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Questions, comments, story ideas?
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Lifestyle/Home

FRIDAY, APRIL 15, 2011, LANCASTER, PA., PAGE B9



Your personalized felted egg is the perfect size for containing tiny gifts.

Felted wool egg can hide Easter treasures inside

Easter is around the corner, and my son was adamant that I do an Easter-related craft this week. He said it only made sense. Luckily, the craft that we did together also made sense and was relatively easy to complete.

The 12-year-old in him saw grand plans for creating a huge Easter basket (I think he was figuring we would HAVE to fill it for the picture and he would reap the rewards). I, however, like tiny packages and am a firm believer that good things can come in small packages.

These little felted eggs only take a few supplies, some time and patience. The base of the egg is a plastic egg and the egg is created from felting raw wool, which can now



Crafting 101
Claudia Esbenschade

be found at craft stores. The popularity of needle felting has helped to bring raw wool to local craft stores — in the past you would have to find it at specialty yarn shops.

There is a fun variety of raw wool colors and you are only limited by your own creativity with this craft. Keep in mind that this is not a precise craft — do not count on your egg felting exactly the way you want; be a little open-minded. The technique of wet felting is a little less precise than needle felting. However, keep in mind, you can needlefelt designs on these finished eggs to make them exactly how you envisioned.

Fill your egg with goodies for your children or a gift for a loved one. That special pair of earrings can get tucked in the center and gifted to Mom. Then she can use the felted egg for her Easter display. I am a big fan of two gifts in one.

Please see CRAFTING 101, page B10

Bunnies bought for Easter often wind up in shelters

DEAR ABBY: Could you please reprint a letter you ran a few years ago about the dangers of purchasing a pet rabbit for children at Easter? As a rabbit owner for eight years, I'm all too familiar with the misconceptions and ridiculous theories associated with these delightful creatures. Every point in that letter rang true to me, and I beg anyone considering giving a child a rabbit to reconsider.

When I bought my bunny, it was near Easter time. Most pet stores didn't offer them, and I was told it was because of the large number of rabbits found dead or abandoned on the streets because the selfish, inhumane people who bought them for the holiday disposed of them the next day. These dear little animals deserve owners who will love and respect them. Please don't waste their lives. — CAITLIN IN LOS ANGELES

DEAR CAITLIN: I'm happy to oblige. The letter you requested carries an important message that can't be repeated often enough:

DEAR ABBY: Easter is coming. Many families still purchase live rabbits as pets for their children. Parents often think rabbits are good "starter" pets and don't understand what they are getting into. As a result, many of these poor creatures end up in animal shelters, and children learn that pets are disposable.

Before getting rabbits, people should consider:

1. Are they willing to make a seven-to-10-year commitment? That is the average lifespan of a rabbit.
2. What will happen if their child gets bored with the bunny after six months?
3. Is there a place in their house for a rabbit cage?
4. Are they willing to pay to get it spayed/neutered and provide vet care?
5. Do they know that most rabbits hate to be held? Will their child accept that?
6. Are they willing to ensure that children under 7 won't pick up the rabbit without supervision? Rabbits are fragile; their legs or spine will break if accidentally dropped.
7. Can they provide three hours of exercise every day in an escape-proof area outside its cage?
8. Do the adults want the rabbit, too? A rabbit should be a family pet.

If people have questions about rabbits and their care, please ask them to contact my organization. We are happy to answer questions. Our website is www.rabbitnetwork.org, and our phone number is (781) 431-1211.

Finally, if a rabbit is right for you and your family, please adopt one from a shelter or rescue group. You'll enrich your family with a new member and also teach your kids the value of saving a life. Thank you. — SUZANNE TRAYHAN, PRESIDENT, HOUSE RABBIT NETWORK

DEAR SUZANNE: The topic of bunnies, baby chicks and ducklings as Easter gifts is one that recurs every year. I hear from people who work in animal shelters deploring the fact that these helpless little creatures are later dumped when they cease to be novelties. I hope readers will take to heart what you

Please see ABBY, page B10

Garden without strain

A green thumb doesn't have to cost you an aching back

BY DAINA SAVAGE
Correspondent

In spring, the outdoor garden to-do list looms large. In between rain showers, it seems impossible to get to the mowing and planting and weeding and mulching and pruning tasks that await. Consequently, sunny, seasonable days end up as a whirlwind of chores that can take a toll on your body.

