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NEIGHBORING STATE AD

A Cup of Tea with Lydia

Creating Beau-TEA-ful Floral Bouquets *by Lydia E. Harris*

Creating Beau-TEA-ful Floral Bouquets

"Your table looks lovely," my friend said as she admired the bouquet I had arranged for our teatime. My favorite part of serving tea is creating a lovely setting. If possible, I like to include fresh flowers on the table along with the pretty teacups, linens, and tasty tidbits.

Whether tea parties are simple or sumptuous, fresh flowers create a fragrant and beau-TEA-ful welcome.

Would you like to try your hand at arranging a floral centerpiece? If so, here are some tips to get started.

Quick and Easy Arrangements

1. Select flowers and greenery from a local market or your garden. Choose mixed bouquets to complement your dishes and table linens for a spring garden feel. Or pick a single accent color for a more striking look. If possible, arrange the centerpiece the day before so you can focus on preparing food on the party day. Set the bouquet in the coolest part of your home overnight so flowers won't open and wilt.

2. Use an upright vase that fans out at the top and allows flowers to spread naturally rather than stand at attention. A neutral or clear vase will complement rather than compete with the arrangement. Fill the vase about three-fourths full of water. Keep the flowers in water until you are ready to arrange them.

3. Arrange the flowers in your hand, adding one flower stem at a time until the head of the bouquet looks attractive and is the size you wish. Hold the bouquet next to the vase to determine the proper height. Then use a sharp knife rather than scissors to cut the stems diagonally to the correct length. Scissors pinch the stems shut so they cannot drink water. Remove the leaves below the water line to eliminate decay and to extend flower life.

4. Place the flowers in the vase and let them fan out. Then trim the stems of the outer flowers slightly shorter. Be sure the bouquet is low enough so guests can see one another across the table. For added color, tie a ribbon around the mouth of the vase to coordinate with the napkins. Add more water as needed and enjoy your lovely bouquet.

5. For a spur-of-the-moment tea time or when you do not have time to arrange flowers, simply float blossoms and leaves in a glass bowl. Flowers like camellias and hydrangeas work well for this.

Creativi-TEA

Glass vases or bowls aren't the only option to use for containers. Anything that holds water will work. To make a small bouquet for a card table, use a cup and saucer, a small



cream pitcher, or even a gravy boat.

For a larger table, consider a teapot. One of my favorite containers is a cracked floral teapot I bought at a rummage sale for a nickel. I place a small jar inside to hold water and arrange the bouquet so ivy trails over the sides to hide the crack. Select any container with personali-TEA.

Fresh flowers perk up not only your table but your guests as well. The welcoming beauty and fragrance of flowers cheerfully announce that "It's Time for Tea!"

To add a special touch, you could serve flowering tea at your teatime. (See Lydia's Idea File for more information.)

After the teatime, I sometimes send the flowers home with guests so the beauty and fragrance of our time together can linger.

I'm ready to plan a beau-TEA-ful teatime. Won't you join me?

Lydia E. Harris enjoys serving tea to family and friends. Her books for grandparents are: Preparing My Heart for Grandparenting, In the Kitchen with Grandma, and GRAND Moments: Devotions Inspired by Grandkids. All are available at amazon.com or can be ordered through local bookstores.



From Lydia's Recipe File: Flowering Tea Balls

April showers bring May flowers, and sometimes they even bloom in teapots. You can purchase flowering tea balls to brew tea. The tea balls are made by hand-stitching tea leaves and flowers together in various shapes before drying them. When you brew a blooming tea ball in glass cups or teapots you can watch them unfurl before your eyes, creating delicious tea along with a beautiful display. Adding them to a menu is like serving champagne or caviar—it seems elegant and a bit extravagant.

Local tea merchants or tearooms may sell flowering teas. Or check the internet for other sources. Many can be found on Etsy, including organic ones. Flowering tea adds a special delight to teatimes. They also make popular gifts, especially for occasions like Mother's Day.

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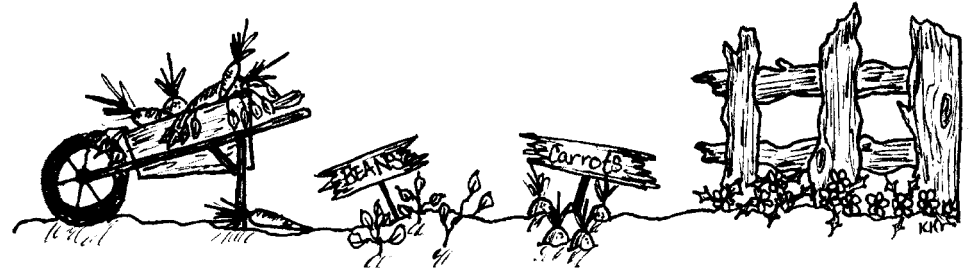
7 Garden Growing Basics for Beginners

Growing your own produce is an all-around smart practice, from the money you'll save at the grocery store to the contributions you can make toward a cleaner planet.

Maintaining a garden takes some effort, but it's a project even a beginner can tackle with ease. Consider these tips to start growing your at-home garden:



1. **Select a perfect spot.** You'll want to place your garden in an area where you see it often so you're reminded to weed and care for it regularly. Find a flat area you can access easily, where erosion and other pitfalls (including hungry wildlife) won't be a problem.
2. **Choose between ground and containers.** There are pros and cons to gardening in containers vs. the ground, and there's no universal right choice. Rather, the best garden depends on your goals and preferences. A ground garden usually offers more space and may provide a better growth environment for roots. However, a container garden is often easier to maintain and may be all you need if you wish to grow just a few plants.
3. **Understand the importance of quality soil.** You may think any dirt will do, but keep in mind the soil you plant in will be the primary source of nutrients for your produce. Not only that, but quality soil provides stability so plants



can root firmly and grow healthy and sturdy to support their bounty. Quality soil also allows for ample drainage. Organic matter like compost, leaf mold or aged manure all help improve soil quality.

