

The Anniston Star

HOME/GARDEN

Spring 2023

DESIGN STATE OF MIND

*Tomeka Thomas's home is
a testament to her passion
for interior decorating.*

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Tucker Webb/Consolidated Publishing

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Photos by Tucker Webb/Consolidated Publishing

The Thomas family has lived in this four-bedroom, three-bathroom home for the past 18 years.

DESIGN STATE OF MIND

Tomeka Thomas’s home is a testament to her passion for interior decorating

BY DANIELLE STALLWORTH
dstallworth@annistonstar.com

Tomeka Thomas has a vision for every part of her home. Each room has a purpose, a reason, a flow — and each is more dazzling than the last. Listen to her explain her inspiration. Watch as she lays out the plan for you — the parts that are completed, the parts that are in progress and the parts that have yet to begin. You can’t help but notice how she glows with enthusiasm.

Tomeka, owner of Styles & Smiles Salon in Oxford, has lived in the White Plains area for 18 years. She and her husband, Donovan, chose the area for its school system. Their two kids, Teana and Dontavious, have grown up and moved out of the house, and Tomeka is on the path of making her dream home a reality.

“I’ve always had a passion for home aesthetics and decor,” Thomas said. “My

very first home was... instead of saying ‘raggedy’ I’ll say ‘shabby.’ And me and my husband found joy in fixing up that home.”

Donovan works at Honda and is well-experienced in welding and carpentry. Together, the Thomases make a real dream team, with Tomeka coming up with the designs and Donovan bringing them to life.

“Don is my carpenter, and he executes everything for me,” Tomeka said. “I always had that gift of decorating and that played a part. And it also played a part in giving him visions of things I wanted to do.”

Stepping into the Thomas residence, you might feel as though you’ve stepped into a magazine — the sequence of mirrors at the entrance and the glittering light fixtures give off a glamorous vibe. But this isn’t a house: It’s a home, and you get that vibe as well. The color scheme is neutral in a warm and inviting way, not stark and untouchable. Golden accents

and strategically placed pops of color breathe even more life to the space, as do the interesting art pieces (some created by Tomeka herself).

“With neutrals, you’re able to incorporate color and it stands out more than having color everywhere,” Tomeka said. “I’ve done projects where people do want a lot of color. It can be neat, but if you’re not careful with it, it becomes too much.”

The first floor of the home boasts three bedrooms (one of which is currently being used as a mini home gym). The master bedroom features a striking DIY mirror wall that Tomeka created by connecting a bunch of small door mirrors together.

“It’s a dupe of a very expensive mirror from Pottery Barn that runs like a thousand dollars,” she said. “Somebody on either TikTok or Instagram showed a smaller version of this that they did. And I was like, ‘I could do that.’ I have done this

in several homes and businesses.”

The Thomases have also planned a remodel of their master bath (which will include a walk-in shower and standalone tub) and a revamp of the connecting walk-in closet (which will have the wire racks replaced with adequate shelving to maximize space).

Tomeka’s love and experience with interior design and landscaping led her to start her very own business, T&T Interior Design (@ttinteriordesign1 on Instagram). She brings the same creative spark that she has for designing her own abode to her clients’ spaces.

“I started decorating, and I was getting jobs to decorate people’s homes and businesses. It just continues to grow and I hope it grows more,” she said.

Danielle Stallworth is Features Editor of The Anniston Star. Contact her at dstallworth@annistonstar.com.



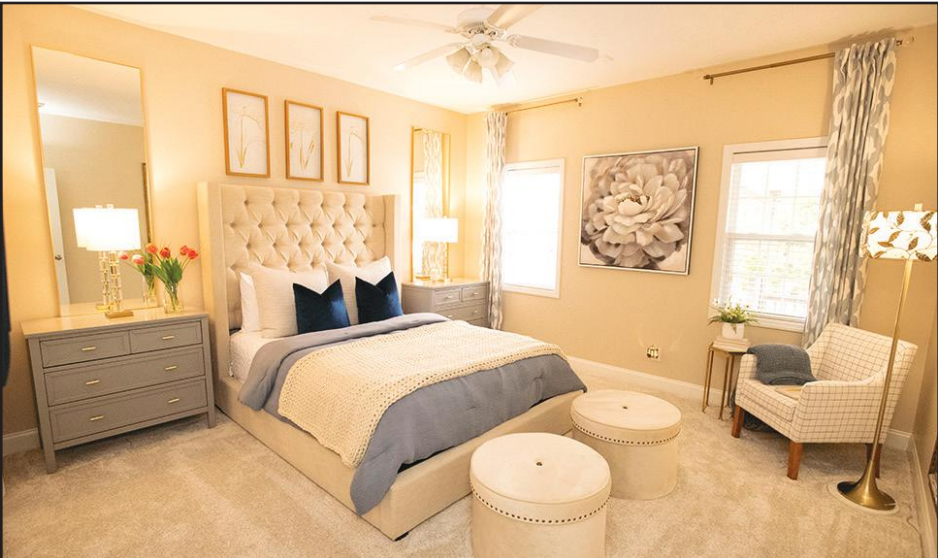
Updates to the kitchen include the faucet, the trim work and the hardware on the cabinets. Tomeka plans on painting the cabinets, changing out the countertop and getting rid of the bar counter.



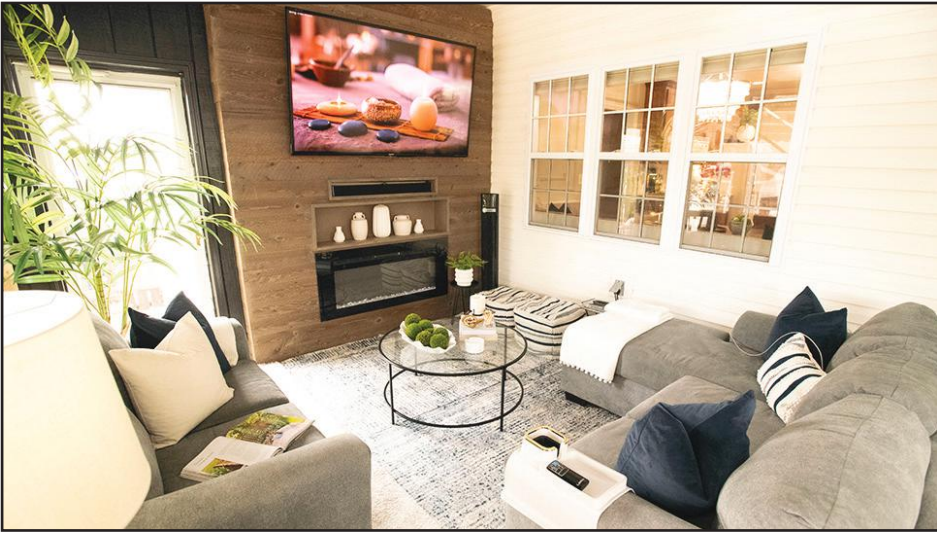
The butler’s pantry acts as an extension of the kitchen, as shown by the matching backsplash. This was formerly the laundry room, but the narrow space made it hard to navigate the machines. The washer and dryer now reside in the garage. Tomeka designed the trim work and Donovan built it. They plan to replace the floor with tile.



Donovan, who specializes in welding and carpentry, built this spacious dining nook and table.



Teana's room has mostly been kept the same from when she lived at home, aside from new wall art.



