

Spring Flings

Stock a stream, sample some syrup and have a seat: Eight great ways to celebrate the vernal season

How sweet it is

A treat so sweet, it has to repeat! Maple Weekend actually spans two weekends: March 20–21 and 27–28, when the public is invited to tour, taste and take home some of New York’s favorite forest product—pure maple syrup. This statewide event highlights the sugaring operations of some 1,500 maple syrup producers, who collectively produce 332,000 gallons annually. Nothing beats the smell of the steam coming off the evaporator in a real sugarhouse when the maple sap is boiling down— and you can watch and learn how sap is collected and condensed into the final, delicious product. Many of our local farms feature wagon rides and activities for the family. Locally, Maple Valley Farm (84 Harris Road in Corinth) offers close-up tours and tastes, plus antique engines and a “frontiermen” campout. In Galway, Nightingale’s Maple Farm (4890 Jersey Hill Road; 518-882-9334) features a reverse osmosis system, and filtering and bottling demonstrations (weather permitting). For information, go to mapleweekend.com/index.html.

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ISTOCK

Get Plenty of Fiber



Weave your way out to woolly Washington County for the 18th annual Fiber Tour. Celebrating fiber-yielding livestock and pets, this self-guided tour of local farms features visits with alpacas, llamas, sheep, goats, and even angora rabbits—plus demonstrations of shearing, spinning, knitting, weaving and felting. With 14 farms participating, you'll have lots to see and do.

Each farm offers different activities, such as walking alpacas on a lead, petting animals, and crafts for the kids. Most offer items for sale, like handcrafted yarns, knitted items, weavings, and fleeces. The tour is scheduled for April 24 and 25, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., rain or shine. The Washington County Fiber Tour even has a warm and fuzzy motto: *The fibers of life begin on our farms*. Wear your boots and bring your flock. But be warned: things can get a little hairy out there! For information, go to washingtoncountyfibertour.org.



Finny Family Fun

Brown trout are not native to America, but since their introduction from Europe in 1883, they've become our most popular trout species due to their hardiness and better tolerance for lower oxygen levels than our indigenous brook trout. Kids and families are invited to Saratoga Spa State Park to introduce their own brown trout to Geyser Creek at the popular annual fish stocking in April. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation trucks will dispense more than 1,000 brown trout fingerlings to eager kids for release into the creek. Come early, as families start lining up well before the event—and bring buckets and rain boots. Food and drinks will be available. Other activities include fly fishing demonstrations, exhibits, crafts and live music. The event will be held on April 7 at 11 a.m. at the Geyser Picnic Area; call (518) 584-2000, ext. 119 or go to saratogaspastatepark.org.



Catch a Natural Buzz

Spring is a perfect time to observe nature waking up from its silent slumber. In April and May, the Wilton Wildlife Preserve offers informative walks-and-talks around its properties, highlighting newly emergent spring flora and fauna.

On April 17, mycologist Sue Van Hook will lead "Take a Liking to Lichens," so kids and adults can learn about this mysterious composite organism. April 24 is "Earth Field Day," when kids can pit their strengths against their fellow creatures in a carnival-like challenge. "Don't Worry, Bee Happy" is set for May 22. Join the group on a walk through the wildflowers while learning about pollination, bee keeping, and the many varieties of honey. Check wiltonpreserve.org or call (518) 450-0321.

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Taste o 'Toga

There's no tastier way to donate to a worthy cause than to attend the sumptuous Taste of Saratoga at the Canfield Casino on March 27. More than 30 area restaurants offer samplings of their signature dishes, along with live music, dancing and an opulent silent auction featuring one hundred auction packages—donated items and experiences from local individuals and businesses. Last year, nearly 400 attended this fabulous fete, raising nearly \$50,000 to benefit Shelters of Saratoga, a nonprofit that provides help for the adult homeless in our area. "The outpouring from the community has been truly remarkable," says SOS Executive Director Nancy Breen Lamb. It's an elegant evening of tasting, tipping, tripping (the light fantastic) and bidding. Bring your checkbook, your comfortable pants and your appetite! For information, go to sheltersofsaratoga.com/events/events.asp



