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## DESIGNING FOR WORK AND LIFE

**A Q&A with architect  
Stephanie Mashek**

**Studios & Workshops:  
New spaces in old places**

**hot trend: fire pits**



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# THE VINE

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BY SUSIE MIDDLETON

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**Cover photo:** Architect Stephanie Mashek at home in Oak Bluffs. Photo by Jeanna Shepard.

From the Editor

## Work, Meet Life

On the Vineyard, work and life are intermingled. That's an understatement, I know. Right now, if you're a landscaper or a contractor, you're probably saying, "Life, what life?" But for many of us, some part of our home doubles as a work space - or even a hobby space. (This year, my vegetable garden definitely fits into this category.) And for all those many hours we spend working (or dabbling), we want it to feel right. That's why we loved getting a peek at the home spaces three Island artists - a potter, a painter and a composer - repurposed into work spaces (page 13). And it was fun to visit architect Stephanie Mashek at her home and office in Oak Bluffs (page 8).

And while we're looking to make the most of our interior spaces, there's a lot of living (and some working) going on outdoors. We looked into the trend in backyard fire pits (page 19) and discovered the options are limitless. And we learned that sitting around a fire reduces your blood pressure.

Looks like we need to do more living, less work.

—Susie Middleton

## THE VINE

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# Halfway to Summer

## SECRET GARDEN

### In the House

Spring days on Martha's Vineyard are often decidedly un-spring like. The wind and the cold can be exasperating as we dream of warm days, and green grass and spring beauty. (Those bare trees do not help the mood.) On one of these days, if you need to be transported to someplace warm and beautiful, here's an idea. There's an antique glass greenhouse behind the large main floral area of Donaroma's nursery in Edgartown. Filled to the brim with vases of all shapes and sizes and colors, pots large and small, bird houses, glass ornaments and gorgeous silk flowers, it's like a grown-up version of a fairy house. The floral designers at Donaroma's pop in and out of the greenhouse looking for vases for



arrangements, but you can wander back there and shop or dream any time you like. Just sayin'.



Susie Middleton



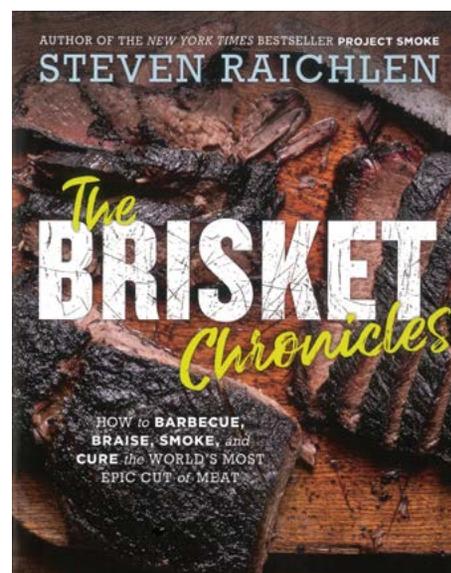
**This just in:** Morning Glory Farm has announced its new (free) loyalty card for year-round Islanders. The farm will no longer be accepting the Island Club card. The new MoGlo card will entitle cardholders to discounts and specials. Apply online at [morninggloryfarm.com](http://morninggloryfarm.com), then bring your I.D. to the farmstand any day starting April 29, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The farmstand officially opens May 3.

## BOOK IT

### Brisk-It

Prolific cookbook author, public television star and seasonal Chappy resident Steven Raichlen has turned his attention to a cut of beef that's rich not only in flavor but also in history and culture. *The Brisket Chronicles: How to Barbecue, Braise, Smoke, and Cure the World's Most Epic Cut of Meat* is the award-winning author's thirty-second book and the definitive guide to choosing, handling and cooking the cut of beef that stars in everything from Texas barbecue to Jewish pastrami. Recipes range from Bacon-Grilled Brisket Bites and Vietnamese Crispy Brisket Salad, to Brisket Baked Beans and Brisket Ramen.

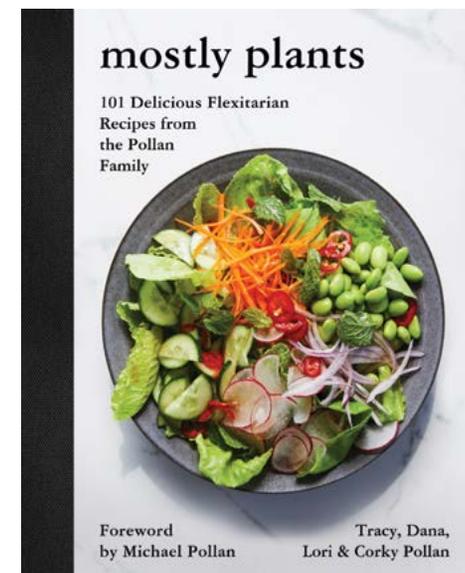
The book will be published by Workman Publishing on April 30 (\$19.95), and Steven will do an author event at Bunch of Grapes bookstore on the evening of July 24.



## COOK IT

### Plants, Please

The Pollan family's new cookbook, a follow-up to their award-winning first cookbook, *The Pollan Family Table*, takes its title from brother Michael's wise words: "Eat food, not too much, mostly plants." *Mostly Plants: 101 Delicious Flexitarian Recipes from the Pollan Family* makes that advice feel both doable and delicious. Sisters Tracy, Dana and Lori and mom, Corky, offer cooking tips, time savers, essential utensils and pantry guidelines in addition to recipes with bold flavors and exciting texture: Crispy Kimchi & Scallion Pancakes, Sheet Pan Tacos with Crispy Brussels Sprouts, Balsamic Chicken with Caramelized Fennel and of course a recipe in honor of their summer home – Martha's Vineyard Seafood & Chicken Paella. *Mostly Plants* was published in hardcover by Harper Wave on April 16, 2019, and will be available at Bunch of Grapes bookstore (\$29.99).



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## The Architect

### AN INTERVIEW WITH STEPHANIE MASHEK

BY PAULA LYONS • PHOTOS BY JEANNA SHEPARD

**NAME:** Stephanie Mashek

**PROFESSION:** Architect

**WASHED ASHORE FROM:** Cambridge, Mass.

**YEARS AGO:** 15

**FAVORITE SPOT ON THE ISLAND:** In a catboat on Nantucket Sound

**FAVORITE ROOM IN THE HOUSE:** Her sun-filled dining room

Growing up in the Washington, D.C., area, Stephanie Mashek knew in her early teens that she wanted to be an architect. She must have been prescient, as her career has turned out to suit her perfectly. She thinks before she speaks. Her answers to questions are thoughtful and detailed – just what you would want from an architect – and she’s clearly delighted with the career path she chose.

After studying architecture as an undergraduate at the University of Virginia and going on to get her Masters in Architecture at Harvard University Graduate School of Design, she started her career in the Boston area. When she married Ken MacLean, Jr., a fellow architect, they joined forces professionally. After

visiting the Vineyard with friends many times, they began to take on projects here, eventually buying property, building a home, and then moving here year-round. While they’ve done many commercial and residential projects on the Island, two of their most notable have been the Oak Bluffs Public Library and the YMCA.

#### Q. What led you to become an architect?

**A.** From my early teens I was interested in spaces and how they related to each other in different structures, and I just started reading about it. I got books out of the library, and then some friends of my parents gave me books.

#### Q. How did you end up on Martha’s Vineyard?

**A.** We would come to visit friends on the Island and that turned into, ‘Gee, we really love this place. What would it take to get a little house or a piece of property here?’ First, we bought a piece of land and we designed what was just going to be a summer camp. But that very quickly

turned into, ‘Oh, we’re going to insulate this and put a wood stove in because we want to be here in the shoulder months.’ Then a couple of years later, ‘Why don’t we just live here?’ We added on to that house!

#### Q. Was it hard to make that decision?

**A.** Actually, it worked out pretty smoothly. We were working on the new Y at the time. Construction was happening, we needed to be here; and after that was complete, we closed our Boston office and decided to do everything here.

#### Q. The Y was quite a project!

**A.** The Y was the most remarkable project we’ve ever done, because we are members and I teach yoga there as well. It is the one project in our lives that we have the most ongoing involvement with. That doesn’t happen a lot. Usually, you just birth these things and that’s it.

#### Q. Would you make any changes to the Y, now that it is up and running?

**A.** Oh sure. It was a huge leap of faith for everybody to do that project. The board had studies done of what the usage might be, but nobody really knew. There were changes made initially to

stay within budget. A few things were eliminated, things we knew that we needed. For example, there is no bathroom on the second floor. But the Y at this point is so successful that I’m optimistic that the bathroom – and more – will be added.

#### Q. In your experience, what makes a successful client-architect relationship, whether in a commercial project or in a home residence?

**A.** Certainly sharing ideas and thoughts and keeping the lines of communication open.

#### Q. When is it wise to hire an architect?

**A.** There really is no set rule. Some people will hire an architect no matter what. Others will work with a builder, add a room, and work out the design as they go. A lot of builders have great eyes.

#### Q. So what can an architect provide?

**A.** Taking the time to think through and plan a project is hugely important. You should take the time because you’re investing a lot of money, whether it’s a little addition or a complete house. With an architect, that stage of planning is

built into the process.

I spend a lot of time with people trying to work out how they're going to use their spaces, what they need in them, the way they live, the way they entertain, and the way they have family and friends visiting in summer, and what they need when that happens.

