

Spring 2016

OUR COUNTRY HOME



A RIVER REPORTER LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

Letter from the editor

Winter is the time for curling up and enjoying the coziness inside our country homes—but it's getting to be spring, time for rollicking around in the realm of landscaping and gardening. You can get started in these pages, with some fun and inspirational ideas about what you can do with your outside space this year.

Much as I have appreciated this mild winter, it has raised its own conundrums—like, what the heck happened to my garlic? It started to sprout mid-winter when temps were high, and then it froze! “One warm-winter worry”

will give you some ideas on how better to protect this dearest of bounties in the future.

Speaking of bounties: last season, I couldn't help but marvel at the plethora of low-hanging fruit on everyone else's property but mine. If you, too would like to investigate the possibility of planting fruit trees of your own—or of taking better care of the ones you have—learn all “About fruit trees” under the expert guidance of tree farmer Bill Korwan.

If you've ever considered adding nonliving, man-made fixtures to your property such as sculpture, signage, or any other object you happen to deem beautiful (or just can't part with), then check out award-winning photographer Jonathan Charles Fox's “Roadside attractions” for some inspiration.

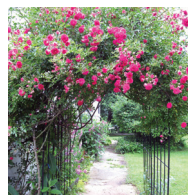
Already a consummate flower and/or vegetable gardener? Then you know it's a must to lay some pathways and stepping stones for yourself and admiring visitors; find five easy ways to do so inside these pages. And if gardening, in general, seems too unruly for you, but you'd still like to do it, then check out Zin Garden's 10 useful tips on container gardening. Above all, let's not forget to smell the roses—but first we have to grow them. Tips on tending, trimming and trellising those lovelies can be found when you read “A rose is a rose.” Happy landscaping and gardening and most of all, happy spring!

Ramona Jan
Section editor



Photo by Ellie Ohio

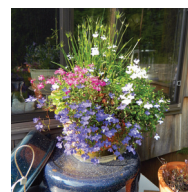
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A rose is a rose

By RAMONA JAN

Types

If you're planning to cultivate roses, memorizing all 37 classes of species (currently recognized by the American Rose Society) will not be necessary. Becoming familiar with the three main groups, however, might be helpful.

Species: Wild and other hybrids; large climbing or shrub-like roses with single, flat flowers blooming in late spring or early summer followed by hips (seeds) in autumn.

Old Garden: Alba, Ayrshire, Bourbon, Boursault, Centifolia, China, Damask, Gallica, Hybrid Perpetual, Moss, Noisette, Portland, ramblers and tea.

Modern: A broad mix of climbing including floribunda, grandiflora, hybrid musk, hybrid rugosa, hybrid tea, landscape (ground cover) or shrub, miniature, mini-flora and polyantha.



Heirloom antique tea rose. The smell is heavenly.

Tending Tips Pruning

In late winter, just as the buds begin to swell, dead, dry, brown whole and partial branches need to be pruned from rose bushes and shrubs. (If you prune in the fall, new growth will begin and then possibly die in winter, and you don't want that to happen). When trimming the dead ends off branches, first find a five-leaf segment that faces outward and away from the center of the bush, and then cut the branch at about a 45-degree angle right above that segment. If you can't find a five-leaf break, a three-leaf will do.

Late winter is also a good time to prune a rose down to about two feet high, especially when the plant seems a ball of tangled brown brambles. This type of pruning will give most roses a new start. Otherwise, selective pruning of dead branches can be done at any time during the year.

Canes tall enough to be damaged in high winds by blowing wildly into each other should be regularly trimmed. Suckers (canes without buds) should be done away with completely by cutting them down to about two inches under the ground. If you can't get your cutting instrument underneath the soil, trimming suckers tight to the ground will also work.

To mulch or not to mulch

It's best to provide some sort of winter ground cover for roses that grow outside your drip line. You can protect the feeder roots with pine or wheat straw by distributing it to a depth of at least an inch. (Various straw products eventually break down to benefit the soil and feed the worms).

