

Water meter can help you detect leaks

BY MORRIS AND JAMES CAREY
FOR AP WEEKLY FEATURES

Q. Colleen asks: How can I find a leak in my house? My water bill keeps going up. Sometimes I can hear water dripping in the bathroom after the sink has been used, but then it stops.

A. If you are on a public water system, chances are you have a water meter somewhere on or near your property. Besides telling you how much water you are using, it can help you detect leaks.

Water meters look a little like a speedometer. Subtract the first reading from the second to find out how many cubic feet of water you have used. A cubic foot contains 7.5 gallons of water. For example: If the first reading is 008300 and the second — a week later — is 008400, your use for one week was 100 cubic feet or 750 gallons (100 cubic feet x 7.5 gallons per cubic foot = 750 gallons). That's an average of slightly more than 107 gallons per day.

In some communities, all you need to do is read your water bill to discover this information.

To use your water meter to detect a hidden leak, turn off every plumbing fixture in your house for a couple of hours. Don't forget the built-in ice-maker or the reverse-osmosis water filtration system. If they turn themselves on automatically, once everything is off, take a meter reading. If the reading changes, a leak exists.

If the leak is a plumbing job or fitting located in the attic or walls, chances are great that you would have seen water dripping from the ceiling or noticed damp spots on the walls or floor. If, on

the other hand, the pipes are in the crawlspace or basement, it might require a bit of investigative work to find the leak.

It also is possible to have a leak between the water meter and the main shut-off valve where water enters your home. To determine if the pipe between these two points is leaking, shut off the main-water supply valve at the house, and check to see if the meter continues to show water is being used. If such is the case, it's time to call in a leak-detection company.

Using state-of-the-art technology, they will be able to pinpoint the leak for repair. They can also find an evasive leak in your home.

Q. Tim asks: We have a 3-inch schedule 40 PVC drain from a bathroom that runs about 8 feet down through the basement. When hot water is draining from the bath, there is a loud cracking sound generated in the drain pipe. What can I do to the drain pipe to reduce the noise?

A. The cracking noise is the result of expansion and contraction of the PVC pipe as it heats up and cools down — when hot water is run through it. While there are many means to deal with this problem, we believe that the best solution is to replace the PVC with a section of no-hub cast iron. Use no-hub couplings to connect the cast iron to the PVC. You not only will be rid of your cracking noise, you also will hardly be able to hear water running through the new pipe.

For more home improvement tips and information, visit www.onthehouse.com.

GARDENING CALENDAR

Send items for consideration in the Gardening Calendar to Keely Kalecki Wygonik, Assistant Managing Editor, Features, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, MI 48150. e-mail kwygonik@ec.homecom.net

GARDENING CLUBS

Redford Club: Meets 7 p.m. on the first Monday of the month at the Redford Community Center on Capital in the library. Share information with fellow gardeners, attend workshops and programs offered through the Federated Garden Clubs of Michigan which are provided for members. Call Sandy (313) 937-4495 for club and membership information.

African Violet Society: is having its annual spring display and sale 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, March 30 and 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday, March 31 at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 Dixboro Road, Ann Arbor. No admission charge.

Rose-West Society of Novi: Meets 7:30-9:30 p.m. Friday, March 1, at the Novi Community Center, 45175 West Ten Mile. "Yesterday's Roses for Today's Garden" will be presented by Nancy Lindley of Great Lakes Roses. Free, open to the public. (248)347-0400.

CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS
Junior Master Gardener: The Master Gardeners of Wayne County offer a Junior Master Gardener program for children in grades 2-5. Children can learn about gardening and how to use gardening to volunteer in their community. This six-week, one-hour course will meet at 6:30 p.m. Mondays March 4 to April 15, at the Quaker Meeting House at Greenmead Historical Park on Newburgh.

To become a Junior Master Gardener, a child must attend all six classes and complete 10-hours of volunteer gardening. A parent or guardian must attend the classes with the child. The classes will cover soil, vegetables, houseplants, wildlife, flowers, trees, shrubs and lawns. The cost is \$20 per child and covers the Junior Master Gardener notebook, classroom supplies, a T-shirt and newsletter. Maximum class size will be 20 students. Deadline for registration is Thursday, Feb. 21. Registration forms can be obtained at the Livonia Public Libraries. For details, call (734) 427-9658.

Schoolcraft College: Nancy Lindley will teach the Schoolcraft College class Radiant Roses. "Anyone with at least six hours of sun a day in the summer can grow roses," said Lindley. "You can work around problems like poor soil, but not around the issue of sunlight." The five-week class

meets 6-9 p.m. beginning Monday, March 18. Lindley will help backyard gardeners recognize the main rose categories, and teach them how to select, fertilize, prune, train and winter protect the plants and produce glorious blooms in the spring and summer. The class will culminate with a visit to a rose garden on April 14. The fee for the class is \$98. For more information or to register, contact the Schoolcraft College Continuing Education Services department at (734) 462-4448. Schoolcraft College is at 18600 Haggerty Road, between Six and Seven Mile roads, just west of I-275 in Livonia.

Photographing flowers: Steven Nikkila, a noted horticultural photographer of gardens and plants, will present "How to photograph our favorite flowers up close to show the details of each flower," 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 28 at the Royal Oak Senior Community Center, 3500 Marais, Royal Oak, three blocks east of Crooks Road and three blocks north of 13 Mile Road. Nikkila maintains a fully indexed slide library of over 90,000 color slides. His photographs are used by *Perennial Favorites*, *American Nurseryman*, *The Landsculptor*, *Country Journal*, *Fine Gardening*, *Michigan Gardener*, and other publications.

Along with photography, Steven is a horticultural instructor at the Michigan School of Gardening and co-owner of Perennia. There is no charge, and the lecture is open to the public.

Spring Berry Garland Workshop: Jacquelyn Carney of Paterson Carney Florist will hold a workshop in her shop for creating a Spring Berry Garland that would be suitable for a doorway, over a hutch, on a stair railing or down the middle of a dining table. The workshop is 2-3:30 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 26 in the shop, 239 Pierce Street in downtown Birmingham. This workshop has been one of Paterson Carney's most popular ones. Participants will be able to select from a number of vines, berry garlands, berry picks and ribbons to create a beautiful bright garland. Cost of the workshop is \$20 plus materials. Materials will cost \$40-\$60. Sample garlands are on display in the shop. Pre-registration for this workshop is required, call (248) 647-7477.

Send items for consideration in the Gardening Calendar to Keely Kalecki Wygonik, Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. To fax, call (734) 591-7279 or e-mail kwygonik@ec.homecom.net. Please send information as a text file or copy and paste into an e-mail.

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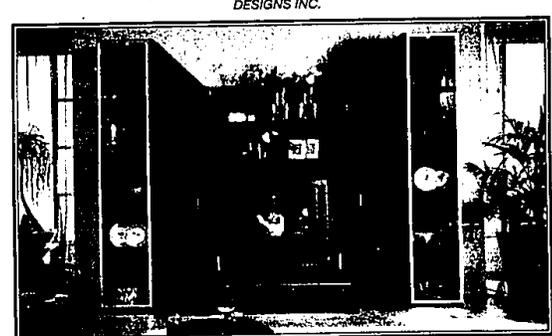
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