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INSIDE:

The complete guide to the *Bucks County Designer House & Gardens*

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Paradise Found

A SERENE SETTING INSPIRED AN ELEGANT DESIGN
FOR COUNTRY LIVING.



BY FREDA R. SAVANA | PHOTOS BY JUAN VIDAL

Winding your way along the Delaware River on an early spring morning toward the back roads to Lodi Hill Farm in Tinicum Township is nothing less than magical. The mist drifts upward as the sun begins to reach the newly green trees, making them glisten as if lit by invisible light.

The first building that comes into view up the gravel road is a striking red barn. A gentle turn and the beautiful white house can be seen, complete with its expansive view of some 40 acres, all of which are preserved through Tinicum Conservancy.

This is the weekend home of John Sebesta and Bill Tomai. Monday through Friday, they're in Manhattan, where Tomai works as a finance professional and Sebesta as an interior designer. After purchasing the former chicken farm in 2014, they have dramatically expanded the simple 1810 farmhouse into a 6,000-square-foot showplace that flawlessly blends the peace of the country with the elegance of 21st-century design.

"The original bones of the house reeled us in," explained Sebesta, sitting in the sunny kitchen where light streams in through a bay window overlooking the lush landscape. A valance cre-

ated from fabric called "Bucks County" tops the window, and pillows made from Tony Sarg placemats – featuring iconic images of farm life – line the bench seating. Overhead are green lampshades repurposed from baskets in the barn, which Sebesta described as a "treasure trove of inspiration."

To accommodate large dinner parties, he and Tomai created an oversized room under a 25-foot ceiling where a table can expand to seat 15 to 20 guests. They like to call this spacious area that links to the kitchen, dining room, living room and stairs, the "hall." Most of its furnishings are on wheels so they can be changed seasonally, while the moveable French lighting is on long arms that can be swiveled to highlight specific areas.

A double-sided stone fireplace from the original home anchors one wall, graced by a painting from New Hope artist Hodi Poorsoltan above the mantle. Art lovers Sebesta and Tomai have



John Sebesta, left, an interior designer and his husband, Bill Tomai, in their living room designed by Sebesta.



The walls of the home are filled with an impressive collection of work.

established an impressive collection of work, largely by regional artists. Walls are filled with diverse paintings by Susan Dryfoos, David Stier, Kit Dalton, John Schmidtberger, Luiz Vilela and Joseph Barrett.

“All the artwork we buy is intentional,” said Tomai. “It’s very nice to be holding a glass of wine and know the story behind the piece you’re looking at.”

To reach the living room, one enters through a sculpted aluminum door inspired by a 1920s-era Paris apartment. “When a fire is burning in the fireplace, it reflects the warm light,” noted Tomai.

With white suede couches designed by Sebesta, the room is flooded with natural light from 10 French doors framing the stunning space. Chicken crates from the barn, painted white, form the base of a glass-top table, and a colorful 1970s rag rug adorns the slate floor.

The most striking feature of this lovely room is the vividly colored panels by Richard Kromka as a gift to Tomai for his 50th birthday. Perfectly paired with colors from the rug, they are reminiscent of the abstract expressionism of Jackson Pollock.

Looking east through a wall of French doors, the eye is drawn to the seemingly endless vista beyond, including a shimmering salt water pool. The couple has hosted two family weddings on the property, whose manicured grounds add yet another touch of elegance.



“It’s the openness we love.”

Upstairs, two guest rooms capture the history of Lodi Hill and its modern refinements, with beamed ceilings and “pie stairs” to a red wrought iron gate and loft. The master suite has an ample shower that opens to a balcony and staircase to the pool. Across the hall, in a spacious office with breathtaking views, each man works, if need be.

“It’s the openness we love,” said Tomai. “We spend all week on ‘shelf space’ and then we get to come here. It’s a nice balance.”

“This home is a world Bill and I created,” added Sebesta. “It’s become our sanctuary.” □

This article first appeared in River Towns Magazine.

The two-story living room is bathed in natural light.

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For Beauty That's Worth the Climb

Using garden structures can bring your garden to new heights.



A John Cabot rose arbor creates an elegant garden entrance.

BY MELINDA RIZZO

As an entry point to an outdoor room, sculpture positioned among the garden borders, outdoor walls as perennials or a plant woven canopy respite taking garden structures fit the bill. And few pieces set the stage like ornamental ironwork, a vine covered pergola or trellis, patio arbor or serene garden house to amp up the impact.

What inspires you?

For high end event designer and florist Rusty Thomas, it's American Beaux Arts. Popular around the turn of the 20th century, Beaux Arts posits anything old can be new again.

"Those types of garden elements are very appealing," he said of the Beaux Arts style, fundamental to creating outdoor rooms by using different structures.

