

## **Flea Market Fever is Contagious**

Flea Market Fever is contagious. If you've ever been exposed just once, you probably have caught the "bug" and no doubt are enjoying its exhilarating symptoms.

Flea markets have literally sprouted up in this area within the past few years. Weekend after weekend from early spring through late autumn sellers and buyers are out in full force throughout the state and it is not uncommon to see indoor flea markets scheduled during Wisconsin's frigid winter months.

Many sellers prefer to set up their wares in locations where produce farmers congregate to market their harvests. Throngs of customers, attracted by the reasonable prices and high-quality of fresh grown fruits and vegetables, mill about the marketplace and are drawn to the "fleas" like moths to a flame.

If you are a novice at this kind of thing you might need a bit of information on what flea marketing is all about. Expect to see just about everything for sale (even some kitchen sinks for that matter)...a goodly number of items on display are termed collectibles. These items, for the most part, are no longer being manufactured and are therefore considered obsolete for their original purpose. Most of these fleas have not reach the age qualifying them for antique status. IT is common, however, to see a few authentic antiques at every sale. Flea market buffs usually shop for specific items although some regular buyers are attracted simply because they are collectors at heart.

A great many of us enjoy restoring articles and putting them back into useful service. We have just discovered ways of recycling many flea market buys to serve other purposes. Just because an item is outdated doesn't mean it can't have a new life.

Inflation has touched each of us these past months and surely will continue to affect our lives for sometime to come. While it is difficult to imagine having to cut back much further in our already tightened budget situations, flea market shoppers might want to keep in mind items that can be salvaged as useful home furnishings.

I've seen scores of people tempted to buy particular fleas but were reluctant because they had no idea what the items were to begin with or how in the world they could possibly be used today. Always remember that most sellers are helpful. I have met some of the most delightful people through flea market transactions. They want you to buy their wares and they are happy to answer your questions or offer suggestions. But they can't help you if you don't ask. Hundreds and hundreds of items are available at flea markets – many selling for just a few dollars. Many for less than one dollar! I've haggled over prices and found the majority of sellers very fair at compromising. That makes for a happy sale.

When you shop for fleas, keep gift giving in mind – REALLY. Christmas is always just around the corner and there are many potential gift buys awaiting you. Always keep in mind that much flea market merchandise is not brand new. You will find some items in need of a thorough cleaning once you get them home. Don't be discouraged if sets of articles are incomplete – use your imagination before you decide whether or not to buy.

You can do something with odd salt and pepper shakers. If your children like to help with holiday preparations, buy these unmatched shakers and let the little ones make fruit rind or cinnamon sugars or seasoned salt for holiday gifts. Plant hers in cup and saucer sets; use pretty plates or bowls for gifts of Christmas breads or cookies, fill rose bowls with homemade candies and shaving mugs with nuts.

Buy unmatched glasses for homemade jellies and jams. An orphaned teaspoon tied to one of these sparkling goodies makes an attractive gift. Two-tined forks make clever serving pieces for accompanying a gift jar of homemade pickles.

An ice cream chair can be purchased quite reasonable and is a quaint addition to a powder room. Covered wicker baskets make convenient clothes hampers. Hair receivers are making a comeback as soap dishes. I was lucky enough to find a chamber pot set for just a couple of dollars. Repainted, the box looks brand new and a thriving spider plant resides in the pot. Metal or brass curtain rods are an inexpensive investment if you are in need of towel bars.

Doilies or other needlework add a touch of nostalgia when used as a background in framing old family photographs. Picture frames are often in abundance at flea markets. If you are uncertain of what to frame, how about pressing some of your garden blooms or roadside weed blossoms and making a dried floral arrangement. I found old flat irons make perfect flower pressers and serve as sturdy bookends or door stops, too.

Bedding can be comfortably stored in roomy trunks and crocheted table clothes are simply beautiful when spread across a colorful blanket or comforter on a bed.

If you're handy with a needle and thread, consider transforming lace curtains into fancy holiday aprons, elegant evening shawls or detachable collars which, by the way, are back in fashion again this year. Old fur coats can be recycled into bike seats, decorative pillows, stuffed toys or infant wear such as booties, mittens, hats and muffs.

Snuff boxes provide secure homes for pills, stamps, and all sorts of minute objects. Wood bins are as useful today as in their heyday. They can take on the role of a sturdy chest, as well.

