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home &  
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The Clinton Chronicle  
April 29, 2009





# Money-saving tips for the yard

- Gardeners eagerly await the start of spring to spruce up their yards and tackle new projects. However, this year, more than ever, people are looking for ways to cut costs.

“Most people want to have a nice landscaped, healthy yard for their own enjoyment and because a well maintained lawn is a great selling point for a home,” says Jason Cupp, CLP, president of the Professional Landcare Network (PLANET). “It is more important than ever to make your home stand out if you ever want to sell it.”

PLANET, the nation’s lawn care and landscape association, offers money-saving tips to consumers who want to keep their yards to be healthy and beautiful.

## April is National Lawn Care Month

- First, do a walk-through of your yard and make sure the existing lawn and plants, trees, and shrubs look green and healthy. It is expensive to remove dead or diseased plants and trees, therefore keep costs down by protecting what you already have.

- To save money on materials, look for free tree and plant giveaways in April in conjunction with Arbor Day or Earth Day celebrations. Some towns and cities also give away free mulch, compost, and trees. Check with your local agricultural extension offices.

- Purchasing small plants, trees, and shrubs is another way to save, as a seedling costs a fraction of

what a more mature plant costs.

For complicated jobs, such as new landscape design and installation, turf installation, irrigation,

lighting projects, or dealing with diseased plants, many people choose to hire a professional. For more information or to find a lawn care and landscape professional,

*PLANET is the association of members who create and maintain the QUALITY OF LIFE in communities across America. With more than 4,000 member companies and affiliates, these firms and their employees represent more than 100,000 green industry professionals. For more information on PLANET, visit LandcareNetwork.org or call*

# Artwork

From Page 4

Caribbean ocean while snow falls outside. You can bring a piece of paradise into your home with a wall mural.

For some, the image of a tropical sunset is the perfect way to drift off to sleep each night. Others might prefer to visit a scene from their favorite city in the den. Murals Your Way, a Minnesota-based company, will create a wall mural from your own photograph or you can select an image from their collection.

Murals Your Way’s collection of images includes famous paintings, city skylines and fantasy worlds. “Imagine a coral reef in a child’s room, or a Parisian café in the kitchen. With a wall mural you’re instantly transported,” says

company president Todd Imholte.

For smaller spaces, think about accessories. Transfer photos to fabric for custom pieces that also make great gifts. A child’s artwork can grace a pillow or tote bag. Quilts can boast a collection of smiling grandchildren. In the living room, ditch the dust-collecting jumble of frames by constructing a photo tray. Simply layer pictures under glass to create a useful display that can rest on the coffee table or sideboard when not on duty.

Artwork should be a personal expression of your style, taste and the things you love. What better way to surround yourself than with the people and places that mean the most to you.

For more information on custom wall murals, visit [www.muralsyourway.com](http://www.muralsyourway.com) or to speak to a

# Get consumer safety tips over the phone

(SPM Wire) — In an effort to help South Carolina’s consumers avoid fraud and get the latest consumer protection information, state officials have launched an automated telephone service designed to help answer their most pressing needs.

The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs (SCDCA) has launched its new Tele-Tips automated service to help consumers access recorded information on a variety of consumer issues. Covered topics include how to file a complaint, debt collection, purchase of vehicles and fraud.

For instance, if a resident has a concern about a debt collector and wants to understand their rights, their first step should be the

Tele-Tips automated service.

The Tele-Tips line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Consumers can reach the Tele-Tips information by dialing (803) 734-4215 or (888) 734-4215, which is toll-free in South Carolina. The caller should then follow the prompts to access the information he or she needs.

“The goal is to continue to make receiving helpful information easy, fast, and accessible,” said Brandolyn Thomas Pinkston, the Department’s Administrator.

For more information on the Department or other consumer protection issues, visit the Department’s Web site at [www.sc-](http://www.sc-)

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# Spring

From Page 5

other necessary supplies and the cost would repeat itself for each room. Renting a wallpaper steamer costs around \$40 to \$50 for a weekend project (and rental units are heavy and bulky to move around). The Wagner 705 steamer is lightweight, very portable and can be used again and again throughout the whole house. At a cost of around \$49, it is a smart investment for current and future projects.

