

Flora & Fauna

The Fun of Fountains

Adding a fountain to the décor inside or outside your home will do more than just make things look nice. Throughout time, moving water has been a source of enchantment and wellbeing, helping people feel more relaxed and refreshed.

Fountains have a natural humidifying effect on dry air and add negative ions in the environment, which means they will help reduce the static in your home and keep the air from being too dry. In addition, the soft gurgle of a fountain is far more appealing than the hum of a humidifier.

Today, we live mostly indoors surrounded by unnatural sounds and disconnected from nature. A bubbling fountain helps to block out less harmonious noises, while allowing us to tune into more natural rhythms within ourselves. Even a momentary pause to watch a fountain helps us to experience the present moment in greater fullness and appreciation. Flowing water also helps improve concentration, so it can be beneficial to have a fountain in an office or in a student's room.

If you've ever sat beside a waterfall or a gurgling brook, you know how you feel soothed by the sound of running water. Fountains help us to relax and reduce daily stress levels, keeping us calm and centered. Taking a stroll past the fountain in your backyard after a rough day at the office is an easy way to unwind and relax. At night, the sound of gently flowing water puts us to sleep naturally.

But what type of fountain should you choose for your home? Most often, this depends on your decorating scheme. The style that you have chosen for your interior living space can be carried over in your choice for a fountain, and add that final finishing touch to a beautifully decorated room.

Homes with **contemporary decor** should consider stainless steel and black slate wall fountains, or a stylish, modern acrylic floor fountain that doubles as a piece of fine art. In particular, floor and wall fountains make a bold statement that will serve as an eye-catching centerpiece in any room.

If your space has **rich colors, organic fibers and a multicultural feel**, natural materials such as copper, slate and granite can make it feel complete.

If your home has an **Asian-influenced** design, there are lots of Asian-inspired water fountains that will complement this look. These kinds of fountains are usually made with bamboo, stone and ceramic. You can also use a small tabletop fountain instead of a large wall fountain to add a subtle accent.

Traditional homes call for a **classic look** in a fountain. Tiered basins, elegant scrollwork and scalloped edges come together for a polished look, which complements many decorating styles. Many traditionally styled wall fountains are made for use either indoors or out, so you can use it and move it as you please.

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Household Tip: Removing Salt Stains

Where there's snow – there's salt. And where there's salt, there are stains. "Salt" stains are usually caused by calcium chloride and magnesium chloride, not sodium chloride, according to the Carpet and Rug Institute. Rock salt has small amounts of both of these salts imbedded in it. Salt acts as a drying agent, "sucking out the moisture" and making some fabrics, and especially leather, become dry and brittle.

Prevention is the key to keeping stains to a minimum. So it would be good to invest in some rubber mats for your car and home to prevent salty water from soaking into floor mats and carpeting.

If you get salt stains on your leather shoes or boots in the wintertime, mix one tablespoon of white vinegar in one cup of water. Dip a clean soft rag in the liquid, then wipe the salt stains. Allow to dry. You can also use your vehicle's interior polish, such as Armour All, to do the trick. It will clean off the salt and place a protective coating on your shoes at the same time.

To remove salt stains from carpeting, first try to vacuum most of the dry residue off. Then apply a cleaning mixture of 1/2 white vinegar to 1/2 lukewarm water, allow to stand 15 minutes and rinse with clear water.

February

- 1288 Scotland declares the legal right of women to propose marriage in that country
- 1709 Rescued British sailor marooned 5 years inspires the writing of Robinson Caruso
- 1863 Samuel Clemens decides to write under the pen name of Mark Twain
- 1870 Utah women are given the right to vote in elections
- 1922 Reader's Digest magazine publishes its first issue
- 1923 Ethyl gasoline introduced to the driving public
- 1940 Frank Sinatra makes his singing debut with the Tommy Dorsey Orchestra
- 1951 First nuclear bomb test conducted in Nevada
- 1959 Vince Lombardi signs on to coach the Green Bay Packers football team
- 1978 First computer bulletin board system launched in Chicago
- 1993 Janet Reno becomes the nation's first female Attorney General.

Health Tips: Keep Your Heart Healthy

February is American Heart Month, so during this season of love, be sure to take care of yourself to prevent a real broken heart. According to a cardiologist from Pennsylvania's Geisinger Health System, women are suffering from broken hearts in an increasing number all year round. And thyroid patients are at an even greater risk of developing heart disease than the general population of American women.

