

# OUR COUNTRY HOME

Autumn 2018/Winter 2019

## **The Deliberate Life**

Art and light in Victoria Lesser's home

## **Snow Days, Festive Days**

The joys of a winter party

## **Zindoor Garden**

Create your garden inside this winter

**... and more**

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## Letter from the editor

“An Autumn sky; the color of peaches...” begins a poem by Michael McClintock on the approach of winter and, though it’s a beautiful thought, it truly makes me wonder just how I can extend the summer. One approach is indoor gardening. Master Gardener Patti Zins suggests plants that thrive in homes and are easy-care even for a novice. In Zindoor Gardens, she photographed her personal indoor garden and shared tips and links to online forums worth investigating. Also worth looking into is Barbara Winfield’s essential list on getting your home ready for winter, inside and out.

One winter worry for many of us might be mice. In “Unhoused Mouse,” Joe Cooke consulted Robert Morris from Let Us Spray on how to keep the little critters out of our homes during the cold season using traditional, as well as more modern and innovative methods.

Since we all know the inevitable is on the horizon—indoor activities, that is!—party planner Katie Welsh was interviewed by Annemarie Schuetz on entertaining with cozy cold-season bashes.



Some of these affordable ideas may be just the thing to get you through the winter.

Light is another element that can help alleviate the doldrums of even the grayest skies. Many people use full-spectrum lighting to pick up their mood; however, artwork in the form of a beautiful stained glass window might also cheer one up. Our featured artist is Joanie Schlafer of Light Curves Glass. Check out her history, process and work in the article by the same name.

Highlighted on the cover is a small, custom-built home designed by Victoria Lesser. She’s responsible for the look of the Old North Branch Inn, The Antrim Lodge in Roscoe, and other area gems. Just like Lesser, her home is smart and compact. Give it a tour right here in the pages of **Our Country Home**.

— Ramona Jan  
Section editor

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Cover photo: The living area of Victoria Lesser’s house, photo by Joe Cooke. See article on page 9.



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# Zindoor Gardens

## Create your garden inside this winter

By RAMONA JAN

**M**aster Gardener Patti Zins, who currently hails from the high hills of Buck Brook, describes herself as a “bit of a gypsy,” having lived previously in Illinois, Idaho, Vermont, and parts of north and south Jersey. Zins has worked maintaining and enhancing outdoor gardens in this area for the past nine years, often taking her pet Westie, Gin Gin, with her. However, she now finds herself gravitating back to the focus of houseplants.

“Because I grew up in the suburbs of New Jersey and New York City, house plants and their culture were more amenable to my environment,” explains Zins. “They were very popular in the ‘70s when I was young. They are portable and can move with you.”

Moving in with her “man friend” Bob Bestenheider (who enclosed a south-facing deck, making it into a sunroom and a special place for Zins to nurture



**Master Gardener Patti Zins is seen with her sidekick, Gin Gin.**

and showcase her collection of indoor plants) was exactly what started Zindoor Gardens. She calls it her “cultivation room” and her obsession. “The natural beauty and abundance of resources in the area only serves to enhance my passion for growing plants of all kinds,” says Zins. “I find the cultivation of living things, especially plants, to be a harmonious and therapeutic pastime. The vary-

ing colors, textures and habits of plants are endlessly awe inspiring to me. The more I learn, the more there is to learn.”

As a young girl, Zins was taken under a neighbor’s wing to learn about gardening. “She allowed me to work with her as a preteen without stress or judgement,” says Zins of her neighbor gardener. Since then, Zins has worked in quite a few retail nurseries and as an interior plant maintenance professional in both commercial and residential settings. Certified in 2001 as a Master Gardener by Penn State, in this region alone, Zins has designed and planted countless outdoor residential

*Continued on page 7*



*Photos by Patti Zins*

**Variegated ficus is a small tree perfect for indoors. Note: The hardware cloth over the top of the pot keeps kitties from using it as a natural litter box.**



**Burro’s tail is a lovely cascading succulent that will drop its puffy little leaves when moved or touched, so handle with care!**



**Hens and chicks grow and multiply easily in a sunny window.**

### “Zindoor” tips for growing indoors:

1. Start with an easy house plant like pothos or philodendrons.
2. Research their needs for light, water and occasional fertilizer.
3. Give them your attention; remember they are living things.
4. Watch how they respond to your care.
5. Don’t overstress or overwater.
6. When you do well, they do well.
7. Eventually they will need a bigger pot.
8. Failures are lessons; successes are joys.



**Windowsill beauties: Two different varieties of *Streptocarpus* (related to African Violets), left; sago palm with rosary vine trailing down; and variegated wax plant, hoya, which produces a cluster of pink, fragrant flowers.**



**A silver variety of begonia will stand out amongst myriads of different types of plants.**

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# ZINDOOR

Continued from page 6

ornamental gardens.

“After all these years, my relationship to plants has become second nature, an instinct or knowing of sorts,” states Zins. “Plants, although silent, can tell you many things if you recognize the signs.”

“Although indoor gardening can and does give solitary rewards, it is also an opportunity to share your interest with others of like or curious minds,” says Zins. “There are many societies dedicated to one particular group of plants as well as many sites on social media of enthusiastic house-plant lovers from novices to experts. Indoor gardeners: You are not alone! So check them out.”

