

SPRING 2015

# OUR COUNTRY HOME



## Firefly Haven

Journey's end: an 1876 farmhouse

## Trading Lifestyles

A reimagined trading post  
invigorates Callicoon

## Spring Cleaning

Learn how to keep it green

A RIVER REPORTER LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

# CONTENTS

## FEATURES

- 4 Trading Lifestyles**  
*A reimagined trading post breathes life into a country hamlet*  
By RAMONA JAN
- 8 Winter canvas**  
*Imagining this year's garden*  
By PATTI ZINS
- 10 Arriving at Firefly Haven**  
*Two diverse journeys converge in an 1876 farmhouse*  
By RAMONA JAN

## DEPARTMENTS

- 6 ASK THE EXPERT:**  
**Spring cleaning ahead?**  
*The experts tell you how to keep it green*  
By NANCY DYMOND
- 12 DIY:**  
**The numbers game**  
By RAMONA JAN
- 16 MAKING CHANGES:**  
**Creating a home office**  
By ISABEL BRAVERMAN



Cover and page 2 photographs  
by Ramona Jan

At left: the marvellous colors and textures on these old trunks adorn a corner of the Callicoon Trading Post (see page 4).

# Our Country Home

Sometimes we choose to begin again; other times we are thrust into new situations that require new beginnings. In this issue of **Our Country Home**, you'll become acquainted with a retired couple whose paths diverged early in life and then later converged into a marriage, an international adoption and a dream home in the country. You'll read about how a former Manhattan art gallery impresario restored a precious Victorian home and turned it into a central spot for gatherings, classes, commerce and fun—all in Callicoon, NY.

Wise words from Master Gardener Patti Zins will spark your imagination as you picture some spring planting. She'll guide you in choosing the right plants for our zone and help you to save money in your gardening endeavors by incorporating more of our indigenous foliage.

Your spring cleaning will be renewed, improved and especially green, thanks to tips from two super ladies with their own cleaning companies. And once you've cleaned a corner or two, you'll naturally want to install a home office, even if you think you don't have the room. You do! And Isabel Braverman will show you just how to make a home office in a very small space.



Photo by Joan Rafferty

Ramona Jan

Lacking a number for your house or perhaps you just want to give your front door a face lift? There's a great DIY on creating your own house number. All new beginnings to inspire the soul as the snow melts, the cherry blossoms get ready to pop, and everyone lets out a sigh of relief—another winter gone, another chance to start again.

— Ramona Jan  
Section editor

*“There is only one day left, always starting over; it is given to us at dawn and taken away from us at dusk.” — Jean Paul Sartre*



The early spring light may still be chill, but inside the kitchen of the Fellenberg's 1876 farmhouse, the cozy decor warms the heart (see page 10).

## THE RIVER REPORTER

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# Trading lifestyles

By RAMONA JAN

In the hustle and bustle of New York City, Brooklyn-raised Irene Nickolai started her career dealing in art, then moved on to selling luxury real estate. But she never forgot her roots in art. At her gallery, Nickolai Fine Art (located smack dab in the middle of Chelsea), she represented primarily contemporary photographers and a smattering of installation artists who created large-scale public sculptures. Nickolai produced over 40 solo and group exhibitions, as well as the second edition of the Scope Art Fair, working in association with international consulates and foundations. She curated exhibitions for the Federal Reserve Bank, and for four years she has served on the board of directors of Time in Children's Art Initiative, bringing children from underserved classrooms into the world of opera, fine art and museums. Indeed, her lifestyle was about as fast paced as one could imagine. And for many years, while enjoying every bit of it, she imagined trading it all for a simpler, quieter one.

Initially, Nickolai considered buying a home in Nyack, Kingston or Saugerties, NY until an artist friend (living in North Branch) invited her for a visit, and en route she fell in love with Callicoon. "The price of real estate was affordable, it was relatively undeveloped, and there was a river running through it," she explained.

Smitten, Nickolai bought a Victorian gem, situated



TRR photos by Ramona Jan

Callicoon Trading proprietress Irene Nickolai dressed in turn-of-the-century garb greets guests during Dickens on the Delaware.

on Upper Main Street right next to the Western Hotel and in front of the train tracks of the former Erie Railroad (now part of Norfolk Southern Railway).

Built in the mid-1800s, Nickolai's home is a large building with a mansard roof, a partial front porch and a variety of textures on the siding. "It saw its heyday as a boarding house amidst many hotels in the surrounding area. At one time, it even housed a tannery and a speakeasy," she said. When asked about the condition of the building when she took ownership, Nickolai rolls her eyes at "excellent," winces at "good," giggles at "fair"—and before I even get to the word "poor," tells me, "It's a work in progress."

