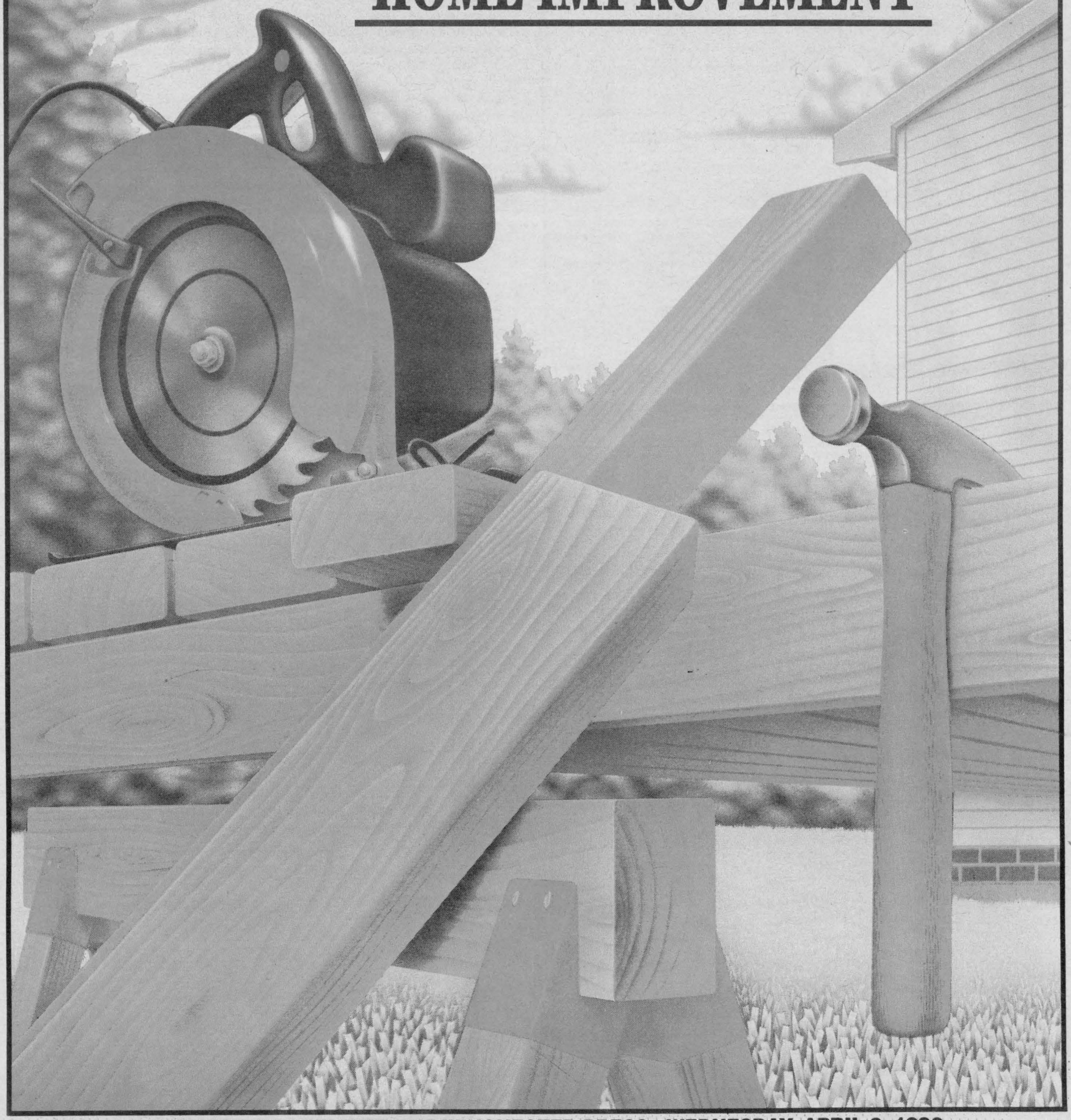
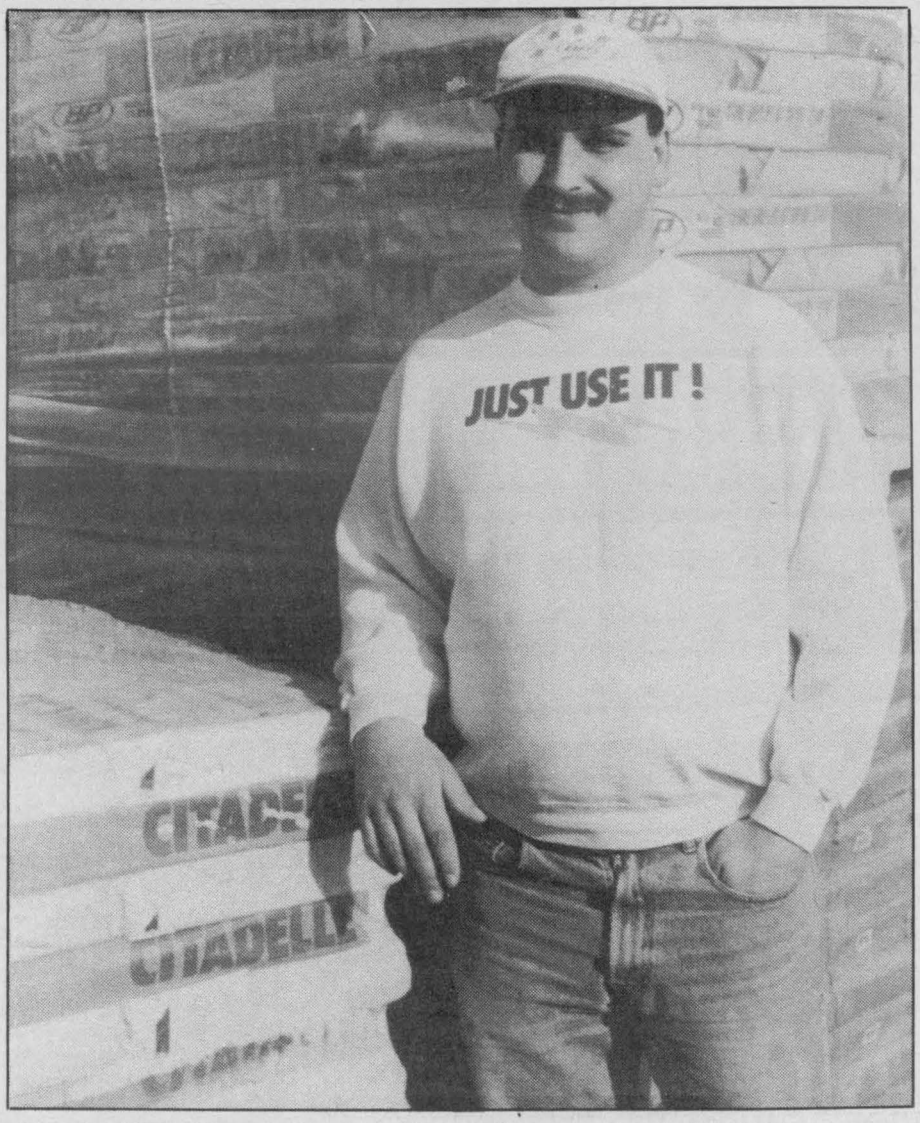
Spring
HOME IMPROVEMENT



SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE WINCHESTER PRESS WEDNESDAY, APRIL 3, 1996



J.D. Van Noy of Lannin Lumber Mart & Construction Ltd. can show customers the selection of Rampart long-lasting shingles in stock at the supply company. The shingles are made to last 25 to 30 years.
Press Photo—Holmes

R and R for your home

Buying a home is a sound financial investment. Maintaining a home secures that investment. Giving your home the yearly facelift it needs ensures its value — simple "lipstick and rouge" can enhance the curb appeal of your home, neighborhood and community. In terms of present homeowners to future home buyers, maintaining a home's exterior could be the difference between a house for sale and a house that sells.

Probably the most difficult obstacles to maintaining the home's exterior are time and money — both of which are limited. However, with the inception of advanced formulated cleaners, giving your home the necessary maintenance it needs shouldn't put a strain on you or your budget.

• Part of your home's transformation includes those finishing touches to your garage floors, driveways and sidewalks. Oil deposits, gasoline and grease from vehicles will stain, weaken and create slippery driveway surfaces. Rain and groundwater also can create white deposits or stains on patios, porches and steps. If left untreated, these stains will be harder to remove.

• Special care always should be paid to the exterior wood structures of your home in order to maintain and protect their natural beauty. If your wood structures are in relatively good shape by the end of winter, simply restoring your wood fences, decks and siding by removing grime, stains and the occasional bird dropping could be all the spring maintenance needed. By maintaining your wood structures, you can keep peace in the neighborhood, since unkept fences and wood siding not only affects your property value, but the neighborhood as well.

