

## consumer mailbag

## Garden pays as recreation

I would like to put in a garden this summer but I think it will cost more than it is worth. Can I really save money?

Barbara R., Southfield

Last year, 33-million American households grew some of their own food. The total value of produce from all these gardens was \$13 billion, an average yield of nearly \$400 from each garden.

Consider gardening as not only offering financial savings, but as a form of meaningful recreation. Another benefit which makes it worth the effort is better, fresher and more nutritious food. For free gardening information send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Concern, Inc., Detroit, 1 Northfield Plaza, Troy 48098.

Last summer I worked on a farm in Ohio as a volunteer to learn organic gardening. I would like to make this opportunity available to others in my family. Are there any farms in Michigan that offer this exchange program?

Bob C., Canton Township

SATIVA, Society for Agricultural Training through Integrated Voluntary Activities, is an organization that acts as a clearing house for Organic Farms, many in Michigan, that use volunteer help in exchange for services, room and board.

You can gain valuable hands-on experience with vegetable growing, food processing, and animal care for weekends, weeks, or longer. For information write to: SATIVA, P.O. Box 2410, Station A, Champaign, Ill. 61820.

What are "Raised Garden Beds"?

Robertia M., Troy

A raised garden is simply a garden planted on mounded soil above what is normally considered ground level. Raising your garden gives you control of your soil (you bring it in) and allows you to use space that would otherwise not work well. Generally the soil is held in place with a structure that resembles a window box, only on a larger scale.

**ECO-TIP:** Spring growing season also means insects. Pesticides should always be used carefully and sparingly. Remember gardening was meant to create, not to destroy. For a helpful publication "Pesticide Fact Packet" send \$1 to Environmental Action Foundation, 724 Dupont Circle, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Consumer Mailbag answers your questions on environmental topics. Address mail to Grace R. Gluskin, Concern, Inc., Detroit, 1 Northfield Plaza, Troy 48098.

## Feds knock shared housing

During today's difficult economic times, "shared housing" arrangements — such as boarding houses and room rentals — are coming back in style for many elderly and low-income citizens who wish to reduce housing costs and ease problems of solitary living.

Unfortunately, federal legislation is out of step with the times, says University of Michigan researchers, because low-income people who live in such "shared" accommodations risk a number of possible economic penalties. These include possible losses of food stamps, federal rental subsidies, and possible reductions of social security income.

Legislative changes that would make it easier for elderly people to live in cost-saving shared housing is being urged by the U-M's National Policy Center on Housing and Living Arrangements for Older Americans (NHC).

Established in 1980 under a grant from the U.S. Administration on Aging, the U-M center is a joint unit of the U-M Institute of Gerontology and the U-M College of Architecture and Urban Planning.

In addition to possible losses of federal benefits, NHC says other deterrents to shared housing include incompatible zoning laws in local communities, and unwillingness of banks to make loans for shared housing.

The "cumulative" effect of the federal regulations, according to the U-M researchers, "is to force low-income persons into traditional high rise, resulting ironically in a 70 percent higher rental subsidy

than if shared housing were to qualify for subsidy."




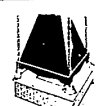
Norman K. Blackie, project coordinator at NHC, says much of the present legislation dealing with housing for elderly and low-income people is too "rigid" to meet today's economic realities. By contrast, shared arrangements were quite common 40 years ago — especially during the Depression years — and it appears to be a growing trend today, says Blackie.

Brian Lutz, a policy planner at NHC, is presently serving on the staff of a congressional committee — the Subcommittee on Housing and Consumer Interests of the House Select Committee on Aging — which is investigating legislative changes to make shared housing available to more people.

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## In training

Betty Roame, employee relations specialist at Oakland Community College, is one of 66 women chosen from more than 400 applicants nationwide to participate in a leadership training program financed through a \$50,000 grant from the Fund for Improvement of Postsecondary Education.

The program, "Leadership for the '80s," is designed to teach women the skills they need to assume major decision-making roles.

As part of the six-month program, Ms. Roame will develop an employee assistance program at OCC and participate in special regional workshops and national conferences.

Participants were chosen for their interest in advancement in community college administration and the quality of their proposed project to develop new skills as well as benefiting their home institution.

Ms. Roame is a resident of Farmington Hills.

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*Garden J. Houston*



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