A Sullivan Renaissance grant enabled Nickolai to touch up the historical cream-and-blue trim on the front, and transform the ground floor from what had been a restaurant layout into a retail space: Callicoon Trading.

Asked about the idea behind the store, Nickolai said it came out of the idea of a trading post. "It's inspired by traditional goods vendors that were once a part of the celebrated railroad town," she said. "The store is dedicated to items such as antiques and limited-edition, locally made goods, including jewelry, ceramics, metal and wood. The displays and fixtures are often re-purposed, with details like salvaged barn wood, old windows, book pages. One section of the store is dedicated to a bead shop where individual beads and findings are sold

in glass vintage vials and by the strand." Irene also has her own jewelry line, Serenity Stone, which she sells at the store, made from semi-precious stones and beads.

Last October, Irene joined forces with the Callicoon Business Association to launch the Callicoon Art Walk, which paired Upper and Lower Main Street shops with local artists. "The idea behind the art walk was to have the retailers in town host artisans from the area, including painters, ceramicists, sculptors, handcrafters and many more. Ragtime Clothing Exchange, for example, sponsored singer/songwriter Felicia Rose, while the antique dealers exhibited vintage art. All in all, the focus was on art of all kinds."

Shops that typically closed at 4 p.m. on a Saturday stayed open until 9 p.m. The first annual Callicoon Art Walk not only brought together many visual art disciplines, it also incorporated musicians and video projections of New York City artist's work as well.

During the walk, Callicoon Trading sponsored ceramicist Tara Backlund, painter James Gann, container-gardener Patti Zins, and photographer Brandi Merolla. "Brandi takes miniature objects found at yard sales and juxtaposes them to create a vignette; the series is called 'Scenes from the Attic.' It's kitschy, but it's like a Jeff Koons taking something kitschy and creating it on such a large scale it becomes intriguing. The work here is very affordable, which is such a nice change from the New York art scene," Nickolai said.

As far back as college, Nickolai had an entrepreneurial streak. At Brooklyn College, for example, she studied printmaking, sculpture and welding under the guidance of Professor Karen Giusti, a National Endowment Artist, and eventually became Giusti's art installation assistant and ultimately her gallery rep. "She's a community-minded sparkplug," attests a neighboring shopkeeper. "A lot of people are moving to this area to pursue a different lifestyle, but only in a personal way. They just want to do it for themselves, whereas everything Irene does is about offering opportunities and creating a vibrant community. She's all about saying 'yes' and not saying, 'no.'"

Based on the positive feedback and attendance at the Callicoon Art Walk, Nickolai was approached by one resident with the idea of putting together a Christmas event called "Dickens on the Delaware." During this early December event, shopkeepers dressed in Victorian costume, carol singers serenaded, and many attendees young and old took turns riding in a horse-drawn carriage. The Delaware Valley Opera performed from the balcony of a building on Lower Main Street, while free

*Continued on page 5*



Soft hues and romantic paintings grace the halls and walls of Callicoon Trading.

## TRADING LIFESTYLES

*Continued from page 4*

cookies and hot chocolate were offered at the newly opened Riverside Remedies, a much-needed pharmacy.

“Right now we’re considering a third and maybe even possibly a fourth event. Plus, we’ll definitely repeat the Callicoon Art Walk as well as Dickens on the Delaware. These events, along with all the new places like The Callicoon Brewery and the eatery Ba & Me, really get people circulating between Upper and Lower Main,” said Nickolai.

Although she appears to have traded the fast pace of Manhattan for the peace and quiet of Callicoon, Nickolai is ever the go-getter. “At Callicoon Trading, I’ve just finished organizing an ongoing class schedule in fine art that will include hat making, basic jewelry making, painting and other art forms taught by experienced local artisans and teachers.”

“Running Callicoon Trading with its gallery is a completely different experience for me,” she said. “It’s a retail shop with an entirely different kind of customer. In New York City, we didn’t make many sales from walk-ins—maybe only 5%. Here, I have to rely on the walk-ins; that’s why promoting the area is very important, along with working with the business association, which has been great. In the future, I’d like to use the store as a monthly event place to launch local artists and their work or products. It’s also in the plan for me to eventually be up here fulltime. It’s just a matter of connecting

the dots.” This type of thinking recently led to Nickolai being named president of the Callicoon Business Association.

According to Nickolai, she’s “quite happy to be living part-time in Callicoon, exploring nature, the creative process and meeting incredibly talented people who are also seeking to leave the rat race and get back to basics by meeting organic farmers and effecting change on a micro level that can possibly grow into a macro level.”

“Coming from the city, it’s a change of lifestyle for me to be around so much nature. I can identify most of the vegetables at the farmers’ market, but I don’t know how to grow them.” Some of us grow food while others grow small towns and their economies. Entrepreneurial Nickolai, who is obviously already helping to grow the town (and subsequently the economy) of Callicoon, will most likely eventually do both.

