

Flora & Fauna

Get Your Garden Fix Year-Round

Passionate gardeners have a number of tricks to keep them happy when the weather's less than hospitable: Indoor plants, books, clubs and, nowadays, the web offers an amazing variety of sites to help soothe our green spirits when puttering isn't possible. One of the sites we found very helpful is newgardeners.com, but don't let the name fool you. Seasoned gardeners and newbies alike will enjoy the variety of plant-focused information on this site, launched to provide a cost-free alternative to all those gorgeous (pricey) home and garden magazines on newsstands.

We've often laughed at retail shops that advertise, "If we don't have it, you don't need it." That philosophy could easily be applied to this site. If your schedule is as crazy over winter as it is in the summer, you will appreciate a year-round 'cyberplace' that offers everything but a few extra hands to help plant your bulbs in the fall.

Bookmark newgardeners.com and carve out time to enjoy its features over the long winter. Featured articles and columns take even the most seasoned and dedicated plant fans through the hows, whens and wheres of starting and maintaining plots of every size. There's a plant directory that allows you to compare various types of flowers and veggies according to where you live and what you hope to accomplish. Additionally, you can order plants courtesy of a partnering link after you have learned which kinds are good fits for your area.

Not a place to stick to just plants and how-to articles, newgardeners.com can hook you up with wide variety of gardening supplies, too. This is particularly helpful if you're a seasoned planter in need of more efficient or sophisticated versions of tools you've already acquired. If you love to do your shopping online to avoid crowds and keep driving (and gas prices) to a minimum, this is your destination.

At the start of this article, we mentioned the fact that this website has everything you need and we're not joking. You can even retrieve your area weather information by keying in your zip code. Access it daily this spring and throughout the summer. It costs nothing and you can figure out exactly when enough rainfall will help your fertilizer work best.

Since its launch, newgardeners.com has gained many cyber-fans. Its "Garden Forum" gives you a chance to chat with folks around the country so no gardening question or concern you pose will likely go unanswered. You can also read garden-ing book reviews before you head to the store to invest in that guide to tomato planting. Better yet, read the review and reserve a copy at your local library.

By the way, if dressing green when you don your gardening gloves is a must for you, a collection of funny t-shirts will probably catch your eye, as will the site's gift shop's bountiful mix of everything from aprons and baby wear to a garden-funny outfit for your pooch.

We could go on, but we recommend you see for yourself how much you can learn on this informative (and pretty) website. When was the last time one destination promised so colorful a gardening fix throughout the long winter months ahead?

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Household Tips: Speedy Tabs Clean, Too!

The large white tablets many of us turn to when nothing else helps an upset stomach (such as Alka Seltzer®) have proven to be a real lifesaver for homemakers who have turned to them when they need to tidy up hard-to-clean projects. If you've got foil packets of these handy tablets and run into a couple of tough tasks during your cleaning routine, why not try these out?

- Drop two tablets into the toilet, wait 20 minutes, whisk with a brush and flush. The combination of acid and effervescence cleans vitreous china nicely.
- Drop two tablets into a grimy vase to remove stains that form at the bottom after floral waste has settled there.
- Make all types of jewelry sparkle by dropping two tablets into a glass, then immersing your gems, gold or silver into the bath for two minutes.
- Filling thermos bottles with coffee and other dark liquids leaves stains over time, so try putting four tablets in a water-filled thermos bottle and soaking for an hour (or longer).
- If drains are clogged, but the build-up isn't bad enough for a snake, three tablets may clear up the problem, offering a fix without putting toxic materials down the drain. Follow the tablets with a cup of white vinegar. Wait a few minutes, and then flush with hot water.

November

- 79 Mt. Vesuvius erupted, burying the Italian city of Pompeii
- 1512 Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel ceiling murals were finally completed and unveiled
- 1800 John Adams was the first U.S. president to move into the White House
- 1894 Dr. Roux, a Parisian researcher, announced his discovery of a diphtheria vaccine
- 1922 Anthropologist Howard Carter stumbled upon the tomb of Egyptian Pharaoh Tutankhamen
- 1939 Packard exhibited the world's first air-conditioned car at the Chicago Auto Show
- 1946 John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives
- 1959 The Rogers and Hart musical, *The Sound of Music*, opened on Broadway
- 1981 Record numbers of viewers saw Luke marry Laura on the ultra-popular daytime soap opera, *General Hospital*

Health Tips: Home-Grown Healing Remedies

Your great-grandma was right: nature heals if you know the right kinds of natural remedies for specific problems. We've unearthed an heirloom medicine cabinet full of fixes, just in time for Thanksgiving. If you're as thankful as we are for having good health, check these out. One of the best perks of using a home remedy is this: whether or not they work, you'll probably spend less money trying one out than you would on a pricey prescription at the pharmacy.