For further information on Zindoor Gardening: pattizins@gmail.com

## Online house plant forums:

[www.houzz.com/discussions/house-plants](http://www.houzz.com/discussions/house-plants)

[www.garden.org/forums/view/houseplants](http://www.garden.org/forums/view/houseplants)

[www.gardening-forums.com/forums/indoor-plants.27](http://www.gardening-forums.com/forums/indoor-plants.27)

[www.davesgarden.com/community/forums/f/houseplants/all/#b](http://www.davesgarden.com/community/forums/f/houseplants/all/#b)

[www.permies.com/t/36493/favorite-house-plants](http://www.permies.com/t/36493/favorite-house-plants)



The Norfolk Island Pine is a sub-tropical conifer native to a small island that sits between New Zealand and Australia. It's often sold as a miniature Christmas tree and it makes a great indoor plant.



Wandering Jew, though it may or may not be politically correct in name, is an old standby for hanging baskets.



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# The River Reporter's 23rd Annual 2018 READERS' CHOICE AWARDS

## THE BEST BALLOT IS ALL NEW!

We have revamped our ballot and it's easier than ever to find your favorite categories! Since the themed groups we're confusing, we've alphabetized the list! We ask that you simply vote for the people, places or businesses that you think are the BEST.

We will publish our 2018 WINNERS in our annual Readers' Choice Awards "BEST" supplement in January 2019. Remember, you can always vote online at [riverreporter.com/best-vote](http://riverreporter.com/best-vote)

- |                                      |   |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| 55+ Active Adult Community _____     | Career Training Facility _____          | Eye Care Center _____            |
| Accountant _____                     | Carpenter _____                         | Fair _____                       |
| Ambulance Squad _____                | Carpet Cleaning _____                   | Family Night Out _____           |
| Amusement/ Fun Park _____            | Catering _____                          | Family Practice _____            |
| Animal Shelter _____                 | Celebrity _____                         | Family Restaurant _____          |
| Antiques/Collectibles _____          | Chamber of Commerce _____               | Farm _____                       |
| Appetizers _____                     | Cheese Steaks _____                     | Farm Equipment Retailer _____    |
| Appliance Dealer _____               | Chef _____                              | Farmers Market _____             |
| Architect _____                      | Chicken BBQ (Volunteer) _____           | Fastest Take Out Service _____   |
| Art Gallery _____                    | Chicken Wings _____                     | Financial Planner _____          |
| Artist _____                         | Child Care Provider _____               | Fine Dining Restaurant _____     |
| Assisted Living Facility _____       | Chinese Restaurant _____                | Fire Department _____            |
| Atmosphere _____                     | Chiropractor _____                      | Fitness Center _____             |
| Attorney _____                       | Chocolates _____                        | Flea Market _____                |
| Auction House/Service _____          | Christmas Tree Farm _____               | Flooring/Carpet Store _____      |
| Author _____                         | Cider Mill _____                        | Florist _____                    |
| Auto Dealer _____                    | Civic Club or Organization _____        | Food Truck _____                 |
| Auto Dealer Pre-owned _____          | Clergy _____                            | Formal Wear _____                |
| Auto Mechanic _____                  | Clothing Store Men _____                | French Fries _____               |
| Auto Painting/Collision Repair _____ | Clothing Store Women _____              | Fried Chicken _____              |
| Auto Parts _____                     | Cocktail _____                          | Friendliest Service _____        |
| Baby/Kids Store _____                | Coffee Shop _____                       | Friendly Staff _____             |
| Bagels _____                         | Collectibles Store _____                | Funeral Home _____               |
| Baker _____                          | College _____                           | Furniture Store _____            |
| Bakery _____                         | Community Festival or Street Fair _____ | Garbage & Junk Removal _____     |
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| Bank Teller _____                    | Conference Center _____                 | General Store _____              |
| Bar _____                            | Consignment Shop _____                  | Getaway _____                    |
| Barbecue _____                       | Contractor _____                        | Gift Shop _____                  |
| Barber Shop _____                    | Craft Beer Selection _____              | Golf Course _____                |
| Bartender _____                      | Custom Cabinetry _____                  | Gourmet Restaurant _____         |
| Bathroom Remodeler _____             | Customer Service _____                  | Green Builder _____              |
| Bed & Breakfast _____                | Dance School _____                      | Green Business _____             |
| Beer Distributor _____               | Dance Studio _____                      | Grocery Store _____              |
| Beer Selection _____                 | Day Care Center _____                   | Gym _____                        |
| Best Place to Work _____             | Day Spa _____                           | Hair Salon _____                 |
| Boat/Marine Service _____            | Day Trip _____                          | Happy Hour _____                 |
| Bookstore _____                      | Deli _____                              | Hardware Store _____             |
| Boutique _____                       | Dentist _____                           | Health Food Store _____          |
| Breakfast Buffet _____               | Dermatologist _____                     | Heating & Air Conditioning _____ |
| Breakfast Menu _____                 | Desserts _____                          | Heating Fuel Company _____       |
| Bridal Shop _____                    | Diner _____                             | Historic Site _____              |
| Brunch _____                         | Dinner _____                            | Hoagie _____                     |
| Budget-friendly _____                | Dinner Specials _____                   | Holistic Practitioner _____      |
| Buffet _____                         | Doctor _____                            | Home & Garden Store _____        |
| Builder/Developer _____              | Drug/Alcohol Treatment Center _____     | Home Builder _____               |
| Burger Place _____                   | Dry Cleaner _____                       | Home Cooking Restaurant _____    |
| Burrito _____                        | Early Bird Specials _____               | Home Décor _____                 |
| Butcher _____                        | Electrician _____                       | Home Health Care _____           |
| Campground _____                     | Electronics _____                       | Home Renovation _____            |
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| Candy Shop _____                     | Emergency Services _____                | Hospital/ Medical Facility _____ |
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|                                      |   | Jewelry Watch/Clock Repair _____ |