(For cyber-visits or store hours: ‘like’ Callicoon Trading on Facebook).



(Above) The atmosphere at Callicoon Trading is cozied up with potted plants by Master Gardener Patti Zins.



Many local artists are represented at Callicoon Trading, including ceramicist Tara Backlund, whose work is seen at left.

# S-scapes

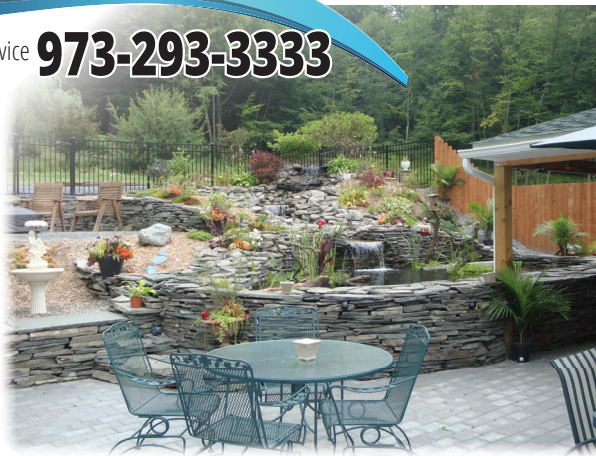


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# Spring cleaning ahead?

The experts tell you how to keep it green

By NANCY DYMOND

Wondering how to approach your spring cleaning with an eye toward earth-friendly solutions? Then ask the experts.

Faun Gilchrist's Green Cleaning Company and Kate Sykes Bowers' Clean Team have the answers when it comes to using green products and sustainable methods to clean and maintain your home spaces and business areas. Both companies' founders have been local "green" cleaning entrepreneurs for years, seriously conscientious about their clients' health and chemical sensitivities while staying connected to what is safe for the planet.

"I have always been green minded and earth conscious," Faun said. "Mom was an herbalist and an avid gardener, so I was influenced by living in a natural environment."



Contributed photos  
Faun Gilchrist

Ever in tune with the natural world, Gilchrist's devotion to developing and using nontoxic cleansers deepened with the birth of her two daughters, and she adapted her lifestyle to include all aspects of sustainable living. A few years after her second daughter was born, Gilchrist began working as a midwife's assistant. Her desire to help people in their homes blossomed into Helping Hands, a company that began by offering help to mothers and babies, later attracting older clients who needed help with tasks around the house and outdoors. "Green Cleaning" is the name Gilchrist chose for the housecleaning company that emerged from Helping Hands.

When Gilchrist launched her green cleaning business, she was forced to purchase most of her natural cleaning products online. Today, what she doesn't purchase in grocery stores, she makes herself. "Most of my clients today are very savvy about green cleaning. Some even make their own cleaning solutions. I learned about using straight-up vinegar and lemon juice for counter tops, even for mopping, from a client."

To supplement the family's income after her babies were born, Kate Sykes Bowers began cleaning offices on evenings and weekends. In 1998, she went full-speed ahead with her business, Clean Team. At first her "team" was composed

of just her husband and herself, but as her client base increased, she began to hire and work with subcontractors. "With the subcontractors," Bowers said, "we could accomplish a lot more, and it became a lot more enjoyable, too." These days her daughter, Raina, helps out, too.

"I started using green cleansers because I became concerned about the environment. Also, I handle this stuff and the people working with me handle this stuff. It's just not healthy for us... But also, most homeowners prefer that I use green cleansers, so I do what the customers want. I would say I use green cleansers 90% of the time."



Kate Sykes Bowers

"I bring all my own equipment. I don't really use anything from the customer unless they ask me to. Some people have issues with minerals in the water that leave stains, and they want me to try something new. It may not be a green product, but because the customer asks me to do it, I'm going to try it."

Bowers' experience has taught her that cleaning doesn't require the effort combined with harsh chemicals that advertisers would have you believe. "A secret is soaking. You don't need to pummel something with chemicals. You can clean your oven with baking soda and vinegar. You just wipe it on and then you can let it sit overnight. Self-cleaning ovens are really nice, but you're using a lot of energy for that."

Both Gilchrist and Bowers agree that the natural, nontoxic ingredients they use in their recipes for cleansers work as well as, if not better than, the commercial, chemical cleansers. And many people have sensitivities to certain chemical ingredients or fragrances contained in some commercial cleaners. One of the ways Gilchrist tests for the presence of harsh chemicals is the sniff test. "Spray a little in the air and see what your reaction is. Is it irritating to your eyes? Your skin? Does it affect your nose or your breathing? I can usually tell within 15 minutes if I can use a product."

