

## THUMBS UP, THUMBS DOWN

# Degunking those slow-going drains



Sometimes the best inventions are discovered when trying to solve some other problem. Take Post-it notes, for example, which were the unintentional result of Spencer Silver's search for a strong adhesive (his invention wasn't strong enough but, because it left no residue and could be reused, fellow scientist Arthur Fry found it could be applied to make a better bookmark in his choir's hymnal). Or consider cellophane (invented by Swiss chemist Jacques E. Brandenberger, who, in 1908, was looking for a way to coat fabric to make a stain-proof tablecloth).

Now, add Scott Turner and his FlexiSnake to that list. FlexiSnake is a chemical-free antidote to hair-clogged drains — to be precise: a thin, 26-inch-long rubber-coated cable with an inch-long piece of Vetro attached to its end. Simply fish the cable into a slow-running drain, reel it in and be prepared to be impressed by a dramatic glob of gunk.

Turner of Chillicothe, Ill., came up with the FlexiSnake idea while trying to help his dad market Di-San, a microbial product that breaks down solids in septic tanks. He packaged the FlexiSnake with the Di-San but soon found the Snake was far more popular.

We asked some colleagues — Linda Bergstrom, At Play editor, and Cheryl Bowles, At Play assistant editor — to give it a test run to see if it's something we should recommend.

— Elaine Matsushita, ematsushita@tribune.com

## How easy was the FlexiSnake to use?

**CB:** Very easy — even without the videos offered on the Web site, it was pretty obvious that you just stuff it down your drain and fish around a bit.

**LB:** My "problem" spot is the shower, which has a drain with small holes. Hair gets caught, but it is impossible to clean. The flexiSnake was too large to fit in the holes, so I had to trim it a bit.

**EM:** So easy no directions were needed — a real plus in my book.

## Did it work?

**CB:** Like a champ — I've never been so happy to do household stuff. I fished out a decent-sized (but disgusting) clump of hair from the tub's main drain, then unscrewed the secondary drain below the faucet so I could get the FlexiSnake past the metal grid that blocks the pipe about 3 inches down.

**LB:** Oh. My. God. I've never been so

excited about a home product in my life. It was able to reach some hair gunk that I think has been there since the shower was installed. And despite having the small holes, the Vetro hung on to gunky stuff and I was able to remove it.

**EM:** You betcha. And it's so satisfying (even if disgusting) to see what you're getting out of the drain that you keep going back to see if you can get more out.

## Would you buy a FlexiSnake for \$2.95 or three for \$6.95?

**CB:** Definitely. Count me in. Heck, I may buy stock.

**LB:** Yes. I think one is fine. (Disposable? We are talking drain junk. So I wasn't thinking it would need to be pristine.)

**EM:** Yes and yes.

## Anything else you want to tell us

## about your experience with the FlexiSnake?

**CB:** Slow drains are so irritating that being able to clear them on your own is its own kind of entertainment. After fishing all the hair out with the FlexiSnake, I used home-brewed drain cleaner to get the nasty soap gunk out: 1 cup of baking soda poured down the drain, then followed with 1 cup of vinegar heated in the microwave. Run some super-hot water after a few minutes, and it's as clean as a whistle!

**LB:** Love the size, shape — OK, everything.

**EM:** If you love those crane games in video arcades, you're really going to love the FlexiSnake. You come up a winner every time.



## THE BOTTOM LINE

Thumbs up all around.

FlexiSnake costs \$2.95, or three for \$6.95, at [www.flexisnake.com](http://www.flexisnake.com).

## THE CHICAGO GARDENER

# Replanting bulbs carries no guarantees

By Beth Botts  
Tribune staff reporter

Can you replant dug-up bulbs?

Several people have asked whether you can replant these spring bulbs after they flowered, and whether you should replant them immediately or wait until fall.

According to Sally Ferguson and David Carras, the spokesmen for the Netherlands Flower Bulb Information Center: At this time of year, spring bulbs are not dormant; they are actively

Species tulips and some Darwin hybrids have the best chance of surviving, Carras says, but still, replanting them is risky.

If you have dug-up bulbs, and they still have a good set of roots that have not dried out and a good set of leaves, you can try replanting them and see if it works. If you get the bulbs free, you may have nothing to lose. Just don't get your heart set on it working.

## Cicada killers?

in which to overwinter. It will emerge the next summer as a wasp.

The wasps need disturbed ground to dig their holes, and lawns fit the bill. One of the best pla-

## IN THE WEB EDITION

For more about gardening in Chicago, see Beth Botts' blog. The Chicago Gardener at [chicago.tribune.com/gardener](http://chicago.tribune.com/gardener).

