

MIKE'S Tool Box

Mike Forner's Home Services:



MY MISSION IS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY BY PROVIDING PROMPT, COMPREHENSIVE, EXPERT HOME MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS. OUR SERVICE IS A FUSION OF HIGH EXPECTATION & EXCELLENCE IN PERFORMANCE.

5 Deck Safety Tips

It is the season of backyard barbeques and summer pool parties. You can help keep your family and friends safe by making these easy evaluations part of your yearly summer maintenance routine.

1 - Search for split or decaying wood.

Check several different areas of the deck to be sure the wood is still sound, including the ledger board (where the deck attaches to the house and a common source of deck failure), deck boards, railings and stairs. Look for soft, spongy areas in wood that can indicate insect damage or decay.

2 - Test railings and banisters.

Assure the security of these key pieces of the deck by gently pushing on them to assure they are firmly attached with no "give" that could indicate failure. Then, get the yard stick out. Most codes require a 31" high railing (and usually encourage 42" high railings) with rails placed no more that 4 inches apart (measures from the inside of rails) to keep small children and pets from squeezing through.

3 - Check your fasteners.

Over time, fasteners may "pop" from wood, loosen or even corrode. Check nails, screws or anchors and reinforce or replace anything that looks suspicious.

4 - Step carefully.

Check each step to make certain of security and lack of decay. If an area behind the stair tread is open, this opening should be no more than 4 inches high. A fast tip is to also keep stair pathways clear of planters, décor, toys and other items that can present a tripping hazard.

5 - Clean up debris.

Make it a priority to clean away leaves, branches or other debris from your deck. When left in place, these can be slippery and promote mildew. If you're already seeing mildew on the deck, or the deck coating has worn away, now is the time to clean and apply a new waterproof coating.

Your deck and stairs should appear even without sagging, and should not sway or move when tested. Also, it's important to check on anything used on the deck, such as grills, lighting, storage and furnishings.

Inside This Issue:

- 5 Deck Safety Tips.....Page 1
- 9 Mowing Mistakes & How To Fix Them.....Page 2
- Upcoming Events.....Page 2
- "Concord Hymn".....Page 3
- German-Style Potato Salad.....Page 3
- Did you know.....Page 4
- Wise Home Owner Tip.....Page 4
- Fruits & Veggies How To.....Page 4
- Joke Of The Month.....Page 4
- Quote Of The Month.....Page 4

Stay tuned for next month's front-page article!

9 Mowing Mistakes & How To Fix Them

What's the difference between your lawn and the one next door? If the grass looks greener on the other side of the fence, it could be that you're making one of these cardinal mowing mistakes. Let's have a look and see if any of your bad habits is costing you a better-looking lawn.

Buying the wrong mower: You could be making a whole lot of extra work for yourself—all because you're using the wrong mower. For instance, a push mower slows things down on a large plot of land (over 1/2 acre). On the other hand, in a small yard (1/4 acre or less), a lawn tractor will only get in the way. When buying the right mower for your yard consider the size of your lawn, the terrain, how many trees you need to maneuver around. As well as the steepness of the various slopes.

Using dull blades: One of the simplest solutions to a clean-cut lawn is a fresh set of blades. Lawn mower blades wear down with use, just like a razor blade. You can tell when it's time to sharpen yours by looking at the grass blades themselves. Ragged, jagged, and torn grass is a sign the blade needs to be sharpened. Weekes recommends keeping a second set of mower blades in the garage and taking the dull set to a specialist to sharpen so you'll never have to wait to mow.

Running the mower at half speed: Some folks mistakenly believe that running a riding lawn mower at full speed is bad for the engine and shortens the life of your machine. Not so, in fact, there's an optimum blade tip speed on each and every machine and hitting a higher RPM on your engine means you'll get an even better cut.

Cutting a wet lawn: After a rainstorm, there are often plenty of tasks to do around the yard but mowing the lawn shouldn't be one of them. Not only can wet grass be slick (not ideal for mowing), the moist clippings are more likely to stick to and clog your mower. One of the best ways to eliminate the need to mow a wet lawn is to watch the forecast and mow ahead of schedule. If you normally mow on Saturdays but you're in for a rainy weekend, give the grass a haircut on Thursday or Friday, instead.

Not mowing enough: Want to keep your lawn looking luxurious all summer long? Then cut it and cut it often. For the strongest, healthiest grass, you'll want to cut no more than one third off the top each time you mow. That means adjusting the blade height when necessary and never allowing the grass to grow too long. For most regions, mowing once a week in the summertime is just about the right amount.

