

Baker from page 1D

The term "yarden" is used to incorporate all areas in a landscape and to treat them all equally — to think of them as a whole.

Grass-roots movement

Since grass is his favorite plant, our conversation generally revolved around it and his formulas. He begins his yearly yarden season in mid-January when the lawn is fed with a balanced fertilizer applied with a broadcast spreader set on number 3.

He allows the fertilizer to land on everything, around trees and shrubs and on the flower and vegetable beds.

When the snow is almost gone, about mid-March, as soon as he can take his mower across the lawn without it sinking, he cuts just above the emerging rhizomes — a little of the new grass that is emerging as possible.

Next he adds a box of Epsom

salts to each bag of fertilizer that covers 2,600 square feet and applies it.

"The magnesium deepens the color, thickens the petals and increases the root structure, and that's what I need."

He repeats this in the spring and fall. Baker advises that newer fertilizers contain urea and slow-release products that attract moisture, so either use the bag up right away, or give it to a neighbor.

Recipes for success

He then mixes one can of beer (an enzyme activator), 1 cup of liquid dish soap (to wash off pollution and discourage insects), one-half cup liquid molasses or clear corn syrup (to help plant digest food) and 1 cup household ammonia (to speed up the process) with 1 cup liquid lawn food,

and applies this.

He washes the lawn every week with yet another formula, but concedes that every two weeks is OK. This removes surface dirt and allows the full spectrum of light to reach the plant.

He mows the lawn regularly, three times a week, feeds it every three weeks, and has it cored twice a year.

A few of his other tips are: Water before 8 a.m. so water will get into the soil, and not evaporate from the plants into the air. Listerine in water if watering is done after 2 p.m. will help prevent bacteria from forming.

A hose-end sprayer filled with half Coke, half ammonia and 1 teaspoon of soap sprayed on the lawn will help grass clippings compost in place. This is important because more and more municipalities aren't taking clippings to landfills.

Walking on the lawn while wearing golf shoes allows the spikes to mechanically penetrate the invisible barrier, called surface tension, so that water and nutrients will get down into the soil.

"The best two things you can do to your yarden is to spoil it. Use Coke and ammonia (or any other pop — not sugar-free or 7-Up)."

Chemicals need to be used occasionally and must be used as recommended on the labels, or use less.

Career branches

Baker's career has been varied, often involving garden-related activities. He has written more than three dozen books, including two New York Times best sellers. Two more are waiting to be written. He was the garden consultant for World Book Encyclopedia and has done two videos.

He lectures extensively and

hosts the year-round national radio program "On the Garden Line." As a result of radio audience questions, he began publishing a monthly newsletter with the same title. He has been a guest on many television shows.

His newest venture is The YardenCare Co., which includes the newsletter and radio program, and a Garden Line Series of eight easy-reference booklets.

This company also carries YardenCare Tonics that contain the active ingredients in Baker's homemade concoctions that have been pre-mixed for the consumer. They include Thatch Buster, Yarden Activator and Yarden Shampoo.

Baker was dubbed America's Master Gardener by the man who started the MG program in Oregon. A master gardener award was given in 1965 by the Standard Oil Co. (Chevron).

Michigan State Prison in Jackson asked Baker to speak to prisoners to motivate them to attend a master gardener program and to tell them the opportunities in landscape nursery and management and greenhouse management. He took the courses with the prisoners at the "Hardrock Horticultural Center" and earned master gardener status then.

Now this program trains inmates who earn an associate degree, toxic chemical application certification as well as the master gardener certification. He releases money to help the prison program and plans to participate on a regular basis this year.

Baker has worked with children, senior citizens and church groups. He said the horticultural field is excellent for young people, and gives two scholarships each year to Michigan State University.

"I really think it's points toward heaven if you get yourself involved with the environment."

'Structurist II'



Campus contribution: Barbara and George Urb (left) of Bloomfield Hills pose with sculptor David Barr of Nout on the campus of Oakland University in Rochester. The Urbs donated Barr's painted steel sculpture to the university, in part because of Barbara Urb's fondness for the OU campus where she received her undergraduate degree in 1986, she said. She and her husband enjoyed taking walks on the campus, she said. The sculpture, 7 feet tall and 6 feet around, is between North and South Foundation Halls. Barr teaches at Macomb Community College. His works are placed around the state, including the new history museum in Lansing.

Master gardener: Troy resident Jerry Baker uses humor and common household products to help people raise healthy gardens.



Textile designs shown at fest

For the first time at the Michigan Renaissance Festival, an artist/textile designer at work.

Watch Robert Paige 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. Saturday-Sunday, Aug. 14-15, as he creates, designs and hand paints one-of-a-kind silk yardage, demonstrating renaissance techniques for hand painting silk. For more information, call 874-0300.

Paige's geometric patterns and shapes of all kinds express pure art and total design. He has an eye for subtle color combinations and organic patterns.

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