"Don't be limited by scale."

Rusty Thomas

He recommends visits to estate gardens for inspiration, and bringing those ideas back to adapt and create a personal landscape.

"Don't be limited by scale," Thomas said.

Creative garden excursions on less than a tank of gas include Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C. and Kykuit, the Rockefeller Estate in Sleepy Hollow, New York (temporarily closed due to the coronavirus pandemic). Among Thomas' favorites is Oak Spring Garden Foundation in Upperville Virginia.

While visits may be limited this year because of the pandemic, even photographs of Rachel "Bunny" Mellon's iconic crab apple allée at Oak Spring offers a

fresh way to consider using espalier.

Espalier is growing trees or woody plants against walls, fences or structures to create living artwork. It can be adapted to any size garden or landscape.

Thomas suggests mixing different materials – like concrete, brick, metal, wood or stone, as well as using elements from different eras to create something new.

“Take a few elements and run with it,” he said.

Ornamental trellises and garden obelisks create a platform to grow vines and stagger plant bloom times – especially for the first-time garden structure novice, and extending the blossoms’ show, said Andrew Eckhoff, general manager at Bountiful Acres in Buckingham Township.

Because obelisks can be used in containers they provide a convenient, portable way to create drama in the landscape. They can be a foundation for growing floral or perennial vines like clematis.

Mixing clematis and climbing roses on the same structure, like a trellis arch or pergola, can create a stunning combined effect and extend the bloom across several weeks.

“Building custom pergolas over patios for shade elements...introducing plant material onto those

structures increases the amount of shade, and you can get wonderful color,” he said.

Eckhoff suggests dependable, tried-and-true climbing rose performers like Blaze, Don Juan and New Dawn as vertical pairings with clematis. For bedding or anchor points consider hardy shrub rose varieties like Lemon Fizz, or Miracle on the Hudson to create contrast in the garden.

Wrought iron sculptural objects and tropical plants marry well, too. Eckhoff recommends tropical mandevilla grown as an annual. Look for pink, red, white and new shade-toned varieties.

“Mandevilla are spectacular on these metal objects, and you can put them out in May and they’ll bloom into the fall,” he said. Mandevilla is drought tolerant, a colorful perfect option for those with weekend and summer homes.

For larger structures, wisteria is a popular perennial choice. With small leaves and a delicate cascade of blooms, wisteria can be a dramatic anchor in the garden draped over a stone wall, or allowed to ramble on a structure.

Another shrub to consider training on walls, fences or other landscape structures is climbing hydrangea. While a slow starter, it rewards the pa-



Red mandevilla bounded by colorful annuals elegantly climbs an iron work obelisk.

tient gardener with vigorous 30- to 40-foot mature vines, and it is shade tolerant.

Trumpet plant, a native vine with orange “trumpet like” flowers, attracts hummingbirds and butterflies adding charming visual movement and sanctuary for pollinators.

Wooden structures, cabanas and garden houses made from a mix of wood and masonry are popular outdoor addition choices right now, said Christopher Peeples, owner of Vixen Hill in Elverson, Chester County.

These smaller ancillary structures can serve as an anchor or be part of the garden combined with other structures to add interest to the landscape.

He said “quasi-outdoor living” porches with screens or glass extend the season, can provide a feeling of outdoor living, footsteps from the threshold. □

“With a whole set of fresh eyes, there is no telling what can come about,” Thomas said.

Melinda Rizzo, an avid gardener, is a regular contributor to the Bucks County Herald.



Clematis loves to climb.

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HOLD YOUR HORSES!

Did you know that this year's home for the Designer House is owned by Heritage Conservancy?



Heritage Conservancy safeguards Mearns Mill Manor and its surrounding property. The Conservancy is pleased to be a part of the VIA's annual event and to share this historical home with the community.

Community support makes Heritage Conservancy's mission to protect open spaces and historic places like this one possible.

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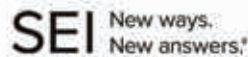


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BUCKS COUNTY
Designer House
& Gardens

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Welcome Home



PHOTO BY JUAN VIDAL

24 designers and a cadre of dedicated volunteers have transformed Mearns Mill Manor into a home and garden paradise. And you're invited.

For the month of May, the elegant Mearns Mill Manor, an 1870s country estate in Ivyland, will be home to the popular Bucks County Designer House & Gardens—returning for its 46th year after its 2020 hiatus.

The 5,200-square-foot, seven-bedroom mansion and 200-acre grounds, on loan from Heritage Conservancy, a local land conservation organization, will be designed by 24 interior designers, landscapers, and artists who were selected by the Village Improvement Association (VIA), the event's sponsor.

