

# *The Florida Register*

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May & June 2025

*Annual  
Gardening  
Edition*



# The Florida Register

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# The Florida Register



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Happy World Environment Day  
June 5, 2025



## Just A Note...

Welcome to sunny May and June. We hope you enjoy getting out to visit the shops advertising in this issue or shop with them online.

The May/June timeframe seems to be full of gift giving events: Mother's Day, Father's Day, graduations, weddings, teacher gifts, and the list goes on. Please remember to visit the shops advertising in this issue so the shop owners can help you find that perfect gift for your special someone (and don't forget a gift for yourself – while you are shopping). Or if you can't decide what to give, most of the advertising shops offer gift certificates. So spread the news of your favorite shop by giving a gift certificate.



Amy, Grace, Rachel and David

Remember that the businesses advertising with us this issue and every issue need your support! Please shop local and let them know you read about them in our publication. Our publication exists because the shop owners have placed ads. We want to thank you, our readers, for well, being loyal readers and shoppers. We also want to thank our advertisers who continue to make this paper possible.

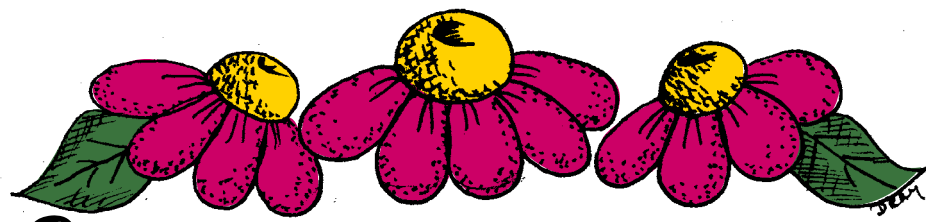
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Rachel is all settled in Raleigh and started as an Anesthesiologist Assistant in April. It's wonderful having her on the East Coast - closer for our visits back and forth. Rachel's 25th Birthday is in May! Grace finished her sophomore year at UGA! She really excelled in her classes, already made commitments to next school year academic activities outside of her classes and had a lot of fun. She's got a busy summer planned (of course).

Thank you for reading this issue. Feel free to pick up a second copy and share it with a friend. Our July/August issue will be out in late June/early July – just in time for you to take that issue with you visiting shops throughout the summer.

Happy May & June to you and enjoy using our publication as your guide to the best shopping and events. Enjoy Shopping!

Amy & David



# Shows & Events

### July/August events due by June 1

Mail a check for \$25 with your event info to the address at the top of page 2.

### Facebook Live or App Events

- Mondays 3:30 pm ..... Quilted Twins (pg. 11)
- Mon-Sat 5:30 pm ..... Quilts and Lace (pg. 23)
- Tuesdays 6 pm ..... Inspire Quilting & Sewing (pg. 15)
- Wednesdays 7 pm ..... Crafty Quilters (pg. 14)
- Fridays 9 am ..... Boutique 4 Quilters (pg. 26)
- Fridays 3:30 pm ..... Quilted Twins (pg. 11)

### May

- Apr 28-10 ..... 54th Anniversary Celebration at Margie's Sew Much Fun in Crestview (pg. 4)
- 1-18 ..... Mother's Day Specials at Nana's Quilt Shop in Brooksville (pg. 15)
- 1-31 ..... Spring Bernina Sale at Margie's Sew Much Fun in Crestview (pg. 4)
- 1-31 ..... Sale at Itching for Stitching in Dade City (pg. 12)
- 3 ..... End of Shop Hop Party & Goodbye to Becky Party at Quilted Twins in Dade City (pg. 11)

### June

- 3-6 ..... Summer Camp at Sewing Garret in Daytona Beach (pg. 22)
- 17-20 ..... Summer Camp at Sewing Garret in Daytona Beach (pg. 22)
- 26-28 ..... Beautiful Batik Bash at Beyond the Stitches in Crystal River (pg. 6)
- 28-29 ..... Stampfest at RP Funding Center in Lakeland (pg. 12)

### July

- 25-Aug 9 ..... Visit the participating shops during the Central Florida Shop Hop (pg. 8)
- 28-Aug 2 ..... Daytime Quilting And Sewing Retreat at Stitcher's Quest in Mary Esther (pg. 4)

### September

- 18-20 ..... 38th Annual Quiltfest at Prime Osborn Center in Jacksonville (pg. 20)

### October

- 12-17 ..... Quilting & Sewing Camp at Blue Lake (AL) with Stitcher's Quest in Mary Esther (pg. 4)
- 24-25 ... Quilter's Crossing Quilt Guild Quilt Show at Countryside Rec Center in Clearwater (pg. 17)



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## Retreat Surprise

by Deb Heatherly

In the most basic sense of the word, a retreat is a time in which one steps away from the cares of everyday life to reenergize and reflect. This is the time of year when quilters across the country are looking forward to doing just that. Most attend with friends and travel to various locations across the county to spend a few days laughing and stitching. I've often heard it said, "It's just good for the soul."



I've hosted quilt retreats every spring and Fall for the past fifteen years. I've made some amazing lifelong friends and the ladies who attend have done the same. Everyone keeps in touch throughout the year and it feels like a family reunion when we gather for the next event. Each retreat has its own special moments, but one definitely stands out above the rest.

This particular retreat was actually two back-to-back events, from Monday through Thursday on consecutive weeks. I did not go home between events, so I was on site for almost 2 weeks. It was a crisp fall day and as we were finishing our lunch on day two of the first week, someone said, "there are three kittens outside!" Cat lover that I am, I had to see for myself. And, I just happened to take some chicken from the left overs on my plate.

Sure enough, there they were. Three beautiful little faces peering down from the overhang of a door on a nearby building. They were very leery of this crazy woman who was telling them how beautiful they were while she tried to entice them down for food. They did not budge. Breaking the chicken into small bits, I tossed the pieces up where they felt safe and my little friends hungrily gobbled it down.

This was the beginning, every day after lunch and dinner, I took them bits of whatever had been on my plate. Before long they came down from the roof and would eat about 8 feet away from me. There were two fluffy calicoes and one short haired gray. Since the calicoes were sure to be girls, I assumed the gray one was a boy. When I asked about these precious babies, I was told that the mother had been caught, spayed and adopted, but no one could catch the kittens. They hoped that they could eventually be caught and find homes too. Challenge accepted!

This particular retreat had a 50s theme and I had actually hired an Elvis impersonator to serenade and surprise the ladies at dinner the first evening. With that in mind I named the gray kitten Elvis and referred to the trio as 'Elvis and his girls.'

Each day when I took them food, they got closer and closer with Elvis being the most daring. On Tuesday of week two, Elvis would come within a foot of me. It was that night that I called my husband and said, "I might be bringing home a kitten" and told him what I had been doing.

"How will you get it home if you catch it?" he asked. My answer was that I would just play it by ear.

On the final day, with my car packed to head home, I knew this was my one and only chance. Parking nearby, I went out to the spot where I had been feeding them and sat down to wait. By now they came when I called.

I had saved a lot of chicken for this attempt and to my surprise Elvis came right up to me and started eating out of my hand. As I held out the final piece, I thought to myself, it now or never. Quickly my left hand scruffed the kitten's neck, while my right hand reached under its body. I quickly tucked it under my right arm while I continued to scruff the neck. I really expected growling and hissing but to my surprise Elvis just gazed at me as if to say, "what do you think you are doing?"

This now posed a dilemma and careful thought. If I just put him in the car and drove home, how would I catch him and get him in the house? I really needed a pet carrier to make this a success. Luckily, a friend saw me walking around with my furry friend and called another friend who lived nearby. If I could keep my hands on this baby long enough, a carrier would soon be there.

For twenty minutes I walked around with this little gray body tucked under my arm and whispered in its ear. "Don't worry little one," I said, "You will have a soft bed tonight and will never have to survive on hand outs again." This resulted in more wiggles from my furry friend but not much of a fight.

Once home, Elvis had his own room for several days until a vet appointment could be made. After I knew that he was healthy, I'd introduce him to my two other cats.

Fast forward several days to our visit to the vet. Judging from his size, I had written down 3 months on the form I had to complete but was informed by the vet that Elvis was actually about 8 months old. He was just small for his age. That makes sense when you've been surviving on handouts. Surprise number two came when the vet said, "Congratulations, it's a girl!" Oops, so Elvis will not work and I quickly renamed her Lacey.

That was almost 13 years ago. Her nickname became Lou Lou and she spends most days on the cat tree watching the birds and squirrels outside the window. She is the oldest of our furry kids and she is the boss. After dinner, each night she has trained me to sit in my recliner and hold her while we watch Wheel of Fortune. This is the only time she wants to be held. She has trained my husband to give her treats when she sits on the coffee table and stares at him. And, each night as we turn off the TV, she jumps on the back of my recliner so that I can have the honor of brushing her.

Yes, she is a diva. She went from being a wild child to being the queen of the house and I would not have it any other way. Lou Lou was definitely the best surprise I ever brought home from retreat and she will always be my special girl.

© 2025 - Deb Heatherly is a designer for Creative Grids® rulers and the author of eight popular pattern books. Creative Grids® fans are invited to join her Facebook group, Grids Girls, for tips and inspiration and two free mysteries each year. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/770429649800457/>.

Shop Owners are invited to join her group just for you, "Grids Girls for Quilt Shop Owners Only" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/273593657256524>.

Visit Deb's website at [www.Debcatsquills.com](http://www.Debcatsquills.com).