If you feel the need to protect the bottom couple feet of each plant from a particularly cold winter, wrap the bush with three layers of heavy row cover or engulf the plant in commercially sold pre-made cones, baskets, or wraps.

Fighting black spot

Black spot is a fungal disease that attacks roses, causing leaves to drop from the bottom of the plant. Black spot can kill a rose. There are many commercial products available to alleviate this malady, including Bayer Advanced Disease Control for Roses, Flowers & Shrubs, BannerMax, Immunox and Fertilome. Apply said products in warm weather, making sure to alternate them. There are also two homemade treatments that deserve to be tried:

Homemade treatments for blackspot:

1. Three tablespoons of baking soda mixed with one gallon of water. Apply with a sprayer to both sides of all leaves until the moisture becomes rivulets.
2. Sprinkle cornmeal on the soil around the base of the plant. Remember that no treatment will bleach out the black spots. If you want to improve the appearance of your rose, you'll have to pluck the spotty leaves.



Trellis made from reclaimed old wooden framed windows.

Trellising

To give climbing roses the best life possible, you'll need to trellis them. Attach the main and secondary cane to the trellis using a soft, flexible material such as cloth or nylon. Twist and cable ties that are loosely applied can also be used. From this main cane, shoots will emerge and flowers will be abundant. Note: Make sure to ask your rose seller if the climbing rose you are buying is most prolific when grown horizontally as opposed to vertically.

Know the mature size of your climbing rose before you attach it to a trellis, so that the trellis is large and strong enough for the plant to anchor itself firmly. Note: Metal trellises tend to last longer than wood. However, with metal, you may run the risk of scorching your climbing rose. The best way to test a metal trellis is to touch it when in full afternoon sun.

To grow a rose on the side of a wall espalier style (flat), you still need a trellis. Leave at least two to four inches of space between the trellis and the wall for air circulation. This extra space will allow you to take down the rose if you ever need to repaint.

Fences and rooflines make good horizontal trellises. Rose arbors, towers and even some pitched roofs make great vertical trellises. You can even wrap a climbing rose around a tree trunk. Rose trellises can also be fashioned from old windows and reclaimed wooden railings (see photos). Use your imagination, and when all is said and done, remember to smell the roses!



Photos by Ramona Jan



Trellis fashioned from the railing of a circa-1800 farmhouse.

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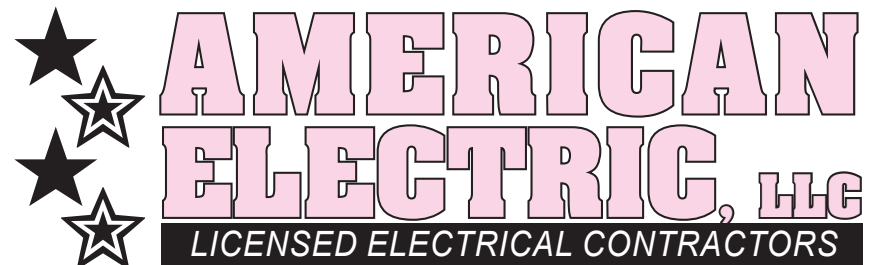
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About fruit trees: Tips from Bill Korwan

Love the idea of picking fruit off a tree in your own backyard but daunted by all that would be involved in a long-term investment like a tree? We asked 30-year veteran tree growers Bill Korwan of Korwan's Tree Farm in Jeffersonville, NY (845/482-3345) for some tips on buying and growing fruit trees to help get you over the hump.

Ponderings: What to consider before you buy

1. Size and type: Fruit trees come in dwarf (6' – 7'), semi-dwarf (12') and standard (35') sizes. According to Korwan, the fruits on dwarfs and semi-dwarfs are not much smaller than that of a standard.

2. Caliper: A one-inch caliper tree (with intact roots) may produce fruit the year you plant it as opposed to a three-inch caliper tree (with trimmed roots), which will most likely produce fruit in about three years.

3. Staking vs. non-staking: Dwarfs and semi-dwarfs will need staking to maturity because they have small shallow roots. Standards do not need staking.

4. Ripening: If you're a "snow bird," plant an apple tree that ripens early. Weekenders have the luxury of getting trees and shrubs that will ripen whenever.

