

# Share growing pains, successes

GARDEN SPOT



MARTY FIGLEY

For several months this column has been appearing in both the Oakland and Wayne county editions of the newspaper. You folks in Wayne County and I will have to get to know one another a little better!

I invite all readers to let me know about your special successes (and perhaps failures — for how else can we learn?), so that we can share them. Send information to me at the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham 48009.

Desmond Goodman of Farmington Hills called with his success story. The soil around his home is clay, as it is in many areas, so he tried a new method of growing tomatoes and is very pleased with the result.

"I plumped" three bags of blended organic sedge peat on the

ground, slit them open and planted two beefsteak tomato plants in each," he said. "I bought the peat at Meijer and the 12- to 18-inch plants at Tony's on Warren in Inkster."

Goodman sprayed them periodically with malathion, and then as the plants matured, fertilized them with an Ortho granular tomato fertilizer (5-10-10) about once a month.

In mid-August the blossoms began to form and the fruit ripened quickly in the southwestern exposure. By the end of August he had harvested at least a bushel.

"The flavor is great. I never had good luck before with tomatoes."

He has shared his bounty with appreciative neighbors.

The tomatoes are growing against a western rail fence with shrubs on the other side. The fence and tomato cages keep the plants upright, although Goodman has decided that next year he will try a smaller variety because the tomatoes and vines are so heavy the plants break.

As well as support for the tomato plants, the fence will be useful

when there is a frost warning. He plans to tack a tarp to the top of the rail to cover the plants to prolong the harvest.

## Recipe for success

1 cup cooked Swiss Chard (Beta vulgaris) for the first time and we enjoyed it very much. You might want to plant seeds next spring.

The recipe I used is from "Organic Gardener's Edible Plants" by Rosalind Creasy. It contains the most up-to-date information on the subject. Edible plants — veggies, fruits, nuts and herbs — do have a place in the landscape and she shares her experiences and how to accomplish this. Information about growing, caring for, harvesting and preparing is included in a well-organized format.

The recipe is simple and can be used for other "greens":

Sweet Sour Sauce for Greens  
6 slices bacon, cut into small pieces (I used grease from Italian sausage)  
1/2 cup onion, chopped  
3 teaspoons sugar

1/2 teaspoon salt  
2 teaspoons flour  
1/4 cup vinegar  
one-third cup water

Brown bacon and remove from pan. Fry onion in drippings until golden brown, blend in ingredients, add liquids, stirring until thickened and bubbly. Remove from heat. Add bacon, pour sauce over your choice of raw spinach. (I removed the ribs from the chard, cut the leaves coarsely and cooked them in a bit of water for about five minutes before pouring the sauce over. I omitted the bacon.)

## Garden topics

Three other books, the latest in Van Patten's Organic Gardener's Series, are "Organic Gardener's Basics" by Barbara P. Lawton and George F. Van Patten, "Composting" by Steve Solomon and "Annals" by Peter Loewer. Each well-written, informative, soft-cover book is \$12.95 and can be obtained by calling the distributor, Logos Publisher's Consortium, at 1-800-626-4330.

I lecture on a number of gar-



MARTY FIGLEY

It's in the bag: Desmond Goodman of Farmington Hills shared his success story for raising tomatoes. It involved planting tomatoes in bags of blended organic sedge peat.

dening subjects and would be happy to speak to your group. When I meet my readers I find what various clubs are doing and it is always a pleasure to meet face to face.

When I visited the Orchard Lake Garden Club, I learned that the members are selling handmade birdhouses for a bench to be installed at the West Bloomfield

Woods Nature Preserve. The birdhouses are also available at Farmers Florist in Birmingham.

Marty Figley is an advanced master gardener based in Birmingham. You can leave her a message by dialing 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone, then her mailbox number, 1853. Her fax number is 644-1314.

# Seminars offer advice about interior design

BY JOAN BORHAM

SPECIAL WRITER

"The Michigan Design Center in Troy, as part of an ongoing campaign to present designers as 'real people,' sponsored a series of lectures by and about designers at its recent 'Design Live!' program.

Subtitled 'A Day with Designers,' the seminars covered topics that most interest (and intimidate) consumers: color, accessories, antiques, lifestyles and design, and how to choose and work with a designer.

