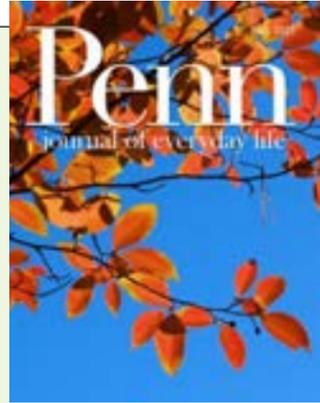


FALL 2021

Penn

journal of everyday life





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A tree in the backyard shows great fall color

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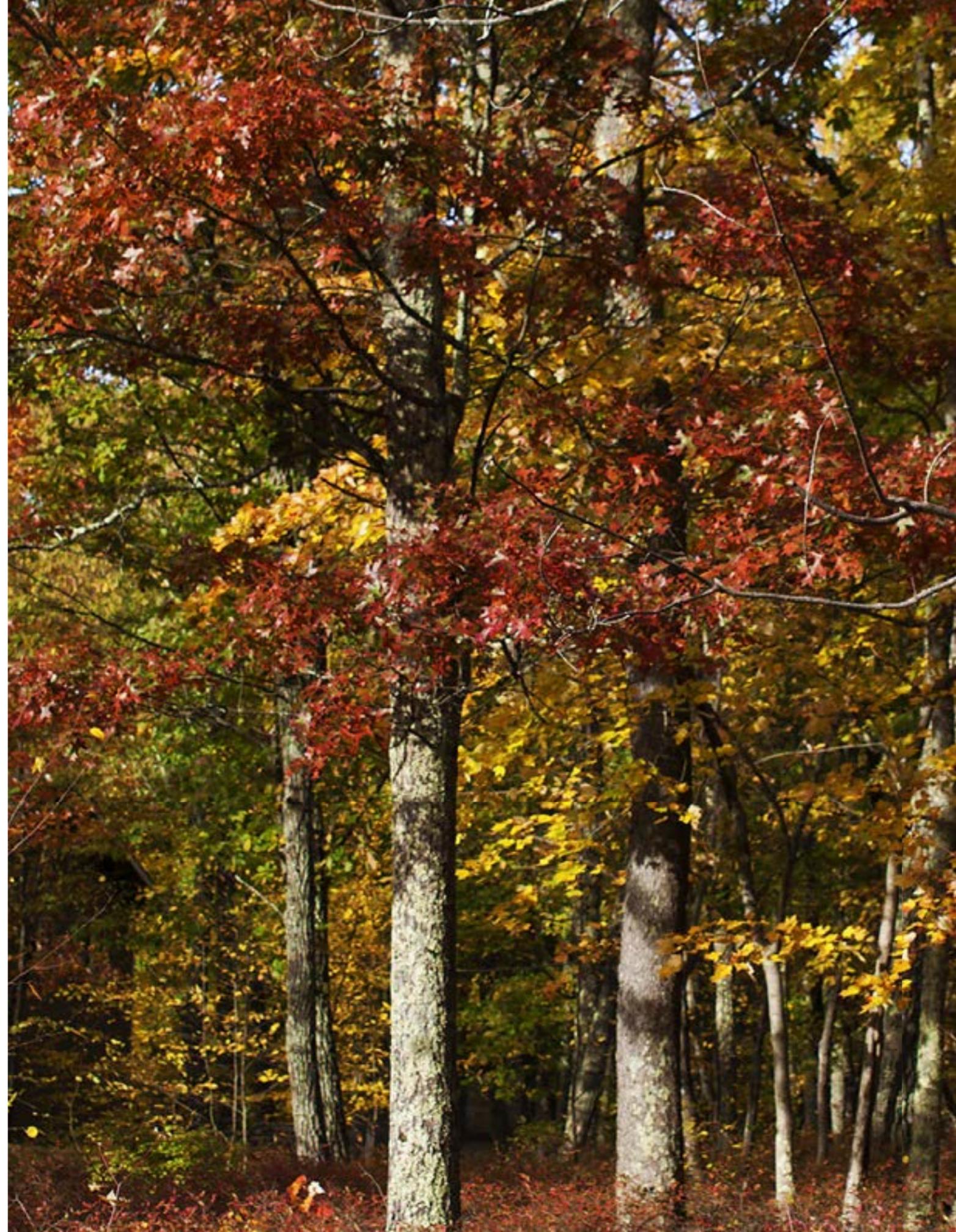
Best Views: *Apple Picking*

Seasonal: *Last Picnic*

The air turns crisp; the leaves explode with color. We head off to enjoy our last outdoor picnic of the year with the kids in Northeast Pennsylvania.

