

# HILLTOPPER

Ralph Perkins & Joan Ebbeson, editors  
Ann Paulson & Jan Hostage,  
photographers

Please send news, views and photos to  
[rlphprkns@yahoo.com](mailto:rlphprkns@yahoo.com) or to mailbox #1.

## COMING EVENTS

**SATURDAY, MARCH 21**

**NOON Hilltop House  
ANNUAL SPRING LUNCHEON**

**Movie Madness** will be the theme of a festive party planned for us by the House Committee. Enjoy a sit-down meal catered by Bubba's. Reservations are needed. See article at right for more details.

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8**

**4 p.m., Hilltop House**

**The Allure of the Amalfi Coast**, a personal presentation by Karen Cooper, followed by social hour. Please BYOB and appetizer to share.

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 13**

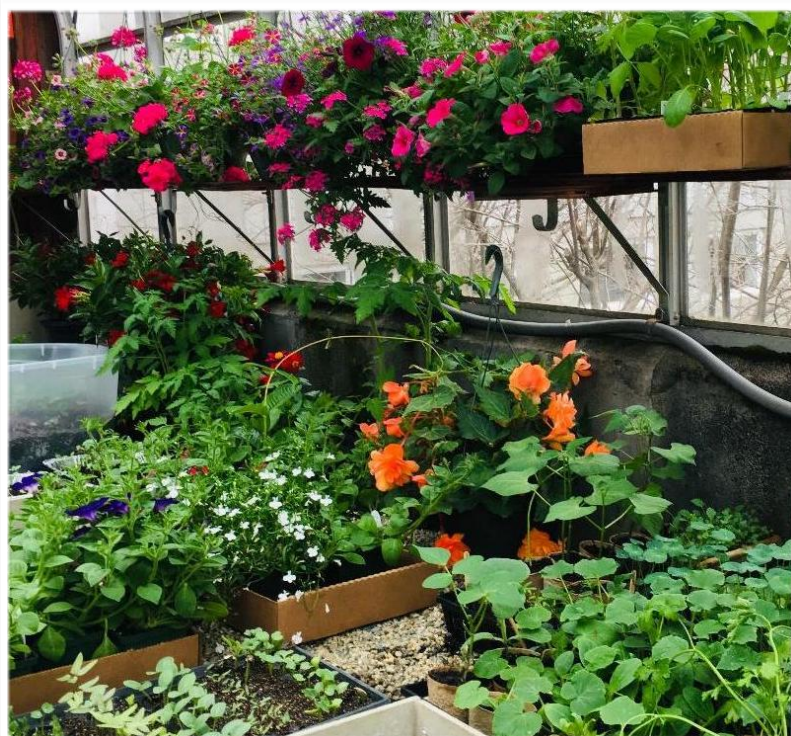
**4 p.m., Hilltop House**

**Costa Rica**, with Elizabeth Lowell. Social hour. will follow. Please BYOB and appetizer to share.



"Spring is nature's way  
of saying 'Let's party!'"

*-Robin Williams*



## Race to Spring!

**On Your Mark!** Daylight Savings Time begins Sunday, March 8. Don't forget to "spring ahead" or you might miss something!

**Get Set!** Start your garden early by using Hilltop's greenhouse to start seeds or summer bulbs. The lush scene from last spring, above, may persuade you. Call J.L. Tonner (526-5890) for information and/or to reserve a spot before greenhouse opening day, April 1. Another important date for gardeners: a 2020 Community Garden notice will go out April 10. Those who want to sign up for the first time should get a form from Linda at Hilltop office, and all should sign up by April 30..

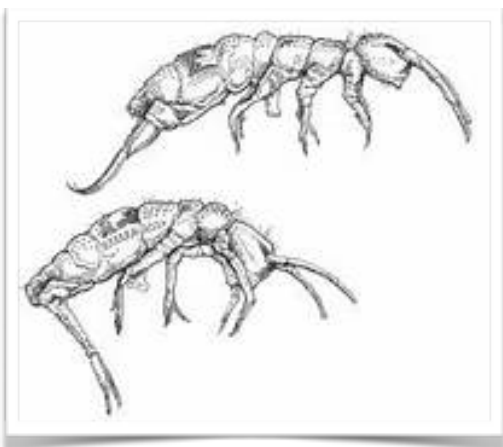
**Go!** It's *the* event of the season: Hilltop's annual spring luncheon on Saturday, March 21. This year, **Movie Madness** will prevail, and you are encouraged (but not required) to costume yourself as a movie character. Prizes in three categories will be awarded: Best Movie Couple, Best Drama Film Character and Best Comedy Film Character. The menu will feature complimentary Bloody Marys and soft drinks, Chicken Robert, rice pilaf, salad, cupcakes and coffee. Cost is \$8/person; reservations and payment should be made to Linda Downes at the office. BYOB, and meet for the Red Carpet entrance at noon. Paparazzi are welcome!

## Ralph's Field Notes: Right Under Your Nose

I'm talking about springtails - aka snow fleas or collembolans. Springtails are tiny, primitive insect-like creatures, usually less than a millimeter long (think of about 30 equalling the size of a grain of rice). In college, I was taught that they were insects, but more recent thinking is that they are something else, and that their bug-like appearance (six legs, antennae, three body parts, etc.) is simply a coincidence. Of the 3,600 kinds, most individuals have a forked appendage (furculum) which bends into a trigger (tenaculum). When a springtail needs to move pronto, the furculum is suddenly sprung from the tenaculum, and the animal instantly snaps several inches away from a predator.

Springtails are almost everywhere in NH and the world, from the top of Mt. Everest to 8,000 feet down in European caves, from deserts to underwater. They eat things like algae, fungi or mold in damp places. They are often a sign of spring in NH, appearing magically by the millions on old snow, which often has a film of algae. Although it obviously was not spring, I saw some clusters of springtails this January on a south-facing slope in Newbury, looking like soot on the snow. You may see them in masses on the edges of puddles, or in one of my aquariums. It's amazing how you will see them by the millions - literally - one day, and the next day they'll be nearly all gone if there is a change in temperature, moisture, cloudiness or some other factor.

Although NH springtails tend to be dark and bug-shaped, some of the several



### One Winter Afternoon

Good music (**2x2** musicians), good food and good company warmed and cheered us. Above, left to right: Barbara & Lyman Smith, Lee & Nina Rogers,, Joan Ebbeson, Ralph Perkins. Right, Michiko Yamaguchi.

### Spring Clean'n'Swap'n'Shop

**Swap'n'Shop**, Hilltop's exchange hub, is the perfect vehicle for finding new homes for your no-longer-wanted possessions. And should you find yourself needing a new hand vacuum or feather duster in the process, you can try a "Searching For" request. To post a search or an item for sale, for trade or for free, contact Jan Hostage (526- 2952 or [jan.hostage@verizon.net](mailto:jan.hostage@verizon.net)).

thousand species elsewhere have appearances that run the gamut from alien-looking, tiny monsters to fat and round "teddy bears." Today's springtails look just like 410 million-year-old fossils.

Some all-over-the-place, interesting facts: The farther down in the ground the springtail lives, the shorter the furculum. If temperatures are too high, springtails can lose 30 percent of their body weight. The oldest known type of springtail (the aforementioned fossil) still lives in Scotland. With an estimated 100,000 individuals per square meter all over the earth's land, the springtail may be the most common multi-celled animal. Although denied by the U.S. government in the 1970s, the army allegedly attempted to use springtails during the Korean War to carry disease germs.



So, next time you see specks on old snow, look closely. You may see some springing.

