

## Sale offers variety of beautiful plants

The Cranbrook greenhouse is bursting at the seams with a large array of gorgeous plants in anticipation of the annual Greenhouse Holiday Plant Sale, which will take place 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.



Garden spot

Marty Figley

Tuesday and Wednesday, Dec. 3 and 4. The greenhouse can be reached from the gated entrance to Cranbrook House, 380 Lone Pine Road, just west of Cranbrook Road in Bloomfield Hills. Follow the signs.

Volunteers have been working diligently in order to offer beautiful and healthy plants. Ulla-Mai Ruben has been devoting her time uniquely mounting a variety of the epiphyte bromeliads, such as *Tillandsias*, *Aechmeas* and *Neoregelias* on surfaces such as driftwood and other unusual woods. Epiphytes are air plants.

Ulla-Mai has been a volunteer for 2-1/2 years and has chalked up many volunteer hours. She formerly taught at Cranbrook Schools.

"I'm really just a beginner with bromeliads," she said. "There are 2,500 species that are native to the tropics and a large unknown number of hybrids."

"Penrith Goff, president of the Southeastern Michigan Bromeliad Society, has been most helpful, and I've attended a workshop at the University of Michigan Matthaei Gardens. I enjoy learning about and working with the plants in the 'Cranbrook greenhouse'."

Other bromeliads that will be available are vespertine, *Billbergia*, flaming-sword *Vriesea*, with mottled foliage; and the earthstar, *Cryptanthus*.

The most distinctive feature of these plants is the cuprosette of leaves that hold the water and nourishes the plant. In some varieties, flowers and large, colorful bracts emerge from the center, creating a spectacular display.

Bromeliads are hardy, easy-care plants and are forgiving.



Ulla-Mai Ruben enjoys working with bromeliads at the Cranbrook greenhouse.

Those that are mounted need to be sprayed with water regularly. In the tropics they gather moisture and nutrients from rainfall and particles in the air.

Those that are grown in pots need a light soil that drains easily, like that used for orchids. Choose a pot that looks a little snail. Water mainly by filling the rosette, keeping it full of water (changing the water in the rosette occasionally). Also moisten the soil occasionally.

These plants need lots of sun and high temperatures. An average temperature between 65 and 70 degrees is fine for foliage plants. An east or west window is best. Fertilize lightly in early spring. There will be many more plants from this sale than can be listed at the Cranbrook sale.

The popular orchid collection is especially outstanding. The cyclamens have unusually marked foliage (don't miss them), and the Crown of Thorns plants are ever-blooming with pretty flowers.

Also, interesting cacti, special begonias and mounted stag-horn ferns will be available. There's much more.

Choose a plant or two for your home. You may want to remember a friend with a gift of a flower.

### GOODGARDEN TIP

If your bromeliad isn't flowering, place it in a plastic bag with a ripe apple and leave it for a few days. The ethylene gas from the apple will initiate flower buds.

When the plant stops flowering the rosette starts to die, a slow process that can last as long as three years.

Planting the off-sets (pups) that form at the base of the plant will give you your collection that blooms year after year.

Marty Figley is an advanced master gardener based in Birmingham. You can leave her a message by dialing (334) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone. Her fax number is (205) 644-1314.

## Thermal fuse helps make dryer safer

I am sure that after reading last week's column many of you are more aware of why the clothes dryer is the most dangerous appliance in your home.

I hope you have already taken action to prevent the possibility of your dryer causing a home fire. I would like to explain what the manufacturer has done to make your dryer safer.

First of all, let me give you a picture of a typical clothes dryer the Joe Gagnon way: plain, simple and to the point.

The dryer is a square metal box that you place your wet clothes into, to catch fire, "almost."

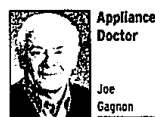
Think about it: a box filled with heat and thermostats to shut off that heat when it gets hot enough.

Since the dryer was invented the service technicians of America have replaced millions of these thermostats due to failure. Still, unfortunately for some 15,000 homeowners across the land, dryers still catch fire.

Some 15 years ago a guy popped up on the scene and proved to the clothes dryer manufacturers that it was the improper vent line that was causing the majority of these fires.

This was no easy task for the white-haired old appliance guy because he had to appear in several lawsuits filed by consumers against the manufacturer. After the manufacturers lost several of these lawsuits and paid out beaucoup dollars, they finally believed what he was saying. "Improper venting causes a lint buildup and a source for ignition."

Not. I spent several years working for a major appliance



Appliance Doctor

Joe Gagnon

company and knew the engineering department very well. Please don't think that engineers don't know what they design, because they do.

I get frustrated to no end when I see products built and sold and the companies reap the benefits of high dividends and yet care so little about the end user.

### THERMAL FUSE

In recent years, the manufacturers have installed a simple thermal fuse to shut off the dryer or heat when improper vent line is used.

Hooray! Finally, at last, they got smart. The question is, smart for themselves or smart for consumers? You decide.

The new thermal fuse does two things. It helps to prevent a dryer fire and it puts a stop to many lawsuits by homeowners. The service industry has been forewarned. Don't install or work on dryers that aren't vented properly. You could be liable.

I would like to have you keep an important factor in mind while reading the rest of this column. The manufacturers have service departments that are designed to make money and they don't care to have you fix your own appliance.

The fuse is a one-time blow fuse, which means it doesn't reset itself when it is overheated. When the air doesn't move across it at the specified rate, it blows and that is usually

because the vent line is wrong or plugged up. This causes the homeowner to call for a service technician in most cases and that keeps a service department very busy.

My point of contention is this: The manufacturers have finally come up with a device that more or less warns the homeowner to either change their current vent line or clean it out, and this device ends up costing the consumer a service call.

I can argue on different systems to do the same thing but I'm sure their engineers know best.

What I do think is absolutely wrong is their design, which creates an expense to the end user.

Why couldn't they place this thermal fuse in an area that is feasible for homeowners to do the repair themselves, such as the easy access right up there in the console area that you could get to by removing a screw?

Instead it is on the back of the dryer, on the portion where air travels down to the vent line.

You have to disconnect the vent line, pull out the dryer so you can get to the back of it, remove the whole back section and replace the part.

Yes, this column does have a very positive flavor in that the manufacturer of a clothes dryer installed a part that compensates for a consumer's ignorance and helps prevent home fires. Could they have done it faster and better? You bet. Stay tuned.

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

### GARDEN CALENDAR

#### Plants and pests

The Michigan Society of Gardening offers a variety of classes. Advance registration is required. Space is limited and some classes have prerequisites. Call (248) 4-GARDEN for information. The schedule includes the four-session Solving Common Pest and Disease Problems (524), beginning Tuesday, Nov. 26, at Goldner Walsh

Hursery, 559 Orchard Lake Road in Pontiac.

#### Poinsettia Soiree

The Belle Isle Botanical Society will present the 15th annual Poinsettia Soiree 6-9 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 8, at the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory on Belle Isle.

The event will benefit the conservatory and surrounding gardens. Donation is \$40 per person. Light supper and desserts by Union Street of Detroit, musical entertainment by Bill Meyer, caricature illustrations by Robert J. Bauer, and door prizes (including poinsettias, wreaths and a gingerbread house) will be featured. Make reservations by Thursday, Dec. 5. Call (313) 852-4064 for more information.

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