Once your walls are prepped and ready to paint, consider using a power roller for fast and easy painting. It's simple to use, and can actually make painting fun. Just plug in the machine, insert the hose into the paint, and press

the handle button to begin pumping paint to the attached roller cover; release the button to stop the flow of paint.

The Wagner Power Roller 980 maintains a continuous paint flow, providing you with an even stream of paint for smooth, even coverage that gives you professional results at a fraction of the cost. The power roller comes with a 14-inch extension attachment for reaching tall walls and ceilings and a splatter shield attachment to prevent paint speckles.

For a more dramatic look, faux finishing fills the bill. WallMagic from Wagner simplifies the steps and cuts the time involved while giving you beautiful faux finish effects you see in magazines and high-end homes.



The patented process simultaneously blends two or three colors on your wall with an arching criss-cross motion. A dual roller with split tray easily produces instant dimension, eliminating the mystery of traditional hand tools. The WallMagic starter kit has easy-to-everything you need, including detailed instructions and an idea-fill CD ROM. Choose from seven dual roller cover looks to create a finish that is uniquely yours. Create a color combination that matches your room and your imagination. The dual roller will blend the colors for you, effortlessly.

With today's convenient and ingenious products, it's easier than ever to transform your home. Why not start today?

For more information about the

# Landscaping improves home value

By The South Carolina Nursery and Landscape Association

Spring is on the way and many of us begin to think about vacations and travel. This year, with so much uncertainty about the economy and home values continuing to fall, why not consider putting those vacation funds into your yard by landscaping? Doing so will not only increase the value and enjoyment of your home but, if carefully planned, create the perfect 'staycation' paradise.

A study by the American Nursery and Landscape Association found that beautiful landscaping could increase property value by seven to fourteen percent. Many experts believe that homeowners can recover as much as 100 percent of the money they invested in cultivating landscapes when they sell their homes.

One of the best reasons to landscape is for energy savings. Studies have shown that properly placed trees can save up to 25% on a home's heating and cooling energy consumption. It is important to note that if you want the benefits of having trees in your landscape, spring is a good time to plant them. Trees take several years to establish and grow to the point where they can provide the energy saving mentioned.

Landscaping can also effectively increase the amount of living space associated with your home by creating outdoor "rooms" such as cooking or dining areas, as well as, relaxation and recreational areas. According to Rick McAbee of Roebuck Wholesale Nursery & Landscaping, Roebuck, SC "Our number one most requested landscaping feature now is to provide outdoor living areas such as sitting or cook-

ing areas."

One aspect of landscaping that is often overlooked is the idea of planting herbs and vegetables. If you like to cook, what could be better than fresh herbs or vegetables from your own yard? Many herbs, especially, can do double or even triple duty providing a pleasing aroma and aesthetic in addition to their usefulness in meal preparation.

Vegetables not only can be planted in the typical row garden fashion but in containers as well.

Of course, landscaping can be helpful in other practical ways such as dealing with drainage issues. More and more often municipalities are requiring homeowners and builders to address and contain drainage in a positive way. Rainwater can be collected from gutters and used to irrigate the trees, shrubs, herbs and flowering plants

in your landscape.

When it comes to simply beautifying your yard nothing gives the proverbial 'bang for the buck' better than annuals. Color is King in the landscape and it is never more so than when you're trying to attract or impress potential buyers.

Given all these great reasons to invest in your yard why wait? If you're the do-it-yourselfer, now is the time to get started. If you need some help putting all the pieces together, call a Landscape Designer or consult your local garden center staff. Regardless of which avenue you pursue, make sure to visit your local nursery and garden centers for materials and advice. Be sure to visit the South Carolina Nursery and Landscape Association website ([www.scnla.com](http://www.scnla.com)) to find nurseries and garden centers in your area, as well as for a vast collection of arti-