**Q. How do we set expectations with an architect? What questions should we ask?**

**A.** If you have not worked with an architect before, you should ask how long the process will take and when you can expect to start building. What are the steps towards that goal? How will this play out? What are the kinds of things we'll be working through together?

**Q. What about during construction?**

**A.** The architect never supervises construction, because that's the contractor's job. But an architect can be involved. I like to visit a project once a week at least to answer questions, and to make any changes that come up, because not everything is going to be figured out on paper.

**Q. How are fees structured?**

**A.** Architect fees are generated in lots of different ways. In Boston, we used to charge 15% of construction cost for our fee, and that worked out in a balanced way. But the cost of construction is so much higher here that I have found it more beneficial to the client to charge an hourly fee. The largest chunk of the fee, naturally, is for the design phase.

**Q. What do you love about what you do?**

**A.** I love working to figure out a nicer home, a better home that is going to work for our clients and bring them joy. I like meeting peoples' expectations, and I also love creating something that I like.

**Q. What do you love about doing it here?**

**A.** There are wonderful craftsmen here, a lot of people who really like figuring things out and who are very good at what they do. And I enjoy getting advice from contractors. After all, they are coming with a different perspective and can often add much to the process. Having a good relationship with a contractor you respect and with talented craftsmen just creates joy all around.



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## Rocking Rockfish

### Chef Craig Decker updates the classics

BY STEVE MYRICK • PHOTOS BY JEANNA SHEPARD

When it comes to food, Craig Decker likes to keep things simple. The executive chef at Rockfish on North Water Street in Edgartown says he takes all the training and experience he has gained over the years cooking at restaurants and slims it down to basics.

“I try to keep it gastro-pub approachable,” Craig said. “Nothing is too expensive. But with the fine-dining experience that I’ve had, I can incorporate some of that into the menu. My philosophy is ‘keep it simple, proper technique, everybody will like it.’”

It was love at first sight between Craig and restaurants. Growing up in upstate New York, he got his first job in the industry as a teenager. It was hard but satisfying work.

“I fell in love with the restaurant business,” he said. “I worked in a diner when I was 15. Busboy, dishwasher, prep

cook, all that. I just loved it. I love being worked hard. There’s a finish line at the end of the day, kind of like a reward.”

At first he didn’t see cooking as a career, but with college degrees in chemistry and biology in hand, and no job prospects in sight, he decided to go back to school. He enrolled at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York, where he found the concentration of cooking expertise a bit overwhelming.

“A lot of knowledge, more knowledge than you can absorb,” Craig said. “It was a great learning experience.” He then went to work in restaurants in both California and New York.

Craig’s introduction to Martha’s Vineyard is a familiar story. It didn’t take him long to decide he wanted to be here.

“I came out here to visit a friend in 1998, fell in love with the place, went back home, put in my two weeks notice,

and came back out,” he said.

After stints at several Island restaurants he landed at Alchemy in Edgartown as the head chef, where he worked for ten years before moving down the street and around the corner to Rockfish.

The chef’s philosophy of keeping it simple does not mean he cuts any corners in making his dishes. For example, he makes all of his fresh pasta in the Rockfish kitchen.

“I have a lot of Italian heritage in me,” Craig said. “I make all of our pasta here, I make gnocchi here. That is definitely more of my passion, what I like to eat.” The influence of Italian flavors is evident on the current Rockfish menu with starters like burrata with speck, mint, arugula, and balsamic reduction and potato gnocchi with sweet Italian sausage, roasted tomatoes, broccoli rabe and parmesan.

He said he would never put anything on the menu that he doesn’t like to eat himself, and that seems to be a formula that works. Craig said the restaurant is showing growth over the past three years.

He strives for consistency from the kitchen, a feat that is much more difficult than it might seem.

“If a customer comes in one day, gets the short ribs, loves it, comes back the next day, says this is not the same short ribs, he may not come back,” Craig said. “That’s what most kitchens try to do, have that carbon copy, plate to plate, week to week, month to month. It’s hard to do. My job and my sous chef’s job is to get everybody on the same page and at the same level. When you’re dealing with food – proteins and vegetables – it’s not coming out of a factory, so things can be a little different every time. Keeping a positive attitude, even in the summertime, when everybody is cranky and hot, it’s important for all of us. Everybody is different, everybody’s skill set is different.”

After more than 20 years in the restaurant business, Craig said his greatest satisfaction now is passing on his knowledge.

“Now as a chef, I like to teach people how to do things. I’ve learned a lot of things from a lot of great chefs, and I feel like I want to share that with people.”

---

*Steve Myrick is a reporter for the Vineyard Gazette.*



## Classics with a Twist

Chef Craig Decker loves to put a fresh twist on a classic dish. He starts with good technique. Short ribs will be braised until tender (in Guinness stout for deep flavor), but instead of serving them drenched in a heavy sauce, he'll present them simply on a base of white corn polenta with an elegant stack of crispy onion rings on top (above, right). Similarly "Chicken and Dumplings" (left) isn't heavy at all – a crispy chicken breast and a braised leg are paired with sautéed cremini mushrooms and velvety black-pepper dumplings. Craig makes all the restaurant's pasta from scratch, and preparations offer just the right balance of sauce to pasta so that the pasta isn't diminished. Fettuccine with braised wild boar (above, left) features shiitake mushrooms, carrots, spinach and sherry cream.

**FACING PAGE:** Chef Craig Decker trained at the Culinary Institute of America in Hyde Park, New York. **THIS PAGE:** Popular dishes coming out of the Rockfish kitchen right now include a Guinness braised short rib on polenta (top, right), fettuccine with wild boar (top, left) and a fresh take on chicken and dumplings (above).



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## A SPACE TO RE-CREATE

**Three Vineyard artists - a painter, a composer, and a potter - carve new work space out of old structures.**

BY LOUISA HUFSTADER • PHOTOS BY JEANNA SHEPARD

If you live on Martha's Vineyard, chances are good that at least one of your neighbors has a home craft workshop or art studio. It might even be you: tying flies, making jewelry, painting or playing music in a dedicated corner of the house or garage.

As a kid in Edgartown, I remember visiting Joe Serpa's glass-blowing studio behind his house on Mill Street, where generations of twentieth-century schoolchildren watched him breathe air into impossibly thin bubbles of shining glass, swirled with colors that started off as brittle sticks and melted into transparency.

That was the old Edgartown, of course. Today's glass-blowers are located up-Island, where many other Island artists and artisans have made room in their homes to pursue their crafts.

With real estate prices what they are all over the Island, it's hard to imagine your average year-round Vineyarder being able to afford much more than living space these days. But in fact we discovered three local artists - a potter, a painter and a composer - who found houses with room for their work in just the past few years.

One of the latest to set up a studio at home is Micah Thanhauser (lower right), a West Tisbury boy who grew up to become an accomplished potter and moved back to the Island last year. Painter Elizabeth Whelan (top left) and her partner, boatbuilder Bill Benns, bought their Chappaquiddick home two years ago - it has room for both their careers. And directly beneath my feet, Paul Marotta (top right) is working on his latest rock music composition in the recording studio he built in my mother's dusty, nineteenth-century Edgartown basement.

Visiting the studios with photographer Jeanna Shepard, I saw that all three had the same basic requirements: heat, light and enough space to use the equipment. But each artist has very different needs for the space, beyond simply creating new work. Micah is planning to sell his ceramics on site, Elizabeth has to organize multiple shows, lessons and commissions and Paul licenses his twentieth-century recordings to music companies while working on new compositions.

---

*Louisa Hufstader is an Edgartown-based writer.*





# PARADISE FOR A POTTER

## MICAH THANHAUSER

The year 2018 was a big one for Micah Thanhauser: He got married, moved back to the Vineyard, bought a house with his wife Emily and started both a business and a family.

A professional potter who studied at Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design before apprenticing in North Carolina for the past few years, Micah knew he wanted a home ceramics shop. What he and Emily didn't expect was that they would find one.

"We thought we were going to buy a piece of land and build things slowly over time, a workshop and a little house," Micah said.

After all, he had already spent many years studying pottery, not only in college and art school but in a three-year apprenticeship with the Osaka-born clay artist Akira Satake. For her part, Emily

was nearing the end of a four-year training in acupuncture. They were willing to put in the time it was going to take to find – or build – a home with a studio on Martha's Vineyard.

"Then this one came up, and we just kind of looked at it on a whim," Micah said.

Although it was priced somewhat higher than their house-buying budget, the home on Merry Farm Road in West Tisbury came with a spacious, wood-stove-heated workshop and was "just perfect." With Emily's share of the proceeds from her grandmother's Vineyard house, the Thanhausers were able to make the down payment.

The house and workshop were built in the 1980s by the versatile Frank Rapoza, a carpenter, shipwright and ship's caulker who worked on the restoration of the whaler *Charles W. Morgan* and helped



Professional potter Micah Thanhauser grew up on the Vineyard and studied at Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design before apprenticing in North Carolina.

build the Freedom schooner *Amistad*.

Frank, who also used his workshop to craft wampum mosaics, had no shortage of offers for the property when it went on the market last year. Only one, however, came from an artist who wanted to use the shop instead of converting it to more living space.

"He told us the reason he wanted to

accept our offer was because we were going to maintain the workshop as a workshop," Micah said.