They've left their Manhattan apartment behind to rent a house in a rural gated recreation community for the Covid season, working from home or commuting when needed. But weekends they are free to enjoy

the trees, the bears and the beauty of their adopted neighborhood. The house they rented is really built for the summer with lots of glass and beautiful views. There is a fireplace and some accommodation to winter—but not nearly enough for people who don't relish cold weather. The ground is covered with natural rocks and thick with huckleberries that turn a lovely orange in the fall. A natural enticement for the bears.



Below, a delicious red and green cabbage slaw with cranberries. *Right*, grilled beef with all of our favorite things—mushrooms, peppers, onions and tomatoes.





SPEED
LIMIT
30



Day Trip: *See Danny Kissel Carve*

Danny Kissel lives in what he calls the heart of farm country, Central Pennsylvania. He is quite simply an exceptional artist and sculpts in multiple nontraditional mediums—ice, wood, sand and (of most interest here) pumpkins.

Then he got famous. Kissel, now a celebrity pumpkin carver, was inspired to compete after watching the Food Network programs *Outrageous Pumpkins* and *Halloween Wars*. He applied his experience creating horror movie special effects and his artistic skills in clay, air brushing and sculpting to pumpkins.



Day Trip: See Danny Kissel Carve

In 2017, Kissel and his team won Halloween Wars: Hayride of Horror. In 2020, he won the championship on Food Network Outrageous Pumpkins. Now, he is invited to compete and show in events around the United States and loves to work alongside the best in the world.

So far, Kissel has three appearances scheduled in Pennsylvania this fall. It's worth a trip. In Pittsburgh last year, Kissel participated in carving a record-breaking 22,000 pounds of pumpkins, the most carved in one continual scene according to the folks at Monster Pumpkins Festival.



Pittsburg

Monster Pumpkins Festival

October 12-15 prep
(Kissel says stop by)

October 16-17, 2021
At the Pumpkin Patch Place, the 3 Crossings Campus between 28th and 29th Streets.

“The city’s most spellbinding spectacle of colorfully colossal cucurbits...”

West Reading

West Reading

Pumpkin Fest

October 16, 2021
From 12 to 8 p.m.

Hershey

Pumpkin Glow at Hershey Gardens

October 23 – 24, 2021
October 30 – 31, 2021
From 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
More than 100 carved and painted pumpkins. See Danny Kissel in action on Saturday October 23 and Sunday October 30, in the Conservatory/Tent.