5. Pollination: If your tree cross-pollinates, then you'll need two trees of the same variety in fairly close proximity to each other. However, if your neighbor has the same variety, you won't need to buy a second tree.

Planting

According to Korwan, before planting any type of fruit-bearing tree or shrub, test the soil for proper pH. "You can buy a pH test-kit for about \$15 from any Agway or Cooperative Extension and it will last about four to five years," says Korwan. "A range between 6.0 to 6.7 is a good pH for any fruit tree or shrub. To make the spot where you're planting more acidic, add sulphur or peat moss (which BTW comes from the bogs of Canada). For a more alkaline-rich soil, add powdered lime and keep testing the ground until it's right. It may take a few tries."

After digging the proper-sized hole (consult your tree seller), Korwan advises adding Roots 2 Concentrate (found at any Agway) to the first watering. "It's an organic root stimulator that helps the tree survive and does not stop upward tree growth. Other stimulators with high



Photos by Ramona Jan



Mountain Wave band member Marc J. Switko, picks from last October's prolific apple crop.



Tree climber Jeremy Jacobi, prunes all types of trees.

phosphates stimulate the roots and take energy from the upward growth, which might stunt it," explains Korwan.

Proper Care

Trimming, fertilizing and watering: Newly planted trees need to be regularly fertilized and watered, especially when there's a drought. Consult your tree seller as to the fertilizing and watering of each individual tree. Once they have been established, you don't have to water your fruit trees and shrubs at all—unless, of course, there's a drought. Very important: Ideally speaking, you should prune your fruit trees (or pay someone else to prune them) on a yearly basis. Local tree pruners and planters include Korwan, Shawn Wilcox (845/701-6935), Jeremy Jacobi 845/807-6037, Michael 'Murf' Murphy (845/423-8310), and Pocono Tree and Landscape Services (570/253-3207).

Diseases: Sooty blotch, fly speck, cedar rust; white and bitter rot; botrytis blight, mummy berry, twig and fruit rot—gotta love the names! Describing all maladies and their perspective cures in this brief article would take up too much space. It's best to consult one of the many Cooperative Extensions and their list of diseases, corresponding plants and antidotes.

Bugs: Protect your fruit bearers from various bugs by using either chemical or organic sprays. Or make your own bug repellent from Tabasco sauce, raw eggs and onions. Recipe: Finely chop all aforementioned ingredients, add water and then boil until liquid. Use a sprayer to apply. According to Korwan, "Bugs change their likes and dislikes as they breed—they become immune to the different sprays and chemicals, so you may end up having to trade off among chemical, homemade and organic sprays." And look out for the peach borer—an uncommon flying bug with a large needle for a tail. "It bores a hole into any and all fruit trees (particularly peach) where it will lay its eggs. Once hatched, little worms eat through the center of your tree," says Korwan, adding,

Continued on page 8

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FRUIT TREES

Continued from page 6

“The easiest way to prevent the peach borer from killing your fruit tree is to paint the tree trunk with latex paint three feet from the bottom up.” Another way to deter the weevil is to apply Vaseline on the first foot of the trunk. But Vaseline must be reapplied after every rain. Fortunately, the bug is only around in July.

Vermin: Fruit trees are high in protein and sugar, which is why deer and other vermin such as voles and moles gnaw voraciously at their bark. A four-foot-tall, circular staked fence surrounding each individual tree trunk is one of the best ways to keep the deer from devouring your precious fruit tree. Add chicken wire to the base of the fence to deter rabbits. (It’s not necessary to go underground with the chicken wire because rather than work hard, rabbits will just find another tree to munch). As for the voles and moles, Tractor Supply sells chemicals that will kill them, but your best natural defense is a feisty barn cat. Indicator for voles and moles: Shake your tree, and if it rocks you have voles and moles. Tunnels and mounds of dirt around the base of any tree are also a sure sign of those little creatures.