Who could be intimidated by someone who admits to owning 21 pairs of purple shoes? P.K. Fields-Helm of P.K. Fields Interiors in Farmington advocates looking into your closet if you think you don't know what colors you favor, or that favor you.

## Color cues

"I could have sworn I didn't like purple," said the ebullient Fields-Helm in her seminar, "How to Use Color with Confidence." "But there were those shoes, and a pair of purple cowboy

boots, to boot!

"If this happens to you, it doesn't mean that you should live in purple rooms. You can indulge your color preferences with pillows, art glass or other accent pieces.

"Color is the most exciting tool we have to use in our homes. Sometimes we forget about color, and do our homes all neutral to be safe, or we might sell, or we're afraid we won't like a room that isn't beige. To be exciting, a neutral environment has to have fabulous accessories, textures and other visual stimulation."

## Brushing up

Fields-Helm reminded her audience that painting a wall is the least expensive thing you can do.

Two or three gallons of paint and a weekend is all it takes to redecorate. But don't try to economize with cheap, cheap paint. It won't cover as well and the colors won't be as true as a good quality, medium-priced paint.

And, if you're painting darker color over white walls, remember

"Color looks darker next to original white," Fields-Helm said.

"I count on clients to panic and call me. I tell them 'The whole room will read it the way you want it to read when it's finished. Be patient.'"

## Personal touch

If you have good taste in clothes, why can't you design your own home? Maybe you could, but look at it this way: Even if your clothes suit you perfectly, you're not going to wear them for 15 years, which is the average length of time between redecorating projects. (Not to mention those great buys in the back of the closet that you never wear.)

"An interior designer will review your personal needs," said Susan Zinger, MDC vice president.

"What style do you prefer? What colors? Do you have children or pets? Do you entertain often? Based on your profile, he or she will suggest a design that will last, based on proper space planning, lighting, your lifestyle and the needs of your family, and your

budget."

Zinger recommends that you interview at least three designers before choosing one. Make sure the chemistry is right between you.

Do some homework: Go to designer show houses such as Detroit Symphony Showhouse in Bloomfield Hills in October. Make notes of what you react to, either positively or negatively, and note the names of designers whose work you love. For over shelter magazines and save pictures of rooms you like.

"It will be easier for you and for the designer if you've developed ideas of what you want to live with," Zinger said. "A good designer wants you to have a living environment you're happy with, composed of elements that make your home individually yours."

## Be comfortable

"Ignore peer pressure" was the advice given by Gene Galley of Joseph Productions in Southfield, who discussed "The Way You Live — Lifestyles, Function and

## Aesthetics in Design."

"Interior design is like the fashion industry — there's no one look for everybody," said Galley, who is also an instructor at Eastern Michigan University.

"The way you live and entertain in your space should determine the way you decorate. Never mind your friends and neighbors: Be as conservative or daring as you're comfortable with."

Galley emphasized the importance of scale in choosing furniture.

"It's a matter of balance and proportion. Often people get furniture of a different scale and throw it all together, thinking it's an eclectic look, but really it's just an attic look."

"If you have a room that's all modern and sleek, you can't just add a heavy, massive piece. It will throw the whole room off."

For those who want a formal look, but are afraid that the appropriate fabrics are too fragile to live with, Galley recommends chenille. It has the nap of velvet, but it's more durable.

# Book sale scheduled

Popular Observer & Eccentric columnist Judd Arnett will help launch the Fall Book Sale Friday, Oct. 15, at the Baldwin Public Library, 300 W. Merrill in Birmingham.

That's the preview night for the Friends of the Baldwin Library fund-raiser that makes hundreds of hardcover and paperback volumes available at prices from 25 cents and up.

The book sale will be open to the public Saturday-Monday, Oct. 16-18. Hours are 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday.

Arnett has donated 10 boxes of volumes from his library for the sale. He will be on hand to chat with Friends members and guests 7-9 p.m. at Friday's preview. A live auction of unusual books is also scheduled for that evening.

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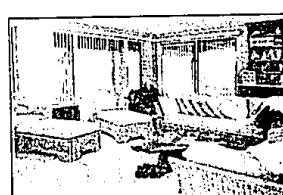
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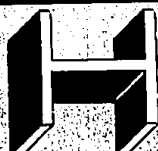
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