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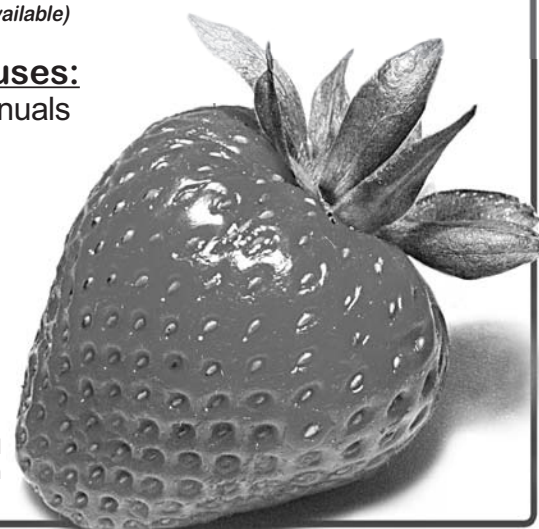
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# Artwork you already love

(ARA) - You spent months searching for just the right sofa, agonized over paint colors and endlessly debated area rug options. Don't leave your walls blank. The perfect finishing touch is something you already have: your own photos.

Thanks to innovations in digital technology using your personal snapshots to create works of art is easy. You favorite landscape, special event or vacation can be transformed to fit your style and room.

A grouping of black and white photos brings a modern touch, but not many people have the cameras or film to create this style. But digital photos can be transformed to black and white with the click of a mouse, and older photos can be scanned and changed. Keeping your pictures in



the same color scheme allows you to bring a cohesive look to unrelated images. A collection of prints

from similar occasions - birthdays, graduations or reunions - provide a timeline of memories.

Pictures tell a story when showcased alongside objects. Using shadowboxes, add the little extras to give photos more punch. Seek out ticket stubs and maps to accompany photos of far-flung adventures, an heirloom handkerchief next to a portrait of your grandmother or even a dried bloom from your bouquet to set off wedding photos.

A treasured portrait gets the look of an Old Master by reprinting the image on canvas. Many companies will take your photos, reprint them on canvas and stretch them across a frame. These ready-to-hang creations have the appearance and texture of a painting. Add an ornate or antique frame to complete the look.

Gaze out over a pine forest in

## Artwork, Page 15

# Spring home cleaning the safe way

(SPM Wire) — Spring finally is upon us, and with it comes sunshine, warmth and an endless list of chores for many of us.

Cleaning, fix-it-up projects, painting, yard work and gardening may be just a few things on your to-do list.

According to the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons (AAOS), a number of spring cleaning activities can be dangerous if safety measures are not taken.

“When spring cleaning, it is important to take your time and perform the activities with caution to reduce accidental injuries from occurring,” said Richard F. Kyle, MD, first vice president of the AAOS. “If you are experiencing pain when partaking in spring cleaning activities, it is important to stop and rest and if pain continues, consult the proper physician.”

Seniors may be at a greater risk

due to underlying health problems so extra precaution is suggested.

With all this in mind, the AAOS has offered some guidelines for your spring-cleaning projects:

- Stretch and perform proper warm-up prior to starting clean-up projects around the home, such as painting or gardening.
- Proper techniques for lifting, carrying and bending should be part of any spring-cleaning project.
- It is important to separate your feet, shoulder-width apart and bend at the knees while tightening the stomach muscles.
- Lift with your leg muscles as you stand up and don't try to lift any object by yourself if it is too heavy or an awkward shape.
- When raking, don't twist your body-instead, use your legs to shift your weight and —switch sides.
- Instead of getting on your hands and knees to clean the floor,

While many look forward to getting homes and lives ready for summer, thousands of injuries occur each year as a result of mishaps around

ming trees, involve the use of a ladder. Every ladder should be placed on a firm, level surface. Never place a ladder on ground that is uneven and watch for soft, muddy spots. The same is true for uneven flooring.

• Every spring before using a lawnmower, have it serviced to make sure it is working properly. Never try to dislodge dirt or grass from the lawnmower blades with your hands, while the machine is running. It is also important to wear shoes, while mowing the lawn.

• Read product labels for proper use and wear protective clothing and gloves when using chemicals for gardening or cleaning. Store all chemicals at the appropriate temperature, which usually indicated on the package.

• Be sure to keep chemicals in a place that is out of reach of both children and pets.

use a mop.

• When vacuuming, push the vacuum in front of you and walk in a long line, then pull back the same way. Pushing and pulling a vacuum in short strokes can hurt your back.