- |                                       |  |                                    |
|---------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Kid's Camp _____                      | Painter _____                          | Restaurant - Wayne _____           |
| Kitchen & Bath Store _____            | Pancake Breakfast _____                | Ribs _____                         |
| Kitchen Designer/Remodeler _____      | Parade _____                           | Romantic Restaurant _____          |
| Knit Shop _____                       | Party Supply Store _____               | Roofer _____                       |
| Landscaper _____                      | Pasta Dish _____                       | RV Sales/Service _____             |
| Latin Restaurant _____                | Pediatrician _____                     | Salad _____                        |
| Law Enforcement Officer _____         | Penny Social _____                     | Salad Bar _____                    |
| Law Firm _____                        | Pest Control _____                     | Salvage Company _____              |
| Lawn & Garden Equipment _____         | Pet Boarding Kennel _____              | Sandwiches _____                   |
| Library _____                         | Pet Day Care _____                     | Seafood _____                      |
| Liquor Store _____                    | Pet Grooming _____                     | Septic Service _____               |
| Live Music Venue _____                | Pet Store _____                        | Shoe Store Local _____             |
| Local Produce _____                   | Pet Supplies _____                     | Ski Lodge _____                    |
| Local Winery _____                    | Pet Trainer _____                      | Ski Shop _____                     |
| Locally Produced Beer / Spirits _____ | Pharmacy _____                         | Soup _____                         |
| Locally Produced Cheese _____         | Photographer _____                     | Spa or Personal Pampering _____    |
| Locally Produced Maple Syrup _____    | Pizza _____                            | Special Area Attraction _____      |
| Locally-made products _____           | Place to Buy Art _____                 | Specialty Store _____              |
| Locally-sourced Menu _____            | Place to Have First Date _____         | Sporting Goods _____               |
| Lumberyard _____                      | Place to Have a Cocktail _____         | Sports Bar _____                   |
| Lunch _____                           | Place to Hold a Prom _____             | Steakhouse _____                   |
| Martini _____                         | Place to Take out of town guests _____ | Storage Center _____               |
| Massage Therapist _____               | Place to Take the kids _____           | Sullivan Renaissance Project _____ |
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| New Restaurant _____                  | Real Estate Company _____              | Wine Selection _____               |
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| Outdoor Dining _____                  | Resort _____                           | Yoga Studio _____                  |
| Outdoor Recreational Vehicles _____   | Restaurant - Pike County _____         | Yoga Teacher _____                 |
|                                       | Restaurant - Sullivan County _____     | Youth Center _____                 |

**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: <http://riverreporter.com/best-vote> **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 15, 2018. Employees of The River Reporter and Stuart Communications are permitted to vote but not eligible to win prizes in the random drawing. 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 15th, 2018. **HOW TO WIN PRIZES:** All ballots will be included in a random drawing for prizes. Drawing will be held in January 2019. No duplicate winners. BEST Winners will be notified in January 2019.

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# The Deliberate Life

## *Art and light in Victoria Lesser's new home*

By ANNEMARIE SCHUETZ

**C**ALLICOON — First, you see the light. Walk into Victoria Lesser's Callicoon home—newly built, designed by her from the ground up—and sunlight washes over you. Most of the windows are up near the ceiling and aren't necessarily large, but they catch the light and channel it in. The floor plan is mostly open, with knotty pine floorboards stained black and then sanded to show the grain. Art is everywhere. The space looks clean and bright and has the feel of a museum for when you have hours to spare, looking at everything.

Although it probably wouldn't take that long. Lesser was the innkeeper and designer at the North Branch Inn. "Forty-five hundred square feet of space," she said, no sign of regret. The new house is a mere 680.

Tiny houses aren't easy. It's like the cliché about writing: the process is easier if you have as many pages as you want, there's no editing, no effort aside from making words. The tiny house is work. Possessions are pared to a minimum, and everything is carefully chosen, then monitored. "One new item in, one old item out," Lesser said with a wry smile. "I need space between things. Nothing feels extraneous; even the Airstream in the backyard doubles as a guest room.

"I do everything with the psychology behind it," she says. "Everything does have a history."

Perhaps because it's all so carefully chosen, it is all personal, symbols of a friend or a memento of an event, a gift by a loved one, a purchase from a local shop.

And she knows the source and story behind it all. "I can't get here by myself... I'm going to honor the person who made this, or the person who grew these flowers, who sold this item," Lesser said. She buys locally as much as possible. "This linen dish towel came from Spruce here in Callicoon—I like the way it looks and feels." A gorgeous toilet brush and red enamel dustpan came from Sunny Ruffalo's shop in Narrowsburg, the desk chair came from Karkula and an art piece from PAO! (both in Callicoon), and the kitchen light from New York Vintage Lighting (New York City and Callicoon).

"Wherever I am, that's where I am, [but] the art follows me. I feel the presence of my friends."

