

Physician doctors plants when away from patients

By Mary Rodrigue
staff writer

When Dr. Richard Wagner isn't tending to patients as an emergency staff physician at Pontiac General Hospital, he's tending to orchids in his Farmington Hills greenhouse.

Wagner has 1,000 orchids representing 150 genera. The variety of species and man-made hybrids include orchids from all parts of the world.

"Even in Michigan they grow wild," said Wagner, who designed his greenhouse.

It has a living room area with chairs and a small library stocked with books about orchids. There's just a faint fragrance of orchid in the air.

"This is my getaway room," he said. Wagner began growing orchids nine years ago. He bought his first plant from Great Lakes Orchids in Monroe.

From that plant, many plants grew. Wagner, a man who admits he never before liked growing plants, now spends at least a half hour daily tending to his orchids.

"It's amazing how many professionals do this, and as many men as women," he said. "It's what the books call 'orchid mania.'"

The greenhouse is kept partially shaded since most orchids don't need much sunlight. Fans constantly circulate air. Three micro-climates are created for different types of plants, ranging from temperatures of 45 degrees to 65 degrees Fahrenheit.

WAGNER RECENTLY took first place for specimen in the Michigan Orchid Society's Palm Sunday show in Ypsilanti. His winning entry was a pale yellow African orchid. He's won several other ribbons which are kept in a box in the greenhouse.

To expand his collection, the doctor obtained an importer's permit from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. With it, he has imported plants from Taiwan, Thailand, Malaysia, South America, India, the Caribbean islands and Africa.

"They go through special customs and are sprayed," he said. "A lot of them die."

But the efforts are worth the trouble since he can import a plant for \$5 that might cost \$50 in the U.S.

"It might take a year though to get it back growing," he said.

Orchids don't grow in soil. Some grow in pots full of fern, others in lava rock and charcoal. Many orchids are epiphytic plants, which mean they grow on objects such as fir bark for mechanical support but not for nutrients.

Some of the orchids are in bloom for four months a year. One species is in bloom for just a single day.

"You might take care of it all year and then miss seeing it bloom," Wagner said.

THE SECRET to growing successful orchids is reading about them, Wagner insists.

"Some need lots of fertilizer, some not any. Each one has to be watered differently."

There isn't a single chart in the greenhouse. Wagner denotes each flower's care by memory.

Though some consider orchids delicate and difficult plants to nurture, they are really strong plants, Wagner said.

Please turn to Page 4A



Moth orchids bloom in the temperate climate of the greenhouse.



Dr. Richard Wagner tends to more than 1000 varieties of orchids inside his greenhouse.

INSIDE ANGLES

GET IN SHAPE for summer with a five-week swim program beginning today, Monday, with sessions at 4:30 to 5:30 each Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

It's sponsored by the Michigan Stingray Swim Association and classes will be at the Harrison High School pool. Enrollment is \$25 a swimmer and this class isn't for beginners.

For more information, call Pat Harkness at 478-9908.

BUSINESS OWNERS worried about burglary, shoplifting and bad checks can learn some preventive tips from professionals on Thursday, April 30, when the Farmington Chamber of Commerce presents a workshop on security at the Botsford Inn.

Speakers include Lee Clifford, chairman of the crime prevention committee of the Service Corps of Retired Executives, Lt. John Santomaro of the Farmington public safety department and Sgt. Richard Murphy and officer Jim St. Louis of the Farmington Hills police department.

The cost is \$5 and that includes continental breakfast and coffee break. Activities start at 8 a.m.

Reservations can be made with the chamber of commerce, 474-3440.

THE OCC WOMENCENTER is sending out an S.O.S. Recent cuts in state funding for community colleges has left the organization with the loss of a parttime secretary and office manager.

Volunteers are needed to help with secretarial work and in other areas, like the political action committees, public relations, fund-raising and the speakers bureau.

If you can pitch in, call 476-9400, ext. 509.

FOUNDERS DAY FESTIVAL plans are picking up steam as the annual summer fair prepares for its 17th appearance in Farmington.