• Don't forget about your lawn and garden. When using exterior cleaning products, be sure that the chemical makeup or wash-off won't harm your vegetation with petroleum distillates or bleach.

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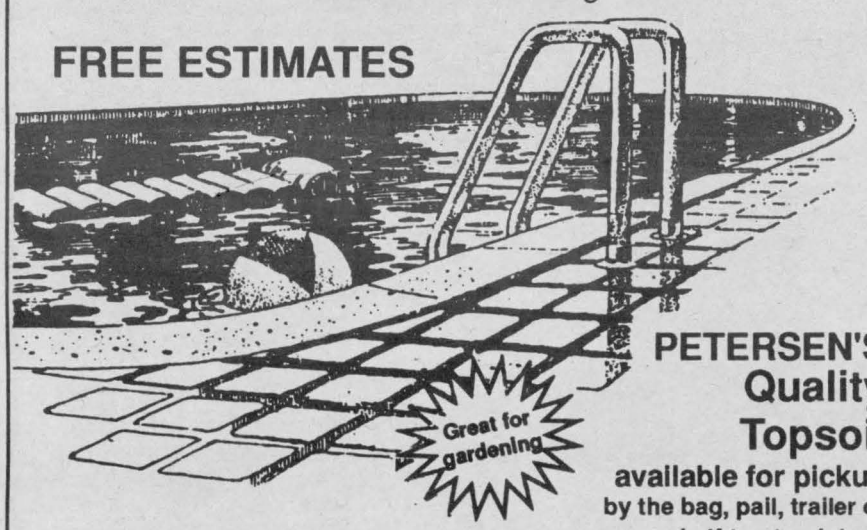

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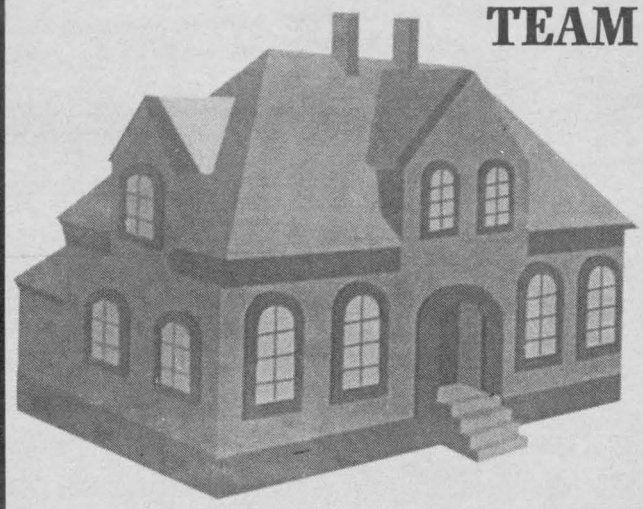

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Choosing windows to block unwanted heat flow

If you're building or remodeling a house and have noticed deterioration of your window frames, you'll soon have to make a decision about new or replacement windows.

You'll find a multitude of styles, shapes and sizes from which to choose in a variety of material systems.

Your first step is to shop among reputable building-products brands, brands that stand behind their products.

You'll find a wide selection of windows sold by contractors and through building materials dealers and home centres. You'll want to look for windows that feature solid construction, energy efficiency and low maintenance for your busy lifestyle. Your choice is critical in ensuring beauty, as well as performance.

Homeowners can choose window frames made of vinyl, fibreglass, primed wood, wood with vinyl or aluminum cladding, or aluminum. There are many different reasons why windows of one type or another are preferred by the individual homeowner; some are less expensive than others, or offer features the others can't. Some types of windows also effectively block heat escape, which occurs through gaps and cracks in wood frames. Vinyl, aluminum and fibreglass windows don't require painting, saving you time during installation, as well as costly maintenance down the road.

While aluminum windows are generally the least expensive windows, their price must be weighed against the disadvantages of aesthetics and energy efficiency. Heat flows readily through the frame from indoors to outdoors, making the indoor side of the window feel cold. This problem can apply even to aluminum frames that are "thermally broken," i.e., have insulation between the interior and exterior parts. (Aluminum is fine, though, to reinforce horizontal members of large windows.)

