



LEEDS LETTER

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MAY-JUNE 2021



Transforming Concrete into a Bistro-Style Garden

by Heidi Stevens

Pure joy seems to emanate from the lush and colorful patio garden on Mulberry Street. It has become an uplifting sight for many people passing by. Roy Levya is really good at many things says his partner, Brooke. Roy's two top favorites are gardening and fishing. Roy moved to Leeds to be with Brooke and her daughter a week before last Christmas. Right away they began thinking of ideas to make the place cozy. One of the things Brooke was quick to wish for was a garden. Being the pleaser that Roy is, he began planning it out. Roy says, growing a concrete garden is not as easy as it looks, but he had some experience as he spent much of his childhood helping his parents plant vegetables and flowers in buckets on their concrete patios in Boston.

I'm sure many of you noticed very early in spring that fresh mulch had been put down near the road and a wooden raised bed was on the patio. Roy had begun construction of the raised garden at the same time he began to sow his vegetables and herbs indoors. That's when the vision of turning the area into a small space reminiscent of a cafe or bistro came to light.

Once things started to come together and plants began to thrive, Roy and Brooke decided they didn't have enough color in the garden spread so they took to some of the wonderful nurseries that surround the area and found many of the vivid colored flowers. Roy says about 70% of their garden was started from seed and the rest they obtained. They also paint terracotta pots bright colors to accent the flowers. Petunias of the deepest purple grow in a bright turquoise pot and are stunning. Roy's mom taught him how to start a pineapple plant from the top of a green pineapple. Roy's pineapple plant lives indoors in the cold months and spends warm months in the bistro garden. A garden isn't complete without bees, so near the garden is a small wall hive of forager bees. Inside their home, Brooke grows a variety of succulents on the window ledge. So far the garden has been an absolute pleasure for them. Not only is Brooke happy with the space, it seems like the community is, too! They get about half a dozen people or more everyday who compliment and smile at it while passing. Roy says, it's a great feeling to make people smile.

Roy lived and worked making fishing videos in Florida before the pandemic hit. Unfortunately, he was laid off and so made his way back to MA to be with Brooke. He loves it here in Leeds and says the people are great and have been so welcoming. Being a professional fisherman he is thrilled to have the Mill River as a backyard. One of the things Roy and Brooke loved doing this spring after attending the garden was throwing on their waders and heading out back to the river and catching many of the stocked and holdover trout. He says, it's always the perfect way to cap off their days.

Roy is a 4 time Massachusetts angler of the year and multiple world record holder over the years. He has worked in the fishing industry for over 30 years helping companies like Shimano develop products. He's also traveled the country doing seminars and casting demos and currently has caught over 500 different species of fish in US waters! Like Brooke says, Roy is really good at a lot of things! One thing he's certainly good at is making the most of each day and making people smile!

To get a smile on your face and a sense of calm, I suggest you check out Roy's fishing videos. This one is beautifully produced and narrated. It's another glimpse into Roy's positive outlook on life. Here's the link.

<https://fb.watch/6pkEHA-IDh/>

Follow Roy on Instagram @offthehookfishing.



Top: potted plants help define the patio edge, Bottom left: raised bed with tomatoes, herbs and flowers, Bottom right: concrete gardener and expert fisherman, Roy Levya takes a break after pulling bittersweet and other weeds from the bank along the bike path.



Back in Time - by Ester Day

New folks in Leeds may not realize that the fruit and garden store at the corner of Florence St. and Rt. 9 is called Clementine's, opened all year and owned by John and Carol. In 1980-81, the building was purchased by John who is a third generation farmer

with a wholesale produce business. Carol, a retired nurse loved working in the store right from the beginning. Prior to it being Clementine's it was an Italian Restaurant called Portofino's. A fire in the upstairs apartment put an end to that business. Before Portofino's it was an ice cream shop called Crystal Springs. Some of us might better remember the other Crystal Springs in Belchertown where Rte 9 and 202 intersect. (There was a distinct cow head with horns adorning the sign.) Anyways, the two Crystal Springs closed, but the Leeds one closed much sooner. Before Crystal Springs resided in the building at the bottom of the hill, it was another restaurant... We know the answer but do you? And while we're at it Look Restaurant's prior name was... what?



Hotel Bridge Admirer - by Heidi Stevens

Tom Martin, a watercolorist from Westhampton first noticed the Hotel Bridge when visiting friends on Main Street. He was fascinated by the notion that his "Rivers Guy" friend lives along this important and historic confluence of the Mill River and near the iron bridge. Tom thought it might be fun to paint the structure and returned in the spring. Tom's painting was made in two sessions: a drawing session and a color session. This is a traditional way of working in watercolor, a medium that does not facilitate editing of the image. Tom says, "Working there next to the falls (after a day of heavy rain) was intense as one can feel beneath the feet the vibrations of the water forcing over the dam and making its way downstream. A little like standing next to train tracks as a train passes by but it is continuous. The great force of nature that is humbling."

