

# The Piermont Newsletter

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## Piermont's Underwater Rescue Team Is Largely Self-Supporting

Piermont's Underwater Rescue and Recovery Team may get fewer calls this spring about people jumping from the Tappan Zee Bridge. That's because the Thruway Authority is finally installing barrier fencing and "life is worth living" signs. The hard-to-find rescue telephones didn't stop the six jumpers last year. All but one perished.

Perhaps a sign that says, "When you jump, you put the lives of our emergency responders at great risk when they search for your body," would have saved more lives. It also might have kept the brave members of our team safely at home more often.

Piermont's Independent Budget Committee recently looked into how much the Underwater Rescue and Recovery Team – it's a part of our fire department -- costs the village. It also wanted to know why Grand View and the Nyack river villages don't have similar water rescue services. Outside payments, it learned, cover the cost of the non-Piermont calls. State grants paid for the team's boats and other equipment.

Dan Goswick, a senior member of the team, reminded the committee that Grand View pays our village more than \$47,000 a year for emergency services, including fire, ambulance and water rescue. Each time the team answers a TZ Bridge call and completes the required cumbersome paperwork and documentation, the Thruway awards it \$250.

And why are we the only village that offers underwater rescue?

"Because we provide it," is the plain explanation Dan Goswick offers. There are other boats available without trained divers. The Thruway Authority has workboats under the span in Grand View. It sends them out in an emergency. Nyack has a rescue boat but it doesn't have the trained people and equipment to get the in-water job done

Piermont will soon be building a boathouse/ramp near the end of the pier to house the team's rescue boat and Zodiac (inflatable) – the craft used for winter operations. A New York State grant of \$125,000 will cover the entire cost.

Rescue and body recovery is only a part, albeit a big one, of the work the rescue team does. They have responded to man overboard calls, fires on boats, sinking watercraft, small craft endangered by strong tides, people lost in the marsh and people falling through ice. When someone is injured along the Palisades ridge and requires water evacuation, police call the Piermont team.

It makes sense for a riverfront community with hundreds of folks boating out of its marinas to provide this service, said Mark Blomquist, another team member. We are part of a countywide system of mutual aid for fire and rescue programs, he explains. It can send Piermont divers as far north as Haverstraw and as far south as the George Washington Bridge.

Piermont's Underwater Rescue and Dive team program



Members of Piermont's Underwater Rescue and Recovery Team help an injured woman from their boat onto the pier. The incident took place several years ago. Team members in the picture are (from left) Dan Goswick, Nick Gatti, Jr., Mark Bloomquist and Scott Silva. Bob Samuels photo

began in 1956, after a village child drowned in the river and the body was never recovered.

There are 15 people on today's team with 10 active divers, headed up by lieutenants Scott Silver and Nate Mitchell. The team trains once a week in the river or the South Orangetown School District's pool. To become a certified diver for this program, you must pass a written exam and have in-river training.

Diver Mark Blomquist, who also is a village trustee, says that people with diving experience in the sparkling waters of the Caribbean in the Florida Keys, find their first Hudson submersion, a dark, dangerous reality. "You can't see your hand on the glass of your mask," he said "All of our divers are tethered to their own dedicated tender at all times—the current, blackness and treacherous, unpredictable bottom conditions make this work extremely dangerous and slow-going."

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# President's Corner



It was a long, tough winter, but the weather has finally warmed. Our pier is crowded with people enjoying the sunshine. On weekends especially, there's an eclectic mix of walkers (many with dogs), joggers, toddlers, bikers, folks in wheelchairs, skaters, benchwarmers and anglers.

Unfortunately, they all must compete for space with cars, pickup trucks and motorcycles -- many ignoring the 15-mile-an-hour speed limit. Some drivers look upset when they have to slow for pedestrians. They don't seem to understand that they are driving in a park.

Meanwhile, in New York City's Central Park, crowds of people are enjoying themselves in similar ways but with one enormous difference -- there are no motor vehicles. That's right; on the weekends and evenings, the Big Apple bans them from its major parks. So, if New York City can do it, why can't Piermont?

It's not as if the Village Board never closes the pier to traffic. It does it without much discussion at least once a

summer when our Fire Department holds one of its fundraising events at the ball field. The pier, always a delight, is at its absolute best on those rare days. No one has to inhale exhaust fumes or worry about being run over.