4. **Keep water close.** Lugging water can quickly eliminate the pleasure of tending your garden, so be sure you're situated near a hose. You'll know it's time to water when the soil is dry about an inch below the surface.
5. **Plan for plenty of sun.** A bright, sunny spot is a must, since most vegetables, herbs and fruits depend on six or more hours of sun every day. Remember the sun's path changes throughout the year, and as trees and foliage grow, they may produce more shade with each growing season.
6. **Consider what you'll grow.** Starting with veggies you know you like is a smart starting point since you'll be pouring sweat equity into making them grow. Over time, you might add new varieties, but early on, keep your focus on foods you know you like so you can see a meaningful return and avoid waste. You'll also need to consider what you can grow to maturity within your area's growing season. If necessary, you might want to start transplants you can nurture indoors before moving them outside when the temperatures allow.
7. **Plant according to a calendar.** Knowing how long it takes different foods to mature will help you create a planting calendar. You don't want to harvest everything at once, and if you stagger planting and replant what you can, you'll have a garden that produces food for your family for a longer period of time.

Find more helpful tips for managing your home and garden at eLivingtoday.com.
Photo courtesy of Unsplash

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by Annice Bradley

Soulful Spaces

As spring comes into full bloom, our yards become abundant with life. Our landscape becomes filled with green more and more each day. Our lawns are transformed and vibrant. The trees that line our country property are showing signs of increased vitality. Our perennial gardens seem to beckon us to enjoy some time getting back to a task we love—nurturing the herbs and flowers that have become a soulful part of what we call home.



With temperatures gently warming and daylight hours stretching out before us, this time of year is indeed a blessing. Spring is the ideal time to tackle some of the tasks we have planned all winter long. Whether it is mending our Williamsburg-style fence or putting a fresh coat of paint on our batten doors, spring often affords us both the weather and the motivation to bring our ideas to life. And at the end of the day, after all of the hard work, the satisfaction felt as you look upon the fresh improvements will be a sweet, welcomed reward to be enjoyed all season long.

Creating Interest and Delight

Preparing and decorating our outdoor spaces is time well spent. As we sip our early morning coffee on our stone patio on one of the first warm mornings, we may come up with special country touches that will add interest and delight to our outdoor spaces. Woven bee skeps are a signature country motif that can be put on a large, seasoned stump or tall post as a focal point to enjoy. Country accents like tall, colorful birdhouses can be hung against the backdrop of a primitive fence to add color amongst the growing herbs. A sundial can be mounted on a hand-hewn post to become a central image in the kitchen clipping garden.

When it comes time to harvest our first batches of tender herbs, there is nothing like bringing out our sturdy, splint gathering baskets to assist in this joyful country task. As we gather, bind, and hang our first bundles of sage, sweet marjoram, and lemon balm, we are easily inspired, for this is only the beginning. Our gardens, whether culinary, medicinal, or decorative will serve us well with our generous care. And in exchange for our efforts our reward will be a feeling of true peace that comes with deep connection.

Honoring True Beauty

This season take time to savor the simple yet significant gifts of spring. Delight in being surrounded by true moments of beauty—like the unexpected return of your first hummingbird, or the vibrant first blooms of the lilac bush that graced your front stepstone for generations. Take comfort in knowing that these reminders will always be around us if we take the time to honor them.

© Annice Bradley Rockwell is an educator and owner of Pomfret Antiques. She is currently working on her book, *New England Girl*. NewEnglandGirl2012@hotmail.com

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Kids' Ketch Opens New Location in Milton

by Kerri Habben Bosman

Kids' Ketch is bringing its signature mix of family fun and thoughtful play to a new home in Milton, Delaware. Known for its great customer service and carefully curated selection of toys, games, books and more, the popular shop is expanding into the growing Cape Region, giving both locals and visitors another place to discover something special.



At Kids' Ketch and Tidepool Toys & Games every item is chosen with purpose, balancing quality, creativity, and educational value. From puzzles and crafts to kites and classic toys, the stores offer something for every age and every budget. Whether you're planning a family game night, looking for the perfect vacation activity, or searching for a meaningful gift, there's always something new to explore.

The Lewes location of Kids' Ketch also features distinctive children's clothing, ranging from newborn to size 10, adding another layer to the shop's unique offerings. Across all locations, customers will find a blend of timeless favorites alongside the latest trends, making each visit both familiar and fresh.

Owners Lori and Sandy Smyth have been at the heart of Kids' Ketch since 2019, when they purchased the business and added it to their Tidepool Toys & Games family. With Kids' Ketch established in 1990 and Tidepool Toys in 2011, their passion for play is rooted in family experiences—especially memories of their own children enjoying the simple joys of playing in tide pools along the beach.

The new Milton location reflects that same spirit. Lori and Sandy are excited to become part of the community, continuing to create a welcoming space where families can connect, explore, and make lasting memories.

Community connection is at the core of everything at Kids' Ketch and Tidepool Toys & Games. Lori and Sandy are grateful for the support they've received and remain committed to giving back, ensuring their stores continue to be a meaningful part of the towns they serve.

