



POST PHOTO/KASIA McDONOUGH

Florence Halstead, Shavertown, has a yard full of zinnias this year. She is already planning her garden for next year.

Gardeners

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That works out well for me because I don't have a lot of time to spend in the garden."

Choosing plants that are native to this region is another way to ensure success. "I went through the 'I like it, I'm buying it and I don't care' phase of gardening," said Linda Thoma, another master gardener. "But I think there is a lot to be said for the right plant in the right place."

Soil preparation, which can be started in the fall, is the key to good gardening. "Composting is extremely beneficial," said Thoma.

"It helps eliminate household waste for free and it is a great way to enrich the soil."

Various methods of composting can be used depending on the results a gardener is seeking. "Household scraps, grass clippings, leaves and weeds, provided they haven't gone to seed, can be mixed in a composting machine and worked into the garden. Fats and meats should not be included," said Thoma.

This organic medley can be tended or left to decompose at a slow pace. "Some people are very

faithful about adding soil and water to help with the mix but others don't do a blessed thing," said Thoma. "It depends on how fast you want the compost to break down."

Protecting soil and plants from winter's bite is the last item on a gardener's list of fall chores. "Sometime in October, after the temperature has dropped to below freezing several times I will put on a pair of heavy gloves and strip the leaves from all my rose bushes," said Halstead. "It's time to put them to bed."

Trees

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taining a healthy balance between wooded and developed areas.

The path is constructed on former railroad beds which were once used to transport timber from the Back Mountain. "Ironically, trees, leather, ice and later coal were carried along this very route," said Judy Rimple, president of the Anthracite Scenic Trails Association, who joined the tree walk.

Logging is still an important business in the state, accounting for \$4 billion annually. "The sad part is that most of our hardwood gets exported," said Cotrone. "It is shipped to South Carolina or Europe where it's turned into furniture."

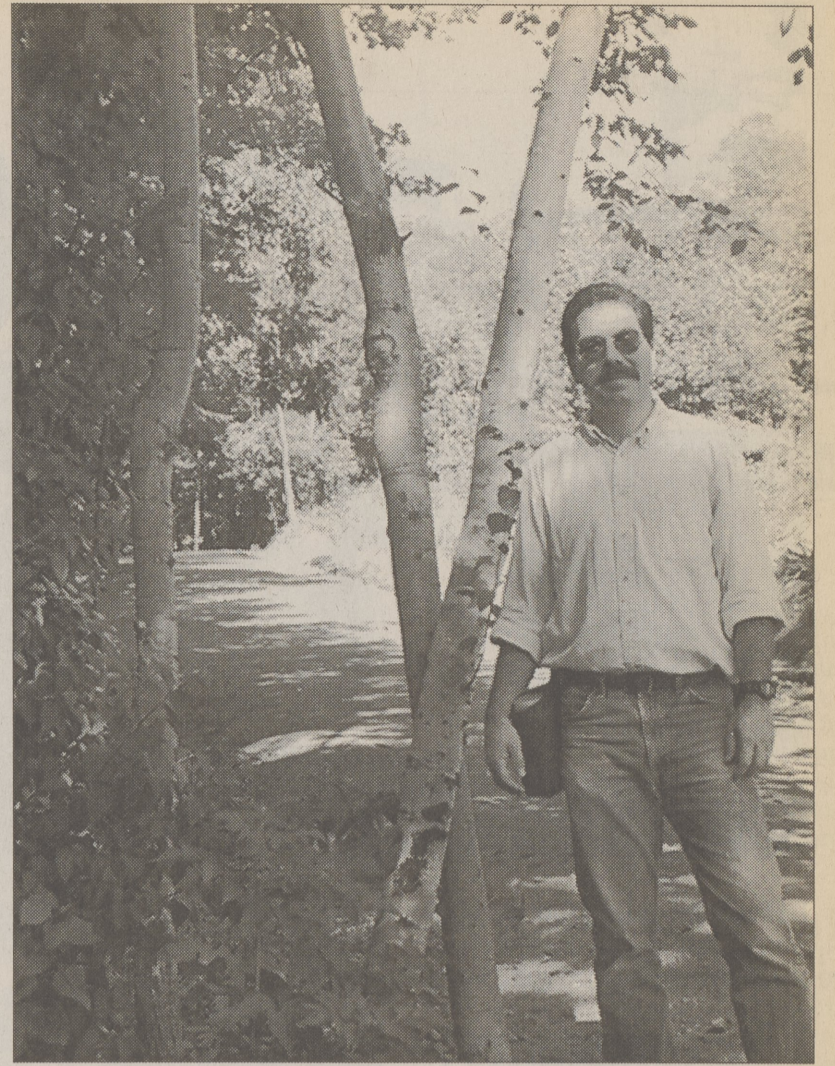
While hardwood trees like cherry, oak and maple are often harvested for lumber, logging is not the largest threat to forests. Trees are more often victims of urban sprawl. "Forests are cut down to make room for development, for parking lots, for drive-ways, for malls," said Cotrone.