Persuasions

Apples

“There are at least 100 varieties of apple trees for this area,” says Korwan. “And two of the best growers are Liberty and Freedom—crosses between Macintosh and Cortland. They are sweet and tart—good for cooking and eating, and they are by and large disease resistant. They



Jacobi examining a tree for disease.



Jacobi pruning from the ground up.

ripen in September. Honeycrisp are also early ripening apples. Gala and Crispin, all hearty to the area, are delicious apples that ripen in October.”

Cherries

Of all the cherries, Korwan recommends the Spella for this area. “It’s self-pollinating and it’s like a bing—big, red and very sweet.”

Pears

“There are many varieties of pear, and each year there are new varieties,” says Korwan. “Plus there are very few problems growing pears. These cold-hardy trees are a good choice for beginners. When it comes to pears, there are two divisions: Asian and European. Within the Asian there are about seven to eight different varieties that will all grow well in this region. Within the European, there are many more varieties meant for colder climate. If you want a lot of pears, you will absolutely need two trees. However, if your neighbor has the same variety tree, you can cross pollinate with that one.”

Peaches

“Lucky are those with a healthy peach tree,” says Korwan, because there are a lot of bugs and fungi that

like to attack the peach. Animals and voles love it due to its very sweet roots. Nonetheless, there are about 10 different varieties that will grow in our 4-5 cold-hardy zone such as Reliance, Alberta, Hail Haven and the new Constellation Peach, which boasts a zone 3 hardiness and a long lifespan.

Berries

Raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, goji and elderberries are all recommended by Korwan as easy care options compared to fruit trees. “You put them in the ground, they grow and produce berries,” says he. “Blues want a pH of 4 to 5—very acid. Coffee grinds (chock full of nitrogen) and acidic compost (test it first) are great supplements for the roots of these shrubs—just dig it into the base of the plant by turning the ground a bit. Although blueberries experience some disease, Korwan assures us that “around these parts not so much. Birds are the biggest problem with berries,” he says, “but there’s usually enough to go around for everyone. Anyway, there’s always the option of bird fencing, netting and scare crows.”

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Container gardening

Top 10 tips from Patti Zins of Zin Garden

1. Use a soil-free mix formulated specifically for containers, available wherever garden supplies are sold. Dirt from your yard and products such as topsoil are too heavy and will compact when watered, which can and will crush roots.

2. Know the light requirements of each container plant. Is the site you are choosing in sun or shade?

3. The composition of your container will affect the amount of water your plants will require. Terra cotta and wood containers are porous and dry more quickly than glazed or metal pots. Wind is drying as well.

4. Keep the concept of thrill, fill and spill in mind when designing. This means something tall, plants that fill in the middle and something that cascades over the sides.

5. Your plants have a maximum growing season of six months during which to flourish and perform, so fertilize thoughtfully by reading package directions. If your soil-free mix already has fertilizer in it, then you don't have to fertilize your containers. Good results can also be obtained with a non-fertilized mix by adding an organic product such as fish emulsion when watering.

6. Retain air space by providing good drainage: indoor container plants need their saucers emptied, outdoor container plants do not.

7. Keep container plants tidy by removing dead, yellowed leaves and spent flowers. Check for pests while on cleaning duty.

8. Don't limit your choices or imagination. Incorporate herbs with salvias, roses with grasses. Go colorful. Use bulbs and seeds.