"This historic property provides a fabulous venue for designers and landscapers to work their transformative magic, returning the house to its former grace and splendor," says Pat Urban, a VIA volunteer and marketing chair of this year's Designer House.

Mearns Mill Manor will be open for touring daily from May 2 through May 30. Visitors will be able to explore the house's completely decorated and fully furnished rooms in a variety of original styles conceived and executed by the participating designers. Outside, landscaped gardens, walkways and unique spaces, like a 150-year old spring house, will feature blooming trees, native plants, interesting shrubs and colorful flowers in full May bloom.

Visitors will also be treated to a unique shopping experience. The third floor of the manor will offer an array of boutiques. There will also be two on-site art galleries with works for purchase. Organizers said that they are unable to offer an on-site cafe this year because of cur-

rent public health guidelines.

With a history of over 5,000 annual attendees, Designer House is the largest fundraiser held by the VIA, a nonprofit women's organization established in 1895. Proceeds will benefit the Women's Diagnostic Center at Doylestown Hospital and the VIA's many community-based initiatives.

Admission to the house will be by timed-entry only. All tickets are purchased in advance, and groups must be limited to four people. Children under the age of 10, and pets, are not permitted, and COVID-19 screening protocols will be in place. For additional information and to purchase tickets, visit [Buckscountydesignerhouse.org](https://buckscountyledesignerhouse.org) or call 215-345-2191. □

What to Know Before You Go

Dates May 2 to May 30

Location Mearns Mill Manor
545 Almshouse Road,
Ivyland, PA 18945

Hours Monday-Wednesday
10 am - 4 pm
Thursday 10 am - 7 pm
Friday-Saturday
10 am - 4 pm
Sunday Noon - 4 pm
Note: *The last entry is a half hour before the House closes.*

Tickets All tickets must be purchased in advance, for timed-entry only. Purchase online at Buckscountydesignerhouse.org

Cost All tickets are \$30.

Kids Children must be age 10 or older.



Group size Groups are limited to 4 people.

Parking All parking is valet, at no charge. There is no self-parking.

Accessibility The house is not handicapped accessible.

Boutiques The Saddlery and Boutique at Fox Heath, The Wearable Garden, L' Aromapothicaire, Sugar Bottom Hemp Co

Galleries Artist Jane Ramsey and photographer Adam Reed will have works for purchase.

Food There will be no on-site food this year.

Health safety COVID-19 screening will be performed. Masks are required.

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Meet the Designers

Many of the 24 designers and landscapers whose work will be on display at Mearns Mill Manor have participated in the event for several years in a row for reasons as varied as their design styles. Some say they are drawn by Bucks County's unique history. Others say it is the architectural inspiration the county provides or because it's a way to contribute to the community in a meaningful way while doing something they love.

For Tom Hebel who has participated for 30 years, it is the connection with the Village Improvement Association, an organization he says has helped define the Central Bucks community by creating a world-class health care organization.

"Great things happen when people get together and share their passion," says Hebel of Bucks Country Gardens.

Selecting designers like Hebel is a key step in the year-round process of putting together one of the few remaining designer houses in the country, say the organizers. After finding a suitable property to highlight, the designer selection process begins, typically in the fall, when candidates are invited to tour the house and grounds at one of a series of Designer Preview days.

Following the tours, those designers who are interested in participating indicate their room preferences and prepare virtual design boards, which are submitted to the Designer Committee for review and a final selection.

The next step is what has become known as "Measuring Day," when the designers are invited back to view their spaces and make whatever assessments are needed to move forward with their plans.

Once work gets underway in late February, the house becomes its own bustling community, with designers, painters, and other workers coming and going. VIA members serve as housesitters to enable access to the house and to address questions and issues as the transformation takes place.

"I wasn't sure what to expect, but it's been a privilege to work alongside the VIA and such a talented team of designers, and watch this magnificent house come to life," says Jennifer Carter of Studio Envie, a first time designer in 2021.

Designer Committee Vice Chairman Audrey Tucker says visitors with diverse tastes will not be disappointed by what they find. "Our talented designers showcase a variety of decorating styles," she says. "There is something here for everyone." □

Dining Room



Marni James
C. Ferry Home - Doylestown

What to expect

The dining room was created with a blend of formality and rustic elements in a country French style.

Master Bedroom



Jere Bradwell
J Bradwells Home & Design - Lambertville, NJ

What is your design philosophy?

I want my rooms to always be amazingly beautiful with some wow factor-but also very user friendly. How my client is going to use the space is just as important as a great design.

Kitchen & Breakfast Nook



Deb Campbell
DC Interiors - Glenside, Pa.

What to expect

Happiness. People always congregate in the kitchen, so it should be a space that brings a smile. "Le Bleu Cantine" is rustic and renewed.

