

APPLIANCE DOCTOR



JOE GAGNON

Ask and you shall receive good service tips

I have written several columns pointing directly at the few unethical businesses that exist in the appliance repair industry. I know that these articles have helped consumers become more aware and think twice before just calling anybody for service.

Today, I thought that if I could put my mind into the head of any person who needs appliance service and who knows nothing about the industry, this column might be a bigger assistance to the readers.

Let's pretend that I'm one of you: My washer doesn't work correctly and I've never had service before. I haven't done the wash in more than a week and I'm running out of everything.

I'm a do-it-yourselfer and I'll be darned if I'm going to pay someone to do something I can do. I'm going to try to fix this thing myself, but where do I start?

(Note: As you can tell, this column is for do-it-yourselfers. An upcoming column will deal with all you other guys.)

You must know someone who can fix things and that is whom you should call. Ask what he or she would do in your position and whom they know.

I'm telling you that there is a neighbor, relative or friend who can direct you to someone who will help you with an appliance question.

At one time in this country there were several manufacturers who had toll-free numbers that you could call and get technical help.

Today, in this profit-oriented world, many of these same numbers end up charging a fee to your credit card for talking with a service technician.

In the very neighborhood that you live in is an appliance repair company that you can stop in for a learning visit.

You can talk to someone in person, explain what's happening with the washer and get instructions on a few common things that go wrong and you can check out yourself.

For instance, if you complain that the agitator doesn't move back and forth but everything else works OK, then maybe the spline in the top of the agitator is stripped.

The technician will show you how to remove the agitator, hold it up to a light bulb and look inside to find the plastic teeth are stripped or worn out.

You can go home, pull the agitator, check it out and buy a new or used one and fix it yourself.

What's wrong with saving \$100 on a service call and labor? Think of the self-satisfaction you get from doing such a simple thing.

Don't tell me you don't have the confidence to attempt these things, because I've spent a lifetime helping first-time do-it-yourselfers. There are many hundreds of fixes on appliances that you can do on your own, and most of these shops like to meet new customers like you.

Think of the customer who spends \$75 to fix the door on the clothes dryer.

All he or she had to do was go visit a shop, buy a little door closure kit for \$5, pop it into the door and bingo! It's fixed.

Let's say the light bulb stays on in the refrigerator after you close the door. It doesn't take an engineer to figure out how to pop out the old switch and replace it. All you need is a little instruction and gumption and you've saved a lot of money.

If tools laugh at you when you pick them up, stay tuned

Joe Gagnon can now be heard on WJWL-950 and WXYZ-1270. He is a member and past president of the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals. His phone number is (248) 455-7281.



STAFF PHOTOS BY JOEY STEINBERG

Tranquility base: A garden pond was added to the Dudzinski back yard since the site was on the Troy Garden Walk 10 years ago. Gardener Gail Dudzinski teaches at the Michigan School of Gardening and has her own garden maintenance business.

LOVE IN BLOOM

Display shows lifelong love of gardening

6/27

When she was a child, Gail Dudzinski loved to help her father in the garden. She walked among plants that seemed gigantic to her, and she raised around 60 African violets.

Now Dudzinski has a family and a garden of her own, and her joy of gardening is even stronger. The joy shows in the spectacular scene she has raised, and is conveyed to the viewer.

"I couldn't begin to tell you how many plants I have," said Dudzinski, a master gardener who teaches at the Michigan School of Gardening. "Well over 100."

The garden is one of five on the 28th annual Troy Garden Walk, taking place Wednesday, July 10, presented by the Troy Garden Club. Items from a featured raffle will be displayed here.

The Dudzinski garden was on the walk 10 years ago. Since then, a sun-room and a garden pond have been added for extra enjoyment and enrichment of the beautiful site.

Dudzinski has her own garden maintenance business. She experiments with different plants in her garden to

evaluate them, the better to advise her clients. Many of the other flowers came from her aunt's garden, such as the shimmering peonies.

The peonies are part of the parade of perennials in the back yard, their petals like banners.

Dudzinski plants only perennials here. She plans the garden as it has continuous color through the seasons, and also looks for leaf and texture variety.

The back yard garden includes



Nature at hand: Gail Dudzinski looks at the peonies from her aunt's garden that now are among the beautiful blooms in Dudzinski's back yard.



Lovely setting: Gail Dudzinski's perennial garden is nestled against a small patch of woods.

Please see GARDEN, C2

Story by Mary Klemic - Staff Writer - mklemic@oe.homecomm.net

Create an oasis in small urban setting

According to a new Harris Interactive Survey for The Home Depot®, gardening and grilling are the most appealing summer outdoor activities.

Fortunately, these summer pleasures and the daily grind of city living can co-exist with creative design and planning that transforms a small patio or balcony into functional space that maximizes the best in outdoor living.

"A thoughtfully designed patio can completely change an urban living experience," said Karen Thompson, a certified interior designer with Home Depot.

"No matter what the size or

location, urban outdoor space should never be relinquished to storage."

Lifestyle is the most important consideration in designing an outdoor living environment, says Damon Vartraw, a visual designer from EXPO Design Center.

"Patios, balconies and rooftop terraces today are being transformed into themed gardens, relaxation zones and entertaining hot spots," he said.

Thompson and Vartraw offer several design concepts to illustrate how easy it is to create an urban oasis.

The key to most street-level patio designs is to mini-

mize noise and maximize privacy.

Evergreens planted in the ground or in large containers are a popular choice for walling off an exposed patio. Thompson and Vartraw suggest starting off with a row of large spruce or junipers as a natural privacy screen.

Elevate pots to create a vertical element in a border, camouflage an unsavory view or draw the eye to a special section of the garden. Vary the heights and shapes of plants, containers and accessories to disguise unpleasant parking lot views or air conditioner units.

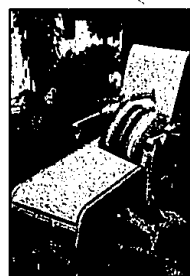
A creative focal point is a

design must for a small patio space, Thompson says.

A mosaic top or iron cafe table adorned with patterned wrought-iron chairs offers a striking centerpiece. Surround with an eclectic assortment of containers brimming with colorful annuals for a vibrant outdoor setting. Or frame a patio door with wrought-iron trellises to create a striking perpendicular element.

Since balconies tend to have limited space it's critical to make use of the ceiling, floor and wall area.

Condo owners can dress up



Disguise the limit: Add flair to a plain chaise lounge with vibrant outdoor patio pillows in bold stripes.

Please see OASIS, C2