• Many spring-cleaning chores, such as cleaning gutters and trim-

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# Plotting home improvement projects

(ARA) - "An Englishman's home is his castle." Clearly his cousins across the Atlantic share the same sentiment. In fact, Americans spend over \$4.8 billion annually on home maintenance services.

Seasons wreak havoc on a home's exterior, and April is the unofficial kickoff of the home improvement season.

"For many Americans, their home is their largest investment," says Charles Chase, president of CertaPro Painters, the largest North American residential painting company. "It's therefore vital to stay abreast of its maintenance, including repainting."

Here are seven telltale signs that it's time to paint your home:

1. Chalking: The formation of a fine powder on paint surfaces occurs after long-time weathering. Chalking may also occur if poor quality paint was used, over-



Courtesy of AR

thinned or was spread too thin or not primed and sealed. Left unchecked, chalking causes color fading.

2. Scaling or Cracking: Paint begins to split, giving way to severe cracks. Cracking can be caused by over thinning; poor surface preparation; painting under cool or windy conditions; or, in multiple layers of old paint. The only remedy is complete removal.

3. Flaking: If cracking is left unchecked, paint chips are loosened and peel off.

4. "Alligatoring": Long-term cracking results in deep fissures akin to alligator skin. Complete removal is the only treatment.

5. Lead Threats: Today, with almost 50 percent of the U.S. housing stock at least 35 years old, many homeowners wish to address the threat of lead-based paint since it was banned by the government in

1978. Peeling lead-based paint needs immediate removal. Complete removal is the only remedy.

6. Discoloration: Discoloration often appears when shrubs, vines or trellises are removed.

7. Loose caulking: Around window and door panes, this can give rise to rotting and further disrepair.

The best results come from proper preparation and quality materials. When a homeowner has determined it's time to renew the exterior of his house with a fresh coat of paint, many find exterior painting too challenging to take on themselves due to scaffolding needs, or simply because they want to allow themselves more leisure time by the pool or at a barbecue with family and friends. Hiring professionals enables homeowners to rest assured that all preparation work, painting and cleanup will be performed on time and on budget

# Painting fresh spring colors

(ARA) - Are you - and your house - suffering from a case of the end of winter blahs? Dark colors and heavy textures are comforting during the winter, but when the promise of spring is in the air, brighter colors and a lighter touch in fabrics are in order.

An easy and relatively inexpensive way to update a room is with a fresh coat of paint in one of spring's exciting new colors. Shades of blue are on the horizon, as are citrusy hues of green, yellow and orange. A trip to your local hardware or big box store will spark your imagination with a wealth of color choices.

If you're painting over old paint, you'll want to do the usual preparation - taping off window sills and other trim; removing light switch plates; and protecting furniture and floors from possible paint



Courtesy of ARA Content

drips or spills with a durable drop cloth.

Dealing with wallpapered surfaces means it will take you a bit

more work before you can paint. But removing old wallpaper isn't nearly the drudgery it once was. If you have memories of soaking the

wallpaper with chemicals and then laboriously peeling it off bit by bit, you'll be happy to know that advances in technology have made removing wallpaper much faster and easier.

Wagner Spray Tech sells the only consumer wallpaper steamer in the United States. The steamer works like a charm the first time in all types of situations, including on vinyl wallpaper, painted wallpaper and multiple layers of wallpaper; with chemical strippers, you may need multiple applications to completely remove the wallpaper. Chemical strippers can also be messy; with the steamer, the only "mess" is the pile of old wallpaper.

Steaming your wallpaper is cost effective, too. To strip wallpaper

**Spring, Page 14**

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# Small changes, big differences

April is Earth month and a good time to give your home its spring, green makeover. In fact, it's a perfect time to take a look around and see how a few small changes can make a very big difference. Think of each of the living spaces around your home as an opportunity to live a little cleaner, a little greener and a lot more efficiently. In the process you will be conserving energy, saving money and doing something good for the planet. Here are some hints for a couple of areas inside and outside of your home. Once you get going, let your imagination take over and your home will get greener right before your eyes. The kitchen is a great place to get started. First of all, if you are not recycling, you should be. Most cities have a curbside recycling program that makes it really easy.