The Library



Victoria Guillot
The Stage Coach - Doylestown

Where do you get your inspiration?

Inspiration can come from the room itself, an architectural detail, a client's favorite belongings, online and magazine images, or a piece I fall in love with...I believe the best designed spaces reflect the person who lives there and are therefore unapologetically unique.

Living Room



Lisa Lazarus
Lisa Lazarus Interiors - Rydal, Pa.
Robert Belchic
Design Style Studios - Rydal, Pa.

What to expect

Tradition with a twist. Classic patterns in modern coloration, and furnishings for today's lifestyle, with respect for the architecture and history of the home.

Home Office

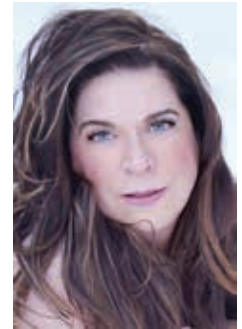


Angela Carroll Ast
ABCA Design - Upper Bucks County

Where do you get your inspiration?

My inspiration starts with history and architecture. Following the lead of many talented designers before me, I am inspired by historical properties and textile designs, formal gardens, art and nature.

Foyer, Staircase & Landing



Kimberly Lux
Lux Interiors - Richboro, Pa.

What to expect

'The Crystal Foyer' will welcome visitors to this year's house. 'The Lux Landing' showcases a chandelier over a center hall table with a floral arrangement, while allowing a glimpse into surrounding rooms.

Guest Bedroom



Jennifer Carter
Studio Envie - Maplewood, NJ

What to expect

A modern take with some Parisian influences inspired by a year of wanderlust.

Where do you get your inspiration?

Nature, travel, architecture, hotels, creative branding and other incredible designers' use of space.

Bedroom



John Bermingham and Mia Kellar
Bermingham & Co. - Doylestown

Where do you get your inspiration?

We draw from lessons learned from some of the top interior designers we've worked with over the last 35 years.

Powder Room

Arlen Sam Brown
Arlen Sam Brown: Interiors + Collections - Lambertville, NJ

What to expect

This tiny room promises to be simultaneously decadent and capricious; yet purposeful and essential.



Butler's Pantry



Lori Mason
Lori's Funky Junk Décor - Chalfont, Pa.

What to expect
An industrial farmhouse design using repurposed items, painted vintage furniture, and a mix of old and new accessories.

Master Bath



Julia Thomas
Tile Gallerie - Dublin, Pa.

What to expect
I wanted to "bring the outside in" after the year we've had. The bold paints are offset by the earth tone tiles and greenery around the room.

Upstairs Bath



Lisa Shull
The Fabric Loft - Holland, Pa.

What to expect
I designed a bathroom with a young child in mind. The theme is a safari experience. I used lots of greenery and baskets and a bit of whimsy to make this room stylish and fun.

Mud Room Art Gallery



Jane Ramsey Fine Art -
Bedminster, PA

Where do you get your inspiration?
From my everyday surroundings...the rural countryside of Upper Bucks County and the rich heritage and history that make up the local farming community.

Third Floor Gallery



Adam Reed
PHL Unbound

What to expect
The "In the Wild" gallery is a representation of my experiences while living in Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

Front Entrance



Amy Sanchez-Hamilton
Bucks Country Gardens - Doylestown

Where do you get your inspiration?
Nature is a pretty big influence. As a horticulturist and designer, nature tells me what I can put where.

Native Plant Garden



Beverly Auvil
Beverly Auvil Landscape Design & Installation - Quakertown, Pa.

What to expect
A traditional landscape to go with the home's symmetrical façade. The garden will feature a bird bath, narrow trees, and a short hedge.

Spring House Garden



Carol Perovich
Huntingdon Valley Garden Club

What to expect
I looked to the immediate surroundings for texture and color, like the stone used in the Springhouse, and immediately thought of purples and the wafting sway and color of Mexican Feather Grass.

Barn Windows



Ann Trate
Cloverhill Studios -
Doylestown

What to expect

Bucolic depictions of barn animals highlighting each one's personality, inspired by the beauty of nature in Bucks County, and my love for animals.

Back Garden & Walkway



Jeff Robinson
Professional Landscape
Services, Inc. - New
Hope

What to expect

A beautiful blend of plantings and hardscape elements in an intimate garden setting.

Arch Entryway



Julie DeFlavis
Buckman's Home and Garden - Doylestown

Where do you get your inspiration?

God has given me the ability to put colors and textures together to create amazing beauty in nature.

Well Garden



Colin Slota
Slota's Property
Maintenance - Holland, Pa.

What to expect

A circular garden that echoes nature and symbolizes unity and community, created in partnership with Bucks Beautiful.

