

SUMMER 2014

# OUR COUNTRY HOME

Life at home in  
a country inn

The joys of foraging

Recipes to dress  
summer salads

A guide to native plants  
v. invasive species

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By JOHN HIGGINS



### From the editor,

Ah, summer! Not to start a debate, but we think it's the best season of the year, one that allows us to expand our "living room" into the great outdoors. It's also the season when we roll out the red carpet to welcome back faithful summertime friends and to greet new acquaintances—the countless numbers of guests who come to explore the beautiful countryside and experience the many pleasant diversions the Upper Delaware River Valley has to offer.

In this issue of **Our Country Home**, we have, as always, a featured house to show off. This time it's a picturesque country inn, where its owner, Victoria Lesser, makes her home. After reclaiming the Old North Branch Inn from years of neglect and disrepair, Lesser now invites guests to experience the unique space she has created.

Next, meet landscaper Ed Gavalla, a passionate professional who knows his plants and is pleased to share some ideas to help with your own gardening and landscaping adventures. In addition, following the current horticultural trend of planting native species—especially shrubs and grasses—we offer a list of native plants to enhance your backyard and point out many of those nasty invasive species that knowledgeable gardeners, with an eye to local ecosystems, are seeking to avoid.

Perhaps, without your even knowing it, your country home sports some edible plants on your property. Expert forager Nathaniel Whitmore writes about searching for edible plants, whether they be in your backyard, in a nearby field or forest, or just along the highways and byways of the Upper Delaware River Valley.

And then, **The River Reporter's** monthly food columnist, Laura Silverman, (Relish Every Day, which appears in the paper the fourth week of every month) offers several easy-peasy salad dressing recipes perfect for this time of year when gardens and farmers' markets are producing tender lettuces.

Next, set aside your preconceived notions of what a man cave should be. Writer Linda Drollinger introduces us to Man Caves—Backwoods Style. Find out where local backwoodsmen retreat when they just need some peace and quiet and to get away from it all.

Summer being the time of year for vacations, why not consider a vacation where you don't even have to leave the comforts of home? We offer our ideas for things to do in the region that tourists flock here to see, but many year-rounders rarely take advantage of. And then there's the ultimate overnight staycation—camping in the backyard. Writer Isabel Braverman shares her memories of many a country child's special treat.

Finally, Milanville resident John Higgins gives a sartorial twist to that endless summertime chore of mowing the lawn.

We hope you enjoy this issue of **Our Country Home**, and we want to wish every one of you a happy summer season. Treasure it! It is our shortest season.

Jane Bollinger  
Section editor



Cover photograph by  
Jonathan Charles Fox

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# At home in a country inn: Restoring past glories

By JONATHAN CHARLES FOX

Travel down any number of country roads throughout the Catskills and one can discover architecture that exemplifies what life was like during the heyday, when the region was known as a playground for those seeking respite from the workaday world of city life. Boarding houses, hotels, bungalows and inns were scattered across Sullivan County, and among them, The Old North Branch Inn stood proud. Built in 1868, the inn was only one of a number of hotels in the area, and North Branch was a destination, nestled in the hills, welcoming guests who traveled by rail to Callicoon, NY to spend a few days or an entire season relaxing by the pool fed by natural water flow, or simply sitting on the veranda, watching the world go by. Since many similar establishments popped up along the way, each had its own unique flavor that made it stand out in a variety of ways, and this little inn was no exception. Boasting a two-lane bowling alley and four intimate rooms on the second floor, the inn was a popular stop for those who desired vacationing on an intimate scale. With the advent of the automobile, followed by the lowered cost of air travel, travelers began to expand their horizons, setting their sights on seeing the USA or more exotic locales across the world, and “Grande Dames” like the inn fell out of favor.

While this charming Victorian jewel changed hands over the years, it did remain open to the public for a great deal of the time, eventually becoming a private residence and falling into disrepair, until designer Victoria Lesser stumbled across the place while searching for a new project to fuel her creative energy. Lesser’s website ([www.victorialesser.com](http://www.victorialesser.com)) reflects the sentiment shared by those who know her best as a creative dynamo who never stops. No stranger to the press, Lesser has also been described as the “designer to the stars,” having created original fashion for Bill Cosby, the Bee Gees, Barbara Mandrell and Aerosmith, but interior design and architectural restoration are a passion that has fueled her soul for decades, whether it’s a loft in Key West, or creating stunning vacation getaways for DIY television network’s popular “Blog Cabin,” which features top-to-bottom renovations, or new construction from the ground up.

Lesser’s extensive research into the history of the inn, coupled with her design expertise, inspired what she describes as “an eclectic mix” that preserves the original motif, while updating and repurposing space for a new generation. Meticulous to a fault, Victoria is passionate about her work and finds herself “rarely satisfied” to rest, moving from one project to another, in an effort to make all things beautiful. A peek at Lesser’s online diary ([www.designgrl.blogspot.com](http://www.designgrl.blogspot.com)) allows one inside the creative process. “Woke up in the morning thinking about color and how inspired I am by the palette Mother Nature provides,” it reads. “When I choose colors for inside or out,” it continues, “I take into account what colors will be missed most after all the leaves have fallen and we are left with winter’s mark.” It’s that fascination with the change of seasons that led Lesser to stray from Florida and expand her design horizons in this neck of the woods. One renovation led to another and eventually led to her scoping out the inn, which had gone into foreclosure and “was a wreck.” Most folks would have instantly passed on what had become an eyesore, but Lesser has

*Continued on page 4*



*TRR photos by Jonathan Charles Fox*

Victoria Lesser reclaimed the Old North Branch Inn in North Branch, NY from disrepair after years of neglect and decided to make it her home. Seen here are Beans, a Jack Russell terrier, and two Great Danes, Roxie and Baker, in her bedroom.



Prior to renovation, Lesser discovered an old bowling alley when she began peeling back old layers of carpeting and such. The room now also serves as a screening room for showing films and for other entertainment.

# LIVING IN A COUNTRY INN

*Continued from page 3*

the ability to look beyond the surface and “see the bones of what lies underneath.” Undaunted by the task before her, she toured the grounds and structure and “instantly fell in love” with the place, ignoring her friends and family, who advised her to walk away. “I knew what was there,” she claimed, “after pulling at some old carpeting and searching below the layers, the old bowling alley resurfaced and excitement set in.”

Lesser’s desire to update, while preserving the inn’s historical integrity was paramount to the project, and she knew that a bed and breakfast was the “only way to go.” What was not part of the plan, however, was taking up resi-

dence herself. “I had no plans to actually live here,” she said, “but I was informed that I had to, in order to run the B&B. That changed everything. I looked at the place anew, figuring out what part of the inn would become my apartment. Once I realized that I could design my living quarters, replete with 20-foot ceilings and a dream kitchen that embraces the country style, I was hooked.” Hiring local contractors and slipping into work boots, Lesser dug in, doing much of the work herself. Ripping into lath and plaster and exposing the original bead-board were all part of a day’s work, as Victoria labored tirelessly alongside the hired help. “Each

*Continued on page 6*



Months of careful restoration brought the original staircase back to its original glory.



This old jukebox was given to Lesser by her sister Karen whose husband Brad is a member of the band Aerosmith. It has been retrofitted to play discs, including (of course) the music of Aerosmith.

“Once I realized that I could design my living quarters, replete with 20-foot ceilings and a dream kitchen that embraces the country style, I was hooked.”



This is one of four bedrooms, each with a private bathroom, that welcomes B&B guests into Lesser’s home. Her seamless renovation of this bathroom makes it hard to tell the original from what has been retrofitted.