The transition from wood and wampum shop to ceramic studio didn't take much effort. Once Frank's tools and materials were moved out, there was plenty of room for the potter's wheel and firing kiln.

"Getting the kiln in is a big deal," Mi-



cah said. “This is my first small one, and I’m hoping within the year to build my bigger kiln.”

Apart from that, all he’s had to do so far is add some shelving near the wheel and name his business: Merry Farm Pottery.

The next project is to turn the front part of the workshop into a show room for Micah’s nature-inspired dishware and vases, which got their Island preview last year: Before he and Emily tied the knot at Flat Point Farm in June, he hand-made, glazed and fired 150 clay cocktail cups for the wedding guests and helpers, as well as vases for the floral decorations.

Micah also makes mugs, bowls, plates, teapots and hand-carved candle holders using minimally processed clay from North Carolina that he fires without glaze, making each piece unique. When his larger kiln is up and running, he said, he expects to make some sculptural pieces as well.

The West Tisbury zoning board has already approved Merry Farm Pottery to invite the public by appointment seven days a week between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., with special weekend events up to three times a year, Micah said.

“My plan is to have a couple of events a year when I really try and make a time out of it, with food and live music,” he said.

Micah also plans to sell his work in this summer’s Vineyard Artisans Festivals and Chilmark Flea Market, he said. He’d be glad to do more wedding favors, and to create dish lines for restaurants.

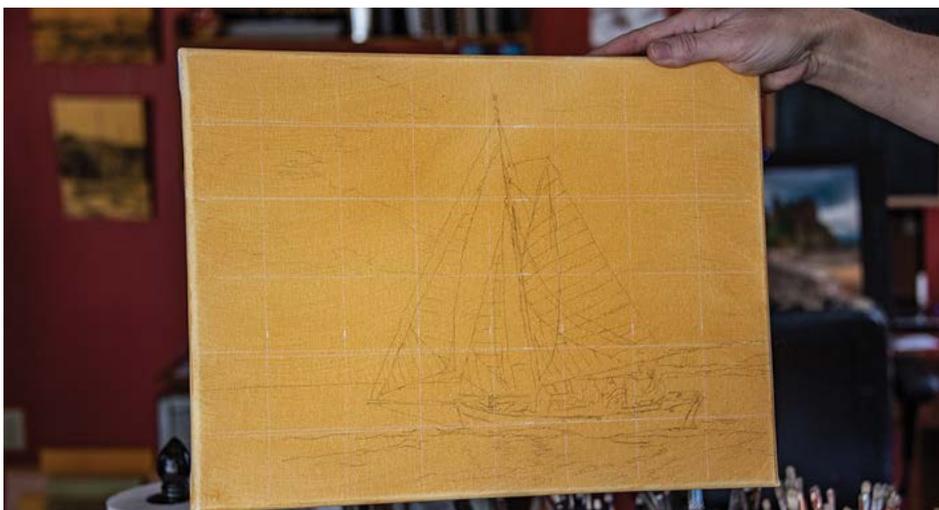
But first, he (and dog Rue) will be welcoming his wife into their home – to stay: Emily finishes her acupuncture program in North Carolina May 17, and the couple are expecting their first child, a boy, a few weeks later.

To make an appointment with Micah, see some of his work online and read his blog, visit [merryfarmpottery.com](http://merryfarmpottery.com).



Micah’s new studio was formerly wampum artist and shipwright Frank Rapoza’s workshop. Frank sold the property to Micah and his wife, Emily, because he liked the idea of the shop continuing on as a creative space. Rue the dog approves. Merry Farm Pottery will be for sale this summer at the Vineyard Artisans Festivals and the Chilmark Flea Market.





**TOP:** Portrait artist Elizabeth Whelan found a home with a workspace big enough to hold her huge Hughes easel. She uses the mirror to help change her perspective on a piece. **MIDDLE:** Paintbrushes arrayed in jars near the easel. **BOTTOM:** A marine study in progress.

# PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST

## ELIZABETH WHELAN

After seven years on Nashawena Island, where they worked as caretakers for the property owner, Elizabeth Whelan and her partner Bill Benns were ready for a home of their own. But unlike Micah and Emily, Elizabeth and Bill were intent on buying a place where she could start painting right away.

“I always had to have a studio on land,” said Elizabeth, who met Bill when both were living aboard their sailboats.

On Nashawena, she painted in a borrowed workshop so drafty, “the canvas would be vibrating from the northwest wind blowing in.” Elizabeth wanted a real studio – one big enough to fit her “Cadillac of easels,” a towering, counter-weighted Hughes model 3000 that expands both vertically and horizontally to accommodate larger canvases.

Buying that easel “was a huge deal for me,” said Elizabeth, a self-taught artist who began her career as a graphic designer and now paints portraits, landscapes, still lifes and marine subjects. “I waited until I had my first professional

commission before I bought it.”

Their real estate agent knew the easel needed its own room when she invited the couple to see a 1980s home in Chappaquiddick’s Enos Lots neighborhood two winters ago. Like any serious Island home-hunters, Elizabeth and Bill got there as soon as they could, borrowing the Nashawena tender to make the trip.

“We came in a blizzard, in a lobster boat,” Elizabeth recalled with a laugh. At first, she didn’t see anything remarkable about the recently-renovated, 1980s home – although it did have an outbuilding where Bill could (and does) work on the wooden boats he crafts by hand.

But then, Elizabeth recalled, the agent said, “And this will be your studio,” leading the way into a wide room with one wall of floor-to-ceiling glass and the rest painted a passionate red against a bright white ceiling.

That’s all it took, as Elizabeth tells the tale. “The pictures online had not done it justice,” she said. Two years later, she’s barely changed a thing.



The room had begun its life as a two-car garage, which the previous owners had thoroughly converted into a living room with a finished wood floor, sliding glass doors to the yard, fresh paint, and a pellet stove for warmth. A wood cabinet discreetly encloses the house's mechanical equipment.

Elizabeth's easel now takes pride of place in the room, with paintbrushes arrayed in jars on a nearby table. (She stores her loaded palette in the freezer, to keep the pigments fresh.)

"The northwest light is pretty neutral until the end of the day," she said. At her back when she's painting, a mirror hangs on what had been the wall mount for the previous owners' flat-screen TV.

The mirror is not there to reflect more light, Elizabeth said. Instead, she uses it to change her perspective on a piece that she senses is flawed. Turning around and looking at the mirror image of the work allows her to pinpoint what's wrong.

Elizabeth also has a wall-mounted easel, one of the only fixtures she's added to the room itself. The other: picture rails along the tops of the walls, so she can hang portrait studies and other works in progress.

"It's my nature to work on a lot of things at once," she said. "I needed not to have paintings stashed on the floor."

A printmaking press on caster wheels stands near a broad drafting table with

paper and pencils at hand, for when Elizabeth is making block prints or drawing instead of painting.

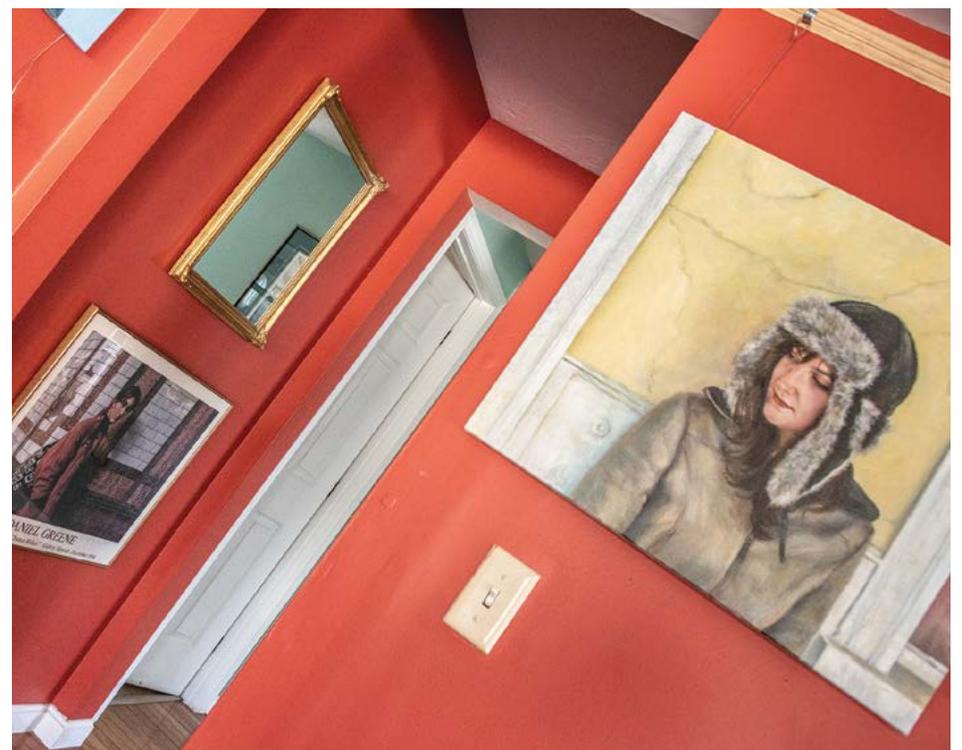
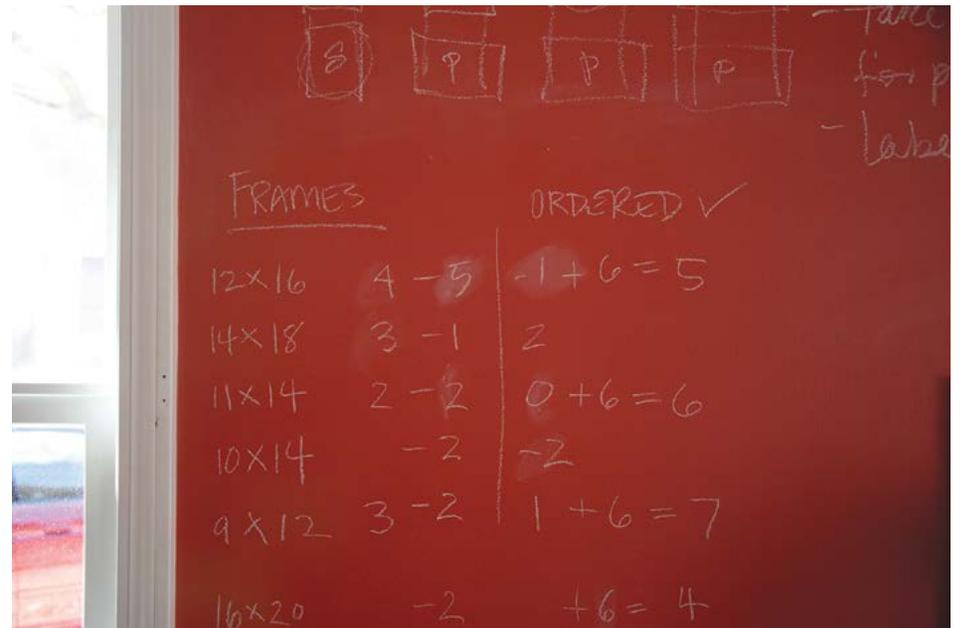
The wall facing the glass doors is lined with shelf cases holding everything from sketchbooks to still-life subjects: A vase, a car hood ornament, some shells. In between the cases are Elizabeth's desk and filing drawers. Everything is neatly stacked, sorted and displayed, as befits a former live-aboard sailor. A pet bed belongs to Yin, the couple's shy cat.