Kids' Ketch locations can be found on 2nd Street in Lewes and now at 113 Union Street in Milton. Tidepool Toys & Games stores are located on the boardwalk in Bethany Beach and at 100 Coastal Highway in Fenwick Island. For store hours and more information, visit www.kidsketch.com or check out their Facebook page.

Taurus the Bull, Tea and Me

by Barbara Kalkis

I am not a believer in astrology or horoscopes, but I learned that some traits of my April birthday sign, Taurus the Bull, hit uncomfortably close to home. It is true that I am logical and goal oriented. I like to think I'm dependable, loyal, and a hard worker, but sometimes stubborn, and slow to accept change. (Finally! An excuse for why I've not remodeled my kitchen!) However, if I dwell too long on the longer list of a bull's "earth signs", I visualize myself on an 1800s farm, stolidly plowing a field or dragging a covered wagon from St. Joe, MO, to Sacramento gold country. Not a pretty picture.

One source states that Taureans love good food and great meals. Right! Supposedly, we are great cooks. Wrong. Unless you want 10 different ways to make canned tuna fish. My favorite meals are those with easy-to-be-with friends. One such group is my

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cardmaking group. Every month, we meet for breakfast in a cozy mom-and-pop café. My go-to breakfast there is two poached eggs, potatoes and rye toast with coffee. Yes, I know I'm supposed to be talking about the wonders of tea, but it's important to understand that there's always an exception to the rule. Part of it is a matter of taste. Somehow, coffee and eggs cooked any style just go together in terms of flavors. The other part is that I've never really found a restaurant that makes good hot tea.

This insight occurred to me one morning as we gathered. We all had ordered coffee, except for Denice. She had ordered tea. While we were drinking hot coffee, I observed that her tea bag was floating aimlessly around in her cup, like a goldfish in bowl. The water was just too cool for the tea's flavor and color to be released. That's when I reconfirmed my restaurant rule to drink coffee or iced tea "out" and hot tea "in".

My kitchen may be light on exotic herbs and spices, unless you count sea salt as "exotic", but I have a plethora of tea varieties, ranging from white tea to green tea to black tea to herbals; from fruited teas to florals and fermented brews. Coffee aficionados can rave about the merits of Columbian versus Ethiopian coffee beans, but those comparisons fade against tea. You cannot put a rose or chrysanthemum, ginger or peppermint in coffee unless it's the froth on top of a drink that isn't really coffee. If you have a cold, drink tea with lemon. An upset stomach? Tea with ginger. Stressed? Chamomile. Celebrating summer? Peach tea. Crave a standby at lunch? Jasmine works fine. Need a sweetener? Use honey. Tea easily adapts to flavors. Consider that Genmaicha tea combines roasted rice with Matcha tea for a smoky, tasty exotic flavor. Try putting rice in coffee and see what that gets you.

Preparation time is an important difference between tea and coffee. Coffee is fast. Place coffee grounds in a pot or pop a packet in a coffee machine and in moments you have hot coffee. Tea takes time. Boil water. Place a tea bag or an infuser containing tea leaves into the pot. And wait. Wait until the tea diffuses the water with flavor. In shops, coffee drinkers expect their drink to be made and paid for in instants. With tea, we know that good drinks take time. Tea slows the pace of life to a moment that lets us grapple with whatever emotion we are feeling. Somehow, tea makes everything manageable. Even learning that your astrology sign contrived to hit some of your personality traits right on target.

©Barbara Kalkis, 2026. Barbara loves writing, teaching communications, and consulting on high-tech topics. Her poetry book is *Little Ditties for Every Day: A Collection of Thoughts in Rhyme and Rhythm*. Contact her at BarbaraKalkis01@gmail.com.

WILMINGTON – DE

That Old Pink Robe

by Becky Van Vleet

I was heartbroken when my beloved mother left earth for heaven in 1977 when I was only 23 years old. My husband and I hadn't even reached our second anniversary yet. It felt so unfair. I'll never forget the day Daddy asked my sisters and me later on to go through our mother's clothes and decide what to do with them. That was an incredibly difficult day. We donated some items, while others we kept as personal mementos. I requested my mother's pink satin robe. It was already missing a couple of buttons, and dangling threads hung from the satin quilting. I can't recall why I asked for it, but I saved it in a drawer for almost 40 years.

Here come the grandchildren. Six granddaughters! As I brought out the robe for them to play dress-up, fond memories of my sweet mother filled my mind. Watching that old pink robe find new life with the little ones made my heart burst with joy. However, with age and gentle play, it has become quite worn. I've had to mend the robe several times. It's much too large for my younger granddaughters, yet they adore its long length and the feel of the satin. The memories of my mother wearing that robe around the house on chilly days are still etched in my mind to this day.

To preserve the cherished garment as a special keepsake, I've removed it from the play clothes and placed it on a dedicated hook in my closet. I'm thrilled whenever my granddaughters say, "Nana, I'm cold. Can I wear your mother's robe?" I hurry to retrieve it for them. I share tidbits about my mother when the robe comes out. How kind she was to others. Her pretty brown eyes. How her homemade macaroni and cheese was the best ever.

The memories flood back. And when more than one granddaughter visits at the same time, it's not unusual to have to mediate who gets to wear it. I never imagined this would happen!

Why did I save this old robe? Back then, I wasn't sure why I wanted to hold onto it. But now it makes perfect sense. It holds cherished memories as I watch my granddaughters scampering around in it whenever they feel "cold." It reminds me of my lovely mother, and that's priceless.