"The problem is that people haven't done these motions in six months and they're just wiped out at the end of the day," said master gardener June Wise. "It can make for a many-Advil evening."

Wise, who heads up the horticulture therapy program at Conestoga View, said that gardening can take its toll on bodies at any age.

"People think about (positioning) when they're lifting something heavy, but usually don't when they're just picking up something light."

Dawn Cox
Prana Functional Manual Therapy

In the hopes of preventing some of these gardening injuries, she's offering a free seminar April 21 at Patio at Penn Stone, 190 W. Ross St.

"It's a great opportunity for us to help our customers," said John McGrann of Penn Stone, who knows the spring rush of planting and patio building can be physically demanding.

"We see so many gardening injuries," Cox said. "I would rather people come in before a big gardening weekend and learn how to prevent these injuries from happening."

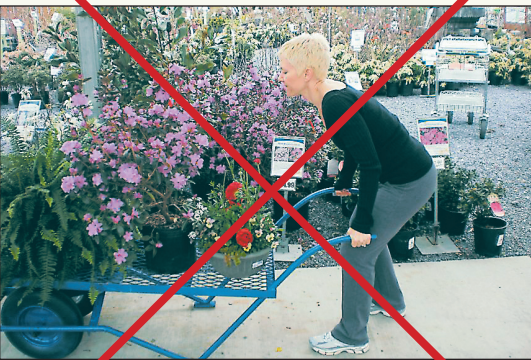
Cox's focus is teaching clients how to stay strong and how to efficiently

Please see GARDENING, page B10



Photos provided by Dawn Cox

Jim Cox demonstrates the correct technique for starting, at left, and following through, right, on your rake strokes.



WHICH LIFT IS CORRECT? Use the strength of your body's core, top, bend your knees and lift the wheelbarrow. Don't hunch over, above, straining your arms and lower back.



THE SAME PRINCIPLE AS ABOVE APPLIES HERE: Dawn Cox of Prana Physical Therapy shows how to use your body, not work against it, to avoid straining or injuring yourself.

Deadbeat boyfriend isn't ready to be a real grownup or father

DEAR ANNIE: I am 21 and have a baby with my boyfriend, "Emmett," who is 19. I love him dearly, but I don't know what to do with him. He is unemployed and goes out all the time.

I am stuck with two young children at home while Emmett does nothing but sleep and party. I continue to support him, but he hardly helps with the kids or around the house. There are sever-



Annie's Mailbox Advice

al minimum wage positions available to him, but he's stubborn and wants something better. He says he wants to support the family on his own. As much as I would love that, it's just not possible at this time.

Also, Emmett is mean, saying I complain too much about what he needs to do, that it will happen in time. I've suggested counseling because we fight so much, but he refuses. Meanwhile, he is draining my finances with his constant speeding tickets and, most recently, a broken car window that I cannot afford to fix.

How do I convince him to settle for a minimum wage job and work

on our relationship before it's too late? — LOVE STRUCK FOR A MULE

DEAR LOVE STRUCK: You sound like a sensible woman, but Emmett is 19 and not mature enough to be a responsible partner and father. He wants to have fun with his friends. He resents having to work for a living and support a family. You cannot force him to grow up. Frankly, you'd be better off financially if you asked him to leave and sued for child support.

DEAR ANNIE: I work for a small company, and like many others, we've had cutbacks, layoffs and reduced benefits.

One co-worker uses her time to manage her personal life. She does very little work. She is constantly texting, writing e-mails to friends and updating her blog, and she blatantly lies about the length of time she takes for a lunch break.

The company is paying her to do nothing, while others have lost their jobs. I brought this situation to the attention of the managers last year, and her behavior has only worsened. I feel it is immoral for her to be paid a full salary for not working, while others are being cut back.

How far up the corporate chain should I take this without risking

my own job? — FRUSTRATED WORKER

DEAR FRUSTRATED: If your company has an HR department, you can register a complaint there. It's possible this woman has some kind of "protected" status. While it isn't fair, you cannot force management to get rid of her. The best you can do is focus on your own job and try to ignore her.

DEAR ANNIE: I'd like to share my solution for teaching children manners. When my kids were 9, 8 and 7, we started a tradition of formal Thursday night dinners.

Please see MAILBOX, page B10

When to prune clematis

BY DEAN FOSDICK
Associated Press

There's a lot to like about clematis, one of the earliest vines to green up in the spring. It's easy to grow, blooms in profusion and is hardy, with some varieties lasting over 50 years.

