

Flora & Fauna

## Stay Safe While Gardening

As the weather begins to warm up, it's time to start preparing the garden for this season's flowers and vegetables. Gardening is a great way to exercise, ease stress and put nutritious food on the table. However, it can also expose you to risks from sun, insects, equipment and chemicals. Here are a few suggestions on how you can keep yourself safe throughout this gardening season:

**Protect yourself from sun and heat.** Planting new bulbs and seeds with the sun warming your back may feel wonderful at first, but prolonged sun exposure can lead to painful burns and an increased risk of skin cancer. Try to garden early in the morning before the sun is at its peak. Remember to keep covered by wearing a wide-brimmed hat, long sleeves, sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher, lip balm with sunscreen, and sunglasses. Also, take regular breaks from the heat and drink enough water to replace what you lose.

**Tell insects to buzz off.** Try not to wear bright colors (which attract bees and wasps) when working in the garden. Wear long sleeves and tuck your pants into your socks, particularly if you see ants. Use a repellent that contains DEET and apply the insecticide permethrin on your clothes – it won't harm or stain them. Repellents must state any age restrictions, so read the label carefully before using the product on children. If you have questions about repellent safety, talk with your doctor or call the National Pesticide Information Center toll-free at 1-800-858-7378.

**Keep your tetanus vaccine current.** All adults should have a tetanus shot every 10 years. Tetanus lives in dirt and can enter your body through breaks in the skin, such as when you prick your finger on a thorn or accidentally cut your hand with a sharp pair of shears. People who garden are especially at risk, but a vaccine can help protect you.

**Use lawn and garden equipment and chemicals properly.** Wear safety goggles, gloves, long pants and sturdy shoes when using lawn mowers, roto-tillers, tractors or other equipment. Always read and follow instructions when using fertilizers or pesticides. Wear a mask if recommended. Wash up thoroughly after using chemicals.

**Mind your back.** Gardening, raking, mowing, hoeing and lifting can strain your back. Watch your posture and body mechanics. Instead of bending from the waist and stopping painfully, always bend at the knees. Be especially careful when you lift heavy items, such as bags of fertilizer or yard waste.

With a few precautions, your garden will bring a bounty of good health to you and your family the entire growing season!

## GUARANTEE SYSTEM.

1518 Steele Ave SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49507  
Phone: 616-451-0787  
[www.guaranteesystem.com](http://www.guaranteesystem.com)

## Cleaning Corner: Quick Cleaning Tricks

Here are three cleaning shortcuts you can do during the week that will save you time and make keeping a clean household a lot easier.

**Stop dusting.** Don't drive yourself crazy by trying to dust all those little tchotchkes. Clean glass and china knickknacks all at once by putting them in a mesh laundry bag and tucking them in the top rack of your dishwasher. Run a regular wash cycle *without* detergent and let them air dry.

**Double time.** Squirt a little baby shampoo or body wash onto a sponge and scrub the walls and tub while you're showering. The walls will get rinsed as you shower. Wipe them down with a towel when you're done to leave a streak-free finish.

**Suck it up.** Keep a cordless handheld vacuum under the bathroom sink so you can easily pick up stray hairs and spilled powder before they spread.

# April

- 1849 The safety pin is patented by Walter Hunt
- 1865 Abraham Lincoln makes his last public speech
- 1913 The 17th Amendment to the United States Constitution, requiring direct election of Senators, becomes law
- 1921 Iowa becomes the first U.S. state to impose a cigarette tax
- 1970 Apollo 13 is launched
- 1985 Coca-Cola changes its formula and releases New Coke. The response is overwhelmingly negative, and the original formula is back on the market in less than 3 months
- 1988 After spending a record 741 consecutive weeks (over 14 years) on the Billboard 200, Pink Floyd's album, Dark Side of the Moon, left the charts for its first time ever

# Health Tips: Keeping Eyes Healthy

Our eyes are incredible little machines. They let us see in color, perceive three dimensions, and recognize the subtle changes in another person's facial expressions. As we get older, it's a simple fact that our eyes get older, too. The most noticeable changes happen in our eyes around ages 40-60. We start pushing the page away to see it better or need more light in order to read. We become more susceptible to common eye ailments and diseases, too.