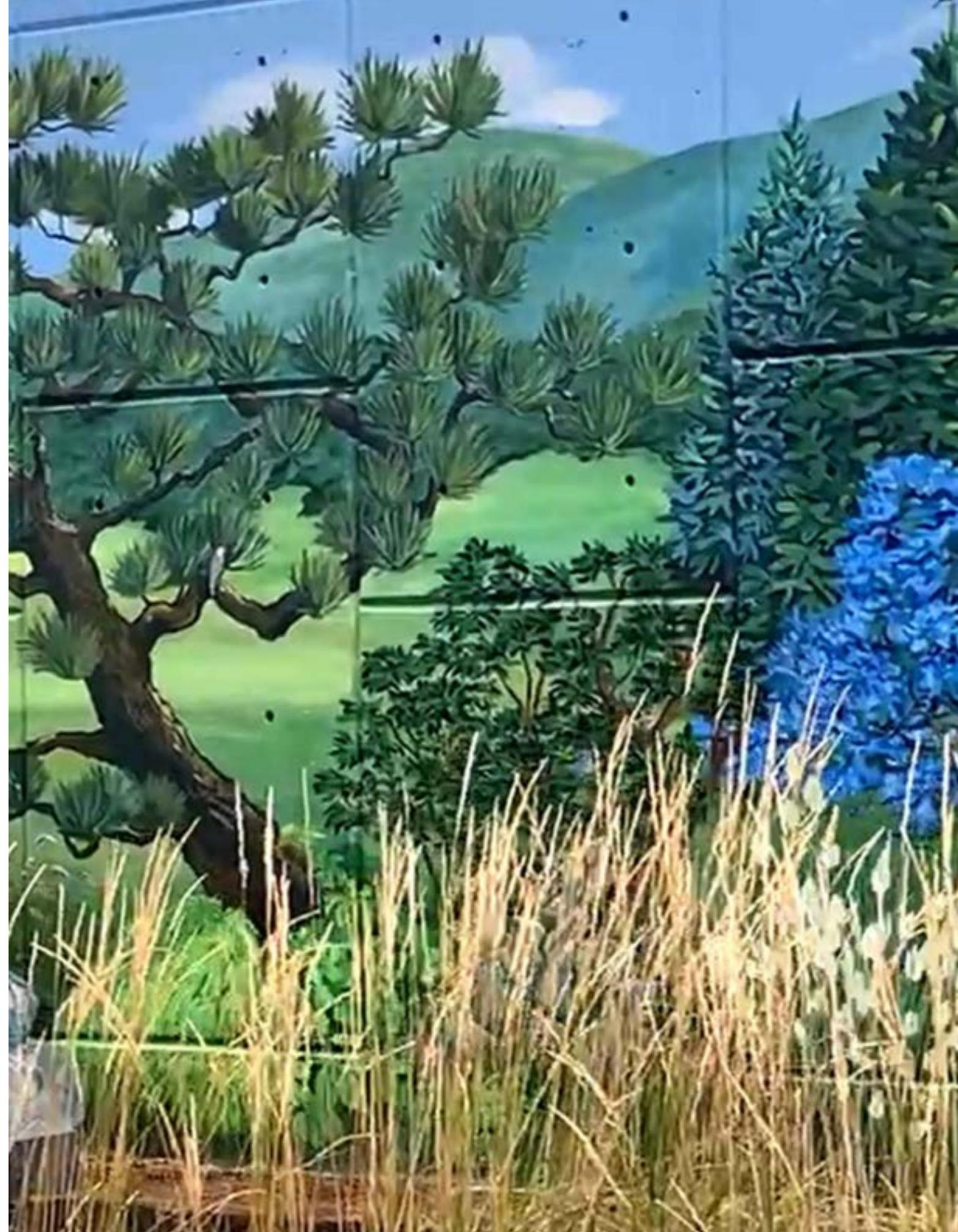
Art: *Kaysch Healing Garden*



Doctors have put up photos of nature to calm and relax patients for many years. We have all contemplated a picture taped up on the ceiling. Today this concept has expanded and hospitals are using walls of images to help patients, providing a more immersive experience. And apparently the practice is rooted in research. Cedars-Sinai COO Mark Gavens said, “There is so much evidence on

the impact that therapeutic landscapes and nature can have on a patient’s recovery.”

Freehand Murals, a group of artists based in Easton, have created beautiful scenes for Lehigh Valley Hospital Network. Seven years ago they did a painting in an operating room. This fall, an outdoor Healing Garden was opened at the Kasych Family Pavilion on the Lehigh Valley Hospital—Cedar Crest campus. The space includes the long mural wall, a walking path and a newly landscaped

