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A smartphone or tablet might be the best remote control for blending traditional and Internet TV. **4-5H**



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How you can dress up a less-than-stellar fence with evergreen shrubs or vines. **3H**

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The Charlotte Observer

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**Problems from rain will seep in on you**

REAL ESTATE



**ALLEN NORWOOD**

It has rained some, you might have noticed. And rained, and rained and rained some more.

I asked Craig Madans, founder of the service network HOCOA, what kinds of calls his home repair folks tend to get when it rains for what seems like 40 days and 40 nights.

He didn't miss a beat. Not a blink. He said, "Well, they come in two-by-two."

After I quit laughing he said that service calls during long rainy spells are about what you'd imagine. Mostly they're about roof leaks, flooding crawl spaces and yard drainage.

Here's a soggy reminder: Heavy rain doesn't cause roof leaks - it makes them impossible to overlook. A passing afternoon shower might not dump enough water to cause a stain on your ceiling. It's over quickly, and then everything dries out until next time. What we've endured recently, well, it finds those holes and cracks and lets you know about them.

It might be a stretch, but the heavy rains could be doing us all a collective favor by pointing out all these leaks.

Madans said roof leaks tend to be caused by missing shingles, failed caulking around flashing and cracked plumbing vent boots. That's the same advice other experts have offered over the years. If you have a leak, start looking for it in one of those places.

Remember that the leak in the roof might not be directly above the spot on your ceiling. Water can run along rafters and the underside of the roof sheathing before dripping. It won't run directly uphill, home inspectors have told me, but it sure can take some creative routes in other directions. If you discover a ceiling stain or wet insulation, check nearby flashing and plumbing vents first.

We have some experience with old, cracking plumbing vent boots at our house. When the first one started leaking, I figured that the others weren't far behind. They were all the same age, and all on the hot southern slope of the roof.

Sure enough ... You don't even have to go up on the roof to check the boots. Do it from the attic. If you can see bright sunlight between the PVC plumbing vent and the flexible boot that's supposed to fit tightly around the pipe, that's not good.

Here's another reminder: If you hire someone to fix a leak, ask him to check other potential problems. "Hey, he has his 40-foot ladder," said Madans, who founded HOCOA (www.hocoa.com) 20 years ago. "Get him to clean the gutters and change the outdoor spotlights while he's up there."

Special to the Observer: hominfo@charter.net



Scott Beattie, author of "Artisanal Cocktails," likes to put edible flowers in his drinks, such as these from Thai basil.

**Cocktail gardens raise the bar**



LEA GERGMAN

A Pimm's Cup cocktail is garnished with a Lemon Gem marigold. Like the cucumbers in the drink, the marigold is edible. Recipe, Page 3H.

**Create a pretty spot to garnish - and savor - your drinks**

BY MARTY ROSS

Universal Uticik

**S**hake things up in the backyard this summer: Cocktail gardening puts a new twist on edible landscaping.

Fresh herbs and fruit have long been the key ingredients in some of summer's most refreshing libations, and when they're within easy reach of the backyard bartender, every cocktail becomes a flourishing signature drink.

Making a mojito with homegrown mint is only part of the picture, though. A successful cocktail garden should be a comfortable and inviting place to be.

"You can't just translate the indoors to outdoors," said J'Nell Bryson, a landscape architect in Charlotte. "An outdoor room needs more space to be in scale with nature." Postage-stamp patios in big backyards don't look right, she said, but if a



MICHAEL KEVIN DALY

Raspberry Shortcake is a thornless, dwarf plant you can grow in a pot for sweet berries to dress up a beverage.

small space is all you have, there are lots of ways to make it work as a cocktail garden. "Even if you live in a condo and just have a tiny patio, you can do a vertical garden, or use pots."

Amy Stewart, author of "The Drunken Botanist," turned the challenging side yard of her Northern California home into a lush and colorful cocktail garden worthy of her book, which delves deep into the horticulture and lore of hops, rye, barley, grapes and dozens of other plants used to make and garnish the world's greatest drinks.

Stewart worked with garden designer Susan Morrison on the plans for her limited space, which relies heavily on container plantings and includes an outdoor bar, where Stewart stirs up garden-fresh cocktails. Most of the garden is only 7 feet wide, with a wider patio at one end. Stewart



Bryson

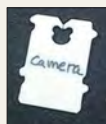
SEE COCKTAILS, 7H

**I'M SO CLEVER**

A way to keep track of warranties

BY ROLAND WILKERSON  
rwilkinson@charlotteobserver.com

**The winner:** Whenever something breaks or quits working, I always wonder how long I've had it and whether it's under warranty. So now, whenever I buy something, I take a Sharpie and write the date of purchase, length of warranty in an inconspicuous space. Example: "5/7/13 by Walmart." I also staple receipts to the warranty/product info and keep in a folder. I have gotten everything from ballpoint pens to briefcases replaced under warranties when they went kaput too soon. — S.P. WILLIAMS, SHELBY

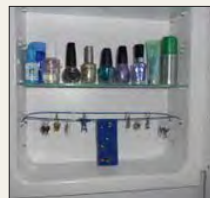


**Hot dog! Bun tags come in handy**

Those plastic tabs that come with some buns and breads are perfect for slipping on charging cords to help keep them labeled. — HAZEL MCCRONE, MOORESVILLE

**MORE CLEVER**

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**Organize those earrings**

Here's a great way to keep earrings organized. Snip the bottom part of a wire hanger and bend the ends to fit into the slots in a medicine cabinet. Fold a ribbon or piece of fabric over wire for stud earrings. — JACKIE KOERNER, CHARLOTTE

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