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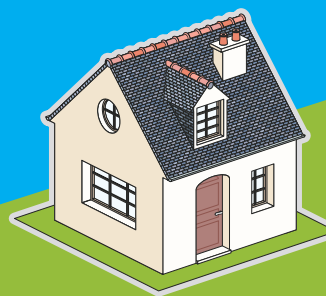
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One wall of the renovated kitchen in Lesser's own living space is a blackboard, where friends and neighbors leave notes for her to find.



This old-time bar was brought to the Old North Branch Inn from New York City during restoration. It originally came from the 1939 New York World's Fair.

## LIVING IN A COUNTRY INN

*Continued from page 4*

day brought a new discovery, as well as a new challenge," she recalled, "but it never occurred to me to give up. I was like a dog on a bone," she laughed, recalling the many hardships and mounting costs encountered along the way. "I never gave up. Not in my nature."

Today, the Old North Branch Inn attracts visitors once again. Amenities abound, yet it's impossible to discern where modern-day updates took place, since Lesser's attention to detail is meticulous. Visitors will never know where walls were knocked out, or old closets made way for spacious private baths attached to each room, all of which invite with country charm, beautiful decor and peaceful views of the surrounding countryside.

Seamlessly renovated, every corner of the facade remains intact, and although the pool is long gone, the interior boasts a stunning bar brought up from New York City, with its own history, which the proprietor will be happy to share, lugging out the albums filled with photographs that explore the rich history of the inn. Never one to rest on her laurels, Lesser continues to strive for innovation.

"Oh, I've got plans," she said gleefully. "This place is a haven for private parties, family reunions and musical interludes that draw interest from the community as well as visitors."

The bowling alley is fully functioning and converts into a screening room, providing more opportunities to be entertained in style, while basking in the country charm that abounds. Rotating art exhibits, alluring antiques available for purchase, and that gorgeous bar, which features locally sourced snacks and beverages, enhance any visit to the Old North Branch Inn that Victoria Lesser calls home.

For reservations and information, visit [www.theoldnorthbranchinn.com](http://www.theoldnorthbranchinn.com) or call 845/482-5925.





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TASTEMAKER: Ed Gavalla, landscaper

# Tips from a professional

## Plan, plant, persist & be pleased with yourself

By JANE BOLLINGER

Landscaper Ed Gavalla of Jesse G's Nursery in Glen Spey, NY is in the business of helping people create special outdoor spaces. His eyes twinkle and his passion for his line of work shows when he talks about the pleasure of creating a backyard dream oasis—a peaceful zone where a person can sit quietly and appreciate the birds, the bees, the flowers and the endless palette of nature's colors, no matter what the season. In Gavalla's world, spring should pop with color, summer should be lush and green, and autumn should be awesome. "Personally, I may be more about autumn leaves than summer," he confessed recently as we talked.

Whereas spring is a time when homeowners engage in a frenzied period of planting—flowers, shrubbery, vegetables, you name it—Gavalla plants up until the ground freezes or the snow flies. According to him, one needn't confine planting (and replanting) to springtime. It's OK to plant continually all summer and fall, but there are some rules.

### Splitting perennials

Splitting of perennials—dividing them at their roots—is the best way to promote new growth, and you'll end up getting new plants for free. While some gardeners recommend not splitting perennials when they're in bloom, Gavalla insisted, with proper care, you can split perennials any time of year. Divide a plant when it's good and healthy, and replenish the soil with organic matter/compost. Depending on the kinds of roots the plant has,

the procedure differs a bit. (Watch a four-minute video and read the accompanying information at [www.finegardening.com/video-introduction-dividing-perennials](http://www.finegardening.com/video-introduction-dividing-perennials).)

### Transplanting

In early spring (oops, if you haven't done it, do it now!), remove old material from deciduous plants, ideally before they leaf out or bloom. To transplant, remove and re-place in its new location and water immediately; don't leave it sitting out to get stressed. Then, you want to provide proper maintenance to keep everything lush, green and growing. As for evergreens (they experience a tender, new growth season in the spring), it's not recommended to transplant when their new growth is soft, but rather to wait until the new growth is fully developed and hardened.

### Make a plan

So now that you've tackled a few small jobs yourself, perhaps you're ready for the BIG PROJECT, and that involves making a plan.

**Determine shade, wet and dry areas.** Make a sketch of these areas on a large piece of paper.

**Do your research:** Make a list of which plants will do best in these differing conditions. Learn which plants are deer resistant. (For a long list of deer-resistant plants, visit the website: [faq.gardenweb.com/faq/lists/midatl/2002083026012897.html](http://faq.gardenweb.com/faq/lists/midatl/2002083026012897.html).) When purchasing plants, one of the most important sources of basic information will be right there at the store.

*Continued on page 10*



When making a garden or landscaping plan, be sure to research which plants do well in wet or dry conditions, in sun or shade.



Turning a steep hill into an asset, Gavalla created different levels of trees and shrubbery to create a natural looking landscape that features big boulders, stone steps and walls.



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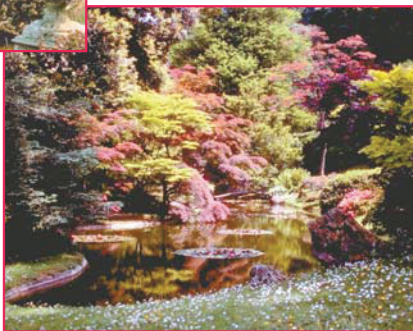
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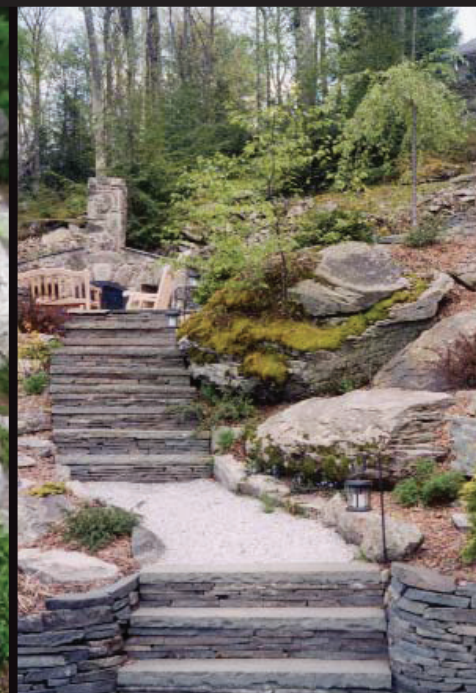
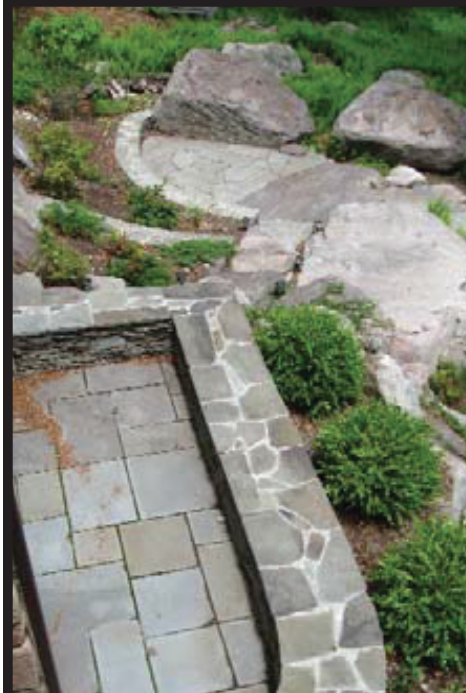
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# TIPS FROM A PRO

Continued from page 8

“Read the tag,” Gavalla insisted. “It’s worth the few minutes you invest.” Finally, if you’re so inclined, your research might also include having your soil tested; based on the results, you can add the appropriate amendments, making it more or less acidic or adding minerals that may be missing from your soil.