Garden

Yet there remains a great deal of confusion about when — or even if — these woody plants should be pruned.

“If you have vines that grow 20 feet a year, they likely will be blooming in your neighbor’s yard and not your own,” said Linda Beutler, curator of the Rogerson Clematis Collection at West Lynn, Oregon, and author of “Gardening With Clematis” (Timber Press, 2004). “The reason for pruning is to keep them under control.”

The tops get bulky and the bottoms appear bare if you don’t prune clematis plants every two or three years, Beutler said.

“People like them to look green from the bottom up,” she said. “You have to prune them to keep them looking that way.”

There are more than 250 clematis species and even more hybrids. They are separated into three broad pruning groups, mainly according to when they bloom.

Clematis in Group A are the vigorous spring-blooming

varieties that flower on stems produced the previous season, the so-called “old wood.” They include the “Alpina,” “Armandii” and a number of the Montana varieties. They should be pruned as soon as they finish blooming.

Group B is the large flowered hybrids, such as the familiar “Nelly Moser,” “Miss Bateman” and “Henryi.” They bloom in early to mid-summer, also on old wood. Prune the tops of these plants lightly in February or March, allowing them time to produce new stems for the next flowering season. The vines can be given a second and hard cutting immediately after flowering, down to a height of around 18 inches. That helps direct and support their growth, whether they are wrapped around a fence, pole or trellis.

Group C is the late bloomers, including the iconic “Jackmani,” the “Perle d’Azur” and “Duchess of Albany.” This collection blooms on stems formed during the current growing season, and should be pruned in late winter or early spring.

With clematis, you ignore pruning at your peril, said Dennis Patton, a horticulture agent with Kansas State University Research and Extension at Olathe. “Left untended, they will grow into a tangled mass of vines mixed with new growth. They will be unruly looking. Difficult to manage,” he said.

Crafting 101: Felted eggs

Continued from B9

For this project, you will need a plastic egg, tape, a variety of colored raw wool, a knee-high pantyhose stocking and a washing machine.

Begin by taping your egg shut. This will help keep the water out while in the washer.

Select your colors and begin wrapping your egg with thin layers of the raw wool. You want to be sure the egg is totally covered and that your layers alternate directions. This will help in the felting process.

Add extra colors to your egg by tearing off pieces of raw wool and incorporating them into your layers.

Once you have enough colors and designs added to your egg, place it in the bottom of the knee-high pantyhose stocking: Roll the stock-

ing down toward the toe, as if you were going to put it on, and carefully place your egg inside without moving any of the wool. Tie a knot just above the egg to hold it tight in the stocking. You can layer more than one egg per stocking.

Wash on hot in a normal wash cycle with detergent added. I threw it in with the load of wash I was already doing.

Dry the egg in the dryer. Once it's dry, remove the plastic egg from inside the felted egg by cutting horizontally in a straight line or zigzagged (so it looks like the egg was cracked open) about halfway to three-quarters of the way up the egg. Only cut a little more than halfway around the egg so that the top stays attached to the bottom with a “hinge” of felt.

Fill and enjoy!

Gardening: Don't ruin it with pain

Continued from B9

perform tasks.

“I want people to be about to do what they want to do without pain,” she said.

Cox hopes the class will “plant a seed so people will think about their alignment, so they can visually picture it.”

In teaching the mechanics of motion, Cox emphasizes creating a base of support, so that people will be more stable as they begin their tasks. She then asks that people ensure correct alignment before applying a weight shift in their bodies.

As she helps adjust clients to make these subtle shifts, she said, she sees lightbulbs go off.

“I love this stuff,” she said. “I love helping give people personal strategies to have less pain.”

For instance, she said that to avoid back and neck pain when raking or hoeing, people should move one foot forward to help initiate a base of support, then check that their bodies are in alignment, then hinge their hips and “get your booty back” to accomplish the task most efficiently. She will be demonstrating this fully at the seminar.

Retraining your body to be more aware throughout your day’s tasks can prevent many injuries, she said.

“You want to ensure you’re in the optimal posture to perform the task without pain or injury,” she said. That lack of awareness is why many injuries happen when lifting lighter objects than heavy ones.

“People think about it when they’re lifting something heavy, but usually don’t when they’re just picking up something light,” she said. “It’s important to do it right every time.”