If you decide low maintenance and energy efficient windows appeal to you, check out the following details. And, remember, not all windows are created equal:

- Corners are airtight and watertight and won't pull apart after exposure to heat and cold.
- For increased energy efficiency, look for Low-E/Argon glazing, which helps keep the house warmer in winter and cooler in summer.
- R-value measures a window's resistance to heat flow, so the higher the R-value, the greater the insulating performance.
- U-value measures the actual heat transfer through a window's frame and glass, so a lower U-value means the window is insulating more efficiently.
- The new single-hung and double-hung tilt windows make cleaning a breeze, and many casements open a full 90 degrees. Check the tilt features out on a couple of different brands.
- Installation ease may be a factor if you're doing the replacement work yourself. Look for a frame depth of at least 3 1/4 inches or one that may not be as deep but is offered with an accessory — a drywall return or wood return — that snaps on to the frame and brings drywall or wood flush against the window, so you won't have to caulk or trim.
- Check the warranty. Ten years for glass is usual and periods up to lifetime for the frame are available from some manufacturers. The warranty should be nonprorated.

Choosing windows is often a complicated exercise. Following these tips should help you through the purchase process and ensure your new windows will contribute to your comfort and savings throughout the year.

Pollen-proof your residence

Is your home ready for another heat wave like last summer? August was several degrees above normal for some areas. Hot weather doesn't just put a strain on your air conditioner; it also increases your need for a whole-house air cleaner to defend your nose against the attack of pollen.

The hot, dry weather that much of the country experienced in the summer of 1995 was ideal for ragweed, according to allergy and asthma experts. Ragweed thrives in those conditions, and usually bothers more people than normal on hot and windy days.

Since ragweed pollen can travel for up to 400 miles in the wind, there is not much anyone can do to avoid outdoor exposure, but you can make your home a clean-air sanctuary. To reduce your exposure to pollen, most experts recommend practicing an avoidance strategy. Among the common recommendations:

- Keep your house closed up as much as possible;
- Limit outdoor activities, especially during the morning;
- Shower before going to bed;
- Brush pets frequently outside;
- Use a whole-house, high-efficiency air cleaner.

A whole-house cleaner installed on a home's central heating and cooling system is an excellent way to clean all of the air that moves through the system.

They differ from the do-it-yourself variety of filters because high-efficiency media air cleaners use specially engineered fibres to trap up to 98 per cent of airborne irritants as small as 1/25,000 of an inch. That includes pollen and mold spores, as well as microscopic particles so small that they go right through ordinary fiberglass or polyester panel filters.

High-efficiency media air cleaners work effectively for up to two years before the media need changing because they use a deep-pleated design that greatly expands their dust-catching ability.

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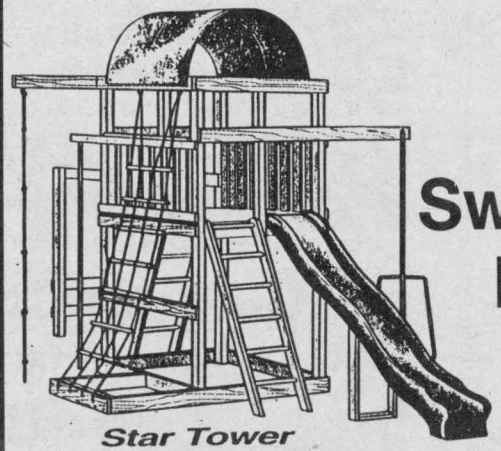

