

# stuff you Should KNOW

## *Tips from alumni*

### Gardens

*Tips that will leave time for your iced tea and patio chair.*



**Think about sun.** Before you buy plants, ask yourself how much sun that spot really gets. It may be shady when you get home from work, but it may have been in the sun the rest of the day.

Shade is on the north side of the house and under large, heavy-leaved trees. Partial shade could be morning sun and afternoon shade. Or dappled shade under tall but not heavy trees. Full sun is considered more than eight hours, although four in the early morning and four in the late afternoon do not equal eight in the midafternoon.

**Pick easy plants.** Don't pick a plant just because it's your favorite color. Use catalogs, and get a gardening book with an encyclopedia of plants in it. Find plants that say, "Easy to grow" or, "Grows in a wide range of growing conditions." If there are two varieties and one says, "Very resistant to mildew" and the other says nothing about mildew, pick the first one.

**How big will it get?** When buying woody plants, find out how tall and wide it will be at maturity. Shrubs and trees are a long-term investment. It may look sparse to plant a little shrub six feet away from its neighbor, but it will grow! Space it correctly and you'll save yourself a lot of pruning.

**Go Soilless.** Soilless potting mix may be hard to find, but it's the best thing for pots and other containers. Real garden soil compacts too much in pots. Made of Canadian sphagnum peat moss or bark with a few other additives such as perlite and fertilizer, it's good for root development and retains moisture well, yet allows for good oxygen exchange in the roots.

**New annuals to try.** These four new annuals will provide abundant color all summer. Angelonia has white, pink or purple small orchid-like flowers. It needs sun to partial sun. Diascia is only 12" high full of pink flowers. It's a real charmer that likes sun and is heat tolerant. Calibrochoa is like a small-flowered petunia in many colors. It likes sun to partial shade. Sweet Potato Vine has foliage that is chartreuse green or dark burgundy. It likes sun to partial sun and can grow eight feet or more in good soil.

*Judy Rosenow Dluzen '76 is the senior horticultural assistant at the University of Michigan's Matthaei Botanical Gardens. Her husband, Robert Dluzen '75, is a gardener at Domino's Farms in Ann Arbor. Their daughter Robin is a student at Adrian College.*



## Wine

*Enjoying a glass of wine doesn't have to be a foreign experience.*



**Relax!** Don't be intimidated by wine. You don't go down the soda pop aisle at the grocery store and say, "But I don't know anything about pop!" It's true that a little bit of knowledge about wine helps, and a little bit more knowledge helps even more, but so what? Just enjoy it first, then learn about it.

**Drink what tastes good to you.** Even though it's listed second here, this is probably the first rule of wine tasting. If you don't like red wine, who cares if everyone says red has to go with meat? Have white if you want. And don't let anyone buffalo you into drinking a certain wine just because it's the sophisticated thing to do. Stick with what you like.

**Ninety percent of the wine will go with 90 percent of the food.** Don't worry too much

about getting all your pairings right. That said, however, when you do match just the right food with just the right wine, magic happens.

**Talk to the wine people.** If you want something specific – or just want to know that you're trying something good – then go to a store with a wine expert. That's why they're there.

*These tips were provided by **Dan Measel '85**. He and **Nathan Sparks '85**, along with others, own Pentamere Winery in Tecumseh, where they make and sell their own wine.*



## Grilling steak

*Fresh-cut isn't necessarily best.*

The key to grilling an excellent steak is to use choice aged beef. Aged beef is much more tender and flavorful than fresh-cut beef. My favorite is the New York strip. Purchase a full loin of beef from a wholesale distributor such as Sam's Club or Costco. Pick meat packed with a system that removes oxygen and replaces it with nitrogen, thereby stopping bacterial growth. Ask the manager what the pack date is, take it home and keep it in the refrigerator for 30-45 days. Cut steaks to your preferred size and serve or freeze individually. They'll keep in the freezer for about two months. To cook, turn gas grill on high and close lid to preheat. Season beef on both sides

with choice of seasonings. Put steaks on grill and turn after 3 or 4 minutes, depending on thickness. Cook to desired temperature. Enjoy!

**Angelo Antonucci '75** moved to Myrtle Beach, S.C., in 1980 and opened Angelo's Steak & Pasta Restaurant. In the past 25 years the restaurant has expanded to 250 seats serving an all-you-can-eat Italian buffet and a full-service menu featuring "The Greatest Steaks in the Universe." In 2004, Angelo's served over 36,000 steaks.



## Digital photos

*Make your pictures count.*



**Squeeze to please.** Many digital cameras are plagued by "shutter lag," a delay of up to one second after you push the shutter while the camera focuses. One solution is to pre-focus. When you push the shutter halfway down on most digital (and film) cameras, the focus locks. If you're photographing a moving car, pre-focus on a spot where you know it will be, and when it gets there, push the shutter the rest of the way down. This not only reduces shutter lag, but with practice provides tack-sharp action shots.

**Flashes of genius.** Use the flash in bright sunlight for portraits, since it will eliminate shadows covering eyes and shadows from hat brims falling across faces. This technique is called "fill flash," since it "fills" in the shadows. In fact, it's usually a good idea to use the flash all the time, as long as you don't expect miracles. But remember, the built-in flash is weak and in dark situations won't work past 10 feet or so.

**Get close.** Fill the viewfinder with faces. There is no rule that says you have to include someone's shoes in a portrait. Use the "human zoom" to eliminate meaningless background. If you depend on the digital zoom built into your camera or crop photos later on your computer, you will reduce detail and sharpness in prints.