Widespread deforestation has serious repercussions for the environment. "We are seeing the effects in this summer's flash flooding. Water runs off paved surfaces too quickly and streams can't handle it, but trees help absorb rainfall and prevent soil erosion," said Cotrone.

Wooded areas bordering creeks and rivers are especially crucial. "There is a link between us and the people who live down stream," said Cotrone. "Pollutants enter the water from runoff and their impact is felt by everyone and everything along the way, which is why the governors of three states and the mayor of Washington DC have formed a coalition to protect forests along tributaries that flow into the Chesapeake Bay."

Another consequence of deforestation is a dramatic shift in climatic conditions. "If we removed all the trees, temperatures would get much higher," said Cotrone. "We would see more severe weather including floods, droughts and major storms."

This year's hot dry weather has



POST PHOTO/KASIA McDONOUGH

Vinnie Cotrone, Penn State Urban Forester, stood by a birch tree on the Back Mountain Trail

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Vinnie Cotrone
Penn State Urban Forester

care about itself but it wants to make sure its species is on the planet."

Self preservation does, however, yield the vibrant colors of fall leaves. "As the days start getting shorter, a tree begins to shut down," said Cotrone. "It conserves energy and stores nutrients in the form of starches. Water is stored in the roots because if it would freeze in the branches and the tree would actually explode."

Conservation is also a key to our welfare. "My job is to help people recognize the importance of trees in our environment," said Cotrone. "They are not just for profit and they are not just to be cut down in the name of progress. There has to be a balance."

been harsh on trees. "It's been a tough summer for anything that grows," said Cotrone. "A tree's response to a drought, or any stress, is to reproduce. It doesn't

Square dance benefits Red Cross fund

On Sunday, Sept. 26, the Northeast Pennsylvania Square and Round Federation will host their 2nd annual Modern Western Square Dance for the benefit of the Red Cross Disaster Fund. The dance will be held in the cafeteria of the Tunkhannock High School,

located just off Rt. 6 in Tunkhannock. The program will start with early rounds from 2:30 p.m.-3 p.m. A Plus program of Square Dancing will be conducted from 3 p.m.-5:30 p.m., with an Advance tip at 5:30 p.m. Calling and cueing will be by the callers and cues

of the member Federation Clubs. Additional information can be obtained by calling Andy Glowach, 696-1093 or Dane Niess 434-2453.

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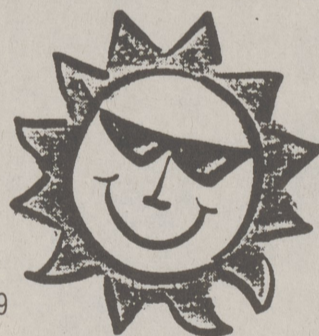
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