

CAFFEINE SOLUTION

Coffee really can keep you more alert at night, L6



MMMMM

Beware of those great-tasting curbside hot dogs, L3



ANDREW WALLACE/TORONTO STAR

Andrew Freedman wanted to learn piano for years. He took it up last year, under the tutelage of Clare Pengelly, right, after his wife bought a piano.

Songs in the key of life

Part psychologist, part teacher, Clare Pengelly instructs a growing number of "big kids"

SUSAN PIGG
LIVING REPORTER

Andrew Freedman fixes his gaze on the sheet music like a seasoned concert pianist, and plants his fingers on the keys with an intensity rivalled only by the look on his face.

Freedman, 57, has clearly done his homework. The song he's chosen to play was written in 1893, Time-Warner bought the rights in 1998, and it's one of the most popular songs in the world, he tells a small

group of anxious onlookers.

There's no mistaking the first few notes of "Happy Birthday" — or the distinctive "sh" word that slips from Freedman's lips as he makes his first mistake.

It's one of the most popular swear words in the world.

"There's a lot of swearing — and a lot of talking to themselves. But mainly a lot of swearing," says piano teacher Clare Pengelly, breaking into a smile as wide as the keyboard of the Weber grand piano.

Freedman is one of what Pengelly calls her "big kids" — baby boomers who are passionately taking up piano. They now outnumber the "little kids" who flock to Pengelly's ramshackle Victorian house where two

baby grands share centre stage in the bay window of her family home.

They're busy teachers, photographers, medical experts and investment bankers.

"I get a lot of accountants," says Pengelly, 51. "So many of them say, 'I've got to learn jazz. I've got to swing. I'm not swinging enough.'"

Most are in their 50s. Many have never taken a piano lesson. A shocking number who did are still haunted by their mistakes decades before, fearful of once again having their knuckles rapped.

"They'll tell me, 'I hated that. I quit. But I want to start again. I hear that you don't hit.'"

PIANO continued on L2

GARDEN START

Ready? It's grow time

We've got the essentials for gardening covered this holiday weekend

JANE VAN DER VOORT
TORONTO STAR

Patio weather? Maybe. Sowing and planting this Victoria Day long weekend, the traditional start of gardening season? Definitely!

"For a lot of people, how the May long weekend goes is how the summer goes," says Environment Canada weather expert David Phillips.

He's got a point: Our hopes have been rained out for two years in a row. Last year's Victoria Day weekend there was a wind chill of -3C.

But not this year. The holiday arrives a week later, which helps, says Phillips, who is calling for temperatures from 20C to 27C, although with a few millimetres of rain on Saturday.

North of Toronto, the forecast is stellar as the rain storm bringing Saturday's "showery" weather stays south of the Great Lakes. "There will be no problem at all

with planting. The soil is warm. The overnights are not cold. You'll be able to plant with no risk of frost."

In the garden is where you'll find nearly half the country this weekend. A national fitness and lifestyle survey in 2005 found 49 per cent of adults garden, and a recent poll showed about one in four in the GTA take part. Statistics Canada estimates gardening to be a \$3.5 billion national industry.

Garden centres have been rocking for weeks already. Sheridan Nurseries' president Karl Stensson says 20 per cent of his company's sales for the year will happen over the next three weeks. Outdoor furniture sales are booming at their nine GTA stores, hydrangeas are hot and big organic vegetable plants are in demand this growing season.

"People are fed up with the recession, with grey skies. They want colour and they want to see things grow," says Stensson.

CULTIVATED CREW: Get the gardening goods from our experts, including one you can talk to today, L4



MISSING



TARA WALTON/TORONTO STAR

James Woollatt's favourite sock was orphaned last year, when its mate disappeared in a shared laundry room.