I encourage all of you—grandmothers, mothers, daughters, aunts, sisters, and friends—to hold onto a piece of clothing, a quilt, a doll, a teacup, a scarf, or any meaningful keepsake you can pass along to your children or grandchildren. While the item might not seem important now, its value often grows over time. Share the story behind it. Create a cherished memory. Treasure the tale. That old pink robe brings me immense joy even today.



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Mother's Day Quotes

by Janet Young

It's that time of the year as Mother's Day rolls around, that we begin to switch gears and begin to focus on our mothers. We celebrate the many blessings she has brought into our life.

This year I thought it would be a novel way to share some quotes that people have made about their mother. It may make you laugh, reflect, and recall some of the remembrances you have of your mother.

Let's get started.

- Mothers can look through a child's eyes and see tomorrow. *Reed Markham*
- Mother is a verb. It is something you do, not just who you are. *Cheryl Lacey Donovan*
- All I am I owe to my mother. *George Washington*
- All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe to my mother. *Abraham Lincoln*
- A mother's arms are more comforting than anyone else's. *Princess Diana*
- My mother has a great deal of trouble with me, but I think she enjoyed it. *Mark Twain*
- A mother understands what a child does not see. *Jewish proverb*
- My mother is my root, my foundation. She planted the seed that I base my life on, and that is the belief to achieve, starts in your mind. *Michael Jordan*

The next three quotes are from unknown sources:

- Nothing is really lost until your mom can't find it.
- Life doesn't come with a manual it comes with a mom.
- Moms are like buttons they hold everything together.

I hope as you read these quotes some made you laugh, and some touched your heart. But more importantly, I hope it brought back reflections of why your mother means so much to you.

For those whose mothers are in heaven, may you cherish the memories and feel the love that only a mother can provide.

Happy Mother's Day

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



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ELMER - MICKLETON

Clutter Happens

by Julie Pirtle

Lessons From a Quilt

I am a collector of romance. Not hearts. Not Gothic novels. I enjoy the romance of items that show a long life. Do they tell a story? If not, is it easy to imagine a story befitting of their valor for withstanding the test of time?

While thrift finds are always fun, my favorite pieces are those that have been passed down by my family. I love to be the keeper of the history they shared with my ancestors. It's a feeling hard to put into words, but if you know...you know.

My favorite treasures that have been entrusted to me are quilts that were made by my great grandmothers. They hang like proud family crests on the wall of my guest room. They are uneven. The corners don't match up when folded. Some colors have faded and some hand stitching is not as strong as it used to be.

Even with all those irregularities, they are still stunning. One is a wedding ring pattern that was made for my Grandmother by her Mom. It was a gift for their wedding in the early 40's. I remember seeing it on their bed as a young child...well into the 60's.

The other quilt is a carnival of small colored scraps. It is bordered with a bright seafoam green fabric. The pieces came from old shirts, dresses, blouses...anything that could be reused to create a fabric masterpiece. (Looks like upcycling isn't such a new trend after all!)

Over the centuries, quilts have been mainstays in the lives of those who used them. Women made them for their families as a necessity. After all, running to the

Department Store for a new blanket wasn't really an option!

When I see a really old quilt, I like to think about who used it. Were they traversing cross-country in a covered wagon? Was it used in a backwoods farmhouse? Did it grace the bed in a Victorian home?

As important as the usage was the way most quilts were made. In the days before any electronic diversions, people actually talked to each other! In this way, the Quilting Bee became the social club of local groups of women.

Together, they spent quality time. I imagine there was a lot of gossip, tears and laughter. All the while, their busy and crafty hands sewed stitch by stitch, making the creation a community effort.

In a time of our lives when life is uncertain and the world is a little crazy, I think we should take some wisdom from those quilts and the artisans that made them. It didn't matter what array of colors were sewn together. It was beautiful. Spending time together allows for a time of support and healing. It was also beautiful.

The stitches that connect the pieces of us together as a community are there if we take the time to see it. The seams holding those pieces together bind us as one. We humans all need the warmth of community ... and quilts.

Quilts make life softer. Old quilts make us wiser with the stories they tell. Let's make a pact to be softer and listen to those that have stories to share. We've got this. I know we do.

© Julie Pirtle lives in Eagle Point, Oregon. She is a Professional Organizer and owner/operator of Clutter Happens. She also works with clients nationally through video consultations. The Clutter Challenged can reach her on Facebook:/clutterhappens or email her directly: clutterhappens@yahoo.com

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Shrimp Dip

I remember having this dip back in the late '80s. I have a weakness for it, but how can you resist anything with shrimp?! This is a more upscale version than that one, as it uses frozen shrimp instead of canned.

1 pkg. (8 oz.) cream cheese, softened	2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
1/2 cup sour cream	1 medium green pepper, chopped
1/4 cup mayonnaise	1 small tomato, chopped
1 cup seafood cocktail sauce	3 green onions with tops, sliced
12 ounces frozen cooked salad shrimp, thawed	Assorted crackers

In a large bowl, beat the cream cheese, sour cream and mayonnaise until smooth. Spread mixture on a platter or bowl. Top with seafood sauce. Sprinkle with shrimp, mozzarella, green pepper, tomato and onions. Refrigerate until serving. Serve with crackers.

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HOPE

Emily Dickinson, was a very wise woman! Her connection with nature and virtues like Hope, take us to a more profound level beyond wishful thinking. Hope perseveres through trials and helps us maintain our moral integrity.

Hope is the combination of the desire for something and the expectation of receiving it. When Ms. Dickinson connects the concept with nature it gives us a visual and sensual experience. I can just hear that little sparrow singing a song about flying to her babes still within the shell of her eggs.