Tom is yet another fan of the Hotel Bridge who looks forward to it being restored to a bicycle and pedestrian bridge.

Saratoga Race Track and Casino Trip - Friday, July 30, 2021

Jim Mias has coordinated this popular all day event once again. The trip includes a comfortable air conditioned round trip bus ride, admission to track grounds and bus driver tip. The cost is \$50. To reserve a seat, and for more details on what to pack and other information call Jim Mias at 584-1623 or flag him down if you see him on his bike!

Departs: JFK Middle School at 7:00 a.m.

Arrive at Casino: 9:30. Stay at casino until 11:30

Arrive at race track: 11:45 a.m. / Depart race track: 5:30 p.m.

Home and in bed: 9:00 p.m.

2021 Bradford Scholarship Awarded

Each year scholarship applications are available to high school seniors from Northampton, Florence and Leeds who plan to continue their education. The winners of the LCA Bradford Memorial Scholarship are Shea Crowther, Cyril Rees-Burton and Sonham Salsedo. Congratulations!

Green Tip - Gift Giving - by Amy Stamm

Birthdays and holidays for which it's customary to give gifts present a great opportunity to think sustainably. Instead of adding to the consumer stream, you can give zero-waste or sustainable gifts, such as garden plants

or houseplants, homemade food or gift certificates to local restaurants, massages, local-artisan-made pottery, soaps, farmers' market teas or other products, a picnic, a donation to a local nonprofit in your gift recipient's name, a bike tune-up, something that you sew or make, or some other sustainable idea you come up with. For example, you could give a couple hours of your time to help a friend clean up an office or weed their garden. Another sustainable and beneficial gift idea is to make a donation to a local nonprofit organization in your friend or family member's name. That's a gift that keeps on giving!

New Mill River Greenway-Leeds

In mid-June the City took ownership of the "Owner Unknown" property and it is now officially part of the Mill River Greenway-Leeds. The parcel abuts existing conservation land on its northern border at the confluence of Beaver Brook. Chartpak property abuts it's southern border. Leeds Civic Association holds the Conservation Restriction and will help steward the area. It has been a popular spot that has been abused and over used for many summers. The LCA has partnered with Friends of Northampton Trails (FNG) and the Inclusive Group (IG) to remove trash during the summer as the carry in-carry out policy takes hold. We understand getting people to assume personal responsibility for their own trash might take some time. The LCA, FNT and IG volunteers have been rotating every third weekend to clean up the conservation area and bike path. Collected trash is being picked up and hauled away by the Planning Department.

The LCA posted temporary carry in-carry out signs in English and Spanish on-site and on the bike path. The Planning Department and LCA are working on permanent on-site signage listing rules such as: no alcohol, fires, glass, camping, loud noise, and carry in-carry out. The Planning Dept hired a UMass work-study student to be a part-time river ranger and help educate users about the conservation rules. The Connecticut River Conservancy has begun weekly water testing for eColi. The LCA and friends will continue to advocate to make this area a safe place where people can enjoy the river while respecting the ecosystem and not disturbing the surrounding community. The City's support and engagement is much needed for it to be a success.

Councilor's Corner - A note from Rachel Maiore, City Councilor, Ward 7

Hello Fellow Leedsians!

You may have noticed the temporary 'no parking' signs from last year are back on Grove Avenue, Front Street, Florence Street and Main Street in Leeds. More permanent signage is on its way. Last month City Council voted to make these restrictions permanent, based on safety assessments by Director LaScaleia of the DPW. Director La Scaleia had suggested the restrictions be seasonal as well, since her safety concerns centered mainly on the increased pedestrian and vehicular traffic in the summer months. Many Councilors had concerns about setting a precedent for Northampton to allow seasonal and permit parking, as they are seen as potentially inequitably restrictive on the public's use of what are public ways. I hold these concerns -and also want to acknowledge that, on a practical level, the parking restrictions, especially existing all year round, disproportionately impact those who rely on on-street parking; visitors and residents alike, in particular many renters.

In response to feedback from some residents on Main Street, Councilor Jarrett and I have asked Director La Scaleia to reassess the sidewalk side of Main Street to see if there may be places where the street is wide enough to safely add a few parking spaces. For the same reason Director LaScaleia and I agreed that, though it was a tough decision, it was better to maintain parking on the riverside of Main Street because there are approximately 10 more parking spaces on that side. We felt maximizing available parking was paramount for residents, as well as visitors.

Acknowledging the burdens the new parking restrictions bring, I encourage folks to reach out with any feedback to me at rmaiore@northamptonma.gov, 'cc'ing DPW Director and Transportation and Parking Chair Donna LaScaleia, dlascaleia@northamptonma.gov.

On a non-car note; ValleyBike, the regional electric-assist bike share program is coming to Leeds Village! Soon ValleyBike will be placing a bike station on Main Street near Mulberry Street intersection for quick access to the bike path. You can learn more about the program and their free equity passes at <https://valleybike.org>.

Wishing you well,

Rachel

The LCA hopes you all have a safe and fun summer!