The vibrantly blushing wall paint may have been a bold choice on the part of the previous owners, but Elizabeth has embraced it. Not only does it remain her room color, but she uses one "sacrificial wall" as a vivid chalkboard for the framing notes she makes when planning a show of her work or getting ready for the recent reopening of Night Heron Gallery, where she is one of the member artists.

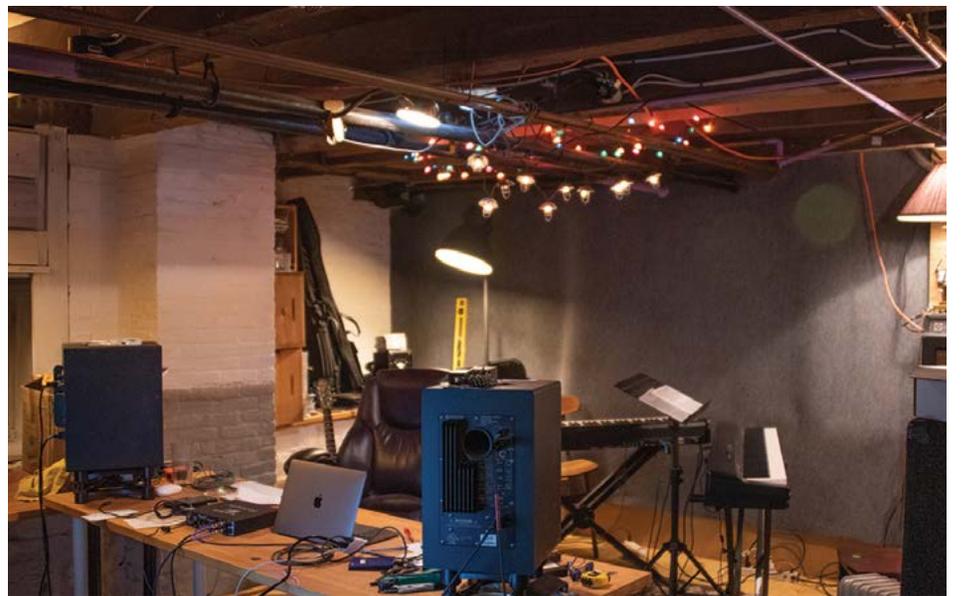
"It's wonderful to have a place to think visually," said Elizabeth, who is prepping for a June Art in the Stacks show at the Vineyard Haven library as well as a one-woman show at Featherstone Center for the Arts later in the year. She also teaches and works by commission.

"There's very little I don't like to paint," she said.

To see Elizabeth's artwork, learn about commissions and classes and read her blog, visit [elizabeth-whelan.com](http://elizabeth-whelan.com).



**TOP LEFT:** The house on Chappy came with a two-car garage that had been converted into living space – just the right size for Elizabeth's studio. **RIGHT:** She kept the existing tomato-red paint color and uses one entire wall as a chalkboard for framing notes. A picture rail at the top allows her to get works-in-progress and finished works off the floor.



# KEYS TO THE CELLAR

## PAUL MAROTTA

D.I.Y. could be my partner Paul Marotta's middle name. Beginning in 1970s Cleveland, where he recorded with underground bands that still turn up on "pre-punk" playlists, Paul has built his own music studios out of whatever was available.

When we first moved in together, in California, he partitioned off a studio in the garage and spent many hours playing the keyboards. Sometimes other musicians would come by to jam: He had a complete drum set and P.A. system out there too. Our cat Frankie used to sleep on the cushion inside the bass drum.

Our first couple of years on the Vineyard were spent in apartments, but once my mother invited us to share the Edgartown house she'd bought in 1967 – my enduring childhood home – I knew he'd find a way to fit the studio in. The basement, large and seldom frequented, was

the logical choice.

With her blessing, he picked a corner and began what to me was the Herculean task of reclaiming habitable space from a musty, cobwebbed cellar, made even more demanding because he had to go in and out through an outdoor bulkhead and steep concrete stairs and thread his way through a half-century's accumulation of basement stuff.

He framed wood panels and covered them with burlap to wall off the studio from the dusty jumble of the main basement, and built a raised wooden floor to keep feet and equipment above the chill of the concrete. Bright white waterproof paint now covers the old stone and brick of the foundation, and mellow illumination comes from an assortment of table lamps, standing lamps, high-lux therapy lights and decorative string lights.

Paul's keyboards, guitars and laptop



Composer Paul Marotta cleared and retrofitted an area of basement in an old Edgartown home to make a recording studio. Access is through the cellar door. He built a raised wooden floor, painted the walls a bright white, installed some sound insulation board, and illuminated the space with a variety of light fixtures.

computer are the only equipment. The minimal set-up is more than enough for him to get new music ready for his next recording, though he said "it's no substitute for a professional studio."

While he did use some sound insulation board – "the studio builder's best friend," he called it – Paul has not soundproofed the studio, and that hasn't been

a problem so far. He tends to work when Mom and I are out, and when we're home he turns down the volume.

It also helps that he plays the piano and writes melodically. If you want to hear what that sounds like, try YouTube for The Styrenes: One Fanzine Reader Writes or Paul Marotta: Ignore Alien Orders.



Courtesy Lark Hotels

# Ring of Fire

**Fire pits are the hottest trend in outdoor living - and you can have one at just about any price point.**

BY SUSIE MIDDLETON

Don't laugh, but it's true - sitting around a fire can actually reduce your blood pressure. Scientists have long known that fire promotes relaxation. With its flickering light, radiant warmth and captivating aroma, fire invites calm and stillness. But some studies go so far as to credit fire with evolutionary changes, one theory asserting that over the course of time, the ritual of sitting around a fire increased man's capacity to be social. And certainly, while you can enjoy the benefits of a fire by sitting across from a fireplace, there's something inherently communal about sitting around an open fire.

So let's assume that your capacity to be social is highly evolved, but your relaxation instincts are somewhat stunted.

You need a fire pit. Not that we're saying you should have one because every one else on the block does. (Or in the case of the Vineyard, everyone else on your dirt road.) That would be social pressure,

a disagreeable trait in homo sapiens.

No, we're just saying it might be time to honor those happy campfire memories, whether they were all about the marshmallows and Hershey bars or more about the beer and raucous singing.

## **Decisions, Decisions: Portable or Fixed? Wood or Gas?**

If you go shopping for a fire pit, you will quickly learn that the term "fire pit" can cover everything from a metal fire ring to a bowl-shaped vessel to a fire "table" to a permanent masonry structure.

A fire ring is designed to contain a wood fire and often features decorative metal work; a metal (steel or copper) fire pit cradles a wood fire and comes in many shapes and sizes (photo right).

A fire "table" is a piece of furniture that has a propane-fueled gas burner inset into the top of it. Sometimes the base of the table hides space for a portable propane

tank; other fire tables should be hooked up to a gas line. Fire tables can be coffee table height (like the one in the photo above), dining table height or bar height.

Permanent stone fire pits can go in two directions. The first is a structure that

is designed and built around a propane burner (see photos on page 21). Propane burners come in a variety of shapes, so the fire pit can be round or rectangular. These types of masonry fire pits are usually built on a patio as part of a formally



Fred Fournier



*Fred Fournier*

designed outdoor living space. The second type of permanent stone fire pit is designed to hold a wood fire (see photos above). Often it is a rustic structure with boulders and other stones used to shape not only the pit but a seating area as well; this type of structure feels particularly at home in a natural landscape.