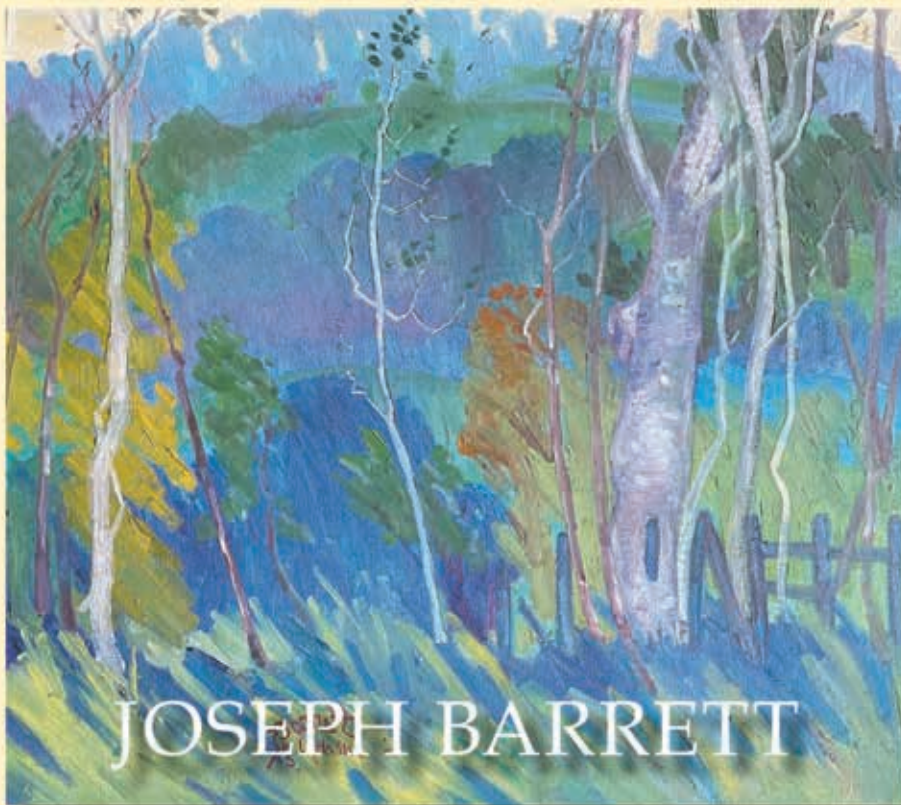
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If These Walls Could Talk

Mearns Mill Manor's storied history includes tales of rum-running and celebrity guests.



COURTESY OF HERITAGE CONSERVANCY

Mearns Mill Manor in the late 19th century.

With a rich history that can be traced back to grants from William Penn, includes a mysterious rum-runner, and has connections to the Philadelphia Orchestra, Mearns Mill Manor is an excellent location for the 2021 Bucks County Designer House & Gardens.

It begins when Robert Mearns used land grants from William Penn to construct several mills along the Neshaminy Creek and owned land surrounding the current house. In 1750, his son, Hugh Mearns, purchased a 100-acre tract adjoining his father's land where Mearns Mill Manor was constructed over many years.

Its architectural style suggests the majority of the building was constructed in the mid-1800s. Two dates, 1817 and 1819, are carved on an interior partition in the barn.

The property remained in the Mearns family until 1919. After passing through several owners in the early 20th century, the house and 23 acres became the property of Dr. Thomas E. and Mary Lindsay.

According to family lore, Dr. Lindsay purchased the property using about \$26,000 left to him from an elderly woman of apparent meager means he had taken care of for free. The money was reputed to be the ill-gotten gains of her rum-running nephew, who was never heard of again after Prohibition.

During the Lindsay ownership, the house appears to have been used to host Philadelphia Orchestra musicians, who often entertained local celebrities, including Oscar Hammerstein and Pearl Buck.

The Heritage Conservancy acquired the property—except for the house and barn on five acres—through donation. Milan S. Kirby later purchased the house and barn and gifted them to the Heritage Conservancy.

The amazing 5,200-square foot house features period charm, original hardware, and architectural detail sprinkled throughout its seven bedrooms and three bathrooms. Together with its sprawling grounds, the property pro-

vides designers and landscapers an inviting canvas on which to work their magic.

“By loaning Mearns Mill Manor to the VIA for this year's Designer House, we are able to share a piece of our region's natural and historic heritage with the greater community,”

says Linda Cacossa, chief operating officer for the Heritage Conservancy. □



The Spring House today.

PHOTO BY JUAN VIDAL

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DESIGNING *for Good*

With adaptation and enthusiasm, the VIA's show, a major fundraiser that's helped thousands, goes on.

