

Spring

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Greater New York Orchid Society, Fischer and co-workers are readying some of their blooms for the society's late-April international show at Rockefeller Center. Among the displays could be a white-blossomed cattleya orchid named the "Brian Fischer."

"After you've successfully cross-bred two (flowers) to create another, you have the right to name it," Fischer says. "But never after yourself. I have a dear friend in Florida, Joe Grezaffi, who named two plants after me. It's an honor."

Orchids might signal passion, romance, mystery, but for Fischer they register something even more central to spring: hope.

"We used to have the orchid show downtown at the World Financial Center, on the bridge to the World Trade Center," he says. "After 9/11, the building was choked with dirt and debris. The plant manager's office had been closed and locked up for four months. He finally went back in, and there were four inches of dirt on his desk. Right in the middle of that, no water and no light for four months, a dendrobium orchid was blooming."

Back out on the avenues, change sweeps the cityscape almost moment-to-moment, like paint from a brush. From Haledon down into Paterson, flowering trees planted and tended by city crews fairly burst with blossoms. Among trees lining the Passaic River and the rocky heights cut through by freeways, a haze of light green appears, soon to deepen into full-blown summer.

At Totowa Bait and Tackle Shop, on Albion Avenue in Paterson, owner Thomas Daunno Jr. and co-workers Antonio Gomez and Gloria Williams might as well prop open the front door, rain or not. Customers swarm like, well, tied flies, going for meal worms, butter worms, blood worms writhing in earth, going for fatheads and minnows and shiners feathering in tanks in the back, going for line and lures and rods and reels.

"Spring comes, it's fishing time," Gomez says. He greets customers with cheerful energy, the kind he applies to his own angling in national contests and to helping with local children's fishing events, including Paterson's and West Paterson's contests coming up on May 20. "Just to see those beautiful blossoms, see nature, relax after a hard day of work, a hard day of school, it's beautiful."

William Ghant has driven in from Teaneck with his daughters, Whitney and Raven, to plunk down \$33 for a fishing license and trout stamp and pick up some number 10 Eagle Claw hooks. The Ghants will head up to Barbour's Pond at Garret Mountain for a shot at brown and rainbow trout, newly restocked by the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife.

"I've been coming here for years," Ghant says. "I told the girls it was going to rain, and they said, 'So?' They still wanted to go fishing, see the birds, see the deer, get out there on the water."

A few minutes later, Jack Masaro stops in for a bushel of clams and a reel, heading out to Liberty State Park and later to Raritan Bay for saltwater fishing. "My father taught me how to fish with a bamboo pole when I was 3 years old," he says. "Now I have two boats and everything in tackle known to man. This place is five minutes from my house, and they got everything."

In his day job, Daunno runs a security company. The bait and tackle business had belonged to his late father, Thomas Daunno Sr., and the son couldn't bear to part with it. "We're probably the only store in North Jersey that opens at 4 in the morning on weekends," he says, "so the saltwater guys can get their bait and be fishing before they open down at Sandy Hook or some other place on the Shore."

He has known Gloria Williams since she showed up at 14, eager to learn how to fish; she lives, now, in the apartment above and runs the place most days. "She's like family, like my sister," he says, and adds that fishing is a family thing. He tells parents, especially single mothers, to consider fishing as a better alternative to higher-priced entertainments. "The best part," he says, "is that you really get to spend time together."

As they return to their vehicles, customers pass a tulip tree next-door, its pink-and-white petals drifting down, shed like a formal gown after a fleeting cotillion. The season might seem brief; for some, though, spring starts earlier and lasts longer.

Down Black Oak Ridge Road in Wayne, vehicles wheel into Farms View Roadstand and unload passengers among tables of flowers and produce, their gazes drawn to fields beyond. Here, preparations for spring started in October, when the first greenhouse bulbs were planted.

Todd Kuehm has been up since before dawn, as usual, the way his parents and grandparents and great-grandparents were on this



Photos by ELIZABETH LARA/Herald News

A miniature donkey is one of several animals roaming at the Farms View Roadside in Wayne.

same land, and he is out with his workers at the moment in a nearby field that the rain has softened to mud. Hoping to plant corn in drier soil, they are busy in other parts of the farm's 32 acres, clearing and hauling brush and working in cold-frame greenhouses. From nearby pens a rooster crows, then a donkey brays.

