

The Columbus Dispatch
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Home & Garden

SECTION J

OLD HOUSE HANDYMAN

Bedside books a sure sign that he needs help

A look at the reading materials beside a person's bed probably could tell a lot about the person.

I'm afraid to know what it means. I just went upstairs looking for a book that might aid in writing this column and realized most of the books and magazines on my side of the bed have something to do with old-house repair.

Wild and crazy guy, eh?
I found the old standard, *Popular Mechanics*, along with a back issue of *Mother Earth News*. And two books that would electrify any bedroom: *Basic Home Wiring*

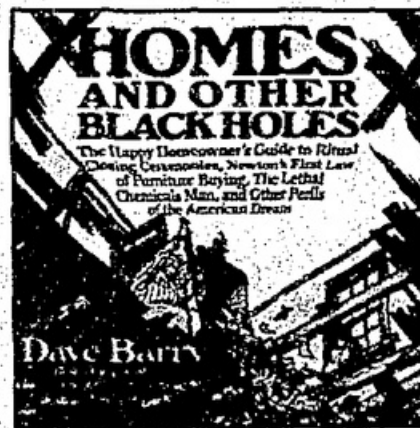


ALAN D. MILLER

Illustrated, by the editors of Sunset Books, and *Wiring Simplified*, by H.P. Richter and W.C. Schwan.

Anything with "illustrated" in the title moves to the top of my Old House Handyman favorite list. And for the record, *Wiring Simplified* doesn't live up to its title.

I also found my all-time favorite house-hints book: *Homes and Other Black Holes*, autographed for me by its author, *Miami Herald* columnist Dave Barry. He knows two things about home repairs: He can't do them, and he can make most people laugh about trying. His idea of installing a home security system, for example, is buying a large dog.



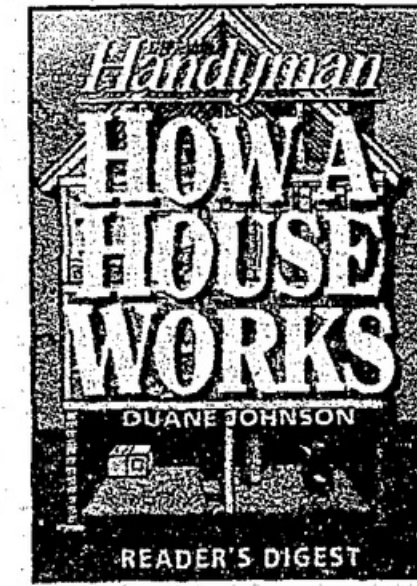
I mention all of this because I've had several requests recently for a list of home-improvement information sources. What follows is an updated and expanded version of a list published more than two years ago.

The best sources are often people around you. I never hesitate to stop and ask people about their house. If I see some recent repair or construction I like, or similar to something I plan to do, I stop and ask about it. Who did it? What materials did they use? Where did they get the materials? How much did it cost?

If you want something in writing, the library is loaded with helpful books. Most bookstores carry a wide selection, too.

Here are some ideas:
The Walls Around Us: A Thinking Person's Guide to How a House Works, by David Owen. It explains the mysteries of Sheetrock, shingles, toilets and toggle switches. It's a good book for beside the bed, but you'll notice "illustrated" was not part of the title. It's not a book you'll hold in one hand while wielding a greasy wrench in the other.

On the other hand, *How a House Works*, by Duane Johnson, was made for folks like me who carry illustrated books in the toolbox. It's loaded with easy-to-follow diagrams and drawings.
On TV, *This Old House*, the granddaddy of all home-improvement shows, is full of good ideas. The PBS series airs at 8 p.m. Thursday and 4:30 p.m. Saturday on WOSU (Channel 94).



Another good show is *Hometime* (4 p.m. Saturday on WOSU), which offers more of a mix of old and new construction.

Home Improvement (9 p.m. Wednesday on WSYX, Channel 6) offers no good advice, but laughter in the midst of an old-house project is good medicine.

Most library video sections, and some video rental stores, stock a selection of how-to tapes for various home improvements.

If you seek help with the exterior of your house, both the German Village Commission and the Victorian Village Commission have published handbooks that are helpful to anyone.

The Ohio Historic Preservation Office is staffed with old-building experts. They are at the Ohio Historical Center, 1982 Velma Ave., Columbus 43211-2497. Phone 614-297-2470.

