# Time to be aware of your furnace care

The nights are getting cold-er, the leaves are dropping in bunches, and the gas and electric meters on the out-side of the house are spinning



thought should be about your safety. You already know Gagnon

Gagnon alterlay shrow that thousands of people pertial people of the people pertial people pe

Observer & Eccentric | Thursday, October 31, 2002

You as a homeowner have one thing to do to make sure the furnace is operating properly and efficiently, and that is to clean or change the filter every few months.

Many of the old style filters are still appropriate for today, but there are many people who suffer all sorts of allergies and are very sensitive to the air they breathe.

The American Lung Association says that indoor air can be worse than outdoor air, and if you are concerned you may want to have the new pleat type filter installed on your furnace. The heating industry recognizes these new filters as trapping more airborne particles than the electronic air cleaners.

The accessory item that most people want on a furnace is a numidifier. Those who don't have one can wake up with a dry, itehy throat and feel the sting of an electrical shock through the end of a finger.

Many homeowners today prefer the flow-through type because they are concerned about standing water and the minintenance required on the drum type. Ask your heating

maintenance required on the drum type. Ask your heating contractor for recommenda-

tions they might have on the subject. If your furnace is 15 to 20 years old, that deesn't mean you have to replace it. Even though the newer furnaces may be up to 30 percent more energy efficient, you should weigh the cost factor and estimate both against the time you will remain in your home. It is quite possible that the older units were built much better than today's units. than today's units.

### **GET MORE OPINIONS**

With all this said, I must With all this said, I must stress the importance of you knowing whom you are dealing with it comes to your furnance and hard-earned eash. There are many good heating companies out there, with a few bad apples in the industry. In the past four years the Attorney General's Office spent a lot of time dedicated to

a lot of time dedicated to removing two comparies who had been in business for more than 20 years. Thousands of consumers had been ripped off. When a technician tells you that the furnace is producing carbon monoxide, you should get another opinion. When you are told to more out of the house, or any kind of scare tactics are given to you, then call someone clse to make sure it's

true. When you are given a price for a new furmace you must remember that it doesn't cost anything to have two other companies come out and give you their price. There are contractors out there who will charge \$1,000 plus more for the same unit from someone else.

charge \$1,000 plus more for the same unit from someone else. In essence, get three differ-ent blds for a furnace replace-ment. The quality of furnaces today shouldn't be of major concern, as the junk compa-nies of yesteryear are no longer in business.

nies of yesteryear are no longer in business.
Take a close look at the warranties offered with the product and any extended contracts. Make sure you understand them completely before you sign on the dotted line. Most cities require that a permit be pulled when installing a furnace, and you should make sure that the contractor did so. There are many horror stories about furnace rip-offs

There are many norror sto-ries about furnace rip-offs every year and you will hear about them again this year. I do not want you to be one of them! Stay tuned.

Joe Gagnon can now be heard on WWJ-950 and WXYT-1270. He is a mem-ber and past president of the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals. His phone number is (248) 455-7281.

# **HOME CALENDAR**

Basement remodeling

Basement remodeling Bloomfield Hills Community Education, in cooperation with Oaktand Builders Institute, will offer an elpithonor basement remodeling seminar 6-10 pm. Monday and Wednesday, Nov. 4 and 6. Andover High School, 4200 Andover in Broomfield Hills. School 4200 Andover in Broomfield Hills. School 4200 Andover in Broomfield Hills. School 4200 Andover in Broomfield Hills. And 400 Andover in Broomfield Hills. School 4200 Andover in Hills. S

The list instructor, a licensed builder, will explain the many facets of basement remodeling - Including planning, meeting building codes, insurance, permits, estimating materials, the basics of home construction, working with subcontractors, finishing techniques, and tying into estisting pluming, electrical and healing systems. Daktand Builders institute occurs building courses in 38 schools in Michigan, for a free brochure and a current schedule of class localions, call (800) 940-2014. Visit www.buildersinstitute.com.

or country will find something they will like among the selections, which will range from moderately priced to expensive. Furnishings and accessories will be

eurnsmings and accessories will be offered for sale just as they are dis-played in the participating homes. After the show closes, the homes will be shown by appointment only and can be bought with furnishings includ-

can be bought with furnishings included, in most case, in most case, in most case, in underly subdivision is on indiamond flood, between Josiyn and Baldwin roads. Homearama hours are 2-9 pm. Thursday-Friday, 10 am. to 9 pm. Salurday, I of am. to 9 pm. Salurday, I of am. to 6 pm. Sunday, Admission is 57 for adults, free for ages 12 and under. for more informallon, call (249) 862-1019 or visit www.builders.org. Home decor

