries and red fruits. It is rich and elegant on the palate, with spice, raisins and red fruit flavors. It is well balanced, with a velvety but firm tannic structure that leads to a luscious, long finish. This wine is unfiltered and will continue to develop in the bottle. As a result, it may throw a light deposit and need decanting. The sweetness of the port balances the saltiness in the cheese.

## Wine and chocolate pairing

**Chocolate:** Equal Exchange Fair Trade Organic Very Dark Chocolate

**Wine:** Renwood Old Vine Zinfandel from California, \$19.99

To taste the chocolate, examine the attributes of the chocolate, noting the aroma, listening for the snap when you break it and checking the shine and glossiness. Before tasting it, though, take the same notice of the wine. Swirl the wine in the glass—be aware of the color and the viscosity. Sniff the wine and note the bouquet and flavor components. Sip the wine; let it fill your mouth. Notice the wine’s complexity—which flavors come to mind. Now, take a small bite of the chocolate; let it sit on your tongue. When it just begins to melt, sip the wine again and swirl together with the chocolate.

Just like in a chocolate or wine tasting, the flavors are released in stages. The first notes should be filled with fruity acidity (from the grapes in the wine and the cacao beans in the chocolate). Watch the flavors that unfold in this middle stage, and look for a sweetness phase. The finish should be identified by tannins, flavor notes common to both wine and chocolate.

Many of the same flavor notes you experienced in your chocolate tasting will emerge during the pairings. You’ll observe fruity, nutty, spicy and/or woody notes. You may even detect roasted flavors specifically identifiable with chocolate.

Slightly floral nose with hints of chocolate and rose, this wine has a nose of exotic spices and dried fruits. The classic old vine character also exhibits notes of lavender. On the palate full in body and very ripe, the dark fruit on the first taste melds into mildly spicy fruit, with a hint of roasted coffee towards the end. Overall, this dusty and bold wine offers ample flavor.

Continued on page 21



To go with Tonjes Farms Dairy “Beechwood Blue” Cheese, our Tastemaker chose two wines: a Schmitt Söhne Riesling Auslese – Sweet & Luscious, and a ruby-colored port, Quinta Do Noval 2005 Single Vineyard.

*TRR photos by Amanda Reed*





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# Tastemaker: Theresa Allen

Continued from page 19

## Wine and beef pairing

**Wine:** Charles Krug Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon, \$26.99

Charles Krug Cabernet Sauvignon evokes aromas of black cherry, raspberry and a hint of cocoa. Flavors of black currant mingle with rose petals, while supple, smoky overtones visit the back palate. A silky mouth feel and balanced tannins create an elegant finish to this classic Napa Valley wine.

## Beef tenderloin with mushroom Madeira sauce

### Beef Tenderloin

1 beef tenderloin, 2-3 lb.  
1 Tbsp. vegetable oil  
1 Tbsp. unsalted butter  
Season with:  
¼ tsp coarse sea salt  
¼ tsp cracked black pepper

### Mushroom Madeira Sauce

2½ cups beef broth  
1¼ cups Madeira wine  
1¼ cups dry red wine  
4 large fresh thyme sprigs  
3 large fresh rosemary sprigs  
4 large fresh parsley sprigs  
1 bay leaf  
1 pkg. fresh sliced mushrooms  
Butter  
1 shallot

### Directions:

Combine broth, Madeira wine, red wine and spices in medium saucepan. Boil until mixture is reduced to 2 cups. Remove from heat, strain and discard herbs.

Sauté 1 package of fresh sliced mushrooms in butter with 1 crushed shallot. Sauté just until mushrooms start to become soft. Do not overcook. Add to Madeira sauce. Use as sauce over beef tenderloin

To prepare beef: Season beef. Heat 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil, and 1 Tbsp. unsalted butter in small flameproof roasting pan over moderately high heat until foam subsides. Then, brown beef well on all sides, about 10 minutes. Put roasting pan with beef in oven and roast until instant read thermometer inserted diagonally into center registers 130° F for medium rare, about 30 minutes. Transfer to cutting board and let stand about 10 minutes.

Then, cut beef into ½-inch thick slices. Serve with mushroom sauce.