Like a cat, Lesser has had many lives.

She first saw Callicoon in 2005, and went elsewhere, but she has Sullivan County roots: a childhood summering at the Riverside Hotel, attendance at Sullivan County Community College in the late '60s. She logged time at Key West, then in North Branch, then in California.

And then she cycled back here, loving Callicoon, the changes happening here and the beauty of the village. The new house is on a small plot of land that is easily mistaken for a neighbor's side yard. When the land came up for sale, Lesser grabbed it and started thinking.

She chose Mountain Valley Builders for the construction. When the hole was dug for the foundation, "36 by 20," she says, "and three feet down, I'd climb into the hole after they left for the day and imagine where everything was going to go."



TRR photos by Joe Cooke

*Continued on page 10*

**The sunlit center of Victoria Lesser's house is a space for carefully chosen art.**

# DELIBERATE

*Continued from page 9*

She loved that she could create “every inch of it... I’m not stuck in any one design,” she said. Past homes, her Key West design studio, her friends’ artwork—it was all grist for the interior.

Lesser segues into a talk about designing clothes, demonstrates the details—French seams, carefully made buttonholes—that characterized her line. “So much work went into clothing, and it only gets worn once,” she said. “Now I really like making places that other people can live in.”

And she can live here. Construction-wise, the place is “a tight build,” Lesser said, so when the train goes by the house doesn’t shake. Pocket doors conserve more space. There is enough room not just for her, but for her two dogs, Baker and Beans, as well.

Working on the North Branch Inn and other people’s homes taught her that “with a house, you take the needs, wants and budget. Sometimes when it comes time to dress the house, you’re out of money.” So she made choices all along. The windows scattered at the top of the walls, for instance, came from Keller Glass, remnants from other projects.

Tiny houses require curation, For Victoria Lesser, the result worked splendidly. “I wake up in the middle of the night and I look at the windows and watch the light change. And I think, ‘Oh, how beautiful.’”



Lesser, Baker and Beans pose in front of the house



Aigues-Mortes clock in kitchen



The nightstand and its collection of reading material



View of the foyer and central living area.

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# Light Curves Glass

*Capturing the beauty of Mother Nature*



*Photos contributed by Light Curves Glass*

## **"Ruby's Sunflower Rising": a Tiffany technique stained-glass window**

By RAMONA JAN

**S**omewhere below the Neversink Reservoir live and work stained-glass artisan Joan Nicole Schlafer and her design partner, Nicholas Clemente. Together they share a spacious six-acre property with multi-faceted art studios. However, before

settling here, these two mega-talents looked far and wide for just the right inspiring space.

"In 2002 Nick and I were looking to purchase a home to build and expand our life together that would provide us with space enough for our various art studios, including jewelry and stained glass fabrication; scale-model making for theater, television and film; traditional

painting and drawing; graphic design; music and sound recording," says Schlafer. "We also wanted land and to be surrounded by natural beauty. Neither of us was very familiar with Sullivan County; a friend suggested we look at some homes in the area."

Prior to homesteading in Sullivan County, the two were sharing a studio space in Sugar Loaf, NY. Initially, they

*Continued on page 14*

# GLASS

*Continued from page 13*

looked in Orange, Ulster and Delaware counties, but branched out to Sullivan County when they couldn't find the right place. "We instantly fell in love with the mountain views here," Scdhlafer said, "and the property certainly had enough space for our various studios. We took a leap of faith."

Schafler and Clemente moved their collective studios along with their brood of pet cats—El Pud, Oli and Kali—and founded Light Curves Glass where they finally consolidated their talents.

"We instantly began supporting each other's work," says Schafler. "Nick is my sounding board and design partner. We have worked on pieces together, sometimes sketching at the same time or going back and forth. Our first real hands-on collaboration was when I was working on a porcelain sculpture for fun. I was stuck, and so Nick asked if he could do something to it and I said 'sure.' He took a knife and split it in half and shifted it two inches apart. It looked much better, so we continued working on the piece together. And what started out as a realistic nude became an abstract cubist piece."

"It is natural for me to be collaborative, coming from a set-design background and collaborating with a team of designers. It is amazing how two minds can push each other to explore new directions. It makes the creative experience more unpredictable."

In 2015, the pair had their first art show together at the Stray Cat Gallery in Bethel, NY. The experience of working together inspired Schlafer to take Clemente's painting, "Sun Serpent Road," and recreate it in glass. "It was perfect for mosaic, so I created my first mosaic glass on glass work," says Schlafer.

Schafler designs traditional stained glass using a "lead came putty" and a Tiffany-styled copper-foil method along with "glass fusing and slumping. I was lucky to travel to Siena, Italy and study under ecclesiastical artist Alberto Postiano, who comes from a line of Italian glass artisans," says Schlafer. "His mentor was FiozenzoIoni. I feel very privileged to have learned from such a master glass artist."

Schafler also learned the art of glass painting known as "silver stain," hence the term "stained glass," in which paint actually stains the glass. She uses traditional grisaille, a powder-glass paint that is applied with brushes and various mediums depending on the desired look. "I learned a method of airbrushing in layers and removing paint to reveal the

*Continued on page 15*



**"Rodger's Girl":** commissioned reclining nude, leaded stained glass diptic with hand blown glass in homage to Picasso



**"Floating Abstract":** Baroque glass Tiffany method



**"Interlocking Counter Balance":** sculpture mobile inspired by the work of Alexander Calder

# GLASS

*Continued from page 14*

light, rather than painting the shadows. It's a technique that Alberto developed," adds Schafner.

