

## Hot peppers are trendy vegetables

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- For each plant, dig a hole six inches deep and six inches in diameter. Put in a two-inch layer of compost mixed with one tablespoon of fertilizer, and cover with just enough soil to allow room for the pepper plant. Cover the roots with more soil, and water well.
- Peppers are not heavy feeders: you shouldn't have to fertilize them again. However, pepper plants require a moist soil for fruit formation, so cover the ground surrounding the plants with a mulch, and water regularly during dry spells.
- Sweet peppers may be eaten at any stage of their growth. Hot peppers should be allowed to achieve full growth and flavor before harvest-

ing. Cut, don't break, peppers off of the bush: cutting reduces the risk of breaking the branch.

- Consider this: If you have a sunny patio or walkway, try using pepper plants as ornamentals. The plants are attractive, and easily cared for in pots.

But what if you don't have a sunny walkway, or a sunny yard? What if you live in a condo, and don't even have any soil?

For you, there's hydroponics. It's the chance to play Mother Nature, claims Scott Day, co-owner, with wife, Bonnie, of Brew and Grow, in Livonia. "You have complete control over your plant's light, nutrients, and water.

"Hydroponics simply means using an inert growing media, such as clay

pellets, instead of soil," explains Scott, "Essential nutrients are supplied in a water base."

Peppers do extremely well under these conditions. Since all nutrients are provided, the root system doesn't have to use any energy looking for food. The plants can spend 100% of their energy fruiting.

The Days are transplanted Californians, so it's fitting that many of their display plants are hot peppers. "We have three small Serrano plants, about six months old," Scott says. "And we've harvested over 200 peppers in four months. We've a taste for hot Mexican foods, so we grow only hot peppers. We never eat a meal without one of Bonnie's salsas. She stuffs them and makes hot pepper pickles, also."

### Bonnie Day's Easy Salsa

Place 6 tomatoes and 1 or 2 Jalapeno peppers in a sauce pan.

Cover with water, and simmer for about 10 minutes, or until the skins slip off the tomatoes and peppers. Drain. Put peeled tomatoes and Jalapenos in blender or food processor with 1/2 cup sweet onion, chopped; 3 - 4 cloves garlic; 1 tsp. salt, and 1/2 bunch cilantro leaves.

Process mixture until desired consistency is reached. Place in serving bowl, stir in 1/2 cup chopped tomato and 1/4 cup chopped onion. Chill. Remove from refrigerator 1 hour before serving.

## Fountain lighting adds sparkle to garden or patio

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There are several types of low-voltage lights that can be submerged in water. Water becomes a black surface at night: if the light source is directed through the water it regains its transparency.

"An underwater spotlight creates

a shine on top of the water," says Wilkop.

"The homeowner has a choice of colors: red, green, blue, or amber. Fountains also provide a wonderful opportunity to create sparkle on a patio or in a garden. It's a simple

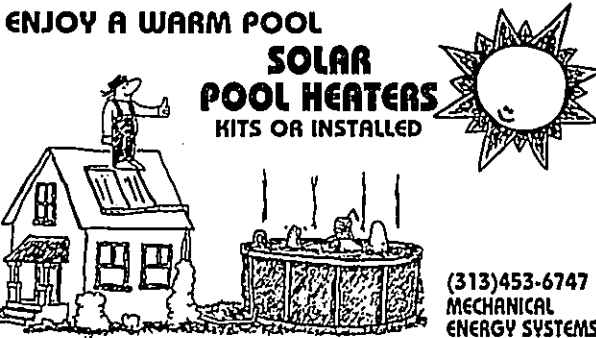
matter to direct light towards the point where the water falls."

Outdoor lighting needn't be permanent - it's much more interesting to change according to the occasion, or the seasons. For example, a small ornamental tree, or even a young

deciduous tree, can be spotlighted during the summer, to highlight leaf patterns and the texture of the bark. In starker winter conditions, lend magic to the landscape by threading the same tree with strings of tiny clear lights.

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