**Consider the dimensional perspective:** Start with low ground covers and work up to taller shrubs and trees. According to Gavalla, one of people’s biggest mistakes is overcrowding; you need to leave enough room for potential maximum future growth. If you’re planting what he called “understory trees” (they live under the canopy of taller trees), consider redbuds, dogwoods, shadblow, or bay magnolias.

**Decide which plants you like best:** “It’s important for people to understand what they like,” Gavalla explained. “There are blue people, gold people and silver people, for example. I’m particularly fond of gold: gold junipers and golden mop (*Pisifera chamaecyparis*), Peabody’s gold-tipped arborvitae.” Now, on the drawing you’ve made of your plan, sketch your plant choices, placing them, as Gavalla says, “where they want to be.”

**Consider other natural features:** Rocks give a tranquil native kind of feel, according to Gavalla, but need to be in line with surrounding geology and ecology. Water features also offer a sense of tranquility. “The sound of running water is soothing to the soul,” Gavalla said. “They can be a little pricey and require maintenance, but if you’re willing, they can be awesome.”

**Pergolas and trellises:** These manmade features, from simple to elaborate, add interest, atmosphere and even privacy, helping to create what Gavalla calls a “fortress of solitude” (or FOS as he calls it for short). Some of the vines and climbing plants he likes include climbing hydrangea (“I love it”), clematis Japonica and silverlace vine (*Fallopia baldschuanica*), which blooms in mid-summer.

**Label your plants:** This adds a nice, professional look to your landscaping and helps others identify what you’ve planted. In addition, it also helps avoid a surprisingly common problem—believe it or not people frequently start weeding out the very ground covers that they planted intending them to spread. “When I weed gardens, I weed what looks like grass,” Gavalla laughed.



Happy among his hostas, his eyes twinkle as Ed Gavalla of Jesse G’s Nursery talks about his passion for his line of work.

## Trends in landscaping

### Native plants, ornamental grasses, mosses and ferns

Finally, Gavalla mentioned several popular trends in landscaping, including—top on his list—planting native plants and avoiding invasive species, followed by gardening with moss (“everybody’s getting into it this year”) and ferns, as well as planting for bees and butterflies.

For more information on working with these, here are some resources:

## Ed Gavalla’s favorite deer-resistant plants

Given where we live in the Upper Delaware River Valley, when making your plan, consider plants that are deer resistant. Fencing is wonderful for keeping deer away, Gavalla observed, and it comes in some awesome black and dark green colors, but there are many plants that deer don’t like and don’t require a fence.

“Most of what I plant is limited to coreopsis, Russian sage or any sage, scented geraniums, Echinacea, lavender and mint. Walker’s Low (*Nepeta racemosa*) is awesome.”

The more Gavalla talked, the longer his personal list of deer resistant plants grew. Many varieties of deciduous shrubbery, and hardwoods don’t get browsed by the deer, he said: Vibernums; white snowballs, either Anabelle hydrangea (*Hydrangea arborescens*) or Chinese snowballs (*Viburnum macrocephalum*), American cranberrybush (*Viburnum trilobum*); Minnesota snowflake mock orange (*Philadelphus x virginialis*), Princeton Red Bells (*Enkianthus campaulatus*).

If you’re looking for deerproof flowers, Gavalla likes Japanese iris or Siberian iris, snapdragons, columbine, creeping phlox (*Phlox subulata*), bleeding heart (*Lamprocapnos spectabilis*), Clematis viticella ‘Alba Luxuriant’.

For four-season interest there are many evergreens: Russian Cyprus (*Microbiota decussate*) is a low-growing, spreading conifer, which Gavalla said he uses on every one of his jobs. He also likes bird’s nest spruce (*Picea abies ‘Nidiformis’*), globe spruce, mugo pine (*Pinus mugo*) and Oriental spruce (*Picea orientalis*).

**Ornamental grasses:** See [www.bluestem.ca/ornamental-grass.htm](http://www.bluestem.ca/ornamental-grass.htm)

**Mosses:** how to grow and care for moss: [www.thegardenhelper.com/mossicare.html](http://www.thegardenhelper.com/mossicare.html)

**Ferns:** [www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/foilage/ferns/taking-care-of-outdoor-ferns.htm](http://www.gardeningknowhow.com/ornamental/foilage/ferns/taking-care-of-outdoor-ferns.htm)

As for any final advice Gavalla has to offer: start with what you can afford, do a little at a time, spring, summer and fall, and if you make a mistake, dig it up and move it, and then give it a drink.

Gavalla’s parting words the day we spoke? “Good luck and let’s do some gardening.”



This long, curved stone wall wanders off into the distance, creating a frame that helps focus attention on a collection of colorful flowers.



Backing up to a wooded area, Gavalla created a dramatic scene, filled with blouders, “under canopy” trees, cascading grasses, shrubbery and low-growing ground cover that hugs the stone wall.

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## Invasive species: Don't plant this

Purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*)

Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*)

Callery pear (*Pyrus calleryana*)

Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*)

Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)

Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)

Burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*)

Linden viburnum (*Viburnum dilatatum*)

Mutiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*)

Autumn olive aka Russian olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*)

Butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*)

Reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*)

Japanese silver grass (*Miscanthus sinensis*)

Tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*)

Giant knotweed (*Fallopia sachalinensis*) & Japanese knotweed (*Polygonium cuspidatum*)

## Native species: Plant these excellent substitutes instead

Spike gayfeather (*Liatris spicata*), butterflies love it; whorled (yellow) loosestrife (*Lysimachia quadrifolia*); fireweed (*Chamerion angustifolium*); swamp milkweed (*Asclepias incarnate*), good for wet areas

Red maple (*Acer rubrum* Linnaeus)

Serviceberry aka shadbush (*Amelanchier alnifolia*) or (*Ameranchier arborea*)

Trumpet honeysuckle (*Lonicera sempervirens*)

New Jersey tea shrub (*Ceanothus americanus*); Witch alder (*Fothergilla gardenia*); Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginica*)

American bittersweet (*Celastrus scandens*)

Red chokeberry (*Aronia arbutifolia*); winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), plant one male to two females; red osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*)

Black chokeberry (*Aronia melanocarpa*); highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*)

Summersweet (*Clethra alnifolia*); chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*); spicebush aka wild allspice (*Lindera benzoin*), likes it wet

Witchhazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*)

Spike gayfeather (*Liatris spicata*); buttonbush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), likes it wet; summersweet sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*), likes wetlands

Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*)

Indian grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*)

Purple top (*Verbena bonariensis*)

Goatsbeard (*Aruncus diocus*)

This list was compiled for a native plant workshop by Susan Thompson, owner of Mariposa Gardens, a native plant nursery, in Wayne County, PA.



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# The joys of foraging

By NATHANIEL WHITMORE

I am generally happiest when foraging. By modern standards foraging is an eccentric pleasure based on an unusual, specialized knowledge. It is a loners' sport for those who enjoy the quiet sounds of wind in the leaves and birds singing along. But it is not just the wildlife that keeps one company in the woods. When we pick wild plants, we do so alongside countless generations who have survived through just that practice. The knowledge of wild foods is one of the oldest continuous threads of human experience.

Such a pleasure is not contrived by advertising, nor is it a phase of childhood development. The joy of wild crafting (harvesting from nature) is a deep connection to the ancestral lineage mentioned above, to the cycles of nature and to the language of plants.

Wild foods, to those that enjoy them, have a certain perceivable "glow" that can be sensed simply by being in their presence and can be felt when they are eaten. I am convinced that the nutritional benefits of wild food are greatly superior to commercial foods and even to garden vegetables. Just as the Chinese tradition favors ginseng from the wild over cultivated roots, I prefer my medicinal herbs, vegetables and mushrooms from Mother Nature herself.