GIRLFRIEND WISDOM:

Hum a tune of Hope when doubt enters your world, it will calm your mind, lower your heart rate, and bring you some peace!

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Girlfriend Wisdom is written and illustrated by Jody Houghton®.
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Life-to be continued.

by Wayne M. Bosman

Last year was a momentous and chaotic one for our little family with the passing of both my daughter and my mother, but life continues on. With spring's annual rebirth going on all around us comes an inspiration to see what life has in store for us in this new season of life. While I am still slowly opening my eyes and heart to the joy of life, Kerri has already started exploring hers.

For her, the place to start was to revisit things that she has enjoyed in the past. She has always loved local history and been an avid seamstress. She has spent the last few years teaching preschool to indulge her love of young children. A natural meeting point of these things fell into place for her this spring.

When we moved to the NC coast a couple years ago, a new local history opened up. Because life can be busy, we never had time to explore the history of the region. We had passed right by the History Museum of Carteret County many times, always vowing to stop in. We have time now. What we found was an opportunity for her to pursue three of her loves.

The museum started a program aimed at opening up fourth graders to how their area was settled and grew to what it is now. Kerri fit right in. Over the years she made a number of true to period dresses that she wore giving tours at historical sites. Most of them still fit, although some apparently shrank or something...

She augmented them with new dresses and aprons that she spent enjoyable evenings creating. One of her characters that she got to portray for the Museum program was a locally well-known woman who was a Civil War era spy for the Confederacy. Miss Emeline spent the war smuggling supplies to Confederate soldiers across Union lines. The voluminous skirts of the era coupled with a lady's personal modesty gave her plenty of hiding places. Kerri stitched together a slip with pockets capable of holding a pair of boots, two pairs of pants, bandages, sewing articles and an entire ham without looking out of place. She put her hair up in a way common to the era and hid notes in her hair that she gave to the fourth graders during their field trips.

The children loved it all. Opening a window for them to a time when there was no internet, no television or even radio. Telephones were not yet invented, much less cell phones. Cars? No. Malls? No. For most families, a trip to town was a major undertaking to sell what you produced or to buy what you couldn't. Kerri would come home from the museum excited and enchanted by the questions the children asked, and how some children's eyes lit up when something caught their imagination.

Kerri, for her part, started sewing things by hand whenever she could, to try to make everything as true to life as possible. No more zippers, which weren't invented yet. Elastic, invented in 1820, was technically okay, but the likelihood of it being available here was small. Buttons, hooks and ties were the order of the day. Dyeing by hand was common, especially with indigo as a local cash crop. She hasn't tried that yet.

For Kerri, Spring has sprung. For me, the first tentative shoots are emerging from my fallow soil. I hear the birds more now, insistently calling out their springtime message. I look over my unfinished projects, actually finishing some! I look out at the ocean, waiting for the schools of fish to migrate through, following a rhythm that only they understand. I stay still, grateful that I have a life to be continued.

Wayne M. Bosman is a retired auto mechanic living in Cape Carteret, NC.
His email is wbosman1@gmail.com.

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Small Town Library: A Cherished Institution

by Nancy J. Nash

I'm sitting at a table of polished dark wood, watching as the late afternoon sun transmits a golden treasure of light through small panes of glass in a window with an arching wooden frame. I feel content here in the little municipal library I frequented as a child and frequent now as an adult, and I start thinking about how libraries function in our changing culture.

I grew up in a rural part of our small town, with a rooster crowing delightfully from a farm down the street while our chickens placidly stalked grubs not far from the backyard. The pasture behind our house invited us to explore its graceful, tall grasses. But the library was special place that welcomed us to journey through its huge storehouse of knowledge and ideas.

The heart of a small town is usually a set of buildings: a town hall, a church or two, and a library. These libraries vary in architectural style. They may be stately Victorian mansions or, in tiny hamlets, one-room wooden structures that escape the notice of passersby. Before computers and cell phones, they were havens for adults who needed a respite from working in fields and factories, and spaces for children to explore new realms of learning and imagination, to daydream and to dream.

My parents started taking me to the library when I was very young. There I encountered the Little Maid series by Alice Turner Curtis, which were fictionalized accounts of girls who helped the American cause by heroically delivering information to troops and performing other acts of bravery in Revolutionary War times. A local writer, Thornton W. Burgess, wrote such classics as *Old Mother West Wind* and *The Burgess Animal Book for Children*. I loved his warm, humorous style as well as his way of combining natural history with endearing stories of animal characters. He knew how to entertain his young readers while teaching them facts about the animals and plants of their world.

Somewhere on a library shelf appeared a chapter book by Grace Purdie Moon. I read it and was immediately enraptured by her story of the adventures of a courageous and cheerful pueblo girl in the American Southwest. There was a distinctiveness to Grace Moon's writing style that prompted young readers to follow her plot as it unfolded, full of danger and surprises, in the sagebrush-strewn desert. Each chapter was fittingly introduced by a poem that was lyrical and lilting, warm and beckoning, I could picture the shadowy canyons and sunlit mesas, and smell the scent of pinyon trees - so different from the landscape of my New England town.

Years later, I discovered that Grace Purdie Moon came close to winning the distinguished Newbery Medal. Her books were simply and luminously illustrated by her husband, Carl Moon, a superb artist and photographer. Together they had lived and traveled in the Southwest, working and making friends with Native Americans of Pueblo and other tribal groups. Their books brought to life stories of Pueblo, Navajo, and Mexican-American children, reinforcing values of courage, optimism, and integrity. Who knows how much of what we read as children molds and sustains character as we begin to meet the challenges of adulthood? Certainly the books of Moon, Curtis, and Burgess shaped my own imagination and attuned me to the world around me.