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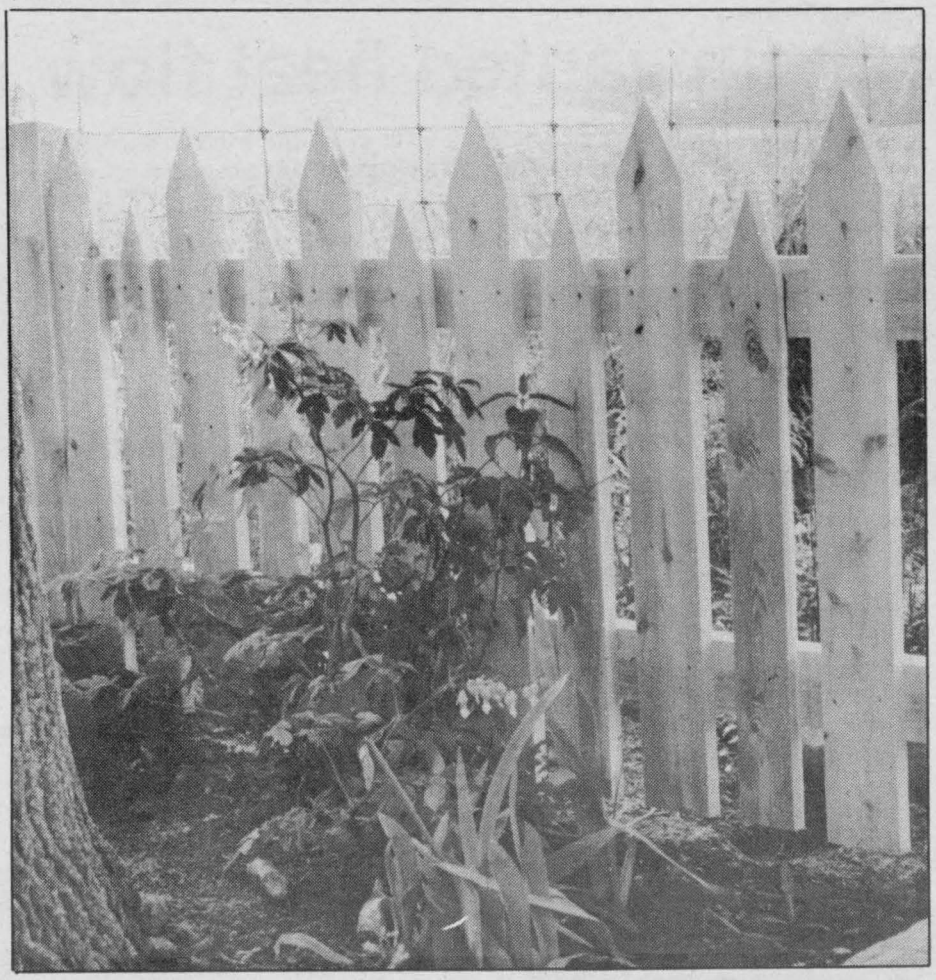

Contrasting edge

A picket fence makes an attractive, tidy border for a lawn or garden. Painted in a light color, it offers a contrast to the green vegetation. As well, it acts as a support for climbing plants. In addition to these functions, one of its main attractions is the privacy it provides.

Press Photo—Fetterly

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Touch of class

Hardwood mouldings dress up a room

"Moulding provides elegance, surprise, unexpected detail," declares one famous designer. "It's like pearls — it dresses up a room."

Affordable and easy to install, hardwood mouldings transform an ordinary room into one rich in character, depth and definition. A touch of moulding establishes mood, emphasizes architecture and creates a focal point.

Mouldings are an easy way to add character, and they don't have to be used traditionally, notes another well-known designer. I just designed a bedroom with traditional moulding, but I let it float away from the ceiling to create a space for cove lighting.