Piermonters have asked the Board to close the pier permanently to traffic, or at least on warm weather weekends. The Board has always refused, explaining that seniors and people with disabilities would find it impossible to go out there if they couldn't drive. That doesn't seem to hamper anyone in the city. Many seniors and disabled people use Central Park. They manage to get there without cars.

At the very least, the Board could try closing the pier to traffic one or two weekends this summer. I think it would be a wildly popular experiment. If an entire weekend seems too much, why not close it just on Saturdays or Sundays as a test.

It is doubtful that this column alone will produce a new policy. To do that, we need to have a steady stream of res-

idents asking the Board for the change. That's wonderfully easy to do in Piermont. They usually hold Board meetings 7:30 pm on the first and third Tuesdays of the month on the second floor of the Village Hall. Public comment is always the first item on the agenda. It's the best time to ask them to stop traffic on the pier. If you want that to happen, do it soon!

~Bob Samuels

## Nyack Group Honors A Piermonter Again

Piermonter Usha Wright was one of five women honored by the Nyack Center as part of Women's History Month. Wright is President and Chairman of The Society for Hospital and Resources Exchange (S.H.A.R.E.). It's a not-for-profit group of doctors, nurses, paramedics, business, and lay people who volunteer to help children and communities in Kenya, Africa. Last year, the Nyack Center recognized Piermont's Joan Gussow.

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## Mo Siegel, Piermont's Marathon Swimmer

It takes a lot of stamina to keep up with Mo Siegel.

At the age of 59, the Piermont resident is an accomplished long-distance swimmer. His free-style stroke has taken him across the English Channel twice. He has completed four 28.5-mile marathons around Manhattan Island.

Last October, Mo did a 17-mile swim from Battery Park to Sandy Hook. The open water competition took place in choppy seas through New York Harbor, past Coney Island and down to New Jersey. The water temperature was 56 degrees. Ten swimmers competed. Mo, the oldest, finished the course in 6 hours and 15 minutes. He had to complete most of the journey on his own. Due to the rough conditions, his kayaker dropped out of the race after two hours, leaving Siegel to navigate the challenging waters. Despite this setback, he finished the race excited but exhausted.

Mo and his family have lived in Piermont for nine years. His wife, Tricia, is "a happy housewife." Their daughter, Simone, is in her third year at an arts college in New York. To her father's delight, she rode on the boat alongside him during last August's English Channel swim.

The Siegel's house borders Sparkill Creek. Theoretically, Mo could walk out his back door, cross his lawn, dive into the Creek, and swim to the Hudson and on into the oceans of the world. Only a small dam stands in his way.

When Mo is not swimming, he's the President and co-CEO of Ice Air, a heating and air conditioning manufacturer in Mount Vernon, NY.

He started marathon swimming in the mid '90s. Constantly in training, he's out at 5 am, heading to a pool five or six days a week.

Mo became interested in swimming long distances at Coney Island when he was a boy. His grandmother inspired him. "She'd swim out until she was a speck," Mo said, "The life guards paddled out to see if she was alright. 'Don't worry about me,' she told them. 'Worry about someone who can't swim,'" Mo recalled.

Marathon swimming is a lonely pursuit. "You're pretty much by yourself," Mo said. He is accompanied by a kayak or powerboat, but he's not allowed to hang on and rest. Treading water alongside, Mo can drink high carb drinks and eat bites of peanut butter and banana sandwiches.

An important role of the trail boat is to keep a swimmer directed toward his destination. There are no lanes, no lines, and no walls in open water. It's very difficult to see a land-



*Piermonter Mo Siegel (in water) swims across the English Channel.*

mark through wet goggles, swimming freestyle with one's head half under water.

The marathons can be in water as chilly as 52 degrees. He doesn't wear a wet suit—only a skimpy Speedo, a cap and goggles. Putting grease on his body can add a little insulation. A couple of years ago during a race, Mo realized he had hypothermia and pulled himself onto the trail boat. "I was shivering for 45 minutes," he said.

Mo completed his swim around Manhattan Island in nine hours and three minutes. His steady freestyle stroke gave him an average speed of 3.16 miles an hour --- about the speed an average person walks on land.

What does he think about during the long, lonely hours of a swim? "Just about anything and everything," he said. What inspires him to plod on when he's exhausted? "The sight of land."

