

Save a bit of summer color

Gardeners hate to see the "curtain come down" on their choice flowers and foliage. But you can save a little of summer.

The microwave oven has become a way of life for many households and it is easy to preserve plant material for winter bouquets with its use.

There are three possible agents to use with the plant material for drying: silica gel, an equal amount of borax and corn meal, and cat litter (I was threatened once with a lawsuit for using the name of the four-legged animal who uses it).

Select flowers which have not begun to turn brown. Clip the stems until they are 1/4 inch long. Select a glass or paper container deep enough so the drying agent covers the flower. Use a cannerole for large flowers.

Sprinkle a 1/4 inch layer of the drying agent in the bottom of the container. Place flower "bloom up." With a spoon carefully cover the plant material with your mix. Be sure each petal is covered.

Place one cup of water in the microwave oven for moisture. Microwave from 1-3 minutes depending on the size of the flower. A large mum could take

5-6 minutes. Tap flower gently as you remove it. Let flower stand in the agent for at least 10 hours. Tap floral sticks to form a stem.

WHEN YOU dry leaves they will retain their beautiful color with this method. Select a branch with these leaves with the largest leaf around four inches wide. Clean the leaves. Invert a 13-by-3 inch baking dish on the oven floor. Cover with a layer of paper towel. Place the branch on the towel and cover with another towel. Microwave for 30 seconds on high.

Turn the branch over and cover with a towel, microwave for one minute and

30 seconds on high. For drying larger branches you need more oven time. These directions are through the courtesy of a Magic Chef oven demonstration.

If you have green tomatoes on your vines you can save them for future eating. Before frost, gather all of the healthy fruit and wash.

WRAP with paper and store in shallow boxes in a cool place. At 55 degrees they will take about one month to ripen. Check the cache and toss out the ones which won't "play your game."

What do you do with animals who destroy your planted bulbs? I have

down to earth
Alice Burlingame

heard that human hair will keep them away from scratching and eating your bulbs. I just hope that I can get to my hairdresser first before all of you do to save "cuttings." You can have the local barbers save their cuttings for you.

A book which came out this year and holds your attention due to its abundance of photography and writing by a knowledgeable person is "Pruning," HP Books, Box 8367, Tucson, Ar. 85708, 160 pages, \$7.95.

It is written by Dr. Robert L. Steb-

bins and there are three or four color photographs on each page, plus drawings by Michael MacOakley. The latter was in town a few months ago to take pictures of trees and evergreens for a future book.

The training of fruit trees is well covered. The renewing of old plant material is an important part of the illustrations. The quality of the publication gives the reader a plus experience. It really teaches how you can give your plant material a rebirth.

An energy-efficiency showcase

By Sandra Ambruster
staff writer

HOW MUCH did you pay to heat your home last winter? Despite the mild winter, did your bills total \$500 or more?

Well, imagine paying just \$512 a year for both heating and cooling a home with 2,350 square feet. That's the estimate energy experts predict the owner of the Ener-Tek 1, featured in the Homearama '84, will pay.

This is the first year for the showcase of 12 homes, sponsored by the Builders Association of Southeastern Michigan Inc. The homes are in Troy's Fox Hall subdivision at Square Lake Road and Crooks.

Builders were selected on the basis of plans submitted, and among the seven was Professional Home Builder Group Inc.

Energy efficiency was the reason the Plymouth firm was among those selected to build the homes, according to Dennis Dickstein, president of Ralph

Manuel Associates, Realtors. Dickstein was on the architectural control committee which evaluated builders and their plans.

"There aren't too many who are building energy-efficient homes. Yes, they're more energy-efficient than they were 15 years ago, but they went further. They built the home with energy in mind 100 percent," Dickstein said.

CO-OWNERS Alan Mead and Stephen Eicholtz of Plymouth used such features as quad-pane windows, extra insulation and a double entry air lock to minimize heating and cooling costs.

"This is the most energy-efficient home we've done," said Eicholtz, who, along with his partner, has built custom homes in Brighton, South Lyon and Orchard Lake.

"Actually, this home is a prototype in the area of super insulation. We've learned a lot doing it," added Eicholtz, who started out building homes with his father. In 1973 he went on his own.

His partner, Mead, said his experience was in commercial carpentry construction, which he could "see heat going out the window."

"From hands-on experience, you know what's wrong with construction methods," Mead said.

BEFORE BUILDING the home, Mead and Eicholtz consulted with Princeton Energy Partners of Troy, a group affiliated with Princeton University, and with Owens-Corning Energy Design Services.

"We're really dedicated to what we do," Eicholtz added.

Princeton Energy Partners aided in the design and did a lot of the insulation work. Eicholtz said that after the home was built, the company inspected the home for heat loss with an infrared camera and tested for air infiltration by pressurizing the house.

Owens-Corning did a scientific study that came up with the \$512 figure, Eicholtz said.

"If we followed the Michigan Energy Code, it would cost \$1,300 for heat only," he said. "So I figure this house pays back \$125 a month."

The three-bedroom home is priced at \$157,000, but that's not the base price. That figure includes the lot, all options such as a fireplace, solid oak doors and trim and energy-efficient items.

WHAT YOU get for that price is an outside wall with double two-by-four, 10 inches of fiberglass and one inch of Styrofoam insulation. The outside joints of Styrofoam are taped. The outside walls are wrapped with Tyvek, an air-infiltration barrier, on the outer side, and a plastic, polyethylene barrier is placed on the inner side.

The ceiling has 12 inches of insulation, and the basement has two inches of Styrofoam, keeping it at an even 60 degrees year-round.

Windows are "state-of-the-art," Eicholtz said, with four panes of glass measuring two inches thick.

Entry to the home is through double steel insulated doors into a double air lock that prevents the great room of the house from filling with cold air when the door is opened.

To prevent stale air from stagnating

in the air-tight house, the builders have used vaulted ceilings in the open floor plan of the great room and dining room as well as the bedroom. The large volume of air from those rooms is circulated by a ceiling fan and highly placed furnace vents.

"The open living plan allows good cross ventilation," he said.

DOORS OPEN from the great room and the bedroom onto a backyard deck.

In the kitchen, matching ceramic tile is used on the floor and counters. Oak cabinets match doors and woodwork throughout the house, and inside provide drawers, cookie sheet storage areas and smelish shelves or lazy Susans for maximum efficiency.

Skylights in the two bathrooms and what Eicholtz calls they're "little six."

"We feel we had to sacrifice a little (heating energy) for light since there are no windows on the east side of the house," he explained.

Eicholtz said he thinks the building industry is "on the road to recovery," but builders will have to work harder.

"People are looking for quality and value," he explained.

Although the company is from Plymouth, Eicholtz said that the Ener-Tek 1 house, at 5391 Denton in Troy, will remain the company's model.

Homearama is open through Oct. 17. After that date, those interested in viewing the home can reach Eicholtz at the company's Plymouth phone number, 459-0763.



DEBORAH DOOKER/staff photographer

The spacious great room of the house, built by , has vaulted ceilings, a fan and furnace registers placed high on the wall to permit good air circulation. The insulated steel doors lead into a double entry air lock. The model is promotions representative Laurie Washotzki.



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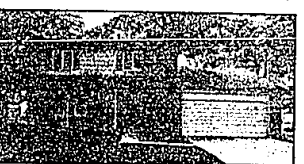
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