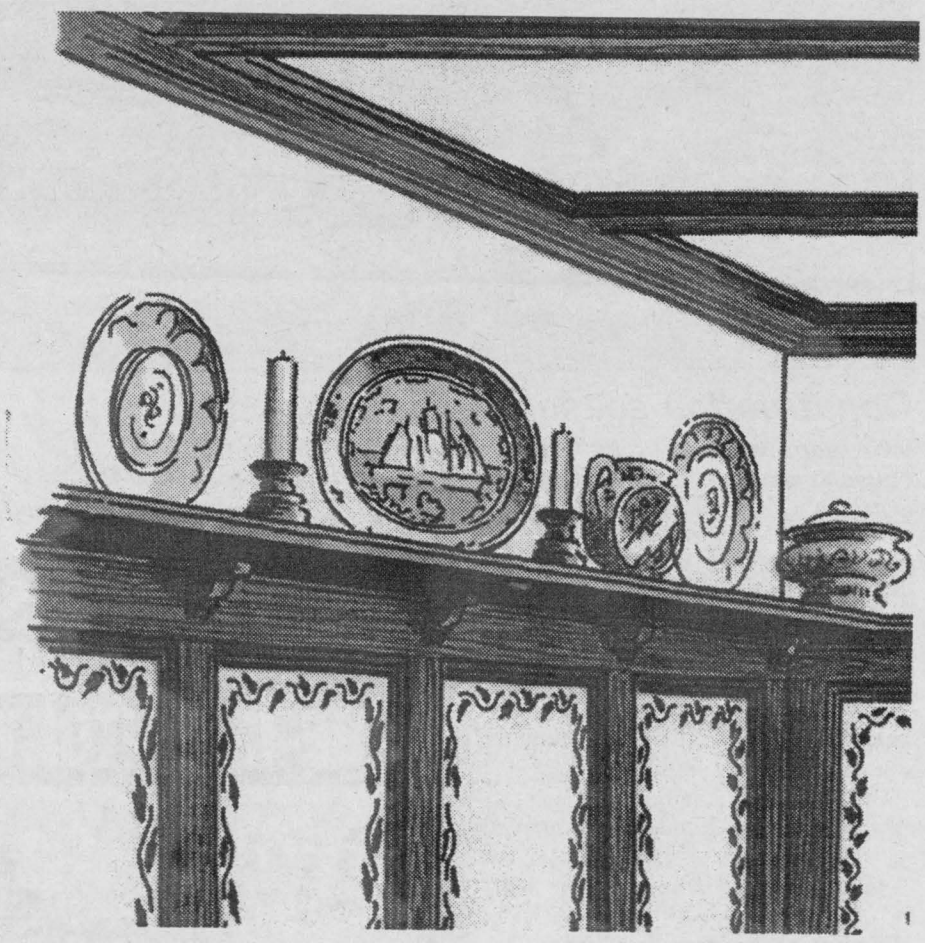
Mouldings and decorative woodwork direct the eye, add pleasing changes of scale within a room, and can unify or divide a space. Setting off one area with different mouldings can give you definition between 'rooms' where you may not have any walls. All it may take is a change of moulding on the ceiling or at floor level.

When shopping for moulding, you'll find a wide range of choices to fit any budget. You can custom-order decorative mouldings through your architect, contractor or interior designer or through millwork houses, specialty shops and custom cabinet shops. You can find them, too, at local lumberyards and home centres or through mail-order specialty catalogues.

Oak, alder, ash, beech, birch, cherry, maple and walnut are among the most popular choices for hardwood mouldings. Pine is a particularly affordable option, since it's painted easily to flatter wall color, window treatments or upholstery.

FAVORITE DECORATING TIPS

- Moulding choices depend on the size and scale of your room. Crown mouldings, for example, work best in rooms where the ceilings are eight feet or higher. Choose narrower mouldings for smaller rooms, wider ones for larger rooms.
- Mouldings should be widest at the floor level, becoming progressively narrower as they approach the ceiling.
- If you want visual continuity and flow, continue the same moulding pattern in adjacent rooms — especially if there's an uninterrupted view from room to room. For example, extend the entryway mouldings to your formal living room.
- Mouldings add a touch of class even to a plain drywall ceiling. For example, crown moulding in classic dentil design embodies sophistication and elegance.
- Chair rails protect walls from chair backs and can signal a change in wall covering. For instance, the upper half may be painted while the lower half is wallpapered.
- Go ahead and mix grain patterns, tones and colors in your mouldings, flooring and furnishings. A variety of woods and finishes adds drama to a room.



Tudor accents

Decorative crown molding matched with a hardwood plate rail give a room a distinctive Tudor look while providing a prominent but safe spot for collectibles.

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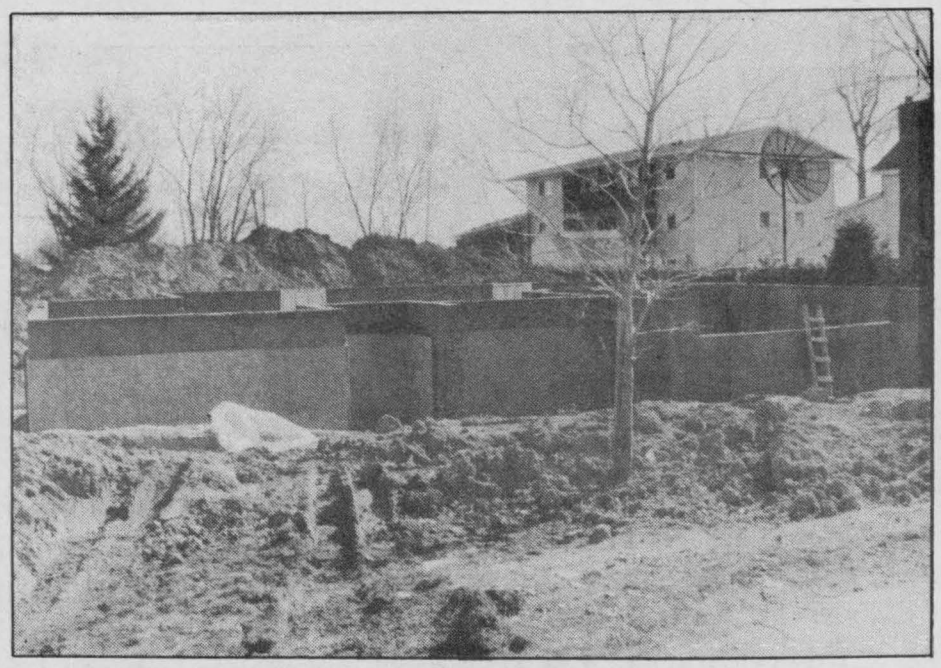