Dr. Heather Horton, director of the Cardiac Cath Lab at The Heart Hospital at Geisinger Wyoming Valley Medical Center in Wilkes-Barre, PA, reports that nearly 500,000 women unnecessarily lose their lives annually to heart disease, which claims more women's lives than the next seven causes of death combined. One in 2.5 women will die of heart disease or stroke, compared with one in 30 from breast cancer. But there are things all women can do to mend their broken hearts.

"Start by getting fit," says Horton, "Don't have time to exercise? Don't think exercise—think action. Standing is better than sitting, walking is better than standing. Increase physical activity to at least 30 min. a day on most days of the week, even if it's 10 min. at a time."

Another key in reducing heart disease is to **stop smoking**, which is the most important aspect to improving your health. In addition to causing cancer, emphysema and heart disease, smoking will shorten your life by ten years.

"Healthy food habits can help to reduce three risk factors for heart attack and stroke—high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, and excess body weight," Horton says. Be sure to eat a balanced diet that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, cereal and grain products, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, beans, nuts, fish, poultry, and lean meats. Make sure the foods you choose are low in saturated fat and cholesterol. And eat with other people—you'll eat less than if you eat alone.

Try falling in love! A study last year from the University of Pittsburgh found that women in good marriages have a much lower risk of cardiovascular disease than those in high-stress relationships. The National Longitudinal Mortality Study, which has been tracking more than a million subjects since 1979, shows that married people live longer, have fewer heart attacks and lower cancer rates and even get pneumonia less frequently than singles.

According to Horton, there are questions about whether a woman's health risk to heart disease and stroke is due to gender difference or gender bias. "It's probably some of both and several factors may explain the apparent disparity in treatment of men and women," she says. "In the past, many of the major heart research studies were conducted on men. Clinical studies now under way may help clarify the gender differences that affect diagnosis and treatment of women with heart disease."

Horton reports that clinicians and patients often attribute chest pains in women to non-cardiac causes, leading to a misinterpretation of their condition. "Both women and men may have the 'classic' chest pain that grips the chest and spreads to the shoulders, neck or arms. But women tend to have atypical chest pain and may complain of abdominal pain, difficulty breathing, nausea, and unexplained fatigue," she says.

"Women, too, avoid or delay seeking medical care, perhaps out of denial or not being aware of both typical and atypical heart attack symptoms. And since women tend to have heart attacks later in life than men do, they often have other diseases, such as arthritis, that can mask heart attack symptoms."

So this month, take care of your heart by keeping your body healthy. Exercise, eat right, put out that cigarette and spend time with the ones you love!

Symptoms of Depression in Kids

Adults experiencing symptoms of depression are likely to confide in a friend, a health care professional or a family member. Kids, however, are another story. Not only can feelings of depression confuse them, but kids often lack the vocabulary necessary to describe what's going on inside their heads. Given this dilemma, it's incumbent upon people closest to a child – a parent or caregiver – to act as translator. Since not all of us have been trained to spot symptoms of childhood depression, we've turned to the experts. If you see the following behaviors in a child you care about, you might want to consult your pediatrician for advice:

- Persistent sadness and/or irritability
- Low self-esteem or feelings of worthlessness (e.g., making statements like, "I'm bad. I'm stupid. No one likes me.")
- Loss of interest in activities the child once loved
- Change in appetite (increase or decrease)
- Change in sleep patterns (sleeplessness or too much sack time)
- Difficulty concentrating
- Anger and rage
- Headaches, stomachaches or physical pains with no apparent cause
- Changes in activity level resulting in the child becoming noticeably more lethargic or hyperactive
- Recurring thoughts of death or suicide

Any change in a child's behavior that seems to have no external or physical cause should send up a red flag, particularly if the behavior is associated with such events as the death of a loved one, moving, changing schools, divorce and other traumas. If symptoms last more than a few weeks, err on the side of caution and have the child examined by a health care professional.

By the way, depression is just one symptom of an illness known as bipolar disorder (also called manic depression) that has been diagnosed in more and more children of late. If you think a child you know suffers from bipolar disorder, confirm your suspicions by noting whether or not they exhibit any or all of these symptoms: Abrupt, rapid mood swings, periods of extreme hyperactivity, prolonged, explosive temper tantrums/rages or coming up with exaggerated ideas.

So much help is available these days, it makes good sense to intervene early so troubled kids can get on the road to good mental health fast.

Ingredients:

- 3 tablespoons granulated tapioca
- 1 cup milk
- 1½ cups cooked lobster meat, chopped
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon paprika
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 2 egg yolks, beaten
- 2 egg whites beaten until stiff

Preparation:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter or grease an 8 x 8-inch glass baking dish or equivalent round baking dish.
2. In the top of a double boiler, stir tapioca and milk until tapioca is clear and transparent.
3. Remove from heat.
4. Add lobster, salt, paprika, lemon juice, and beaten egg yolks, stirring to combine. Fold in stiff egg whites. Pour into prepared baking dish and bake 40 minutes or until firm.
5. Serve hot.