"As an artist, the most humbling reality is that whatever we create is never as beautiful as Mother Nature's art. I am constantly trying to capture just a glimmer of her perfection. I love the sheer beauty of the glass, pure rich color... For me, color is a drug that can instantly lift my mood."

According to Schafner, working in glass originally came as a complete surprise. "My education was in fashion design with a degree from Parsons. At first, I wanted to be a fine artist or sculptor; but knowing that it was not a lucrative field, I opted to study illustration, then transferred into fashion design."

Upon graduation and the realization that fashion was not, after all, her direction, Schafner mailed a letter and resume to film and Broadway set/costume designer Tony Walton. As luck would have it, a stage door attendant at the Martin Beck Theater personally handed her letter to Walton, who immediately hired her for the off-Broadway production of "Square One." The job required both sewing and pattern-making skills. Schafner created five oversized stuffed animals that stood up to seven feet tall. She worked with Walton for the next 17 years until one day when...

"I fell into the art of stained glass when I took a friend to a glass shop in Patterson,

*Continued on page 17*



Joan Nicole Schafner is seen in Light Curves glass studio leading a St. Joseph window.



Chandelier: Model piece constructed for Disney's Broadway production of "Frozen"

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# GLASS

Continued from page 15

NJ,” Schlafer recalls. “There I found myself picking up sheets of glass. It was all just so beautiful. The colors popped out at me. The movement and the surprise colors that emerged when I held it up to the light were intoxicating. I ended up spending a few hundred dollars on glass, not knowing anything about how to do it.”

Though she was still involved in the world of set design, Schlafer always thought that one day she’d have a glass studio. Walton was very supportive and actually purchased one of Schlafer’s first windows for \$3,000. The money allowed her to buy more glass and set up a viable business. Inspired, she expanded her studies both at Manhattan’s Bendheim Glass and the Vertrate Artiste Tuscan Glass Studio in Italy.

“I have been working in glass since 1990, and my technique is still evolving,” adds Schlafer. “I am grateful that I challenged myself to push the limits of the glass. There is always something new to learn.”

To learn more about Light Curves Glass, visit [www.lightcurves.etsy.com](http://www.lightcurves.etsy.com) or call 845/978-7653.



Scale model of “Uplift,” a metal sculpture installation by artist Mia Pearlman: This model was used as reference for the precise fabrication of the life-size art installation as seen at the Liberty Mutual building in Boston, MA.

## The process of creating a stained glass window

### Designing:

At Light Curves Glass, before building any piece a drawing is created. Schlafer and Clemente often work together on refining any and all designs. Once a design is decided upon, a pattern is created. “This part is tricky because you need to think about the glass shapes and decide where to put the lines to enhance the drawing. You also have to keep in mind that you have to cut the shape in glass so choosing the glass is important,” explains Schlafer. Once the glass is chosen, Clemente creates a very true computerized rendition of the completed window so the client can better visualize the finished piece.

### Cutting and Assembling:

Next is “grouching” and cutting the glass with a glass cutter, pliers and/or a diamond wet saw. Copper foil is then applied to the edges and burnished on when using the Tiffany method. If the piece is leaded it is put together and slipped into channels and then soldered using Schafer’s own old-school putty mix of whiting, raw and/or boiled linseed oils. No matter the mode, “Each window is put together like a puzzle working from one corner out until the piece is completed,” says Schlafer.

### Curing:

For certain works, the curing time can take weeks, depending on method, humidity and temperature. With leading, for example, the piece is brushed every couple of days and more whiting and oil are applied. This period of drying is crucial in obtaining a proper finish. Each piece is then cleaned and finished by buffing to polish or applying patinas.

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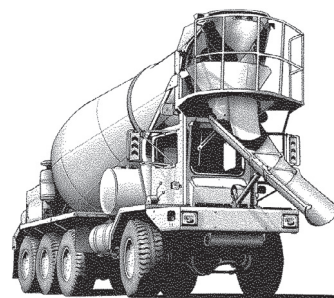
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# 21 Ways to prepare your home for winter

By BARBARA WINFIELD

1. Have the boiler and chimney cleaned.
2. Check that fire extinguishers, smoke and carbon monoxide alarms work.
3. Order wood or pellets for your fireplace.
4. Make sure your fuel tanks are free of water and filled.
5. Have your generator checked, and make sure you have enough fuel.
6. Examine the house and garage foundations for cracks.
7. Inspect the supports, railings and steps of your porch or deck.
8. Check your roof for loose or missing shingles.
9. Seal up draft areas, especially attic and basement doors
10. Clean gutters and downspouts; replace if necessary.
11. Make sure drainage ditches aren't clogged.
12. Replace old storm doors.
13. Place an emergency kit in your car, with blanket, flashlight, batteries, roadside flairs, water, power bars and first-aid kit
14. Protect your lawn with driveway markers.
15. Have dangerous tree limbs removed.
16. Bring out snow shovels and place them where needed.
17. Check to see if your snow blower is in working order.
18. Stock up on a pet-safe, non-toxic de-icing salt.
19. Shut off and drain outside hose bibs and bring hoses inside.
20. Put down winter mulch.
21. Stock up on bird seed.



