

## Nifty gadgets give gardeners a helpful hand

BY DONNA MULCAHY  
SPECIAL WRITER

Gardening, like everything else in life, is easier when you have the right tools. I asked some gardening experts to tell me which ones they'd recommend and here's what they said.

Brookstone, which has locations at the Somerset Collection-South in Troy, Twelve Oaks Mall in Novi and Lakeside Mall in Sterling Heights, has lots of nifty gardening gadgets. I heard that from several people and they were right.

One of the things there that caught my eye is the electronic Home & Garden Whiz, \$50. It looks like a handheld calculator, but contains thousands of gardening and household hints. It can tell you what types of plants work best under certain conditions, how they should be planted and much more.

### SHOPPING CENTERED



DONNA MULCAHY

Other neat things at Brookstone include:

- A five-piece, hand-held, garden tool set and matching beige and green canvas tote. Together, they're \$50. Bought separately, the tool set is \$35 and the tote is \$25. The tools include a cultivator, fork, planter, trowel and narrow weeder, all with a comfortable grip and made out of rustproof, die-cast aluminum.

- A padded, steel-frame platform for kneeling or sitting, \$30.

- A 16-piece Gardener's Choice Tool Kit, complete with 16 tools and a green plastic carrying case that has a parking spot for each of them, \$75.

- A garden seat/tool caddy with 12 tools, \$100.

Mike Bovio, purchasing manager for English Gardens, which has four locations, including one in West Bloomfield, recommended the following things.

Whisk Rake, by Lewis Tool. It's a small, six-inch rake the size of a whisk broom and costs \$12.98. "It's great for raking under low-growing shrubs and perennials," Bovio said.

Grow-through plant supports, about \$8, by Rainbow. They look like a wire grid shelf, supported by plastic-coated legs. Like tomato cages, they're used to prevent plants from flopping over and must be set in place early in the growing season before the plants are too big.

Gardener's Lever Loops by Bosmere, \$2.98 for a package of 50. They're little plastic clips that open and close with a squeeze of the thumb. Use in place of string or twist ties on tomato plants and vines.

Hide-A-Guide garden hose guiding system, \$3.99 by Aquapore Moisture Systems. When not in use, the guide can be pushed flush into the ground to prevent mowing problems.

Floral snips by Fiskars, \$5.98. They're great for delicate shaping and dead-heading, Bovio said.

Bill Saxton, co-owner of Saxton's in Plymouth, which sells gardening and power equipment, recommended Green by Greenview. It's a chemical that stops weeds from spreading by preventing seeds on the surface of the ground from taking root. It costs about \$20 to cover 2,500 square feet.

Saxton, whose father founded the store in 1928, also recommends Mantle portable gasoline tillers, \$319; the Ames plastic planter's wedge, for sitting on and storing tools, \$69.95; Permacscape for Trees, a mat made out of recycled tires to put around trees and prevent weeds, \$16.49; and Coronna hand tools with comfort grips, about \$7 to \$10.

Denny Snell, garden store manager for Bordine's Nurseries in Rochester and Clarkston, recommended the Gold Digger, a new tool with a 3-foot handle and several different heads for edging, planting and weeding, \$36.95.

Another new product he likes is The Soil Scoop by Garden Works, \$16.98. It looks like a serrated spoon and is good for scooping, digging and tilling soil in a pot.

He also recommended Lewis Lifetime hand tools, about \$10 each; tile joint weeder for picking weeds out of sidewalk cracks, \$5.99; and electronic pH meters, which start at \$9.98.

Happy gardening!

## The Saks experience

### Somerset expansion aims to make it fun for shoppers

While Saks Fifth Avenue was pleased to announce the opening of a 40,000-square-foot expansion of the Men's Store at its Somerset South location in Troy in mid-April, it's already apparent that all of the changes involved will be more than pleasing to its patrons. And, that's intentional, of course.

Indeed, few shoppers will even notice that such major construction work is going on. Yet, the major changes at the store aren't taking place gradually as the Somerset store becomes Michigan's largest and most complete Saks outlet.