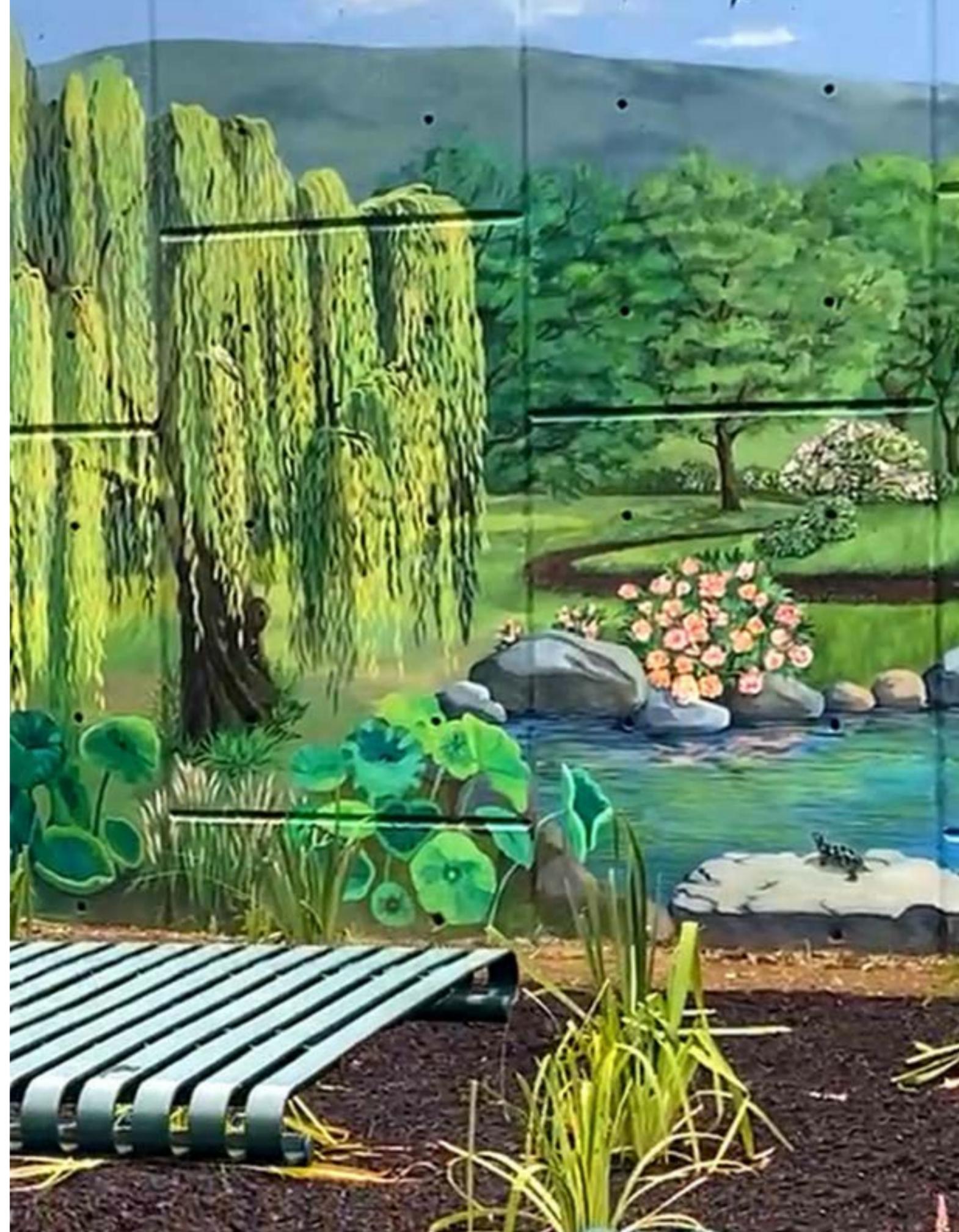




area with seating and tables for picnics or contemplation. The remarkable landscaping provides an almost tromp l’oeille effect, making it a challenge to know where the painting ends and the real ground and plants begin.

Freehand Murals is a long-time collaboration of four women artists based in Easton, including Jenny Miller Leggett, of Martins Creek; Donna Thatcher and Kim

Hogan, both of Easton; and Janet Hodick of Palmer Township, Northampton County. Since 2002, they have done a three-wall and ceiling mural in the dining room of the Alzheimer’s Unit at the Easton Home as well as public art in the region. Jenny Leggett described the Kaysch Healing Garden at LVHN as, “a visual hug.” Their goal was to create an inviting place where patients, families and staff could go to just feel better.



Harvest: *Green Tomatoes*

After a long summer season of harvesting ripe, red tomatoes, there is a sudden rush at the end to not lose the bounty of the remaining tomatoes—green though they may be. So, once the weatherman warns us of an impending first frost, we rush out and pick the last tomatoes hanging on the vines. Some we put on the windowsill so that they ripen in the sun.

Most we look for ways to use or store in their green state. You might be surprised how many recipes there are for green tomatoes.

Thanks to the movie of the same name, everyone has heard of fried green tomatoes. How many people have actually made and eaten them? Probably far less. We fried our first batch in oil and then found a healthier recipe to bake them. The crisp coating is made more so by the use of panko.



Harvest: *Green Tomatoes*

This cake is usually a surprise to our guests. You might not think of making a cake using green tomatoes, but this is one. And it really is delicious. The best thing to compare it to is a carrot cake. The green tomato cake batter has the same spicy flavors, toasted walnuts and cream cheese frosting. Because we usually have an abundance of green tomatoes, we make a number of these cakes. They freeze beautifully to bring out again for Thanksgiving, Christmas or New Years get-togethers. The cakes in these photos were



Harvest: *Green Tomatoes*

made in a loaf pan, but we have had equal success making them in cake pans then slicing layers to spread more cream cheese frosting inside.