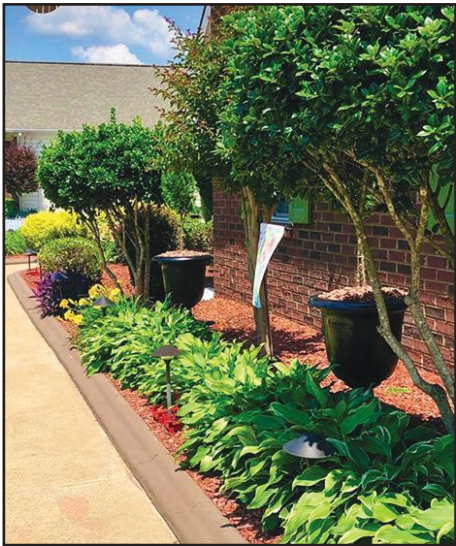
A cozy closed-in deck area in the back is perfect for outdoor entertaining. Left-over carpet from indoors helps keep the cold air from coming up between the wood slats.



The master bedroom features a DIY mirror wall that Tomeka created by connecting a bunch of small door mirrors together.



When the kids come home, they spend time in the upstairs den.



Submitted photos

Tomeka also loves gardening and landscaping, and incorporates that into her design business.

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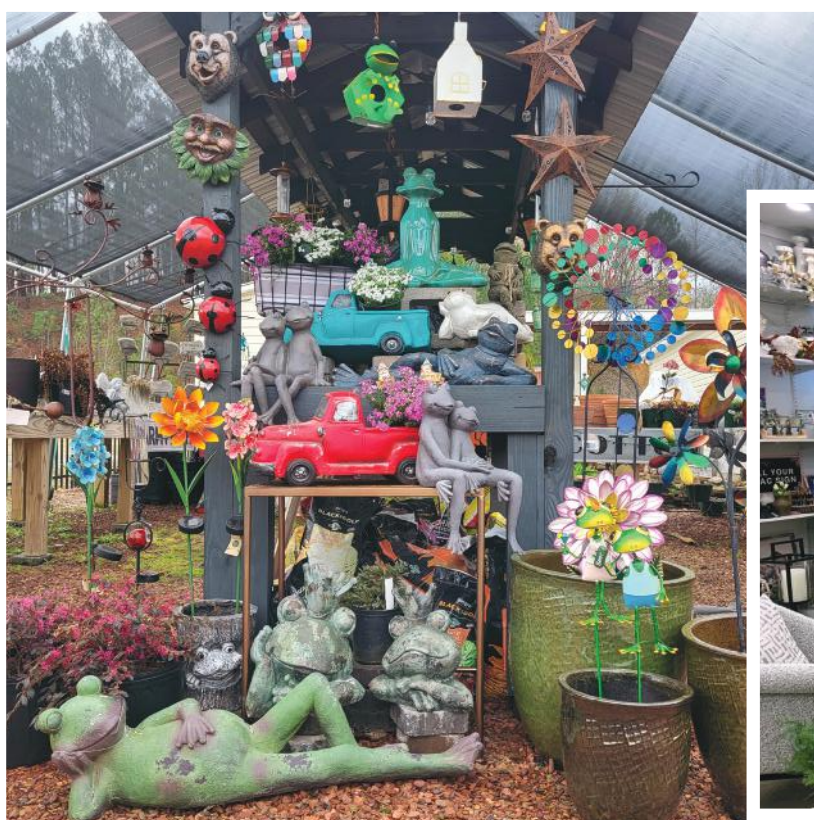
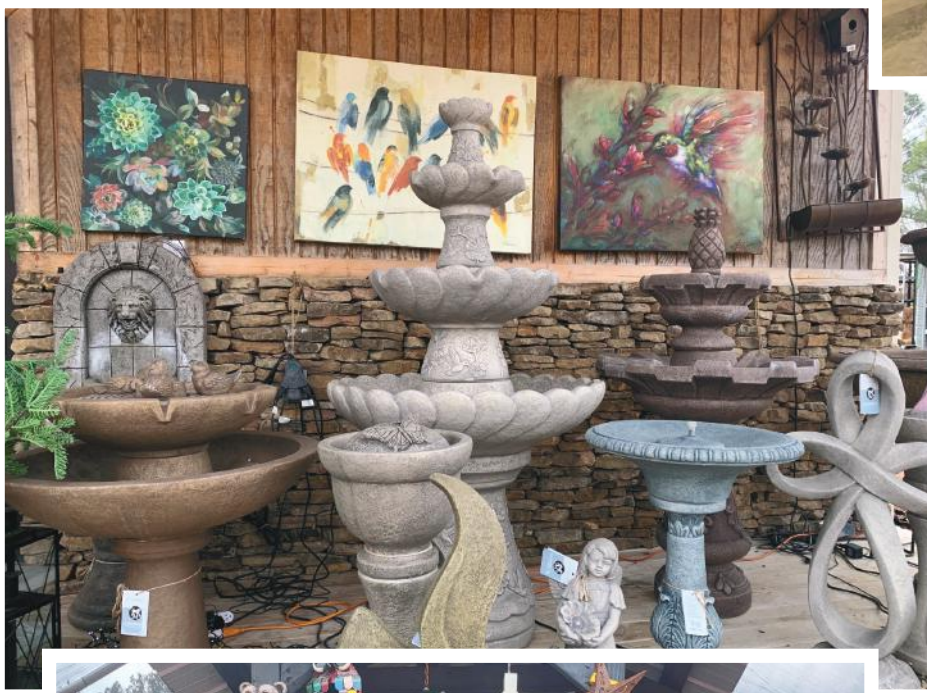
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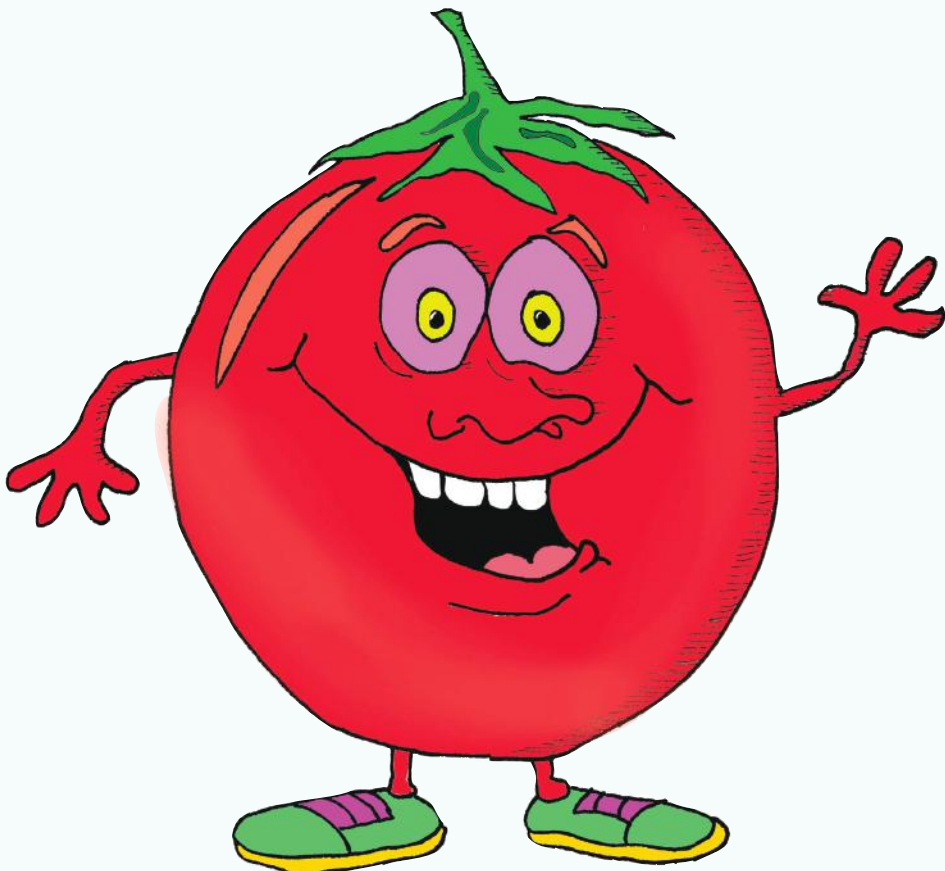
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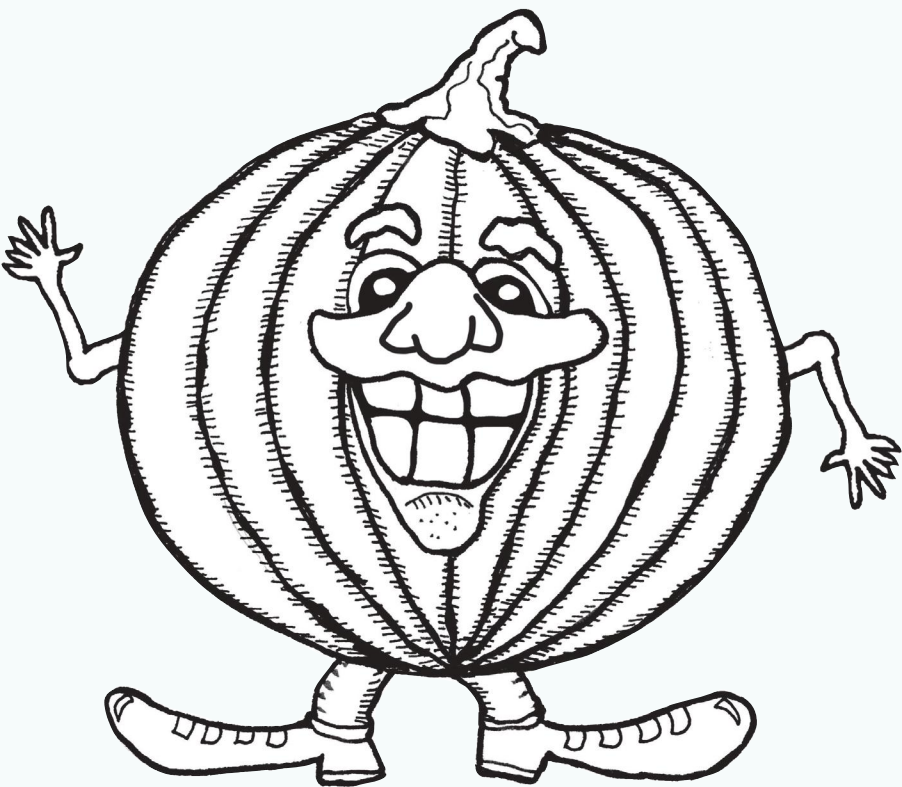
JUST WAIT AND SEED!