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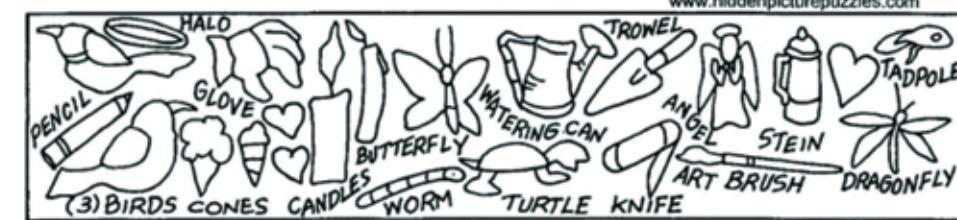
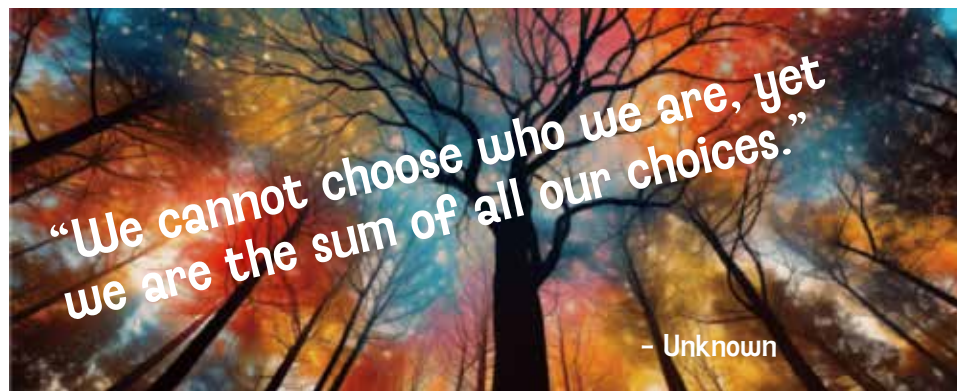
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### Picnics, Parties and Food Allergies

Summer is upon us with lots of fun gatherings like graduation parties and picnics. One thing to keep in mind when you are bringing a dish to a gathering is being considerate of people's food allergies. Labeling your baked goods, salad or casserole can avoid a scary allergy attack for someone else.

When I was growing up, my younger brother ate a grape jelly on white bread sandwich every day. I had peanut butter and jelly. No one I knew had any food allergies. It was a great surprise to me when, as an adult, I ended up in the emergency room with an allergic reaction to nuts. Today many children develop food allergies, and it is important to read all the labels in order to keep everyone safe.

As a grandparent, I love having my grandchildren over. I used to make a big pan of ziti with mozzarella cheese and everyone was happy. Not anymore. A pasta meal is not an easy meal for my family.

One grandchild is diabetic and regular pasta spikes his blood sugar way too high for hours. Instead, he has chickpea pasta and as many meatballs as he likes.

Our oldest grandchild, age 12, has become sensitive to dairy. He can eat regular pasta but no cheese. I buy a dairy-free cheese substitute which makes him happy.

by Janet M Bair

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Then several family members have become sensitive to gluten, so we have: regular pasta, gluten-free pasta, chickpea pasta and gluten-free meatballs. The utensils used to stir the gluten-free pasta cannot touch the regular pasta. Lots of pots and pans!

Our oldest granddaughter reacts badly to even trace amounts of gluten, so my daughter has had to work hard to keep things non-contaminated. For example, she keeps the toaster oven tray solely for gluten-free toast. If you spread mayonnaise on regular bread, don't put the knife back in the jar because the crumbs can contaminate the jar with gluten. She is that sensitive.

This is a difficult allergy because gluten is in everything—salad dressings, gummy bears, French fries, ice cream, most cereals, lots of snacks, pizza, birthday cakes (at other children's parties), and the list goes on. There is gluten in regular PlayDoh so she can't even use that.

We have all learned how to adapt. My 10-year-old granddaughter has learned how to bake out of necessity. When they lived in Brazil, it was difficult and very expensive to get gluten free foods. It is easier and safer here in the US because the labels are stricter but it is still expensive.

I have had fun baking cookies with them using Bob's Red Mill Gluten Free 1 to 1 Baking Flour (\$12 for 2 lbs.) Often people will use almond flour (which I cannot have) but that is also expensive. I finally found Bob's Red Mill Gluten Free Pie Crust mix on sale (\$7) so I am planning on helping my granddaughter bake a pie for the next holiday. She thinks she would like to have her own bakery when she grows up.

These are just a few glimpses of dealing with food allergies in our family. What does everyone eat? Plain meat, fresh vegetables and fruits. When we find gluten free stuffing, we snatch it up because everyone likes turkey. Tortilla chips and salsa or hummus are all fine snacks.

These are just some of the ways our family copes with allergies. My three rules of thumb:  
Always read the labels to be safe.  
Always bring your own snack to any outing or pot luck dinner.  
When in doubt, don't eat it. Better safe than sorry.  
Whenever I am at a gathering that involves food, I am very glad when others include labels on their items. Many parents of young children will thank you too!

- © Janet M. Bair of Ansonia, CT. You may contact her at [librarybair@hotmail.com](mailto:librarybair@hotmail.com)

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### Writing From Life

by Jeanette Lukowski

**Reunions**

When I think of the word, "reunions," the first images which come to mind are high school and family reunions. Although I have attended a number of family reunions over the years, I have never attended a school reunion. Was I invited to one? Great question.

This past weekend, my grown son and I attended an event which came very close to that sense of a high school reunion: the annual Show Choir Dinner Show at his high school.

It's been about twelve years since he last performed a show with his high school's show choir, but they had a year for the record books: after more than 15 years of the program, his group made it all the way to the National's Level of competition (after attaining 1st place in the Regional's competition).

As many do, my family eventually moved out of that community. My son left shortly after graduation, while I stayed only a few more years.

This, then, was our first return to the show choir circuit. We had talked about catching a competition in other towns over the years, but it's difficult to locate the schedule information without connections. We walked into the high school, wearing our spirit jackets with pride, and chatted with the strangers seated with us at the dinner table.

The show was nice. The dinner was nearly a carbon copy to what I had helped serve twelve years earlier. The team singers and dancers, however, looked so much younger.

While eating, one of our table mates (a current team member's parent) handed me the small flyer which had been sitting closest to her plate; it was announcing an "All Show Choir Reunion" this coming summer. She encouraged us to take it, as my son was the only alum of the program sitting at our table. On the long drive home, though, my son said while he might go to see the performance, he will not participate in the three days of rehearsals and such. "It will be fun," he explained, "to have them see me, and see that I'm not dead."

"What? Why would you suggest they think you are dead?"

"Because I'm not on social media. No one has kept in touch with me. In fact, the only person I've even seen from high school in the past ten years is..."

What do we gain, or lose, as the communication styles change from one generation to the next? Like my son, I have no social media accounts. I call my mother regularly, keep in touch with a small collection of people through text messages, and send a larger group of people the annual Christmas letter update.

My mother, who has never sent a text message (and can no longer recall how to access email), attends her high school AND college reunions. Invitations arrive in her mailbox, or come as phone calls from a committee chair.

We have my daughter to thank for this one; she sent me a text message.

© Jeanette Lukowski 2025. Jeanette is a mother, grandmother, teacher, and author who lives in Alesandria, MN. She is inspired by the lives of strong women. Her email address is: [writingfromlife@yahoo.com](mailto:writingfromlife@yahoo.com)

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**Gardening Keeps You Healthy**

As Thomas Jefferson famously wrote to Charles Willson Peale in 1811 at age 68, "But though an old man, I am but a young gardener." Any gardener who has planted peas on a brilliant spring morning or cut zinnias on a sunny summer day knows the feeling of a lightened step, a younger mood. There is mounting empirical evidence that gardening is both good for the spirit & for the body as well.

Of course, you knew this all along.  
 1. Gardening Helps You to Stay Lean  
 You can expend calories by going dutifully to the gym, or you can simply live an active life: "Non-exercise activity thermogenesis" or NEAT, is now officially recognized as an effective way to keep incoming and outgoing calories in healthy balance. According to Dr. James Levine of the Mayo Clinic, engaging in everyday activities can overcome a propensity to gain weight. "NEAT includes all those activities that render us vibrant, unique, and independent beings," says Dr. Levine. Gardening, for instance, expends 200-400 calories per hour!

2. Gardening Keeps Your Bones Strong  
 Women aged 50 and older who garden weekly have stronger bones than those who engage in jogging, swimming, walking, or aerobics, according to a 2000 study by Dr. Lori Turner at the University of Arkansas. "We hadn't expected yard work to be significant ... But there's a lot of weight-bearing motion going on in the garden—digging holes, pulling weeds, pushing a mower," concluded Dr. Turner.

3. People Who Garden Are Less Likely To Be Deficient in Vitamin D  
 Vitamin D is widely recognized as the sunshine vitamin. A deficit has been linked to an increased risk of a number of ailments, including common cancers, type 1 diabetes, and rheumatoid arthritis. Absorbing enough sunlight to allow your body to produce sufficient vitamin D but not so much that you risk skin cancer can be tricky. Age complicates the situation, as a person over 65 years of age exposed to the same amount of sunlight as a 20-year-old person makes only about 25% of the vitamin D. According to Harvard Health Publications, a little sunshine can go a long way: 10 to 15 minutes of sun on the arms and legs a few times a week can generate nearly all the vitamin D the average person needs—assuming its rays are at a fairly direct angle. And regardless of age, time of year, and other factors, regular gardening has been shown to reduce the likelihood of inadequate vitamin D.

4. Gardening Makes Us Happy  
 People who engage in green exercise, that is, activity while out in nature—even if it's just for just a few minutes a day—enjoy greater self-esteem and improved mood, according to an analysis by researchers at the University of Essex. And actively playing in the dirt can offer extra rewards. A 2007 study suggests that contact with a common soil bacterium can increase the release of serotonin in parts of the brain that regulate mood. In other words, gardening makes us happy.