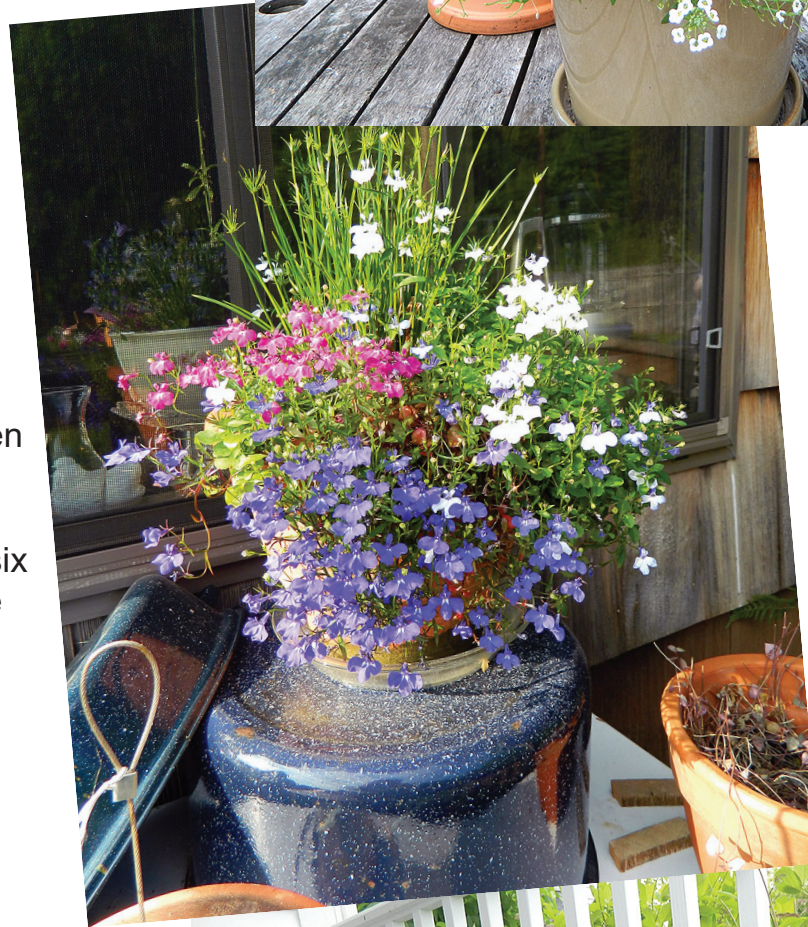
9. Got a question? Pick a gardener's brain, or call your local extension service. Research your issues online as well as in books and magazines.

10. Have fun!

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Photos by Patti Zins



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One warm winter worry:

Early sprouting garlic



Photos by Ramona Jan

By RAMONA JAN

Around late September/early November, as usual, I dutifully plant a bed of garlic and then watch while a reliable winter comes and goes. This year was no exception—but for the reliable winter. Apparently, El Niño gave us a break from our typical Catskills winter, which is fine by me. But how about the garlic?

I panicked when I saw my bed of bulbs sprouting green shoots in December, and then I ultra-panicked when the shoots bent in half and froze in late January. Surely, freeze-thaw weather is anything

but ideal for garlic. Since I can't expect an El Niño to rescue me from the cold snow, sleet and ice each year (and at the same time jeopardize my garlic crop), from here forward I vow to:

1. Mulch the beds more heavily (at least 2" to 3") with minced leaves and grass clippings. (As you can see from the photo, my winter mulching was far too thin).

2. Stagger my plantings from late September into December to ensure a more stable crop.

This winter we had repeated freezing and thawing, with temperatures rising into the 40s and 50s and then plummeting to below zero. For garlic, this

can be a real concern. It's possible, though, that the frozen green shoots are merely suspended in time and will come alive and continue to grow in the spring.

Luckily, acclimated garlic usually flourishes like a weed. (Proof: When harvesting, a clove or two always ends up randomly dropped somewhere and many of these cloves do grow). Despite our balmy winter, come July, one can expect some (and maybe even all) of our garlic to mature. Next year, however, mulch more and stagger the plantings. That's my new motto!

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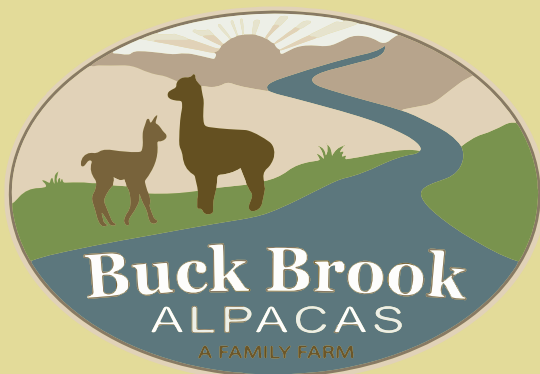
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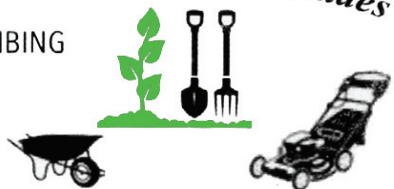
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Five easy ways to a garden path

Pebbles, pallets, pavers and more

By WALLIS BRANDT

If you're planning a flower and/or vegetable garden, you will surely need a path. Aside from providing a touring way through paradise, paths and stepping-stones also serve as places for steady footing when weeding and planting. Here are five easy and affordable ways to create some narrow roads within your garden.