A Southfield public accounting firm, Fox & Company, has agreed to sponsor the YMCA mini-marathon, a regular part of festival revelry.

The Fox Trot will be July 25. Fox's sponsorship will provide for prizes, course markers, timing apparatus, T-shirts and sun visors, water stations.

Other festival committees are gearing up and need volunteers, reports chairman Betti Huff.

Also, the organizing committee is looking for persons interested in obtaining space for arts & crafts or ethnic foods booths.

The festival will be July 21-26. Call Ronnie Guzikowski at 531-4422 or write Founders Festival, P.O. Box 2894, Farmington Hills, 48018.

GREAT LAKES NAVIGATION, bag-piping, bartending and silk floral design are among the series of non-credit leisure courses offered at Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge.

Courses are scheduled on weekdays and weekends throughout spring and summer. Students can register by mail or in person in K-104 starting today. Minimal fees are charged, but senior citizens get one course per semester free.

For a brochure, call 476-9400, ext. 227 or 235.

The Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation department also has spring classes for adults offered at various elementary schools.

Slimastics, flower arranging, stain glassery, painting and dancing are included. Classes begin this week.

To register, call 474-6115.

RALPH NADER, Monte Clark and Doug Henning have something in common: they're all coming to town in May.

Nader will address the Sisterhood of Adat Shalom Synagogue on May 4 at the group's annual spring fund-raiser. The lunch and talk are open to the public. Call the synagogue for reservations.

Clark, head coach of the Detroit Lions, will be at Faith Covenant Church in Farmington Hills May 9. He'll conclude an evening of sports competition on the football field for youngsters and adults by awarding trophies.

Clark will talk about football and sportsmanship. Your tickets and a map to Masonic Temple will be mailed to you by Adults for Kids. Call 555-3252 by May 4.

Henning and his world of magic will be at the Masonic Temple Theatre May 12-17.

Adults for Kids, a non-profit group in Farmington Hills, is offering special prices. But orders must be received no later than May 1.

Your tickets and a map to Masonic Temple will be mailed to you by Adults for Kids. Call 555-3252.

EDSEL & ELEANOR Ford's Gross Pointe Shores house was the setting for a recent lunch for the William Tyndale College Ladies Auxiliary.

Dr. Robert Woodburn, vice president of the Farmington Hills college, gave a brief address before those in attendance toured the main floor and plantings on the grounds.

The luncheon was held in the great gallery.

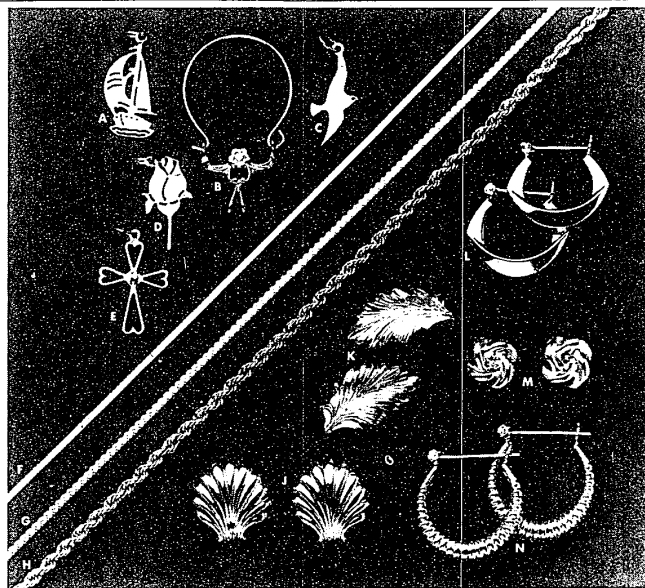


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C. Seagull	\$23	16.99	H. Serpentine, 15"	\$75	55.99	L. Half Moon	\$75	55.99
D. Rosebud	\$25	17.99	I. Serpentine, 18"	\$90	66.99	M. Swirl	\$37	27.99
E. Open Cross	\$29	20.99	J. Hollow rope, 18"	\$140	104.99	N. Shrimp	\$98	72.99
			K. Hollow rope, 24"	\$187	139.99			

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