The Columbus Landmarks Foundation is another source of information. It is at 65 Jefferson Ave., Columbus 43215. Phone 614-221-0227.

The National Paint and Coatings Association offers a free pamphlet on dealing with lead-based paint. Send a self-

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"Life but smiles upon the blooming plants
That the seasons round her cast."

— FRIEDRICH VON SCHILLER,
German poet, playwright and philosopher



The Huntington Gardens form a pathway to the centerpiece statue in Schiller Park.

Craig Hacker / Dispatch

A garden for the heart and mind



A Casablanca lily

By Michael Leach
Dispatch Garden Reporter



Isidom, history, symbols and traditions flourish along with the perennials in Schiller Park's Huntington Gardens.

The gardens, on the promenade connecting City Park Avenue to the bronze statue of Friedrich von Schiller, were planned to please more than the eye. There are quotes from Schiller's works carved in 25 paving stones to delight the mind.

Planted last year, the volunteer-maintained gardens are a flowery example of a community, business and city government cooperation that is leading to a revitalized park.

"The budget crunch has really hurt the recreation department, and this can help take up that slack," said Jerry Glick, German Village Society president, of the partnership that has led to the gardens.

"Isn't this the way government is supposed to work?" said Frank Wolst, president and chief executive officer of Huntington Bancshares. "The whole German Village part of Columbus is a wonderful example of what private interests

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One of the sidewalk stones



White coneflower is native to the central United States.

GARDEN VARIETY

What does a garden say about our civilization?

Gardens are such ephemeral creations that they disappear after a season or two of neglect, leaving few hints of their design or purpose.

Gardening accessories and tools, however, could outlast our civilization. This makes the wonder what future archaeologists will think about our age.

Uses for shovels and hoes should be easy to guess at, but what about wind chimes and concrete geese? (Indeed, lawn gnomes are already a mystery to me.)

Add to this the inherently iffy nature of archaeology, and the potential for misinterpretation is vast.

Consider this: Can you remember how the living room furniture was arranged 40 years ago — or even two weeks ago? If you can't, how do you expect an archaeologist to figure it out after everything tumbled end over end and got buried under several feet of dirt?

Thus, in trying to unravel garden gewgaws, archaeologists could conclude that plastic leprechauns and pink flamingos were household gods.

The whole business of attracting birds will be confusing, too.

Birdbaths may be construed as altars where small feathered creatures were sacrificed to placate concrete deer and squirrels.

And feeders: The idea of filling a miniature country church, log cabin or Windsor Castle with imported seeds will be another puzzle. A future archaeologist's only hope of fathoming bird feeders is for sufficient seed residue to remain inside these objects to interpret feeders as lures. This is improbable, however, given the voracious appetites of squirrels and raccoons.

And the likely conclusion to be drawn from all this bird paraphernalia is that late 20th century people used them for obscure religious rites.

Birds were enticed to their doom and their remains cooked on ceremonial, charcoal-fired grills. The people then dined, while seated in molded white plastic or folding aluminum "throne" set amid a pantheon of concrete idols.

Now what about garden tools?

Our civilization's bombs, handguns and high-powered rifles may vanish. Yet if any of the gadgets we use for attacking bugs and weeds survive, archaeologists can't help but think we were a very belligerent lot.

Just look in the summer edition of the Langenbach tool catalog. There's a hand-held, flame-throwing weeder that creates its own scorched-earth policy, and the "power pruning system" resembles the forelegs of a tyrannosaurus.

No 31st century scientist will ever imagine that American gardeners used this stuff to create places of tranquility and beauty. Especially not if they stumble across a pair of strap-on "boot spike" lawn aerators.

And when they skewer themselves on those spikes, there's sure to be a small figurine of a rotund, Oriental man nearby, staring at them with a laugh set forever in concrete.

HOUSE WATCH

Single-family houses in Franklin, Delaware, Madison and Union counties, according to the Columbus Board of Realtors.

	08/01/94	08/02/93
Houses on market:	6,534	7,205
Average price:	\$151,355	\$143,642
Average days on market:	91	95

More statistics on Page 5J

INSIDE HOME & GARDEN

Editor: Pam Coffman / 461-5215

REAL ESTATE

Getting more credit cards and loans to re-establish credit may actually hurt you when you apply for a mortgage, columnist Edith Lank warns / 6J



Lank

DESIGN

Buy outdoor pieces that also look good inside the home / 11J

GARDEN

An application of fertilizer now will keep animals healthy and blooming / 12J