

This year celebrates vinca, spinach

The National Garden Bureau celebrates 2002 as The Year of the Vinca and The Year of the Spinach.

We are all familiar with the popular *Vinca minor* often grown as evergreen groundcovers in shady areas. Generally the flowers are blue; some are now available in white or pink.

Vinca major is also a trailing plant with soft green, variegated whitish-yellow foliage and is often used in containers because of its attractive trailing habit.

The vinca the NGB is celebrating is the annual summer-flowering vinca, *Catharanthus*.

Unlike the perennial ground-



MARTY FIGLEY

blue.

At one time there was some confusion about its true botanical name, but now this flower is *Catharanthus*.

The species name is *C. roseus*, which means rose-col-

ored. Most modern cultivars are the result of hybridizing between *C. roseus* and other *Catharanthus* species. Are you thoroughly confused? This is no April Fools joke!

The species *C. roseus* is rosy pink with a small mauve "eye" at the center. There is also a white form. The newest vinca is "Jais Scarlet Eye," an All-American Selection for 2002.

Vinca has been grown for centuries in Europe, India, China and America. In European countries it was used as a medicinal to treat coughs, sore throats, and eye and lung infections. Folklore informs that it was also used in treating diabetes.

In the 20th century researchers discovered that it contains dozens of alkaloids — some lower blood sugar levels and blood pressure. It was discovered in the 1950s that two alkaloids are the source of anti-cancer drugs.

The NGB urges people not to use this plant for medicinal purposes, but to enjoy its beauty in the garden.

Seeds of vinca can be planted indoors now so they'll be ready to be set out when the ground is warm. The plants don't like cold or cool temperatures or too much moisture. They need total darkness to germinate. Follow directions on the package.

When buying plants from a nursery, choose those with bright green foliage — avoid yellowed leaves and/or leggy plants.

Flowering vines will be available at nurseries in a four-pack. Plant them 8 to 12 inches apart for a border edging, or 6 to 8 inches for use as a ground cover. Space trailing vines 12 to 14 inches apart. Set them at the same level they were growing in the potting soil.

The last step is to water well at soil level; try not to wet the foliage. Mulch the plants and fertilize monthly with a granular or

water-soluble fertilizer. When established, water infrequently.

Spinach

Spinach is one of the healthiest greens you can eat, raw or cooked, and it's so delicious!

Much has been written about this vegetable lately. It has been used as a culinary staple for centuries. In fact, it originated so long ago in Asia that the exact location is unknown. It was introduced into Europe in the 15th century. Even Thomas Jefferson grew it in his garden.

The seeds are either round or prickly; no indication that the leaves will be crinkled or smooth. Much research is being done so that more disease- and pest-resistant varieties will be available.

Spinacia oleracea, its botanical name, is interesting. *Spinacia* comes from the Latin word for spine and refers to the prickly seed coat. The species name, *oleracea*, refers to a plant that is edible.

There are two major types of leaf textures: smooth with light to dark green leaves with an oblong shape, or thicker, rounder, darker green crinkled or smooth, found in savory spinach. Either

makes a very appetizing salad.

This cool weather crop grows well in early spring or fall. It takes 30 to 45 days after planting the seed until harvest. Now is the time to plant seeds outdoors — as soon as the soil is workable.

The NGB suggests sowing seeds indoors if planning for a fall crop (August is usually too hot), or if you're going to grow the spinach in containers, or among other plants so the starts can be more easily spaced when setting in the ground.

Spinach likes a rich garden soil and a pH between 6.5 and 7.5 (add lime if it is more acidic). For a longer harvest, sow every week to 10 days for three to four weeks. Most varieties take four to six weeks to mature.

Spinach needs a lot of nitrogen for healthy, abundant foliage; a 6-4-1 ratio is fine. Cultivate gently to remove weeds and water often.

Marty Figley is an advanced master gardener based in Birmingham. You can leave her a message by dialing (734) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone. Her fax number is (248) 644-1314.