Construction season

With warm weather on its way, building projects are in full swing. This house in progress on Main Street in Winchester is being built by P.F. Donnelly Construction of Metcalfe. *Press Photo—Robinson*

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Pressure-treated wood building tips

(NU)—If you thought modern materials were the answer for all outdoor furniture, you may be disappointed.

The use of plastic in furniture is not to everyone's taste. Aluminum is a more substantial alternative, but, like steel, aluminum costs substantially more than the old standby, wood.

Wood has the advantage of being economical in cost and is a perfect material for "do-it-yourself" projects. However, whether buying wooden furniture already made or building it from a pattern, the question of durability remains.

That is why woodworking experts stress using treated wood for outdoor furniture, gazebos, decks, playground equipment and fences. Generally, treated wood is a must whenever an item is to be in contact with the ground—meaning moisture or termites—or weather.

Building a picnic table, patio furniture or even a gazebo with a grill inside can be surprisingly easy if one takes advantage of the free plans and designs regularly available at many lumber yards. One can also find them in Sunday newspaper sections or special sections, or in do-it-yourself publications.

Generally, for outdoor uses such as furniture, play equipment or decks, the wood should be "pressure-treated." Be sure to follow recommendations on the use of treated wood:

- Only treated wood that is visibly clean and free of surface residue should be used for patios, decks and walkways.
- When power-sawing and machining, wear goggles to protect eyes from flying particles, and launder clothing separately before reuse.
- After working with wood, and before eating, drinking and use of tobacco products, wash exposed areas thoroughly.
- Dispose of treated wood by ordinary trash collection or burial. Don't burn it in open fires, stoves, fireplaces or residential boilers.

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A kitchen makeover

Is your kitchen boring and lifeless? If your kitchen needs help, don't worry. Countless solutions for creating a knockout kitchen exist, and most of them can be accomplished in one weekend. Following are 10 tips for enhancing and updating the look of your kitchen.

1. FLOORING — Say goodbye to hard-to-clean floors. You might want to consider a new floor surface with the look of real wood combined with the brilliant, long-lasting finish of an extremely hard lacquer to give you an easy-to-clean, wear-resistant surface. Some modern floorings can easily can be installed directly over a variety of subfloors, including concrete, vinyl and wood. You won't ever have to worry about refinishing, since floors of this type are virtually maintenance-free. Their prefinished topcoats offers shine and protection for years to come.

2. WORKING WINDOWS — Let the sun shine in your kitchen. Create a cozy window seat, or grow herbs right on your windowsill. Designed to visually open any room, a garden or bay window ensures maximum insulation and lowest air-infiltration rates.

3. MOULDING MAGIC — Available in a wide variety of shapes and contours, real wood moulding can add immediate drama to your kitchen. Customize your cabinets with moulding profiles along the tops, or add panel moulding to flush cabinet and drawer fronts. Create an attention-getting ceiling with a cluster of lights surrounded by moulding. Even your dishwasher door can blend in with a new moulding-framed front, glued in place with epoxy. And, it's easy to build an overhead pot rack with moulding to display and store your wares at the same time.

4. A FABULOUS FAUCET — If you're looking for fashion appeal and value-packed performance, then take a look at the wide selection of kitchen faucets available. These faucets come in a variety of finishes to match any kitchen decor and some have elevated spouts that swing 360 degrees, so it's easy to clean large pots. Other convenient and timesaving accessories include a vegetable sprayer and updated soap dispenser.

