

APPLIANCE DOCTOR



JOE GAGNON

New law targets unethical service reps

I met State Rep. Perry Bullard in 1985, and gave him names and evidence of unethical operators in the appliance repair industry. We drafted a bill and took it before a committee in Lansing. I remember being in a room filled with many people and TV cameras.

Some service companies testified that Joe Gagnon was a loud mouth, self-serving so and so who was creating this because he was trying to drive out competition. I was instructed to remain quiet and let them do the talking. It was not an easy thing for me to do. In the following months and years this repair act has changed sponsors several times and been through many committee hearings. Each time has been a learning experience for me.

I have written about this proposed legislation several times, and in one of my first columns explained I did it for a self-serving purpose. I am ashamed of the tainted image that many good guys in the business have to live with. I did it alone and I can't blame others who were afraid of repercussions. The threats and fears caused me to become even more determined to get this law passed.

■ The law will help the appliance repair industry build a better image, and help to prevent consumers from being ripped off by unethical service technicians.

The law will help the appliance repair industry build a better image, and help to prevent consumers from being ripped off by unethical service technicians. It appears almost certain to pass in the short weeks ahead.

Senate Bill 217 passed the Senate and was recently approved by a House committee. The last remaining step is for whole House to approve it, and then the governor will sign it. When that happens, my work will be completed.

I should tell you how proud I am of those appliance repair people who came to my side of the table when I needed them most, and the officials who were elected to serve the public, and did their job.

To the many thousands of consumers who I have personally talked with in the past 20 years who were ripped off, I can only apologize for the wrongs done by unethical operators. It won't happen to your children. When this act becomes law in the next few weeks I will make sure that all of you readers have access to it in writing.

The remainder of this column I would like to address to the crooks in the repair industry, and trust me folks, I am speaking for the majority of the appliance repair companies.

You, the few companies who, for many years have reaped the benefits of being dishonest, are coming to a justifiable conclusion. I expect the appliance industry will soon form a group to better inform customers of the rewards of hard work and reputable service. I doubt you will ever belong because you never did learn how to be honest. Besides, you won't be invited.

Stay tuned.

Joe Gagnon can be heard Saturday and Sunday on 760 WJLB. He is a member and past president of the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals. His phone number is (313) 873-9789.



PHOTO BY TONY HOFFMEYER

Experienced: Charlotte Seitz works on a free-form style Ikebana piece that greets visitors at the front entrance of her home.

the splendid world of Ikebana

Japanese floral art respects Earth's elements

BY LANA MINI
STAFF WRITER
lmini@oe.homecomm.net

Toshi Shimoura is still studying the floral art of Ikebana even after more than 50 years of training. Just last Friday she created an arrangement for the Detroit Institute of Arts; her skills are well-known in the Ikebana world.

Shimoura, of Rochester, is a modest professor in the Japanese art form and over the years has been an Ikebana mentor to women like Charlotte Seitz, of Farmington Hills. Both are active members of The Detroit Chapter of Ikebana International.

Ikebana is an artistic expression in the dimension of trees, consisting of plant materials arranged in tall vases or containers. Traditional Ikebana belief is that flowering trees are perfect when blooming in nature. Therefore, attempting to recreate the beauty of a flower in nature, once it's cut, is superfluous. Instead, a skilled

A GLIMPSE OF JAPAN
Ikebana Floral Art created by members of The Detroit Chapter of Ikebana will be on exhibit at 4 p.m. Wednesday, May 15 at Southfield Presbyterian Church, 21575 West 10 Mile Road between Lahser and Evergreen roads in Southfield.

Performances by Koto Music Trio Japanese Dancers, folk and classical styles. Assorted Japanese items available. Tea will follow the dance show.

Donation is \$8.

Ikebana artist should choose the best forms of a plant, tree or flower and arrange them in a way that doesn't try to mimic nature — but instead has a simple and serene beauty of its own.

A Glimpse of Japan, an exhibit of Ikebana Floral Art presented by the Detroit Ikebana chapter, is being held on Wednesday, May 15 at Southfield Presbyterian Church, 21575 West 10 Mile in Southfield. Donation is \$8 and includes music, Japanese folk

dancers, a small boutique and tea.

There's many forms of Ikebana and today many forms blend varying traditions; but Shimoura said there are basic elements that are always respected.

"Traditionalists feel the basics are very important; the three points," Shimoura explained. "Heaven. Man. Earth."

In a floral arrangement, the highest point honors heaven, the middle represents man and the lowest is Earth. Ikebana arrangements are asymmetrical, meaning even numbers of elements are avoided. Yet it's balanced when a skilled person creates it.

"Objects are important," Shimoura said. "But so is space."

The ceramic pots or tall vases used for specific arrangements are considered — as is where in the home or office the piece will be placed. Some arrangements, like those in the Rikka and Shoka styles, should be the focal



Centerpiece: An Ikebana centerpiece gives serenity and elegance to Charlotte Seitz's dining room table.

Please see FLORAL, C2

Native plants can add much to your landscape

BY DOUG FUNKE
STAFF WRITER
dfunke@oe.homecomm.net

Sometimes, we get so excited by the exotic in color, fragrance and texture that we forget about what native plants have to offer.

That's why the Oakland Land Conservancy in Rochester, Friends of West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation and the University of Michigan Matthaei Botanical Gardens in Ann Arbor will focus on home-grown vegetation with workshops and plant sales in the weeks ahead.

"The pollution involved with mowing

lawns, fertilizers and pesticides — you don't need to do that with native grasses and wildflowers," said Carolyn Henne, forestry and wildlife biologist with the Oakland Conservation District.

"It provides a much better wildlife habitat for different songbirds, butterflies, hummingbirds," she added. "Root systems slow erosion ... and geese won't walk through taller vegetation."

Brian Klatt, interim director at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, picks up on the theme.

"Probably the biggest thing native plants have to offer is because they're

native, they do very well with our climate," he said. "Many are perennials."

While that might seem obvious, it's no small potatoes that native plants are adaptable to natural pests and many come up year after year without the work of planting.

"Native plants more often are drought resistant," added Lorna McEwen, president of the land conservancy.

Oakland Land Conservancy teams with Friends of West Bloomfield to present a native plant workshop 6:30-9:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 22, at Schuylak Farm on Maple Road west of Drake

in West Bloomfield.

Henne will conduct the class. Cost is \$30. Call (248) 601-2816 to register.

Then the land conservancy, Clinton River Watershed Council and Healthy People Oakland will sponsor a native plant and wildflower sale 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday, June 2, so folks can experiment with what they've learned.

A variety of plugs, vines, shrubs and trees will be available for sale (free to browse) at the Pancake Shelter near the Pontiac Library on the southeast corner of Pike and Mill.

Please see LANDSCAPE, C3