The first Bucks County Designer House & Gardens event, held in 1971, was a modest affair. With VIA members volunteering their time to iron curtains and paint walls at Wheelbarrow Hill, the event raised \$7,000, which helped support construction of the present Doylestown Hospital on West State Street.

From that humble beginning, the Designer House & Gardens has become the VIA's largest fundraising event, raising over \$5 million to date. Fulfilling the original mission of the Village Improvement Association, those dollars have funded educational scholarships for Central Bucks teens, provided community improvement grants, supported the needs of veterans, and have helped the most vulnerable members of our community with food, clothing, baby supplies, prescription medicines, and utility bills.

This year, a substantial portion of the profits from the 2021 Designer House at Mearns Mill Manor will go to the Doylestown Health System's Women's Diagnostic Center as part of the ONE VISION campaign, a comprehensive fundraising effort that leaders expect to transform healthcare delivery in the community.

Putting together this year's event while in the midst of a pandemic has been challenging, says Joyce Hanson, a member of the Designer House Advisory Committee. After last year's cancellation and the financial impact it caused, the VIA was determined to move forward this year with proper safety protocols in place.

"When planning began there were many unknowns, and there have been some pivots along the way," says Hanson. Among them were the cancellation of the opening Preview Gala and onsite cafe.

Still, there have been some positive developments. According to Hanson, planning on Zoom, she says, "has created a whole new cohort of technology experts and some new ways of operating within the VIA." To provide maxi-



Designer House Advisory Committee members Donna Schuman, Sara Moyer, Kathy Krick (standing), Joyce Hanson and Whitney Chandor.

mum safety for visitors and volunteers, timed-entry tickets need to be purchased in advance online; only four guests will be admitted every 10 minutes. CDC protocols will be observed — everyone must wear a mask, social distance, and use hand sanitizer.

"We are very excited to present Mearns Mill Manor as our 2021 Bucks County Designer House & Gardens and know that our visitors will thoroughly enjoy seeing it," says Hanson. □

Designing Women: A Brief History

On April 26, 1895, 14 women, dedicated to using "every proper means" to improve the health and welfare of Bucks County residents, formed the Village Improvement Association (VIA)

Early on they worked to eliminate dust in the streets which was causing respiratory ailments. They also established the area's first visiting nurse service—one that made over 700 home visits during the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic.

The VIA's most lasting contribution came in 1923, with the establishment of Doylestown Hospital, an eight bed hospital in a rented house. With the VIA beneath its wings, the hospital has grown to become the award-winning Doylestown Health System, with 232 beds and 450 physicians in over 50 medical specialties.

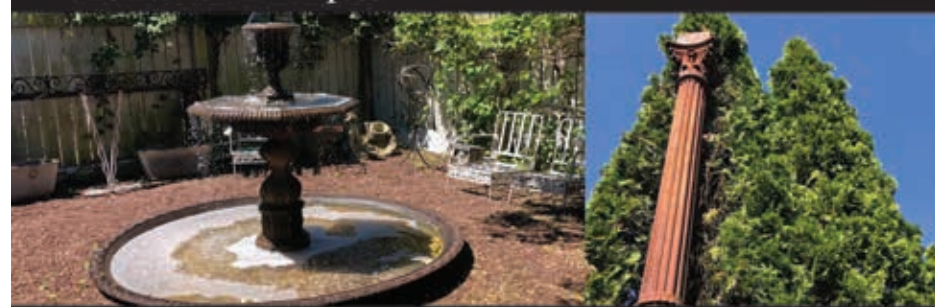
In addition to supporting health services, the 300-member, all volunteer organization provides educational scholarships and grants to community organizations and individuals in need. The Bucks County Designer House is its largest fundraiser of the year.

The historic James-Lorah Memorial Home on Main Street in Doylestown serves as the VIA's headquarters. Once the home of Sarah M. James, a charter member of the VIA, it also operates as a house museum and is on the National Register of Historic Places.



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COURTESY OF ABCA DESIGN

BY BRIDGET FITZPATRICK

“Flex furniture” is in vogue, while jewel tones, draperies, earth tones and antiques are making a comeback.

Without a doubt, living space adjustments we have all had to make in 2020 are affecting interior home design trends into 2022 and beyond.

We’ve all been spending more time in our homes, working remotely or handling students’ online learning. Upgrades and modifications are at the forefront. Home improvement platform Houzz reports that remodeling expenditures in the US in-



COURTESY OF DECORATING DEN INTERIORS

A pop of color can accentuate any living space, like this den that also serves as an office.

creased 40% in 2020, and home additions rose 52%.

The pace of home trends has accelerated, says Angela Ast, designer and owner of ABCA Design – Decorating Den Interiors of Doylestown. She has clients who find themselves needing both work space – and privacy.

