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MAY/JUNE 2010

## Refreshingly Simple

An Afternoon  
Garden Party

## The Clear Blue

Bermuda's  
Sea and Sand

## Historic and Hip

An Architect's  
Eclectic Retreat

# Bathing Beauties

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**ENTERTAINING IN STYLE:**  
Janet Simon hosts garden parties, holiday soirees, and charitable events at her Georgian manor home throughout the year.

# *Refreshingly Simple*

A GRACIOUS  
MOM-AND-TOT  
GARDEN PARTY AT  
NEW VERNON'S  
HIDDEN POND FARM.

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photographed by LAURA MOSS





**PULL UP A CHAIR:**

A perky pumpkin-colored tea party tablescape (left) is simple but elegant, graced with antique Wedgwood serving pieces and pristine roses and hydrangeas from the family garden. Hostess Janet Simon (above) welcomes guests with her signature citrus iced tea, fresh raspberries, scones, and jam. She wears a pretty polka-dot silk coat dress by Michael Kors.

ON A GLORIOUSLY GOLDEN DAY UNDER A BRILLIANT BLUE SKY, INTERIOR DESIGNER, entrepreneur, and philanthropist Janet Simon of New Vernon hosted a whimsical garden party at her family's Hidden Pond Farm residence.

Set upon 43 bucolic acres, the picture-perfect 1928 Georgian manor home exudes history and charm without being stuffy. Those who know the effervescent Simon attest that she and the lifestyle she has created are the epitome of laid-back elegance.

On what otherwise would have been a garden-variety weekday, Simon whipped up a chic soiree for several local mothers and their energetic pre-schoolers. (Her own children—three sons and one daughter—are in their teens and early twenties.)

As moms enjoyed conversation and iced tea on the terrace, Simon invited the visiting youngsters to take on a pint-sized potting project in the nearby garden house, supervised by a responsible tween (see sidebar, page 37).

While the children planted seeds, Simon, widely known for her gracious and stylish entertain-





**AFTERNOON DELIGHT:** Alphabet sugar cookies (left) were perfectly complemented by antique Wedgwood serving dishes. Local mothers (above) appreciated an afternoon break on Janet Simon's welcoming terrace. One of the family's five canines, beagle Lilly keeps watch over the outdoor festivities at Hidden Pond Farm.



ing, treated the ladies to a delightful and delicious couple of hours. "Friends who visit in the spring and summer know they will be offered my signature iced tea and fresh-squeezed lemonade," she says. "And I always serve a little fruit with whipped cream on the side."

Simon's general approach to entertaining is to keep it "refreshingly simple," although she believes even the smallest party warrants planning. "Entertaining is serious. I never wing it," she says.

This hostess uses her imagination to come up with unexpected elements to make guests comfortable and happy. "Even for informal parties, I like engraved invitations and fabulous food." However, Simon flatly admits, "I do *not* cook," so she often relies on her caterer of choice, New York City-based Glorious Food ([gloriousfood.com](http://gloriousfood.com)).