We also make a batch of green tomato sauce, especially if we have a mix of ripe and green tomatoes left on the vine. The process is the same as for sauce from ripe tomatoes and you can include the green sauce in all the same recipes. The trick is to add more spice to the sauce when you open a bottle to make sauce for pasta. It also makes a great base for soups where you might otherwise have opened a can of crushed tomatoes.





Celebration: *Thanksgiving*

Thanksgiving is a special time to gather family around the table for a traditional meal. We often have a ham and try to choose a local one from a good meat producer or butcher. We then add roasted fall vegetables with cranberries and fresh baked biscuits. We only make things we

enjoy and look forward to because we have Thanksgiving leftovers for days.

Since we head out to the local tree farm for our Christmas tree right after Thanksgiving, the table decorations hint at this next holiday. We used small blank wooden blocks and cones, glued them together and painted the cones white for



Celebration: *Thanksgiving*

a simple decoration. With an artificial eucalyptus garland and electric candles, the table is complete. We use artificial pieces so there are no smells or smoke that anyone might find disagreeable.

Right, for homemade soup we like to use ceramic covered pumpkin bowls. *Below*, our roasted fall vegetables include cubes of butternut squash, brussel sprouts, toasted pecans and cranberries. This mix is also good with fresh roasted beets. *Far right*, puff pastry leaves baked with cheese and herbs and mini cream cheese corn muffins.





Garden: *Mint*

There are lots of different kinds of mint. We are not picky about the variety but try to plant at least one spearmint and one peppermint each season. Moving the pots indoors in the winter allows the mint to grow a bit longer, but we rarely get the plants to last year to year. So, we harvest as much as we can and look for recipes to make with the mint.

This year, for the first time, we tried to make and bottle an extract. After cutting and washing the leaves, we soaked the leaves overnight in a high alcohol content grain liquor to pull out the minty flavor. This was strained then funneled into little brown extract bottles to use later, a few drops at a time, in recipes. Most of the alcohol smell and taste disappeared by the time we bottled it. All that was left was the nice mint flavor.



Garden: *Mint*

To make mint jelly, we cut and washed the mint leaves then put them in the Instantpot with a little water to cook them at high pressure. This was very successful at getting the mint flavor into the water. After straining the liquid from the leaves, we used it to make the jelly.

Mint jelly is traditionally served with lamb, but we find it equally good along side beef. It also makes a wonderful glaze for meats. We did a test run on thumbprint butter and mint jelly cookies using a Food Network recipe. They froze beautifully but they didn't last long. We like them with our coffee break.



The use of mint most common for us is to dry it and save it to make tea. We planted a variety of mint this year that has a lemon and mint flavor that is perfect for tea. We hang our mint on a wood laundry rack in a place on the porch where there is good air circulation. Once dry, we put the mint stems and leaves into plastic bags to freeze it. We are careful not to crush and release the mint oils before we are ready to make the tea. We use a simple wire mesh caddy to make one cup at a time.



Garden: *Fall Vegetables*



Our big experiment this year was growing potatoes. We chose Yukon Gold seed potatoes then planted them among the blueberries and in fabric growing bags. They grew beautifully. Unfortunately, an animal picked the potatoes that were in the blueberries so we only saved a few from the yard. We wished we had those potato boxes with a door to

check on the potato growth, but settled for digging up a few after the blossoms fell to see how they were doing.

We found the growing bags a fine alternative to traditional pots. The fabric allowed the excess moisture to escape—something we had an abundance of this year with all of the rain. It took a lot of potting soil to fill a pot, so we tried saving it for next year once the potatoes were harvested.





Left and above, making potatoes, onions and peppers was our favorite use of the potatoes and peppers we grew this year.



Last year we grew yellow bell peppers and loved having them. So, this year we grew yellow banana peppers and green peppers. We love to make stuffed peppers. One of our favorite uses is to make omelets with peppers, onions and tomatoes topped with cheddar cheese. There is nothing like going into the yard in the morning to pick the ingredients for your breakfast. The pepper flavor and texture is completely different right off the vine that after it has sat on the store shelf.