If you're already overwhelmed with the choices, a visit to Vineyard Hearth, Patio & Spa in Vineyard Haven can be a helpful place to start. Owner Patricia Parker has been in business for 22 years and has seen the popularity of outdoor products grow exponentially over the last five years. She carries dozens of different varieties of both wood and gas fire pits (which can be delivered, fully assembled), and she works with landscapers and designers on bigger installations.

"People use fire pits for everything now," she said. "Camping, ambience, entertaining, the beach."

A good-quality wood-burning fire pit with a 28-inch diameter begins at about \$250, while a larger (40- to 54-inch diameter) copper vessel can range from around \$1,500 to \$3,000. While you can buy a lightweight metal fire pit for as low as about \$100, it will likely rust out after one season. Before buying a metal fire pit, check the measurement of the steel's thickness: 1/8-

inch is very thin, 1/4- or 3/8-inch thickness will be longer lasting. To keep rust at bay, buy a cover for your fire pit or move it to a covered location when not in use.

With all wood-fueled fire pits, Patricia recommends putting a layer of playground sand in the bottom for a bit of heat insulation. She also points out that Dukes County fire regulations require that a fire pit be used with a cooking grate over the fire. Many of the fire pits come with screened lids as well, though some may be optional purchases. Other common-sense fire safety precautions should be followed, such as positioning the fire pit a safe distance from the house or other structures and putting it on a non-flammable surface like blue stone, gravel or pea stone.

The range of gas-fueled fire options is astounding, beginning with the smallest option: Vineyard Hearth carries the very cool Intrigue gas table-top fire pit that screws into the umbrella hole of any patio table. Above the table, a glass lantern shields a gas flame that glows in a spiral formation, while below the table, a one-pound propane tank with a battery ignition switch powers the flame.

You can also buy a small gas burner "in a bag" that is basically a small portable fire pit to take to the beach. It must be hooked up to a portable propane tank.



**LEFT:** Using boulders for seating, Landscape designed this rustic fire pit for clients who wanted to be close to nature. **TOP:** A more formal wood-burning pit is recessed into a stone patio and is part of a larger outdoor kitchen area.

Moving up in size, Vineyard Hearth has a selection of popular fire tables. The good-looking Vin de Flame fire tables are made from retired California wine barrels and come in "hi-lo" height and "chat" height (below). They're also on casters so they can be easily moved around. The tallest are able to conceal a propane tank inside the barrel. Patricia noted that Tilton Tents and Party Rentals also rents out Vin de Flame fire pits if you need one (or more) for a special occasion.



Vin de Flame fire tables, for sale at Vineyard Hearth, Patio & Spa, are made from retired wine barrels and come in various sizes.

### **The Big Build: Custom or Semi-Custom Fire Pits**

Fred Fournier, who's been in the landscape design and construction business for over 40 years as owner of Landscape in Edgartown, has, like Patricia Parker, watched the interest in outdoor living mushroom over the years.

"First it was pools, then outdoor

showers, then built-in barbecues and grills, then outdoor kitchens. Then fire pits started to get popular, and now you see kind of a combination of all of these," he said. There's also an overall feeling of wanting to tie the indoors and outdoors together so that one flows into the other.

Fred thinks the popularity of fire pits, like outdoor showers, has a lot to do with extending the time you can spend outdoors. In a place as beautiful as Martha's Vineyard, why not be outside as much as possible?

If clients come to Landscape wanting to incorporate a fire pit into their landscape design, Fred asks them first whether they want a wood-fueled pit or a gas fire pit. Next, his questions will center on what the clients' lifestyle is like and what kind of style feels right for them. Are they older? Do a lot of entertaining? Formal or casual? Do they have young kids or even grandkids around? Do they want the experience of being surrounded by nature? Do they want the fire pit to be on the patio, closer to the house?

And, um, will one fire pit be enough? Though he doesn't seriously ask that question, he did recount a funny story. He built a fire pit for one client and then, after a dinner party when the men all gathered around the pit with their cigars and glasses of red wine, the client returned and asked, under pressure from the female half of the household, for a second fire pit so the women could have their own.

Now that Landscape has done a number of custom fire pits, they've settled into a process (see photos at right) for building them. First the site is excavated and graded, then a concrete base is



**FROM TOP LEFT:** Landscape's first steps in building a custom gas-fueled fire pit are to excavate the site, pour a concrete base and build an initial structure from fire brick. (Room is left for venting and gas-line hookup, done by a licensed gas plumber.) The structure houses a gas burner element. The pit is faced with stone or brick and capped with bluestone. Lava rock tops the burner. And comfortable seats are essential.

*Fred Fournier*

poured. A supply line for the gas is set up. (All gas work is done by a licensed gas plumber). The right-sized burner is ordered and installed, and an initial structural surround of fire brick is constructed, leaving room for the burner to be connected to the gas line and for the proper venting to be installed. Then the structure is veneered, or faced with the client's choice of stone or brick. Finally, the fire glass or lava rocks are installed over the burner and the coping (or stone cap) is installed. And the fire pit is good to go.

A fire pit like this can be constructed for \$7,000 to \$9,000 (depending on size and materials) but is most often done in conjunction with other landscaping and stone work for a total higher cost.

### Don't Forget the Garden

A total landscaping plan is something you want to think about if you're going to spend the money constructing a masonry fire pit. Will there be a path leading to the fire pit? Will there be built-in

seating or a simple ring of Adirondack chairs? Will it be near a water source, or near an outdoor kitchen or cooking area? Does an existing deck need to be renovated to lead to a patio surface?

A fire pit is an enjoyable space in the daytime as well as at night (and many can be covered when not in use to double as a cocktail or coffee table) so you'll want

to take advantage of its location and surround it with beautiful or fragrant plants, or even clear a view if necessary. While a company like Landscape can work with you on a master design for the garden and the masonry, you can also work with a garden designer who collaborates with a stone mason, as Renee Clermont of Second Nature Designs (Vine, Fall Home and Garden, 2018) did when she and Jesse

Fuller of Fullers Landscaping designed a gas-fueled fire pit (and later a second one for a wood fire) on her client's property (plan and photo below).

Beautiful surroundings, comfortable seating, the warmth and comfort of a fire, the company of good friends – lower blood pressure and a higher pursuit of relaxation seem practically guaranteed with a fire pit.



*Jeanna Shepard*

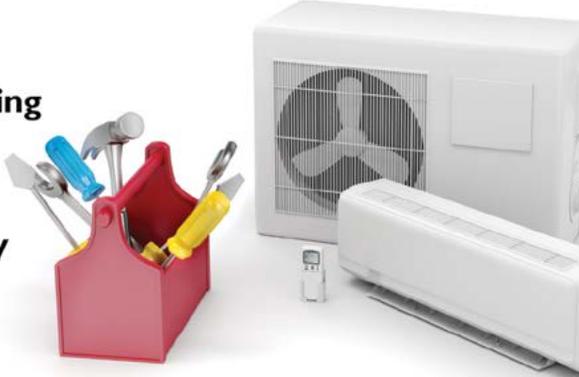
**LEFT:** Renee Clermont of Second Nature Designs drew the plan for the location of this fire pit in her client's landscape. She then collaborated with Jesse Fuller of Fullers Landscaping on the construction. **RIGHT:** Her perennial plan completed the beautiful spot.

