

HOME XPERT

Simple ways to improve your home comfort, safety and value.

Spring 2009 \$3.00

MY WORD

Beeps and Buzzers

By Steven Heidler & Mick Heidler



Is it Spring already? Hope so. It's been a pretty tough road for lots of folks around the country, probably in your own neighborhood – and maybe even in your own house! So I'm thinking most of us could use a little "renewal."

For months now, we've heard all about how folks have been cutting back on extras. But around here, we look at that a little differently. I mean really. Can you believe that some of the things we use to run our houses – electricity, air conditioning, plumbing – used to be luxuries across this land?

Not anymore. They're as vital to our way of life as... well, let's just say as a text message is to a teenager. Beeps and buzzes are the symphony of today's family life, letting you know that some really "important" and "urgent" information is right at your fingertips.

Or maybe it's just because most of us really do like to stay in touch with our friends.

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INSIDE...

- Put More 'Green' Into Your Garden
- Removing Those Pesky Pet Odors
- Motor Oil Facts, Not Friction

MONEY WISE

Spurring on Energy Efficiency

► and the economy, too

What does a complicated 1,100-page package of legislation mean for your household? In the fine print, there are some true finds.

The Economic Stimulus package voted on by Congress offers a mix of spending incentives and tax cuts in hopes of kick-starting the economy by creating jobs, giving money back to consumers and businesses, and improving the nation's infrastructure. There's also particular attention given to the goal of making the country more energy efficient, with several provisions for taxpayers to claim on their own.

Are you ready for upgrades in your home? This could be the best time ever, seeing as how the new legislation sets aside \$300 million for rebates for purchases of energy-efficient hot water heaters, central air conditioners, furnaces, windows and doors, or insulation in homes. It extends and expands tax credits through 2010.

No, you can't have the whole \$300 million!

But just ask us what this huge figure means for you personally, and we'll be glad to help you figure it out. Basically, you can get a 30 percent tax credit of up to \$1,500 on these improvements – which is three times more than the tax credit for 2008. Additionally, a 30 percent tax credit for installing solar water heaters in homes – with no installation price cap – is good until 2016.

There's also more help available for low-income households to weatherize their homes.

Is it time for a new car? New car buyers will be allowed to deduct the purchase's sales tax from taxable income. Also, be sure you know about the tax credit of up to \$7,500 for families buying plug-in hybrids.

The legislation is complicated, but there's no need to be confused. Just give us a call and we'll talk with you about how your house can qualify for the energy-efficient tax credits.



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Removing Those Pesky Pet Odors

What's covered in fur, has four legs, and is your favorite family member? For millions of Americans, it's someone of the canine or feline variety. Pets are becoming indispensable members of the family.

That popularity can be tempered by some of the less desirable things a pet can bring to the relationship. One of the worst traits? Odor. Fortunately, answering the following questions can help...

What's the cause?

Why your pet suddenly smells can be the result of many things, and finding out the cause is the first step to stopping the stink.

- ➔ Make sure you keep his outdoor play areas clean and his fur well-groomed.
- ➔ Keep his resting areas and kennels clean.
- ➔ If you suspect the odor is resulting from a physical condition, schedule a visit to your veterinarian as soon as possible.

Are you doing your part?

Even if your pet is housetrained, accidents can happen. Liquids can be effectively removed from carpet by placing a handful of paper towels on the spot, then standing on it. Once you've removed as much liquid as possible, apply a pet-friendly carpet cleaner to remove any lingering odors.

Is your pet learning anything?

If your pet keeps witnessing you cleaning up after him yet continues to have trouble, chances are he either needs behavioral training or has a physical problem. In either case, your veterinarian can help you decide what's best for your furry friend.

Motor Oil Facts, Not Friction

There are meaningful differences in motor oils and choosing the right one can have a major impact on how well your car runs. Plus, selecting the right oil is the quickest and cheapest way to improve your car's performance and reliability. Here's a crash course in motor oils...

Two components determine how well motor oil will perform in your car. One factor is the base oil, and the other is the combination of chemicals that are *added* to the base oil.

Base oils The two primary types of base oils used are mineral and synthetic. Mineral oils are by-products of refined crude oil. Synthetic oils are manmade compounds that have less friction and perform significantly better than mineral oils.

Additives Regardless of the base oil used, chemicals must be added to give motor oil the characteristics needed to do its job. Price is often an indicator of quality since the more advanced additive technologies cost more to produce, but the ultimate measure is performance.

How to Choose

◆ **Mineral-based (conventional) motor oils.** These are the cheapest and most widely available oils. They typically use standard

additive packages that provide minimum levels of performance and protection.

◆ **Synthetic motor oils.** These man-made oils are more expensive than mineral-based oils but are still widely available. They have a longer service life and offer some improvements in protection, but typically use the same additive packages found in mineral-based oils.

◆ **High-performance 'specialty' synthetic motor oils.** Although they significantly outperform mineral-based or synthetic

motor oils, they are about the same price

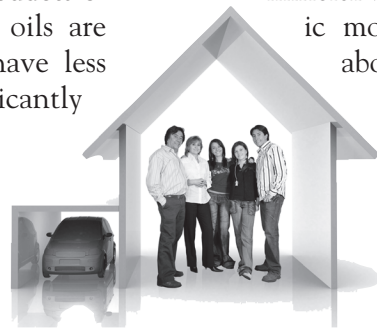
as standard synthetic

motor oil. The catch?