It is amazing what you can create with a tiny seed and some soil: food for your family, an entire vegetable garden or even one of these kooky veggie characters! Planting a seed — like those available at Downing and Sons’ garden store in Anniston — and watching how nature takes its course can be very rewarding! Interested in growing some of your own vegetables? Give one of these a try!



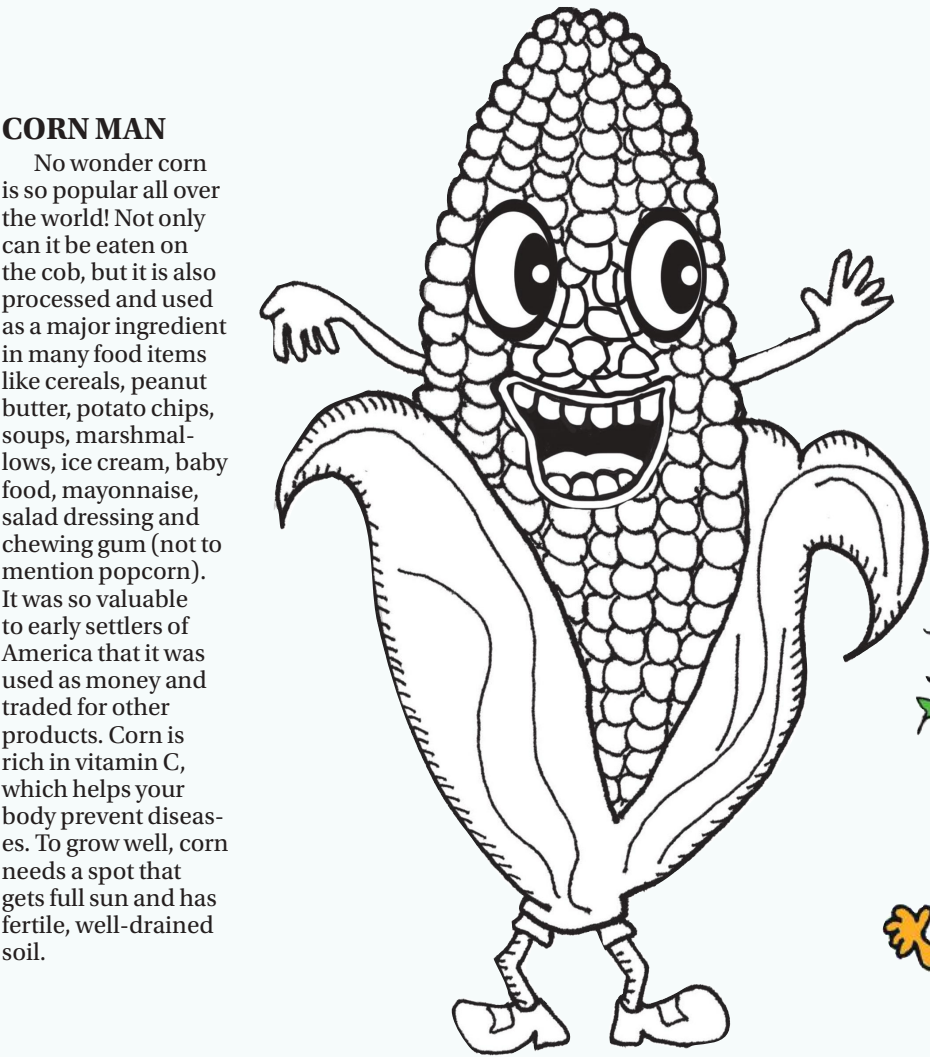
TOMMY TOMATO

Is it a fruit? Is it a vegetable? Surprise! It’s actually both. Tomatoes are fruit because of their seeds that grow on the inside, but they are treated like vegetables since they are not sweet like most other fruits. There are over 10,000 varieties of tomato in the world, and they come in all kinds of colors — green, pink, purple, yellow, black and even white! These juicy treasures are packed with vitamin C, potassium and lycopene, which is an antioxidant that helps keep your heart healthy. When planting tomatoes in the garden, they need lots of direct sunlight and plenty of space in between them to grow.