The spring cleaning tips in our sidebar are furnished courtesy of Green Cleaning (proprietor: Faun Gilchrist, 570/470-6425, www.gcleaning.vpweb.com) and Clean Team (proprietor: Kate Sykes Bowers, 845/887-5758).

## Ten tips for green cleaning

1. Make your own money-saving cleaning solutions. DIY recipes for natural cleaners can be found at: [greatist.com/health/27-chemical-free-products-diy-spring-cleaning](http://greatist.com/health/27-chemical-free-products-diy-spring-cleaning).
2. Always read labels. Be a detective. Protect your health.
3. Use vinegar and water to eradicate odors.
4. In water, use a small amount of dish detergent and a dash of vinegar to mop the floor.
5. Always do a patch-test before using any product (even a homemade one) on the floor.
6. Polish up your floors with a dash of vegetable oil in your vinegar/water solution.
7. Use a nonabrasive sponge to avoid scratching the finish on appliances.
8. Always start cleaning from the top down. If you have high ceilings, dust those first and then work down from there.
9. Use a good vacuum cleaner with removable filters that can be cleaned and replaced. Clean them often. It will make your vacuum run better.
10. Use lint-free cloths for windows and mirrors to save on paper towels.



TRR photo by Ramona Jan

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# Winter canvas: imagined garden

By PATTI ZINS

Whether you've been living in this region for years, or are just discovering the details of a newly purchased property, early spring is the time to overlay an imagined garden on a waning winter canvas. As perennials and woody plants husband their energies beneath the soil, garden catalogs arrive in the mail with fine photos of specimen flowers glowing in multicolored wonder. Beneath each photo is a short synopsis of your dream plants' requirements to give you an idea of where each plant will be happy.

Zone is most important. Can this beauty survive the winter here? This area is generally zone 5A, so plants hardy from 5A or lower should be all right. However, in some places micro-climates exist, such as near a foundation of a south-facing wall, where a zone-6 plant might thrive.

Deer- and rodent-resistance symbols will tell you whether you will need to provide extra protection. Bloom time and the eventual height and width of a plant will give you a clearer picture of what your garden will look like in the end. Plant tags that come with your future purchases provide similar information. As the late great local gardener Douglas Joslin once wrote, "Planning will determine the rewards reaped in the coming season."

Every gardener will interpret how their parcel evolves according to their own particular personality. In January, I consulted with neighbors Ligia and

Farid Tawa while their gardens lay sleeping:

Located on the Delaware River, the Tawa property consists of a modest home, an unimproved two-story barn and a church building with apple trees, hemlocks, a rose of Sharon and multiple untended yews. The Tawas are not gardeners, but craftspeople, and neither had plans of ever becoming a gardener. However, inspired by neighboring gardeners and gifted divisions of plants, they removed the scrubby yews, dug out some beds around the perimeters of buildings and fences, and pretty soon there was no turning back. They planted easy perennials such as gooseneck loosestrife and red bee balm, as well as native ostrich fern, at the base of their front deck, and then hung rows of pinecones from house railings. Ligia described her garden philosophy as "creating a sense of permanence," using a variety of nursery purchased perennials mixed with native and wild plants, while somehow "maintaining a sense of order." We both smiled at the last part! If some stray "weeds" sprout up that happen to have



Maximillion sunflowers brighten a corner and complement the orange garage doors.



Photos by Patti Zins

Indigenous black-eyed Susans and agastache pepper the Tawa garden.



Waxwings visit the author's bush honeysuckle.

daisy-like flowers, they will be left to bloom.

For the past eight years, I have lived on a five-acre parcel of wild riverbank and mountainside at the edge of the Delaware River. Lining the inside of the stockade fence were six very overgrown Chinese junipers. Three similarly overgrown junipers were crammed in an ell to the left of the front door. The ground everywhere was rocky, acidic, filled with the roots of spruces and the aforementioned junipers. The first season I hired someone to yank out the front junipers by means of chain and truck. Somehow I managed to chop out enough ground to install a young *Cornus florida* (flowering dogwood) and then backfill it with humus/compost blend and topsoil. I then lined the ell foundation walls with local rock, added some large-leaved hostas and a low-rock wall. I also planted daffodil and tulip bulbs, mulched, and voilà—my first bed! (FYI: Hostas are 'deer candy' and must be sprayed with a natural

repellent such as Liquid Deer Fence during the growing season. You can get Liquid Deer Fence at Delaware Valley Farm and Garden.)

I have since carved out other small beds, gardened in containers, and installed young hardy shrubs at different focal points. Staying patient enough to let them grow into their space has served me well, as I now have a nice-size purple smoke bush, a shrub rose and a Nishiki willow.