If not, rinse your bottles and cans, collect them and periodically take them to a community recycling center along with your old newspapers and cardboard boxes. It makes a difference. Secondly, researchers estimate that nearly a million plastic bags are used every minute around the world, reusable grocery bags are a simple, inexpensive way to make sure you aren't adding to that number. Finally, if you are still drinking bottled water, it's time to stop. Affordable filters from companies like PUR and Brita deliver clean, pure drinking water. So use a safe, refillable bottle and drink up. Moving on to the rest of the liv-

ing area of your home, begin by replacing your incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent (CFLs). They save energy, last longer and give clean, safe light. Being green means conserving energy and by plugging your electronic equipment into power strips and turning the strips off when you leave the house or go to sleep will save a tremendous amount of energy and save you money. Lastly, switch to non-toxic cleaning products. You will be doing a lot for your family and for the planet. Now let's take your commitment to going green outside. Begin by eliminating the use of gasoline powered lawn and garden equip-

ment and your yard will be a much greener more eco friendly place. The EPA estimates that nearly 17 million gallons of gasoline are spilled every year just filling and refilling mowers and related power equipment but there has not been an alternative that delivers the kind of power and performance of gasoline, until now. This spring marks the arrival of the first lawn and garden tool that runs on clean, green propane. As for the rest of the lawn, a push mower is a good green choice, especially considering that lawns cut with a reel mower require less substantially less water. As more and more people are looking for ways to go 'green',

## April is Earth Month

### Do your planting indoors

By placing plants at your desk, in your child's study room, or around the house, not only can you reduce harmful toxins in the air (such as formaldehyde, benzene, and ammonia), you can increase productivity, decrease stress, and reduce common health complaints, according to the Plants at Work Campaign.

- Sneezing, wheezing or loud sounds got you down? Take a walk around your office to locate places where you commonly find people sneezing or complaining about headaches. Is there an annoying co-worker who plays his music too loud? Place a few Spider Plants or Peace Lilies around to help solve the problems.
- Get your co-workers and boss on the "Green Plan." Due to the boost in aesthetics, mood and health, many large corporations have successfully used office plants as employee incentives, even prom-

ising bigger, nicer plants with each promotion.

- Check out your home's lighting conditions. If you have had troubles keeping a plant alive at home, your "black thumb" probably is because your plants weren't in the right light.
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- For semi-sun areas: The Dumb Cane is easy to maintain and has a big appetite for toxins. The Snake Plant, similar to the Aloe Vera, releases oxygen and absorbs carbon dioxide at night.
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# Plant a garden with your kids

## And watch the fun grow

Remember how much fun it was to play in the dirt as a kid? Mother Nature could always use a few extra green thumbs. If you don't exactly have a green thumb, make this a chance for both you and your kids to learn something new. The outdoor space you have will determine how much "room" to give to your kids. If you have a yard or community garden give each child a plot to work with. If you live in an apartment, give each a window sill. It's really not that complicated. Plus it will give you a great opportunity to bond with your kids and soak up some fresh spring air! You can get seedlings from people who already have plants, or pick up seed packets from most stores, including your local grocery store.

Plan your garden in advance on graph paper. Visiting a nursery can help your kids figure out what kind of plants they might be interested in growing — colorful flowers, a spiny cactus, or their own fruits and veggies. For the very young, sunflowers, zinnias, or beans are great. They sprout quickly and grow very fast. Take "before and after" pictures for the

When children grow plants, topics for conversation grow with them. How do seeds work? How do the plants know what to grow up into? The curiosity from watching a living thing grow, and sharing that experience with you, is not only stimulating for your child's development but provides a comfort zone in your home that makes it easier for your child to relate to you. Talking about a plant's life cycle can also raise perhaps one of the most difficult subjects to deal with — death and what happens after. While you're planting seeds and seedlings, here are a few more questions that aren't quite as se-

rious but can be great conversation starters:

- How do plants grow? (Plants grow much like people! They eat! Their roots absorb minerals and water, and their leaves take in sunlight.)
- Why do living things seem to do better when they're cared for? (Like people, plants need things to be healthy.)
- Neglected plants might not get enough water or sunlight, and they'll wither as a result. Being a caregiver means giving a plant what it needs to grow.)
- What are some of the differences between a plant that grows in the desert (cactus) and one that grows near a pond (water lily)? (A



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# Expand your home size outdoors

(ARA) - The yard work is done and you just want to sit back and admire your surroundings. If you're reclining in an old lawn chair that's seen better days, it's time to treat yourself to something that better complements your outdoor living space.

