

# Today

MONDAY, JULY 23, 2007

SECTION D

WWW.TUSCALOOSANNEWS.COM



## USE OLD CDS TO SAVE GARDEN

Have you been getting a lot of CDs for online service in the mall? And have you been tossing them?

Not so fast. There is something useful you can do with all those free CDs. They can save plants and trees, fruit and vegetables.

Instead of tossing the CDs out, drill a hole in the edge of each and thread thin wire, twine or dental floss through the hole. Then hang them on your fruit trees. The silvery, flashy surface will scare birds away.

You can protect low-lying fruit plants and vegetable gardens, too, by hanging these digital scarecrows on coat hangers (bent into hooks) and sticking them in the ground.

Got pesky birds? Small critters that nibble? The answer, my friend, is blowing in the wind.

## ZAP CARPET CRITTERS

When clean just isn't clean enough, there's the Halo UVX Ultraviolet Vacuum.

The vacuum cleaner has a light bulb on the underside that emits UVC radiation to eliminate allergens such as dust mites and mold, as well as lice, fleas and germs that can live in carpet. UVC light — the kind used to disinfect drinking water and medical equipment — works by destroying the ability of insects and microorganisms to reproduce, the company says.

Because ultraviolet rays can harm the eyes, the machine is designed to direct reflected light downward. Sensors on the wheels shut the light off if the machine is tipped.

The vacuum cleaner's other features include HEPA filtration, a telescoping handle and a gear-driven system that eliminates belts.

## PLANTS WITH ATTITUDE

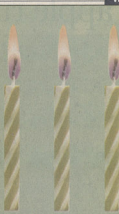
Jon Carlottis knows houseplants. He also knows interior design.

Combining the two is the focus of his book "Beyond the Windowill: Add Style to Your Home With the Beauty of Indoor Plants."

Carlottis, a New York garden designer, wants to stop associating plants with cluttered windowills and macramé hangers. His book demonstrates how houseplants can enhance a stylish decor, adding color, life and, yes, flair.

He concentrates on easy-care plants and includes growing tips for his favorites, making the book a good resource for beginners.

"Beyond the Windowill" is published by Cool Springs Press and sells for \$24.99 in softcover.



By Lucinda Coulter  
Staff Writer

**TUSCALOOSA** Frank Calloway laid bricks and stirred mortar by hand in his youth.

At 111 years old, he grasps crayons and fine-point pens to sketch purple and red townhouses with orange curtains.

Calloway, who celebrated his birthday July 2 at the Bryce Hospital nursing home where he resides, is considered to be one of Alabama's oldest residents.

In 2005, the oldest man was 109 and the oldest woman was 111, according to the Alabama Center for Health Statistics.

He is reported by Bryce officials to be only three years younger than the nation's oldest person Edna Parker, a Shelbyville, Ind., resident who turned 114 in April.

But for those who care for Calloway, his gentleness and zeal for drawing panoramas of folk art on 18-foot swaths of butcher paper eclipse his age.

His drawings chronicle his work and being a black man in Montgomery County during the racially oppressive era of Jim Crow.

SEE CALLOWAY | 6D



By Michelle Slatalla  
N.Y. Times News Service

I hate parents who brag. But it is true that my daughter Zoe has the amazing ability, by doing nothing more than contorting her neck and jaw muscles, to transform her face into a square. Or a triangle. Or even a trapezoid.

Have I mentioned that she can do this without wrinkling her forehead? Or that she is only 18?

I know what you're thinking because we were thinking it, too: YouTube.com!

After 15 minutes of camerawork and another 10 minutes of editing, we tagged "Geometry Face" with keywords we considered surefire lures: "doughnut," "strange" and, for some reason, "sex" (Zoe's idea). Then we sat back and waited for the calls from Hollywood.

After more than three months,

our total views numbered 87. Perhaps the strange doughnut-sex category was more crowded than we anticipated. Or maybe "Geometry Face" wasn't as funny as we thought. But why not?

The creative team gathered at the kitchen table for a rational, constructive discussion about how to avoid a similar sad fate for our next videos.

"It's your fault, Zoe; you misspelled 'trapezoid' in the caption," said Ella, 16, the family member responsible for marketing.

"Dad did that," Zoe said. "It's your fault for not e-mailing the link to enough people."

"It's both of your faults for not letting the dog be in it, doing his rectangle face," said Clementine, 9, whose specialty is props and animal handling. "I can't work with you people," Zoe said.

Then everyone vowed never to speak to one another again, and instead sat side by side, with laptops, watching (in pointed silence) dozens of more successful comedies at sites such as Dottedcom.com, Thisisjatin.com, Punnyjorie.com and Superdeluxe.com.

We watched our favorite 27 times, looking for clues. It's called "David Blaine Street Magic 2: The Sequel," and in it the comedian Mitch Spila brilliantly portrays Blaine's profes-

# And counting

## 111-year-old artist enjoys every day

A left-hander, Calloway sketched in early morning light last week. He smiled as he pressed a Bic pen against a worn old Bible as a guide rule.