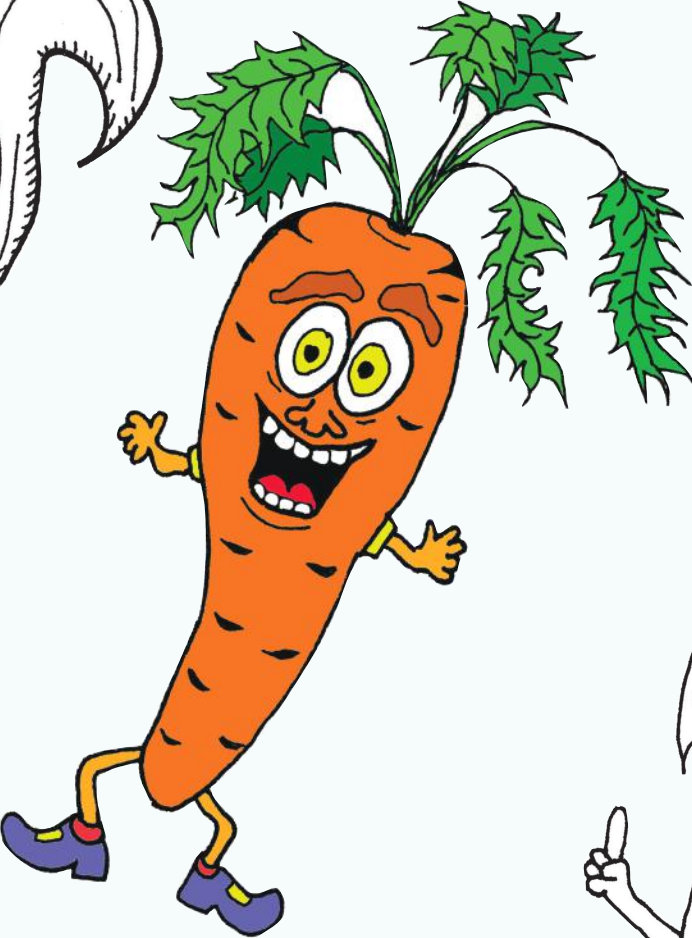
PETER PUMPKIN

They’re not just a spooky Halloween accessory or a Thanksgiving pie filling — they’re a delicious and nutritious vegetable as well. Pumpkins are a type of winter squash, and they grow on a vine. Almost every part of a pumpkin can be eaten, including the seeds. The vitamin A in pumpkin can help keep your eyesight sharp. They also contain vitamin C, iron and folate, which all help your body fight infections. Pumpkins are best planted outdoors after the cold weather is gone for the year.



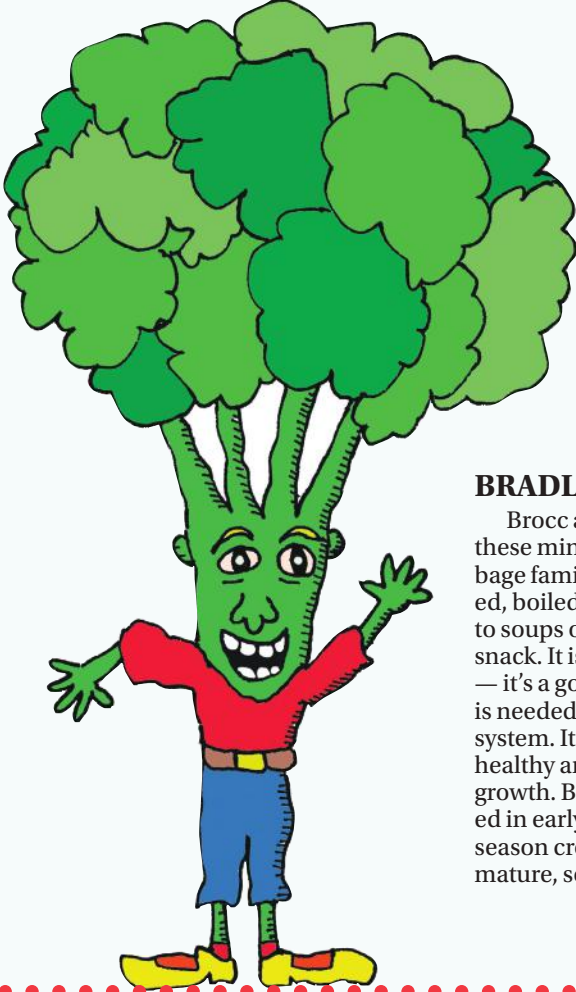
CORN MAN

No wonder corn is so popular all over the world! Not only can it be eaten on the cob, but it is also processed and used as a major ingredient in many food items like cereals, peanut butter, potato chips, soups, marshmallows, ice cream, baby food, mayonnaise, salad dressing and chewing gum (not to mention popcorn). It was so valuable to early settlers of America that it was used as money and traded for other products. Corn is rich in vitamin C, which helps your body prevent diseases. To grow well, corn needs a spot that gets full sun and has fertile, well-drained soil.



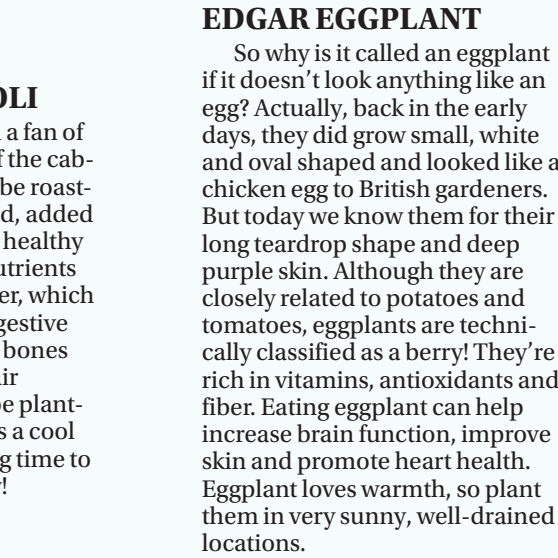
CARLEE CARROT

The Easter bunny should be visiting soon, and you might see him snacking on some of these! Carrots are a root vegetable, meaning they grow underground. They get their orange color from the beta carotene in them, which becomes vitamin A, which helps improve your eyesight. Crunching on carrots also helps clean your teeth and stimulate your gums. Growing carrots requires soft, well-drained soil and a sunny location. You can even grow carrots by planting a whole carrot in the ground!



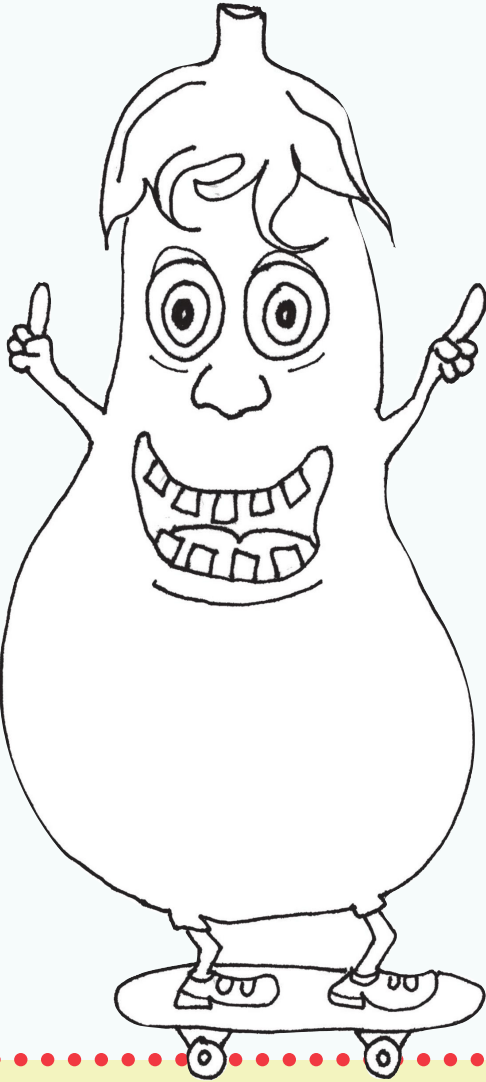
BRADLEY BROCCOLI

Brocc and roll! Are you a fan of these mini trees? A part of the cabbage family, broccoli can be roasted, boiled, steamed, baked, added to soups or eaten raw as a healthy snack. It is packed with nutrients — it’s a good source of fiber, which is needed for a healthy digestive system. It also keeps your bones healthy and helps with hair growth. Broccoli should be planted in early spring since it’s a cool season crop. It takes a long time to mature, so patience is key!



EDGAR EGGPLANT

So why is it called an eggplant if it doesn’t look anything like an egg? Actually, back in the early days, they did grow small, white and oval shaped and looked like a chicken egg to British gardeners. But today we know them for their long teardrop shape and deep purple skin. Although they are closely related to potatoes and tomatoes, eggplants are technically classified as a berry! They’re rich in vitamins, antioxidants and fiber. Eating eggplant can help increase brain function, improve skin and promote heart health. Eggplant loves warmth, so plant them in very sunny, well-drained locations.