5. Gardens Build Healthy Communities  
 The networks and social support that come from being involved in a Community Garden brings a whole other set of mental health benefits. Shared experiences with others growing traditional ethnic foods can be a starting point for understanding between cultures. The entire community benefits from a Community Garden in multiple ways: better nutrition, enhanced mental health, social ties, and an increased appreciation of social diversity.

6. The Fresher the Food, the Greater the Nutrient Content  
 Get the most out of your vegetables by eating them fresh from the garden. Vitamin C content can decline rapidly, particularly in leafy greens like spinach, after just three days of refrigeration. The best way to be sure your vegetables offer maximum nutritional benefit is to grow them yourself.

—Postscript: Thomas Jefferson died on July 4, 1826 at age 83, after a long-life spent farming and gardening ... among other things.

—References: University of Arkansas Newswire. 2000. Got Weeds? University Of Arkansas Researchers Say Yard Work Builds Strong Bones. <http://newswire.uark.edu/articles/10028/got-weeds-university-of-arkansas-researchers-say-yard-work-builds-strong-bones> University of Bristol. 2007. Getting Dirty May Lift Your Mood. Science Daily <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2007/04/070402102001.htm> Barton J., Pretty J. 2010. What is the Best Dose of Nature and Green Energy for Improving Mental Health? A Multi-Study Analysis. Environ. Sci. Technol., 2010, 44 (10), pp 3947–3955 De Rui, M. and others. 2014. Vitamin D Deficiency and Leisure Time Activities in the Elderly: Are All Pastimes the Same? PLoS One 10(9(4):e94805.Favell D. 1997. A Comparison of the vitamin C content of fresh and frozen vegetables. Food Chemistry 62(1) p59-64. Holick M. 2004. Sunlight and vitamin D for bone health and prevention of autoimmune diseases, cancers, and cardiovascular disease. The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 80 (6).Wakefield S. and others. Growing Urban Health: Community Gardening in South-East Toronto. Health Promotion International 22(2). <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/wpcontent/uploads/2014/02/researchWakefieldYendallTaronReynoldsSkinnerGrowingHealth.pdf>

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**Life on My Farm - Breezy Manor**

**Knee Deep in May and June** by Donna Jo Copeland, farmeress

One of James Whitcomb Riley's poems that my grandfather read to us grandkids was Knee Deep in June. I confess I enjoyed the sound of his voice more than the words. Strawberries, lazy afternoons come to mind. The Strawberries freshly picked, still warm. As to lazy afternoons, a nice idea but rarely happened on a farm. For this is prime hay weather, barn liming, fly swatting, garden hoeing time.

I have grandfather's Riley book and often read from it at tea time. Those poems ring of days long lost, captured in memory. Don't think too many people read poetry anymore. But there is an innocence in those simple words.

The long days of late spring are so crammed with outside chores—planting, weeding, repairs, painting—make it hard to stop and smell the roses, new mown hay, cedar chips in the bunny barn, laundry on the line, air dried sheets on the bed.

Eventide is my favorite time of day especially now. I often linger out by the sheep pasture long after dark. The comfort of a day well lived and worked, listening to sheep munching grain and hay. Pause and be thankful. Count my blessings.

The flowers, leaves, bark, lichens of summer provide excellent natural dyes for my wools. I have 2 tire rim stoves just for dye pots. Mother Nature and Dye Fairies give

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fabulous colors, hues and surprises. I have figured out how to lay old oven racks over those rims so I can carefully set 8 dye pots on at one time. Using downed tree limbs, the fires heat the waters and magic happens!

With lots of dyed locks I get to my spinning wheels and create art and just plain fun yarns, listening to what the wools tell me. They never lead me astray. Life is too short to just spin fine, smooth yarns.

I've noticed people my age have forgotten to be fun and crazy, I am dedicating myself to create art and crazy in my life and anyone who will join my quest. Let's do silly things—blow bubbles, toast marshmallows, laugh til our bellies ache.

Knee deep in June only happens once a year, then pfft, it's gone. Let's all laugh freely, explore color and texture. Go barefoot, ground ourselves in soft grass, lay on a hillside and watch clouds. Eat more chocolate, even for breakfast. Make mud pies. Spit watermelon seeds.

It's time to celebrate winter's end. Bring on spring colors and songs. Each new season has its gifts. We have long sunny days, cool nights and spring peepers.

Those of us rich (or misguided) enough to embrace a simple small farm life may be a dying breed. It is hard, lonely, not often rewarded in general. But we love it. I hope you all will thank and support a local small farm, farmer, farmeress. We are trying our best.

© 2024 - Donna Jo Copeland writes from her farm, Breezy Manor, Mooresville, Indiana where she tends her flock and creates art from the wool. Being the 14th generation of farm owner/operator, Donna Jo brings alive the struggles of farm life.

**Breezy Manor Recipe for Gardening**  
 My Aunt May's favorite: Whipped Jello

- Chill 1 can of condensed milk overnight in fridge
- Dissolve 1 small box of jello, any flavor, in 1-1/2 cups of boiling water.
- Chill in fridge til "ploppy", not quite set
- Whip the milk until stiff peaks form, gently mix in jello.
- Chill at least 4 hours.
- She always served it with shortbread cookies

\*Submitted by Donna Jo Copeland, Farmeress at Breezy Manor Farm. See her article in this edition for what's happening on her farm.

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### A Cup of Tea with Lydia

**Traveling Teacups** by Lydia E. Harris

Sundays are a day of rest in our home, and I look forward to these leisurely afternoons to nap and read.

But one Sunday as I curled up on the sofa with a good book, my thoughts turned to Myrtle, our silver-haired neighbor. She had recently moved to a retirement home, and I wondered how she was doing. I smiled as I recalled times we had shared when she lived next door.

"You're my dessert lady," Myrtle said and giggled whenever I brought her warm bread pudding or other sweet treats. But now I couldn't easily stop by to see her.

Laying my book aside, I said to my husband, "Perhaps I should visit Myrtle today and take her tea."

"Good idea," he said with a smile.

I packed a tea basket for two. Inside I nestled china teacups and saucers wrapped in dishtowels, adding assorted teas, sugar cubes, and teaspoons. I would need a thermos of hot water, and, to live up to my nickname, dessert. Myrtle ate mostly soft foods and loved homemade puddings, so I cooked the easy tapioca recipe on the box of tapioca. I also took some spicy homemade applesauce to stash in her small refrigerator.

When I arrived, the curtains were closed and Myrtle reclined in her favorite chair, watching baseball on TV. Myrtle brightened as I opened the drapes. "I've been reading some good books lately," she said.

We chatted and admired her family photos. Then I unpacked the tea basket. Myrtle smelled each tea and chose a pear-caramel tea from France. I placed a doily on her saucer and brewed the tea in her cup. While she stirred in a sugar cube, I scooped warm tapioca pudding into green goblets.

"These goblets are so beautiful," Myrtle said.

I chuckled and admitted, "I bought them at a rummage sale for a quarter a piece."

She giggled at our shared secret, then added, "I hear Jonathan is engaged." Myrtle loved hearing about our son's wedding plans, and I asked questions about her grandkids. Almost forty years separated us in age, but our mother hearts felt close.

Myrtle took the napkin I handed her and read its sentiment aloud: "Friends like you are special and few." She sighed and tucked it aside with the lemon drops and an extra teabag to enjoy later. I snapped a few photos so I could send her one and keep the memory of our teatime fresh for myself. Then it was time to pack my traveling teacups and drive home.

There have been other lazy Sundays when my teacups and I sat idle. But the Sunday we visited Myrtle remains a beloved memory. Yes, it really is more blessed to give than to receive. But by giving, I also received and left full—brimming with memories of shared laughter, love, and tea.

Do you know someone who needs love? If so, won't you join me and pack a basket with a traveling tea party? You'll be glad you did.



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**From Lydia's Recipe File**

**Easy Tapioca Pudding or Parfaits**

Ingredients:  
2 3/4 cups milk (whole or 2%)  
1 egg, beaten  
1/3 cup sugar  
3 tablespoons minute tapioca  
dash of salt (optional)  
1 teaspoon vanilla

Directions:  
1. Combine all ingredients except vanilla in a large microwaveable bowl.  
2. Let stand for 5 minutes.  
3. Microwave on high until mixture comes to a full boil and thickens (about 10 to 12 minutes), stirring every 3 minutes.  
4. Stir in vanilla.  
5. Cool. The pudding will continue to thicken as it cools. Serve warm or chilled. Makes six 1/2-cup servings. Refrigerate leftovers.

Variation: Tapioca Parfaits. Use goblets or small glasses for individual servings. Alternate layers of pudding and favorite jam or fresh fruit to fill each glass. Top with whipped topping. Serve chilled.

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### DeLand, Deltona

### Last Chance Wool Project Turns Waste into Sustainable Fashion

by Donna Jo Copeland

A revolutionary new wool yarn project, Last Chance Wool, is hoping to take the textile industry by storm, transforming sheep wool that might otherwise be discarded into sustainable and versatile yarn. This innovative initiative not only saves wool from ending up in landfills but also promotes environmentally friendly practices in fashion and textiles.



Sheep wool, often considered a byproduct in many farming operations, is sometimes discarded due to low prices paid to farmers or lack of processing facilities. However, this new project aims to change that by collecting and converting wool into high-quality yarn. The yarn produced can be used to create a myriad of useful and fashionable items, including hats, mittens, sweaters, socks, and more.