In my childhood, visits to the library were like nothing else in my life. To this day, I return there perhaps once a week, with the same comforting feeling of freedom to explore the unfamiliar in a pleasant, familiar place. I enter a brick building with windows that arch gracefully at the top, suggesting serenity and space for contemplation. I find staff who can answer myriad (and often complicated) questions about books, computers, and local events. Recently, the library system hosted a lecture about a part of town that many of us knew little about. Once upon a time it had been a center for small factories that produced seed packets, pocket watches, buttons, paper, and other goods. We listeners were surprised and fascinated that so much had been manufactured along the banks of the brook not far from where many of us grew up.

A small town library holds more than charm - it is a vital component of the community. It functions like a giant, open book, providing pathways to worlds outside of our sight and experience. It helps keep the residents of a community mentally alive, informed, and able to navigate through life's challenges.

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*Nancy J. Nash is the author of *Mama's Books: An Oregon Trail Story* and *Little Rooster's Christmas Eve*. She has a B.A. in English composition from Mount Holyoke College and an M.F.A. in Writing for Children from Simmons College. nancynash341@gmail.com*

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FLEMINGTON - PEQUANNOCK

Focused on Fun

by Jeanette Lukowski

For a number of years now, my grown son has made jokes about our different approaches to life. He describes us as being two different kinds of birds in the same flock: I am the focused goose at the front of the "V," fighting the windshear every mile--while he is the "relaxed" goose, riding the lift. In the "work smarter, not harder" ideology of his younger generation, he challenges me to enjoy the ride rather than fight through negotiations.

The adjustment has been challenging, but I'm already beginning to see some improvements in my physical health and mental outlook since I started down this path! All because I'm trying to focus more on "fun" and smiles now!

First, I attended a class on Color Theory held at a quilt shop. Such a great outing! Part of my course fee included my very own color wheel--while the other part introduced me to the woman who explained what it all means in relation to selecting quilting fabrics. Well worth both the time, and the course fee, in my humble opinion.

While we waited for the class to start, I had the opportunity to chat with a fellow classmate. She talked about how she meets her son for lunch every Friday, followed by a variety of classes offered at the quilt store in which we were sitting. How fun! I still work, but she planted the seed: Regular meal visits with family members!

After that, the rewards began quickly accumulating. A lunch-date with my mother, sister, and two others; a comedy show with my son and two of his friends, followed by dinner out; my granddaughter's after-school dance program (which ironically ended 15 minutes after it started), followed by dinner out; two Sunday drives with my son to orchestral concerts in towns an hour's drive away, followed by dinners out.

And then this afternoon, the postal clerk and I shared such an exchange of giggles over a package I was mailing to a friend in another state, because it sounded like a set of maracas clicking away in the cardboard box! "Is it anything fragile?" she asked.

"No, they are just empty wooden thread spools. I am sharing them with my friend, because she is a wood carver. I forgot to take them when I went to visit her last summer, so I'm just mailing them to her now," I explained.

That's when we both acquired the giggle-bug. What might the other postal employees who handled the package along its journey think about the sound they would hear coming out of the box? What other unusual--or funny--things do people mail to others? What will my friend think when she retrieves the package from the post office? Or, if porch-pirates snag it--and think they have acquired something really cool? What if someone thinks the contents got broken during the shipping process? Such a lovely random Wednesday.

Smiles are free, and my blood pressure might be lowering.

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

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CORNER BOOKMARK PATTERN



Supplies:

- Three scraps - chosen fabric: cut to 3.5" squares
- One scrap - fusible stabilizer cut: to 2.5" (ex. SF101) (optional - cut 2 for a stiffer finished piece)
- Coordinating thread(s)
- Iron and pressing mat
- Point turner, scissors or snips, and pins or wonder clips

- Stitch** around the stabilizer (should be roughly a **1/2" seam allowance**)
- Leave approx. 2" opening to **turn the piece right side out**
- Start on one of the sides that does **not** have the folded square between it and **back stitch** at the start finish.



- Press** the fusible stabilizer to the **wrong side**, centering it on one of the sq.'s
- Fold** one sq. in half diagonally corner to corner, **wrong sides together** & press
 - Optional: Add an extra 2.5" sq. of stabilizer to this fabric for an even stiffer finished piece
- Layer:**
 - One sq. (without the stabilizer) **right side up**
 - Then lay down the folded in half diagonally fabric, on top matching the raw edges
 - Should have two **right sides** facing out
 - Layer the third sq. (with stabilizer), **right side down**
 - Pin or clip the layers *Top & bottom should be wrong side facing out



Final Step - Top stitch the two sides that do not have the folded fabric.

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<https://authorkathrynmykel.com>

OUT OF STATE ADS



Creamy Casserole

I think this casserole has been around a long time – it's a classic!

- 8 oz. egg noodles
 - 1 lb. ground beef
 - 1(15 oz.) can tomato sauce
 - 1(8 oz. package cream cheese
 - ¼ cup sour cream
 - 1 cp cottage cheese
 - ½ cup chopped green onion
 - ½ tsp garlic powder
 - 2 Tbsp chopped green peppers
 - 2 Tbsp melted butter
- Cook noodles; drain and set aside.
Brown meat; drain.
Add tomato sauce to beef; remove from heat.
In a separate bowl, mix cream cheese, cottage cheese, sour cream, onions, garlic powder and peppers.
Butter a casserole dish and spread 1/2 the noodles in the bottom.
Cover noodles with 1/2 the cheese mixture, then 1/2 the meat mixture, then 1 more layer of noodles, then cheese mixture and then meat mixture.
Pour 2 Tbsp butter over top; press down slightly.
Bake at 375° for 1 hour to 1 hour 15 minute.
If drier casserole is desired, cook 15 minutes longer.