According to the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), homeowners will be improving or adding to their outdoor entertaining space in 2009.

"House sizes are shrinking and backyards are becoming more important," says outdoor living expert Tom Ryan. "There's a new trend to living — it's adding square footage and really expanding your life into the backyard. Spending quality family time outdoors and de-stressing from the long winter and daily life is worth

a fortune — for your health and happiness."

\* According to a survey conducted by the ASLA, fire pits and outdoor fireplaces will be among the top requests of homeowners in this year. Adding warmth and light to cool summer nights, you can extend your gatherings with the Double Diamond Mosaic Fire Pit Table, a copper bowl surrounded by hand-crafted mosaic tiles, set on a durable wrought iron stand (FirePitShop.com). Homeowners can also opt for a Stainless Steel Dome Fireplace with a heavy duty log grate and powder coated finish that won't rust or blacken with use.

\* Adirondack chairs in matching sets are an outdoor favorite. Add an ottoman and side table for hours of relaxation. Adirondacks

in new, bright colors will be hot this summer.

\* Try the traditional style rope hammock which are revered in South American countries where they're made and used as beds. You'll find the comfort incomparable. Hung in the shade of your favorite tree or set up in a hammock stand to move wherever you like, a cool hammock hits the spot, especially for a summer afternoon nap. Quilted fabric hammocks are also popular. The quilting provides maximum comfort, and they're made with durable outdoor fabrics for weather resistance.

\* The ASLA survey also found that homeowners will be demanding water features, like fountains, in 2007. The relaxing sound of running water, wind chimes in the gentle breeze — any outdoor décor

that adds a touch of calming character will be in demand. Solar fountains (SimplyFountains.com) are a big hit as "green living" becomes more popular. And for nighttime yard enjoyment, solar lighting brings ambiance and extended hours of use.

"We put together complete sets of furniture, so if you like a style, other pieces are automatically included in the set. You don't have to spend a lot of time deciding on chairs to go with the table," explains Ryan. "You can choose from the basic patio set or customize a set — add extra chairs, or choose from six finishes and 25 fabrics to match your décor and make it your own."

Unlike visiting the brick-and-mortar stores that have two or three items to choose from, A vast

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## Home Improvements Start With Clinton Department of Public Works

Before you tackle that list of Spring home improvements... landscaping, fix-up repairs and renovations... consider these fundamental improvement tips to promote safety and efficiency:

• **Call before you dig in your yard!** Call 833-7520 at least three days before digging so that our utilities can be located and marked.

• **Be sure to shut off utility service in the room or area where you are demolishing or constructing.** Turn off the breaker or valve so there are no surprises or injuries.

• **While cleaning, don't forget to clean or replace the air filter.** Your air conditioner & furnace will run smoother and more efficiently with a clean filter. Also, check that ductwork is properly sealed.

• **Yard debris should be put out by the road.** For building & construction debris, call Tim Rogers at 833-7520 for pick-up.

So before grabbing your shovel or hammer, remember these fundamental tips from the **Clinton Department of Public Works!** For more information on utilities, and operations, call 833-7520. For account history call us at 833-2790.

## Clinton Department of Public Works

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## Safe digging: Call 811 before you dig

April 1 marked the official start of South Carolina Safe Digging Month, a statewide initiative aimed at raising awareness of the importance of notifying the Palmetto Utility Protection Service, Inc. (PUPS) by calling 811 before all digging projects to reduce the risk of striking underground utility lines and potentially causing community damage or personal injury.

Throughout April, South Carolina will join other stakeholders of the Common Ground Alliance (CGA), the national association dedicated to protecting underground utility lines and those who dig near them, in leading local campaigns across the country to spread awareness about 811, the national call-before-you-dig number, and the importance of calling before digging.

