

HOME CALENDAR

Special sale
Gorman's Furniture, 23231 Industrial Park Drive in Farmington Hills, will be hosting a special warehouse sale 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday, May 3, and noon-5 p.m. Sunday, May 4. All floor samples and overstocked items will be available at discounted prices. Gorman's associates and design consultants will be on hand to assist customers with their selections. For more information, call (248) 473-9131.

Basement remodeling
Walled Lake Community Education, in cooperation with Oakland Builders Institute, will offer an eight-hour basement remodeling seminar

6:10 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday, May 6 and 8, at Walled Lake Middle School, 48720 W. Pontiac Trail. Cost is \$99, plus a textbook fee of \$8. Pre-registration with payment is required no later than Friday, May 2, to Walled Lake Community Education. To register, call (248) 955-5020 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday-Friday. The seminar is designed to help people make better use of valuable space in their homes by planning and completing a successful basement remodeling. For a free brochure and current schedule of class locations, call (800) 940-2014.

Geraniums generate general interest

Happy May Day! Be kind to yourself, family and friends, and make this a special day to remember.

Soon we'll see many beautiful and versatile geraniums in flower beds, and containers such as window boxes and hanging baskets. You folks always surprise me with the way you "dress" your gardens with these plants.

Most species of geraniums originated in South Africa, and although their popularity had ups and downs, on the most part they have been quite popular for many years. Before going any further, here's the scoop about



Garden Spot
Marty Figley



MARTY FIGLEY

Geraniums are very popular plants and add beauty to the garden.

geraniums/pelargoniums. The Geraniaceae family of plants includes five genera, of which Pelargonium and Geranium are the best known. The differences are in the flowers and the fact that geraniums have 10 fertile stamens, while pelargoniums have no more than seven fertile stamens out of 10. (Wow! Now you can sleep easily tonight!)

Most people call these plants geraniums, including nurseries, so that is the term we will use. We'll concentrate on some of the most familiar ones, the zonals for bedding and window boxes, the ivy-leaved types for hanging baskets, and the scented for their versatile uses.

Now breeders offer geraniums with unusual forms, miniatures and those with scented leaves.

TYPES

Zonal geraniums are distinguished by the dark ring, or zone, that's often found on the leaves.

These plants bloom in an extraordinary array of colors.

The red, white and pink varieties are now joined by those with vibrant scarlet, crimson and magenta, or cream apricot or pale lavender. Bicolors are either edged, speckled or softly tinged with a contrasting color. These are also known as garden geraniums, for obvious reasons. Ivy geraniums have fleshy, lobed, ivy-like leaves and trailing stems that can reach 2 to 4 feet. The single- or double-flower clusters of flowers in shades of pink, mauve, lilac and white are ideal for hanging baskets. They are also attractive when they're positioned to hang over the edge of a container.

Geraniums with scented leaves are becoming more popular each year as people discover them. Their forms and leaves are varied; usually the flowers are insignificant.

The scents are as varied as the leaves themselves. They include rose, mint, lemon, ginger, lime, apple, orange, coconut, nutmeg and spley. They don't always smell the

same to everyone, but that is part of the fun of growing them. The leaves can be used in potpourri, cooking and beverages, and to flavor sugars. The sugars can be used to flavor fruit salads, cakes, icings and iced teas.

Here's how to make rose geranium sugar: Use extra-fine white sugar, and rose-scented geranium leaves, washed and dried. Place a pinch layer of sugar in an airtight storage jar. Gently bruise a few leaves, to release their fragrance, and place them on top of the sugar. Repeat until all the sugar and leaves are used. Cover, label and let set for at least 24 hours before using.

CARE

Geraniums don't require a lot of care. Wait until all danger of frost is past before setting them in the garden. They do like full sun to light shade and rich, well-drained soil (neutral to slightly alkaline pH).

Pinch plants to encourage branching and deadhead regularly. Newly potted plants have enough nutrients for about six weeks in peat-based composts, so wait a while before fertilizing.

Water container-grown plants regularly; generally, the more you water the more you should feed. Set directly in the ground. They can withstand some drought. Fertilize with an all-purpose product; follow label directions.

I grow my geraniums in a small rectangular container. When it's time to bring them indoors, I simply carry the box of flowers to the basement, set them in an east window and prune them back.

I water them about twice during the winter months (the basement is warm) and cut them back a time or two. I begin fertilizing them and give them more water as spring approaches.

I change the soil completely or incorporate fresh into the existing soil before I set them back out on the deck.

Geraniums can also be started from 4-inch cuttings.

GOOD GARDEN TIP
Tim Travis and Julia Janiak of Golden Walsh Nursery, 559 Orchard Lake Road in Pontiac, will present An Asia Travelogue and Private Pottery Preview 6:30 p.m. Thursday, May 8.

They recently returned from Southeast Asia - where they visited Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam and Singapore - and will share their adventure and show how the pottery is made there. Three truckloads of new pottery will be available for purchase. A special discount of 15 percent will be offered that night only for attending guests.

You are invited to this free slide presentation. Call (248) 332-6430, Ext. 233, for your required reservation.

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.

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GARDEN CALENDAR

Metropolitan Rose Society
The Metropolitan Rose Society will meet 7:15 p.m. Friday, May 2, at the Royal Oak Senior/Community Center, 3500 Marais, east of Crooks and north of 13 Mile. Amy Coltrone will speak on Making Flower Arrangements Easy. Admission is free. The public may attend. Call (248) 689-9529 for information.

Farmington Garden Club
Betty Poole, a member of the Farmington Garden Club, will use slides and demonstrate the art of container gardening, putting a large pot together in time for spring planting at the next club meeting at noon Monday, May 5, at the Longacre House on the west side of Farmington Road between 10 and 11 Mile roads.

Hardy Plant Society
Jackie Walley, owner of Herbal Thymes and Gathering, will talk about the use of herbs in garden design - not just for culinary purposes, but for form, texture, flowers and to attract beneficial insects on Monday, May 5 at the Congregational Church of Birmingham on Woodward just south of the Cranbrook Institute. All are welcome. \$3 admission for guests. For information, call (248) 589-2286.

Beverly Hills Garden Club
The Beverly Hills Garden Club will meet 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, May 6, at the Beverly Hills Village Office, 18500 W. 13 Mile. Guests are welcome.

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