**Presbyopia** is the gradual inability to see things close-up, which many of us first recognize when reading a menu in the dim light at a restaurant. It happens when the lens becomes less flexible and loses its ability to change shape and focus on things nearby. This problem is easily corrected with glasses: bifocals or progressives, which provide more than one prescription in the same lens, or reading glasses, which can be obtained through a doctor's prescription or bought in the local drugstore.

**Cataracts** occur when proteins that make up the lens break down and clump together. As the damage builds, the lens grows cloudier. Everyone, by the time they reach their 60s or 70s, will have some translucence in their lenses; although some aren't bothered by it right away, or ever. People who spend a lot of time outdoors and have more exposure to direct sunlight are more susceptible to cataracts. The only long-term solution is surgery to replace the natural lens with an artificial one.

**Glaucoma** is a disease that causes damage to the optic nerve and progressively impairs peripheral vision. Sometimes, the disease narrows the field of vision to the point of blindness. The nerve damage is irreversible, but medications that reduce pressure inside the eye can sometimes stall the progression of the disease. Surgery can also be an option.

**Macular degeneration** is an eye disorder that makes it difficult to see fine details. The condition affects the macula, the part of the retina responsible for central vision. It is the leading cause of blindness in the United States for people over the age of 65. Vitamin C and E, beta-carotene, and zinc supplements can slow the progression of the disease. Some prescription medications have also been shown to stabilize vision, and even improve it.

## Tips for maintaining good eye health.

1. **Wear sunglasses to block ultraviolet rays.** Simply shielding your eyes from the sun or squinting on a bright day doesn't offer enough protection.
2. **Eat a diet rich in antioxidants that can slow cell damage.** Foods like kale, mustard greens, spinach, and fish are best.
3. **Avoid smoking.** Smoking affects more than just your lungs – it's a bad habit for your entire body.
4. **Get frequent exercise** to keep blood vessels, including those in the eyes, in good working order.
5. **Get regular eye exams.** People over 40 should have their eyes examined every two years, and then every year after age 60.

## Kid Corner: Eight Ways to Enjoy a Better Family Life

The best gift you can give your children is a happy and healthy family life. Today's schedules are jam packed with meetings, sports practices, meetings, and other obligations that can sometimes take away from the family unit. To help your family reconnect, try these helpful tips.

1. **Schedule one day a week that is designated as "family day."** Choose one day or one night each week where the family gathers to spend time together. All other plans and obligations must be scheduled around this time so there is nothing distracting from quality family time. This means all cell phones (those belonging to kids *and* adults) should be put away.
2. **Get down to your kids' level and play a game.** Ask your child to choose a favorite board or card game you can play. Games like Go Fish, Uno®, Slap Jack, and Memory can be played by almost any age level. You could also draw, paint or color together. Choose pages in a coloring book or try to come up with your own unique drawing theme such as "monsters waiting for a bus" or "monkeys at a party."
3. **Read to your children regularly and relate your own stories.** Research shows that reading books and stories aloud to young children can dramatically increase vocabulary and comprehension. It's also a great way for your children to learn more about you. Tell them about your favorite memories as a child. What games did you play? What goofy shenanigans did you get into?
4. **Help with homework.** Be proactive but patient. And if the subject is beyond your knowledge, look for a good tutor to help.
5. **Enjoy the great outdoors.** Get outside and take a walk together. Play "I Spy" as you walk, or encourage the children to point out any animals they see. What are the squirrels eating? Can you mimic a bird's call? Make your trip outside as interactive as possible.
6. **Schedule a family film night.** Allow each family member to take a turn picking out the movie of their choice and preparing the popcorn and beverages. You could also create your own family film. Work together to create a script and then break out the video camera to record your performance.
7. **Cook up some quality time together.** Baking, cooking and preparing food as a family is a wonderful and enriching experience. It's not only fun for kids to help in the kitchen, but it also makes them more excited to eat a meal that they helped prepare.
8. **Don't neglect your spouse or significant other.** It's important that you and your spouse have a strong relationship, too. So hire a babysitter and schedule a night where the two of you can get away to enjoy dinner and a movie.