Over the last few seasons I have had the junipers in the back cut down and discarded to mulch on the riverbank. Rather than deal with the extensive root systems and stumps left in the ground, I plan to build raised beds along the fence right over them. Necessity was, happily, the mother of invention, as I can have my mixed veggie/flower beds without an excavation that would most likely undermine the fence. I can work at a comfortable height while ensuring a deep, fertile soil environment for my plants.

Bush honeysuckle is an invasive ornamental that grows freely from the Midwest to the Atlantic and south to at least Tennessee. It also grows freely on our riverbank. I cut out the new ones as they grow, but retain a large one at the bottom of the stairs to the lower yard that provides great cover and a launching pad to the bird feeders on the deck. They flower early in yellow and white. Bright red berries in late summer attract, among other birds, a migrating flock of beautiful Bohemian waxwings. Uneaten seeds strewn from the birdfeeder create random black oil sunflowers and accidental squash vines that add charm to a summer landscape.



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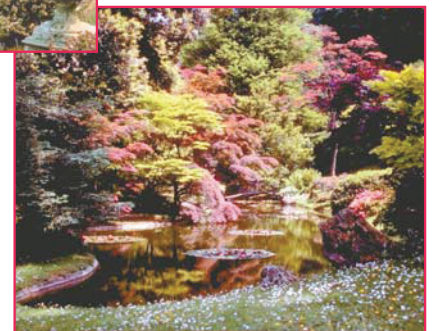
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# Arriving at Firefly Haven

By Ramona Jan

Except perhaps for her fiery red hair, there's little indication that Donna Fellenberg once literally tangoed across night club stages as the front person of a rock band. She's way too well-pressed, you would think, in appearance as well as approach for that sort of thing. Indeed, she did play timbales, sing lead and dance the tango in various '70s rock bands under the alias of Ruby Dubois. For real money, she worked during the day teaching dance and English. But this was merely part of life's journey for Donna, and only half of the Fellenberg story.

Bill and Donna Fellenberg met at Montclair State Teacher's College (now Montclair State University) and upon graduation went their separate ways. Over the years, Bill Fellenberg became a floor walker at Bamberger's, a writer for *Mobile Travel Guide*, a communications manager at the National League for Nursing, the director of membership at the Museum of Modern Art and eventually vice president of advancement at New Jersey City University.

Donna went back to school twice: first to obtain a license in hair dressing, and then for a graduate degree in psychotherapy. "People would literally call me up and say, 'I don't need my hair cut [today], but I do need to talk to you,'" says Donna about her decision ultimately to open her private practice, specializing in eating disorders. Somewhere along the road, Bill and Donna reconnected and married. They adopted a son, whom they named Miles for the miles he traveled from Korea as well as for Miles Davis. (Coincidentally, Miles Fellenberg is now a graduate of the Julliard School of Music and a working concert pianist).

"I'm very lucky that I had a mother who always told me you can do anything or be anything you want to be," says Donna.

Both of the Fellenbergs wanted someday to be in the country and to own a house with "a big kitchen, plenty of guest rooms for friends, a barn and some kind of water on the property. It also had to be near a cultural center," says Donna adding, "We always thought that Narrowsburg offered a lot." Little did the Fellenbergs know that just

outside of Narrowsburg, on 10 pastoral acres dotted with hand-worked stone walls and cottage gardens, an 1876 farmhouse with their exact specifications (and more) awaited them.

Sunny and sprawling, this 2,800-square-foot home has four grand bedrooms and three-and-a-half baths. Each bathroom, though updated, maintains its rustic charm with the inclusion of pedestal sinks and painted cabinets. Touring the house, one cannot help but notice a tasteful mix of antique and mid-century furnishings as well as a gallery's worth of art work. "I've never had any training as a decorator, but whenever Bill and I go on vacation, we always try to get a piece of original art," says Donna, and truly the walls are lined in art not only from around the world but from many of our local artisans as well.

The eat-in country kitchen, with its six-burner Garland stove, is a place for large gatherings as well as a healthy peeping of roosters and chickens that appear in paintings, ceramics, oil jars, cook pots, rugs and even on dish towels. "I started collecting this stuff even before I had the house, and my friends would give me rooster things as a gift. Finally, I had to call a moratorium on all of it," laughs Donna. Slate

countertops, exposed original hand-hewn beams and picture windows also grace the kitchen.

Warmed by a fieldstone fireplace, the substantial living area boasts original tiger-maple floors, a painted wainscot chair rail and a baby grand piano tucked into the bay window. French doors open into an adjacent sunroom with built-in cabinets and a bead-board ceiling. A cozy red couch for Bill and a collection of vintage fishing gear for Donna are only some of the distinguishable differences in their separate offices. The hearty interior is as compelling as the house's surrounding grounds.