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# Unhoused Mouse

*Ridding your home of unwanted winter occupants*

By JOE COOKE

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Illustrations by Amanda Reed

There is no experience quite like opening the door to your beautiful, well-kept second home in the country—and finding piles of mouse poop, half-eaten food in the cupboard and footprints in the butter that someone forgot to take back to the city.

When the weather turns cold, it's understandable that the mice want to be somewhere warm, or at least sheltered. But the damage these houseguests do can be significant: for instance, chewed wires are a fire hazard.

And if the animals have not only visited for the winter, but settled down and started families—well, let me illustrate the scale of the problem. For 20 years, our house stood empty for much of the year. We knew there were bats in the attic. But it wasn't until we moved up full-time that we learned there were entire families of bats—generations of bats—literally thousands of bats—in the attic. And that doesn't count the mice in the rest of the house.

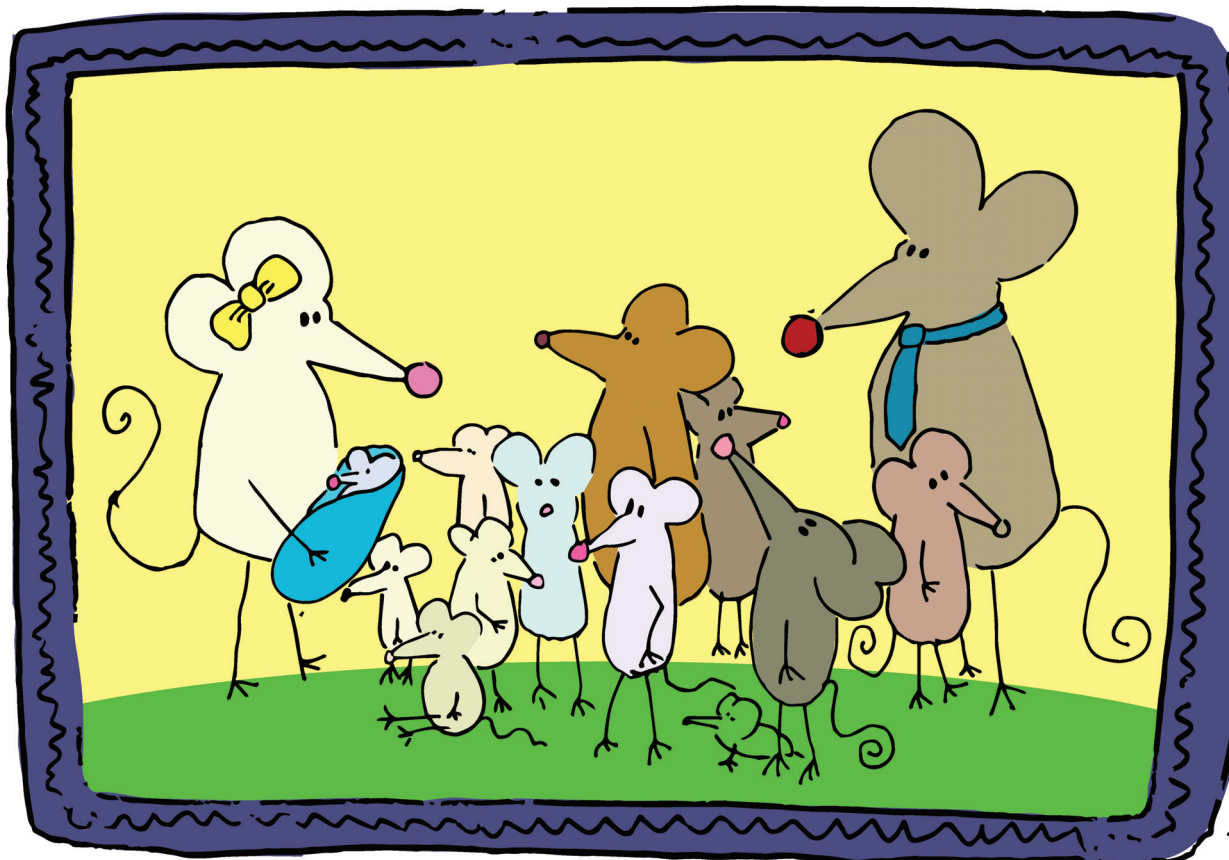
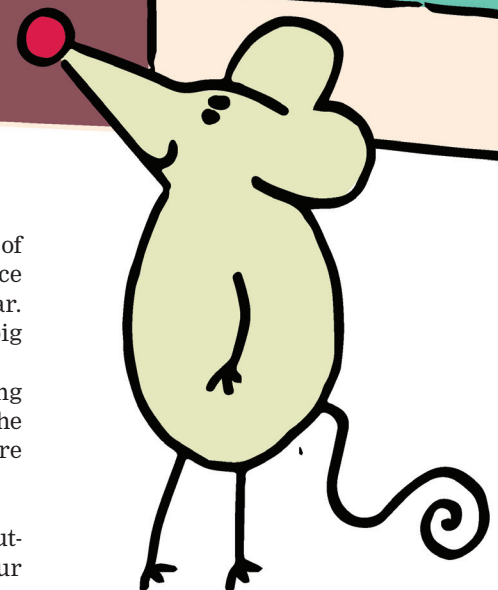
Imagine the cleanup.