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# Golf

*Ways to enjoy the game more.*

**Don't let your friends critique your golf swing.** No matter how well they play, they don't know what they're talking about. Instead, find a PGA professional who is close enough so you can visit him/her for instruction on a regular basis. The most expensive isn't necessarily the best; find someone who is genuinely interested in your game, and who doesn't try to overload you with swing mechanics.

**Don't critique your buddy's golf swing.** No matter how well you play, you don't know what you're talking about. (See above.)

**Never, never critique your spouse's golf swing.** Maybe you do know what you're talking about, but attempting to impart that knowledge isn't worth the inevitable conflict. Trust me, you will come off as condescending.

**Play "ready golf."** Most of us aren't at the skill level where multiple practice swings, a methodical pre-shot routine or in-depth analysis of yardage, wind and hole location makes any kind of difference. Trust your instincts, select a club, then let it fly.

**Attend a noteworthy amateur tournament.** You'll be amazed by the talent of Generation Next. Typically there are few spectators besides the contestants' friends and family, so you can watch the action up close and personal. For a glimpse of PGA Tour stars of the future, check out the Western Amateur, July



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26-31 at Point O' Woods Country Club near Benton Harbor. Better yet, there's world-class team competition at the Walker Cup Match, Aug. 13-14 at venerable Chicago Golf Club in Wheaton, Ill. It's the Ryder Cup of amateur golf.

## Where to play

In the United States, the Bandon Dunes Resort in Bandon, Ore., is unrivaled. Three spectacular courses overlooking the Pacific Ocean; pristine natural setting; excellent accommodations; great food; and totally unpretentious. Not the easiest place to get to, but well worth the effort. (Better than Pebble Beach, at half the cost.) Overseas, Ireland (both the Republic and Northern) gets the nod over Scotland. Start at Royal County Down and work your way north and west to Royal Portrush, Portstewart, Rosapenna, Ballyliffin, Murvagh, Ennescrone and Carne. And here's a tip: Spend time in Belfast. It's a fantastic city.

# Decks

*A little thought can make the project much more successful.*



**Material.** If you want natural wood, you'll need to apply a sealant and semi-transparent stain nearly every year to hold color and prevent weather checking. Keep in mind that paint and solid-color stains are not recommended for deck surfaces. However, new manufactured deck materials are

now being offered in several colors and wood grains.

**Size.** Do you want a deck where you can sit and relax, or a deck that's big enough for table, chairs and a grill? Remember to scale the deck to the size of the home and the yard. You will waste less material if you use even-foot measurements. Most lumber is available in 8'-16' lengths, and manufactured deck materials also come in 20' lengths.

**Location.** Decks constructed on the east or west side of homes will have a shaded area either in the morning or evening.

Southern exposures might be more usable with some type of shade trellis. Of course an awning or roof will make a deck even more useful.

**Staying up to code.** Most building codes require decks that are 24 inches or more above the ground to have a railing. Railings can be made of the same material as the deck, or can consist of pre-made vinyl rail and post systems. Metal spindles and even glass panels may be incorporated into the railing design. Consider adding a bench as part of the railing and you'll provide additional seating as well as a place to sit on those warm days when the deck furniture has been stored. If space permits, multi-level decks can be used to eliminate the need for railings.



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## Budgets and Diets

*Both are four-letter words.*

Notice when you put on a few pounds, the first thing you do is figure out what diet you can start that will help you lose it fast. Diets generally fail because we are forcing ourselves to change our eating patterns for a period of time. We fully intend to go back to our eating habits once we have lost our desired weight. For most of us, “diet” is a four-letter word.

Budgets are like that too. They are usually a forced discipline with no commitment; we fully intend to go back to our old ways, once we have gotten ourselves out of debt.

Here’s a better idea. Commit yourself to *trade-off* spending. First, figure out what your basic living expenses are. You can do this by tracking your expenses from your checkbook for a month, then annualizing the amount. Divide your expenditures into fixed (those items that you must pay each month like utilities and rent or mortgage) and variable (those items that you can control like groceries, restaurants, clothing, travel, etc.). Once you know what your discretionary amount is, including an amount set aside for savings, you can adjust your spending each month. For example, you’d like to have a new computer. What are you willing to “trade off” in your variable expenditures so that you can buy it? I had a client once tell me that she gave up smoking so she could afford a face lift.



### To lose weight successfully:

**Keep track of what you eat.** Nutritionists suggest writing down everything you eat because it’s hard to see “just ate a dozen donuts” on paper.

**Have small-portioned, well-balanced meals.** Eating a large pizza with cheese and veggie toppings may qualify for the major food groups, but will NOT pass the small portion test.

**Exercise.** Just 15 minutes a day will burn calories and fat. Sports are good; spectator sports are not.

**Set realistic weight goals.** Wanting to “lose weight” lacks specificity. Wanting to lose 50 pounds in three weeks lacks reality.

**Make a commitment to a new way of life.** Change your lifestyle, not just your eating habits.



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### To gain financial success:

**Track your expenses.** Creating an audit trail keeps loose cash from flying out of your pockets. Use your checkbook, not your ATM card.

**Diversify your assets.** Invest in various asset classes, not just the domestic stock market. Bonds, small companies, real estate and international asset classes have their place in a portfolio as well.

**Actively save.** Max out your 401k if you have one. For additional savings, make out an “invoice” to your money market each month. When you have enough, buy an index fund.

**Have realistic return goals.** The 1990s left us all with a taste for double and triple digit returns. We may not see those again for some time so be happy with moderate, stable returns over time.

**Commit to your goals and objectives.** Good planning will get you where you want to go. No planning will get you nowhere.