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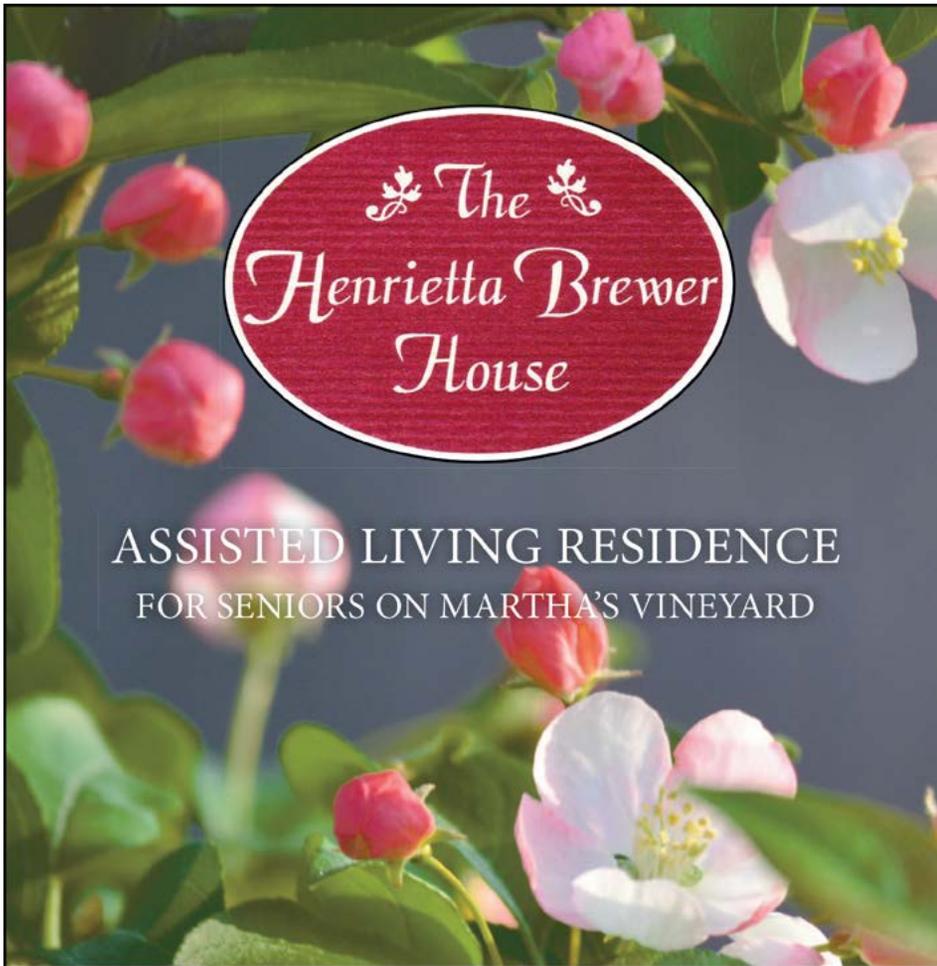
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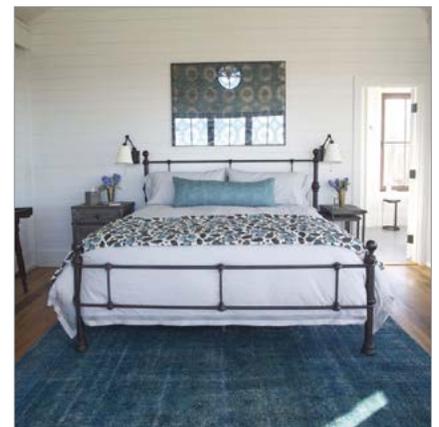
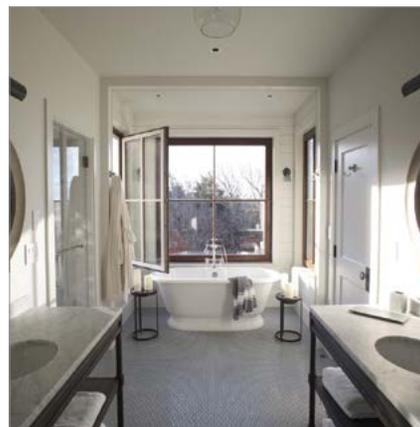
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# This Year, Up Your Herb Game

**Growing fresh herbs is easy and rewarding; try adding a few new varieties to mix things up in the garden and in the kitchen.**

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SUSIE MIDDLETON

One of the best things about growing your own herbs – in addition to super freshness and lower cost – is the chance to try different varieties. If you like to cook, it's a lot of fun to be able to pluck a few leaves of **Thai basil (1)** or **lemon thyme (4)** off a plant growing outside your kitchen door and add them to a stir-fry, a pan sauce or a salsa. You can experiment without making a big investment.

This time of year I always visit the herb hut at Vineyard Gardens in West Tisbury. Herb gardener Irene Fox tends the robust selection of herbs there and she always helps me find something new. But by the time Memorial Day rolls around, I've probably checked out the herb section at every Island nursery. I love the hunt.

Over the years, some of the most beautiful herbs I've grown are those with edible flowers. Two favorites are **garlic chives (3)** and **pineapple sage (5)**. Garlic chives, like all members of the allium family, produce a cluster of tiny flowers on

thick stems. These ones are white and arrive in late summer. You can cut the stems to add to flower arrangements or use the pungent flowers in pickles, on tomato sandwiches, mixed into a soft cheese or as a garnish for pizza or toasts. Garlic chives are hardy perennials, returning every year with enthusiasm, thanks to the large black seed heads that form after the flowers go. The seeds drop in late fall, and you'll always find new garlic chive plants the following year. So plant your first clump where they have room to spread.

Pineapple sage has tender green leaves that really do smell like pineapple, but what I find most endearing about this herb are the sweet red flowers that bloom profusely in the early fall. The plants can get three or four feet tall in one season, so when the red flowers cover all the branches, the sight is arresting. Pollinators love the flowers too. Add leaves and flowers to fruit salads and iced tea.

Pineapple sage is a tender perennial, and I have not had a lot of luck bringing

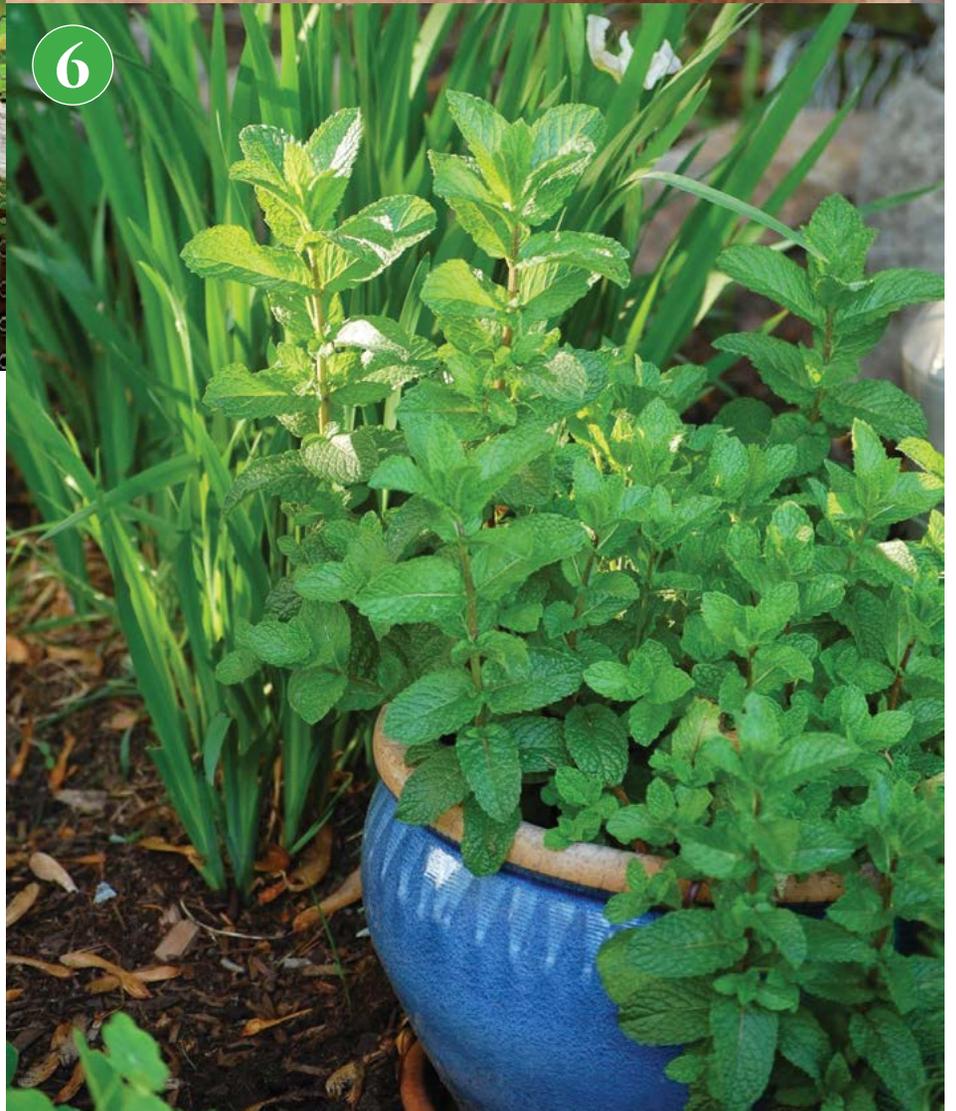
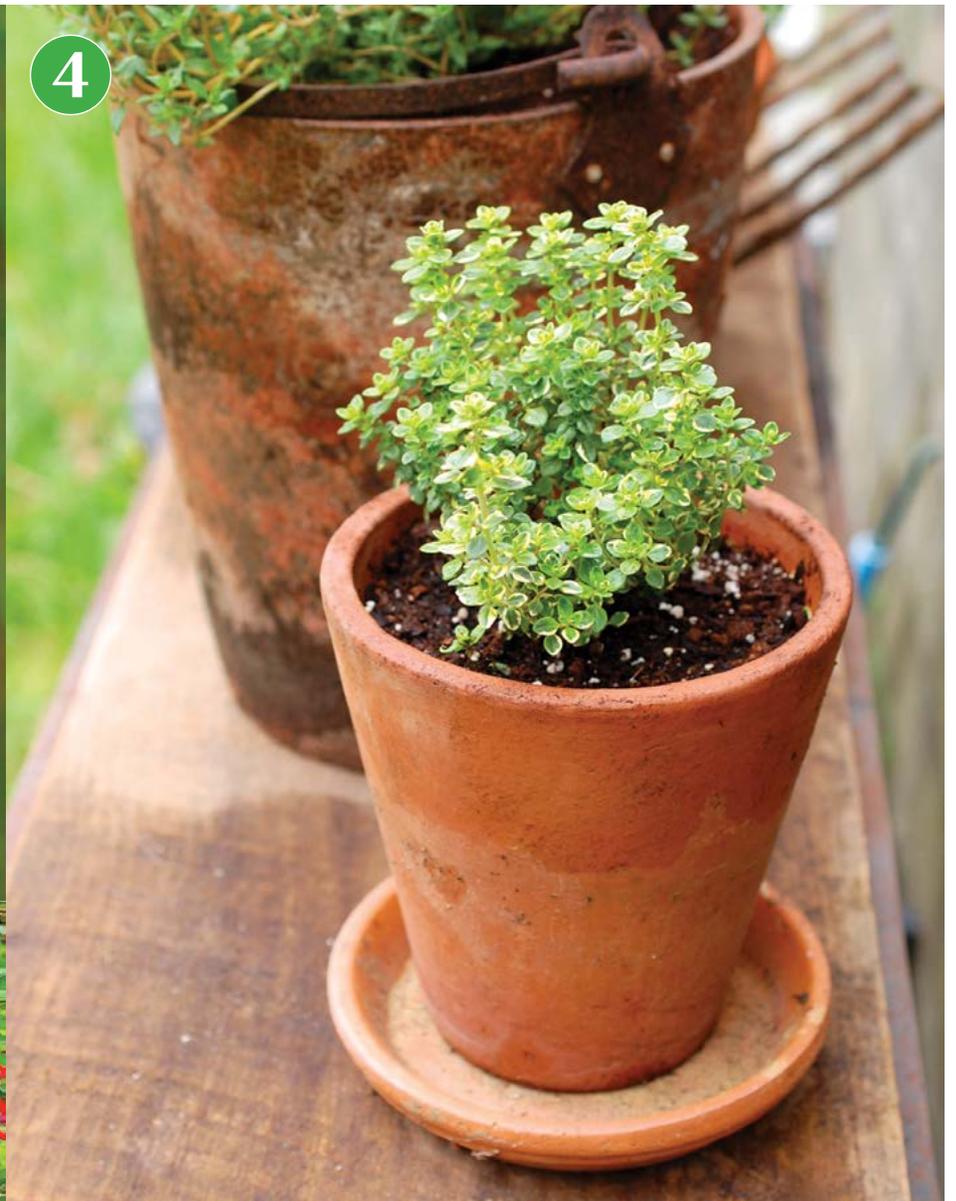
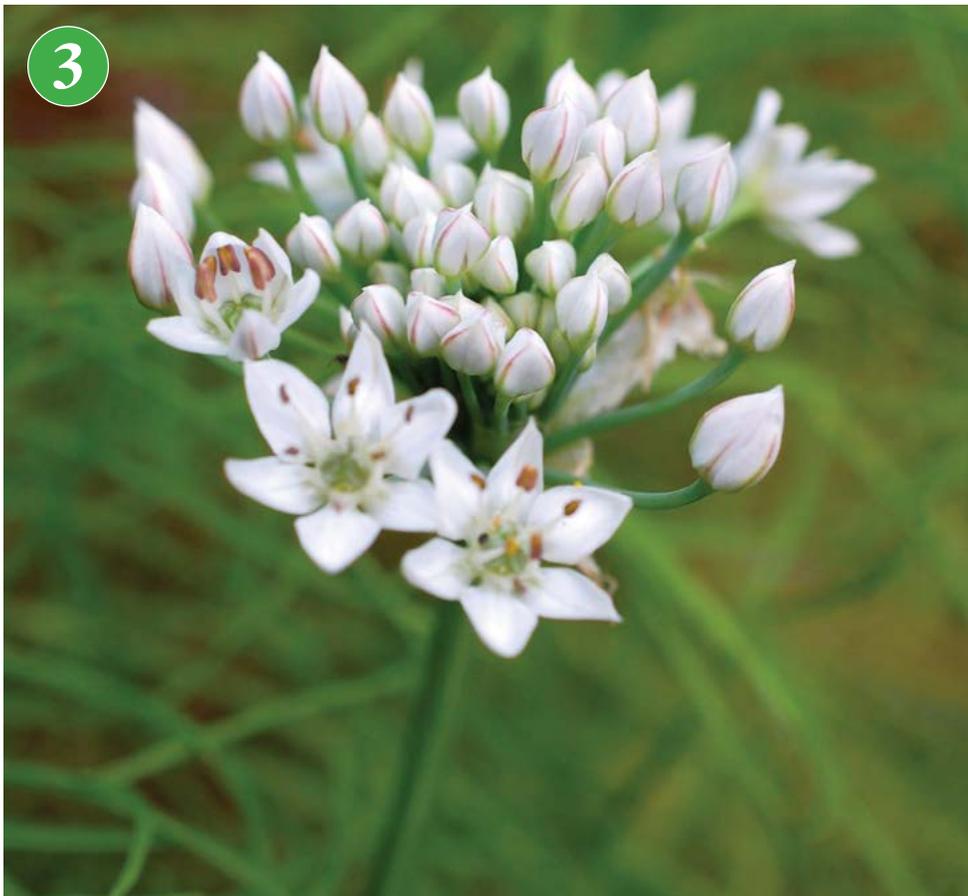
it through the winter outside. I do have a Vineyard friend who overwintered it in a pot inside by a sunny window. I think it would be best to put it in a container before it blooms rather than digging it up while it's blooming. Then you can just bring the pot in before the first frost.