The project's founders Donna Jo Copeland and Yvonne Jones, Sue Speichert and their partner mill Mystery's Meadows Fiber Mill in Humbolt, Iowa are keen to highlight the sustainability of wool. Unlike synthetic fibers, wool is a natural, biodegradable material that doesn't contribute to pollution or microplastic contamination in our land and waterways. Its production relies on sheep farming, which can be managed in a manner that supports land conservation and promotes biodiversity.

Moreover, wool is known for its durability and insulating properties, making it a preferred choice for winter garments. Its ability to retain warmth while remaining breathable ensures comfort across various climates. The yarn produced from this project maintains these desirable qualities, offering consumers eco-friendly options without compromising on performance.

The response to Last Chance Wool has been overwhelmingly positive. Both artisans and consumers are eager to explore the possibilities presented by this sustainable material. Local knitters, crafters, and online communities have all expressed their enthusiasm, with many already incorporating the yarn into their creations.

As the project continues to grow, its founders hope to be able to buy wool from local farmers at above market prices (with a focus on 4-H sheep clubs) and to expand their reach and encourage more farmers to participate in wool collection efforts. By turning waste into valuable yarn, they are not only reducing environmental impact but also fostering a greater appreciation for sustainable fashion. This initiative signifies a step forward in responsible consumption and production, paving the way for a greener future in the textile industry.

- Submitted by Donna Jo Copeland. Photos: Top - Dobby, a Cormo wether. Cormo sheep produce exquisite fine wool that is sought after by spinners, knitters, felters and other fiber artists. Bottom - Shearer Yvonne Jones shearing a little Shetland ewe named Loretta. Shetland wool is soft, strong and durable and is a delight to spin and is ideal for knitting.

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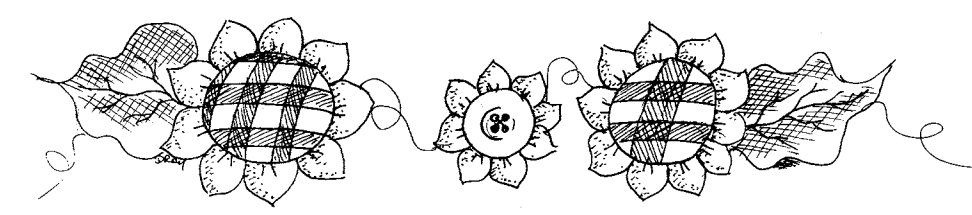
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Juice from 1 lemon  
3 Tablespoon lemon juice  
1 cup boiling water  
Dissolve the Jello in water then add juices to it and refrigerate for about 1.5 hours or until it thickens

2 packages Graham crackers-cinnamon style if wanted  
Crush Graham crackers  
Then add 1 stick melted butter, making a nice mixture of Graham cracker crumbs 2/3 of crumbs, approximately 2 cups, to line the bottom of a 1/4 sheet Tupperware  
\*Save the rest to sprinkle over the top

11 oz cream cheese  
1 cup sugar  
1 tsp vanilla  
Beat together then add the thickened Jello mix

Whip the refrigerated evaporated milk until thick  
Then add the cream cheese mix to the whipped evaporated milk  
Pour into Graham cracker lined Tupperware  
\*Sprinkle Graham cracker crumbs over the top  
Refrigerate over night

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Yes, you enjoy the beauty of your flowers and the taste of your fresh-from-the-garden vegetables. But the real attraction likely comes from a deeper place. Connecting with that deeper place is soul satisfying. Reveling in that aspect of the garden offers rewards that go well beyond the vision and the palate.

Direct your artistic impulses in any way the spirit moves—writing, painting, crafting, drawing—and your garden will enchant you in a new and vital way.



**Journaling the Garden**  
A garden journal can take many forms. It might be a record of the sequence of blooms, and the date you picked the first tomato of the season. It can document the life stages of a back-yard butterfly from egg to larva to pupa to emergence, or a robin nesting in the holly outside your kitchen window. Or it may be an artistic outlet that helps you to examine and express, in words or drawings or collage, what most excited you on a particular day.

- If you've never journaled before, try these exercises:
- Sit in the same place once a week for three or more weeks, and draw the weekly changes in the scene before you. It might be a rosebud opening to full bloom and then fading, or the leaves on a branch of a tree changing from green to orange. It might be the head of a sunflower.
  - Take a moment to just listen. Write down every detail of what you hear—birds singing, leaves rustling, cicadas sounding. Make it into a haiku, a three-line poem with 5-7-5 syllables per line, respectively, if you wish.
  - Find something in your landscape that puzzles you—a weed you don't know by name, an egg mass on the back of a broccoli leaf, a gall on the stem of a goldenrod—and document it with a drawing. Then try to solve the mystery by researching it.
  - Collect seedpods. Examine their architecture. Write descriptions.

**Crafting the Garden**  
It's hard not to bring the garden indoors in one form or another. Cutting flowers is just a first step, a jumping-off point for the creative mind. You can fill a journal page with words, drawings, and found objects by creating a collage. Or you can create a folding "book" of mushroom spore prints.

- Here are a few ideas to get you started:
- Collect natural objects with different textures, such as lacy leaves, cicada wings, and the shed skins of snakes. Use them to tell a story. Add just enough words to connect the objects.
  - Collect petals of many colors and press them dry. Arrange them creatively on the sticky side of laminating paper, and press the creation into your journal.
  - Make mushroom spore prints by cutting the stem from a mushroom and placing it, gill side down, on a paper and covering it with a bowl. Within 24 hours a spore print will appear. Spray the print with fixative.
- Writing the Garden's Stories**  
Your garden is full of stories. How could it not be, filled as it is with life? Discover the stories by watching pollinators in action, and watching the chain of events as your

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plants attract pests, which in turn attract predators. The soil, especially, is a hotbed of activity. To learn the stories, pay attention to the action. Discover the details. As you tell the stories be clear, rather than flowery, in your phrases. Your stories are acts of discovery; they can be brief haikus, or full-page essays.

- Try these exercises:
- Sit, quietly, until your attention lands on a natural object. Get closer. Study it. Put the feelings it brings into words, and craft them into a haiku.
  - Outline a garden story—beginning, middle, end. Then start your story in the middle, going back to the beginning, and forward to the end.
  - As you work in your garden think of a cliché that fits the moment. "Busy as a bee," or "pretty as a picture" might come to mind. Discard the clichés and come up with completely original similes.

- For more information and resources on garden journaling, visit [ArtofNatureJournaling.com](http://ArtofNatureJournaling.com)

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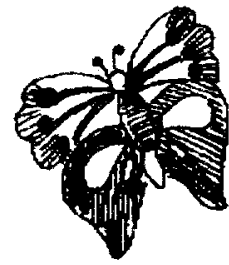
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**Signs of Summer in Nature**

by Janet Young



There are many ways you can tell summer is on its way by certain signs in nature. For instance, beginning in April and May fireflies start to appear. Walk at night in an open field, and as if by magic flashes of light begin to appear. It is through these flashes that the bugs are communicating with one another.

But how many remember from their childhood, when the first flash of light appeared in a darkened field, the excitement this would elicit. Most likely you ran in your house to get a jar and lid with holes punched in, so as to allow the bugs to breathe. These were exciting times, for the occasional light in the night air produced a magic all of its own making. By evening's end, the bugs were released so that they could join the rest of their "friends."

Next comes the butterfly with its large, colorful wings folded at rest, to open wide when it's time to fly, is a beautiful sight to behold. They are unassuming and gentle, yet children especially want to catch them. If you have ever been to a butterfly house, you see the beauty as they flutter by.

But life for the butterfly has not always been easy. To transform from a caterpillar to a butterfly is very challenging. However, it was the fight that brought this adversity which built a strong, unassuming butterfly. Amazingly, after this transformation, the butterfly just flies on to start its' new butterfly life.

Finally, there is the Ladybug, which is actually a beetle with a bright red body and black dots. This bug is so pretty it has caught the attention of the fashion world to the extent, that on occasion it has designed fashions reminiscent of the colors of the ladybug.

Some people believe there is a religious symbolism like heaven, or angels associated with the ladybug. In addition, the ladybug is associated with good fortune, happiness, and love.

While nature has provided us with a bounty of insects, they all serve a purpose in preserving our natural surroundings. And while, I have chosen some of the more unique or most beautiful examples, there are still more to discover.

I started out with the intent of making us aware that when we see these wonders of nature, it is then that we know summer is on its' way. And by the way, another way I personally, can tell summer is on its' way, is something I experienced while working in my yard today. And that was the honking of geese, announcing that they have returned after a winter in the south. But that's a story for another time.

It is now time to enjoy the fleeting days of summer, because before too long I will hear the geese honking as they make their flight down south for the winter days that lie ahead.

Have a great summer!

— © Janet Young is a Certified Tea and Etiquette Consultant, Co-Founder of Mid-Atlantic Tea Business Association, and prior owner of Over The Teacup

**Brooksville, Plant City**

**Talkin' About My Jeans Generation**

by Barbara Kalkis

The health benefits of my yoga class begin about an hour before the class itself. That's when I begin putting on my leggings. These contemporary girdles guarantee a sleek look that smooths out wrinkles, flab, bulges and "thunder thighs." Stomachs and the 'rear view' are flattened to shallow curves. The waist on the leggings ensures that you will have a waist by pinching it into breathless submission. The breathless part refers to your lower lungs. They do not conform to you. You conform to them.