"The oldest outbuilding on the property, a small barn built around 1780, may very well have been the original house," says Donna, "and the outhouse is now the garden shed." The well's hand pump, outfitted in masonry, is in perfect working order. The natural spring-fed pond is ideal for summer swims as well as winter ice skating. Before buying the house, however, the Fellenbergs intentionally visited the area every weekend in all kinds of weather—especially snow, sleet and hail—just to be absolutely sure they were doing the right thing. Soon they discovered that on dark, cool June nights, the yard would be visited by an amazing number of fireflies. As they turned the key to their new home, they nicknamed it "Firefly Haven."

People have asked the Fellenbergs what they might do now that they have retired. "I think when you retire you have to find something to work at—you have to find a purpose, a mission," says Donna. And truly, both have been very busy—Bill as a writer with *Yarnslingers* and Donna as a volunteer radio host at WJFF Radio Catskill. For this newly retired couple, it seems life's journey never ends, and yet in so many ways within our community and at Firefly Haven, the Fellenbergs have finally arrived.



TRR photos by Ramona Jan  
Donna and Bill Fellenberg moved from suburban Montclair, NJ to an 1876 farmhouse just outside of Narrowsburg, NY.



Tucked away in a sunny bay window sits a baby grand piano upon which Donna, now retired, learns to play.



In side-by-side offices (shown above and below) Bill has the red cozy couch, while Donna has the vintage fishing gear.



Every bit of charm surrounding an old farmhouse is maintained in this updated bathroom.

Wallpapered nooks, painted furniture and exquisite china are only some of the comforting touches within the Fellenberg home.



The way the skies turn and the light hits the original hand pump and stone walls can sometimes make the backyard look like a painting.



Guest bedrooms bathed in sunshine are a welcome morning treat for friends who had stayed the night.



# Ramona's DIY: the numbers game

By RAMONA JAN



One thing I faced when moving from a city apartment to a house in the country was a numbers game—literally! Our new “old” house, situated on a rural route, had no actual number—the address was something like Rural Route One—that’s it. When our township finally created a real road name along with designated house numbers, I had to fight for my number—yes, literally. At first, the powers-that-be assigned the number 58 to my home, but my neighbor (a crotchety old man who later abandoned his house to foreclosure) had already arbitrarily hammered the number 58 onto his front door. When the township ordered him to remove the number (I even pleaded with him), he flatly refused. Rather than take the old guy to court, township officials allowed me to choose either number 56 or 60.

I happily chose the regal-sounding 60, but the numbers game wasn't over yet. I still had to figure out the best way to install that stately numeral above my front door. No matter where I shopped, I found the most insipid numerical product in mostly black plastic peel and stick. Exhausted, I eventually settled on gold numbers (even though I don't like shiny) just because they were metal and one could actually nail rather than stick them to something. Being somewhat “scrappy,” I happily affixed my new golden digits onto a scrap of antique wood, which was then cut to fit above my front door (shown above). In giving directions to my house, I always say, “There’s a number 60 in gold above the door.” It’s okay. I’ve gotten over the fact that it glints. Well, not exactly. I still pray that someday number 60 will, like me, tarnish a bit. Ironically, since that time, I’ve designed numerous numbers for a variety of clients using some of the inexpensive techniques on this page.

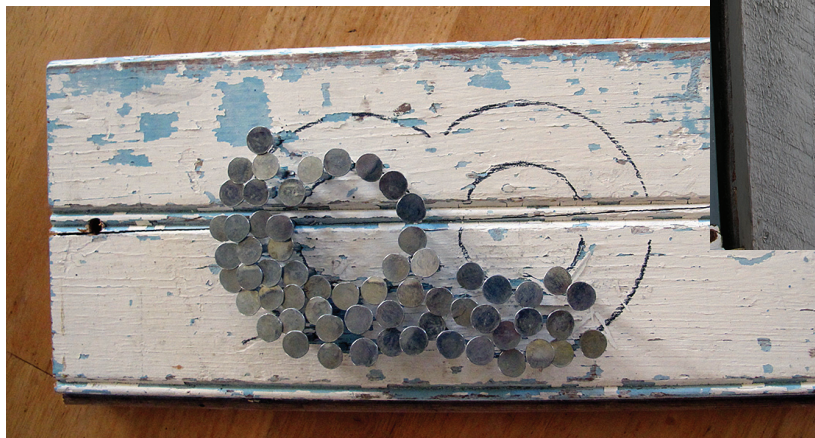


## Stencil it!

Stencil it: Take any old planter-sized wooden box (in this case one that was already painted a dusty mauve), and then paint numbers on one side using stencils of different sizes, styles and shapes. Tips: When stenciling, overlap the paper stencils (as shown with numbers 4 and 6), otherwise your numbers will be too far apart. Also use the

## Nail it!

Nail it: Using a stencil, first trace your desired number onto a piece of scrap wood. Then pound one-inch galvanized roofing nails (from the hardware store) into the board, being careful not to sink them all the way. Hammer the nails just enough for them to fasten and form a relief. Tips: When tapping the nails, start along the edges of your tracing and fill the number in as you go. The nails can and should overlap. When done, simply nail the board to the side of your building. Watch your fingers!