Every spring refreshes with maple syrup, then dormant roots like burdock, followed by morels and a handful of other early mushrooms, all opening to a cascade of old friends like violets, ramps, fiddleheads and nettles. As spring continues we get Japanese knotweed, milkweed, poke and the flowers of black locust.

There are many different parts of plants that are edible. Early spring (and then again late fall) offers roots such as burdock, oyster plant, and spring beauties. Then shoots appear: milkweed, poke weed, and knotweed. Of some plants you eat the flower shoots: winter cress and cattail (from cattails we get many edible portions—starch from the rhizomes, vegetable portions, tender leaf-bases, immature flower stalks and pollen). Yes, indeed, we can use pollen as a food, including pine pollen.

Foraging for wild foods is a great way to better know the trees, not only through their flavors, but also because harvesting requires attention to detail, often transient details. Basswood, or American linden, is particularly noteworthy as a tree with leaves that can be plucked right off in the springtime as a kind of lettuce substitute. Slippery elm provides a mucilaginous bark that can be used as a medicinal and as a breakfast cereal. Spruce tips can be cooked as a vegetable as well as brewed into beer. Maple provides syrup



Photo by Scott Rando

Tapping black birch sap and boiling it produces a sweet syrup.



Photo by Stephen Sterling

The author, seen here, is surrounded by cattails, which provide many edible portions.

from the boiled sap, as do black birch and others. Hickory and oak provide nuts. And serviceberry (aka Juneberry, or shadbush) provides berries. Of course, among the trees are those planted for fruits—some of which (like the apple) have gone wild. Pictured, at the right, is sassafras, which is used as a seasoning, a thickening, a beverage, a vegetable and a medicinal herb.

There are many different plants in our area and it can take a lifetime to study them. Rather than attempting to learn each plant and its uses, beginners can focus on the handful that are the most edible in their area, along with the handful to be most avoided because they are poisonous. There are a couple of good guides on poisonous plants available, as well as a few that are out of print. I also enjoy studying old farm bulletins that include descriptions of poisonous plants.

Regarding mushrooms as well as plants, there are only a handful of deadly poisonous species. Many more are of varying degrees of toxicity (not to mention that any substance in excess can become poison). Learn the most poisonous species first, in order to develop an understanding of the "red flags" to be avoided and avoid any unfortunate errors. Likewise, instead of learning all the potentially edible plants that you might turn to in the end times, learn first the handful that are most delicious and available to you.

In order to learn about plants one should study constantly. There is always some botanical wonder to take note of, to witness and to develop an understanding of—especially this time of the year when there is a continuous succession of leaves and flowers coming forth. Spring is so full of wild edibles, but because the plants grow so quick it is easy to miss what is sometimes a very narrow margin of availability. I just noticed a poke weed plant about as tall as I am, and it seems like only a couple days ago, I was looking at some plants in a different area that had only just begun to emerge. So, you have to keep your eye out. You also have to use the large array of field guides available to us. There are an increasing number of books dedicated to

wild foods and many wonderful field guides to wildflowers, trees, grasses, ferns... and many of them can be found in our region. You will also develop an appreciation for the more technical material available for botanists and serious students of nature. Of course, those interested in fungi will also want to invest in a good collection of mushroom field guides. Some have a specific focus, perhaps on a single type of regional mushroom, such as Boletes.

I started learning originally from the Peterson field guides. At one point when I drove a van, I kept two crates of books in there—one for plant books and one for mushroom books, so I was always ready to look up a new find in my travelling reference library. Now I have so many books it would take an awfully big van to tote them around. My favorite go-to is "The Plants of Pennsylvania" by Ann Rhoads and Timothy Block. When I don't have it nearby, I often wish I did (like a good pocket knife). Every forager needs a good pocket knife. I also recommend a pair of clippers (pruning shears), hori-hori (digging knife), a collapsible shovel (best are the old Army ones) and a small root-digger (like a large screwdriver or short section of rebar), all of which can be easily carried. Foragers will also want a digging fork (spading fork), shovel and loppers, though you will often prefer to not carry these larger tools.

I hope I have encouraged some of you to try your hand at foraging. It's a real pleasure and an opportunity to always be learning something new.

**[Nathaniel Whitmore regularly offers nature or foraging walks to public and private audiences. On June 19 at Lacawac Sanctuary, near Lakeville, PA, he is hosting a walk on wild edibles. Later in the month there will be two BioBlitzes (24-hour identification sessions)—one with the Monroe County Environmental Education Center in Blakesly, PA and the other, the Upper Delaware BioBlitz, to be held in the Town of Tusten, NY at the Ten Mile River Scout Camp. July finds Whitmore in New York City as well as in Tunkhannock, PA on the 22nd. In September, there will be mushroom programs scheduled at Lacawac and Promised Land State Park in PA. Information about these events and more are detailed on my website: [www.nathanielwhitmore.com](http://www.nathanielwhitmore.com). The Delaware Highlands Mushroom Club has monthly events; see: [www.dhmushrooms.org](http://www.dhmushrooms.org).]**

*[An urgent word of caution: knowledge about what is safe and what is unsafe to eat is essential in foraging. Do not eat anything without fully researching it or showing it to an expert, and if you have any uncertainty, do not try it.]*

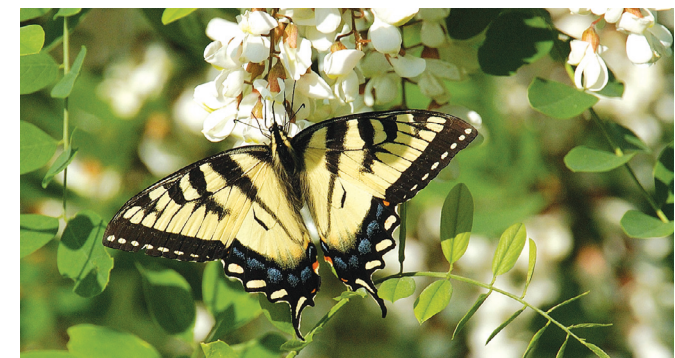


Photo by Scott Rando

The flowers of the black locust tree are edible.



Photo by Stephen Sterling

An afternoon of foraging produced a variety of tasty morsels, including morels and oyster mushrooms, Dryad's saddle and fiddleheads, plus something unidentified (potentially *Agrocybe*).



Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons

Perhaps you recognize burdock by its burs that snag your clothing during a walk in the woods. Several parts of the burdock plant are edible. (See [www.ediblewildfood.com/burdock.aspx](http://www.ediblewildfood.com/burdock.aspx))



Photo by Scott Rando

Japanese knotweed is a ubiquitous invasive plant, but its young shoots, the growing tips of larger plants and unfurled leaves on the stalk and branches are edible. Among many websites about edible knotweed, you can see a short video on how to harvest and eat it at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QzMNKAQo9Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3QzMNKAQo9Y).



Photo courtesy Wikimedia Commons

Fiddleheads, found in early spring, are the young coiled fronds of the ostrich fern (*Matteuccia struthiopteris*). They must be cooked properly in boiling water or steamed, and should not be eaten raw. (See: [umaine.edu/publications/4198e/](http://umaine.edu/publications/4198e/))



Photo by Stephen Sterling

The young twigs and leaves of sassafras are edible fresh or dried, or you can dig the underground portion, peel off the bark, let it dry, and then boil it in water to make sassafras tea.



Contributed photo

Ramps, also called wild leeks or wild garlic, are a prized early spring vegetable.