First, choose the area where your path will travel and remove any plants and their root systems by either digging them up entirely or, if the roots are shallow, simply turning the ground. Note: The path doesn't have to be too straight or wide.

As a base for any and all paths, it's a good idea to lay down a weed barrier of landscapers' cloth. This black cloth comes in rolls and will let water through but will block most sun and air. Weed cloth can be purchased at farm and garden stores like Delaware Valley Farm and Garden in Callicoon, NY as well as Home Depot in Honesdale, PA. Once your path is sketched out and weed cloth is laid, consider covering it in any one of the following materials:



Photo by Ramona Jan

Pebbles are attractive, easy to walk on, and you can buy them by the bag at most farm and garden stores or by the truckload from landscape suppliers such as Dyberry Sand and Gravel (www.dyberrysandandgravel.com). Dyberry specializes in rounded stone for any and all landscaping needs, and they deliver. Garden pebbles installed on top of a weed barrier will hold up fantastically and usually don't sink or thin out. In time, however, seeds will land, and (horror of all horrors) weeds will find a way to grow on top of the pebbles, so you will have to do some weeding. However, most of those weeds have shallow roots and are easy to pull. Weeding a pebble path about three times per season is not too bad.



Photo by Ramona Jan

Pallets made from wood are useful for all kinds of paths and other things. Make a raised garden path by simply setting the pallet on top of the ground or dig down, lay your weed cloth, and set the pallets into the crevice. Fill the spaces between the slats with dirt and moss. Pallets can also be used to traverse a shallow stream or as a composter when you nail four of them together in the shape of a box. Leftover pallets can be found at construction sites and almost any large store. Just ask.

Continued on page 16

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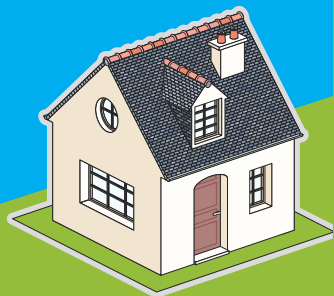
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GARDEN PATH

Continued from page 14



Photo by Ramona Jan

Pavers are man-made concrete stones of many colors and styles. They are stronger than asphalt and commonly used to build driveways, but they also make splendid garden paths, as many of them look like natural cut stones. Because they are shaped into near-perfect squares and rectangles, a garden path made of pavers will have a precise appearance. DJM Landscaping Material Unlimited in Ferndale, NY (www.djmdealers.com) is a great place to shop for pavers and many other landscaping needs including top soil, gravels, mulches and sands. Plus they deliver!



Photo by Patti Zins

Brick and bluestone, combined or laid separately, make great garden paths. At Campfield's Custom Bluestone in Narrowsburg (845/252-3532), you can get cut bluestone by the piece, or a truckload of "quarry rubble" (a mix of scrap stone of various size and thickness) for a very reasonable cost. Dig each piece of stone individually into the ground until flush. If you live along the East Branch of the Delaware River, you'll find cut stone at Johnston and Rhodes Bluestone in East Branch, NY, and in Lackawaxen, PA, you can find it at Holbert Bros.

Recycled or new brick can be had by the pallet from Orange County Mason Supply in Middletown, NY. You can also check out stores like the local Agways. To add interest and discourage weeds, plant a groundcover such as flowering sedum in between the stones and/or breaks.

