Garden *from page C1*

leisurely exploration to recharge your enthusiasm for your own garden."

The Garden Conservancy's Open Days Directory: The Guide to Visiting Hundreds of America's Best Private Gardens, 2002 Edition lists the gardens around the country that are in the program.

Each listing includes a garden description, travel directions, and the dates and times each garden is open. Many public gardens are also featured.

The 512-page directory costs $15.95 and is available wherever books are sold.

To order the directory – with an additional $4.50 for shipping and handling – write The Garden Conservancy, P.O. Box 219, Cold Spring, NY 10516, or call (888) 842-2442 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. The cost is $10.95 for Garden Conservancy members, plus shipping and handling.

The 2002 Open Days Program is sponsored in part by Sara Lee Corporation.

Heart *from page C1*

With dedicated counter island seating for smaller, younger occupants, Mom can cook, surf the Internet or pay bills while her child does homework or draws a picture.

"The more user- friendly the kitchen is for all ages, the more you're going to all be together," said Anderson. "It's another way to spend time with the kids."

But what about the not-so-pint-sized messes frequently left in the kitchen by youngsters?

"If you have three children, you give them three drawers," said Dawn Bluga, certified kitchen designer at Kitchen Master in downtown Farmington.

That way, children have a destination for backpacks, art work and personal items, she said.

"It's whether you have the space to give up for those items."

But for today's busy families, the trade-off usually proves well worth it, Bluga said.

"We go to people's houses and see stacks and stacks of papers, and we ask what are you trying to accomplish, and they say 'Get rid of all this paper and get things organized.' "

Figley *from page C1*

also called the royal fern. The rhizomes, underground stems, become quite large as the plant matures.

Candelabra primulas would fit most successfully in a wet garden.

Primula "Rowallane Rose" glows with tall, deep pink flowers atop tall stems. The foliage is a pretty shade of green that would contrast well with ligularia. *P. pulverulenta* produces clusters of deep red flowers with a dark purplish red eye along the stem. *P. heladoxa* brings bright yellow blooms into the picture.

There are many choices of astilbe with blooms in varying shades of pinks and crimson, purple to white. Take your pick and mix and match. They're wonderful additions to many gardens.

GOODGARDEN TIP

Today is the final day to pinch chrysanthemums for a beautiful show this fall.

Marty Figley is an advanced master gardener based in Birmingham. You can leave her a message by dialing (734) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone. Her fax number is (248) 644-1314.

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It's not just who you call, but how

In my last column, I talked about the common logic that many people can use when an appliance breaks down, and how people are so capable of doing some of the repairs on their own.

APPLIANCE DOCTOR

JOE GAGNON

Today's column is directed toward the person who just simply calls someone any time an appliance goes into the failure mode. Where must you start – to get the proper service?

I would wager that everyone knows what the symbol of "walking" fingers on a book indicates: The yellow pages provided in America for many years by the phone company and now by others not even in the phone business. I think that a little more effort by consumers can bring as good as or better results. I like to see a homeowner put a little effort in that initial contact with an appliance repair company.

A personal recommendation from a friend goes a long way in selecting someone already proven by another. When it comes to a doctor, your life and good health usually cause you to ask someone for a reference. You might want to use this kind of thinking when it comes the appliances in your home.

Even so, I suggest you call the Better Business Bureau and check out anyone who is going to enter your private domain. The BBB does a better job today than ever and I give credit to Fred Hoffecker, the current director. His past years as head of the complaint division of the Attorney General's office have helped to lend more credence to the BBB.

It only works if consumers will take advantage of the information they have. The first phone call you make for service will tell you a lot about the company. Were they polite? Did they keep their appointment?

Did the appearance or attitude and conversation of the service technician please you or make you feel ill at ease?

Was the product and work area cleaned up after the repairs, and did the technician wash his or her hands before working on the inside of your refrigerator?

Did the technician give you an understandable explanation of the necessary repairs needed, and was the service invoice presented you easy to understand? Did the invoice explain what parts were used and how much they cost? Did you understand the service call charge and how much you paid in labor?

You have to ask yourself one question from the time you called initially for service up to the point where the product has been repaired and the service technician is leaving your home: Would I call this company again?

I am not the one to tell you how to get the best service possible; you are, and your own common sense will do that for you. Stay tuned.