**Cilantro (2)** is an herb that can be frustrating to grow until you develop a strategy. It likes cool weather, tends to "bolt" or flower quickly (and seemingly automatically around the June solstice), and one plant does not yield a lot of leaves before flowering. Instead of buying one or two plants, buy a whole package (or two) of seeds and sow them in the ground or in a wide and deep container. Let the seeds germinate and the plants grow for only a couple weeks and then pull up individual plants. If possible plant a batch of seeds every week or two so you'll have a continuous harvest of cilantro.

The leaves and the tender stems of cilantro are both equally edible. You can

also use the tender roots in cooking; they are a traditional ingredient in Thai curry pastes. Another advantage to pulling cilantro plants up with the roots is that they will hold in a glass of water in the kitchen for a few days.

If you're doing the Vineyard shuffle and moving around a lot, planting herbs in containers is a great way to have an instant garden that you can also take with you to your next place. **Mint (6)** is a star candidate for a container because it's such a vigorous grower and can become invasive if planted uncontained. There are dozens of mint varieties with which to experiment, including chocolate mint and apple mint. But if faced with a choice between just spearmint and peppermint, I always choose to grow peppermint (look for the red stems). I prefer its clean, sweet, intensely minty flavor over spearmint, but I know plenty of chefs who like to cook with spearmint, especially in Mediterranean dishes. Vineyard Gardens has a Mojito Mint which is a spearmint variety. One of my favorite



uses for mint in the summertime is to add the tiniest leaves or slivered leaves to green salads.

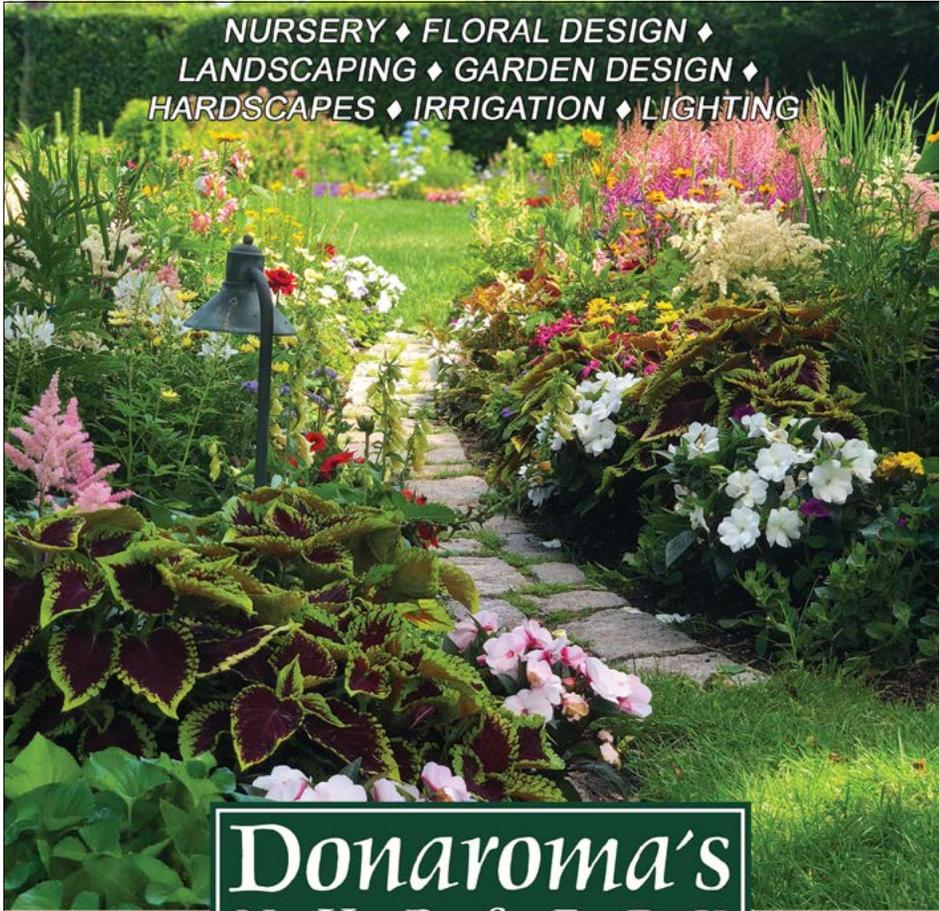
If you decide to grow herbs in containers, choose pots that are deeper than they are wide, allowing the roots plenty of room to grow. Hardy herbs with tough stems like rosemary, sage and thyme like to dry out a bit between waterings and don't appreciate overwatering. This makes them good candidates for planting in the ground too. If you go away, you won't need to worry about watering them. (Cooking tip for woody herbs: Don't over-chop the leaves or the strong oils will become bitter. Use a very sharp knife to chop or slice, rather than bruise the leaves.)