# Dressing up

By LAURA SILVERMAN

As tender greens begin to come up at farms and in gardens, it's smart to prepare yourself with a repertoire of dressings that do them justice. Though the smallest, juiciest lettuces call for little more than a light coating of olive oil and lemon juice, we'll soon be inundated with firmer heads, curly endives, spicy arugula and succulent leaves of spinach. These substantial greens are fully capable of standing up to more robust textures and flavors and your palate will also welcome the exciting variety. If you have come to rely on bottled salad dressings to enliven pre-bagged greens, I beg you to read on and reconsider.

Fresh, vital greens add a welcome lightness to the warm-weather table, and when the mercury really soars, I'll often find myself wanting to make them the centerpiece of every meal. I love to incorporate other herbs and vegetables from my garden—and occasionally some cheese, fish, or meat—and the right dressing is what pulls it all together. This can be as simple as a vinaigrette, or a bit more involved, like that addictive carrot-ginger dressing you've probably enjoyed at Japanese restaurants. I also like what I refer to as a "relish," with a drier, chunkier consistency that's an ideal complement to firm, crunchy leaves of endive or Romaine. As far as tools, a fork and a bowl are all you really need, but a mortar and pestle and a food processor or blender also come in very handy.

Many dressings are a variation on the vinaigrette, whisked together in the right proportions to create a sauce that is emulsified. (That means the fat molecules in the oil are broken down by acid, so you get a smooth, creamy texture that's ideal for coating the greens.) The right proportions generally hover around four parts oil to one part acid, but you can adjust this to suit your taste. Do it enough and it becomes instinctive—you won't even have to bother with measurements. Start with a classic French vinaigrette: minced shallot briefly softened in sherry or red wine vinegar, combined with Dijon mustard and olive oil, and seasoned with salt and pepper. I sometimes add an unorthodox pinch of sugar because I think it creates the perfect balance. Always mix the acid with any other ingredients you're using before whisking in the oil, slowly at first, until the emulsification starts to come together. If this doesn't happen, you can add a few drops of hot water and whisk away. Or shake it up vigorously in a sealed glass jar and that should do the trick.

From here, you can go almost anywhere. With rice vinegar and sesame oil, you head East. Lime juice, cumin and



Photos by Laura Silverman

The season's first tender lettuces from the garden require little more than a light coating of olive oil and lemon juice.



This classic French vinaigrette combines minced shallot (briefly softened in sherry or red wine vinegar), combined with Dijon mustard and olive oil, then finally seasoned with salt and pepper.

## Classic Vinaigrette

Makes about 1/2 cup

2- 2½ tablespoons sherry or red wine vinegar  
Fat pinch of sugar, optional  
1 small shallot, grated or minced  
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard  
1/2 cup olive oil  
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Stir together the vinegar, sugar, if using, and shallot, and allow to sit for about 10 minutes. Whisk in mustard, then stream in oil slowly, whisking constantly to emulsify. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

chile conjure up Mexico. Champagne vinegar, preserved lemon and almond oil make a delicate yet piquant dressing that wakes up butter lettuce.

Substitute good-quality mayonnaise for some of the oil and suddenly you've got something much creamier. If you're serving very bitter greens, like one of the chicories or dandelion, try a dressing of hot bacon fat, mustard and apple cider vinegar with a little honey whisked in. To dress a spinach salad with oil-cured olives and toasted walnuts, stir some crumbled feta into your combination of red wine vinegar and olive oil.

A fantastic ingredient to incorporate into your salad dressing is the humble anchovy. I once thought that paste was good enough, but I've since converted to the funky complexity of the salt-cured kind. Rinsed, filleted and quickly mashed, they add a rich, deeply savory flavor that is not at all fishy. They're a key component of the quintessential Caesar, as created by British chef April Bloomfield, whose cookbook "A Girl and Her Pig" has recipes for several bright, assertively flavored dressings. Her addictively creamy and garlicky Caesar dressing (recipe on next page) uses seven whole anchovies, which disappear into a whirl of egg, oil, vinegar and cheese.

Once you start getting creative with your salads and their dressings, you'll discover endless permutations limited only by your imagination and the ingredi-

*Continued on page 17*

## DRESSING UP

*Continued from page 16*

ents you have on hand. When herbs are at their peak, I throw them in the blender to make an infused oil—try it with chives, chervil, basil or parsley and your best olive oil. These vigorously green concoctions keep in the fridge for about a week. Drop a handful of chive blossoms into some white wine vinegar and treat yourself to the delightfully pink, subtly oniony result. Or do the same with a few cloves of garlic and you'll get something a bit more intense.

When it comes to dressing your salad, don't just dump all the dressing on top and agitate it with a fork and spoon. Instead, pour about half the dressing around the sides of the bowl and use your (clean) hands to gently mix it into the greens. They should be lightly coated, not doused. Using the same technique, add however much of the remaining dressing you need to bring the salad up to your standard of perfection. It may be a simple dish but it's all these little details that really make the difference. Always taste as you go, and adjust your seasonings as needed. As some sage once said, "It takes four men to dress a salad: a wise man for the salt, a madman for the pepper, a miser for the vinegar and a spendthrift for the oil." You can be all of those things and an inspired cook to boot.

## Pistachio-Herb Relish

Serves 2

- 1/4 cup raw pistachios
- 1 1/2 tablespoons Champagne vinegar
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1/2 Thai chile, seeded and minced
- 1/2 teaspoon flaky sea salt
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1 tablespoon chives, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon chervil, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon mint, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon tarragon, finely chopped
- 1/4 cup Manzanilla olives, pitted and finely chopped

In a small pan over medium heat, lightly toast pistachios, then chop them and set aside.

Stir together vinegar, lemon juice, chile and sea salt, then whisk in olive oil. Stir in toasted pistachios, herbs and olives. Ideal spooned over halved romaine hearts or spears of endive.

## Asian Carrot Dressing

Makes about 1 1/2 cups

- 1 large carrot, peeled and roughly chopped
- 1 small shallot, peeled and roughly chopped
- 2 tablespoons peeled and roughly chopped fresh ginger
- 1/2 Serrano chile, seeded and chopped
- 1 tablespoon red miso
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 2 tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2 tablespoons roasted sesame oil
- 1/4 cup sunflower oil
- 2 tablespoons water
- Juice of half a lemon

Whiz the carrot, shallot, ginger and chile in a food processor until finely chopped. Scrape down the sides, then add the miso, honey, vinegar and sesame oil. With the machine running, slowly drizzle in the oil and water, then stir in lemon juice as needed.

## Caesar Dressing

(Lightly adapted from April Bloomfield)

Serves 4

- 7 whole salt-packed anchovies, rinsed, soaked and filleted
- 2 smallish garlic cloves, smashed and peeled
- 3 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 1/4 cup Champagne vinegar
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 large egg
- 1 cup expeller-pressed sunflower or grapeseed oil
- 1 ounce Parmesan, very finely grated

Put the anchovy fillets and garlic in a small food processor and pulse to a rough paste. Add the mustard, vinegar and lemon juice, crack the egg, and blend until the mixture is smooth and creamy. With the processor on, gradually drizzle in the oil in a steady stream. Finally, add the Parmesan and blend until it's all well combined. Scrape the dressing into a bowl, cover it with plastic wrap, then refrigerate to chill and thicken up. (Dressing will keep for three days.)



This addictive carrot-ginger dressing is like the one you've probably enjoyed at Japanese restaurants.



Rinsed, filleted and quickly mashed, anchovies add a rich, deeply savory flavor that is not at all fishy. They're a key component of the quintessential Caesar salad dressing.



The author refers to the dressing on this salad as a "relish" because of its chunkier consistency that goes well with the firm, crunchy leaves of endive or romaine. Dressing ingredients include a mix of several chopped fresh herbs, chopped olives and toasted pistachios.