Despite the torture, I view leggings as part of a mandatory uniform. (Yes, I am unduly influenced by social media and glamour magazines.) So, I pull my leggings out of the drawer and begin the process of putting on what only appears to be a flimsy piece of stretchy elastic. The first exercise begins. I bend over and touch my toes, one foot at a time. In this position, I pull the leggings up past my ankles. Then I unroll each "leg" to reach my shins. No go. I cannot get past my ankles. I hope, with no success. I begin tugging, yanking, pulling. Keeping my feet apart is crucial. If I relax my death grip on the heavy elastic fabric, it snaps back in place and knocks my knees together. After more pulling, yanking and acrobatics, my waist is finally encased in the elastic prison. I am a bit blue from lack of oxygen, but I have mastered the yoga style "look." When the Yoga master directs us to breathe through our abdomen and fill our lower lungs, it is impossible to do so, but deep breathing is overrated. I have perfected my ability to pant like a dog awaiting a left-over beef rib.

You may think I am exaggerating, but I took physical therapy for a shoulder problem and acquired a rainbow selection of stretchy straps of increasing stiffness. The PT marveled at my upper-body strength in stretching the most advanced band. I could have told him it was because of my leggings but saw no reason to discourage his professional enthusiasm for helping a patient.

Yoga has taught me a valuable lesson, aside from exercise or meditation. It has taught me to be proud that I am a member of the jeans generation. Jeans are always in style. The fabric is stiff at first, but after a few washings they are comfy and conform to your shape. The stretchy waists do really stretch. They let your stomach be your stomach so you can breathe. Jeans may not hide curves, but they enhance them. They come out of the wash with a simple shake and fold and are ready to wear again. Jeans go with anything. They don't "pill" or stretch so far out of shape you can only use them for garden stakes.

Jeans are statement clothes. They can be dressed up or down. They can be worn with a sequined top or an old plaid shirt. You can wear them to dig in the garden or to walk your kids to school. There's no worry about restricting blood flow. You have the freedom to run, stretch, sit, stand, go anywhere and do anything. They last almost forever. You can cut them down from long pants to "crops" to "shorts" and then sew the remainder into a purse. Jeans speak about a generation of people who work, picnic on the grass, are dressed and ready for any adventure, and who know that true comfort is both a look and a lifestyle. I call that being part of a great generation!

— © Barbara Kalkis, 2025. Barbara spends her time writing, teaching, and working in tech. She's author of Little Ditties for Every Day...A Collection of Thoughts in Rhyme and Rhythm. Contact her at BarbaraKalkis01@gmail.com.

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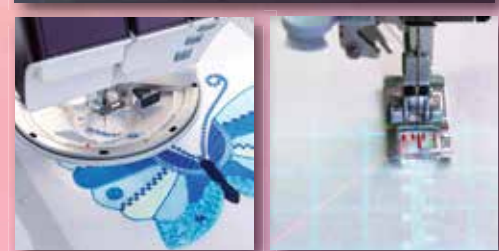
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## Tips for the Thrifty Gardener

A garden doesn't have to cost a lot of money. In fact, there are many ways a garden can save you money. Here are a few suggestions for keeping your garden in top shape without draining your bank account. Supplement them with your own creative ideas!



**Grow from Seed:** It makes good sense, and saves dollars to start easy-to-grow plants from seed rather than buying started seedlings from a nursery. Here are some vegetables and flowers that can and should be sown directly in the garden:  
Lettuce, arugula, and other salad greens: Sprinkle the seeds in wide rows. You will get at least three cuttings of salad greens, which can sell for upwards of \$6-\$7 a pound at the local supermarket.

All root vegetables like carrots, beets, radishes and turnips are also very easy-from-seed vegetables. Garden mainstay veggies such as beans, peas, squash, cucumbers and corn all come easily and quickly from seed as well as long as you wait until temperatures are warmed up into the 50° range both day and night.

Sunflowers, zinnias, cosmos, marigolds, alyssum, sweet peas, morning glories and nasturtiums are some of the beautiful and popular flowers that can be had for the price of a pack of seeds. If you want to have cut flowers, a pack of seeds will produce lots and lots of flowering plants so that you can enjoy bouquets all season long. See <http://www.ezfromseed.org/> for more vegetables and flowers that can be sown directly in the garden.

**Share-starting:** And while you're at it, consider joining with friends in a seed-starting cooperative for plants that need a head start indoors (peppers, eggplants and tomatoes all need to be started indoors in the US except in the warmest areas.) One person starts eggplants, another tomatoes, and at planting time, just divide the started plants among the participating members.

**Compost:** Don't give your leaves away! Chop them with your lawnmower and put them in a pile. Or make a simple compost bin with chicken wire and four stakes. Add vegetable trimmings, prunings, weeds (but no weed with seeds), and other compostable.

**Stake with Reused Materials:** Scavenged materials make very serviceable stakes. Political signs stakes (minus the actual signs) are a good size for propping up peppers or small pea varieties or vining cucumbers - but wait until after the election before collecting them! Scrap wood or old broomsticks or rake handles can be fashioned into tomato supports. An old stepladder can be repurposed as a bean or flower tower.

**Fertilize your Vegetable Garden with Living Plants:** Planting a cover crop in your vegetable garden when the weather is not conducive for growing edible plants is a sure way to improve both the structure and the fertility of your soil. Winter rye, mustard and clover are widely available good choices. For more information, consult your Cooperative Extension, or go to <http://hort.uwex.edu/articles/using-cover-crops-and-green-manures-home-vegetable-garden>

**Get Creative with Weed Barriers:** Laying down 3 to 4 inches of bagged mulch, at considerable expense, has become almost a rite of spring for many homeowners. There are many materials that will perform the same function at a fraction of the cost! Newspaper, cardboard, or shredded paper, topped with straw, pine needles, or chopped leaves, will make a very effective weed barrier between plants. If you don't like the look of these alternatives, try using shredded wood mulch in the front of the garden, and paper or cardboard topped with straw in less visible parts.

**Water with Rain:** Use rain, as much as possible, to water your plants. Rain barrels need not cost a fortune. Check out this EPA instruction sheet for a low cost, DIY version: <http://www.epa.gov/Region3/p2/make-rainbarrel.pdf>

**Seed Pots come in all Shapes and Sizes:** Seeds can be started indoors in any container. Orange juice cartons (sliced in half), yogurt containers, takeout containers - the list is endless. All you need to do is poke holes in the bottom for drainage to make them useful.

**Mark with a Stone:** One attractive way to keep track of what's where is to mark the names of your plants with indelible ink on flat stones. [www.homegardenseedassociation.com](http://www.homegardenseedassociation.com)



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5 large egg yolks, lightly beaten  
1/2 cup butter  
1 tsp vanilla  
9" pie crust - flour or garham cracker  
Whipped topping and baking cocoa, optional

In a large saucepan, combine the first sugar, flour, cocoa powder, salt, water and evaporated milk. Cook and stir over medium-high heat until thickened and bubbly, about 6 minutes. Reduce heat; cook and stir 4 minutes longer. Remove from the heat. Whisk 1 cup hot mixture into egg yolks. Return all to the pan; bring to a gentle boil, stirring constantly. Remove from the heat; stir in butter and vanilla. Cool slightly. Pour warm filling into crust. I recommend making the recipe first thing in the morning or the day before, as it needs time to set.

Submitted by Colleen Gust, The Country Register - SK & MB

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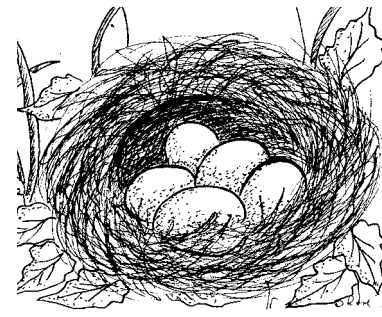
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### Wit & Wisdom

by Judyann Grant

#### Feathering a Nest



Nestled in her faded blue recliner, a green aluminum tray straddled her lap and a floor lamp cast a soft glow over her shoulder. Thus ensconced, my mother filled many long North Country nights engrossed in her latest creative challenge. Early schooled in the art of multi-tasking, Mom worked on her craft projects while music from Lawrence Welk, Ed Sullivan or the Loretta Young show hummed from the black-and-white television across the room.

After a full day of caring for home, husband and five rambunctious children, Mom relaxed by engaging her hands in artistic endeavors - aptly applying one of her favorite mottoes - "idle hands are the Devil's workshop."

One year, in the early nineteen-sixties, mom received a "Fad-of-the-Month" Club membership. Each "fad" (craft) was guaranteed to become a "unique creation your family will treasure for years." Once a month, like clockwork, the mailman wedged a rectangular package inside our rural, metal mailbox. It was an exciting time in our household as mail was rare in those days and parcels even rarer. Excitement rumbled through us, akin to Christmas morning. We kids hovered around Mom as she spread the contents of the latest object d'art on the kitchen table. We nosed through the tiny envelopes of beads and pins, cardboard templates, pieces of plastic and Styrofoam, bits of cotton and cloth, and shiny foil bags of glitter and glue - a mish-mash of supplies that awaited transformation into something greater than the sum of their parts.

Our home soon became a repository for bird's nests tucked inside plastic fruit, imitation Faberge eggs, and sequin-studded ornaments. Unaware of it at the time, lessons beyond cutting and gluing, stitching and staining were being instilled in my young heart.

Attaching hundreds of sequins to foam balls with half-inch straight pins, Mom demonstrated perseverance and finishing what you start. No matter how tedious, she never gave up on a project. Watching Mom work, I learned to follow directions and pay attention to details, even confusing ones. Doing so, without second guessing the craft's creator, guaranteed the finished project would look like the picture in the instruction booklet.

When the Fad-of-the-Month Club membership ended, Mom went back to choosing her own projects. She made costume jewelry with seed beads and miniscule safety pins; she knitted sweaters, scarves and hats; she crocheted doilies and bedspreads; she created wall-hangings by gluing thousands of green and amber acrylic crystals into cord-lined, wine-bottle shapes. With latch-hook and yarn she created pillows, rugs and framed art. She finished paint-by-number canvases of seascapes, landscapes, gardens and the Good Shepherd.