Dark skies have lowered. A farm family, Todd says, might easily feel beleaguered. When his great-grandfather, George Kuehm, founded their operation in 1896, other farms covered the surrounding hills, including a branch of Sheffield Farms Dairy, one of the biggest milk-producers in America. Now the hills are covered in housing and roadways, and some people living there seem to regard agriculture as alien.

At the family's other farm, in Montville, local officials are trying to seize some of Kuehm's land and have forbidden him from digging a well, despite support from the state agricultural board and his assurances that it would not endanger local water supplies. "I've spent over \$45,000 in legal fees," he says. Later in the week he would learn that a judge had ruled against him.

He's working hard to attract a full-time farm manager, too, in an area where housing prices climb through the high six-figures. Much of the other help is homegrown. His father, George, and mother, Irene, still work with them. His sister, Dana, works there, too, and so does his wife, Joan, of whom he says, "She raises three kids, takes them to school, takes them to sports, plus taking care of me. I don't make it without my family."

If none of the next generation lingers on the land, Todd Kuehm says he is standing at that moment on his and Joan's retirement. But if one of the young people working around him — his sons, Jayson and Travis, daughter Shannon, and nephews Alec and Adam — decide to stay, he'll be happy.

"I get up every day without an alarm clock, with a smile on my face," he says. He invests much of his energy into the farm's carefully tended produce: radishes, scallions, arugula, spinach, cauliflower and broccoli, dill and basil and coriander, plum and cherry and orange tomatoes, beans, cucumbers, raspberries, blackberries, strawberries, pumpkins and squash, and dozens of other crops. The family once sold them from a farm stand up on the highway; they expanded in 1997 to a spacious sales and display structure down below.

A worker calls from a field, and Kuehm says he'll be right there. "Cinco minutos. No mas," he says. Talk of the government identifying and screening Hispanic workers worries him, as does increasing pressure on land, especially with the recent set-aside of 145,000 acres of the New Jersey Highlands as development-free to protect water supplies. Restricting the Highlands might improve water, but it also puts pressure on remaining land. Every week, Kuehm says, some developer stops by to wave big money in his face, and he always turns it down. "I have no regrets," he says. "I love what I do. I like being here every day. When you grow up on a farm you have a 32-acre play yard. Then you figure out how to make money on it."

There and far beyond, cabin fever has deferred to spring fever. Pollen invades, sowing sneezes, but much of the fever is more spiritual.

Some of the spirit descends, literally, on Lorrimer Sanctuary, on Ewing Avenue in Franklin Lakes. Birds might seem at home anywhere, flocking to backyard feeders, wheeling over parking lots and waste bins, pecking the ground in pocket parks. Here, though, they and other visitors find a haven.

Patrick Scheuer, the sanctuary's naturalist, came in from eastern Pennsylvania. He grew up, he says, on a farm, arriving here from a post

on the 130,000-acre Delaware Watergap National Recreation Area straddling New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Lorrimer's 14 acres and its buildings, one a spacious colonial home dating in part to 1775, came to the New Jersey Audubon Society in 1955 as a gift from the mother of Lucine L. Lorrimer, who tended formal gardens and raised apples and goats and trophy hunting dogs on the property, and who died of cancer at age 36.

Along its trails and in its gardens and display center, touring schoolchildren and other visitors, Scheuer says, can find the kind of adventure and solace the Lorrimers found there.

"Original nature is almost impossible to find here in urban

New Jersey," he says. "We're promoting this secondary growth forest, and parts of the property are landscaped with wildlife in mind — the hedgerows, the butterfly and hummingbird garden here. Every morning you come out and there's a new flower in bloom, or you'll hear a new bird returning from the south. We're right on the Atlantic Coast flyway, and the state also has about 250 nesting species.