Mo's extended resume includes a Lake Zurich Marathon Swim and 11 Great Chesapeake Bay Swims.

His next race will be the 24-Mile Tampa Bay Marathon on April 23. At least the waters off Florida won't be so chilly.

~Fred Burrell

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# Tallman Pool Closed For Second Year, But Park Stays Open



The desolate looking Tallman Mountain Park pool will not open this summer. Ron Derven photo

For the second summer in a row, they won't be opening Tallman Mountain State Park's swimming pool.

"There are two problems with the pool," said Palisades Park Commission Executive Director Jim Hall, explaining the reasons for the bad news, "It needs work because it is an old swimming pool and quickly develops cracks and the cost to run that pool exceeds the revenue we can generate from it.

"Other than the pool, the park's other amenities will be available for everyone," he quickly added. "Our funding from last year to this year remains flat. That is actually good news, given the fact that over the past few years we have lost 20 percent of our staff in this region." As of press time, the New York State had not finalized its budget.

Where's the next best state facility for Piermont residents to swim? The closest, according to Hall, are Rockland Lake State Park and Hi-Tor State Park. "At this point," he said, "Hi-Tor will definitely be open for swimming. The Rockland Lake pool probably will be open. The problem is that the facility also has pool issues. We are trying to get them fixed before the start of the season."

Piermont residents who are unfamiliar with Tallman will find a dramatic 706-acre park overlooking the Hudson. Its other facilities include tennis and basketball courts, an athletic field, picnic areas, bicycle paths, and hiking trails. Bordering Tallman is the 1000-acre Piermont Marsh, one of four coastal wetlands making up the Hudson River Reserve, a component of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System.

The park owes its existence to a group of visionaries who seized it from quarrying interests to prevent the destruction of the Palisades formation in this area, according to the Park Commission's website. The Commission battled determined resistance from quarry operators who stood to lose money. In 1928, after the owner turned down an offer from the visionaries to buy the land, the Commission condemned a 164-acre site of a nearly completed quarry plant. The ensuing litigation, which lasted 10 years, upheld the constitutionality of the condemnation.

In 1933, thanks to labor provided by the Temporary Emergency Relief Administration, the Park Commission was able to transform the former quarry site into a popular recreation center—the area of the park where the swimming pool, picnic areas, and facilities for field and court games are located.

Tallman's popularity soon exceeded its capacity, so that in 1942, with funds donated by three of the Park Commissioners—Laurance S. Rockefeller, George W. Perkins Jr., and Averell Harriman—the Commission acquired 542 adjoining acres. Last year, the Palisades Region of the New York State park system had almost 4.5 million visitors. For information on Tallman or any other of the 178 state parks or 35 historic sites, call (518) 474-0456 or click on [www.nysparks.com](http://www.nysparks.com).

~Ron Derven

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## Planning Board, Zoning Board—What's The difference?

Ever wonder what our Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) do and how they differ?

Both Boards regulate land use, balancing the rights and interests of individual property owners while preventing harm to existing residents, businesses or the environment. In our lovely village of Piermont, with its small scale, riverfront beauty and unusual topography, zoning is crucial to preserve these special characteristics.

The Boards have some similarities: the Mayor appoints five members and two alternates to each. All are non-paid volunteers and they must take training courses and be certified periodically.

When an applicant goes before the either Board, a clerk notifies all adjacent property owners so they may attend the public hearings and express any concerns. The meetings are open to the public and posted at the Piermont Village Hall.

However, each Board serves a different purpose. Here is an overview:

The Planning Board is the gateway for any land use project. If you're building something, you will be interacting with this Board to get approvals. Its key priorities are community planning and environmental protection. It does this both on a micro level, for individual lots, and on a macro level, for the preservation of the overall Village.

Doug Stone, Chair of the Board for more than five years, says he got interested initially when he didn't like what a neighbor was building and went to some of its meetings to voice his concerns. Stone found the process to be fascinating and decided to get involved. Although the Planning Board requires some long unpaid hours and the occupational hazard of displeasing fellow Piermonters, he says that his commitment to the village prompted him to serve. "I just love the character, scale and nature of Piermont," he says, and is interested in, "keeping out the McMansions."

Currently, the Planning Board is updating the village's Master Plan. The focus is on land use and environmen-

tal impacts—particularly important to Piermont because of the Hudson River, slope areas, flood plains and marshes, all critical ecosystems.