Not cleaning the mower: Everyone knows that you're supposed to clean the underside of a mower after use—but many folks let this little chore slide. However, when you do just that you're actively shortening the life of your machine. Not only do clippings block proper airflow necessary for mulching or bagging clippings, but moisture and fertilizer traces can corrode the deck of the mower, causing premature rust and wear.

Ignoring the maintenance manual: If you treat your mower well it will return the favor. Consult your manual to determine how often you need to change the oil and filters. This simple bit of maintenance will do wonders for improving performance, extending the life of the mower, and making for a smoother running machine. Mark reminders on your calendar so you don't miss a crucial tune up.

Improper off-season storage: The last thing anyone wants come summertime is finding that the mower won't start because of sticky, separated fuel in the tank. Not only is it frustrating to deal with, it's not great for the mower. Be sure to add fuel stabilizer to the tank before you stow it away for the season. Also, run the mower for 10-15 minutes before you park it in the shed.

Ignoring safety protocol: No matter what kind of mower you own, you're working with a powerful and potentially dangerous piece of machinery. Take proper safety precautions every time you mow by ensuring the discharge shoot is properly attached to the mower to prevent debris from flying up and hitting you. Even more importantly, mowing is not a family affair: Keep the little ones—and pets—inside while you mow. Then, after you're finished and the mower's put away, you can safely relax in the yard together, enjoying the sweet smell of clipped grass.



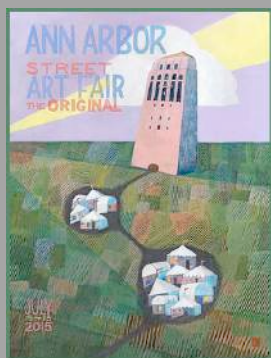
Upcoming Events In July That Might Interest You...



* Independence Day on Saturday the 4th.



*The Saline Celtic Festival The Celtic Festival is a fun and exciting event for all ages that is held on Friday and Saturday, July 10-11 in Saline, Michigan.



* The Ann Arbor Street Art Fair
July 15-18, 2015
W-F: 10am-9pm Sat: 10am-6pm



* The Ann Arbor Farmers Market is in the heart of the historic Kerrytown neighborhood of Ann Arbor.

Hours

January - April, Saturday | 8 a.m. to 3 p.m.
May - December, Wednesday & Saturday |
7 a.m. to 3 p.m.
June - October, Wednesday Evening Market
| 4 to 8 p.m.

“Concord Hymn”

By Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 – 1882)

The Background

The following hymn was written in 1836 by the famous American poet, Ralph Waldo Emerson, for the dedication of a battle monument commemorating the men who gave their lives at the Battle of Lexington and Concord. Emerson’s grandfather had fought in the battle, and his home was situated next to the bridge mentioned in the poem. The hymn was sung at the Fourth of July celebration in Concord in 1837. Emerson has since been credited with coining the phrase “the shot heard round the world.”

The Hymn

By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April’s breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world.

The foe long since in silence slept;
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps;
And time the ruined bridge has swept
Down the dark stream which seaward
creeps.

On this green bank, by this soft stream,
We set to-day a votive stone;
That memory may their deed redeem,
When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

Spirit, that made those heroes dare,
To die, and leave their children free,
Bid Time and Nature gently spare
The shaft we raise to them and thee.



German-Style Potato Salad

Ingredients:

- 4 large waxy-style potatoes (about 2 ¼ pounds)
- 2 tablespoons, plus 2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 3 strips bacon (about 2 ounces), minced
- ½ medium Spanish onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup chicken broth, homemade or low-sodium canned
- 1/3 cup white wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 ½ teaspoons sugar
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons chopped flat-leaf parsley leaves

Directions:

1. In a large saucepan, place the potatoes and cover with cold water by 1 inch. Stir in 2 tablespoons salt. Bring to a boil, lower the heat, and simmer until just tender, about 30 minutes. Drain, transfer to a large bowl, and cover with plastic wrap to keep warm.
2. Meanwhile in a small saucepan, over medium-high heat, add the bacon and cook, stirring frequently, until crispy and its fat has been released, about 3 minutes. Lower the heat to medium, add the onion and cook, stirring, until translucent, about 6 minutes. Stir in the flour and cook for 45 seconds more. Add the remaining 2 teaspoons salt, broth, vinegar, mustard, and sugar. Bring to a boil while whisking constantly. Remove from the heat.
3. Using your hands, rub the skins off the potatoes. Cut the potatoes in half lengthwise, then cut crosswise into ¼-inch slices. Return the potatoes to the large bowl. Pour over the vinegar mixture and toss to coat the potatoes. Toss in the parsley and season with pepper to taste. Transfer to a serving platter and serve immediately.