Socks and the city

Seeking stories about forlorn footwear, with green dreams in mind

FRANCINE KOPUN
FEATURE WRITER

Everyone has a story about the sock that got away — the comfy, cushioned yoga socks, separated forever by the dryer; staunch woollen hiking socks, torn asunder by the washing machine; or the lime green sock with red chili peppers widowed by the family Shih Tzu.

They're called orphan socks for a reason: we miss them that much, hanging on to the one that's left

forlorn hope that its mate will turn up again.

Or maybe we're just cheap.

James Woollatt, 46, was one of dozens of people who responded when Toronto asked people to write in with a story about their favourite lost sock, part of a green energy campaign launched earlier this month. The first 100 people do so will receive a free wooden drying rack.

Woollatt inherited his favourite socks from a friend, who didn't like them because they kept falling down.

Woollatt did, and the socks became his best-worn pair, perfect for muttering around the house

from the apartment laundry room.

"For over a year MFS (my favourite sock) has been waiting, single amongst all the other couples, a third wheel in a drawer of pairs," he wrote to Toronto Hydro.

"I will continue to hold on to it as I hope, miraculously that someday its partner will reappear."

Woollatt, a partner in Toronto media company Blink Blink, may be sentimental about his socks, but others are even more syrupy — or stubborn, perhaps.

One person wrote anonymously about a dress sock that has been missing for 20 years. He's still hoping.

LIVING

DIG IN

The annual long-weekend garden party

FITNESS

"Expect soreness."
That's how chiropractor Natalia Lishchyna sums up the reward for gardeners who go at it too hard this weekend. "We want people to make sure they don't turn a green thumb into a sprained thumb."
Start with a quick walk to scope out the neighbourhood gardens. That will warm you up to stretch those thighs, hamstrings and your back. Prep your wrists — hold your arms out in front of you and flex your wrist and hand upward, gently pulling fingers back. Then do the same with fingers pointed downward.
When hoisting bags of dirt, bend at the hips and hold the load close to your body. Guard against twisting with the rake, hoe or spade: "Pivot your feet, keep your toes between your nose" to let your legs, and not your back, do the work.
Get right down to your seeds or plants by kneeling on a pad, or sitting on a short stool. And while you're down there, try to use the muscles in your arms, not your back.
Lighten your load when you can — use a wagon to haul heavy bags and use a hose instead of carrying a watering can.
"At the end of the day, sit down and put your feet up," says Lishchyna. She prescribes a cold pad for sore muscles. Call the doctor if soreness lasts more than two days.



Chiropractor Natalia Lishchyna stretches her hamstrings.

Our experts dish on the the dirt, the plants, the tools, the bugs, the weather and the bodies that will ache after a sudden return to the yard and garden



SHUTTERSTOCK PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

Slugs love your ripening tomatoes. Some gardeners use saucers of beer to divert the molluscs' attention.

SOIL

Whether you have "miserable concrete, clay soil or sandy soil, you need organic material," says Paul Zammit, director of horticulture at the Toronto Botanical Garden.
"Always take the opportunity to amend your soil at planting time. If, for instance, you're putting in a peony bush this weekend, at least do that spot where you're planting," he says. For an easy fix he suggests composted manure, mushroom compost, worm castings, even the leaves that covered your garden this past winter.
His favourite soil tonic? Dry leaves



and fresh kitchen compost "and you can create a delicious combination of both," Zammit says of the carbon-nitrogen boost.

You can check your soil's acid and alkaline levels with a soil testing kit, available at garden centres. Slightly acidic soil appeals to most plants, Zammit notes.
"But I like to say, work with what you've got — the right plant for the right place." A rhododendron loves acidic soil; Madonna lilies are happy in basic or alkaline soil.
Then, to protect what you've created, he suggests a cover of mulch to preserve moisture, keep weeds down and add yet more organic matter as the mulch breaks down.