Yet Mom's deeper desire, one that eluded me during my growing-up years, was the fine art of feathering her nest - creating a cozy haven for her fledglings to grow and a unique perch from which to try their wings.

One by one my siblings left the nest, then, in 1971, it was my turn. After graduating high school, I found employment as a typesetter at a small-town newspaper.

At the ripe, know-it-all age of seventeen, being employed in the fast-paced world of publishing in a town of nearly two-thousand people was a heady experience for this rural girl.

Though I continued to live with my parents, my horizons had broadened beyond hearth and home. There was a big world out there and, coming-of-age on the cusp of the burgeoning women's lib movement, I relegated homemaking to the ranks of the obsolete. Dedicating one's life to the care and nurture of a family was passé. Women were created for so much more, or so popular culture led me to believe.

Before too long, though, winds of change blew across my life. I had been at the newspaper office for four years when a printer's apprentice was hired. While he learned the ropes of running a print shop, I perfected my flirting skills.

In less time than it takes to say: "time and tide wait for no man" - (another of Mom's favorite mottoes) - I was deeply in love with that brown-eyed printer boy. An autumn courtship was followed by a spring marriage. We purchased a small cottage on the wooded shores of North Pond, an inlet of Lake Ontario and I went into homemaking overdrive - painting, decorating and crafting knick-knacks for our little home.

I continued working at the newspaper during the day. Nights and weekends were spent helping Don build his own printing business. Two months before our first baby was due, I quit my job to prepare for our bundle of joy.

I traded in my sporty apple-red Mustang for a hefty blue station wagon. I knit sweaters, booties and blankets for our baby, made polyester-stuffed toys and sewed curtains for the nursery. I devoted myself to feathering a nest for my own family. And I never looked back (though today I wouldn't mind having that apple-red Mustang!)

Now, nearly fifty years, three children, nine grandchildren later, and still deeply in love with my brown-eyed printer boy, I rarely ever sit idly in front of the television. If I'm not reading, I'm working on my latest project - crocheting, sewing, sketching, knitting, etc.

Fad-of-the-Month Club creators were right on target. Their simple crafts did become timeless treasures - but in a far greater way than transitory keepsakes. By creating those treasures, my mother planted an overwhelming love of home in my young heart, not with words, but with sequins, glitter and glue. Lots of glue.

Judyann Grant and her husband Don's rural home is situated across from Lake Ontario in northern New York. While both are "semi-retired," Don continues to operate his print shop and Judyann still writes columns and meditations. Her latest book is: "Reflections: One Year of Devotions." Contact the author at: witandwisdomwriters@gmail.com



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### Front Porch in the Summer

by Tammy Page

June, the nationally known celebrated month of weddings and love, including my own, also means days of baseball, swimming, working 4-H animals, baling hay and lots of porch sitting. I love my front porch more than grilled hot dogs, more than 4th of July sparklers and almost more than spending time with my grandkids, I said almost.

My front porch is big enough to have two seating areas, and is covered. It has a great north/south breeze and faces the road where I can wave to my neighbors as they drive by. My porch is the best place to sit and feel the sun to warm by aching bones and drink my morning coffee. I also like to read while relaxing there on my settee. I can place my coffee on the side table all the while reading my newest country magazine. My Australian shepherds lay at the edge of the sidewalk keeping me company and watching for me to rise to give them rubs and sometimes a morning treat. On the other end of my 20-foot porch is a well-loved swing. It's so comfy that I have often fluffed up the pillows and laid down for a nap. My grandkids love to sit with me as I read them one of their favorite books, or play riddly, riddly ree, AKA I spy. Oh, the things we could "I Spy" from the front porch. There is a menagerie of trees, flowers, the yard decor, the cows and calves, the dogs and so much more. The rug on the floor invites the grandchildren to bring out their tote of toys and play at our feet as we visit with our friends and loved ones. A gate is installed across the entrance where we can "coral" them while still keeping a watchful eye on the little ones and also keeping the big, excitable dogs off the porch and from grabbing up the children's toys as their own.

Eating a snack on the porch is the perfect spot for our two-year-old twin grandsons who tend to spill and drop crumbs of animal crackers. Of course, they love to reach through the railings and treat one of the dogs with a few of those crackers too. If truth be told, that is probably the reason why the dogs stay so close while we are out on the porch. They know the twins love to share and get lots of thank you kisses and licks from them too.

The porch has also been a refuge when days have been hard. It has given distance from a quarrel with my spouse, solitude from a teenage spat with her boyfriend, a need to have some quiet time and even a time to reflect after the death of a loved one. No matter the reason, my country porch will always be my favorite place.

© Tammy Page writes from her family farm in Indiana. When not helping her husband with farm chores, she loves scoring a great collectible at an antique shop and spoiling all of her children and grands.

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#### Easy Potato Salad

Easy Potato Salad is a perfect side dish for any occasion. It's creamy, savory, tangy, and full of great texture. This will be whipped up in a flash and is sure to please a crowd, no matter the size!

Prep Time 15 mins	Cook Time 15 mins	Total Time 30 mins
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Course: Side Dish Cuisine: American Servings: 8  
Calories: 341kcal Author: Joanna Cismanu

★★★★★  
4.82 from 11 votes

#### Ingredients

- 3 pound potatoes peeled, such as Yukon gold
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 3 eggs hard boiled, peeled and chopped
- 2 stalks celery chopped
- 1 medium onion chopped
- 1/2 cup sweet pickle relish
- 1/2 teaspoon salt or to taste
- 1 tablespoon mustard regular prepared yellow mustard
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon dill fresh, chopped

#### Instructions

1. Cut the potatoes in quarters and place them in a large pot. Fill the pot with cold water until it is one inch over the top of the potatoes. Bring to a boil over high heat. Once boiling add 1 tbs of salt and cook the potatoes until fork tender, 13 to 15 minutes.
2. In a medium bowl mix the mayonnaise, relish, mustard, salt and pepper, mix until smooth.
3. Drain the potatoes of all the water. Once cooled enough to handle, chop the potatoes into bite size chunks. Place them in a large bowl. Gently mix in the dressing until the potatoes are coated well. Add the eggs, celery, onions, dill and toss. Garnish with more fresh dill.
4. Cover the salad with plastic wrap and chill for at least 4 hours before serving.

Shared by reader E. Hilliard from Virginia.

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#### Garden Havens

by Kerri Habben Bosman

I am writing in what some might call a "shed." I call it the office, but it is really my haven. About two years ago, we bought a 10' by 16' shed for all of the "toys" acquired when you live three blocks from the water. Also, for everything lawn and garden related. Once our little building was set in place, I knew we had to get those kayaks in right away. Otherwise it was quickly going to have hand-sewn curtains for the little windows and extra throw rugs from the house. We jokingly called it the boat house.



Fast forward to January of this year when the kayaks migrated to their berths beside the Intracoastal Waterway. My husband, Wayne, set his floor loom in the living room where two comfortable chairs had been. We had to store them somewhere, right? The wooden clock my dad made in 1982 needed a place to chime. The throw rug is here along with some surplus pillows and a small quilt. And, yes, I sewed valances from leftover calico fabric. Their old-fashioned simplicity soothes me in our more modern world, even as I type away on a computer. We are all a bit ironic sometimes.

The best part is the old card table my mother bought around 1970. I put a tablecloth on it, unfolded a plastic chair, and now I have a quiet place to write. I needed one. Last year at this time, I had a creative lapse. I simply couldn't write an article. Thankfully, Wayne submitted an article for that issue. A wordsmith himself, he now looks forward to writing these articles. This fulfillment as a writer makes my moments of frustrating dormancy all worthwhile.

I described my Picasso blue period this way:  
*I struggled to write because I had thought of everyone else for so long that I forgot how to tap into my own wisdom. The depletion was so gradual that I didn't sense it until it was too late. Creativity needs to be fed and watered. I forgot that and fed everyone and everything else. I planted seeds in our garden, but I forgot to water the plants inside of myself.*

Thus, I have come to treasure my haven of a shed. I sit here and listen to Daddy's clock tick along with the tapping of my fingers on the laptop keyboard. From here I can see the garden beds, the well-settled ones, and the new one we just set out this year. New herbs are spreading out. Our sugar snap peas are thriving, and the tomatoes we grew from seed are on their way. Zinnias splash redemptive color across our garden beds. My stepdaughter and I used to consider the pros and cons of being very kind-hearted. It is a gift having a deep capacity to give of ourselves to others. We lamented that sometimes we were perceived as weak, when being softer around the edges actually requires an interior strength. Yet, it is too easy to forget yourself and therein lies the downside. We talked of how to find a good balance.

My stepdaughter, too, had a shed. She envisioned living long enough with advanced stage 4 cancer to share her healing haven with others struggling with the same illness. She planned a garden around the shed. I promised her some of our zinnia seeds for her planters. It was not to be.

I think of her life as a flower and of all the seeds of kindness she sowed throughout her life. Her blossoming will continue as her children grow into their own gardens and as they give of themselves. And I smile at the tender, tenacious zinnias opening up to the sun.

©Kerri Habben Bosman is a writer in Cape Carteret, NC.