We are big fans of British chef Jamie Oliver. We first saw him on television working to get American school lunchrooms to improve the quality of the food they served children. Then we looked up his cookbooks and PBS cooking shows. We were hooked. This past year we bought a few of his cookbooks and one of our favorites is *Ultimate Veg*. The first two recipes we made are shown here, the Sticky Onion Tart and the Cauliflower Cheese Pizza Pie. Both are made in a big shallow pan on top and in the stove—making cleanup easy. Always a virtue. The only warning is to watch time carefully as the recipe's conversion may not be accurate for American stoves. Now, we are not vegetarian by any means, but Jamie's vegetable recipes are so hearty and full of flavor, they don't leave us wishing for a slab of meat longside.

Crafts: *Afghans*



Our fall delivery of handmade afghans includes this pattern going to the Marketplace for a Cause in East Berlin, Pennsylvania. It is a Children's Cancer Recovery Foundation organization that raises money to assist children and their families who are facing the hardships of a cancer diagnosis.

The pattern is called Gingham by Tiffany Brown. We found it on Etsy in her Daisy Farm Crafts shop. We were looking for a contemporary afghan style pattern and are very happy with this one. It is made in two yarn colors, double thread stitches and a big hook so crochets up quick. This little afghan makes a nice comfy throw for a lap robe or small blanket to bundle up a child.





The other part of our afghans going out this fall is made with a classic ripple pattern we found in Vanna White's (yes, that Vanna) *Color is Beautiful Afghans* publication produced by Lion Brand yarn. The group of afghans on the right is made in the same colors as the gingham pattern. They are also going to the Marketplace for

a Cause for fundraising. The colorful group of ripple pattern afghans above is going to the Pleasant Valley Ecumenical Network in Sciota, Pennsylvania. PVEN is primarily a food bank and provided gently used clothing before Covid. They are also interested in new items for household use. This is our first afghan donation to them.



Local Eats: *Hatfield Premium*



Hatfield is a meat producer in Pennsylvania. It may seem odd to do a story on one of their pork chops, but it is an exceptional pork chop. The Hatfield Premium Reserve Pork “Frenched Bone-in Pork Chops” are simply the best pork chop you will ever have—and probably can’t find. They are produced for high-end restaurants but on occasion may be found in grocery stores and through restaurant

supply houses that also serve the public. In short, you will have to search for this product if you want it. We were fortunate to find a case. Our favorite way to cook them is with panko crumbs, baked in the oven. We also cooked them in a more traditional way, searing them over the flame on top of the stove and then finishing them in the oven. Either way, these are the prime rib of pork. They are huge, thick, juicy and tender. If you can find them, it is worth the effort.







Home Sweet Home: *Package Recipes*

Here are the recipes we have made again and again for years and years. And they come on the box from the manufacturers. First and one of the most popular in our family is the cheesecake recipe on the box of Philly Cream Cheese. I made two for a church dinner. One was accidentally knocked off the serving table. When I went to scoop it up and throw it away, one of the church ladies told me oh no, it is going back on the table or home

with her. We top ours with homemade fruit pie filling or sauce from fresh or frozen cherries or mixed berries.

There are a lot of chocolate chip cookie recipes out there, but the only one we make is on the package of Nestle's Toll House chocolate chips. We've made huge bowls of them that disappeared as soon as we put them out. One woman even apologized for her husband coming into the kitchen, stuffing his pockets with the cookies. She said he just loved our chocolate chip cookies.





**HERSHEY'S
COCOA**

100% CACAO





On the previous pages are walnut brownies made from the recipe on the package of Hershey's Cocoa. This has been a staple in our household. Kids of all ages love the moist, chewy brownie. It's a great choice to make for bake sales; easier than cupcakes for birthday parties.

Another family favorite and cookie season staple is the oatmeal cookie from the recipe on the Quaker Oats box. We make ours with raisins and walnuts. When family walks in the door, the first stop is to lift the lid on the cookie jar. The hope is it is full of homemade chocolate chip or oatmeal cookies.



Last but not least is Jiffy Corn Muffin Mix. A box cost a dime when I was in college so it was probably like the ramen noodles of today. When there are ears of corn leftover from a meal, we save the kernels and make corn fritters using this mix. We regularly make pancakes, often adding blueberries. And, of course, corn muffins. How many times have we looked for something extra to add to a meal. Corn muffins are a quick and easy treat to put in a fresh breadbasket. We buy these boxes by the six pack.





Best Views: *Apple Picking*



Above, Apple picking. An integral part of every fall our whole lives. *Previous pages*, the cherished tradition of a flag pole in the yard. It goes up every morning and comes down every evening. It flies at half mast every sad event.

Penn, journal of everyday life

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