Stoneware always attracts buyers. Its natural color and simple design makes it attractive in any room of the home. Available in many shapes and sizes, you can use it for just about anything – covered bean pots are excellent ice keepers for indoor and outdoor entertaining.

What's more romantic than candlelight? Glass and metal candle holders are popular finds and so are kerosene lamps. The need for emergency lighting is always a possibility and candles or inexpensive aromatic oils are always easy to obtain.

Metal cookie cutters tied with velvet ribbons are unique Christmas tree ornaments and real conversation pieces hanging on kitchen walls awaiting calls to duty.

Small covered barrels make nifty end tables while serving as practical storage containers at the same time.

Remember your pets – take a flea home to them. Crocks are perfect for keeping water cool for long periods of time and these heavy dishes are not easily tipped over. Baskets of all dimensions are available for the smallest lap dog to the biggest canine creature. Legless dough trays make into comfortable draft-free beds for those cold winter nights ahead. These outdated inventions could accommodate a cat or a small dog.

If you don't collect something yourself, you probably know someone who does. Flea markets abound with old books, records, calendars, beer cans, sheet music, stamps, magazines, newspapers, maps, keys, posters, pictures....you name it. When you consider displaying memorabilia of any kind, keep in mind items mounted on a wall will be handsomely exhibited with the use of hand wrought nails. My grandfather's marsh skis, hand hewn oars, and an antique hunting picture show off on our stairway wall in this unique mounting method.

Anyone with a green thumb will delight in flea market finds. An ornate bird cage can be an unusual home for vine-type greenery. I found a lone bird cage stand, repainted it and hung a feather fern inside. Grandpa was once the caretaker at the Allenville cemetery and I cringe every time I think of the dozens and dozens of wicker funeral baskets he burned because no one wanted them. Recently, I bought a very large one, gave it a fresh coat of white paint and planted an assortment of vines, and spider and snake plants in the metal containers and it's simply gorgeous. Candle molds are displayed on occasion and a number of my more ambitious friends are into candle-making. Druggists have plastic or glass vials for inserting inside the molds so you can root plant slips or provide a permanent water home for wandering Jew, coleus or ivy plants.

There are as many ideas for using flea market purchases as there are fleas to buy. You can probably think of creative ways to use cast-off items right now. Flea markets are certainly not the only source of these goodies .... Rummage sales, auctions ..... even our own garages, basements, attics, closets and cupboards may hold unused articles just waiting to be rediscovered.

There is a special satisfaction in saving money by putting your original ideas into action and flea marketing is as entertaining as it is profitable. It gets in your blood. I've talked to dozens of folks who shop for fleas regularly. They are proof, indeed, of that old saying ... "Someone else's trash is another person's treasure".

By Mary Arthur, **The Fox River Patriot**

### **Area Flea Markets**

#### **Westfield** – Westfield Flea Market

In Downtown Westfield, every Sunday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**Princeton** – Princeton Flea Market, in the city park, Hwys 23 & 73 every Sat. thru Oct. 17<sup>th</sup>. For info: Contact the Princeton Chamber of Commerce, 54968

**Wautoma** – Wautoma Flea Market Hwy. 21 at 73, Wautoma. Every Sun. thru Sept. For info: (414)7877-2300

**Friendship** – Friendship Auction, Hwy. 13, Friendship. Every Sat. 7-12 p.m.

**Montello** – Montello Flea Market, 3<sup>rd</sup> & Main St., Montello. Every Sun. thru Sept. For info: (414)297-2032

**Kaukauna** – original pig fair or farmer's market, adjacent to State Highway 55. 2<sup>nd</sup> Sat. of the month, June through Oct. For info: (414)766-1501 or 766-7773

**Adams-Friendship** – Adams Flea Market Hwy. 13 Adams. Every Sat. & Sun. thru September. For info: (608)339-3605

**Hustisford** – Hustisford Flea Market at Firemen's Park, 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday thru September. For info: (414)349-3969.

**Neosho** – Neosho Flea Market at the Fireman's Park, Hwy. 67, south. 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Sundays. For info: (414)625-3784

**Green Lake** – Green Lake Flea Market Hwy. 23 west of Green Lake, every Sat. & Sun. Info: (414)231-2165