TRR photos by Ramona Jan

## Decoupage it!



Decoupage it: Not too long ago, I bought a large cake-plate (made of milk glass) at one of our local thrift shops, and since I'm not a baker, I just ended up keeping it for years. One day, a flower-loving client of mine was in need of a number—so voilà—paper cut-outs from a flower catalog helped to create this fancy house number. To decoupage, I used Modge Podge, which comes in matte or gloss, but you can also use slightly watered-down white glue such as Elmer's or Weldbond.

To hang your creation, plate holders of all varieties can be picked up for pennies at various church sales and thrift stores. For the number shown, I happened to have these two unidentifiable rusty elements just hanging about, so I used them to hold the plate as pictured. Tip: Anything with decoupage should be hung under an awning to protect it from the elements, particularly rain. You don't have to put all the numbers on one plate. I've seen plate armatures that hold up to four plates. One number on each plate would be fantastic, too.



'dry brush method' by blotting your stencil brush on a separate piece of paper before touching it to your box. When done, add seasonal foliage.

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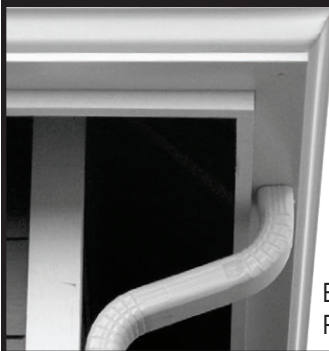
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# Creating a home office

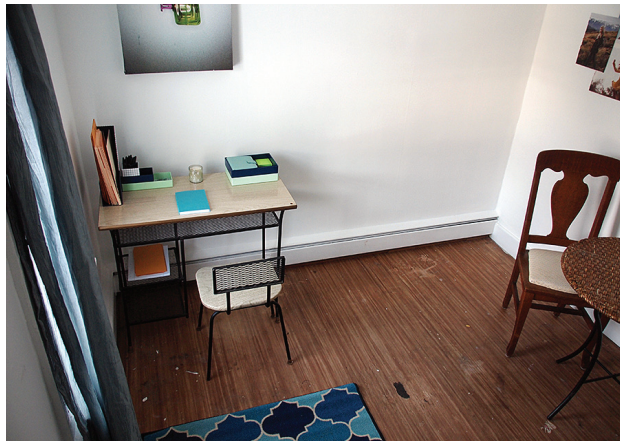
By ISABEL BRAVERMAN

I don't know about you, but when I have trouble focusing at work, or if I lack motivation, I clean my desk. Just the simple task of standing up and taking some papers and placing them elsewhere, or throwing things in the recycling, feels extremely rewarding and mind-clearing. Suddenly, with a spotless desk, I can get back to work.

While my desk at work usually may be found in tip-top shape, my "home office," when I started to write this article, was quite the opposite. In fact, it was not even an office yet. It was just a room with a desk in it. I moved to a new place last year, and long after the main living areas were complete, the office had yet to be touched. Before I began my transformation, it contained a few broken lamps (why do we have so many lamps?), empty packages and items from the previous tenants (still not sure what to do with that). I had a lot of work in front of me. Here is the process I followed to create my own home office.

## Step 1: Assess the situation and create a plan

As noted, the room where I wanted to create a home office was empty except for bits and pieces of junk that I threw in there when I didn't know where else to put them. I was starting from scratch. The good thing was that I had a completely blank canvas to work with and



This is an aerial shot of my home office. The desk is next to a window, and an extra table and chair are in the corner of the room. The door is to the right, and behind is a small closet for extra storage space.

could truly design the room. The bad thing was that I needed to either find or purchase all of the items for an office. I started by clearing out the room and figuring out the best design plan. I decided on placing the desk against the wall next to the window so I could sit in the sun and have natural light. You also need to pinpoint for what purpose you will be using the office. I plan to use mine to write outside of work and sometimes even for fun (I know, I'm crazy) and also to store and organize important documents. Therefore, I want to make sure I have desk space and plenty of storage.

## Step 2: Make a vision board

While I am an avid magazine reader, home design magazines are not in my rotation. Since I wasn't going to make a physical vision board, I turned to the digital: Pinterest. This website is amazing. I simply searched for "home office" and hundreds of images popped up. I looked through them and pinned the ones I liked to my "Home Office" board. If you want to see my vision board, go to [www.pinterest.com/bravermanisabel/home-office](http://www.pinterest.com/bravermanisabel/home-office). Some ideas I gleaned from my Pinterest board: wall art, an area rug, storage bins, wall shelving, flowers, plants and desk objects. Some other good home design and décor websites are Houzz, Elle Décor, and Design Sponge.