He said he has lived a long life, in part, by being careful.

"I was raised up on hard work," Calloway said, repeating a list of hard labor — cutting logs, watering fields and cutting grass. "I enjoy a heap of things. I'm enjoying all my days."

He recalled being bullied by a Holstein as a young man and saving his boss's life from the angry bull.

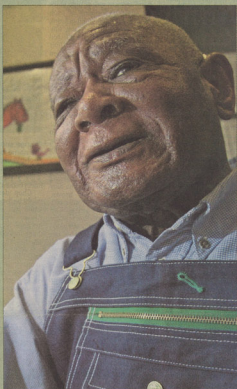
Calloway described other such memories, as he muttered softly, nodded his head and looked at a calendar near his table with a John Deere tractor on the cover.

He has lived at Bryce since Montgomery County health officials admitted him in 1952. Coping with diabetes and schizophrenia, he worked on the lawn crew and made a small salary until he was in his 70s, said Nedra Mouscier-Craig, Alice Kidd Nursing Facility director.

In 1984, he began to draw sheet upon sheet of tracks, horses, tractors and buildings — all with crayons, markers and ink pens.

Mouscier-Craig said that Calloway has no memory of civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. or Malcolm X. She said that he does not

SEE CALLOWAY | 6D



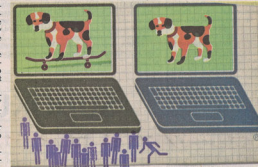
STAFF PHOTO: DUSTY CORPION

Left, Frank Calloway draws a mule on Wednesday at the Alice M. Kidd Nursing Facility on the Bryce Hospital Campus. Calloway recently celebrated his 111th birthday. Calloway is reportedly the oldest living person in the state of Alabama. For the past 25 years he has been drawing folk art, which has attracted the interest of several museum curators in and out of Alabama. Above, Calloway sits in his room at the Alice M. Kidd Nursing Facility.

To see video from Frank Calloway at the Alice M. Kidd Nursing Facility, visit [www.tuscaloosanews.com](http://www.tuscaloosanews.com).



# What makes a YouTube video funny?



sional act by performing on-the-spot tricks at the expense of passers-by. No matter how much we watched, it seemed funnier each time Silpa made orange soda magically spurt from a victim's mouth and then shot the audience a look of deadpan triumph.

But what did all the funny Internet videos have in common that ours lacked? We still weren't sure. So before our next production, I sought advice from Frank Chidiamo, a filmmaker whose specialty

is funny short videos designed to be viewed online or on mobile phones. "My creatives are at each other's throats," I told Chidiamo. "Are there specific tips for how to work in this particular medium?"

"You're making something for the very small screen, and so the premise has to be exaggerated," he said. "Overcompensate."

"Geometry Face" wasn't exactly subtle, Chidiamo elaborated by citing his video series "Mini-Bikers" SEE YOUTUBE | 6D

# Elephant ears can help create a tropical paradise in your home

By Norman Winter  
McClatchy-Tribune News Service

The Imperial Taro is one of my favorite cold-hardy elephant ears for landscaping that lush Caribbean look to the garden. Most elephant ears are thriving this year in a summer that is full of dry and hot days followed with almost daily monsoons.

found under a couple of other names — the aristocratic and Antiquorum. Most catalogs refer to them scientifically as *Colocasia antiquorum* var. *illustrius*. However, the real botanical name is *Colocasia esculenta*. Imperial Taro, by any name, is not a typical elephant ear. While white/black types have jumped in popularity, with Black Magic being the prime example, the Imperial Taro is different. The

Royal Horticultural Dictionary describes it as having light-Antiquorum. Most catalogs refer to them scientifically as *Colocasia antiquorum* var. *illustrius*. However, the real botanical name is *Colocasia esculenta*. Imperial Taro, by any name, is not a typical elephant ear. While white/black types have jumped in popularity, with Black Magic being the prime example, the Imperial Taro is different. The

is something special. The Imperial Taro is one of those carbohydrate/potato substitutes in the tropics, where they are boiled, baked or roasted. At the risk of sounding like my children who won't try anything new, I confess that I don't plan to eat any. But I am growing them, and you should, too. I partnered mine with ginger and cannas. They work well with all kinds of bananas

and are suitable with Louisiana iris or the yellow flag iris. The Imperial Taro is cold-hardy to zone 7a and returns faithfully if winter drainage is good. In the tropics, it thrives in moist conditions, but with our wet, cold winters, it will appreciate better drainage. In tight and heavy soil, incorporate 3 to 4 inches of organic matter for good aeration and drainage, or try planting on raised beds like

the commercial landscapers do. While preparing your bed, work in a slow-release pre-plant fertilizer like a 12-6-6 with minor nutrients. Use about 2 pounds per 100 square feet of bed space. Most gardeners buy the giant-sized bags, but more and more container-grown plants are being sold. Be sure to plant the bulbs so that the top of the bulb is 2 inches below the soil.