The Planning Board ensures that property conforms to the Village Building Codes, including requirements for square footage, side yards, subdivision, setbacks, floor area ratio, commercial vs. residential usage and footprints.

Stone's advice to landowners who are planning a project: "Do your homework before you start spending money on blueprints." He recommends they become familiar with what the Village building codes and says, "The Planning Board will talk to you informally before you start your project."

The Zoning Board of Appeals is where a resident or business must go when a proposed building does not conform to the rules (including Rockland County and NY State codes). They must ask the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) to grant them a variance from the law before they can proceed.

Before granting the exception, the ZBA must balance the legitimate needs

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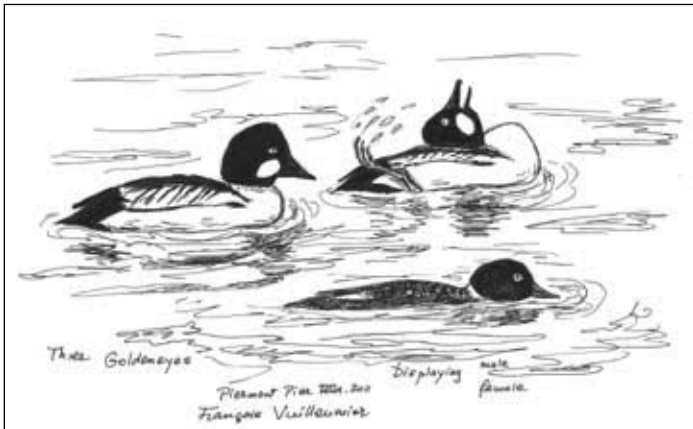
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# No Other River Like Ours



During my globetrotting years I have seen and navigated on all kinds of rivers, some mighty, others less so. In the end, Piermont's Hudson was always the best. The Amazon remains beyond human comprehension: it is too vast. The Rhône, by contrast, has a definite human dimension (besides, it was my river when I grew up). Even though it divides America into east and west, the Mississippi belongs to us all. And everybody knows that the Danube is grayish-brown, not blue. But so is the Hudson. Ah, but there is a crucial difference! The Hudson is an estuary. It is tidal. With its flux and reflux, it works like a pump and beats, like a heart, daily, weekly, monthly, year after year. Moon and Sun are its pacemaker, but seasons regulate its moods and influence the behavior of its winged inhabitants.

During cold winters, the Hudson freezes over and ice cakes give it an Arctic feel. What is this dark shape riding a block of ice? A look through binoculars reveals a Bald Eagle. In my experience, they always seem to go with the southern flow. Why? Meanwhile, flocks of Canvasbacks, mostly males, handsome with their reddish-brown head, sleep in ice-free patches. They feed at night on vegetal matter on the River floor. Canvasbacks breed in the northern Great Plains but winter here. Why? And speaking of ducks, look for Goldeneyes. Distinguished by their white cheek patch, males sense the coming of spring and start their courtship displays in February. Throwing back their head at top speed, like a mechanical toy, while making low-pitched sounds like

a watch being wound, kree-kreek, they attract the attention of brown-colored females, which lay flattened in the water, watching.

Goldeneyes's smaller relative, the Bufflehead, indulge in a similar courtship. But please note: in order to hear such faint voices you must take out all acoustical equipment from your ears. Like Canvasbacks, Goldeneyes and Buffleheads dive for their food, but unlike the Canvasback's it is animal, small crabs and mollusks. And whereas Canvasbacks nest on the ground, both Goldeneyes and Buffleheads nest in tree holes in the Boreal Forest. Bluffleheads are fond of old Flicker holes, some sort of mutualism. Why?

Warmer days will melt the ice, equinoctial tides will flood the Pier, and migratory birds, like the black-and-orange Baltimore Oriole, will appear one day, as if from nowhere, although we know they spent the winter in the tropics. Longer days encourage their hormones to flow, urge their brain to court, and build nests along the Hudson's shores. Yet, think about it: nothing in their memory tells them that the River was an Arctic wilderness just a few weeks ago. Oddly, some spring migrants also come north but they breed in the Arctic. Shorebirds like Semipalmated Plovers and Least Sandpipers will spend only a few days along the River, frantically refueling, a brief respite in their enormously long journey from winters in South America to a short breeding season in the tundra. Interestingly, like their songbird counterparts, their memory does not include the frozen side of the Arctic that we, at latitude 42 degrees north, experience for a few winter weeks.