Cox also advocates learning several different, efficient ways of performing a task to avoid repetitive injuries.

“I recommend looking at what you can change with your own body, not only so you can spend less money on

tools, but also for your own longevity,” she said.

For those who do need specialized tools, Wise likes well-padded, long-handled ones.

“That way you don’t have to bend and stoop as much,” she said. “I like ergonomic things like watering wands help you reach hanging baskets that you might not be able to water otherwise.”

She’s also a fan of kneeling pads and benches, and even rolling scooters. For those with limited mobility or those who use wheelchairs, Wise likes gardening in raised beds that extend to hip height.

“Of course, even though we have raised beds at Conestoga View, we have one wheelchair-bound garden club member who still wants to get down at ground level,” she said.

“So many of the residents were actively involved in gardening when they lived in their homes. This is a wonderful factor to continue in their lives,” she added.

For those with physical limitations, Wise advocates selecting plants and planting techniques to make gardening less cumbersome.

“Maintenance-free is the way to go, so try to find plants that don’t require deadheading or pruning,” she said. “Most perennials don’t require much if you’ve planted them in the right location.”

As for more carefree annuals, Wise recommends the Wave series of petunias, lantana, verbena, begonias, coleus, impatiens, fountain grasses and calibrachoa.

“For vegetables, I recommend planting patio bush varieties in containers to make cleanup easier and to keep them closer to the house where you’ll use them,” she said, adding that many herbs are also ideal container plants.

Wise also recommends gardening with others. “When we plant together, we’re very watchful, looking to see if

Gardening without risk of pain or injury

Dawn Cox of Prana Functional Manual Therapy has these suggestions as we approach the height of gardening season, when the risk for injury is greatest.

- Use proper body mechanics for all aspects of gardening. It’s more involved than just “use your legs,” and may best be taught by a knowledgeable physical therapist.
- Treat your gardening activities as a sport. Do a warm-up before you garden and a cool-down afterward. These should included proper exercises and stretches to address specific muscles used while gardening as well as “practicing” the proper body mechanics you should use.
- Know when to ask for help. If someone is available to help you with something that might be too much to lift or move or pull, ask for help to decrease stress and strain to your body.
- Take breaks during your gardening to check in with your body. If you are noticing that a certain body part is getting sore or strained, stop and stretch. If you feel better, resume gardening and ensure you are actually performing proper body mechanics. If not, stop and resume at a later time that day or the next.
- RICE: Rest, Ice, Compression, Elevation. If you do incur an injury, apply this standard treatment and call a certified physical therapist or your doctor. Preventative icing for 20-30 minutes may also be helpful, even if you do not feel pain or strain but you do have an area that is often sore.
- Don’t settle for pain. Don’t have the attitude that pain is normal with gardening (or other similar activities). Often, so much can be done to ensure there is no pain or stress/strain if identified and treated by the appropriate health care professional.

— Daina Savage

Mailbox: Teaching mealtime manners

Continued from B9

I would shop in the morning and cook all afternoon, and then we would eat in the dining room with the good china, silver and crystal.

The children had a choice: If they wished to build mashed potato forts and shoot each other with pea cannonballs, that was fine. But it meant

they would have their supper in the kitchen.

On the other hand, if they wished to eat with us in the dining room, they had to use their very best grownup manners. That included eating with the proper forks from a choice of at least three, as well as two knives.

They always chose the dining room, and their manners

were impeccable. I’m proud of them. — NO PEA SHOOTERS IN MY HOME

DEAR NO: Very impressive. You made eating in the dining room a way to feel grown up and accomplished. It undoubtedly was a source of pride for them, as well.

Please email your questions to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to: Annie’s Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Ste. 700, Los Angeles, CA 90045.

Abby


Continued from B9

have written, particularly the suggestion that if a rabbit is going to be adopted, a shelter or rescue group can be an excellent resource.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

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Ask an Expert



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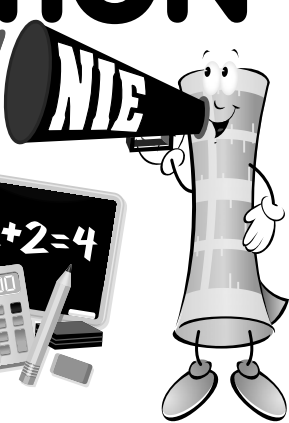
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