# Man caves, Backwoods style

By LINDA DROLLINGER

*[Author's Note: The men who agreed to be interviewed for this article insisted on anonymity and a promise not to disclose the locations of their blinds. My appreciation and thanks to The Old Man, The Soldier and The Cowboy for allowing a sneak peek into the male mystique.]*

Why does a man willingly leave a safe, spacious, comfortable, solidly constructed house with every modern convenience to crouch for countless hours in a two-by-three-foot hunting blind that lacks every creature comfort and sometimes a roof and walls as well? Judging from the confused reaction the question produced in the men asked, it's obvious that they either thought the question rhetorical, or it touched a male instinct too primal for words. The best answer came from a guy who put it this way, "A man needs a place in the woods, and it don't have to be fancy."

The Soldier led me on a hike through a 250-acre wooded tract, home to over 35 hunting blinds of every size, shape and type, each a unique marvel of engineering and architecture. After navigating a homemade bridge across a briskly flowing stream, he pointed out blinds with the panache of a tour guide indicating celebrity homes in Beverly Hills. They are as follows:

**The Bow Stand.** This is the Soldier's sentimental favorite, inherited from a neighbor who gave it to the Soldier along with his membership in the private club that leases the land. A classic tree stand of traditional wooden construction, the Soldier has maintained its structural integrity, making only one necessary modification—replacement of the original steps with a ladder.

**The Tripod.** This precarious perch of a tree seat takes its name from the three supports that hold it in place. Lacking a roof and walls, it's covered only with black mesh that serves to camouflage the hunter but provides little, if any, protection from the elements.

**The Tikki Hut.** Only a former Marine fitness instructor would have the strength and stamina to haul building tools and materials to the site of this ground shelter. Just walking over this rough terrain, well off the beaten path (and made worse



*Continued on page 20*

The Polish Palace

TRR photos by Linda Drollinger

# The River Reporter's 19th Annual 2014 READERS' CHOICE AWARDS

## THE BEST BALLOT IS BACK!

We have revamped our ballot and it's better than ever! We ask that you simply vote for the people, places or businesses that you think are the BEST. Thank you for your participation and we look forward to receiving your votes. If there is a category that we are missing, let us know!

We will publish our 2014 WINNERS in our annual Readers' Choice Awards "BEST" supplement in January 2015.

**Good Luck to all!**

## BEST PLACES FOR FOOD & DRINK

Appetizers _____	Ice Cream Parlor _____
Authentic Meal _____	Italian Restaurant _____
Bagels _____	Locally-Sourced Menu _____
Bakery _____	Local Watering Hole _____
Barbeque _____	Lunch _____
Beer Selection _____	Martinis _____
Breakfast _____	Menu _____
Brunch _____	New Restaurant _____
Budget-friendly _____	Pasta Dish _____
Buffet _____	Pizza _____
Candy Shop _____	Off The Beaten Path _____
Cheesesteak Sandwich _____	Outdoor Dining _____
Chinese Restaurant _____	Overall Restaurant _____
Coffeehouse _____	- Delaware County _____
Deli _____	- Orange County _____
Desserts _____	- Pike County _____
Diner _____	- Sullivan County _____
Dinner _____	-Wayne County _____
Dinner Specials _____	-Region _____
Early Bird Specials _____	Ribs _____
Family Restaurant _____	Romantic Restaurant _____
French Fries _____	Salad _____
Gourmet Restaurant _____	Sandwiches _____
Grocery Store /Supermarket _____	Seafood _____
Hamburgers _____	Soups _____
Happy Hour _____	Steakhouse _____
Health Food Store _____	Vegetarian Food Restaurant _____
Home Cooking Restaurant _____	Wine Selection _____
Hot Dogs _____	Wings _____

## BEST PLACES TO SHOP

Antique Store _____	Jewelry Store _____
Auto Parts Store _____	Knit Shop _____
Baby/Kids Store _____	Liquor Store _____
Boat Dealer/Rental _____	Locally-made products _____
Bookstore _____	Lumberyard _____
Car Dealership _____	Medical Equipment _____
Clothing Store _____	Motorcycle Shop _____
Collectibles Store _____	Music Store _____
Consignment Shop _____	Novelty Shop _____
Electronics _____	Outdoor Recreational Vehicles _____
Farm Equipment Retailer _____	Pet Store _____
Flooring Store _____	Place to Buy Art _____
Florist _____	Pottery Studio _____
Furniture Store _____	Speciality Store _____
General Store _____	Sporting Goods Shop _____
Gift Shop _____	Tattoo/Ear Piercing Shop _____
Hardware Store _____	Vintage Shop _____
Home Décor _____	

## BEST BUSINESSES & SERVICES

Auto Service Station _____	New Business of the Year _____
Bank _____	Pet Boarding/Pampering _____
Child Care Provider _____	Pet Grooming /Groomer _____
Christmas Tree Farm _____	Pharmacy _____
Eye Care Center _____	Photography Studio _____
Elder Care Facility _____	Plumbing & Heating Supply _____
Emergency Room _____	Rehabilitation Services _____
Engaging Facebook Page _____	Recycle & Transfer Station _____
Fitness Center _____	Rental Center _____
Funeral Home _____	Real Estate Office _____
Green Business _____	Salvage Company _____
Hair & Nail Salon _____	Septic Service _____
Heating Fuel Company _____	Spa or Personal Pampering _____
Home & Garden Store _____	Storage Center _____
Hospital/ Medical Facility _____	Towing Service _____
Insurance Agency _____	Truck Center _____
Kid's Camp _____	Tuxedo Rentals _____
Kitchen & Bath Store _____	Veterinarian Clinic _____
Maternity Unit _____	Well Driller _____
Modular Homes _____	Women's Health Center _____
Mortgage Company _____	

## BEST OF OUR COMMUNITY

Ambulance Squad _____	- Golf Pro _____
Amusement/ Fun Park _____	- Musician/Band _____
Animal Shelter _____	- Photographer _____
Art Gallery _____	- Potter _____
Atmosphere _____	Local Products:
Bed & Breakfast _____	- Beer / Spirits _____
Bowling Lanes _____	- Cheese _____
Canoe Livery _____	- Eggs _____
Campground _____	- Meats _____
Chamber of Commerce _____	- Maple Syrup _____
Chicken BBQ (Volunteer) _____	- Wine _____
Cider Mill _____	Meditation Center _____
Civic Club or Organization _____	Movie Theatre _____
College _____	Museum _____
Community Festival or Street Fair _____	Neighborhood _____
Conference Center _____	Pancake Breakfast _____
Dance Studio _____	Parade _____
Day Trip _____	Penny Social _____
Fair _____	Place to Hold a Prom _____
Family Night Out _____	Places to Play Bingo _____
Farm Market _____	Place to Take out of town guests _____
Fire Department _____	Place to Take the kids _____
Golf Course _____	Playhouse Theatre _____
Historic Site _____	Post Office _____
Horseback Riding _____	Private School _____
Hotel _____	Radio Station _____
Law Office _____	Resort _____
Library _____	Shopping Area _____
Live Music Venue _____	Ski Lodge _____
Local _____	Special Area Attraction _____
- Artist _____	Sullivan Renaissance Project _____
- Author _____	Wedding Reception Location _____
- Celebrity _____	Winery _____
- Farm _____	Youth Center _____
- Getaway _____	Youth Program _____