Any season along Piermont's Hudson brings mysteries, makes one ponder the whys of Nature: go there as often as you can, open your eyes and unplug your ears.

~Francois Vuilleumier

*Dr. Vuilleumier, a Piermonter, knows his birds. He is Curator Emeritus in the Department of Ornithology of the American Museum of Natural History. His encyclopedic Birds of North America, published by Dorling-Kindersley, in association with the Museum in 2009, is now also in soft cover. Two new field guide-size books Birds of North America Eastern Region and Birds of North America Western Region, also published by DK in association with the Museum, were released earlier this year.*

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# From The Library

We were pleased to learn in February that The Morris and Alma Schapiro Fund of New York City awarded the library a \$5,000 grant for general operating expenses. They funded our conference room. The Schapiros lived for many years on Piermont Avenue, and Alma Schapiro, a modernist painter who studied in Paris with Juan Gris and later in the U.S. with Hans Hoffman and Morris Davidson, had her studio there. Their son, Dr. Daniel Schapiro, has fond memories of growing up in Piermont and returns often to visit, sharing stories of days gone by and photographing the village as it is now. We thank him and the foundation for this welcome addition to our operating budget.

Our area continues to be home to many creative, accomplished people and in the months to come you can enjoy a variety of programs and events at the library featuring some of their work.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Rena Berger will present an exhibit of her work in collage with mixed media in the gallery in April. Rena and her husband Charlie have lived in Piermont since 1971. She has a view of the river from her studio, which constantly influences the images she creates. Berger will host an opening reception for the show on Sunday, April 3, from 2 to 4 p.m.

Marc Farre has selected the following films for his First Friday Film Series. The films are shown at 7:30 p.m. on the first Friday of the month, and are always free:

April: **Gosford Park** - directed by Robert Altmann, inspired by *The Rules of the Game* (shown in March).

May: **The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter**—an adaptation of Carson McCuller's famous novel (written in Nyack) - starring Sondra Locke and Alan Arkin.

June: **Across the Universe** - directed by Julie Taymor - a joyful, wild ride based on Beatles songs.

*continued on next page*



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**From The Library** continued from previous page

On Sunday, April 10, from 2-4 p.m., local author and library board member Marian Armstrong will be here to talk about her new book, *Musings of a Mystery Sibling*. It is based on her real life experience of the loss of a sibling. Her brother, Michael J. Armstrong, was killed in the attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001. In the months and years following the attack, she felt a growing urge to write a compelling story about adult sibling loss. *Musings of a Mystery Sibling*, a love story on many levels, is a work of fiction drawn from that experience.

Ms. Armstrong will read from the book and encourage questions and discussion. Books will be available for purchase and signing, and refreshments will be served.

Sarah Rothbaum is a certified art teacher with a Masters in Art Education will present a series of three lectures in art history in the library's conference room on Thursday evenings. Each free lecture will be followed by a group discussion. The first, on Thursday, April 14,

will be on Michelangelo; the second, on April 28, on Nazi Propaganda Art; and the third, on May 5, on Pop Art. Because of space constraints, the lectures limited to a maximum of 10 people. Please see our website for more information and contact the library to register.

On May Day, Sunday, May 1, from 2-4 p.m., Anita Bell of Grand View invites parents and their children to a special book presentation. She has co-written a book with her daughter, Belinda. Anita is a seasoned writer who had already published nine books, but this work of fiction was a real change of pace for her. 'Twas Ever is the intriguing story of a twelve year old girl living in 1683 whose friend falls ill during a May Day celebration. The girl travels forward in time to try to find a cure for the illness, and ends up in the same town in the present time. Books will be available for purchase and signing.

And for theater lovers, on Sunday, May 15, at 7:30 p.m. we will host a staged reading of A. R. Gurney's *Love Letters*, presented by Sondra and Al

Markim of Piermont Landing. The Markims have had long careers in theater and television, and this bit of live theater will be a real treat. Please consult the website for further information on this in May.