It's Easy Being Green: Most of us know that chlorophyll works great for sweetening the breath, but did you know it's a miracle worker on feet, too? Any plant that's vivid green could give your tootsies a delightful, refreshing makeover with little effort! Pick up a bottle of liquid chlorophyll next time you're at the drug store. Drop two to three teaspoons into a gallon of warm water and soak your feet for 15 minutes. Thoroughly dry your feet and cover with 100% cotton socks so your feet can breathe.

Banish Stomach Bloat: With the holidays coming, you can bet a family member will head for the buffet table one too many times. If you're the standard recipient of their moans, groans and complaints, get ready now. Some of the seasonings you used to prepare your favorite holiday dishes can come to a sufferer's rescue. Have complainers eat a small handful of anise, dill or fennel seeds. The compounds in these three herbs relax muscles in the digestive track and relieve gastric problems. As an added bonus, each also sweetens the breath.

Visit the Temple of Mint: Dull a tension headache by massaging your temples with essential peppermint oil (available at pharmacies and health food stores). Those who swear by this headache vanquisher cite a German study that stated, "Peppermint works as well as 1,000 mg. of acetaminophen, the main ingredient of aspirin..." Scientists believe this fix has something to do with peppermint preventing the body from sending pain signals to the central nervous system.

Take to Your Toes for Heartburn: Here's another remedy that challenges the imagination. Stand on a carpeted area. Roll up onto your toes (as high as you can), then allow your heels to drop quickly to the ground. Repeat 20 to 30 times. Use a chair as a prop if you think you might lose your balance. According to those who swear by this remedy, the toe rolls pull acid down. What have you got to lose but your heartburn?

Hiccough Remedy #400: If most of us had a nickel for every hiccough remedy we've heard about, we'd all be independently wealthy. Here's yet another solution with its own share of cheerleaders: Place a straw into a six-ounce glass of water, press the tips of your fingers into the indentations behind your earlobes (where the neck and jawbone meet) and drink through the straw. If this works as well as those who recommend it, your hiccoughs will be gone by the time you've finished drinking the water.

Hold the Hives: If the mere sight of a basket of strawberries makes your skin crawl because you can literally feel the start of a hives breakout, listen up. The moment you feel the aura, take 1,000 mg of vitamin C and 500 mg. of pantothenic acid (both available from drug and health food stores). The combination of natural ingredients helps your body produce antihistamines to keep your attack at bay.

Banish Tummy Turmoil: Few cultures on Earth are unaware of the benefits of chamomile. Ours is no exception. Steep one or two teaspoons of the dried flowers in boiling water to ease muscle spasms in the gastrointestinal tract, then wait for the soothing liquid to moderate the body's pepsin production. Chamomile teabags are gentler than the actual flowers, so if your stomach's extra sensitive, go for the bag.

Tell Your Kids to Watch Their Language

If you've traveled overseas, you know that education, in most countries, includes a mandatory second language. Youngsters so small they're barely able to carry a lunch box are given early training in at least one other language in most of the European countries, English being one of the most popular. Why do other nations put so much emphasis on bilingual abilities? No mystery. Children are like sponges, absorbing and internalizing this type of information at a brisker rate than adults. By offering a consistent program of languages, many children are literally growing up with a fluid understanding of English, a skill that is bound to make their future opportunities endless.

While the U.S. educational system doesn't mandate early language acquisition, there are still many public and private schools that have prioritized curricula in Spanish, French or German, and, these days, such languages as Japanese, Chinese and Farsi (a prominent language in the Arabic family). The world is growing smaller and this fact alone is a reason educators are re-evaluating the importance of bilingualism. They know that these skills not only arm a child with additional, future job skills, but language development has long been touted as a way to generate brain cells and accelerate overall learning.

If your household includes a second language-speaker, you are in the best possible position to make your child bilingual from the moment he or she begins to speak. Research proves that a child raised in a dual-language household will have the ability to develop amazingly accurate native-like pronunciation of words. That said, you should know that raising a child with multiple language skills isn't a cakewalk. The simultaneous learning of two languages is strongly affected by many factors that determine how fluent a child will be in later life. Here are two of the most influential:

- 1) Parents speaking only the native tongue at home provide their child a rich learning experience. If the child hears only Spanish at home, he or she is forced to learn not just the words but the inflections. Given the experience of hearing only English in the community and at school pushes a child's brain to acquire accent-free English language skills, too, so even if the child is never exposed to language classes, chances are, he or she will grow up speaking both like a native.

- 2) Some parents prefer that the child be raised speaking only the language of the culture in which the family lives. The parents may downplay speaking their native tongue at home for a variety of reasons. This lessens a child's ability to learn a second language because the consistency and repetition needed to teach that language is diminished. There is less of a chance that the child will grow up to speak the parents' language fluently, but that can be remedied by making sure the child receives language training at school as early as possible.

While each child has the ability to learn language at his or her own speed, attitudes, family stability, mobility and community all affect the rate at which a child learns language. If you are lucky enough to have a Polish-speaking grandma, an Italian-speaking uncle or an Arabic-speaking cousin in your household, take advantage of that fact by promoting, with pride, the ethnic roots that made your family what it is today. One of the best ways to do that is to pass along your linguistic heritage. Not only will your child's brain develop at a rate faster than contemporaries' but he or she will start out with a real jumpstart on a rich life and career.