PLANTS AND TOOLS

If you're just starting out, start small, says master gardener and *Star* gardening columnist Sonia Day (photo at right).
"Don't do too much. That's what puts people off gardening," she says, noting busy jobs and hectic lives have contributed to a boom in container gardening. One tomato plant (cherry or patio variety), for instance, and one basil plant will give you an idea whether it's for you. Or a pot of annuals, like pansies or petunias, if you want flowers and get good sun. Be prepared to water daily, though.

Flowers to consider for shady areas are astilbe, columbine, cone flowers, brunnera and old-fashioned bleeding heart. For texture, look into Japanese fountain grass. For easy yard gardening, think about ground cover — Day suggests the purples of geranium macrorrhizum, or blue tones of lamium (deadnettle).
For a rock garden, she likes the yellow flowers of corydalis.

The right tools will help in the pursuit of gardening happiness. Day's top eight:
1) Dandelion digger; 2) Sharp trowel with a metal blade; 3) Garden fork; 4) Rake; 5) Spade; 6) Big watering can; 7) Hose; 8) Big plastic garbage or recycling bin to fill with water that can be left for a day to warm up and not shock — or worse, kill — sensitive, greenhouse-raised started plants.
Read Sonia Day's new gardening column tomorrow in Weekend Living.



PESTS

Gardeners may be in for a bug batt this season.
"There wasn't much snow cover and it was not really very cold, so there may be more survivors," says Antonia Guidotti, entomology technician at the Royal Ontario Museum.
"But because it has also been a really dry spring, I can make a prediction that there may not be as many mosquitoes," she offers.
Guidotti, herself a home gardener, offers some insight into the insects: arachnids, molluscs and invertebrates that dig in the garden alongside you:
White grubs or beetle larvae: "They're feeding on the roots of your plants, so it's not something you necessarily want."
Worms: All good for the soil, all the time.
Earwigs: These ferocious-looking omnivores could eat your aphids... or they could eat your plants.
Cutworms: "The moths they turn into are beautiful but the damage they do to your seedlings is not good. I've had enough tomatoes damaged by these guys."
Ants: Mostly good because they eat protein (other insects), they help clean up (picnic, anyone?) and decompose organic material. "But you don't want them living in your house."
Ladybird beetles: Aphid eaters.
Spiders: Insect eaters.
Butterflies: "Although bees and even flies are better pollinators, they're lovely to have around and that's why a lot of us like them."



Barrie Murdock photo. A big, lightweight watering can is stalwart in gardening columnist Sonia Day's trove of tools.

LONG-RANGE FORECAST

They both agree the coming summer will be hot.
But Environment Canada's David Phillips says it will be hot and dry, while *Farmers' Almanac* managing editor Sandi Duncan says the forecast is hot and wet.
Predictions are that it will take time to warm up. Ontario and Quebec are expected to get more

precipitation than normal," says Duncan.
But Phillips says he's studied month-to-month weather models, as well as those from mid-month to mid-month, and they're "all saying the same thing, warm and dry."
He predicts the coming season will resemble summer 2005, when 41 days hit sultry temperatures above

30C. Last summer saw only three days go over 30C. Summer 2008 had just 10 really hot days.
If he dubbed last year a "bummer of a summer," Phillips says this one will be a hummer — "for the air conditioners that will be humming away."
And yet, says Phillips, increased variability has defined Southern Ontario weather in the last 10 years.

There is no longer a normal pattern of weather, he adds.
"We've had two of the wettest back-to-back summers and, in the year that we cancelled winter, does this mean we'll cancel summer?"
"Well, you have to look at that, and we've kind of been on a roll."
Compiled by Jane Van Der Voort, Toronto Star

ASK THE EXPERT

Bring your gardening queries to the *Star's* webchat today at noon with Paul Zammit, director of horticulture at Toronto Botanical Garden. To ask Paul's help solving your gardening dilemmas, go to www.thestar.com and click on our webchat.

Ad

PIANO from L1

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NICE CREAM

Look for these products that are all made from 100% Canadian milk or cream!