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

Lethargic bunny could be seriously sick

ASK THE VETS

MICHEAL & TRACY LAFFE

Dear Doctors,

We purchased a baby bunny from a pet store last week. She was playful and happy at first , but now she hardly eats, has diarrhea, and isn't acting as perky. What should we do?

An animal, especially one that is very young or old, that has anorexia, lethargy and diarrhea, needs to be examined by a veterinarian as soon as possible. Your bunny sounds as though she is quite sick.

It's a good idea to call the pet store where you bought her and ask the manager or other qualified personnel if any of the other bunnies are sick.

Contact the veterinarian who performed her pet store check-up before she was offered for sale. Ask whether she had been sick previously or treated with antibiotics (some can cause a rabbit to have diarrhea).

Ask whether the veterinarian did a microscopic examination of your rabbit's droppings to look for intestinal parasites. Even if a fecal sample was examined in the past, another one should be evaluated now.

One common protozoan parasite that may be found in a rabbit's stool specimen is called coccidia. It can affect the liver and intestine and can cause diarrhea and dehydration. Coccidia may be fatal if left untreated.

If your veterinarinn finds coccidia in the fecal sample, your bunny will be given an oral medication for about 10 days. During the treatment period, her droppings need to be removed from her cage as soon as you notice them so she doesn't become reinfected.

After she has finished her course of medication, another fecal sample should be examined to make certain she has cleared her "infection."

If your bunny's stool specimen is negative for parasites, it should be cultured for bacteria. An overgrowth of certain bacteria, such as Clostridium sp. or E. coli, may be responsible for her diarrhea. The toxins produced by these bacteria can make your rabbit very ill.

Feeding

You didn't mention what you're feeding your bunny. Diet changes may cause anorexia or diarrhea.

She may turn her nose up at the new food because it smells or tastes different from what she is accustomed, or is stale or rancid. If her diet change has been abrupt instead of gradual, her body may not have adapted yet and she may develop diarrhea.

Is your bunny eating the same brand of food she had in the pet store? Did you open a new bag of food? Does the food have an off-odor?

Are you feeding her a well-balanced diet that includes fresh water, fresh leafy greens, hay (not straw), commercial pellets, and small volumes of fruit, vegetables and non-insecticide-treated flower petals? Make certain she doesn't fill up on fruit and ignore the rest of her food.

Environment

Examine your bunny's environment for clues as to why she doesn't feel well.

Was she exposed to any toxins? Did you find evidence that any houseplants or household objects have been chewed or consumed? Diarrhea or absence of stools can be a sign of digestive tract obstructions.

Can you open her mouth and examine her teeth? Are they worn down, overgrown and curling, or improperly aligned? Your veterinarian can help you identify and remedy dental problems.

Was your rabbit exposed to warm weather? A bunny can overheat when the environmental temperature exceeds 78 to 80 degrees. If your bunny lives in a poorly ventilated and humid environment, even temperatures in the mid-70s can be a problem.

Make certain you keep her in comfortable surroundings. If she lives outdoors in the summer, keep her in a shady spot that gets a nice breeze and is safe from predators.

We hope that we've given you a few things to think about. Please don't delay in having your bunny get some medical attention.

For those of you interested in adding a rabbit (or any pet) to your household, we suggest you contact your local animal shelter or humane society. Many rabbits bought aa Easter gifts end up in shelters.

The adoption fee for shelter animals often includes a veterinary examination, fecal examination, and spaying or neutering. You're also saving a life!

Send questions to be addressed in this column by mail in care of Mary Klemic, At Home Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Or e-mail askthevets@juno.com.

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Safe household cleaning alternatives

BY MORRIS AND JAMES CAREY
FOR AP WEEKLY FEATURES

Many products used in the average household contain materials that are considered hazardous because the ingredients are flammable, corrosive, toxic or reactive.

Many of these products are so familiar to us that their hazards might be overlooked or underestimated. For those who wish to play it safe, there are alternatives.

For cleaning windows, measure 3 tablespoons of ammonia, 1 tablespoon white vinegar and three-quarters of a cup of water into a clean spray bottle. Spray on and wipe clean.

Ideas for polishing metal:

- For brass, polish with Worcestershire sauce.
- For copper, soak in a vinegar and salt solution.
- For silver, soak in a quart of warm water containing 1 teaspoon baking soda, 1 tenspoon salt and a piece of aluminum foil.

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