Valentine's Day History

There are varying opinions as to the origin of Valentine's Day. Some say that it originated from St. Valentine, a Roman who was martyred for refusing to give up Christianity. He died on February 14, 269 A.D. Legend also says that St. Valentine left a farewell note for the jailer's daughter, who had become his friend, and signed it "From Your Valentine." In 496 A.D. Pope Gelasius set aside February 14 to honor St. Valentine.

In the United States, Miss Esther Howland is given credit for sending the first valentine cards.

Memorable Gifts for Valentine's Day

There's a good reason that Valentine's cards are covered with flowers and hearts and verses of love and passion. This is a special day to express heartfelt emotion and gratitude for companionship, friendship and love.

This is not the occasion for a new drill or lawnmower or a vacuum or toaster! Valentine's Day gifts should be an expression of your love and affection. If you're stumped for ideas for gifts for Valentine's Day, you might get some inspiration here.

Plan a Getaway. This will take a bit of planning ahead, but spending time together is what Valentine's Day is all about. How about a romantic overnight or weekend at a Bed & Breakfast? You don't need to go far away, but just being out of the house will feel special. If you have children, ask a friend or family member to help out. Or to really splurge, plan a weekend cruise. Once you have your reservations, get a brochure and put it into your Valentine card. If you really can't take time away, make the day special with a "getaway" to an evening in front of the fireplace with romantic music or video and a cozy blanket.

Create a Card. Even if you don't feel very creative, you must admit that you could cut out a heart from a pretty piece of colored paper. Glue several layers together and add bits of ribbon, cutout flowers and your own personal sentiment. You're sure to find it in a memory box years from now!

Give a Gift That's Personal. To really make the day special, and one to remember, give a gift personalized for the recipient. Think monogrammed stationery, an embroidered pillow or a handkerchief.

Take a Trip Down Memory Lane. Gather together all the things that you can find from your special times together, such as theater tickets, a memento of your first "date" movie, photos of your honeymoon or a special occasion, and of course, any love letters that you might have sent to one another. Present them in a pretty box and enjoy looking at them and reminisce about past times. Be sure to continue to add to the box this year!

Don't Forget the Flowers. Florists are busy on Valentine's Day, and you'll pay a premium for their professional services. You might make your own arrangement. Add stalks of branch to the arrangement and add a special gift--anything small tied onto the branch with a slim ribbon. How about tickets to a concert or play, a tissue-wrapped piece of jewelry, or a tiny vial of cologne?

Cleaning Odds and Ends

Mini-blinds. Putting off the job? Can't blame you, but here's an easier way to clean them. For general cleaning fill a spray bottle half full with water add a squirt or two of Ivory liquid dish soap then finish filling with water. Ivory soap is inexpensive and makes a great all-purpose cleaner. Spray on a lint-free towel. Turn the slats toward you and wipe down going easy so you don't bend the slats. Reverse the slats, walk around behind the blinds and wipe once more. It only takes few minutes, so clean one set every time you dust to avoid that miserable buildup.

Pleated Cloth Shades. These shades present many cleaning problems. Never use a cleaner of any kind on day-night shades. They stain easily. Vacuum often to prevent dirt from taking control. Be sure to clean the bristles of your vacuum attachment before you vacuum.

Having your draperies cleaned is a snap with Guarantee System - following the manufacturer's instructions, we steam or dry clean your drapes - right on the rod!

Wood Window Shades. Vacuum regularly. To clean, remove and lay them on a towel on a linoleum floor. Scrub with a soft nylon brush dipped in Ivory soap and water.

Popcorn, Textured Ceilings and Wood Beams. Slip a lint roller replacement tube over a paint roller holder. Attach to a handle and roll the ceiling, removing dust and cobwebs without smearing the cobwebs everywhere.

Stone Fireplace Fronts. They are so warm and cozy in the winter and so miserable to clean in the spring. Foaming bathroom cleaner does a wonderful job on soot, but first saturate the bricks with an all-purpose cleaner and allow to soak a few minutes.

Thoroughly spray the bricks with tub cleaner. Scrub with a stiff bristle brush dipped in Ivory soap and water. Reapply the bath cleaner as needed. If the soot refuses to budge, resort to TSP (trisodium phosphate) found in hardware stores. It is toxic and not highly recommended, but it cleans bricks. Keep the room well ventilated, wear gloves and a mask, protect your skin carpet and any furniture close by.

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