"It's imperative that South Carolina citizens call before all outdoor digging project to have underground utility lines marked - both throughout the month of April and year-round," said Patsy Sharpe, PUPS Executive Director. "Please join us by calling 811 during this special awareness month as we work to eliminate unintentional line damages and the risks they pose for serious personal and property damage."

South Carolina state law requires all homeowners and contractors to notify PUPS at least 72 hours prior to digging to have underground utility lines marked, regardless of whether they are planting a sapling or excavating a major surface. Failure to call 811 before digging results in more than 256,000 unintentional hits annually across the country - that's an average of 700 hits per day.

Homeowners and contractors can dial 811, the national call-before-you-dig number, to reach

PUPS, which will notify the appropriate utility companies of the intent to dig. Professional locators are sent to the requested digging site to mark the approximate locations of underground lines with flags or spray paint. Once lines have been properly marked, digging can begin around the marked lines.

In addition to common spring digging projects, such as landscaping or deck-building, PUPS recognizes that many people will be planting trees for Arbor Day projects on April 24. It is important to remember to notify PUPS by calling 811 at least 72 hours ahead of any volunteer events involving digging to have underground utility lines marked.

"Arbor Day is a great opportunity for South Carolina citizens to give back to the environment by planting a tree or doing other outdoor beautification projects, but it's imperative to call 811 before you start," said Sharpe. "Don't create unintended consequences this Arbor Day. Call 811 before all digging projects."

For more South Carolina state information about 811 and the call-before-you-dig process.

About CGA

CGA is a member-driven association of nearly 1,400 individuals, organizations and sponsors in every facet of the underground utility industry. Established in 2000, CGA is committed to saving lives and preventing damage to American underground infrastructure by promoting effective damage prevention practices. CGA has established itself as the leading organization in an effort to reduce damages to underground facilities in North America through shared responsibility among all stakeholders. For more information, visit CGA on the web at [Error! Hyperlink reference not valid..](#)



# Protect your hands when digging

(ARA) - Now that winter has faded away and warmer temperatures have finally arrived, one of America's favorite pastimes is once again taking center stage. According to the U.S. National Gardening Association, 85 million or 74 percent of American households participated in some kind of do-it-yourself lawn and garden activities in 2006, and that number is expected to grow in 2007.

Among the many reasons so many people enjoy gardening, it offers an escape from our hectic lives by reducing feelings of stress and stimulating the senses, it's a great way to get some exercise while at the same time enjoying the fresh air and sunshine, and it adds beauty to our surroundings.

Stacy Livermore of Beavercreek, Ore., has always enjoyed spending time in her garden. She calls it her

great escape. "I love my job as a kindergarten teacher but it can get hectic. It's so nice to be able to come home at the end of the day and tend to the flower and vegetable plants in complete silence," she says.

But not so long ago, participating in one of her favorite activities caused Livermore a lot of pain. Because she washes her hands so often at work, and uses hard, scratchy paper towels to dry them, she says it seemed like her hands were always cracked and hurting, and not just in the wintertime either.

"I had tried just about every cream on the market to improve the situation, but nothing worked until I stumbled upon a creme at my local feed store," says Livermore. "They were offering samples at an opportune time. That day,

my hands and knuckles were cracked and bleeding. After I put it on, they felt better, so I went ahead and bought a container. Now I use it several times a day."

A decade later, millions of people across the country swear by the crème made up mainly of water and glycerin that hydrates the skin, stimulates its growth and traps moisture in the top layers. "They recommend that you put it on once a day right before you go to bed so your hands can heal at night, but I use it more often than that," says Livermore. "I put on a little dab every time I wash my hands. It's not greasy and it absorbs really well."

In addition to using a lotion on a regular basis to heal and protect dry, chapped hands, the experts recommend gardeners also...

\* Wear gloves to protect their

hands from thorns, abrasive tools, harsh chemicals and the soil itself. Pick gloves appropriate for different garden chores.

Cotton jersey is good for all around work, while thick leather gloves are good for wet work or work around plants with thorns or spines. For really wet work, including handling chemicals, wear rubber or plastic gloves with cotton liners.