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#### GIRLFRIEND WISDOM

**What Feeds Your Soul?**  
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"Feeding your soul" refers to nourishing the innermost part of your being, beyond your physical and material needs. It is engaging in activities or experiences that bring joy, fulfillment, and a sense of purpose. This could involve pursuing hobbies that ignite passion, spending time with loved ones, seeking moments of solitude for self-reflection, practicing mindfulness, or connecting with nature and art. In essence, it is about prioritizing your emotional and spiritual well-being to find greater meaning and contentment in life. It is a worthy process to take time and ask yourself the question - "What feeds my Soul?" One large hint, that might help answer this question is what activities you were drawn to as a child when just "playing". Is there anything that could be developed into a hobby or current day activity.

**GIRLFRIEND WISDOM:** Try out one of your childhood activities and see how it feels - if it brings you deep joy, expand that feeling into a current day part of your life - it just might "feed your Soul!"

Joy & Blessings, Jody

Girlfriend Wisdom is written and illustrated by Jody Houghton®.  
Color files of this writing and artwork are available: www.JodyHoughtonDesigns.etsy.com

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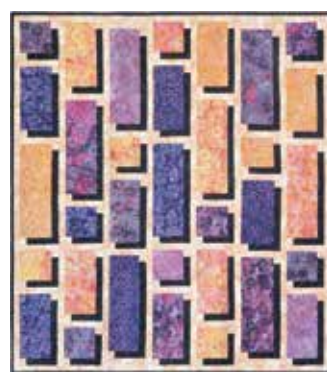
by Marlene Oddie

Introducing a floral batik collection from the newly formed Lumin Fabrics. As one of several subsidiaries, Island Batik is responsible for their batik collections. This new one is called Botanical Dreams and is shipping now to a local quilt shop near you.

Sometimes we have a fabric stack that we just really don't want to cut up too much. This design – "City Shadows" – has three sizes of blocks and allows the fabric to be seen on a larger scale, yet it starts with a 10" stack of coordinating prints or at least a 5" x Width of Fabric strip. Just add background and shadow yardage.

The shadow effect helps each element really pop off the quilt. Insider tip: Choose the large "C" blocks first since they will showcase the fabric the most. The pattern has yardage information for this lapsize as well as three larger sizes.

This version of City Shadows was named Flower Boxes – just perfect for Spring.



© Marlene Oddie (marlene@kissedquilts.com) is an engineer by education, project manager by profession and now a quilter by passion in Grand Coulee, WA at her quilt shop, KISSed Quilts. She quilts for hire on a Gammill Optimum Plus, but especially enjoys designing quilts and assisting in the creation of a meaningful treasure for the recipient. Fabric, patterns, kits and templates are available at <http://www.kissedquilts.com>. Follow Marlene's adventures via <https://www.facebook.com/kissedquilts> and <https://www.instagram.com/marlene.kissedquilts>



**Call Me Old Fashioned**

by Judy Sharer

At an early age, I remember my mother sitting me at the kitchen table and teaching me to write thank you notes after my birthday to everyone who attended the party. At that young age my cramping hand and I didn't appreciate the sentimentality, but I sure do now. Today, when I receive a thank you note or any card it brightens my day!

There are endless occasions to send a note and I have to admit, I've slacked off these past few years myself, but I'm going to try to do better. It doesn't have to be a handwritten note each time, maybe a card with a side note to make it personal is all it takes to let the person know you are thinking of them and that their efforts have not gone unnoticed.

We all have older people in our lives who might not get out much, or someone we haven't visited in a while. Sending them an I'm thinking of you message reminding about time spent together might cheer them and bring a smile to their face. Notes and cards are all about letting others know that they matter.

It doesn't take long to address an envelope and send off a communication to brighten someone else's day. It will make you feel good and the recipient will know you are appreciative and thinking of them. I know today it's easier to email or text, but a good old fashion note still can make a difference. Spread some kindness today, it's worth your time.

© Judy Sharer is the author of a four-book historical Civil War era romance, family saga series titled *A Plains Life*, published by The Wild Rose Press, available wherever online books and eBooks are sold. If you enjoy quilting, you'll enjoy her series with a thread of quilting throughout the story. Look for her next book this fall. Visit Judy's website [judysarar.com](http://judysarar.com) for more details and if you have read her books please leave a review on your favorite site.



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**2 Minute Lift**

My Life Was Changed by This Gift in Disguise

by Kathy J. Sotak

I was given a special gift last month. The gift was pure magic, but disguised as an everyday household item. A bulging box pouring out a high-end, name brand blanket arrived for me.

To be honest, I didn't need a new blanket. My family has more blankets than a household needs. If I dare count, I likely have two or three for every human, dog, chicken and fish on property. Just like you, I have them all. I have hand-crocheted afghans and fleece throws. I have quilts, outdoor picnic blankets, sand-proof beach blankets and even silly ones to wrap and strap around your body. I have former favorites that can't yet be discarded, as their holes and stains are imprinted with memories.

The new blanket didn't care about the others, though. It marched into my life with its own purpose. It was in disguise, daring me to accept a different offering.

It multiplied as I unfolded it, and together we melted into the couch. There was no choice but to embrace together in deep ceremony. Imagine the feeling of a dozen puppy cuddles. Imagine giant angel wings enveloping you in their loving embrace. Imagine tightness you didn't know was there instantaneously dissolves. A miracle from heaven. Under the spell of this magic blanket, my mind switched off and my body melted into original form. My heartbeat gushed out a new elixir that calmed every inflamed bit.

Comfort. That was the true gift I received, but disguised in blanket form. No wonder they call them comforters.

As I let myself be comforted by the blanket, I started asking questions. Do I let myself be comforted enough? Do I let others comfort me, when I am hurting, over-burdened or grieving? This leads me to ask, who are my comforters, the ones I go to for support? Finally, when I am the best one to comfort me, do I even know how to do it?

Sometimes, comfort comes in the way of a friend. Sometimes, comfort comes from the spiritual realm. Sometimes, comfort comes in the way of a comforter or soft sweaters or cozy socks. Sometimes, the best person to comfort you, is you.

How do you comfort yourself? Do you have a favorite sweater or slippers that serves as your comforter? Do you have a special animal, friend or family member? Do you dive into prayer or meditation and seek help from the Source outside of you?

If you aren't sure where to start, try this trick I learned: if you feel a little hurt, vulnerable or sad, simply place one hand on your other forearm, or place your hand on your heart. Then feel into how great that feels.

It can be your own gift in disguise, a built-in comforter that doesn't cost a dime.

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**Back Porch Break My Mother's Hands**

by Nancy Parker Brummett

I was blessed to be with my mother for two weeks before she passed away at 92, even though we lived thousands of miles apart. Sitting beside her bed I found myself drawn to her hands—wanting to touch them and hold them as long as I possibly could.

These were the hands that cared for me when I was little and reached out when she was old and frail. These were the hands that created the home my two sisters and I remember so fondly the hands that stirred the gravy, tied the bows on the backs of our dresses, decorated the Christmas tree, and folded the laundry.

On family vacations my Mom would lay her arm across the back of the front seat where she sat with my Dad, tapping her fingers in time to the music on the car radio or to the songs she was teaching us. I remember marveling at her long red nails and sparkly rings and thinking my Mom's hands had to be the most beautiful hands in the world!

As she aged arthritis took its toll on Mom's hands, but they were still beautiful to me because they were the hands that clapped excitedly whenever she first saw me on one of my visits to Tennessee from Colorado. And when she wanted to call her three daughters together one last time, and it was so difficult for her to speak, she motioned to us with her hands. Saying, "I want one, two, three" as she pointed to three spots on the foot of her bed, she indicated she expected us all to be present at once. When we were assembled, in an incredible and memorable blessing, she told us how much she loved us, how proud she was of us, and thanked us for taking good care of her in her old age. Then she sang the words "He touched me" from the old hymn, and simply said the word "peace."

Mom lingered for two more days but never really spoke or opened her eyes again. She had said her goodbyes. As I sat by her bed after she had slipped away, I was still holding her hand and wondering how I could ever let it go.

But the Lord knew that day would come and thought of a way to comfort my sisters and me in it even as He was creating us in our mother's womb. For you see, when we look at our own hands they remind us of our mother's in so many ways. With hearts full of the love Mom gave us, and still gives us from heaven, we are left to carry on with our children and grandchildren. The work of her hands is now ours to do, and by God's grace we will do it joyfully as we celebrate her life and the legacy she left us—not just on Mother's Day, but every day we live.

Nancy Parker Brummett is an author and freelance writer in Colorado Springs, CO. To learn more about her work and life, find her on Facebook or visit [www.nancyparkerbrummett.com](http://www.nancyparkerbrummett.com).

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 Cindy K.

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## A Tale of Two Cars –Thanks Mom & Dad

by Barbara Kalkis

I admit that sometimes I tend to over-think things but, I believe this in a good way. By over-thinking, I can rationalize things that I would otherwise reject as nonsensical behavior and stop myself from an unwise comment.

Case in point: During a trip to Palm Springs, my friend's husband pulled into a parking garage slot next to a gleaming white BMW that was next to a gleaming white Bentley that was next to another gleaming white BMW – all new models. None of this "vintage" stuff.

I've seen plenty of BMWs, but the Bentley Continental GT convertible was breathtaking. It was sleek and luxurious, making the BMW's look pitifully commonplace. Admiring its curvaceous lines from a distance – to avoid the motion alarm and police – I noticed that license plate frame simply read, "Bentley." Huh?

Since the Bentley logo is emblazoned on the trunk for all to see, I nearly slipped into my old habit of asking questions like, "Do you think that's his dog's name or his?" Then I stopped, recalling that I was trying to avoid overthinking things and be positive. So instead of chirping something like, "Couldn't he think of anything clever to say?" (I assume it was a "he" since women make 84 cents to every dollar earned by men), I told myself to consider that the owner might be exercising courtesy to drivers behind him. Just think, if you're following a Bentley in traffic, the license frame is a clear caution that if you "rear-end" it, you're going to be "slammed" too – by your insurance company for picking up his repair costs. Or perhaps he chose that license frame because other drivers might not observe that he is cruising in a Bentley. Or maybe their eyes aren't good enough to recognize the winged logo.