As you have probably heard, the Edward Hopper House in Nyack is now celebrating its fortieth anniversary with a "Year of Edward Hopper." In mid-May we will hang an exhibit of Hopper influenced works by well-known local artists Margaret Grace and James Kimak, which will continue through June.

On Sunday, June 5, from 2 to 4 p.m., we will focus on Hopper himself with a screening of Hopper's *Silence*, the documentary by Brian O'Doherty, and a lecture about Hopper given by Emily Harvey, Chair of the Art Department at Rockland Community College. A reception will follow.

During the month of July, we will display *Rain Gardens: The Natural Alternative*, an exhibit curate by landscape architect Stephanie Garber, a member

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of the Board of Directors of the Rockland Audubon Society who serves on its Conservation Committee. The exhibit showcases the Rockland Audubon Society Rain Garden installed here, highlighting its function, native plants and role in conservation. Rain gardens are a natural alternative used in improving storm water management. An opening reception for the exhibit will be held on Friday, July 8, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

The Hudson Riverkeeper will be at the library in August with an exhibit and a special lecture. A Hudson River Journey: 1609 – 2109 was created by the organization for New York's quadricentennial celebration and is now traveling throughout the Hudson Valley. It tells the story of the river from three perspectives—pre-contact Lenape, present day and near-term future. The visitor explores six regions along the Hudson River and experiences river stories relevant to each.

The exhibit will be up for the month, and on Sunday, August 7, from 2 to 4 p.m. Please join us for The Hudson

River Estuary: Challenges and Opportunities, a presentation outlining Riverkeeper's current priorities on the Hudson River.

**AND DON'T FORGET....**

that every Monday morning (except on holidays) we host a Toddler Storytime with Agnes and Judy at 11:00 a.m., and on the third Wednesday of each month at 11:30 a.m., Moon River Music Together with Catherine brings a big smile to faces young and old with a lively introduction to musical fun for the very young child.

We hope that our popular art classes for children will be returning in late spring. Watch the website for more information...!

The library is located at 25 Flywheel Park West, and is open from 10-8, Monday through Thursday; 12-5 on Friday, and 12-4 on Saturday. Call us at 359-4595 and keep up with what's going on through our website: [www.piermontlibrary.org](http://www.piermontlibrary.org).

~Grace Mitchell

**Recreation Committee  
Seeks Suggestions**

A new Piermont Recreation Committee (PRC) is looking for ways to bring fresh life to the village's Hudson Terrace Community Center. It is considering a range of programs for people of all ages including group music lessons, art classes, yoga, toning classes, zumba and boot camp. Loreen and Thomas McArdle, who head PRC, ask anyone with a Facebook account to check them out at Piermont Recreation. You can make suggestions there and stay up to date with their progress. You also can do it by joining their mailing list. E-mail them at [lmcardle@piermontny.org](mailto:lmcardle@piermontny.org).

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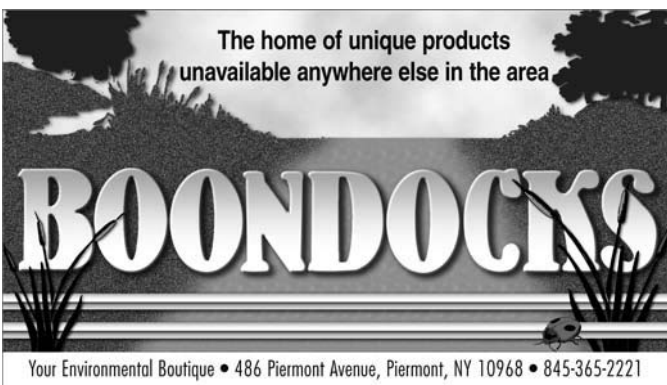
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# Gardening Soil Etiquette: Proper Manners Regarding Your Garden Soil

To plant and maintain a healthy, thriving garden, it is important to use proper garden soil etiquette. If we want to understand garden soil manners, we need to start with a basic understanding of what our soil actually is.

Garden soil is an intricate aggregation of numerous organic (carbon based) and in-organic (non-carbon based) substances and particles. Millions of living things such as insects, worms, bacteria, viruses, fungi and the occasional slime mold populate it. It also has important substances like air, water and roots. The changes in temperature and sunlight turn it into an amazingly complex medium.

While there are entire university courses, maybe even entire university departments, dedicated to soil science, the average gardener can get by with a "middle ground" of soils knowledge—especially if they combine it with a healthy dose of respect.