\* Use tools to work the soil instead of digging in the dirt with your bare hands. Soil and potting mixes, whether in the garden or in containers, deplete moisture from the skin on hands and fingers. Prolonged contact with soil can be very drying to your hands. Add the abrasive effect of grit in soil, and skin begins to lose its protective barrier to further water loss.

"I know I should wear gloves

# Keep up with times with new TV

(ARA) - Want to make a dramatic change to your home's feel and décor? You don't have to replace the carpet and furniture, or even paint the walls. Just get rid of that fossil of a television set that has cluttered the family room for who knows how long and replace it with a flat panel TV.

When they first hit the market in the 1990s, these futuristic looking sets were out of a lot of people's price range. Now that supply has caught up with the demand, they are becoming more affordable and people are eager to bring them into their homes.

Flat panel TVs have many attributes — better picture quality than the old picture-tube sets, they take up less space (are only three to five inches thick) and are available with wider screens. LCD (liquid crystal diode) screens are readily available with screens of up to 42 inches; plasma screens, which use charged gas to make a picture, with screens of up to 80 inches.

As their popularity grows, flat panel TVs are attracting new attention and products from furniture manufacturers who are designing ways in which consumers can "show off" their sleek,



modern new TVs. The new sets offer options that never existed before.

"Instead of simply placing the set on a counter, dresser, TV stand or the floor, you can turn them into the focal point of a room," says Keith Pribyl, director of consumer sales for a company that designs and builds a broad variety of audio video furnishings,

mounts and accessories. "They can be mounted flat on the wall; under a cabinet on an articulating arm that allows them to be swiveled; from the ceiling so they can be watched in bed; on a sleek TV pedestal; or recessed into a wall so they're flush with the surface."

Pribyl's company offers five categories of wall mounts.

1. Low Profile — designed to mount flat panel televisions of any size less than 1.5 inch from the wall. (Made of heavy gauge steel, these mounts are solid and reliable).

2. Tilting — designed to mount a flat panel TV of any size to the wall while allowing up to 30 degrees of tilt for optimal viewing angle.

3. Tilt and Swivel — designed for a wide range of viewing angles; this allows the optimal viewing from almost anywhere in a room.

4. Tilt Swivel Extend — designed for superior range-of-motion and viewing angle. Once installed, allows TV to be positioned at virtually any angle, even 90 degrees to the wall.

5. Ceiling and Cabinet — designed for mounting a TV when there is no wall available or suitable. Also allows TV or projector to be mounted on the ceiling, in or on cabinets — and these also offer tilt and swivel actions.

"Unless they're quite handy and experienced with audio-video work, we recommend people hire a professional A/V contractor to install Flat Panel TVs using our mounts," says Pribyl. "Although the sets are slender, Flat Panel

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# Tips to avoid home repair scams

(SPM Wire)— Warm weather in South Carolina means home improvement projects — and too often, con artists looking to prey on unsuspecting homeowners.

That's why, if you're looking to add a deck, re-roof your house, install vinyl siding or embark on another home improvement projects, it pays to be smart.

"The biggest problem is homeowners paying too much in advance," said Charles McAlister, program coordinator for the South Carolina Department of Labor, Li-

censing and Regulation's Residential Builders Commission (LLR). "We've had contractors get a third of the money in advance, and a third the day they started, and then they just dropped a couple boards and were gone."

Many of these con artists are fly-by-night operators who quote homeowners a low price and then abscond with the money.

"Honest contractors do not require large sums of money upfront," McAlister said. "For example, most builders will build a

\$100,000 house on just \$500 earnest money."

McAlister said homeowners can follow these tips to help avoid being conned:

- Get at least two bids, and do not automatically choose the lowest.
- Ask for local references and then contact them.
- Contact the Residential Builder's Commission at (803) 896-4696 to see if the contractor is licensed and whether there have been complaints against them.

• Make sure the contractor is bondable.

• Never pay for an entire job upfront. The down payment should be no more than one third of the total contract price.

• Be specific about what you want done. Put details in writing, if possible.

• Check with appropriate local building officials concerning permits. Residential builders must pass an exam administered by LLR and renew their license each year. A specialty contractor (painter,