Continued on page 18



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GARDEN PATH

Continued from page 16



Photo by Ramona Jan

DIY Stepping Stones are easy and fun to make especially with children. Fill a 2" or deeper pan of any shape or size with Thin Set, mixed according to directions. (Thin Set is gray in color and can be purchased at Kohler Lumber, Callicoon Supply and Home Depot). Press broken ceramic shards or other decorative items into the cement while it's still wet. Let dry and remove your DIY stepping stone from its pan. Then make another and another and another until you have all that you need. The durability of these stepping stones will astonish you and last through many harsh winters and hard stepping.

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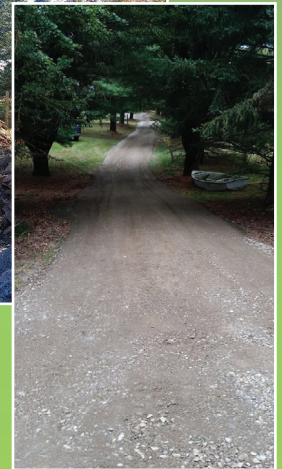
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Roadside attractions

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder

By JONATHAN CHARLES FOX

The Merriam-Webster definition of art is, “The expression of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power.” The Upper Delaware River region is home to many artists who express themselves in a myriad of ways. Their work is often on display in one of the many galleries dotting the landscape on both sides of the river—and sometimes you can see it right out on the roadsides.

While self-expression is open to interpretation, insti-

tutions that specialize in presenting art to the public are not the only game in town, and all one has to do is travel throughout the region to spy various forms of art outdoors, in gardens, or simply by the roadside for anyone to see. “Art gives us a way to be creative,” the Internet informs us, “and for some people, it is the entire reason they get out of bed in the morning.”

For others, the boxsprings of that bed might be considered art, and all one has to do is keep an eye on the road and remember that “one man’s trash is another man’s treasure” while traversing the countryside here in the mountains. Aside from the natural beauty that abounds,

the region is abloom with art in the great outdoors; be it classical, traditional, or the result of someone thinking outside the box. As far as lawn art here in the country is concerned, French novelist Emile Zola may have said it best: “If you ask me what I came to do in this world, I, an artist, will answer you: I came to live out loud.” Perhaps you recognize some of these examples and know where these works of art can be seen. Maybe you know of other hidden treasures, or produce some of your own for passersby to enjoy. Either way, there is little doubt that art is all around us, if we keep our eyes and mind open.



Combining painting, found objects and a bit of imagination, many gardens in the Upper Delaware River region boast “art installations” like this one.

Is it trash, or is it treasure? The decision is left to the casual traveler of country roads who sees this, intentionally displayed in front of a house.

With a little paint and a lot of imagination, an old wheelbarrow can be transformed into an outdoor work of art designed to add a bit of whimsy to a garden setting.

Photos by Jonathan Charles Fox



To some, it’s an old broken down bus by the side of Dr. Duggan Road in Bethel, NY. To others, it is undeniably art.



The great outdoors serves as an open-air gallery for this roadside attraction that boasts tree stump pedestals supporting rock art and metal sculptures deep in the woods, off the beaten track.

Continued on page 22

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ROADSIDE ATTRACTIONS

Continued from page 20



It would appear that a work-in-progress is taking place as one artist builds a sculpture out of natural materials during a spring cleanup somewhere along the Delaware River.



Is this garden artist making a statement by placing ornamental cages next to bird feeders in this woody display? You be the judge.



If you look closely, some of your neighbors might be harboring artistic skills by creating objects like this tin can man discovered hanging from a tree branch in Monticello, NY.



The large-scale works of local metal sculptor Zac Shavrick are on display in the open air throughout the region. This guy appears to be hitching a ride along Route 17B in White Lake, NY.



Evidently, this homeowner sees art in this cutaway view of an automobile, with bits of flotsam added for color. Trash or treasure? Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.



World-renowned woodcarver Paul Stark specializes in nature, and this soaring eagle invites passersby to visit his roadside workshop in Bethel, NY.



Details of sculptures created by Denis Folz capture the imagination of visitors who stop to admire his work outside of the Dancing Cat Saloon in Bethel, NY.

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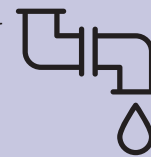
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