Here is some spring soil wisdom

gleaned over many years from Piermont gardeners:

✓ Don't walk where you plant. Walking on soil compresses it, closing up the spaces that should be open for air, water and plant roots. Garden paths allow you to tend your plot without stepping on its soil.

✓ Maintain Fertility. This is a complex issue. Soils can have a wide variety of nutrient profiles. In addition, different plant parts thrive best with different nutrients. So, while some people like to fertilize generally (for the plant as a whole) others like to fertilize for specific things, like tomatoes (fruits), lettuce (leaves), artichokes (flowers) or carrots (roots). To make this simple, remember that if you dig healthy plant matter into your garden and let it decompose, or if you dig compost made from healthy plant matter into your garden, you will help maintain a general ratio of nutrients. However, if you want to grow annuals—like most vegetables—repeatedly in the same

location, digging in compost will eventually not be enough and you'll need to supplement. There are many good, organic fertility boosters on the market today. Figure out what you want to plant and how you want to feed your soil, then find the products that are a good fit for your gardening style and your garden's needs.

✓ Weed, weed, weed. You're gardening to grow what you want. Don't give away the water, air, space for plant roots and nutrients to the weeds. They won't thank you, and the plants you want to grow will have less of these important things for their own needs.

✓ Don't work the soil when it's too wet. Damp is OK, wet is not. It destroys the structure of the soil, and if clay is present, creates a muddy mess that dries into hard clumps. They made it impossible for water, air and soil roots to penetrate. Fixing soil that was worked when too wet is a huge job that can, and should, be avoided

~Susan Freiman

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## The Front Line

### Piermont Police on the Trail of GPS Thieves

The Piermont Police Department wants residents to remove valuables from their cars and lock up them up to thwart thieves who are stealing items out of unlocked cars. "The primary target of the thieves is GPS devices," said Police Chief Michael O'Shea. "The next target is cash, because some people forget their wallets in cars. These thefts are not 'smash and grabs,' where criminals break the car window. Rather, they are simply opening unlocked cars and taking the valuables."

The Chief recalled that the village experienced a similar crime spree two years ago. It came to an abrupt end when the midnight police patrol caught two teenagers with a sack full of GPS units.

With the spring break coming up and warm weather finally arriving, Chief O'Shea advised all residents to notify the police when they will be away from home on vacation. If the police know

you are not at home, police patrols will closely watch your house.

"Get a timer that will turn your lights on and off at different intervals, have the Post Office hold your mail and either stop delivery of the newspaper or have a friend or relative pick up the paper on a daily basis." He said that motion-detector lights on a home's exterior that turn outside lights on and off are also helpful.

Chief O'Shea said that he wanted to stress to all Piermont residents that if you see something, say something. He said that living in your neighborhood, you know who lives there and who does not. "If you see a suspicious person or car in your neighborhood, call the police. We will check it out."

### Signed Up with Nixle.com for Emergency Notices by Phone

The Piermont Police Department wants to alert you in case of an emergency with Nixle.com, its new free and efficient notification system. This

winter it warned residents not to park overnight on the road in snow emergencies.

"We used Nixle for road closings, the car break-in alert (mentioned above) and other things. We encourage all residents to register for this service at [www.nixle.com](http://www.nixle.com). Follow the log on and registration. It is quite simple and you will receive either a text message on your cell phone or a voice message.

"We have been getting a great deal of positive feedback on the system. When we first started it, we did not want to over-do the alerts because people would get tired of them. The word we got was that people want more information on what is going on in the village."

### Biking and Pier Rules

With the spring come robins and bicyclists. Chief O'Shea warned that the traffic laws require that bicycles ride single file. One area of great con-

*continued on next page*

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**The Front Line** continued from previous page

cern for the Chief is the intersection of Paradise and Ferdon Avenues: "People go through the red light there and cause a very hazardous condition. We have a children's park, a canoe rental business and a church on the corner. So it's a busy, active intersection."

Regarding the pier, Chief O'Shea said that village residents could get a pier-parking permit free at the Village Clerk's office. It allows them to park anywhere on the pier except "No Parking" areas. For non-village residents, the permits cost \$175. There are eight to 10 DEC parking spaces at the end of the pier for those without parking permits. Anyone with a valid driver's license can legally drive on the pier.