COLORING CONTEST FOR KIDS: WIN SOME SEEDS!

Some of our veggie friends are missing their color, and they need your help getting it back! Color in the blank vegetables on this page and send it back to The Anniston Star by April 10, 2023, and you’ll have a chance to win some seeds from Downing and Sons that could help you start your own vegetable garden! Our address is 4305 McClellan Blvd, Anniston, AL 36206. Include your name, address and phone number. The winners will be chosen by the artist, Anniston Star reporter Bill Wilson, and features editor Danielle Stallworth. The winners will also have their picture featured in a future Stardust section of the newspaper.

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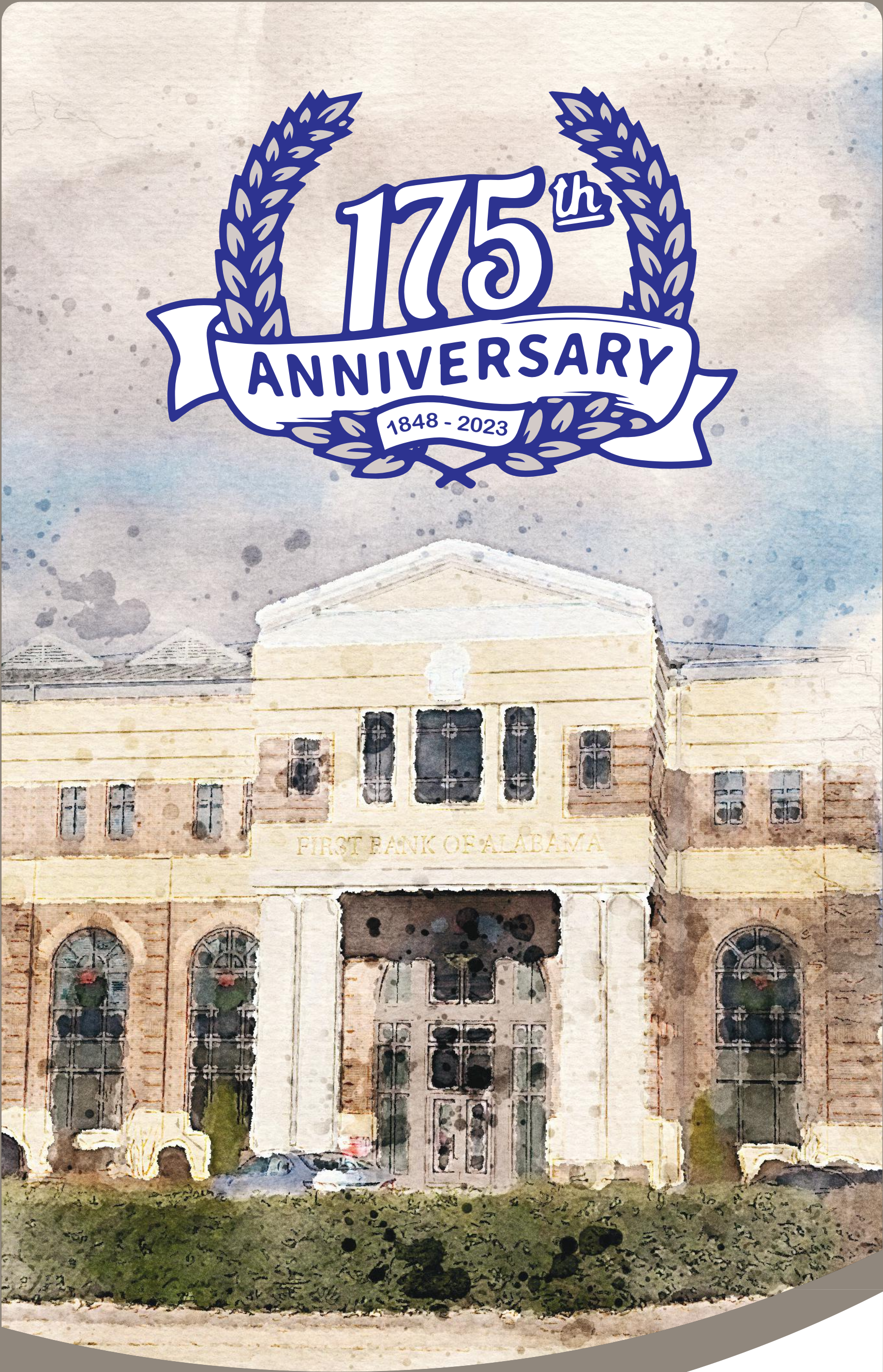
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THE SOUTHERN GARDENER

FLUTTERING FLOWERS

All about butterflies, one the garden’s most stunning visitors

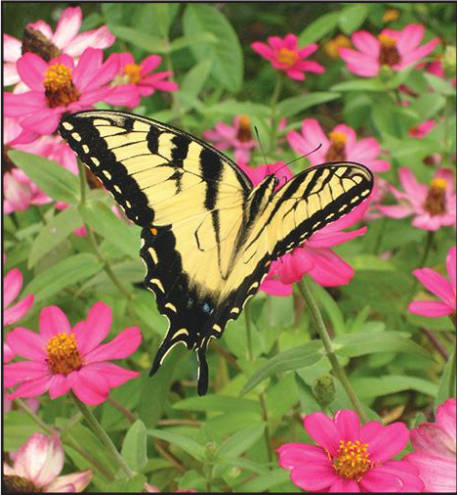
BY SHERRY BLANTON
Special to The Star

There are many stunning flowers in my garden; however, the flying flowers, the butterflies, are the most beautiful. Watching them float in the air from one blossom to another is mesmerizing. Their brightly colored wings appear so delicate, yet they can take the butterfly on long journeys as they seek nectar and warmer climes.

Occasionally, a butterfly drops from the sky and lies still in the driveway, allowing me to get close to marvel at this member of the insect family.

Fascinating facts about butterflies

- Butterflies are part of the Lepidoptera class of insects, meaning they have large scaly wings. Moths also belong to this family. The butterflies and the moths together number between 160 and 170,000. There are about 17,500 species of butterflies in the world. 750 of these are in America.
- Butterflies can be found in all sizes and colors and they span the earth.
- Butterflies do not sting or bite.
- A butterfly may live only a few days. Other species may spend the winter in a slow state called diapause, which resembles hibernation.
- Butterflies do not close their eyes to sleep as they do not have an eyelid. They become quiescent, meaning they are in a period of inactivity or dormancy. Butterflies rest hanging upside down as this requires less energy on the part of the butterfly.
- Butterfly wings are covered with scales. Their wings are clear and the color we see comes from the light reflecting off the scales. Rubbing the scales will not remove the color.
- These brilliant insects use color to protect them from predators. Since the monarch caterpillar matures on butterfly weed, which is toxic, the butterfly is toxic and tastes bad. Predators quickly learn the color and avoid butterflies, such as the viceroy, which resembles the monarch. Some butterflies use camouflage so well they are impossible to be found.
- Butterflies have four wings, although it may look like they have two.
- Butterflies use the sensors in their feet to taste as they lack taste buds.
- As they move from flower to flower, butterflies carry pollen on their feet, thus they are considered pollinators.



Photos by Sherry Blanton/Special to The Star

The life of a butterfly

Butterflies go through a complete metamorphosis, i.e. they change completely from one form to another. Knowledge of each stage of a butterfly’s cycle of life (egg, caterpillar, chrysalis, adult) is necessary for the gardener to create a landscape inviting and safe for the butterflies. There must be suitable plants to accommodate each stage.