MJ ANDERSON PHOTOGRAPHY

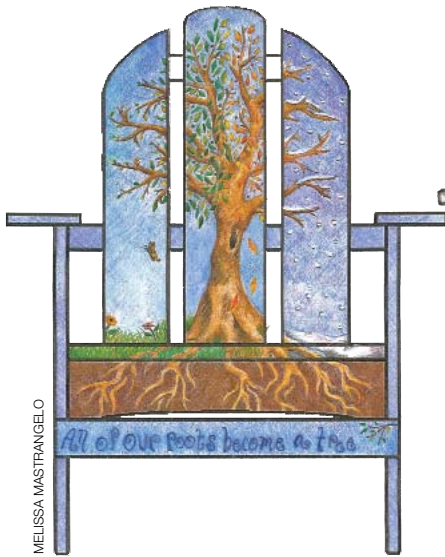


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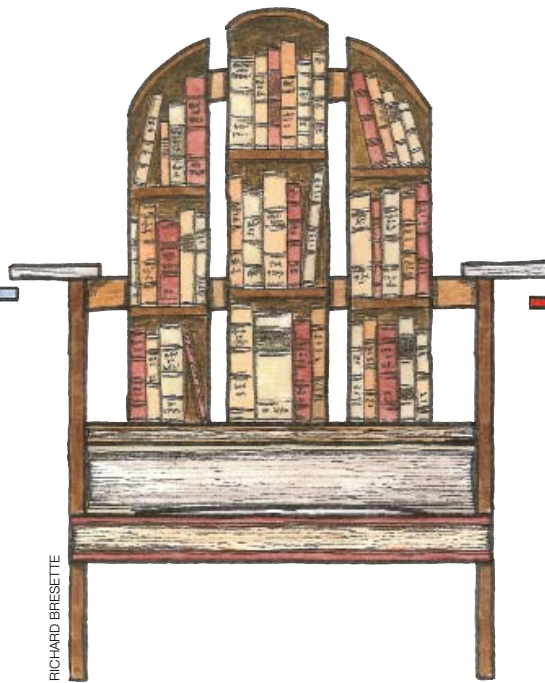
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View to a Kill

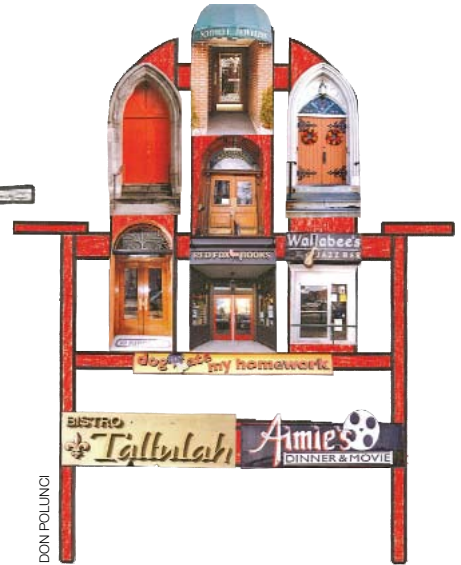
Spanning two weekends in mud season, the Tour of the Battenkill has grown into something of a bike-cult classic. The main attraction is the combined dirt and asphalt route that meanders 125 miles through rural Washington County. Nicknamed "America's Queen of the Classics," the tour draws nearly 2,000 professional and amateur riders and teams from around the world. Saturday, April 10 is the Tour of the Battenkill Pro/Am, where regular Joes can rub shoulders with racing's elite (usually as they zip past). A week later, April 17, is the Ride2Recovery CycleFest, which will include bicycle rides over all or portions of the Tour course. The Ride2Recovery program is designed to benefit mental and physical rehabilitation programs for veterans, and features cycling as the core activity. Then you can watch the pros slug it out in the Professional Invitational on Sunday, April 18. Centered in Cambridge, there's great viewing along the route, but you'll want to check out the food and sports and fitness expos planned for both weekends. For information, go to tourofthebattenkill.com.



MELISSA MASTRANGELO



RICHARD BRESSETTE



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Take a Seat

Saratoga has its horses. Catskill, its cats. And Glens Falls, its chairs. Not to take a back seat to anyone in the “Fun Tourist Spectacles” department, Glens Falls is showcasing artist-decorated Adirondack chairs throughout the city from Memorial Day through September. “Have a Seat in Glens Falls” features dozens of unique and whimsical chairs by local artists, using themes that reflect something about Glens Falls. After the sum-

mer of sensational sight-seating, the chairs will be auctioned off at a “chair-itable” event. It’s another great reason to visit the new and improved downtown, which is enjoying a bit of a renaissance. With tasteful rehabs of many of the elegant older buildings, plus new shopping and dining venues, the “Falls” is rebounding beautifully. Come take a seat-of-the-pants tour for yourself. For information, go to haveaseatglensfalls.com.



KURT HERTZOG

Go with the Grain

Carve out some time to visit the 19th annual Northeastern Woodworkers Association Fine Woodworking Show at the Saratoga Springs City Center, March 27 and 28 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.. Admission is \$8, and kids under 12 get in free. New this year is the Totally Turning Symposium, where you can see and learn about turned-wood crafting. Amateur and professional woodworking artisans display their finest pieces of furniture, toys, turnings, carvings and miniatures. The schedule also includes ongoing free seminars on tools and techniques, such as guitar building, Windsor chair making, and carving a ball and claw foot. In fact, there’s an impressive 48 hours of free instruction available—plus sales and exhibits from local and national manufacturers and suppliers. One of the more popular exhibits is the hands-on Toy Factory, where kids get to try their hand at building wooden toys. For information, go to nwawoodworkingshow.org.



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