Dog of the week: This extremely well-mannered girl was a stray, without food or water. She tried to attach herself to anyone who would give her attention. Mindy is a 2-year-old Lab/Chow mix with a stunning wavy, shiny, black coat and chestnut eyes. She is an absolute joy to have nearby. She doesn't jump, she's friendly and very social. She would make an excellent family pet. Mindy is lonely living in a cage and is waiting for someone to give her a second chance. If you're willing to invite this affectionate dog into your home, please call or visit The Michigan Humane Society Westland Shelter, (734) 721-7300. Mindy's ID number is W36183.



Cat of the week: Lucy is a beautiful Domestic Shorthair whose owner took her into the shelter because she was jealous of other animals in the house. She's a really sweet and happy feline and would love to have a family where she is the only pet. She's loyal, declawed, spayed, friendly and likes to cuddle. This 4-year-old is ready for a home today. Cat season has hit the shelters and many are becoming overcrowded with unwanted homeless cats and kittens. To save one, like Lucy, call the Michigan Humane Society of Rochester Hills (248) 852-7420. Her tag number is R26814.

PLUMBING TIPS HIGH PERFORMANCE TOILET DELIVERS A MIGHTY FLUSH!



Here is a low-consumption toilet that doesn't sacrifice performance! TOTO, the world's largest manufacturer of toilets, offers a full line of great flushing toilets. These high performance toilets feature:

- Industries largest trapway
- 3" flush valve vs. standard 2"
- Siphon jet in the bottom of the bowl to remove waste fast.

There are many models to choose from. Building or remodeling insist on the best. TOTO toilets. Rated Consumers Digest best buy! For more information and a free guide on selecting the right toilet, call

Advance Plumbing Supply Company at 248-669-7474 or visit us at www.advanceplumbing.com.



TOTO® 1.6 GPF®
Ultamax Toilet with Soft-Close Seat. www.advanceplumbing.com

Jeffrey Moss is vice president of Advance Plumbing Supply Co. in Walled Lake and Detroit. Call (800) 560-7474 toll-free. Have a plumbing question? Write to Jeffrey at Advance Plumbing Supply Co., 1977 Maple Rd., Walled Lake, MI 48390.

GIANT WAREHOUSE

SAVINGS

AT SHERWOOD STUDIOS

APRIL 6 & 7

50-70% OFF

EVERYTHING IN THE WAREHOUSE

Choose from a Great Selection of Fine Furniture

Leather Sofas
Love Seats Chairs
Bedrooms
Dining Rooms
Occasional
Exotic Woods
Tables and much more!

SHERWOOD STUDIOS

WAREHOUSE

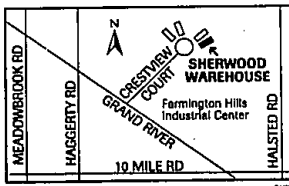
24760 Crestview Court
Farmington Hills

248-476-3760

10 AM - 5 PM



Groups Sold as Complete Sets
Immediate Delivery
All Sales Final
*mfrs sugg retail



April Spring Sale

The Month of April
10% off
All Granite in stock

Marble - Granite - Silestone®

Why buy countertops at retail when you can buy direct. Since we fabricate at our own locations, we beat the "Big Box" store pricing. We offer quick delivery and personalized service.

Granite 3cm thick!

\$45.95	S/F	Rosa Beta
\$45.95	S/F	Luna
\$45.95	S/F	Gold
\$49.95	S/F	Baltic
\$49.95	S/F	Impala
\$52.95	S/F	Verde Butterfly
\$52.95	S/F	Absolute Black

All prices include installation & measurement, straight polished edge 20 sq ft minimum

CERAMIC TILE INVENTORY BLOW-OUT SALE!

10% off with this ad.
Sales excluded.

Non Sale Items
retail Pricing

Check our prices first!

Ceramic Tile Sales Inc. Marble & Granite Shop

Southfield

23455 Telegraph Rd.

248-356-6430

Farmington Hills

24301 Indoplex Circle

(248) 426-0093

Rochester

1972 Star Batt Dr.

248-853-4654

Visit one of our Showrooms!

Installation includes Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb Counties. Others at additional cost. Offer not valid with any other discount. All previous orders excluded. Subject to stock on hand.

Showroom Hours: M-T-Th 8:30-5:00;
W-F 8:30-6:00; Sat 9:00-5:00