Memories of Mom

by Tammy Page

Oh, how I wished I had seen that the previous month's edition was about sewing and quilting because I would have loved to have written a story about my mom's legacy of making a quilt for my sisters and I and for each the grandchildren too. But you see I've been very busy the past few months going through my parents 69 years of marriage belongings. My father recently passed away after being a widow for almost three years and I have had the chore and blessing of clearing out mom and dad's household. It's been a lot of work for sure but it's also brought me joy being able to go through some of mom and dad's things including mom's sewing basket and the many totes and drawers of quilting and sewing materials she had used over the years. I found old seam rippers that she taught me how to use carefully, patterns from my childhood and patterns of playsuits and baby doll clothes she sewed for my daughters. I found her old thimbles that brought tears to my eyes as I remember she never sewed without one. I came across her old black handled metal scissors that weighed a ton and also handmade patterns she had traced. I also discovered she had totes upon totes of material stored in the spare room where she had bought for one project or another and remnants of the quilts, she put together for each of us.

Her sewing machine was always set up in the extra bedroom for when she got a whim to start a new project. One year she made me, and my sisters, my daughters and niece set of matching Christmas runners and napkins. I found several extra sets of those in one of her sewing cabinets. I also found quilt blocks sewn together where she had started a new quilt and didn't finish it. I came across old tools I had not seen since my childhood when she taught me how to sew. A couple such items were the metal hem markers that were different colored, the many little boxes of straight pins and the spools thread of every color. I had to be careful cleaning out those drawers for all the sharp items laying at the bottom. By the way, how many bobbins can one person have?

I wasn't a quilter myself but she was and we have all enjoyed receiving her beautiful quilts. She would piece the one of a kind patterns together and send them off to a lady in Kentucky to quilt them and when completed, the lady would mail them back to mom. I didn't realize the money and work that went into each one until I found all the leftover quilt squares and the hand-written bill the quilter had charged her. It really wasn't much for such a beautiful craft but I'm sure it added up after piecing ten quilts. Today, I have several on display in my living room and bedroom.

One funny tidbit about mom and her quilts. She never wanted us to hang them up for fear of sun damage and tearing the seams. She was very particular about that but I still hung them up on quilt racks and some draped over an old wooden ladder. I wanted everyone to see her beautiful craftsmanship. Her quilts mean more to me now that both of my parents are gone. Each time I pass by one I can remember her scolding me for not having my hands in the right place on the sewing machine or making me rip out a seam on my 4-H apron.

As I cleared out mom and dad's home, I had a small estate sale and mom's sewing machine and materials were a hit. Quilters and crafters went crazy over her supplies and were still asking for more at the end of the day. A young woman bought mom's sewing machine and some of her material and I could not have been happier that a new seamstress was starting her own traditions of sewing things for her family and friends.



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CAPE MAY

Scraps and Crafts What Could be Better?

by Deb Heatherly

Summer is a great time to pull out your scraps and put them to use! Scraps not only make great scrap quilts but fun crafts as well. Here are a few ideas for scrap projects to make with your grandchildren or other young people in your life. You can also donate scraps to a friend teaching a summer camp or to someone teaching crafts at Bible school.

For the youngest, cut a variety of colorful squares, rectangles and triangles from the scraps. Add paper, crayons or colored pencils, ribbon or twine and a glue stick, and you have everything you need! These items will be like paint to a young artists mind. As an added bonus you will be teaching about shapes. Small rectangles can be the petals and leaves for a flower. Triangles can be the sails of a boat. Small squares can be eyes and a rectangle can be a mouth on a funny face. The ideas are endless.

Older children, with a bit more patience, might enjoy using small snips in a collage. Tiny pieces can be glued to a drawing they create or use a coloring book page as the backdrop. Color the drawing or page first, then glue tiny bits of like colors on the page. Provide tweezers to help them carefully place the small bits and scissors for needed trimming. As a bonus, provide them with a small clear Christmas ornament in which they can place leftover bits. This ornament will memorialize a fun day.

Those old enough to use a rotary cutter and sewing machine (with supervision of course), are sure to love making the popular "hot dog" pillowcases. If you are not familiar with these, just google "hot dog pillowcase" for a tutorial. The term comes from the technique of rolling up the fabric and then pulling it out on one end. When I owned my quilt shop, this was always a favorite project for my kids club. They loved making them for themselves and as gifts. If you have an embroidery machine, let them personalize them! The look of fascination and delight as they watch the machine stitch out their name always made me smile.

Another favorite of my kids club was anything that lets them play with buttons. This mini flag is a perfect project to celebrate our country's 250th. You will need (1) 6 1/2" square of blue, (3) 1 1/2" x 7 1/2" and (2) 1 1/2" x 12 1/2" strips of red, (2) 1 1/2" x 7 1/2" and (2) 1 1/2" x 12 1/2" strips of white. Sew the 1 1/2" x 7 1/2" strips together and add to the right of the blue square. Sew the 12 1/2" strips together and add below. Sew on buttons in the blue square in any formation. (I added some white chenille on the white strips but that is optional). You can make this into a mini quilt or add a back to make it into a pillow.