- The cycle of life begins with an egg. The female butterfly is choosy about the host plant to lay her eggs. When the caterpillars hatch from the egg, the first thing they eat is the only thing they will eat. Some butterflies are specialists and only lay their eggs on one plant; the monarch lays eggs only on a butterfly weed. To help feed the monarch, gardeners set out many milkweed plants.
- A caterpillar is a tiny eating machine; it gets fatter, often shedding its skin during the process. When it has had enough to eat, it attaches to something sturdy in the garden — limbs, even benches — and begins to form its chrysalis. The caterpillar’s chrysalis is not the same as a moth’s cocoon. The caterpillar remains in the chrysalis around ten days to two weeks. The length depends on the species of butterfly. In the chrysalis the caterpillar goes through amazing changes and when it is time, an adult butterfly will emerge to fly.
- Recognize the butterfly caterpillars (which differentiate from harmful caterpillars) and do not disturb them. Become familiar with the plants the caterpillars eat. The adult butterfly, however, is not picky about where she gets her nectar, but some

flowers are definitely more attractive.

Make them feel at home in your garden

- Butterflies will visit your garden on a frequent basis if the conditions are right.
- The cold-blooded butterfly relies on warmth. Butterflies need temperatures between 60 and 108 degrees to fly but 82 to 100 degrees is best. If it is too cold to fly, the butterflies will find a place in the sun to warm up and spread their wings to absorb the heat. Flat stones in the sun give them a place to warm.
 - Place the butterfly garden in full sun; the plants in the garden should be tolerant of full sun conditions.
 - The adult butterfly needs shelter — from the elements as well as from predators and also as a place to rest. Add shrubs to provide shelter for the butterfly when it rains. On a rainy day they also may crawl into cracks in the building to stay dry. About the only place they will not go is into a butterfly house; they are for ornamental use only not to shelter the butterflies.
 - Adult butterflies only eat liquid food, so sources of nectar are important. They will also suck liquid out of tree sap, rotting fruit and manure.
 - Butterflies can not see tiny details, so plant flowers in masses. The blossoms also provide a good resting place during flight. Flowers with tubular parts are the favorites of the butterflies. They use their tongue, or proboscis, to suck up the nectar. They are able to unroll and roll up their proboscis when not in use. A variety of flowers with long lasting blooms is important in a but-

terfly garden. Butterflies prefer compound flowers with lots of tubular flowers (verbena, for example, as they get a good drink of nectar in one stop). Some butterflies never use nectar to survive. They visit manure piles instead.

- Butterflies are attracted to bright colors: red, pink, purple, orange, white and yellow flowers. Blue and green are last on the list. Butterflies are always on the lookout for short fragrant tubular flowers.
- Puddling is a favorite activity of a male butterfly; puddling improves his masculinity. He stops in wet places to suck the water and minerals out of the ground with his proboscis. Make puddling places for the butterflies. Fill a shallow pan with sand and keep it wet. Add manure or rotting fruit, two butterfly favorites. A group of butterflies puddling is known as a puddling club.
- Avoid the use of pesticides or herbicides on the plants and flowers in the butterfly or other gardens where the butterflies might visit.
- Include herbs in your butterfly garden. The black swallowtail caterpillar will devour parsley, dill, and fennel. Caterpillars may use the stiff stems of fennel to attach the chrysalis.

Help the butterflies by meeting their needs at each stage in their life cycle; your reward will be the presence of exquisite butterflies to charm you.

Sherry Blanton, “The Southern Gardener,” writes about gardening for The Anniston Star. Contact her at sblanton@annistonstar.com. Follow her on Facebook at Southern Gardener-Anniston Star.

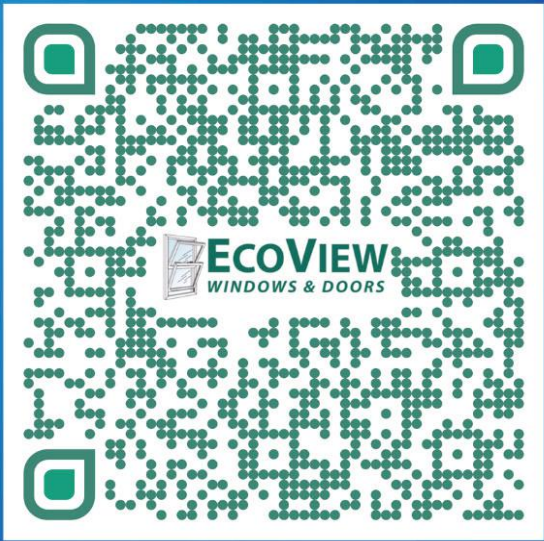


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‘TIS THE TIDYING SEASON

The history and essentials of spring cleaning

BY WHITNEY ERVIN
The Anniston Star

The air is getting warmer and the world around us is becoming less gray. Spring is in the air, and with it comes the spring cleaning ritual. We shake the winter from our bones and realize it’s time to maybe shake the dust out of our houses. Spring cleaning is such a time-honored tradition, it almost feels like instinct to at least give it a thought — even if life becomes too busy to engage in all these cleaning projects that catch our interest.

Why is it ‘spring’ cleaning?

While there’s no definitive answer as to when spring cleaning started, there are many cultures which have it integrated as an important custom. In Iran, the new year arrives on March 21. Nowruz is a rite of marking the new year. In the preceding two weeks leading up to Nowruz, Iranians have a ritual called khane tekani (shaking the house) in which they clean every inch of their homes and bring in fresh flowers. All of this is done to welcome the new year and spring, which is thought to be a season of spiritual renewal.

Spring cleaning also has roots in Judaism. Passover is a solemn holiday which marks the exodus of the Jews out of Egypt. During this exodus, Jews were only fed matzah (bread without yeast) during

their exodus. Now the bread is a symbol of the hardships they overcame. During Passover, it is considered an insult to God to have even a crumb of chametz (bread with yeast) in their house. In order to avoid accidentally insulting God, the house is cleaned very thoroughly leading into passover.

Outside of these very ritualized and important meanings for the annual spring clean, why do we clean in the spring if we don’t follow these rituals? In the United States, an estimated 10 million people suffer with Seasonal Affective Disorder according to the National Institute of Mental Health. Winter turns to spring and the SAD begins shaking off a bit. The mood lifts.

Amy Weimer, owner of Heavenly House Cleaning LLC in Anniston, surmises that the reasons are similar: reinvigoration.

“When the house is all shut up for the winter, a lot of dust accumulates,” Weimer said. “More than people even realize.”

Heavenly House Cleaning LLC offers a one time deep clean, which focuses a lot on the same issues people want to address with their spring cleaning. Weimer said during a deep clean, they focus a lot on cleaning blinds, curtains and windows, and wet wiping.

Missed a spot

Jeff and Danlyn Digby opened Digby’s

Cleaning Solutions in Oxford 11 years ago. There are a lot of things they say people often forget during spring cleaning. Among the most forgotten spots, according to Jeff, are molding, baseboards and window sills.

“Junk drawers, closets and bookshelves are the most forgotten,” Danlyn added. “You really need to take everything off the shelves and clean them.”

It’s also important if you’re going to get a true clean to clean your rugs and carpets, as well as upholstery — especially if you have a big family or pets.

Jeff also pointed out the importance of focusing on the outside of the home as well as the inside. During the wet winter months, a lot of rain and mud can accumulate on the outside of your house. He recommends pressure washing your driveways, walkways, and siding. Another important area of the house people often forget during their spring cleaning? Garages.

“While you’re getting the lawn mower ready to cut the grass again, go ahead and clean the garage out,” Jeff said.

We’re likely still looking at a rather rainy season, but that doesn’t mean you can’t get a jump start on your spring cleaning. Spring is a time of rebirth, reinvigoration and, most importantly, a time to heal from the gray solemnness of winter. There’s no better place to start than making your space feel bright and new.