"Mice are definitely a big problem," said Robert Morris, of Honesdale-based Let Us Spray, LLC. As his website notes, mice produce six to eight babies per litter, and eight litters per year. And there could be ants, squirrels, spiders... "Spiders are a big problem too," he added.

How do you know you have a pest problem? "Look for anything chewed up," said Morris. You can look for droppings, holes in the wall, shredded boxes of food. With bugs, "You don't know they're there until you see them."

And then what?

Come warmer weather, often the mammals head back outside, but if you haven't found and eliminated the way into your home, they'll just be back. And if they've started families in your house, then getting rid of them humanely gets involved. The insects might not leave.



So start with prevention. Here is a list of tips to keep the critters out, and then some suggestions about what to do if that's not enough.

## **KEEPING THEM FROM GETTING IN**

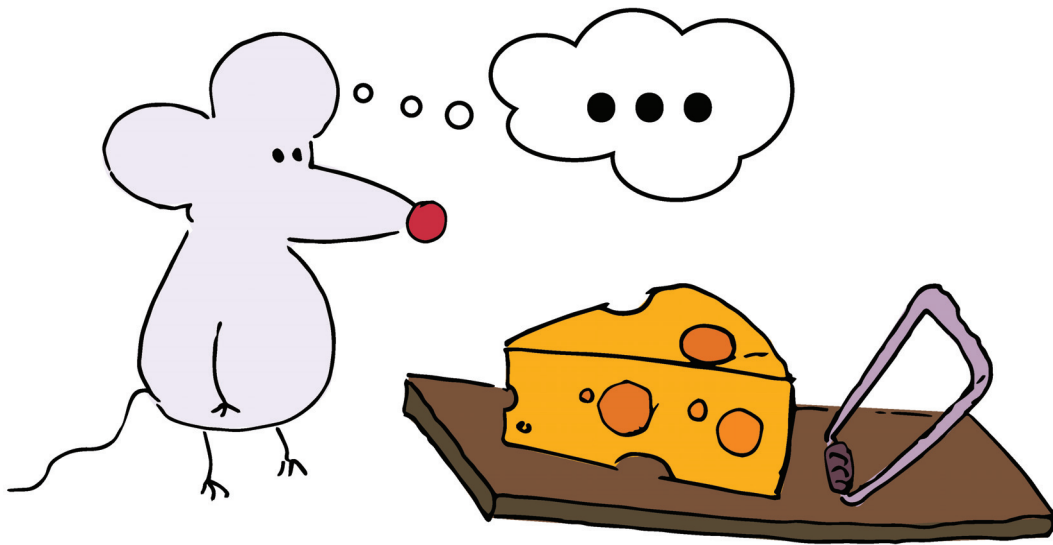
Whether or not you believe in DIY pest control, the most reliable method is to keep the pests from getting in the house in the first place. Robert Morris from Let Us Spray suggests the following:

1. Check for holes. "Mice only need one-quarter-inch of space to get in." Caulk all holes and cracks. Watch for the holes where power lines, plumbing, or gas lines come into your house.

2. Repair screens.

3. Be sure vents are screened. You can buy "bug screen" that will keep most insects out as well as mice. Don't forget chimney openings.

4. Keep firewood at least 20 feet from your house. Bugs and mice will live in your firewood, says Morris, but mice stay within a 20-foot range of their nests. If you keep the wood far enough away, at least you won't bring in mice.



5. Don't leave food out. (Our neighbor keeps food in plastic bins over the winter.)

6. Repair leaky pipes. If there's no moisture, Morris says, animals won't stay.

### IF YOU'VE GOT PESTS

1. You can start with the home remedies. It never hurts to try. We used a Havahart trap to catch a flying squirrel. (It likes Mini-Wheats.) But trapping animals in your walls or between the ceiling and roof is a lot more complicated. Especially if there are plural animals.

2. The ultrasonic devices might work, especially in small spaces. But there are reports that the animals get used to the sound and come back.

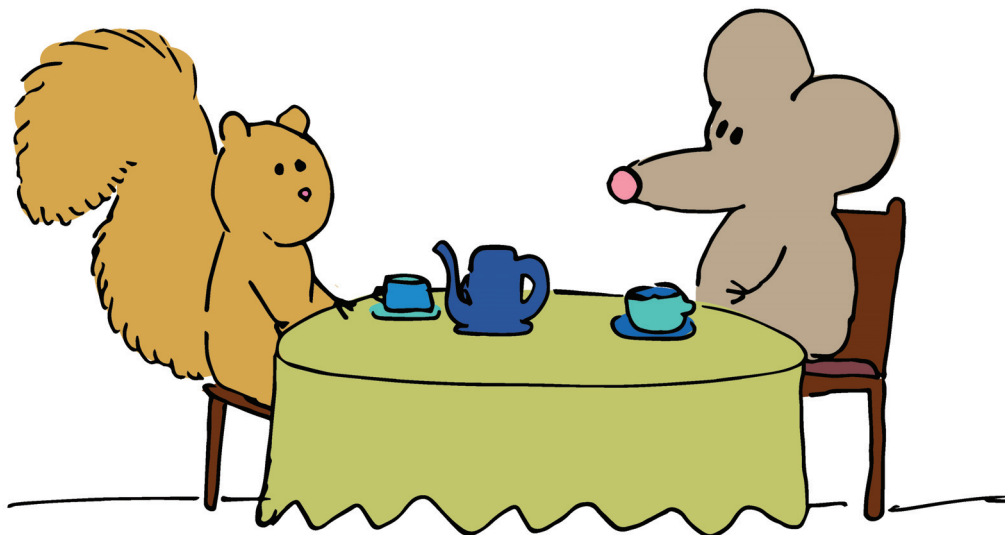
3. Call a pest-control company, especially if there are babies involved. Humane methods of dealing with many animals (insects are more of a challenge) are common now. When we used a pest-control company for the bats, we waited

till the latest crop of babies was old enough, then all but one hole was blocked, then they were smoked out and the final hole was closed. We've had no bats since.