Summer is for memories and nothing could be better than creating those memories with the younger generation. When you take the time to instill the love of creation, you do more than just use up a few scraps, you plant the seed of creativity that will last a lifetime. Who knows, the craft you teach today could be a craft they will pass on for generations to come.

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.Debcatsnquilts.com



Sausage & Sauerkraut Balls

I was inspired to search for and try this recipe because a friend said that it was something her mom used to make. She mentioned that she'd made it once herself but that her family was eating them as fast as the balls came out of the deep fryer!

1 lb. pork sausage	4 oz. cream cheese, softened
1/4 cup finely chopped onion	2 Tbsp dried parsley flakes
1 (14 ounce) can sauerkraut, well drained and finely chopped	1/4 cup flour
2 Tbsp dry bread crumbs	1 large egg, beaten
1 tsp Italian seasoning	1/4 cup milk
1/2 tsp prepared yellow mustard	1 cup dry bread crumbs
1/4 tsp garlic powder	1 tsp Italian seasoning
1/4 tsp ground black pepper	1 quart vegetable oil for frying

Heat a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook and stir sausage and onion in the hot skillet until sausage is crumbly and browned, about 10 minutes. Drain grease and allow to cool slightly.

Transfer sausage mixture into a large bowl. Stir in drained sauerkraut, 2 tablespoons bread crumbs, Italian seasoning, mustard, garlic salt, and pepper. Combine cream cheese and parsley in a small bowl; mix into sauerkraut mixture. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.

Place flour into a shallow bowl. Whisk together egg and milk in another bowl. Place 1 cup bread crumbs and Italian seasoning in a third bowl.

Heat oil in a deep fryer to 375°F.

Shape sauerkraut mixture into 3/4-inch balls. Coat balls in flour, then dip in egg mixture and roll in bread crumbs to thoroughly coat.

Working in batches, fry balls in hot oil until golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Drain on a paper towel-lined plate and serve hot.

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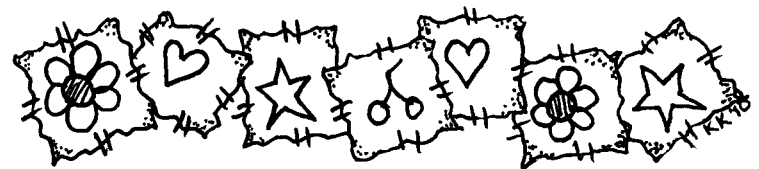
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Sewing On-the-Go

Decision Fatigue in Quilting: Managing Over Choice Finding Clarity, Confidence, and Calm in a World Full of Beautiful Options

by Steve Baker

There's a moment many quilters know well. You stand before shelves filled with beautiful fabric or scroll through page after page of inspiration. You pull one grouping, then another. Everything is lovely. Everything should work. And yet, instead of excitement, you feel tired. Overwhelmed. Unsure. Sometimes you even walk away—not because you don't love quilting, but because you simply can't decide what comes next.

If that sounds familiar, you're not alone. And more importantly, it isn't a sign of indecision, lack of skill or creative failure. What you may be experiencing is decision fatigue—a very real and very human response to too many choices.

Decision fatigue occurs when the mental energy required to make choices becomes depleted. Every decision—no matter how small—uses cognitive resources. When those resources are overused, our ability to make thoughtful, confident decisions declines. In everyday life, this often shows up as end-of-day exhaustion. In quilting, it can appear much sooner, because creative decisions require deeper thought than routine ones.

Quilting asks us to make many layered choices: color, fabric, scale, value, layout and technique. Even joyful decisions carry weight. When emotions are involved, such as making a quilt for a loved one, the mental load increases further. Each choice begins to feel important, even symbolic.

Quilting is especially vulnerable to decision fatigue because it sits at the intersection of creativity, emotion and permanence. Materials cost money. Projects take time—sometimes months or years. Once stitched, many choices feel irreversible. Finished quilts are often gifted, displayed or cherished, which adds emotional significance to every decision.

We also live in an era of creative abundance. Never before have quilters had access to so many fabrics, patterns, tools and sources of inspiration. While this abundance is a gift, it also presents a paradox: more options don't always create more freedom. Often, they create uncertainty.

When choices feel unlimited, it becomes difficult to know when to stop choosing and start creating. The mind continues searching for the "best" option, even when several good ones already exist. This unbounded choice can delay starting, stall progress and quietly erode confidence.

Decision fatigue doesn't always announce itself clearly. It often shows up as repeatedly changing fabric pulls, starting new projects instead of finishing current ones, seeking constant reassurance or feeling unmotivated before sewing even begins. These are not signs of laziness or lack of commitment, they're signals that the creative system is overloaded.

Managing decision fatigue isn't about making faster choices or being more disciplined. It's about deciding differently, with kindness toward yourself. Creating intentional constraints, trusting earlier decisions, pausing constant input and allowing "good enough" can all help conserve creative energy. Sometimes, the most helpful choice is simply to work with what you already have.

There are also times when stepping away is the healthiest response. Creativity moves in cycles. Pausing does not mean quitting; it means listening.

At its heart, quilting isn't about making the perfect set of decisions. It's about engaging in a process—one that unfolds stitch by stitch, choice by choice.

A quilt does not need every option. It only needs your next honest choice. And that—quiet, imperfect and entirely human—is more than enough.

Steve Baker is the Director of Marketing at SewEndipitous located at 1093A Albright Road in Rock Hill, South Carolina. Visit www.SewEndipitous.com for more information.

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