They tend to be available only through auto parts stores and

select oil change centers.

For a used car with little life left in it, stick with the cheap mineral-based motor oil. For a car you plan to keep for a few years, upgrade to synthetic motor oil. To get the most performance or to protect a vehicle you really care about and want to last, high performance motor oil is the way to go.



DID YOU KNOW

- An average home creates more pollution than does the average car.
- Barbie's full name is Barbara Millicent Roberts.
- The first toilet being flushed in a motion picture was in the movie "Psycho."
- The first commercial microwave oven was called the "1161 Radarange" and was the size of a refrigerator.
- The board game Scrabble was originally called "Criss Cross Words" by inventor Alfred Butts.
- The household wrench was invented by boxing heavyweight champion Jack Johnson in 1922.

Put More 'Green' Into Your Garden

► by being water-responsible

Think you're not a water hog? Think again. The average person uses 400 gallons of water *per day*. Talk about a long shower! Even more surprising, according to the EPA, almost half of that H₂O is used outdoors. But you can keep your lawn and landscaping green and still go green in the process. Check out these tips to make your gardening more environmentally friendly:

Choose plants wisely

🦋 **Indigenous plants will do better** than those that are from different climates or areas of the world. In addition to being able to adapt to their surroundings, these plants will also require less water, pest extermination and fertilization.

🦋 **Actively select plants that have low-water needs.** For example, succulents do very well with little water and horde whatever they can get their hands – er, *roots* on. Agave, Aloes and Sempervivum tectorum (commonly known as “Hens and Chicks”) are examples of succulents that will look good and require little water.

🦋 **Steer toward perennials.** These plants will come back year after year and require less effort than annuals. Plus, you won't be discarding the plastic containers that annuals are sold in each year – another point in the environment-friendly column.

Collected rain water has been used to irrigate crops, but the practice is just as at home in your yard offering a nice drink to houseplants and your landscape. You may not be aware of just how much water can be collected from a simple rain shower. Consider this:

A roof area of only 1,000 square feet can provide approximately 600 gallons of water during a one inch rainfall. What's more, rainwater is naturally low in

chlorine and salt, making it a better source of hydration for your plants than tap water, which is usually treated with chemicals.

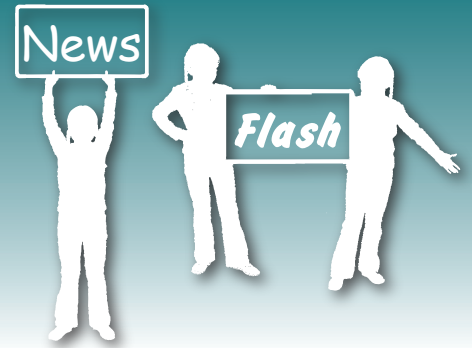
If you're interested in harvesting rain water right in your own yard, Rain Water Collection systems are available that can hold up to 52 gallons of water. The barrel will fill as it rains, and once it fills entirely the water diverter will automatically channel the rain water back through the downspout and out and away from the home.

You can use the collected water for things like watering house plants, your lawn and vegetable beds.

... rainwater
is a better
source of
hydration for
your plants ...

“Quotable”

“An optimist is the human personification of Spring.”
— Susan J. Bissonette



Staying Safe

As technology continues to improve, the home security industry continues to evolve. Many homeowners are securing their homes in ways that were once available only for corporate offices or banks.

But as safe as you can make your home, outside the safety of those four walls, staying safe still rests largely on your shoulders. It's important to know how you can make yourself less likely to become a target:

► **Walk near the curb.** While the criminal lurking around the next corner might seem like a cliché, it's not. By staying closer to the curb, you're making it more difficult for an assailant to catch you off-guard.

► **Do things in pairs.** Avoid situations where you are alone at night. If you must run or walk alone, leave the iPod at home. Wearing headphones can lessen awareness of your surroundings, and give assailants an advantage.

► **Use plastic when possible.** While it's important to keep cash on you in case of an emergency, limit that to small bills and make purchases with a credit or debit card whenever possible.

► **Keep keys at the ready.** Have your keys in hand as you approach your vehicle or home. You don't want your mind concentrating on finding them.

MY WORD (...from page 1)

That, by the way, is how we think of you – not just as customers, but as friends. And the friendship we share matters even more in times like these.

Let me assure you of one thing. We look out for our friends. When you call us about a plumbing problem, we try our best to get your system working so well you won't need us for awhile. But if you do, we'll be right back out there again to take care of any trouble that comes up.

Sound good? Hope so. Look forward to seeing you in your home soon.



Steven Heidler & Mick Heidler

P.S. We look out for friends of friends too, so please pass along our name – and even this newsletter – to your friends, and we'll give them our best service and value too.



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Tired of the Lake In Your Basement?

One simple, inexpensive way to stop the water *before* it destroys your basement is a sump pump. When water reaches its sensor, the pump activates and carries it away to run-off safely away from your home's foundation. The only thing worse than a flooded basement or soaked crawl space

is knowing that the thousands of dollars in damaged, flooring, walls, and belongings could have been prevented.

So call **Heidler, Inc** at **410-268-7191** today. You'll get 10% off sump pump and battery back-up sump pumps when you mention this ad.

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