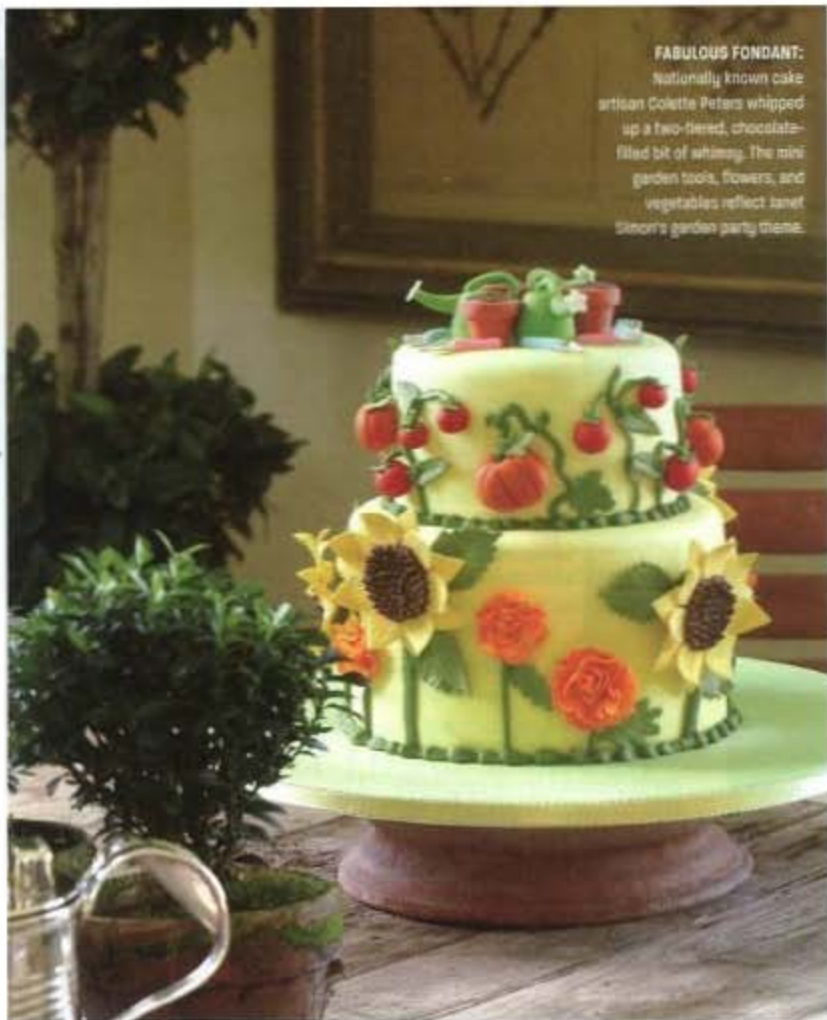
### Just Desserts

Simon's garden party included a special little something from cake-decorating maven Colette Peters of New York City ([colettescakes.com](http://colettescakes.com)). Peters' two-tiered, three-layered chocolate cake was loaded with fudge and decorated with cheerful fondant sunflowers, berries, and vines. For good measure, the hostess also served sugar cookies reminiscent of medieval hand-blocked alphabet letters inspired by linen prints from Raoul Textiles ([raoultextiles.com](http://raoultextiles.com)).

The pretty terrace was replete with Brown Jordan black wrought-iron furniture and an inviting tablescape styled with a perky pumpkin-hued tablecloth, white linen napkins, and nineteenth-century Wedgwood leaf plates and serving dishes. The setting was adorned with mums and moss in a tall wire urn, alongside stunning little bou-



**FABULOUS FONDANT:**  
Nationally known cake  
artisan Colette Peters whipped  
up a two-tiered, chocolate-  
filled bit of whimsy. The mini  
garden tools, flowers, and  
vegetables reflect Janet  
Simon's garden party theme.



quets of white roses and hydrangeas from the family's parterre garden off the kitchen.

For large parties, Simon relies on her favorite floral designer, Jerry Rose Floral and Event Design of Maplewood (973-762-1085; jerryrose.com). For smaller gatherings, she prefers to pick fresh blossoms from her property and arrange them exactly as she wants. Roses hail from the garden near the pool, masses of hydrangeas billow around the barn, and peonies bloom along the path from the barn to the terrace. A humongous vegetable garden used to grace the property, but it grew so large that it became unmanageable.

"A few years ago, we bought a New Jersey summer house and, since I had about 7,000 zucchini growing back here in New Vernon, I was spending hours driving back to harvest zucchini and bok choy so they wouldn't go to waste. And I don't even like bok choy," she says. That's when Simon knew she had to let the vegetable garden go—except for the three-acre pumpkin patch that family and friends enjoy visiting each fall.

### Springtime Parties Abloom

The tea party on the terrace is now a happy memory for this busy interior designer (janetsimoninc.com), but plenty of other events are about to blossom.

Simon, who has a B.A. in art history and 30 years of design experience, maintains a long list of lofty clientele. She recently created a light-infused garden breakfast room with a white-on-white and ice-blue palette (space number 18) for the 2010 Mansion in May decorator showhouse in Harding Township. On the mansion's opening night, she will host 50 guests at

### Who Needs a Refill?

Whether you visit the Simon residence for an afternoon garden party in June or a Saturday night dinner soiree in August, you're sure to be offered the family's signature beverages. "We serve ice-cold tea and lemonade nonstop all summer long," says Janet Simon. "And we've been known to pour a little champagne, too."

### JANET'S CITRUS ICED TEA

Yields 4 servings

#### Ingredients

3 cups of brewed black tea (such as Earl Grey)  
1 cup of orange juice  
Sliced oranges  
Fresh mint leaves

Brew tea and let cool. For every three cups of brewed tea, add one cup of orange juice. Add ice and garnish with sliced oranges and fresh mint leaves.

### SIMON FAMILY LEMONADE

Yields 6 servings

#### Ingredients

Two cups of fresh squeezed lemon juice  
1.5 cups superfine sugar  
8 cups water  
2 cups crushed ice  
Sliced lemons  
Fresh mint leaves

Mix lemon juice, sugar, and water in blender. Pour into glasses over crushed ice. Garnish with lemon slices and lots of fresh mint.





#### OUT OF THE BLUE:

The Simon family's ivy-covered garden house hosts events throughout the year. The interior (bottom) is a perfect backdrop for a children's garden project. Quiet tables hold potted plants, burlap sacks of potting soil, seed packets, mini locls, caks, and lemonade.