## BEST PEOPLE

Accountant _____	Green Developer _____
Architect _____	High School Athlete _____
Auto Mechanic _____	Holistic Practitioner _____
Baker/ Specialty Cakes _____	Interior Decorator _____
Bank Teller _____	Landscaper _____
Barber _____	Lawyer _____
Bartender _____	Law Enforcement Officer _____
Builder _____	Local Hero _____
Butcher _____	Massage Therapist _____
Caterer _____	Medical Specialist _____
Carpenter _____	Painter _____
Car Salesman _____	Pediatrician _____
Chef _____	Plumber _____
Chiropractor _____	Politician _____
Clergy _____	Postmaster _____
Coach _____	Radio Personality _____
Custom Cabinetry _____	Real Estate Agent _____
Dentist _____	Roofer _____
Doctor _____	Teacher _____
Electrician _____	Veterinarian _____
Event Planner _____	Waiter/Waitress _____
Excavator _____	Web Designer _____
Friendly Staff _____	Yoga Teacher _____

**HOW TO VOTE:** Please print clearly your choices for "THE BEST" from the categories listed. Best choices are limited to Delaware, Orange, Pike, Sullivan and Wayne counties. You may also VOTE ONLINE: [www.RiverReporter.com/BEST](http://www.RiverReporter.com/BEST)

**HOW TO ENTER:** NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Additional ballots are available at **The River Reporter** office at 93 Erie Ave, Narrowsburg, NY. Ballots MUST be complete and include full name, address and phone number of voter. All ballots must be received by December 18, 2014. Employees of **The River Reporter** and **Stuart Communications** are permitted to vote but not eligible to win prizes. Entries that are late, damaged, illegible or missing voter's name will not be eligible. One entry per person. Mechanically reproduced or Photocopied entries are not eligible. A business, organization or person may win no more than three (3) categories. Winners will be chosen based on the number of votes received by December 18th, 2014.

**HOW TO WIN PRIZES:** All ballots will be included in a random drawing for prizes. Drawing will be held in January 2015. No duplicate winners. BEST Winners will be notified in January 2015.

## OFFICIAL "BEST" BALLOT ENTRY FORM

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93 Erie Avenue, Narrowsburg, NY 12764

# MAN CAVES

Continued from page 18

by hurricane Sandy damage), is strenuous exercise. This variation on a lean-to has a roof and three walls, making it the most weather-proof of the blinds described above. However, within 15 feet of the hut, I spotted fresh bear scat. Was the bear holed up in the Tikki Hut?

On my return from the backwoods, I explored two other blinds that are barely visible from public roads:

**The Polish Palace.** The name says it all, recognizing both the owner/builder's Polish heritage and the shelter's palatial style and proportions. Additionally, this is the only shelter that can be said to have genuine décor that includes carpeting, swivel chairs worthy of a law office and decorative cushions.

The top story of this duplex was built in the owner's youth. As he matured and his family expanded to include three sons, avid hunters all, the lower story was added. The eldest of those sons now has teenage daughters with the old man's blood in their veins. When the planned ground-level story has been completed, each generation will have its own level.

**The Bat Cave.** So named because it's hidden beneath a boulder, this shelter has a contemporary vibe expressed by its stylish appointments—a plastic chair worthy of the Museum of Modern Art and a plastic bowl that could be anything from a chamber pot to a finger bowl and may, at various times, have done duty as both.

Ladies, although I still don't know exactly why men take to the woods, it occurs to me that they may have discovered in their woodsy lairs what we've known forever: that a few hours spent in Mother Nature's domain does wonders to restore the spirit.



The Bat Cave II



The Tripod



The Bow Stand



The Tikki Hut



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# Camping in the backyard

By Isabel Braverman

When I was little, I would pack up a backpack, grab a flashlight, pillow and blanket and go camping—in my front yard. I had a tiny tent. Each panel was one of the primary colors: yellow, red and blue. I would sleep in my purple sleeping bag, which was pink and fuzzy on the inside. I always brought a book and read it by flashlight way past my bedtime. These are the things I remember.

I also remember feeling independent, like a grown up. Going out on my own. Sometimes I would pretend my parents abandoned me and I had to survive on my own, like the orphaned children did in the book series “The Boxcar Children,” which I read obsessively. I remember a scene from the book when they had to scrounge for food and they ate bread soaked in milk. I would pretend to eat that with my little set of camping utensils that my parents got me—a small fork, spoon and knife, a canteen and a metal cup.

I’m sure these are things many country kids are familiar with. I’ve asked some people if they remember their experiences with camping in the yard. My mom said she and her two sisters didn’t have a tent so their dad let them sleep in the car, and if they needed anything “just blow the horn.” Then my mom saved up money and bought herself a small army tent. Jessica Harris, a dance teacher at The Dance Center in Port Jervis, NY, said, “When I was little, I put a tent in the front yard and brought my pet rabbit in

it. The rabbit peed on my sleeping bag. That was the end of the camping experience.” Mariana Garces, my friend from college who grew up in New Hampshire, said, “One time my best friend and I made a two-person tent out of tarps and sticks and nautical rope just to see if we could do it. It was the worst tent I’ve ever slept in and it rained that night. We were 14.”

And then there were the times I would “camp out” in my own room. I would tie a string from my bed to my desk and then drape a blanket over the string, pulling the sides of the blanket out and holding them down with something. I would put my sleeping bag inside and spend hours in there, mostly reading. Or if my friends came over, we would hang out in it. I have a vivid memory of my neighbors Raye and Emma coming over, and we sat in the tent and split a cinnamon, brown sugar Pop Tart.

Even if you weren’t raised in the country, camping is something that most kids find magical. It’s like having your own house. It means being in nature, and looking at the stars at night. It’s cooking your own food using limited resources. It’s sleeping in fresh air. It’s hearing the many sounds of nature—peepers, crickets, birds, the rustling of trees, an animal moving the leaves. It brings us back to our ancestors, and where we come from. It’s a departure from regular life.

Today, I can’t figure out why anyone would want to sleep on the hard ground.



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# Ready for a staycation?

**Staycation:** "A period in which an individual or family stays home and participates in leisure activities within driving distance, sleeping in their own beds at night. They might make day trips to local tourist sites, swimming venues, or engage in fun activities such as horseback riding, paintball, hiking or visiting museums... Some people may include overnight visits at relatives, friends or a longer trip. Staycations achieved popularity in the U.S. during the financial crisis of 2007–2010 (en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Staycation)."

Isn't it funny how one can live in a great place like the Upper Delaware River Valley and yet rarely take advantage of the many sites and activities that visitors flock here to enjoy? Well, we have the perfect remedy—a staycation! Take a day off, take a long weekend, take a whole week and explore what there is to see and do right here in our own backyard. Here's our list of just a few suggestions...

[Editor's note: The following ideas do not pretend to be a complete and definitive list. If you have a favorite venue you'd like to share with our readers, let us know by emailing [copyeditor@riverreporter.com](mailto:copyeditor@riverreporter.com); also see **The River Reporter's Upper Delaware Magazine** ([www.riverreporter.com/supplement/upper-delaware-magazine/2014/05/15/upper-delaware-magazine-summer-2014](http://www.riverreporter.com/supplement/upper-delaware-magazine/2014/05/15/upper-delaware-magazine-summer-2014)) for art galleries, music venues and more.]