A short time after that trip when I was home again, I pulled into a parking lot just behind my favorite market. It is not used much because the distance to the entrance requires that you walk about 50 more steps than if you park out front. (There's that over-thinking thing again.)

As I marched through the lot, I noticed a nondescript older-model beige car that was showing some wear-and-tear. Nevertheless, it was pristinely clean and in quite good condition. Suddenly, the license plate frame caught my attention. No, it did not say "Bentley!" The top of the frame said, "THANKS MOM & DAD." The bottom of the frame proclaimed, "I LOVE YOU!"

I started to weep. Here was a person who wasn't boasting, advertising a car dealership, pushing a political agenda, spouting a joke, bragging about their university. No. This person simply made a declaration of love. And if the driver behind her (back to the salary disparity comment) saw the message, it reminded them to tell their parents how much they love them. Or maybe their siblings, spouse, grandparents, children, friends, teachers, whoever.

Many countries celebrate Mother's Day, Father's Day, Grandparents Day, and Children's Day. Anyone can celebrate these holidays and then contentedly wait another year to say, "I love you." Meanwhile, that one driver's simple message announces it every time the car leaves home. It only takes money to own a Bentley. On the other hand, it takes true emotion and courage to express love in a bold, public way. Only one of those car owners showed that capacity.

The most innocuous signs in the most unexpected places can change us. When the message is "I love you," there's no need to think about it. Just act.

—©Barbara Kalkis, 2025. Barbara spends her time writing, teaching, and working in tech. She's author of *Little Ditties for Every Day...A Collection of Thoughts in Rhyme and Rhythm*. Contact her at [BarbaraKalkis01@gmail.com](mailto:BarbaraKalkis01@gmail.com).

## In the Black

by Wayne M. Bosman

Kerri and I reached a new milestone today. We finished unloading and spreading a pickup load of topsoil into our expanded garden beds. We both felt compelled to grow more food this year, but growing a productive garden in coastal North Carolina is a learning experience for me, having grown up in Southeastern Wisconsin. Kerri grew up in Raleigh, where red clay is a far cry from the coast's sandy soil.



I was fortunate to have my first garden in Wisconsin. I was a 4-H member and learned at meetings about the different mixtures of fertilizer and soil testing for maximum output. Probably more importantly, we were guided to which variety of vegetables to grow, by people who grew food for a living. The Sweet Spanish Onions, Big Boy Tomatoes, and Silver Queen Corn was well suited to our area and to my goal- to have everything flourishing at the time of the County Fair. I was mostly in it for the ribbons. Not that that was a bad thing.

Yet I was a careless gardener, unlike my father. Dad enjoyed nothing more than spending time in the garden. Before work or after supper he loved to survey the garden and pull the errant weed or thin out the nonproductive plants. I weeded under duress only. The black Wisconsin soil bailed me out.

In early spring, I spent countless hours behind the rototiller, watching the tines bust up clods of soil into grains. I loved leaning back to restrain the tiller from bouncing along the winter-hardened soil until it had dug its way in deep enough that it could not go further until I let it. Every few feet I would toss aside rocks that came to the surface, wondering where new rocks came from in a space that had been gardened year after year. That well tilled soil, after the planting was done and the first few weeks of daily watering and looking for growth, did most of the work. Baseball was a much more attractive option for our bunch of rowdy boys, and Dad, having supplemented the family income as a semipro pitcher, was an understanding taskmaster.

But that was long ago in a distant place. Plants that grew effortlessly in the Midwest's rich soil don't always thrive along the North Carolina coast. To compensate, the growing season starts in February, and some crops produce year-round. We often end up talking to Mom about Kerri's work in our garden while snow covers the garden space of my youth. When I was a child, it was considered quite a gamble to plant the less hardy crops before mid-May. "Knee high by the 4th of July" was considered the measure of a successful corn crop.

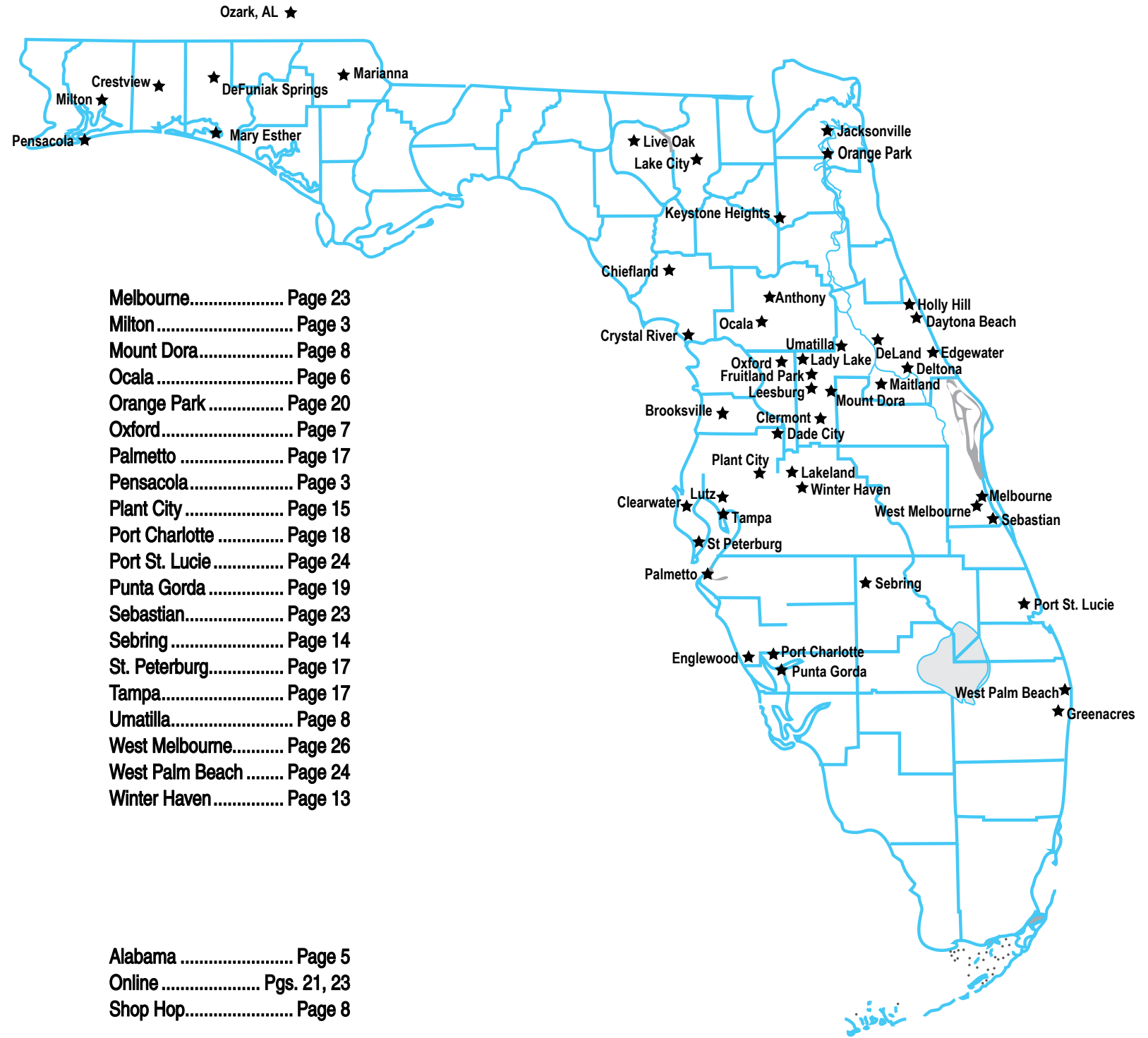
There are lots of reasons to want to grow more of our food this year. Prices rarely go down. But even more, my daughter's passing in January makes me focus more on the cycle of life. And, God willing, another grandchild is arriving soon.

My daughter had purchased four new planters and set them up outside her little shed. She was building a refuge for other women suffering with cancer. Books, a sauna, musical instruments and a quiet place to escape to for support were part of her vision. She didn't get the chance to fill the new planters with soil.

When Kerri and I found some similar planters to put on our underused but sunny front porch, we didn't hesitate. We added an extra garden bed in the back yard and went down to the landscape supply store up the road. The truckload of rich black topsoil brought back a flood of memories from my youth. It is an act of faith that it will provide even more memories in the future.

© 2024 Wayne M. Bosman is a retired auto mechanic living in Cape Carteret, NC. His email is [wbosman1@gmail.com](mailto:wbosman1@gmail.com).

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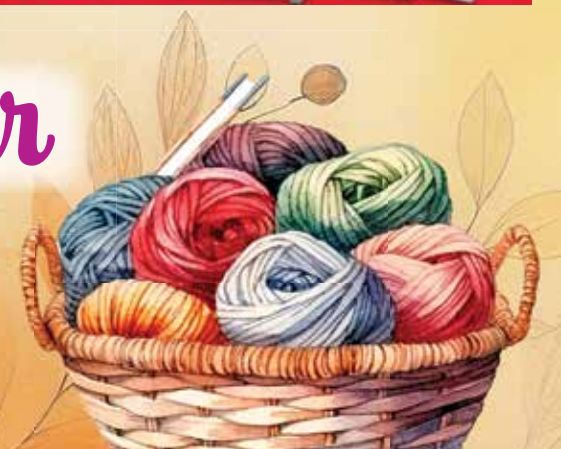
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