

## Marie do voodoo that she do so well

"Way down in Louisiana where the black trees grow,  
Lived a voodoo lady named Marie Laveau;  
She had a black cat tooth and a mojo bone,  
And anyone who saw her better'd leave her alone."

So go the opening lines from a novelty song of a few years ago.

Although she was neither the first nor the last of the voodoo queens of New Orleans, Marie Laveau was certainly one of the most interesting legendary figures of that area.

"The real Marie Laveau (rhymes with 'grow'), was a free mulatto woman born February 2, 1827. By the time she was 15, she had established her reputation as a 'conjure woman.' It was not much later in life that she became known as the undisputed 'Queen of the Voodoos.'"

There were no Protestant churches in New Orleans in the early days. Nearly all of the people there, both black and white, were Roman Catholic. Marie was baptized Catholic, and combined all the color and pageantry of the Catholic church with the ancient voodoo rituals her forefathers had brought with them from Africa.

Once a year, at midnight on June 24 (St. John's Eve), Marie and her friends held an elaborate ceremony in the swamp near New Orleans.

It was supposed to be secret, but



Witch Watch  
by GUNDELLA

Marie invited newspaper reporters, artists, politicians, and the like to attend these productions. And they did so, though usually they were masked or disguised.

As a voodoo lady, Marie dealt in charms: Charms to protect the bearer from evil, love charms, charms for health, and even charms for vengeance upon enemies.

To this day, local museums proudly display her gris-gris bags (little red bags filled with mixtures of herbs, roots, and mysterious kinds of dust-like particles).

Marie is buried in the old St. Louis cemetery on Basin Street. Her neat brick tomb bears the following inscription: "Famille Vve. Paris, nee Laveau."

But even today in New Orleans, (and sometimes in Detroit), a few chicken bones placed on a doorstep, a strange looking powder sprinkled on a door sill or a cross mark drawn in oil on the casing reminds us of Marie Laveau and her gris-gris bags, so long ago.

## Chance of frost is still strong

"How much risk you're willing to take is one of the two factors that should determine when you plant frost-sensitive plants," says Ceel Van Den Brink, Michigan State University meteorologist.

"The other is where you live. This determines the average date of the last frost and the probability of frost on any given date."

According to a chart of frost probabilities around the state, based on 45 years of weather records, the average date of the last frost in the metropolitan Detroit area is May 3. On that date, there is still a 50 per cent chance. The likelihood decreases after that time, until by May 18, there is only a 10 per cent chance that frost will occur.

"Gardeners need to be familiar with information on the likelihood of frost so they can make informed decisions about when to plant," Van Den Brink says. "Knowing that there's a 50 per cent chance of frost and deciding to risk a few plants is a lot different from not knowing and planting and losing your whole crop."

Planting by the calendar provides no guarantee, of course. Van Den Brink points out that the state is always setting new weather records. A frost in mid-June in southern Michigan is not likely, but it is possible.

"Gardeners who get the planting bug early would be wise to concentrate on cool weather crops like cabbage,

broccoli, lettuce, peas, onions and other crops that can tolerate frost and cool temperatures," Van Den Brink suggests. "If they think the possible benefits are worth the risk, they may go ahead and set out a few tomatoes or peppers or plant a couple rows of corn, but they shouldn't be surprised to lose it all to frost."

Covering a few plants to protect them from frost is another possibility. This may enable them to survive, but it may not guarantee early production. Though they may blossom, tomatoes will not set fruit when temperatures are below 50 degrees F. Beating the odds against survival does not necessarily mean an early harvest.

### Pool safety topic of county session

The Oakland County Health Division will offer a two-hour seminar for pool owners at 7 p.m. May 17 in the South Oakland Health Center, 2725 Greenfield in Southfield.

Topics to be discussed will include local building code requirements, pool

equipment and health and safety. A question and answer session will be conducted.

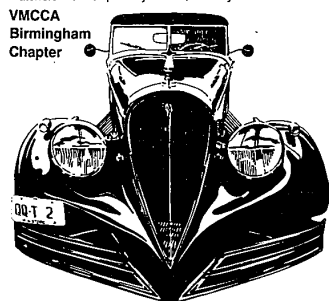
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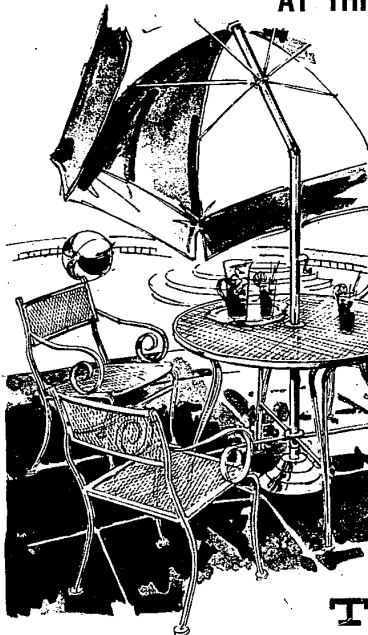
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