

MAY 2009



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MOTHER'S DAY

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Contributors: Bud Maxwell, Jamie Haas, Colleen Williams

Special Thanks to: www.townmoneysaver.com

The Stone Tablet
Yard · Bird · Garden

PRECAST CONCRETE

PAVER &

**WALLSTONE
CLEARANCE**

40% OFF



ENTIRE STOCK

After 18 years, we will no longer carry precast concrete pavers or wallstone. We are clearing out our entire stock of Belgard, Oaks and Navastone products. Items that were already on clearance are 40% - 50% off the original price.

Stop in and take advantage of these great prices...they definitely won't last!

Also included in the sale are Polymeric Sand, Paver Sealer and Effluorescence Cleaner.

Clearance does not include: paver edging, stakes or adhesives

MAY POND

by Bud Maxwell

It hasn't happened this year yet, but I know it will. Someone always asks me what they need for constructing the most basic backyard pond. Certainly not the fanciest of fancy ponds, but a basic attractive pool of water for a garden. The rule of pond construction is that the more money you spend on the installation, the less time you will be spending on maintenance later. However, with a little planning a good result can be obtained with a minimum expenditure.

All garden ponds need a real pond liner. Don't scrimp by using an old water bed mattress or a tarp or roofing material or some other thing to line the pond. These materials will not last as long or be as safe for fish and plants as genuine pond liner. Using a material that was designed for some other purpose, to line your pond is not a good place to save. **Pond liner** is sold by the square foot at **The Rock Pile**.

All ponds need water circulation. This means they have to have a pump of some type. Stagnant water becomes a breeding place for mosquitoes and will soon become an algae filled mess. Pumps of less than 500 gallons per hour are fine for small ponds. Fine pumps are made by **Savio**, **Pondmaster** and **Oase**.

The water pumped from the pond can be returned to the pond by means of an in-water fountain or a spitter perched on the edge of the pond. These are much easier to maintain than a waterfall of any size. Spitters and fountains are available from **Laguna** or **Pondmaster**.

Pumps work best when combined with a filter. A great "poor-man's" filter can be made by placing the pump in a lily basket and then filling the basket with black lava to surround the pump. The lava is an insoluble igneous rock that has a porous texture which provides a suitable substrate for the growth of colonies of beneficial bacteria – wait, that is way more information than you really need. Suffice it to say that this filter is cheap, easy to make and it works.

Pondmaster makes a beautiful combination of a pump, fountain and underwater filter that is perfect for a small pond.



A pond looks more natural with some plants. Every pond should have some underwater plants, called oxygenators, such as **Anacharis**, **Cabomba** or **Hornwort**. Five or six clumps are usually plenty for any small pond.

Surface floating plants such as Freshwater **Hyacinths** or **Pond Lettuce** look great on the surface. Purchase six plants in late May and you will be discarding

extra plants by August. Did I forget to mention that they spread?

How about water additives? The only thing I would add is **Microbe-Lift** for summer. This will add the beneficial bacteria that a healthy pond needs.

If you would like to add some inexpensive fish go right ahead. Inexpensive fish should never be mixed with expensive fish because of the possibility of disease, but a few bright orange goldfish can add visual interest to a pond. If they are small enough they won't even need to be fed.

So dig a hole and add a few hundred gallons of water to the above list of products and a small garden pond will soon be gracing your landscape. All of the materials, except the fish, you would need for your pond are available at **The Rock Pile**. The small pond will satisfy your need for a water feature – until you build your next bigger pond!



by Jamie Haas

Gypsum is a highly beneficial, all natural mineral that contributes to hearty lawns and gardens. **NutraSoft** **Pelletized Gypsum** loosens heavy hard packed clay soils allowing moisture and air to penetrate and move freely in the soil. (**NutraSoft** also has a surprise use that will be addressed at the end of this article.)

The advantages of nutrasoft pelletized gypsum include:

- ✿ Fast and easy to use and no mess
- ✿ Loosens hard-packed soils fast
- ✿ Increases nutrient availability-stretching your fertilizer dollar
- ✿ Spreads accurately with any spreader
- ✿ Supplies vital nutrients: calcium and sulfur

Where and how to use **NutraSoft** **Pelletized Gypsum**:

- ✿ New Lawns: apply 80# per 1000 sq ft before seeding or sodding. Rake or till thoroughly into soil. Use more on higher clay soils.
- ✿ Established Lawns: apply 40# per 1000 sq ft in the spring and again in the fall.
- ✿ Gardens: Mix in 20# 1000 sq ft and water thoroughly
- ✿ Roses: place 1-2 cups around the bush in both spring and fall.
- ✿ Trees & shrubs: apply 2 cups around the base of shrub, 5-6 cups around each evergreen, water well.
- ✿ Compost aid: spread out 2 cups over each garden cart full as it is dumped into compost pile. Turn pile daily, adding 2 more cups per day until complete (approx 1 ½ weeks)

And now the surprise use you have been patiently waiting for:

NutraSoft **Pelletized Gypsum** will counteract damage caused by winter salting, fertilizer striping, and animal spots: apply 20 – 40# per 1000 sq ft. for salt damaged areas and apply ½ - ¾ cup per square foot for small spots.

Gardening in Small Spaces

By Colleen Williams

Sometimes people think that it is a bit ironic that I work at **The Rock Pile** and yet I don't have a yard. That's right, I'm a renter. But just because I don't own land doesn't mean I can't have a garden. There are a number of options for gardening in small spaces.