"See that?" he says. No. "Look closer." Against the foliage and mostly hidden in shadow, he has spied a downy woodpecker. At the next feeder, a black-capped chickadee touches down, and in a small marsh spring peepers — tiny frogs — produce a shrill chorus. Beyond a fence near the sanctuary's northern edge, two wood boxes nestle in the grass, and a sharp-eyed bystander can see something spilling from the lids: bees. Their sting is mild, Scheuer, their beekeeper, says. And

SPRING ACTIVITIES

■ **West Paterson Recreation Department's Annual Fishing Contest**, May 20, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Zaccaria Park, Rifle Camp Road. For more information, call (973) 345-8100.

■ **City of Paterson Fishing Contest**, May 20, pre-registration starts at 9 a.m., contest at 11 a.m., Barbour's Pond, Garret Mountain Reservation, open to children ages 5-13. Contact program coordinator Lucy "Cookie" Lowery at the Division of Recreation, (973) 321-1313.

■ **Lorrimer Sanctuary**, open Wednesday through Friday, 9-5, Saturday 10-5, Sunday 1-5, 790 Ewing Ave., Franklin Lakes. Call (201) 891-2185.

besides pollinating plants, the bees surrender honey.

Just inside the front door of the sanctuary's visitor center, co-worker Janell Bevan appears with a handful of fliers listing upcoming activities, and she smiles brightly. "We just got engaged — did he tell you?" she says, and Patrick smiles. They plan for a wedding in August 2007. "The warm weather," she says, "just makes you feel good all over." Fill a feeder, bait a hook, hoe a garden; out under open sky, Scheuer says, in the woods, on the water, spring can bring the winter-weary and over-extended back in touch with themselves, in touch with each other. The mere memory of it can sustain a person, he says, through heat and cold to come.

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Bend: Farewell to a friend of cities

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with their lust for power, money and aggrandizement, she taught. Get rid of zoning that imposes boring uniformity.

For this she'll be remembered as the First Lady of the Neighborhoods.

Her book came out in 1961. The next year Rachel Carson published "The Silent Spring," and in 1963 Betty Friedan published "The Feminine Mystique." Jacobs, Carson and Friedan formed a kind of spontaneous troika that announced to the world that women had arrived on America's cultural scene for good.

People called Jane Jacobs an urbanologist, a public intellectual — and many other things not so complimentary. It was hard to categorize her, because she didn't have a title or credentials. She never finished college. She didn't have an ideology. She said ideologies are blinders people use to reject ideas that don't fit into their belief systems.

A lot of professional planners and policy heavyweights put down Jacobs as a rank amateur. How could someone whose ideas about cities came mainly from looking out the window of her second-floor apartment over a candy store be taken seriously?

She lived by the dictum "The pen is mightier than the sword" and "In the beginning, was the word." Her ideas about cities took shape through participating in democracy, which meant acting on public issues and policies that affected her life, attending meetings, speaking out, organizing to resist bad development plans and to save livable neighborhoods.

She would have opposed Paterson's Center City redevelopment project, the Meadowlands' megamall Xanadu and the Highland Cross plan to build 3,000 new condo units in Rutherford, as examples of creating lifeless new

zones of consumption and sprawl. She would have loved Passaic's spontaneous and jumbled downtown commercial re-

vival and the bustling immigrant energy of South Paterson. "Designing a dream city is easy," she wrote. "Rebuilding a living one takes imagination."

Jacobs' story leaves behind an important message: When things are going wrong in urban planning, in the life of a city, or a country, it takes someone completely outside the realm of professionals and experts to stand up and tell the emperor he has no clothes. Great innovations rarely come from within specialized fields. Important ideas almost always come from outside the mainstream.

For me, Jane Jacobs was a kind of philosopher and prophetess of the streets, who thought deeply about life in American cities, drew conclusions from her own observations, shared her ideas like a great teacher and acted on her beliefs like a good citizen. She once told an interviewer, "Never underestimate the power of a city to regenerate."

You can read about Jane Jacobs online at Wikipedia.com, and her books are available at public libraries. If you are a high school or college student and live in a city or have an interest in cities, I urge you to find her. She will open your mind.

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Jane Jacobs