**[Hancock Liquor Store is located at 27 West Main Street, Hancock, NY. Allen can be reached at 607/637-5364.]**



TRR photos by Amanda Reed

To sip with a bar of Equal Exchange Fair Trade Organic Very Dark Chocolate, Allen picked a Renwood Old Vine Zinfandel from California.

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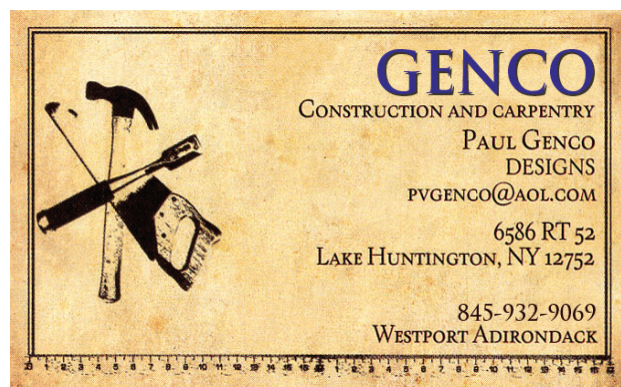
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# A country decorating adventure

*My new house, my old furniture: Making it new again*

By JANE E. CASTELLI

Not that long ago, my husband Joe and I, newly retired, arrived bag and baggage in tow at a beautiful residential golf community in Hawley, PA. We were beginning our “new” life. Left behind was our New England colonial home in Rockville Centre, Long Island, where we had lived for 30 years.

It was time to leave. Our boys were grown, and it seemed to me that I knew every house, block, store, library, tree and plant in the town. I needed to explore new places, and Joe, who paints watercolors, needed the countryside to inspire him. We had dabbled in house hunting, driving our salesman crazy for several years, but we finally found a building lot, grabbed all of our courage and built a modern country home with a lovely front porch and gorgeous views.

The movers placed the furniture and left. I knew then and there that I had a decorating challenge. The question was how to make our Early American colonial cottage belongings fit the house—which, in spite of the lovely rocking chair front porch, clapboard siding and shutters outside, was decidedly not a colonial cottage inside. It had a modern, open floor plan and a great room with high ceilings. Ruffles and small-scale furniture, such as my New England colonial sofa and Joe’s recliner, were not working with the massive ceiling and giant brick fireplace.

While 18th-century period wallpaper had been my Long Island house’s decorating color frame, this house had only simple beige walls. I needed a color rescue plan, some furniture fixes and a decorating theme. The last was easy and proved to be the perfect solution—by blending old possessions and new ones, I would make the design theme eclectic country, with a touch of the primitive and antique.

My plan: spice it up with color to make it cozy, keep it simple, ditch New England, embrace the woods and let nature’s colors be my guide. Since I love fall, I knew autumn red, gold, green and brown would be my palette. Those colors also would tie in with the antiqued red brick in my new fireplace and would highlight our beautiful oak floors.

In a great local furniture shop that specializes in “country”—Van Gorders in Lakeville, PA, near Lake Wallenpaupack—I found a large scale, over-stuffed country design sofa and love seat set to provide the



The great room displays mixed fabrics, warm colors, baskets, flowers, paintings and period lamps.



The fireplace’s oak mantel, mixed pottery, an old primitive print and decorative accessories make it homelike.



This rustic turkey sculpture is a new “friend” to decorate the hearth.



Joseph Castelli’s watercolor helps add charm to the room.

*Continued on page 26*



# A country decorating adventure

Continued from page 25

mass needed for the high ceiling space in the great room. I had it covered with cotton duck material in a floral dark crimson pattern that had muted splashes of gold, green and beige. I used those colors for accent pillows and throws. Dark red and unbleached white ticking fabric covers for my old favorite rocking chair's pillows and footrest made them blend in.

Large red/beige checkered fabric covered some massive throw pillows on the couch. The main room and the adjoining dinette had floor-to-ceiling windows. I used simple blinds behind valances made in a checked fabric that closely matched throw pillows on the couch. The use of the same fabric and color seemed to unify the two spaces.

Luckily, my old farm-style, dark pine side tables and coffee table fit the current plan. I soon found a larger scale, over-stuffed recliner covered in dark forest green that made my hus-



An old family, toddler-sized rocking chair and Teddy Bear add charm to the hearthside area.

band comfortable. I had a gorgeous, large old frosted-glass lamp for a side table and found a standing lamp with a frosted glass shade, which built on that antique look.