TO-DO: SPRING CLEANING

Cut this handy checklist out to keep track of all your spring cleaning tasks!

- ☐ Put away winter decor
- ☐ Wash the curtains and/or blinds
- ☐ Dust the ceiling
- ☐ Clean the carpets
- ☐ Clean upholstery
- ☐ Clean windows and windowsills
- ☐ Wipe down the baseboards
- ☐ Clean the oulding
- ☐ Clear bookshelves
- ☐ Clean knick-knacks
- ☐ Dust shelves
- ☐ Clean out the junk drawer
- ☐ Clean the refrigerator
- ☐ Sweep/mop the floors
- ☐ Deep clean the bathroom(s)

BUGGING OUT

You need professional help (with your springtime pests)

BY FAITH DORN
Special to The Star

Spring has sprung! With warmer weather approaching, we sat down with Jason Grissom, operations manager at Orkin’s Oxford branch, to discuss what we can all do to avoid uninvited houseguests (the creepy crawly kind).

“Well, the best thing you can do is get pest control, right?” Grissom said, laughing.

Grissom said some pest situations may be self-inflicted, although the homeowner may not realize it.

“Some pests may be there because of what we call ‘conductive conditions.’ A customer might have American roaches, so the first thing we do is look to see if there is something environmentally that is causing that,” said Grissom.

Something that might lead to conducive conditions for roaches is firewood stacked up too close to the house or leaves that are not raked up.

“Especially if those leaves are against the foundation of your house, it becomes a breeding ground. Gutters are always an issue,” Grissom said, “Move your wood pile 30-50 feet away from the structure.”

Grissom said carpenter ants start to move this time of year. If limbs are hanging over your roof, they can drop off branches onto roof lines and get into your home.

He encourages homeowners to watch exterior doors and garage doors to make sure they are properly sealed and flush to the ground.

Rodents can fit into holes the size of a quarter, so Grissom recommends not ignoring those spots and sealing those areas up with steel wool and caulk.

“A lot of people like to use foam to try to



seal them up, but rodents can eat through that,” said Grissom.

Grissom encourages homeowners to ensure yards have good drainage.

“Mosquitoes can breed in a thimble size of water, so even bird baths can be trouble when it comes to mosquitoes,” Grissom said.

Although eliminating opportunities for harborage — like an abundance of food and water — will eliminate a lot of pest activity, Grissom cautions that nothing is guaranteed.

“Even having control of all factors, nothing is 100 percent foolproof. Insecticides are important, but if you keep conducive conditions to a minimum, you tend to have a pest free home,” said Grissom.

At times, clients can be surprised by the requests their pest control companies

make during inspections.

“Bird feeders are wildly popular, especially the ones that stand on a metal rod. Rodents will scurry up that metal pole and eat their fill, then look for a place to burrow and bed down. With a home, you have warmth and that water source, and all of a sudden, you have rodent problems you never had before,” Grissom explained. “At that point, they now have a rodent issue, and just the removal of the bird feeder won’t necessarily remove the problem.”

Grissom has encountered clients who do not want to do any behavior modification or get rid of conducive conditions, so that is where a pest control service comes in.

Grissom says that we have entered termite season. He cautions that if you see what looks like a flying ant flying around

your home, it may actually be a termite.

“Floods, fires and tornadoes combined do not do more damage to home structures per year than termites. Termites cause 5 billion dollars of damage to homes per year, and termite damage is not covered by insurance. Pest control companies offer what is called “termite bonds” to cover termite damage,” said Grissom.

Clients call their pest control company as soon as they see the swarming termites.

“Just seeing swarmers doesn’t mean you have termites or termite damage, but it means they are present. It means you should take it very seriously. Your largest and most expensive investment is under attack by a wood eating insect,” Grissom said.

Grissom’s most important piece of advice is to seek out a professional if you have any questions.

“Don’t trust Google,” he said. “Sometimes Google causes more problems. Call people who have the certifications and have been through schooling. To maintain our licenses, we have to do so many continuing education classes per year.”

He explained that sometimes pests are misidentified. Termites and flying ants look similar. Sometimes, people think they saw a brown recluse when it was a common house spider.

“Quality pest control operators can help you,” Grissom said. “When people try to do it on their own, they end up spending hundreds and hundreds of dollars, then still have to call us. Even if you don’t use us, we are still a good resource. We would love to sell pest control, but we are in the business of wanting to help people.”

Faith Dorn is a freelance writer in Anniston. Contact her at faith.h.dorn@gmail.com.



HOUSE IT GOING?

Local realtors give an update on the state of the housing market

BY FAITH DORN
Special to The Star

The state of the real estate market seems to be trending positively according to local real estate agents.

Randy Laney, an agent at Keller Williams in Anniston with over 40 years of experience, believes that the lack of inventory is the main issue in the market.

“That has probably been what has hurt us. The interest rates have gone up and appear to be high at about 6 percent now, but I have seen them at 12 percent or 14 percent,” explained Laney.

UnDrea Gladden, an agent with Sold South Realty covering Calhoun County, Etowah County, Jefferson County and all surround areas, does not want higher interest rates to dissuade potential home buyers.

“I tell my clients, ‘Let’s marry the house and date the rate,’” said Gladden. “We never really know what will happen in the market, so get locked in with a rate, and you can always refinance.”

Although the interest rates have increased, real estate agents are seeing an influx of potential home buyers interested in moving to the area from out of state.

Bryan Booth, an agent with cloud-based brokerage eXp Realty out of Oxford, believes the increase in jobs that allow remote work has allowed people to live where they want to live while keeping their job.

“I have a client who is moving to the area from Oregon. She gets to keep her Oregon-based job while getting to live here with the lower cost of living which is a big benefit to her. COVID helped prove that there are a lot of things you can do without having to be in an office every day,” Booth said.

Kayla Tinney, an agent with Really Real Estate in Oxford, believes real estate is about to enter a buyers market, but considers the current state of real estate as a sellers market.

“We had put a property out at 6 p.m. — by midnight, my clients had seven offers,”



LANEY



BOOTH



GLADDEN



TINNEY

Tinney said.

The pandemic and downturn in the economy has led to a low inventory of homes for sale, leading to the current state of the market.

“We are still well within a sellers market, and I believe much of this is due to the extreme slowdown in new construction in the decade following the 2008/2009 market crash,” Booth explained. “That decade of slow production of inventory has left us somewhere between 1 and 1.5 million homes below the necessary levels per NAR (National Association of Realtors), and I believe it will take quite some time to erase that deficit.”

Currently, realtors need quality inventory. Tinney clarified that agents need all sorts of homes in their inventory, but the homes priced around \$200,000 seem to be “flying off the shelves.”

Gladden agrees that the \$150,000 range seems to be the midpoint for homes in the current market. In Gladden’s experience, many of her clients are interested in homes with the “new construction” or “barn” look.

Tinney encourages sellers to take note of the advice their agent gives them.

“When a buyer walks in, you want the buyer to be able to walk in and picture their family here,” Tinney said. “If the house needs a fresh coat of paint, do it. Land-scape. Take down a lot of family photos. Get rid of clutter. Your agent will guide you through the process. We all give one another feedback. When your agent suggests that you might want to do this or that, it is most likely feedback from the buyer’s agent.”

Overall, the expectation from local Realtors is that the local real estate market is currently in a good place despite the decreased inventory.

“I have seen worse times, and I want to think we are on the mend,” Laney said. “I think Anniston and Calhoun County have got a lot to offer.”

Faith Dorn is a freelance writer in Anniston. Contact her at faith.h.dorn@gmail.com.