*Continued on page 18*



I purchased navy, mint, and checked desk accessories from Poppin, an office supply website with cool and colorful designs.



*Photos by Isabel Braverman*

Recently I turned a spare room in my house into a home office. I won't be working for TRR from home, but I plan to use the office to work on some extra writing as well as a place to organize and store important documents.



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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 2015 WINNERS in our annual Readers' Choice Awards "BEST" supplement in January 2016.

**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 _____	Home Décor _____
Auto Parts Store _____	Jewelry Store _____
Baby/Kids Store _____	Knit Shop _____
Boat Dealer/Rental _____	Liquor Store _____
Bookstore _____	Locally-made products _____
Botique _____	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 _____	Specialty Store _____
General Store _____	Sporting Goods Shop _____
Gift Shop _____	Tattoo/Ear Piercing Shop _____
Hardware Store _____	Vintage Shop _____

## BEST BUSINESSES & SERVICES

Auto Service Station _____	Mortgage Company _____
Bank _____	New Business of the Year _____
Child Care Provider _____	Pet Boarding/Pampering _____
Christmas Tree Farm _____	Pet Grooming/Groomer _____
Customer Service _____	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 _____

## 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 17, 2015. 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, 2015.

**HOW TO WIN PRIZES:** All ballots will be included in a random drawing for prizes. Drawing will be held in January 2016. No duplicate winners. BEST Winners will be notified in January 2016.

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## HOME OFFICE

*Continued from page 16*

### Step 3: Make a two-part list

#### What I have:

Vase  
Wall art  
Small table  
Chair  
Curtains

#### What I need:

Desk and chair  
Desk trays and organizers  
Filing cabinet  
Storage bins  
Area rug  
Office supplies

### Step 4: Go shopping!

This is the fun part (well, minus the expense). I'm on a budget, so everything I bought needed to be on the low-priced side. I shopped online, at local stores and in my parent's house. I started small: desk organizers. I discovered the website Poppin ([www.poppin.com](http://www.poppin.com)), which has everything you need for a home office in sleek modern design and organized by color. This also helped me devise a color scheme. I chose navy and mint. I bought two trays (\$9 each), a desk set (\$16) and a magazine file box (\$15). I also checked out Green Outlet in Honesdale, PA. It's a great used furniture and appliance store with so many things in near-perfect condition at a low cost point. I found a really cool retro desk and matching chair for \$45. I got a rug from Walmart (\$21) as well as office supplies like paper, folders, pens and paper clips. Who knew shopping for office supplies could be so fun!

### Step 5: Clear out the room, do the basics

Now I was actually ready to put the room together. I did a deep clean to the best of my ability (the floors are not in good shape). I placed the desk in the corner and the chair next to the window to optimize natural lighting. Since the desk is so small, I had extra room in the space, so I added a table and chair in the corner. I placed the area rug, added window curtains (both in shades of blue; I call this office the "50-Shades-of-Blue Room") and wall art above the desk.

### Step 6: Design and décor

Focus on the color scheme as well as the overall "look" you want. Also keep in mind the rest of your house; you probably want it to blend with the other design. Think about the function of this office; is it for clients? Do you want it to be quiet? Do you want it to be comfortable and cozy? Ask yourself these questions to help you think of a design plan.



Getting desk accessories was one of the most fun parts about creating a home office. I color coordinated in navy and mint and added a small candle. Finding attractive desk accessories makes storing folders, papers and pens more aesthetic.



I found this desk and matching chair at Green Outlet in Honesdale, PA, a used furniture and appliance store.

### More info on home offices:

- Do you plan on using your home office to work from home? Then get those tax breaks!

For more information, visit [www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&Self-Employed/Home-Office-Deduction](http://www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&Self-Employed/Home-Office-Deduction).

- Want more home office inspiration? Visit [www.hgtv.com/design/rooms/other-rooms/1/10-tips-for-designing-your-home-office](http://www.hgtv.com/design/rooms/other-rooms/1/10-tips-for-designing-your-home-office).



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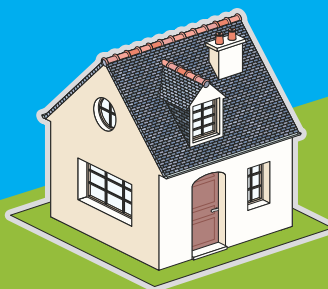
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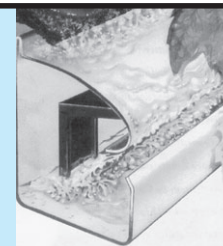
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