Calling it “flex furniture,” Ast says there is a demand to accommodate all family members with individual nooks for working from home, studying or reading. Furniture now has to have multiple uses. Dining rooms have been converted into offices. Family rooms are classrooms by day and home theaters by night.

Coziness is inherent in design these days, according to Ast. After all, homes weren’t designed with cubicles in mind. Combining comfort with work space is a challenge. Wall colors and unexpected textures will undoubtedly take center stage with good reason, she explains. Floor and wall coverings are as practical as they are visually interesting: they absorb sound. (Who hasn’t experienced the challenge of acoustics during an online meeting or class?) “People need a softer place to land,” Ast explains.

Bucks County interior designer Lisa Lazarus agrees. Her concierge-style design service focuses on textiles. “People are craving pops of color,” she says. They can achieve this through window treatments and comfortable furniture that contribute to sound absorption in a busy household. She forecasts a drapery comeback. “At the end of the day, home fashions make

people happy,” she says, adding, “Interiors can be traditional with a twist these days.”

Color trends are changing rapidly, too. Ast says that although white walls never go out of style, people are becoming less afraid of color, especially jewel tones in accents and furniture. Antiques are “hot,” she says because people want furniture with detailed interest. Neutral earthy tones colors such as olive are now being embraced for their warmth.

Proper lighting remains a challenge for every room in the living area, depending on how it is used. Working space requires efficient lighting for projects, while living rooms are usually much softer and warmer for comfort. LED lighting has a long way to go, Ast

believes, before people accept its colder blue tones than warmer incandescent bulbs. Edison bulbs that provide a warmer and ambient hue are still fashionable.

People are becoming more innovative with their interiors. Lazarus predicts cozier and more compartmentalized floor plans. Adding details such as French doors for privacy, or converting a room into a gym, she says, are trends definitely here to stay. □

Bridget FitzPatrick is a freelance writer for the Bucks County Herald and River Towns Magazine.

“Although white walls will never go out of style, people are becoming less afraid of color.”

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NEXT LEVEL OUTDOOR LIVING

A true expansion of the home, luxury outdoor living is the rage.



COURTESY OF ELA OUTDOOR LIVING

Luxurious outdoor living spaces replicate the comforts and functionality of home interiors.

BY FREDA R. SAVANA

Say goodbye to the folding lawn chairs and tired picnic table – outdoor living has become a luxurious expansion of the home, complete with living areas, dining spaces and so much more.

“It’s definitely changed over the last five or so years,” said Rob Ambler, owner of Ambler Industries in Doylestown. “People are realizing they want to take their living space outdoors and enjoy three seasons of their property and all it offers.”

Stroll onto today’s deck or patio and you might see a handcrafted pizza oven, a full service kitchen, ceiling fans, a copper-topped bar and, more likely than not, a natural stone fireplace.

“People are more willing to spend money to really get it right,” said Ambler, whose Doylestown business has been serving the region for 15 years. “They want to extend their homes in a beautiful way.”

This has become even more apparent since the global pandemic drove people indoors. As people spent more and more time at home, both working and with family, they realized just how important it is to have the most comfortable, pleasing and happy home possible. Expanding that environment beyond the home’s walls took on a whole new energy.

“COVID-19 just exploded everything,” said Ambler. “People are investing in outdoor living like never before.”

And, that they are.

“We’ve spent our entire career creating the finest in outdoor living for our clients,” said Keith Frederick, owner of ELA Outdoor Living in Doylestown. But, over the past decade, the industry has evolved into something even more spectacular, he added.

The pandemic, said Frederick, has “pushed people to pull the trigger” on projects they were thinking about for years. “They want that perfect space where they can entertain and relax. We’re really building outdoor rooms.”

To accommodate the desire for nearly year-round enjoyment, outdoor living is being transformed into lush

landscapes with roof coverings, retractable screens and windows and overhead heating, which supplements other “fire features.” Televisions and state-of-the-art sound systems are a necessary part of any sophisticated space – as is lighting, to establish a perfect ambiance that brings an essential refinement to the finest landscaping.

“Our designs emphasize lighting on plants, steps and pathways, as well as highlighting seating areas,” explained Frederick.

Of course, swimming pools or other water accessories are frequently the focal point of outdoor living and entertaining. As such, they require special attention to detail and exquisite design that captures everyone’s attention.

From bluestone pool decking to creative seating arrangements that enhance a guest’s or homeowner’s exposure to the dramatic impact of water, the composition of each element seamlessly complement the other.

Twenty-first century outdoor living is about enjoyment and relaxing in a beautiful, natural environment – whether you’re gathering with friends and family or seeking a bit of solitude.

“People are investing in outdoor living like never before.”