For example, last Thursday the entire Men's Store made a coordinated move from several locations into its new consolidated location on the first level of the new addition, which defines the western boundary of the Saks building, facing Coolidge Highway. What the customers saw Thursday morning was a complete and expanded collection of designer sportswear, clothing, footwear and accessories on display, all in one location, with added services like a Humidor and an exemplary Men's Fitting Complex for on-the-spot custom tailoring and even made-to-order shirts.

Kim Nye  
store manager

All of it was ready for business by opening time.

What they didn't see were the 60 Saks employees who finished a busy workday Wednesday, then stayed after the mall closing at 9 p.m. working into the wee hours to move men'swear stock, displays and set up registers and furnishings in their new locations.

The new Men's Store carries designer selections which include Giorgio Armani, Canali, Corneliani, Hickey Freeman, Donna Karan, Calvin Klein, Hugo Boss and Oxford. For store manager Kim Nye — who was among the late-staying workers Wednesday night — the Saks Somerset store expansion is a personal dream come true. An anchor at the Somerset location for the past 31 years, the Saks Fifth Avenue site now expands by more than one-



On the move: Helping set up stock displays and handle last minute arrangements in Saks Fifth Avenue's new Men's Department are visual manager Michael Knicely, left, and visual stylist Bill Fuller, early Thursday morning before the opening hour.

third of its previous 125,000-sq.-ft. size.

Nye, a Bloomfield Hills native now living in Troy, began her retailing career with Saks while working in the Somerset store after graduation from Michigan State 18 years ago. The personal meaning of the expansion and renovation was obvious as she stood in the new Men's Store area, understating her own enthusiasm with a simple: "It's wonderful to have all this room, now — and to see all of this here in one spot. Our customers will love it."

Nye took Eccentric staffers on a quick pre-opening tour of the new Men's Store facilities Thursday morning, right after that late-night relocation, and then expanded our tour to include a look at what is happening upstairs on the Second Level of the new addition, too.

There, we found the spacious new Chanel Ready-to-Wear boutique. There's also an elegant St. John Shop,

a Birger Christensen Fur Salon and Fifth Avenue Club Suite. Each area is separate and spacious. The expansion also puts the spotlight on new and enlarged designer collections, including Ann DeMuelemeister, Etro, Donna Karan Signature, Ralph Lauren Collection, Escada, Armani le Collezioni, Valentino Boutique, Zoran, Alberta Ferretti, Max Mara, Piazzi Sempione, Missoni and Prada.

Only a first-time Saks visitor would even think about asking if the regular patrons might find all the relocation of sales areas, stock and product during the reconstruction and renovation, ... well, mightn't it be disconcerting or confusing? After all, it is rare to find a store undergoing such a complete and major overhaul while still remaining open for business.

"We've planned to do it, and do it well," Nye said. "That's the only way we know at Saks. Shopping is supposed to

be a pleasant, fun, relaxing experience."

She pointed out the finished walls, installed to screen construction areas during store hours, noting few shoppers have even realized that work was going on.

As for finding the merchandise in its new relocations, all the store employees are making it a personal duty to ease any confusion and make it easy for patrons — and for a Saks shopping excursion, that says it all.

The complete remodeling, including a new Elizabeth Arden Spa, will make the Saks Somerset location the premier Saks Fifth Avenue site in the region.

The majority of reconstruction and renovation — including new elevators — is expected to be complete before Christmas 1998, says Nye, but some remaining detail work will go over into 1999.

## ADDED ATTRACTIONS

News of special events for shoppers is included in this *Eccentric* information to: *Malls & Mainstreets*, c/o *Observer & Eccentric Newspapers*, 805 East Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009; or fax (248) 644-1314. Deadline: Wednesday 5 p.m. for publication on Sunday.

### WEDNESDAY, MAY 13

**Health-O-Rama Bonus**  
Enrich Health-O-Rama Bonus Days, for those age 18 or over, provides free, confidential testing and services, including height-weight, blood pressure, hearing, vision, glaucoma, nutrition counseling, pulmonary function, medication counseling, podiatry, and Health Education literature and displays. Optional tests are also available for nominal fee. Co-sponsored with Botsford General Hospital. Wednesday and Thursday, May 13-14, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.

Livonia Mall, Seven Mile/Middlebelt. (248) 476-1160.