## Pigeon Droppings

- 5 cups of your favorite crunchy cereal
- 3 cups of rice crisp cereal
- 2 cups of thin pretzel sticks
- 1 bag of white chocolate chips
- 2 1/2 cups of mini marshmallows

Mix all the dry ingredients in a large bowl. Melt the white chocolate in the microwave for about 1 minute. Pour the melted chocolate over the dry ingredients, toss, and spread on wax paper to cool. Once your masterpiece is cool, break it into chunks that look like icky pigeon droppings.

## Potty Jell-O

Purchase a replaceable potty pot for a child's training potty (you can find one at your local Target or Wal-Mart). Make lemon-flavored Jell-O in the potty pot and chill. Mix in bite-size Baby Ruth bars before the Jell-O sets.

## Blue Milk

Add a few drops of food coloring to a carton of milk. A tall glass goes well with Pigeon Droppings and Potty Jell-O!

## April Fool's Day Tricks

**At the house** – Unscrew the shower head and put in a non-toxic dye pellet (the kind used to tint children's bathwater), then reattach the showerhead. Your victim will be surprised when he/she sees blue water coming out!

**At the office** – Leave a phone message for the victim that says that a "Mr. Lyon" or "Mr. Behr" called and wants to be called back. Then list the phone number for the local zoo.

## Spring Closet Transformation

We've all got those overcrowded closets at home that are jam-packed with clothes and styles that span years, and perhaps even decades. Spring is here and so is another fashion season, so it's time to clean out that closet and simplify your wardrobe. Here are a few helpful tips on how you can easily clear out the clutter and update your look.

1. **Fashion show.** Before you buy any new clothes, invite some friends over and have them help you decide which items are keepers and which ones need to be retired. That simple black dress may always be a keeper, but that red and white blouse from the 80s will most certainly never come back in style. Afterwards, immediately donate what you don't want, or what doesn't fit. Don't let clothes that are too big or too small take up valuable space in your closet.
2. **Style file.** Compile fashion looks you love and would like to imitate. Collect pages from magazines and place them in a file folder. Use your style file to help determine your personal taste and what you want to add to your wardrobe. This will make shopping much easier later on.
3. **Be specific.** Before heading to the mall, make a very detailed list of items you need, then stick to the list. You'll be less likely to impulse buy (like splurging on a funky new blouse that doesn't go with any pants or shoes you own) and more likely to come home with exactly what you need for some great-looking outfits.
4. **Choose color.** Buying a few vibrant tees or scarves is an inexpensive way to indulge in this spring's hottest trends without breaking the bank. But first, you should know which hues work for you. Grab a pal and head to a store to try on shirts in every color. Take turns helping each other decide which colors look best. While red may be your favorite color, you may discover that a certain shade of green really makes your eyes sparkle!
5. **Total package.** Organize your closet into outfits. By hanging pieces that work well together beside one another, you'll find it much easier to create a complete "look" when you get dressed in the morning.

## **Carpet Talk: Cleaning Tile and Grout**

Just about everybody has some tile and grout in their home, usually in the bathroom or kitchen, that could use a little cleaning. If you have some grout that looks a bit discolored and needs to be lightened, try this at-home remedy.

**Step 1:** Add enough household bleach to a scouring powder to make a cleaning paste. Make sure to use a powder that does not contain ammonia, which produces a dangerous reaction with bleach.

**Step 2:** Scrub the paste over the dirty grout with a soft bristled brush. (An old toothbrush works great.) Then rinse with cool water.

**Step 3:** To clean particularly stubborn stains, leave a small amount of the cleaning paste on the stain and cover with plastic. This essentially creates a poultice that keeps in moisture and helps draw out the stain and reduce scrubbing time. Remove it the next day and continue the cleaning procedure.

**Note:** Be sure to wear rubber gloves and keep the area well ventilated. Once you've finished scrubbing, rinse thoroughly with water.

Of course, if serious cleaning needs to be done, call your carpet care professional. We've got specially designed tools and products that can power through the worse dirt and grime.



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1518 Steele Ave SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49507

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*Phone: 616-451-0787*

*Fax: 616-451-8303*

*www.guaranteesystem.com*

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