COURTESY OF ELA OUTDOOR LIVING

Elaborately designed fire pits and fireplaces are in high demand.

While each home and each homeowner is unique, all share a vision of creating an outdoor environment that expands living beyond indoor boundaries. □

Freda R. Savana is a regular contributor to the Bucks County Herald.



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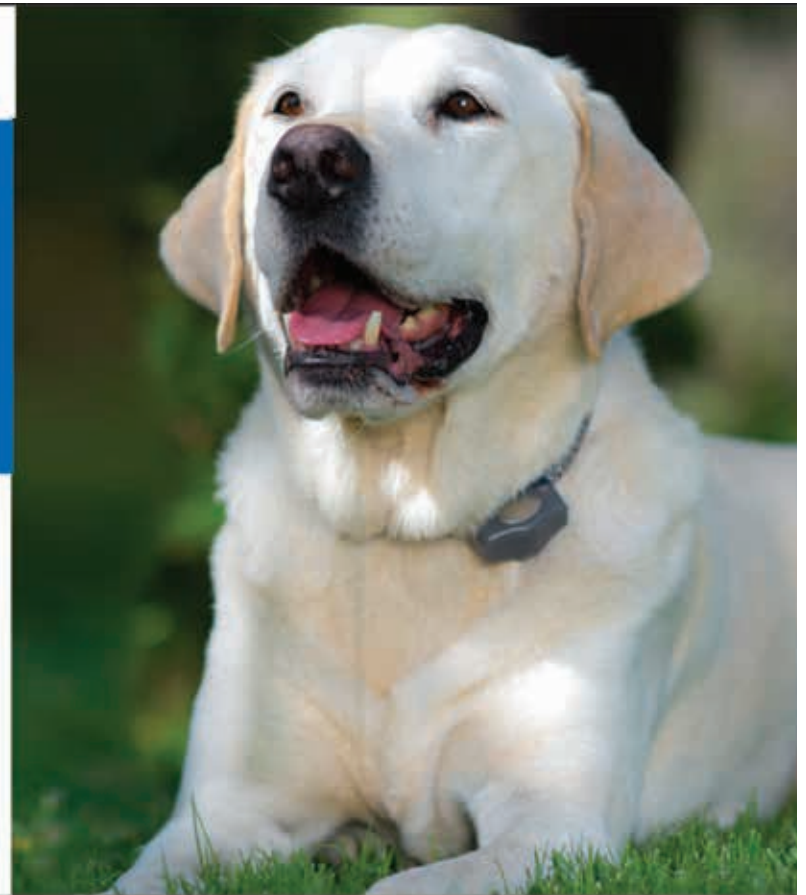
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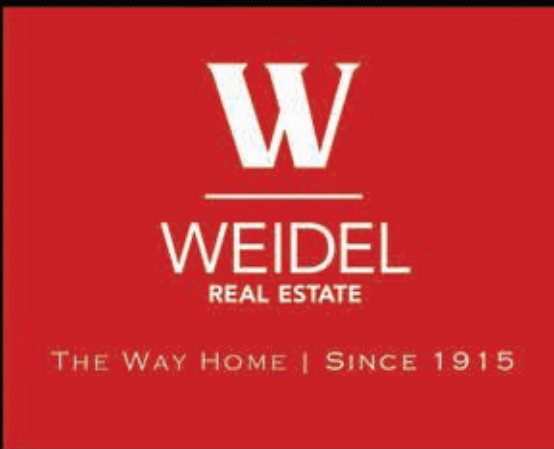
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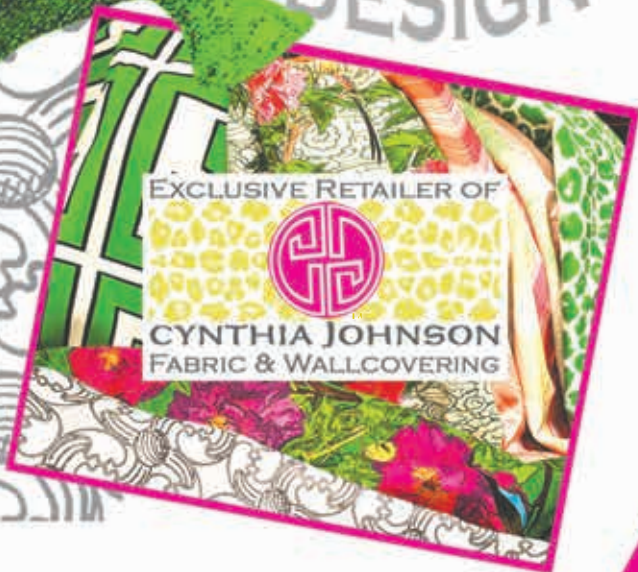


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