I knew I was on the way to "country." I used the antiqued brick fireplace, with its simple oak mantel, as the centering piece and placed the furniture around it with a beige area rug to define the living area. The fun part was finding and using accent pieces, both old and new.

One treasure, which I found in HomeGoods in Middletown, NY, was a brown-antiqued metal, ceramic and leaf sculpture piece that looked just like the turkeys that were often running amok outside my door. I plunked him down on the hearthstone by the fireplace, and he looked quite content while I laughed in pleasure at the sight of him. I found company for him nearby by placing an old handmade, toddler-sized wood rocking chair, which had been in my family for years. In it, I sat a very large, beige teddy bear that I had made over 20 years ago. Bear and I were quite content with this arrangement.

The mantel needed attention, so I spaced my collection of small country pottery pitchers and bowls, in varied muted browns, on the oak mantelpiece and framed them with brass candle-

holders that had been my mom's. Many years ago, my husband bought a print of an American primitive painting at the American Folk Art Museum in New York City. Painted by early American primitive artist Ammi Phillips, it depicted a little girl in a bright red dress. It was simple and charming. I loved it. As I propped her up on the mantel, I knew she still could be the focal point of my room. She made me feel at home again.

I realized that the plain walls needed dressing, too. This might have been a challenge had I not been gifted with a husband who is a very talented artist. I had a wealth of country barns and woods to choose from. What a pleasure to fill the space with his work, adding beauty and vibrant color.

Soon, I added jugs and jars, buckets, tin ware, bowls, benches, stools and dried berries and flowers to the room. I found large baskets and happily filled them with the stuffed dolls I had made over the years. They sat under tables, on benches and in front of the fireplace, making the space lively and colorful.

I found a home for my old, small-scale colonial couch when we finished our basement. The ceiling there was only one story high. Color was a different story. The couch had been purchased when we were first married, and the fabric was very dated. I had a custom slipcover made in a muted beige/cranberry crewel design, and then I bought simple oak, mission-style side tables and coffee tables at Van Gorders to fill out the room. It worked. Keeping eclectic in mind, I found that a large, comfy, white wicker rocker and matching table from my Long Island sun porch were a perfect fit as a country side chair and table. New, large country crockery lamps filled out the room. Happily, I was able to make my modern electronic piano keyboard look like an old-fashioned, 19th century organ by placing it on a matching, mission-style, narrow console table.

The bedroom was easy—I had a four-poster bed with a canopy and dark pine bureaus. I decided to forget the canopy and use a delicate beige and green patchwork quilt to create a soothing color scheme. I needed a small corner desk for my computer. Eventually, I found a tiny wood "camp desk," a design that was used by army officers during both the Revolutionary and the Civil Wars. There are even etchings of Washington sitting at one in his tent. The style has clean,

simple lines—a perfect country look, with a touch of historical nostalgia.

The Hawley, Honesdale, PA, and Upper Delaware, NY area has many resources for creating a country look. If you are facing a similar challenge, you can look for baskets, tin ware, dried branches, berries and flowers, furniture and art in places listed here.



This "camp" style desk makes a great country-look computer desk possible.

## For furniture, there are a number of good stores:

Van Gorders – 2561 U.S. 6, Hawley, PA 18428; 570/226-9726 in Hawley

Pottery Barn – [www.potterybarn.com](http://www.potterybarn.com) online; great contemporary country looks.

BlueBerry Hill Furniture (unfinished or custom finished) – 609 S. Sterling Rd, South Sterling, PA 18460; 570/676-3549

## For creative accessories, paintings casual sculptures, etc.:

HomeGoods – Middletown, NY; 845/344-6197

Silk Mill – 8 Silk Mill Drive, Hawley, PA 18428; 855/795-7455

Wayne County Arts Alliance (WCAA) Museum Shop – at Silk Mill Artisan Picture Framing and Art Gallery – Main Ave, Hawley, PA 18428; 570/226-2700; features local artists' works, including some prints of my husband's (Joseph Castelli's) watercolors

Alliance Gallery (Delaware Valley Arts Alliance) – Narrowsburg NY 12764; 845/252-7576

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