Tender herbs like basil, parsley and cilantro drink a lot of water. If you've got

them in containers, you'll probably need to water them daily during high summer. Also remember that basil (in all of its lovely varieties including lemon and lime basil), while it loves sun, also appreciates a little shade during long hot days so that it doesn't get parched. This is why it sometimes performs better in a pot close to the house (partial shade) than in the center of the vegetable garden. Basil also loves rich soil and can benefit from liquid fish emulsion fertilizer during the summer. If Japanese beetles are a problem in your garden, grow basil under fabric row cover (available at garden centers).

No matter your skill or experience level, either as a cook or a gardener, growing herbs is rewarding – fragrant, delicious and beautiful too.

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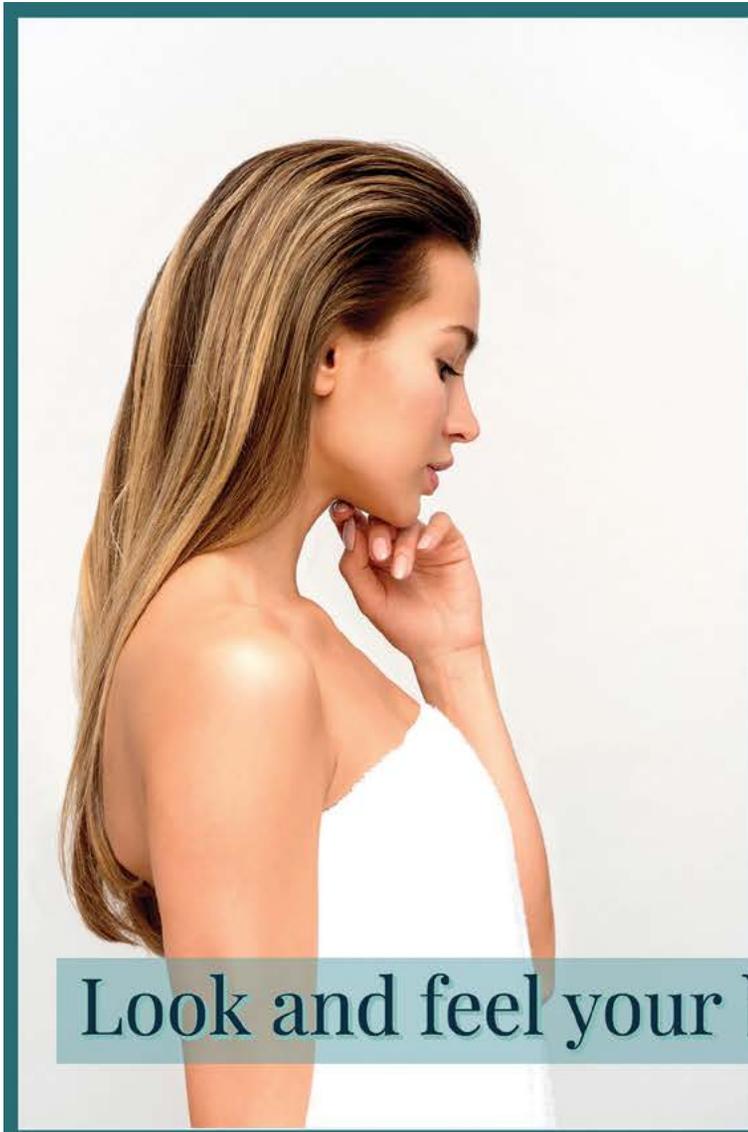


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## Land Ho!

BY NICOLE GRACE MERCIER  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
CHRIS BURRELL



**SMALLER DIGS.** On the other end of the spectrum, the least expensive single-family home sold in 2018 was for \$235,000. The almost 100-year-old house had a 644 square-foot living space with 2 bedrooms and 1 bathroom.

**644 SQ. FT.  
2 Bed, 1 Bath**



**BIG DIGS.** The most expensive single-family home sold in 2018 rung up at \$15,926,848. It featured a 2,938 square-foot living space, 4 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms plus a garage, cottage and camp/boat house.

**2,938 SQ. FT.  
4 BED, 5 BATH**



**PICK OF THE CROP.** Morning Glory Farm germinates 30,000 tomato seeds, but only plants the “best of the best.” 12,320 tomato plants go into the fields in two separate plantings, and 2,450 plants are grown in five greenhouses.



**71  
TRANSACTIONS**

**SELLERS' DELIGHT.** The most real estate transactions in 2018 – a monthly total of 71 – happened in October, while July had only 33. Even buyers know that summer here is for relaxing!

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**2017**  
Martha's Vineyard Magazine

Best of the  
Vineyard  
**2018**  
Martha's Vineyard Magazine

## 2019 Home Game Schedule

JUNE 5 – 6:30 PM – VALLEY BLUE SOX  
 JUNE 10 – 6:30 PM – MYSTIC SCHOONERS  
 JUNE 11 – 6:30 PM – WINNIPESAUKEE MUSKRATS  
 JUNE 12 – 6:30 PM – OCEANSTATE WAVES  
 JUNE 14 – 6:30 PM – NEW BEDFORD BAY SOX  
 JUNE 15 – 6:30 PM – MYSTIC SCHOONERS  
 JUNE 22 – 6:30 PM – SANFORD MAINERS  
 JUNE 23 – 6:30 PM – DANBURY WESTERNERS  
 JUNE 26 – 6:30 PM – DANBURY WESTERNERS  
 JUNE 30 – 7:00 PM – N. ADAMS STEEPLECATS  
 JULY 1 – 7:00 PM – OCEANSTATE WAVES  
 JULY 6 – 7:00 PM – DANBURY WESTERNERS  
 JULY 7 – 7:00 PM – NEWPORT GULLS  
 JULY 11 – 7:00 PM – NEWPORT GULLS  
 JULY 12 – 7:00 PM – KEENE SWAMPBATS  
 JULY 14 – 7:00 PM – OCEANSTATE WAVES  
 JULY 18 – 7:00 PM – VERMONT MOUNTAINEERS  
 JULY 19 – 7:00 PM – UPPER VALLEY NIGHTHAWKS  
 JULY 21 – 7:00 PM – NEW BEDFORD BAY SOX  
 JULY 24 – 7:00 PM – NEW BEDFORD BAY SOX  
 JULY 25 – 7:00 PM – NEWPORT GULLS  
 AUG. 1 – 7:00 PM – MYSTIC SCHOONERS

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# Over the Rainbow

Somewhere is here. You know that "somewhere" - the one over the rainbow? That one. The Vineyard is something different to everyone, but to all of us it's a special place, magical enough to make dreams that you dare to dream really come true. Do all our troubles melt like lemon drops? Well, we might not go that far.

But at the end of a rainy day in mid-April, with the storm clouds far behind us, when a double rainbow arcs from one end of the Island to the other, and bluebirds fly across a blue sky, way up high, we stop and remember we are here. We don't need to click our ruby slipper-ed heels together. The Vineyard is home.

**Tag your photos:**

#theVineMV #vineyardgazette @vineyardgazette or email thevine@mvgazette.com



**@JESSICAPISANOART**

JESSICA PISANO

📍 VINEYARD HAVEN

**Rainbow / 'reɪnbəʊ/**

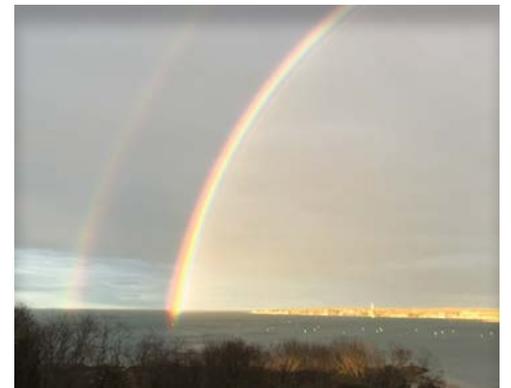
1. An arch of colors formed in the sky caused by the refraction and dispersion of the sun's light by rain or other water droplets in the atmosphere.
2. A serendipitous display of hope and joy and wonder on an April afternoon.



**@ghermm**

GAIL HERMAN

📍 INKWELL BEACH



**@jaredmaciel**

JARED MACIEL

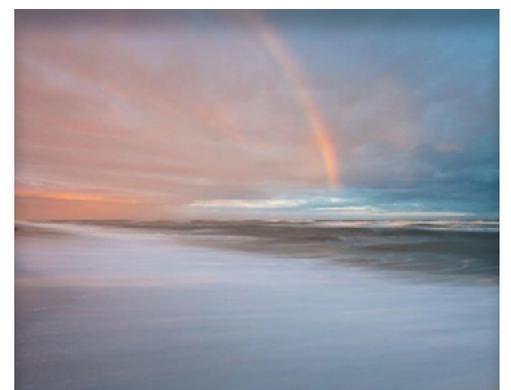
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