

# YOUR FREE TIME

## WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING



VAN GOGH VODKA

### Drink of the week

**Why try it now:** Cinco de Mayo is almost upon us, and though this Mexican holiday commemorates victory over the French in the Battle of Puebla, on May 5, 1862, many revelers in Texas and the rest of the United States join in. After all, the leader of the Mexican forces — Gen. Ignacio Zaragoza — was born in Texas.

— Art Chapman

### Mexi-tini Serves 1

- 1 ounce orange-flavored vodka
- 1 ounce tequila
- ½ ounce orange juice

1. Pour ingredients into cocktail shaker, and add crushed ice. Let stand for five seconds.
2. Shake vigorously for five seconds.
3. Strain into a martini glass, and garnish with an orange slice.

— adapted from a recipe from Van Gogh Vodka

### High-tech hobbies

#### Do-it-yourself camera maintenance

**Product:** VisibleDust Arctic Butterfly

**What it's for:** The sensor on an SLR, or single lens reflex, camera should be cleaned when you begin to see black dots or spots on your photographs. It's coming up on prime time for amateur photographers, with Mother's Day, graduations, June weddings and summer vacations, so now's the time to get the job done. With this dry-cleaning brush, you can do it yourself.

**How to use it:** Charge the brush by turning it on for a few seconds before use. Then take the lens off the camera and wipe the sensor gently to remove light dirt and dust particles. If some heavier particles aren't removed, follow up by cleaning with VisibleDust Swabs, sold separately.

**What not to do:** Don't put the brush on the sensor while the brush is spinning; this can cause damage. And damage to the sensor can be costly.

**What else you'll need:** 2 AAA batteries

**Cost:** \$94.70 by itself, or available in kits.

**How it worked:** The price is high, but considering that a camera service center would charge almost as much for one cleaning, this is a great deal.

**Where to get it:** www.visibledust.com

— Gregg Ellman



### De-stress at home

#### Affordable aromatherapy

The problem with a lot of stress-relieving body products and spa treatments is the price tag; when you get around to paying for them, you've got a whole new thing to be stressed about. Our solution? Three at-home treatments that melt away worries — and cost \$10 or less each.

**Melt Away Stress** body care products, Johnson's. The skin-care giant follows up its line of lavender-enhanced products for babies with a new one aimed at adults. The collection, including a body wash, a lotion and a massage/moisturizing oil, contains chamomile and lavender; the company states that in clinical studies, its products reduced tension by 50 percent and increased quality of sleep by 30 percent. We don't know about that, but a bit of the fragrant lotion does take the edge off. \$4.99 each; at discount and grocery stores.

**Peace of Mind On-the-Spot Relief**, Origins. Dab some of this lotion on your fingertips; breathe deeply. Gently rub it onto your earlobes and temples. Breathe deeply again. We're not sure if it's the strong fragrance of the basil, peppermint and eucalyptus, or just the power of suggestion, but within seconds of applying this, we felt our jaws unclenching and our eyelids becoming heavy. \$10; at Origins retail stores, multiple locations, or online at www.origins.com.

**Aromatherapy Volumizing Shampoo and Conditioner**, Bath & Body Works. Washing your hair is inherently relaxing, but this product makes it even better; our favorite scent is the Relax-Eucalyptus Spearmint. Afterward, we seem to inhale a little deeper and walk with more of a spring in our step (and bounce in our hair). \$10; at Bath & Body Works, multiple locations.

— Di Hall and Heather Svokos



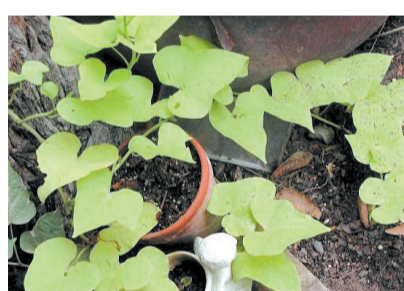
Sweet potato vines are grouped with ferns and impatiens for a gorgeous, unfussy pop of color.

KANSAS CITY STAR/DELORIES JOHNSON/MCT

# The instant gardener



Feathered Celosia CYNTHIA MCKINNEY



Lime-green sweet potato vine WINGNUT

#### Annuals

**Feathered Celosia** — Grows to 24 inches with tall, featherlike spikes. In white, red, yellow, pink and orange. Works well in full or partial sun.

**Sweet Potato Vine** — You won't get any yams from these fast-growing plants, but you will be rewarded with a brilliant wide-leaf display. There are several varieties, but the lime-green Marguerite has become one of the most popular. Works well in hanging baskets and planters. Thrives in full sunlight.



Scabiosa CYNTHIA MCKINNEY



Lantana CYNTHIA MCKINNEY

#### Perennials

**Scabiosas** — A large bloom on a tall stem, the scabiosa is sometimes called a "pincushion." Generally light blue or pink. Prefers a hot, humid climate with full daytime sunlight, and evening shade.

**Lantana** — Great for ground cover or in containers. It is a low, tightly clustered trailing plant with small blooms. Lavender and white are popular colors, but also comes in yellow, pink, red and orange. Does well in full to partial sunlight.

Never got around to planting flowers this month? No worries. Plunk these lovelies in the ground for 'wow' right now.

By ART CHAPMAN  
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You meant to start your garden on time this year. You'd get everything planted in time to have an Easter, or at least a Mother's Day, filled with blooms from your own yard.

Then April debuted with cold weather. With snow. Hail. Torrential rain. Did we mention the snow?

The good news: Get to work today, and you can still have the May flowers that April showers are supposed to bring. This is still ideal weather to plant annuals and perennials, says Steve Chaney of the Tarrant County Extension Service. In fact, many of the most desirable bedding plants have just now arrived in nurseries, say workers at Mike's Garden Center on Crowley Road in Fort Worth.

What to plant? Go beyond the expected begonias and periwinkles with some of these colorful showpieces. Pick the annuals that add exceptional color; choose a perennial that will come back again and again against the Texas heat.

ART CHAPMAN, 817-390-7422



### Quick fix

Let's be honest: *The One-Minute Cleaner* (Storey, \$9.95) is misleadingly named. These hints can help you clean house faster and smarter, but not in just a minute. Still, we got inspired by the book's fast kitchen pickups. Three that make an immediate difference (and that you can do today.)

**1.** Hang a bulletin board inside the pantry or a cabinet door to collect menus, coupons, schedules and other stuff that usually gets plastered on the refrigerator.

**2.** Place a small basket or colorful Talavera bowl on the counter to round up stray junk like cheap sunglasses, Sharpies,

spare keys, outgoing mail.

**3.** Move rarely used items (in my case, corn husks for tamales, a can of salmon, and Vietnamese spring-roll wrappers) to the back of the pantry, making more room upfront for what you really use.

— Patricia Rodriguez