**Piermont's Rubbish Pick Up Begins on April 12**

The Piermont Department of Public Works' (DPW) 2011 Rubbish and Debris Collection Program will start on Tuesday, April 12, and run every other week until Wednesday, October 12. "All items to be discarded should be put out tied, bundled or stacked in an orderly fashion," said DPW Supervisor Tom Temple. "Please cut wood into lengths no longer than five feet and refrigerator doors must be removed for safety reasons. We ask that residents be sensitive in the timing of putting out their debris because it affects the appearance of our Village. Put it out no earlier than the weekend before the scheduled pick up."

Supervisor Temple reminded residents and contractors alike that the Village Code prohibits the DPW from picking up debris left from renovations, repairs or demolition. Contractors and homeowners must remove it themselves.

The DPW cannot accept any type of hazardous household waste (chemicals, paint etc). "It must be brought to the Rockland County Hazardous Waste Facility in Pomona. For any Questions you can call the DPW at (845) 359 1717," he said.

**Hats Off to the Department of Public Works!**

It was a very tough winter: The DPW did a fabulous job clearing the roads. It hauled away approximately 161 truck-

loads or 2,254 yards of snow from village streets. "We had an estimated snowfall of around 53.5 inches as of March 7," Temple pointed out.

**The Fire Department Needs You**


The Piermont Fire Department is constantly looking for new members. If you're interested, come to the firehouse any Monday evening between 7-9 pm.



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**Planning Board, Zoning Board** continued from page 5

of the individual property owners with larger community concerns and applicable laws. With an interest in preserving the character of the community, the ZBA uses the following five criteria in their decisions:

1. Will an undesirable change be produced in the character of the neighborhood or be a detriment to nearby properties;
2. Whether the benefit sought by the applicant can be achieved in a another way without an area variance;
3. How substantial the variance is;
4. Whether the proposed variance will have an adverse impact on the physical or environmental conditions;
5. Whether the alleged difficulty was self-created.

Margaret Holihan, a retired real estate lawyer who has been the Chair of the ZBA for several decades, explains that the character of Piermont, with its slopes, waterfront properties, marshes and flood plains, uniquely varied properties makes each ZBA case a challenge. Members of the current board have varied backgrounds, and offer needed perspective, according to Holi-

han. "We have a very balanced Board," she says. "The ZBA looks for diverse viewpoints."

The ZBA must ensure that its decisions are legally defensible and at the same time, consider the individual. As Holihan points out, "These issues are very personal—it's your home or your business."

~Marjorie Derven

### The More Dogs The Merrier

The Piermont Community Dog Run is now open to non- Piermont residents. If you are interested in having your pooch use the fenced-in run off Ferry Road, just contact us at piermontdogrun@gmail.com and we will send you an application. Membership requires up-to-date vaccination information and there is a \$25 membership fee, covering up to four dogs per family. Updates on Dog Run activities are posted on Ferry Road adjacent to the run, and sent to our members via email.

~Margaret Grace

### Black Panthers Extinct?

Remember all those black panthers skulking around here during the summer of 2009? Some Piermonters swore they saw the big cats in their backyards and in Tallman Mountain Park. Others were skeptical.

The skeptics, apparently, were correct. An item on the Internet says:

"The last confirmed sighting of the eastern cougar, which sported a tawny coat and lengthy tail, occurred more than 70 years ago, reports the Christian Science Monitor. Officials didn't declare it extinct, however, because of the cat's Sasquatch-like history of sightings: 108 people claimed to have clapped eyes on the elusive feline between 1900 and 2010. Those cats turned out to be western cougars or exotic black panthers on the lam from people's homes. After reviewing trail cameras and road kill reports, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service concluded that overzealous hunting in the 18th and 19th centuries killed the cat, who finally disappeared from the 21 eastern states it called home in the 1930s."

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**Piermont Underwater Rescue** continued from page 1

One diver speculated that so few Tappan Zee jumpers survive because most of the suicides occur in the middle of the night, after the bars close. The police do not immediately spot the jumper's abandoned cars. By the time the call goes out, the jumper has died and their body is on the move in the river. "We are always hopeful our training and rapid response will make a difference and save a life," said Blomquist, "but these conditions work against that. We can at least bring some closure to the tragedy of a suicide by bringing the victim in."

~Margaret Grace

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