4. Companies like Let Us Spray also have green sprays available.

### DO NOT DO AS WE DID

Do not say, "Oh, how cute," and feed the pest. When the flying squirrel came down our chimney and popped out the stovepipe cover, we put the squirrel outside. The next night it was back and this time headed for the immense, immovable hutch. Turned out it likes YouTube, especially those eight-hour videos for cats. Then: "You can't put the squirrel out, it's cold," my wife said. Then it was colder. Then it was raining. Then it was hot. Then the squirrel had a name (Python, short for Monty Python's Flying Squirrel), and at that point you are done for.



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# Snow Days, Festive Days

## The joys of the winter party

By Annemarie Schuetz

**F**or some of us—and by “some of us” I mean “me”—the prospect of throwing a winter party is more ominous than exciting. At least with summer parties, you can just put the guests outside, feed them summer food, and when things get slow they can watch the squirrels. But what to do in winter, when everyone is trapped inside and the squirrels are in torpor?

Consult event planner Katie Welsh, that's what.

Welsh is the organizing talent behind this summer's Callicoon Country Fair and the Farmhouse Project's recent Makers Market, as well as working in event marketing and operations and starting a new event-planning business here. She's born and raised in Jeff-Youngsville, graduated from Sullivan West, and has now come home to be with family and give back to her community.

“My family celebrates everything,” Welsh said. “I'm passionate about the creativity involved in special events.” Upbeat and full of positive energy, she loves to channel it into celebrations, which is why she now has The Family Tie Project, an event-planning service that will give you a hand if you already have party ideas



Photos contributed by Katie Welsh

Continued on page 23

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Balance forward	0.00	Budgets Billed since 10/01/17	1,380.00
Miscellaneous charges	0.83	Budget Balance (after payment)	-18.52
Budget billing amount	115.00		
Budget billing balance	-18.52		
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# PARTY

*Continued from page 25*

(there's always something interesting or fun to add), or do full-service event planning, including weddings.

"Katie was such a pleasure to work with, and she was involved in helping us plan the Makers Market at the very early stages of the idea," said Shawn Lang, from the Farmhouse Project. "She has a great sense of logistical planning for an event that size and had great ideas for overall layout and decor, event scheduling and staffing. We couldn't have done it without her, and we are very grateful for everything she has done."

## Planning a party?

Winter parties need not (and probably should not be) last-minute affairs like the one my great-grandfather spearheaded, wherein one morning he leaned out the bathroom window, shot a wild turkey (no hunting season then), raced downstairs, and festively hauled the corpse in to be turned into dinner for six. For that night. The guests had no idea they were invited, nor that there was a party. I'm sure my great-grandmother was grateful.

The virtue of planning is that it lets the party-giver relax and feel in control. Problems can be spotted right away, con-



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flicts can be handled, and you have less to worry about.

Winter parties do offer challenges, said Welsh. Maybe your home isn't Pinterest-ready. Maybe the space is tiny. But don't despair. Welsh offers tips on how to create a joyous celebration in your home... and most of all, how not to be afraid of the prospect (see page 27).

Contact Katie at the [familytieproject@gmail.com](mailto:familytieproject@gmail.com) or by phone at 845/807-8551. Her website is [www.thefamilytieproject.com](http://www.thefamilytieproject.com).

*Continued on page 27*

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# PARTY

Continued from page 25

## Party planning tips

• Make a list. Make as many lists as you need to stay organized. "It all starts with the lists," says Welsh. The guest list, the food for each course, the ingredients for the food. What music will be played? Activities? List more stuff than you think you'll need. If something goes wrong, you'll be grateful to have it there on paper.

• Appeal to all five senses. Vision, hearing, smell, taste, touch.  
• What will make your guests happy? This is not necessarily what you enjoy. At a party, the focus should be on the guests, making them comfortable, creating an environment they won't want to leave, said Welsh.

• Stick to a theme and a set budget. This will help with decision-making, she said.

• If someone wants to bring something, let them. Welsh recommends a dessert or a bottle of wine. "People don't like arriving empty-handed," she said, "This allows them to feel included."

• Consider special dietary needs. Share the menu and the ingredients.

• Have fun with the décor. A tablescape can work wonders, Welsh said, and it needn't be complicated. Forage for the decorations. Winter offers an abundance of greenery, red berries, interesting twigs. "Try twinkle lights," she suggests.

• Nametags. Not the ones that say, "Hi, my name is..." Rather, these tags mark where people sit (making sure that guests who don't quite get along are separated), they let new friends know to whom they are talking. Make your own. They can be little bits of art, they can be simple, but it's another way of putting folks at ease.

• If things get slow, try games. Charades or an indoor scavenger hunt are always fun. Or try Are You There, Moriarty?, which my family really enjoyed. The Internet is full of ideas.



Choose a mixture of color and textures for your meal.



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