## Wayne County

### Parks

Prompton State Park (Prompton)

### Hiking

Damascus Forest Trail (Damascus Twp.), Dorflinger Wildlife Preserve (White Mills), Lacawac Sanctuary (Lake Ariel), Varden Conservation Area (Lake Ariel), plus in the Lake Wallenpaupack area: Schuman Point Natural Area, Ledge Dale Natural Area, Beech House Creek Wildlife Refuge

### Public fishing and/or boating access

On the Delaware River: Narrowsburg (NY)/Darbytown (PA), Balls Eddy, Shehawken Creek (Buckingham Twp), Equinunk Creek (Buckingham Twp)

### Lakes (PA Fish & Boat):

Belmont Lake (Mt. Pleasant), Duck Harbor Pond (Damascus/Lebanon Twp), Long Pond (Dyberry Twp), Miller Pond (Mt. Pleasant), Upper Woods Pond (Lebanon Twp), White Oak Pond (Clinton Twp)

### Boat launches

Lake Wallenpaupack (Hawley), plus on the Delaware River: Buckingham Twp access, Damascus Twp access and Narrowsbrug (on PA side)

### Family fun

Carousel Water & Fun Park (Beach Lake), Claws 'n' Paws Animal Park (Hamlin), Sculpted Ice Works (Lakeville)

### Golf courses (public)

Cricket Hill (near Honesdale), Lake Lorraine (Poyntelle/Preston Twp), Memorial Links, 9 holes (Mt. Pleasant), Red Maples, 9 holes (near Waymart)

### Antiquing

Numerous shops in Hawley

### Museums

Dorflinger Glass Museum (White Mills), Wayne County Historical Society (Honesdale), Equinunk Historical Society and Museum

## Pike County

### Parks

Bushkill Falls, Pocono Environmental Learning Center, Promised Land State Park, Delaware State Park

### Public fishing and/or boating

Lackawaxen River, Delaware River

### Boat launches

On the Delaware River: Lackawaxen (at Zane Grey Museum), Dingman's Ferry, Milford Lake access: Shohola Lake, Lake Greeley, Promised Land Lake (Promised Land State Park), Pecks Pond (Dingman's Ferry)

### Rafting & canoeing outfitters

Indian Head Canoes (Matamoras), Landers River Trips (Matamoras), Kittatinny Canoes (Matamoras), Pecks Pond Pocono Fishing (Dingmans Ferry)

### Beaches

Milford (on the Delaware River), Lake Wallenpaupack (at Wilsonville campground near Hawley)

### Family fun

Costa's Family Fun Park (near Hawley)

### Golf courses (public)

Cliff Park Inn, plus several within easy driving in Sussex County, NJ

### Museums

Grey Towers (Milford), Pike County Historical Society's The Columns Museum (Milford), Zane Grey Museum (Lackawaxen)

## Sullivan County

### Parks

Basha Kill Wildlife Management Area, Lake Superior State Park (Bethel), Livingston Manor Covered Bridge Park, Neversink Gorge Unique Area, Minisink Battleground Park (Minisink Ford), Stone Arch Bridge Historical Park (Kenoza Lake), Walnut Mountain State Park (Liberty)

### Hiking

Basha Kill D&H Canal Towpath and Basha Kill O&W Trail; Bouchoux Trail to Jensen's Ledges; Denman Mountain Trail (Grahamsville); Fallsburg O&W Rails to Trails

### Public fishing and/or boating

Basket Creek, Kellams, plus on the Delaware River: Lordville access, Long Eddy (no parking on site), Callicoon, Skinners Falls, Highland, Ten Mile River, Neversink Reservoir, **Boat Launches**

On the Delaware River: Narrowsburg, Ten Mile River, Staircase site (between Sparrowbush and Hawks Nest) Lakes: Hunter Lake (Parksville), Mountindale Park (Mountindale), Morningside Park (Liberty), Kauneonga Lake, Lake Superior State Park (Bethel)

### Rafting & canoeing outfitters

Kittatinny Canoes (bases in Barryville, Pond Eddy, Staircase), Landers River Trips (Narrowsburg, Skinners Falls), Rebers River Trips (Barryville base), Jerry's Three River Canoes (Pond Eddy base), Bradley Boat Rentals (Hurleyville), Gene's Boats (White Lake)

### Public beaches

Lake Superior, Morningside Lake in Liberty, Crystal Lake, Toronto Reservoir

### Family fun

Holiday Mountain, Skaters World NY, Kittatinny Dual Racing Zip Lines

### Golf courses (public)

Sullivan County Golf & Country Club, Villa Roma, Swan Lake, Catskill Mountain, Lochmor, Holiday Mountain, Kutschers, Concord, Tarry Brea, Island Glen, Grossingers, Green Ridge

### Museums

Sullivan County Historical Museum, Fort Delaware, Time and the Valleys Museum, Catskill Fly Fishing Center & Museum

photo courtesy of the National Park Service

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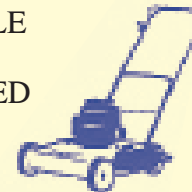
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The last word...

# The gentleman farmer

*Nice outfit!*

By JOHN HIGGINS

I woke up thinking about mowing. Again. This happens a lot between May through October. In my dreams, I find myself having spent what feels like several hours of mowing only to find that I have etched into the field in front of my house what looks like a UFO crop circle. Other times I have an out-of-body experience, and like a Bugs Bunny cartoon I do a “snap focus” high above my property to realize that I have spelled out “Eat at Joe’s” in the meadow in some crazy Etch-a-Sketch pattern. Except in my dreams, this would never happen, mind you, because I am WAY too organized and retentive about straight lines, composition and balance.

In the spirit of full disclosure, my fondness for mowing is the Zen solitude of the task. (I feel this same way about vacuuming—the sound blocks out everything, so the hum becomes a trance.) And in further full disclosure: it’s all about the outfit. The gear alone is like stepping into someone else’s experience and living out their perspective (think Jodie Foster acting in front of a green screen). The orange lens goggles, the ear protectors, the vest, the boots.

And the labor itself is a reward. Robert Frost said it best in his poem “Mowing.” “The fact is the sweetest dream labor knows.” Oh, who am I kidding? It’s really the outfit. This has been true of my life for 50 years now. Since childhood I have been drawn to anything that required a specific outfit. I loved judo because of the gi. I fell in love with skiing because of the boots. (My first pair were white and even in the off-season I would terrorize my mother’s floors clomping around pretending to be a storm trooper from Star Wars.) I fell in love with motorcycles because of the iconic leather jacket. (A side note: let me say this about that: at 25 I looked quite attractive in that jacket. Now at 50, with a buzz cut and a goatee, I look like a guy from a website that suggests the need for parental control software.)

Twenty-one years ago I celebrated my first Halloween with my partner Pip, and we dressed up as (wait for it...) farmers! I recall that Pip looked more like a handsome cowboy farmer, but I looked more like a John Deere farmer. (I have a big ol’ space between my two front teeth, so that makes me feel I look more ‘rural’—room in my grin for a twig of straw.) Ultimately, it’s the outfit and the equipment that draws me in.

On a recent trip to both Home Depot and Agway, I walked up and down aisles of accessories and equipment marveling at the new kinds of rider-mowers, edgers and trimmers but with a healthy avoidance of the chain saw display. (Hollywood has a lot to do with that fear, I think.) There are also so many new kinds of hats each season! Pip made a point to say that I need another hat like a moose needs a hat rack. Yet there I was bringing to the counter at each store a selection of new orange-lens sunglasses, protective grip gloves and a broad brim hat, which looked somewhere between Van Gogh’s straw hat and something you’d see poolside at the Beverly Hills Hotel. *Et voila!*, this new mowing season’s outfit.

Once at home and astride my rider-mower (I have tried the zero-turn mower, and I felt like I was spinning wildly at a disco—turns out I’m an OLD-school mower rider, thankyouverymuch.), I rode off into the afternoon lulled into my zone by the muffled hum provided by my ear protectors and the world as seen through orange-tinted lenses.



Art work by Amanda Reed

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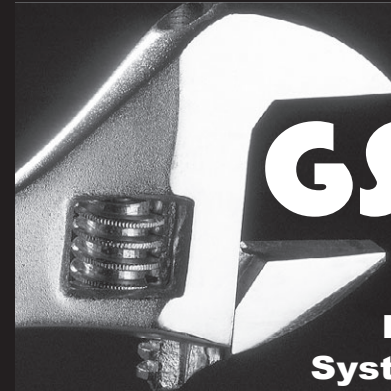
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