## YOUTUBE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1D

(meant for viewing on mobile phones, it's also online at Fun-littlemovies.com.) "It's little movies on little motorcycles, fighting crime a little at a time." It sounds really corny, but on a small screen, it's really cute.

Another rule of thumb: The best amateur videos tend to be 30 to 120 seconds long. "Shorter and people don't feel there's any value to it longer and the attention span drops off," Chindamo said.

I described our next video. "It's a mockumentary in the style of Christopher Guest, who made 'Best in Show' and 'Waiting for Guffman,'" I said. "It's the story of how our neighbors got sick of our dogs using the grassy verge in front of their houses as a toilet, so they tore up the verge and put down cobblestone, and it's our contention in the video that they caused some pretty shocking environmental damage."

"What damage?" he asked. "We saw some mud in the street once," I said. "Hm," he said. "Runoff," I clarified. "Your premise is a little too complicated," Chindamo said. "What works well on the Internet is character-based humor, or physically based humor, or situationally based humor." "Not a mockumentary?" I asked. "A funny title might help," he said. "We came up with 'Verge of Tears.' The next day, the cast (our two dogs) and the crew (still bickering) shot a few scenes. Clementine did the dogs' makeup. Then Zoe, the only one who knows how to use Final Cut Pro well enough to make a movie, edited. Finally, we added Ella's somber narration ('For now, the verge lives on only in memory'). Then we watched it from beginning to end, all 97 seconds of it. 'It's still not as funny as the David Blaine video,'" Ella said. "Who was that guy who was in it?" Zoe asked. "Mitch Silpa," Ella said.

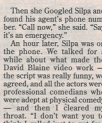


Photo by Norman Winter

Then she Googled Silpa and found his agent's phone number. "Call now," she said. "Say it's an emergency." An hour later, Silpa was on the phone. We talked for a while about what made the David Blaine video work — the script was really funny, we agreed, and all the actors were professional comedians who were adept at physical comedy — and then I cleared my throat. "I don't want you to think I called just to get free advice, but maybe you could give us some free advice," I said, describing the plot of the verge video.

"It might be too subtle," Silpa said. "Think of the audience as a bunch of kids kicking each other in the genitals, and make it sillier for them," he said. "I asked, 'Dogs frolicking in slow motion, I love that idea,'" he said. "And play up how their lives are sad now because of the cobblestones. You know those old movies that show when people hit hard times and now are walking the streets, drinking out of a bag?"

He added, "Can you have the dog sing?" When I approached my animal handler, she mixed the smoking idea as cruel. Luckily, Clementine did OK. Clementine frolicking and a staged scene of dog drunkenness. As Ella and I carefully transferred the brick from both a fifth of vodka and a pint of apricot Brandy into Tupperware containers for temporary storage, Zoe rummaged in the recycling bin for beer bottles. Then we waited for the dogs to lie down on the porch before arranging the Row montage around them. "It's a wrap," Zoe said. "We were pleased. After we uploaded 'Verge of Tears' to YouTube.com, we e-mailed a link to all the 'enemies of the verge' (that is, the neighbors) and got a mix of responses — 'you are out too far this time,' one wrote, which was very exciting, and another threatened to come to the video exposing our family for blocking the parking spaces on the block. Still, I calls from Hollywood. But less than a month after uploading, we had 105 views.



Photo by Norman Winter

There are very few of us who have unfettered time to do what we love," said Hutto, an attorney who advocates for others with mental illness. "But it's unusual to see anyone who has such a kind demeanor. If part of that is because he's not aware of the ugliness of today's world, I don't know. But he loves the act of creating."

That joie de vivre is one of the qualities that the nation's few centenarians is at least 110 years old share, said Dr. Stephen Coles with the Gerontology Research Group in Inglewood, Calif.

He said that genes influence long life more than any other trait. But he said positive attitude is critical to the world's oldest survivors. "They are eager to get up early in the morning and pursue their hobbies," Coles said. "Whatever it is they like to do, they get busy at it." Of the 79 people in the world documented by the Gerontology Research Group to be 110 years old or older, 30 live in the United States. Only 10 percent of the 79 are men, Coles said. Calloway has few answers for his long life, but he has made many calculations to plan the pillars and staywails of all the New Orleans-style townhomes he has drawn. "You have to take time and do the job right," he said.

Reach Lucinda Coulter at lucinda@tuscnews.com or 205-722-0206.

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## CALLOWAY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1D

understand that she, a black woman, can be a white "boss man," as he describes all supervisors.

She and Calloway's guardian, Zondra Hutto, said he would draw all day if others didn't involve him in activities such as trips to the movies, fishing and bowling.

Drawings of vivid red horses and pink chickens are hung on the walls near the table where he draws, his head bent over pen and paper.

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