Modern Farmhouse style is still going strong

BY KAITLYN KEEGAN
Hartford Courant

Modern farmhouse style has been all the rage — in magazines, on design TV shows and in homes and all across the country.

According to a study by Ruby Home, modern farmhouse is the leading home interior style across the United States. The style is a blend of classic and contemporary and is known for its mixture of old and new.

Modern farmhouse incorporates traditional farmhouse components such as wood, metal and distressed surfaces along with clean lines, neutral colors and contemporary touches.

It is especially popular amid the pandemic because of the use of older furniture. Upcycling and thrifting for older pieces and giving them new life is very on trend right now.

According to Sharon McCormick of Sharon McCormick Designs, modern farmhouse is going strong but within reason.

Homeowners are “not decorating with every single element of the style in one room so that style becomes a caricature of itself” she said. “Like any style, it is most successful when the structure and architecture of the home are congruent with the décor. For example, a mid-century modern home doesn’t lend itself to shiplap walls.”

When modern farmhouse first came out, many homeowners rushed to buffalo check plaid and signs with sayings or farm symbols on them. However there are better ways to incorporate the style without feeling like you’re living in a barn.

“Clients who have specifically requested to have their interiors designed in modern farmhouse style are attracted to it for many reasons,” McCormick said. “It is uncluttered yet cozy. It’s traditional, but not fussy.”



Beth Nakamura /TNS

The neutral color palette in whites, beiges and grays are easy to live with, she said, as well as being calming and soothing. Materials — furniture, flooring and more — are natural and sometimes imperfect. Some of the things that make up the style include reclaimed flooring, stone, brick, granite and soapstone. They all add texture without a lot of pattern.

“The mix of vintage with more contemporary pieces is interesting and personal,” McCormick said. “Comfortable upholstered furniture pieces in casual fabrics are family-friendly.”

Function in modern farmhouse is very important.

“Function is as important as aesthetics, with storage as concealed as possible. Furniture is arranged to be conducive to socializing,” she said.

The style also inspires many environmentally-friendly homeowners.

“It’s green,’ with recycling and reusing materials and furniture,” she said. “It’s a great way to use family heirlooms.”

An offshoot of your typical modern farmhouse is industrial modern farmhouse which brings an edgier style into the mix.

“It incorporates the same elements but without the rusticity,” McCormick said. “A greater proportion of metals are used, including copper, brass, iron, stainless steel, brushed nickel and tin.”

She suggested homeowners use up to three different metals in a room so that it feels more eclectic than matchy-matchy. Metals can be used in lighting, appliances, furniture and building supplies. Metals and wood used together are particularly

appealing.

In kitchens

Copper is a popular choice for a modern farmhouse kitchen.

“Copper is a warm metal which stands out and adds personality because it’s not used as frequently as others,” McCormick said.

As for cabinets, Shaker-style is often used in modern farmhouse for its simplicity while white Shaker-style feels clean. Pair them with honed black granite countertops to impart a casualness while a shinier countertop reflects light.

While white cabinets prevail, she suggested using color for the island.

There are also other ways to incorporate something like shiplap into a kitchen. In one of her kitchens, McCormick used shiplap on the ceiling instead of the walls.

Sign usage

Signs make a frequent appearance in the modern farmhouse style. McCormick had some tips on using them thoughtfully and with purpose.

“I like to keep it to one per house, if any, to keep it from becoming a cliché. It’s best if it’s a personal sign that has meaning,” she said.

In one of her kitchens, the sign said Farmington, which was where the antique home was located.

Barn doors

Lastly, one of every homeowner’s favorite thing to do with modern farmhouse is to use barn doors. It adds that cozy, barn feel that shows off the wood and rustic style. McCormick said to be sure not to overuse barn doors.

“I like to use them where they make sense in the floor plan, not gratuitously,” she said. “Replacing a swing door with a barn door as the entry to a master bath can provide extra square footage.”

CHICKEN CRAZE

Choosing the right chickens to start your backyard flock

BY WHITNEY ERVIN
The Anniston Star

Raising backyard chickens is nothing new, especially here in Alabama. In the last three years, however, it has become an extremely popular hobby. There are many reasons people are deciding to start their own flocks — the most common being for the eggs. Not only because of the rising cost of eggs at the grocery store, but also because studies show that home-raised chicken eggs are more nutritious. They’ve been found to have less cholesterol, and a higher amount of Vitamin E and amino acids than store bought eggs. Many are also seeking a more humane source of eggs, as the inhumane treatment of laying hens in industrial farms has come to light. This ties together for one simple conclusion: happier, healthier chickens lay better eggs. Raising your own chickens allows you the control of knowing what the chickens eat and knowing they’re raised in a humane environment. In the end, it also saves you money on eggs.

For those interested in raising their own flock, getting started can be easy. Bailey O’Quinn, the manager of Pickette’s Feed and Pet Supply in Anniston, said the key is planning for the long term. A flock will require a coop and a chicken run. These can be bought pre-built from feed stores, or you can do it yourself.

There are two options for starting your flock: buying live chicks or hatching eggs. For beginners, O’Quinn recommends buying live chicks. Hatching your own eggs can be a little more difficult of a process, and you may not always get as many hatches as you hope for.

Feathery friends

For some, the interest in chickens stems from a desire for companionship. Junior “J.D.” DeForest owns Alabama Silkies located in Piedmont on Highway 21. Silkies are a downright adorable breed of chicken that has boomed in popularity since the first wave of COVID-19 in 2020. When the state began going under lockdown, DeForest had about 300 Silkies, and he sold out in six hours. Alabama

Silkies has continued to thrive since then.

“We have birds in all 50 states and in 20 countries,” DeForest said.

Silkies are not a good option if you’re looking to raise chickens for eggs. Not only are their eggs significantly smaller than your average backyard chicken, but they also don’t lay eggs all that often.

Their main appeal comes from their beautiful silkie plumage and that, according to DeForest, “they’re just the sweetest little things.”

Silkies are very social and require a lot of attention. If you’re going to have Silkies, you have to be ready for a very serious commitment. DeForest does not recommend this cute breed to someone who has never before cared for chickens. They are much higher maintenance than most other breeds. They have to be washed, and their feet have to be tended to. Furthermore, they don’t seem to have a natural fear of predators and their small size also makes them easy prey for hawks, because they can easily be carried away. So if you’re going to let them wander around free range, then be prepared to spend that time outside with them.

Silkies are very smart and can be good indoor pets as well. Some are capable of being house trained — unlike most chickens, they can actually control their bowels.

If you already have a flock of chickens, it might not be for the best to add Silkies to the mix. Their small size and friendly nature makes them an easy target for bullying from larger chickens. DeForest says this is especially an issue with more hardy breeds like Rhode Island Reds. If you are looking to have backyard layers as well as Silkies, DeForest recommends raising them at the same time so they grow up together. A gentler, calmer breed of chicken like Buff Orpingtons will usually allow the Silkies to integrate into the flock with a little work. The best method is to assist integration a little bit at a time.

Whether you’re looking for some good laying chickens or some feathered companions, the key is to plan carefully, and as DeForest says, “learn the bird.”



Photos courtesy of Alabama Silkies



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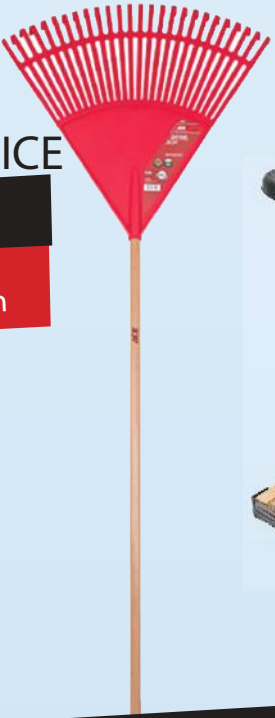
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