I have two spaces in which I can enjoy outdoor plants. The first space is very common for most renters...the balcony. Whether you have a balcony or a small patio space off of the back of your home, you can always start simple by adding potted plants. **The Rock Pile** offers different style pots, from ceramic, to plastic, to bamboo and in varying sizes. You can fill them with whatever plants you wish, or you can purchase pre-potted plants which are perfect for renters because then you don't have to worry about where you are going to store your extra soil! One of my favorite things on my balcony is a hanging basket. Some people are fortunate enough to already have a hanging option for their baskets. If not, you can always do what I do...buy a hook. Many people see hooks that go into the ground, but they don't realize that there are also hooks that attach to a balcony rail. This way you can add height to your urban landscaping. These pots and baskets can contain house plants, flowers, herbs or veggies. They are a great choice whether you want form or function...or the best of both worlds.

If you are really into having a vegetable or herb garden, try the **Earthbox**®. This planter comes on casters for easy mobility and it produces great results. You can achieve more veggies per plant and they're bigger too! Just think, you can have fresh herbs and veggies all summer. Last year, my sister, Heather, bought tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and almost every kind of herb **The Rock Pile** carries. This year will be no different, well... with one exception... My sister got TWO **Earthboxes** this year.

The second space I have is not too common with renters, although common with those who have town homes or condos. Just outside my front door I have a small area that I can choose to landscape or not. It's probably only a 5' by 3' bed. But this small area contains multiple possibilities. Each apartment in my complex has something different going on. One has ground cover like Bishop's Weed, others have small shrubs, a couple of tenants even plant annuals, like Impatiens, Begonias, and Pansies. Check out **The Rock Pile Garden Center** for more ideas.

This is my second summer in this apartment and I plan on staying here for quite a while. Last summer I didn't get a chance to garden too much, but this year I am making it happen. Quite often I hear things like, "Well when you have your own home you can..." Which makes me respond, "My apartment is my home" and this summer, I want to make my home mean even more to me, inside and out.



Running out of Time and going nowhere fast

by Jenny Keener

Occasionally, when I have a moment to reflect, I panic a little at the impossibly long to-do list scrolling in my mind. I wonder if I am the only one who feels like I'm running in a hamster wheel: all the speed and none of the distance. My husband likes to be a bit philosophical with his witty observation that since time is infinite, one cannot 'run out of time'. Yes, very funny, tell that to the guy I have to turn the newsletter into at a certain time each month. He may have a different perspective. So, as I am writing my monthly article at pretty near the eleventh hour, I'm convinced that any project will expand to fill every last second of time available to it.



(While I am attending to the current project of urgent importance, I'm listening to my daughters argue about what to name two little puff-ball caterpillar craft creations. At the moment, the top contenders are 'Bobby' and 'Oop', or maybe 'Bobby Oop Bloop' for a full name. On the one hand they are driving me nuts because I'm obviously not able to concentrate, but on the other hand...how long does this stuff last? How soon will they be rushing out the door with the car keys, maybe on a date with a Bobby (hopefully not an Oop). So, while I am frazzled at times (well, actually lots of of the time), I am trying to remember to enjoy these odd moments. And, trust me, there are plenty of very odd moments around here.) I'd like to note that only a mother would have an entire paragraph as a parenthetical thought.

At this point in my life, time is moving way too fast, and it seems like unless it's on fire or bleeding my undivided attention is hard to get. It seems like one urgent project after another crowded into our life squeezing out some of the fun, non-emergency stuff! While we still have big expectations for our garden this year, I feel like I've failed before I even started because I never started my plants! I can tell you, there is nothing quite like discussing my plans with around 80,000 of my closest friends, and then failing. My husband thinks I talk too much, and in this case, maybe he's right. If I hadn't decided, in my enthusiasm, to tell the world of my plans I wouldn't be feeling like such an underachiever. There are a few plants that I can still start from seed, and I'm hoping to do that in exactly two days...that's when the time is up for this newsletter. And, of course, I'll be repeating last year's plan B by buying already started plants (which we just happen to carry here at **The Rock Pile**).

GARDEN CENTER

Weeping Cherry Trees PERENNIALS
 HANGING BASKETS Hostas
 Lilacs Azaleas RHODODENDRONS
 Dogwood Trees JACKSON & PERKINS ROSES
 Forsythia VIOLAS
 Parsies Weeping Pussy Willows Annuals
 Creeping Phlox Redbud Trees Peonies



We also have a large selection of herbs and vegetables. Cold crop vegetables and onion sets are already here!

We also carry a large selection of *Stepables*® which spread, can be walked on and come back year after year.

And *Earthboxes*®, too!

CONCRETE STATUARY



Birdbaths, benches, decorative figurines



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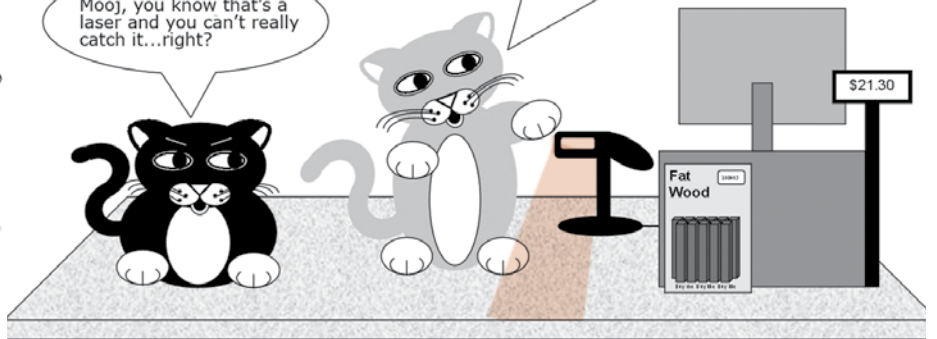
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THE ADVENTURES OF
 Gump & Mooj

Mooj and the scanner...

Mooj, you know that's a laser and you can't really catch it...right?

Leave me alone...I'm releasing my inner kitten.



By Colleen Williams