### THURSDAY, MAY 14

**Wardrobing seminar**  
Liz Claiborne Seminars feature dresses and sportswear, commented by Liz Claiborne specialist, Heather Guild. Elizabeth Dept. 1:00 p.m.

Hudson's, Somerset Collection. Big Beaver/Coolidge. Troy. (248) 816-4000.

### FRIDAY, MAY 15

**Symphonic winds**  
The Novi Concert Band appears from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Livonia Mall stage, near Crowley's, to feature music from Broadway, marches, light classics and pop. The band, a symphonic wind ensemble formed in 1982, performs outdoor concert throughout the metropolitan area.

Livonia Mall, Seven Mile/Middlebelt. (248) 476-1160.

### SATURDAY, MAY 16

**Barbie doll show**  
It's the All Fashion Doll Show at Meadowbrook Village Mall, featuring Barbie Dolls. Appraisals are available during show hours and admission is free. 10 a.m.-9 p.m.

Meadowbrook Village Mall, N. Adams/Walton. Rochester Hills. (248) 375-9451.

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### Keeping the peace

Macomb Mall's own T.C. Bear hosts a sing-a-long show for kids from ages 2 to 13, featuring T.C.'s Tips for Keeping the Peace — learning peaceful ways to resolve conflicts they face in their lives without resorting to violence. There's also an essay contest (forms at the Mall's Information Center available through May 16), with a \$25 gift certificate prize for youngsters writing about an "Act of Peace," experienced or witnessed. Show (near Sears entry) hours: 11 a.m., 1:00 and 3:00 p.m.

Macomb Mall, Gratiot/Masonic, Roseville. (810) 293-7800.

### MONDAY, MAY 18

**Informal modeling**  
Andre Laug's Spring '98 Special Order Collection, informal modeling. Designer Salon, second floor. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Saks Fifth Avenue, Somerset Collection. Big Beaver/Coolidge. Troy. (248) 843-9000.

### TUESDAY, MAY 19

**Channel showing**  
Chanel Spring '98 Special Order Collection, informal modeling with special representative. Designer Salon, second floor. Tuesday and Wednesday, May 19-20. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Saks Fifth Avenue, Somerset Collection. Big Beaver/Coolidge. Troy. (248) 843-9000.

### THURSDAY, MAY 21

**Saks shows Lilli**  
Lilli's Spring '98 Special Order Collection, infor-

mal modeling with special representative. Designer Salon, second floor. Thursday and Friday, May 21-22. 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Saks Fifth Avenue, Somerset Collection. Big Beaver/Coolidge. Troy. (248) 843-9000.

### WEDNESDAY, MAY 27

**McFadden showing**  
Mary McFadden's Spring '98 Special Order Collection, informal modeling special representative. Designer Salon, second floor. Wednesday and Thursday, May 27-28. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Saks Fifth Avenue, Somerset Collection. Big Beaver/Coolidge. Troy. (248) 843-9000.

### SATURDAY, MAY 30

**Sears auditions kids**  
Sears is hosting a search at its Oakland Mall location to find the "Sears Kid Best Reporter" for the Detroit Shock, of the Women's National Basketball Association. Youngsters ages 8 through 16 will try their hand at sports reporting as audition judges entrants on creativity, delivery and poise. Winner will attend a Shock home game to cover the live-action and other prizes. Sears is an official sponsor of the WNBA. Auditions are Saturday, May 30, noon-2 p.m.

Sears, Oakland Mall. John R/14 Mile Road. Troy. (248) 597-4100.

### WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24

**Rock-N-Roll artistry**  
Huffs Promotions brings the "Rock-N-Roll Fine Arts Show" to the Westland Center, featuring artwork by such artists as John Lennon, Bob Dylan, Ron Wood, David Bowie, Yoko Ono, Ringo Starr, Donna Summer, Gerry Garcia and other icons from the Rock generation. The exhibit was a feature at the opening of the Rock-N-Roll Hall of Fame and has toured the country. It's more than a display, the artwork is also available for purchase. Opens Wednesday and runs through Sunday, June 28.

Westland Center, West Warren/Wayne. Westland. (313) 425-6001.