Hidden Pond Farm for a springtime buffet of poached salmon, filet of beef, and crunchy haricot vert salad.

"There's always something interesting happening here at the house," Simon says. "As our peony garden comes into full bloom later this spring, my husband and I will host several events for charitable causes that are close to our hearts." Simon and better half Peter, whom she met 35 years ago at Lafayette College, are passionate about their philanthropic efforts.

Peter Simon is the son of the late William E. Simon, U.S. Treasury Secretary under Presidents Nixon and Ford, and the late Carol G. Simon, the community-minded humanitarian for whom Morristown Memorial Hospital's cancer center is named. Peter is employed as an investment manager for William E. Simon & Sons, is chairman of the Atlantic Health System, and is co-chairman of the William E. Simon Foundation ([wesimonfoundation.org](http://wesimonfoundation.org)), which offers grants to educational, faith-based, and family-strengthening institutions.

Meanwhile, Janet Simon is the founding co-chairman of the Women's Health Philanthropy Council at Morristown Memorial Hospital, and is an energetic supporter of the hospital's early detection ovarian cancer program, a groundbreaking joint effort with Mt. Sinai Medical Center.

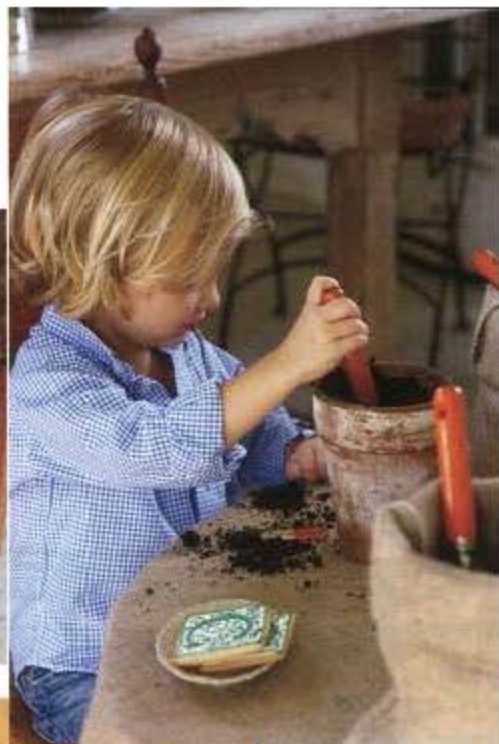
Janet Simon says of her relationship with her husband, "We are two peas in a pod—although my personality is much more outrageous and irreverent than his—and we are completely devoted to each other." Their children and her 92-year-old father also reside at Hidden Pond Farm—along with three beagles, one chocolate Labrador retriever, and one golden retriever who keep watch over the lively country home.







**KIDDING AROUND:** Youngsters enjoy a sunny afternoon of gardening fun, served with yummy gummy-worm candies and alphabet sugar cookies.



## KIDS' POTTING PARTY

DIGGING IN THE DIRT IS GOOD, CLEAN FUN

Consummate entertainer Janet Simon of New Vernon believes that every space on her property deserves to be enjoyed. And that includes the tiny garden house that occupies a 13-by-15-foot parcel of land in the middle of the family's hay field. "It's so much more than a potting shed," Simon says. "I enjoy using it for meditating, journaling, summer dining with my husband, and our annual hot chocolate holiday party. You won't find any garden tools stored there."

While Simon and a few friends enjoyed tea on the terrace on a sunny afternoon, she invited inquisitive preschoolers for playtime in the garden house.

"I wanted to offer the kids a fun project, so I gave each one a clay pot, a small burlap bag of potting soil, and an assortment of seeds—parsley, basil, thyme, and cherry tomatoes," Simon says. She also provided mini garden tools to keep little hands busy. "The kids thought it was great, and they really got into the spirit—and into the dirt."

The garden house has no electricity, phone, or running water, and that's the way the family likes it. "It's just a peaceful little spot in the middle of our field, and it's perfect all year around," Simon says.

### Get Your Kids into the Act

To find out if your town has a garden club, contact The Garden Club of New Jersey, Inc. Is there a bud-

ding young gardener in your family? Then meet Michael Bedrick (aka Marigold Mike) of Morristown. His business, Let's Bloom Together (973-270-0102; letsbloomentogether.com) specializes in gardening fun for kids. "We introduce children ages 3 to 10 to the natural environment in a fun, nurturing way," Bedrick says. "We incorporate earth science, history, and astronomy, as we stress responsibility, sustainability, and community."

In your own backyard, dedicate a tiny patch of soil to your child's garden, and surround it with a border of rocks or shells. Equip your tyke with her own gardening gloves, shovel, pail, and brightly colored rubber boots—and see what sprouts.



**FIELD DAY:** Children were reacquainted with Mother Nature during their visit to Hidden Pond Farm.