Cook’s Note: This potato salad is at its best served immediately or shortly afterwards at room temperature.

Fruits & Veggies In Season During July (& How To Pick 'Em

Veggies

Cucumbers: Choose cucumbers that are uniformly green (not yellow).

Tomatoes: Choose tomatoes that are fragrant, smell earthy at the stem end, and feel heavy for their size. Avoid tomatoes with wrinkled skins.

Summer Squash: Choose squash with naturally shiny, taught, unblemished skin. Avoid squash that appear dull or have soft spots.

Corn: Choose corn with bright green husks and moist but not slimy silk. Peel back the husk to ensure the kernels are plump and not dry.

Green Beans: Choose slender beans that snap rather than bend. Avoid bulging or dried pods.

Lettuce: Choose greens with fresh, crisp leaves. Avoid any that are wilted or slimy.

Fruits

Watermelon: Choose fruits that are firm and heavy and sound hollow when thumped. A properly ripened watermelon should have a yellow spot on one side where it sat on the ground.

Strawberries: Choose berries that are fragrant, uniformly red (not yellow or green), and shiny with fresh green tops. Also check the bottom of the basket to make sure there aren't any crushed or spoiled berries.

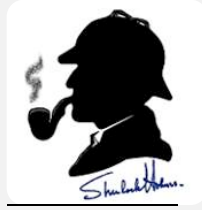
Cantaloupe: Choose fruits that are fragrant and cream or golden in color (not green). Avoid fruits with soft spots, although the end opposite the stem should be slightly soft.

Blueberries: Choose berries that are firm, dry, and blue (not red or green). A white sheen is natural. Also check the bottom of the basket to make sure there aren't any crushed or spoiled berries.

Peaches: Choose fragrant, deeply colored (not green) fruits that are firm but slightly soft to the touch.

Apricots: Choose fruits that are fragrant and slightly soft but not mushy.

Plums: Choose fruits that are deeply colored, shiny, and firm but not rock hard. A white or gray sheen is natural.



Wise Home Owner Tip:

The Importance Of Changing Your Water Filters

Water filtration systems come in many shapes and sizes. But no matter where the filtration device installs, there is a good chance that it uses a filter media that will need to be replaced on a regular basis.

Why do Filters Need to be Changed?

Many filtration systems use carbon, charcoal or a blend of filter media to help reduce impurities. These systems generally reduce contaminants in one of two ways. First, some contaminants are filtered mechanically, meaning they are large enough to be trapped in the pores of the filter. Other contaminants adhere to the surface of the filter media. Eventually, the surface area of the filter media becomes filled and no more contaminants can be adsorbed. Or, in the case of mechanical filtration, the pores of the filter become so clogged with debris that water is unable to move through the filter effectively. While the latter is easy to spot, since the flow rate of the water being produced by the system slows dramatically, it's not as easy to tell when the surface area of the filter media has become full and needs to be changed.

How Often Should Filters be Changed?

The recommended filter change cycle varies from one product to the next. Home filtration systems usually have established "service cycles." The service cycle may be for a specific number of gallons or an estimate of the number of months that a cartridge will last in the average home. To ensure the filter continues to reduce contaminants, replace it according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

Choose the Right Replacement Cartridge

Filter cartridges are not necessarily universal. While a non-certified cartridge may look similar in size and even appear to fit inside the housing of a water treatment system, even the smallest size difference could allow water to go around the cartridge rather than through it. In addition, non-certified filter cartridges may not be of the same quality as the manufacturer's suggested replacement. This could result in the water not being filtered effectively or the possible introduction of impurities into the water from materials that were never verified to be acceptable for drinking water contact. To ensure your water treatment system is performing effectively, use the proper replacement cartridge and change

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Did You Know...

You should clean your vents and replace filters in your forced air HVAC systems MONTHLY to trap pollutants and keep them from being recycled throughout the home?

Uplifting Quote of The Month

*This nation will remain the land of the free only
so long as it is the home of the brave.*

~Elmer Davis

Joke Of The Month

Principal William made it a practice to visit the different classrooms one day a week. He walked into the 4th grade class, where the children were studying the states, and asked them how many states they could name. They came up with about 40 names.

Principal William jokingly told them that in his day students knew the names of all the states. One boy raised his hand and said, "yes sir, but in those days there were only 13 states."