Ingredients:

- 2 cups whipping cream
- 1/2 cup powdered cocoa mix (about 2.5 ounces)
- 1 - 10-inch angel food cake
- 1 - 7-oz. can Almond Roca candy

- 1) Place Almond Roca candy on heavy plastic or foil and freeze for 15 minutes.
- 2) Place the whipping cream in your mixer and begin to whip.
- 3) Slowly sprinkle in the powdered cocoa and continue to whip to stiff peaks.
- 4) Remove candy from freezer and crush with a hammer or mallet.
- 5) Slice cake in half horizontally.
- 6) Ice one layer with about 3/4" of whipped cream topping and sprinkle with half of candy.
- 7) Place other half of cake on top of first and frost surface with remaining whipped cream.
- 8) Press remaining candy over top and sides of cake.
- 9) Wrap with plastic and refrigerate about four hours (important).
- 10) Serve or freeze for a day and it will serve like ice cream cake!

Don't let the stress of Thanksgiving preparations get you into such a state you forget dessert on the other 29 days of the month! Surprise your family with a tasty recipe that takes few ingredients and little time to make. To add to its appeal, this treat can be stored in your freezer, then served as an ice cream cake on another day.



4 Great Decorating Secrets 4 You

If your taste trends toward "Pricey," but your budget says "No way!" you'll want to look upon your next decorating task as an adventure, pairing your desire for a terrific look with price tags you can actually afford. Take a tip from decorators who spend the big bucks when it comes to client-paid jobs, but when they refurbish their own place, the checkbook comes out infrequently. Their secrets? Replace money with instinct, imagination and creative know-how. Follow their lead and you can congratulate yourself on putting together a look that's décor magazine-worthy without having to clean out your savings to do it.

- 1) You don't have to be actively furniture seeking to take a furniture showroom break. Because these places are so big, they're made for walking – so stroll through your favorite one and bring along a critical eye while you get in some aerobic exercise. What colors call out to you? What styles? If you don't subscribe to pricey decorating magazines, this is the best way to see which trends in furnishings and accessories are in (and which are out). And if your favorite showroom has a clearance or bargain center, make sure you include this side trip on your tour.
- 2) Speaking of magazines, if you do subscribe to décor favorites, browse through them for ideas. Clip and file the ones that appeal most in a file cabinet, kitchen drawer, box or album. Browse the local library for decorating books (take along dimes for the copy machine if you strike gold) and unless you're fearful of developing an addiction to them, there are plenty of TV show makeovers that offer not just design help, but how-to instructions, too.
- 3) Check out thrift shops. We live in a material world and many people regularly change their minds about the style and type of furniture they like. This results in plenty of good-quality donations left to fund-generating resale or thrift shops. Finding just the right piece, then giving it a new life with slipcovers, paint or hardware may be your ticket to a breathtaking room, and if tax laws permit, you may be able to write this off as a deduction.
- 4) Be artsy. Original art work gets short shrift. We've seen kids crayon portraits, artfully framed and matted, rivaling the nicest litho, so choose your art touches creatively. Love a calendar you had or have? Purchase dollar store frames, insert the calendar pages, then arrange the 12 pieces of art in a dramatic grid on your wall. Better yet, stop putting off taking that watercolors class you've wanted to try over the years. You could wind up starring in your own room arrangement.

Carpet Talk: Go Green!

We're not talking about color, by the way. We're referring to the fact that it's possible to make environmentally responsible carpet choices and still stay within a budget! If a new carpet purchase is on your horizon, you're in a perfect place to do your part by considering advice from the National Parks Service of the Pacific West Region. Though the following suggestions were designed to help organizations and businesses make environmentally-wise carpet purchase choices, there's no reason why they can't help consumers like you do the same.

- 1) Do what you can to recycle your old carpet so it doesn't wind up in a landfill. Consider donating it or giving it away.
- 2) If you worry about spot problems because your active family lifestyle makes them inevitable, choose carpet tiles rather than rolls so you can replace a single tile if a stain can't be removed.
- 3) Ask your carpet salesperson to give you information on the recycling future of the fiber, backing and cushion of the carpet you're considering.
- 4) Choose your carpet for its fiber density and durability, especially if you experience heavy traffic at your home.
- 5) Choose colors and patterns that reduce wear. If you're not sure which styles qualify, ask your carpet care expert.
- 6) Become an expert when it comes to carpet fiber construction so you can help make a good, lasting purchase decision.
- 7) Consider choosing backing or carpet cushion that has a high-recycled content.
- 8) If you have questions about any aspect of your carpet choice or installation, check with your carpet care professional. You'll be delighted to find how much they know about the subject!

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851 West Fulton Street
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

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GUARANT@@ SYSTEM.

Phone: 616-451-0787

Fax: 616-451-8303

www.guaranteesystem.com

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