1019 or visit www.bulders.org. Home decor Haberman fabrics, 905 S, Main in Royal Oak, offers a variety of home decor classes. Pre-registration is required. Call (426) 544-000 or visit www.habermandabrics.com for infor-mation. The schedule includes Simple United Curtain (560), Thursdays, Oct. 31 to Nov. 14; Tabric covered Boxes (520), Sunday, Nov. 2 and Pillow Shams (560), Mondays, Nov. 4-18. Hollday decorations

Shams (560), womays, nor. a lo. loliday decorating Hancy Szeriag will give a free presentation on Holiday Decorating on a Shoestring Budget 7 p.m. Wednesday, Nov 6 at Art Van Furniture, 27775 Nov.

She will discuss unusual ideas and give tips on how to decorate your home for the holidays without breaking the bank. Refreshments will be served.

# American

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# BULBS

dark storage place.
Although some bulbs don't require a cooling period – amaryllis and paper whites are two such varieties – most do. That's why a little advance planning is necessary.
Generally speaking, the cooling period is three to four months at a temperature range

ing period is three to four months at a temperature range of 35 to 48 degrees.

Bowman-Tomlinson's preferred temperature range is 35 to 45 degrees. She also likes to store her bulbs in labeled paper

store her builds in labeled paper bags in the refrigerator. University of the transfer of the attached garages serve the same purpose, provided the tempera-ture stays in range. If you're

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potting bulbs in soil, you may do so before cooling, or cool first and then pot the bulbs.
"The main thing is don't let them freeze," Bowman-Tomlinson said. "That's why the fridge is good."

# POPPING UP FLOWERS

POPPING UP FLOWERS

After the cooling period, the buibs can be placed in a buib vase with water or planted in a pot of soil (unless you opted to pre-plant before cooling).

Again, the water method is easier. Simply place buils in a foreing wase or forcing pan containing water at a level that just reaches the buils base.

The best route for beginners is probably using single-buil vases, with one buil per vase. Built rays can be bought for multiple built placement.

Any receptacle works, as long as it doesn't allow drainage and is sized appropriately, Bowman-Tomlinson said. The key is the water level needs to be just below the built. Also, don't forget to refill water when needed.

Even though the soil method is more difficult, it allows for greater number of builts per container. Different varieties can even be layered in a single large flower pot, Bowman-Times on said. "It's more like

# BUILD FACTS

Free information about bulb forcing is available from numerous resources, including the Internet.

For recommended cooling periods and appropriate planting times, ask your local garden center for a brochure or chart. If the store doesn't create its own materials. handouts from bufb companies like Holland should be available.

Valuable Internet sites include: www.msue.msu.edu

(Michigan State University Extension, go to the "Green Tips" page)

www.savvygardener.com

www.hgtv.com www.growinglifestyle.com

■ www.virtualseeds.com

an arrangement.

an arrangement."
Be sure to use potting soil, as topsoil may not the bulbs, and a pot with drainage.
When layering, keep in mind the bulb's growing potential, which is its capacity to push through the soil based on overall plant height. In general, most bulbs will push through 8 inches of soil. Follow up with water and keep the pot moist while you wait for blossoms.
Soil-potted bulbs require watering every two to three days in the average home, said Bowman-Tomilisson.
When your bulbs finally blos-

span.

Most bulbs are planted with

with your bulbs finally blos-som, keep them in bright, but not direct, light to prolong life span.

the wide side down and pointed side up, like a Hershey's Kiss. A



King of the amarylils, "Elvas" bears lavish double blossoms flushed with plak at the center. The premium bulb comes tucked in a red-glazed Portuguese po along with soil, moss and forcing instructions for \$34 at Smith & Hawken.

few are planted differently; consult a gardening expert.

# CONTAINING BEAUTY

Although any non-draining receptacle can be used with bulbs in water, glass vases and containers are popular because they allow observation of root growth, Jamieson said at Smith & Hawken.

Glassware allows for creativity, as placing rocks or glass beads on the bottom creates texture and drama. Smith & Hawken sells about 15 types of rocks and beads, and most are priced \$3.95 to \$4.95 per pound. Ceramic pots, which come in

a variety of colors and clay types, are a nice alternative to standard flower pots. And for glimmer and shine, try a cop-per pot.
"Copper is very hot this year," Jamieson said, adding bulb arrangements can be tailored to their location in the home. Really, you can create differ-ent looks for different rooms. After your bulbs have given

ent looks for different rooms.
After your bulbs have given
their final blossom, reuse the
container, Jamieson said.
"The best thing is the containers have record lives. They can
be used for cut flowers, or centerpleces or floating candles."



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