5. PRE-HUNG WALLPAPER — If you like the look of wallpaper, but don't want to endure the hassle of hanging it, you may want to consider this option. Available in many different patterns, the attractive "wallpaper" prints are mounted on plywood paneling sheets for easy application. Simply nail the 4-foot-by-8-foot panels onto the wall, and cover the seams with matching seam tape.

6. ORGANIZED COOKING UTENSILS — Now, you can find exactly what you're looking for without rummaging through your "junk drawer" or hunting through cabinets. Cover the top half of a wall with a perforated hardboard. Attach small hooks into the holes in the board, and hang your cooking utensils, measuring cups, small pots and pans. Everything you need will always be right at your fingertips.

7. TEMPTING TILES — Decorative tiles can add a splash of color and design to countertops, backsplashes or even the floor. There are lots of sizes, colors and shapes to choose from, but one constant remains: You'll need to install a stable, moisture-resistant base beneath the tile to prevent moisture damage to the subfloor or wall cavity.

8. "GREEN" APPLIANCES — If it's time to replace appliances, you may want to remodel "green." That doesn't mean green-colored appliances, just ones that are more environmentally friendly.

According to experts, your best bet when it comes to buying a new refrigerator is one of the new 1995 CFC-free systems.

The newest dishwashers are more energy-efficient — about 25 percent more. If you choose a dishwasher with internal heating, you can further cut energy costs, say home economists.

That's because it raises temperatures to grease-dissolving levels, so the machine doesn't place extra demands on your hot-water heater. Other items to consider are trash compactors and in-sink garbage disposals, which will help reduce the volume of household trash.



Details can add life to your kitchen.

9. WAINSCOTING — Change the look of your breakfast area by paneling the bottom half of a wall and capping it off with a chair rail. This adaptable design can dress up your breakfast nook or any of your kitchen walls.

10. EASY MAKE-OVERS — Don't forget the little details, the small touches. By doing a few simple things, you can give your kitchen a distinctive flair. Try hanging some large ferns from the ceiling. Add new knobs and hardware to your cabinets. Install a dimmer switch on your light hanging over the kitchen table. Replace the solid doors of a few cabinets with glass ones, and show off your tableware. Use a stencil pattern, and add some color to your backsplash or walls.

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Simple-to-sew home decorating projects

When you think of spring and summer, it's hard not to think of the outdoors — bright-yellow sunshine, wildflowers, crystal-blue waters. Now, you can bring this warm feeling indoors by giving your home a seasonal facelift. Whether it's for the kitchen, bathroom, living room or bedroom, there are many ways to incorporate items you have sewn into your decorating scheme.

Sewing is a fun and creative way to express personal style in the home. A few simple sewn items can make all the difference by turning an ordinary home into an extraordinary one.

Visit your local fabric store to get a better idea of the wide selection of fabrics, patterns and notions available for home decorating. Color, texture and print should be taken into consideration when choosing fabrics to create an atmosphere. Bright, strong colors, like yellow or orange, create a cheerful room, while print fabrics add a cozy effect. Textured fabrics add dimension and interest. Mixing solids, stripes and floral fabrics is very popular this season and leaves a lot of room for creativity. If you are having difficulty deciding on a style, bring a selection of fabric samples home, and drape them around the room to get a sense of how the fabrics work together with other items, like carpeting and wall coverings.

BATHE YOURSELF IN LUXURY

The latest trend in home decorating is the designer bathroom set in which everything co-ordinates — wallpaper with shower and window curtains, towels, seat cushions, and just about every accessory imaginable. These sets are beautiful, but expensive when purchased separately. Create your own designer accessories by sewing matching fabric, ribbon or trim on to a plain hand towel for a fashionable look. A shower curtain can be made with buttonholes sewn at the top for easy attachment to hooks. Some other easy decorating ideas include adding fabric or ribbon to mirror frames, wastebaskets, tissue boxes or any of your own innovative ideas.

KITCHEN CAPERS

Small details can make a big difference. With just a few yards of fabric and basic sewing skills, it is very simple to give your kitchen a new look for summer. With your kitchen's current color scheme in mind, try incorporating a new color that will "rejuvenate" the room. For example, add yellow, red or green to a blue and white color scheme to brighten it up. Replace plastic place mats with serge-sewn quilted mats or plain appliance covers with some sewn in a fruit print. Gingham, calico and chintz are great fabrics for napkins, chair covers, stool cushions and aprons.

Also perfect for the kitchen are fabrics with barnyard prints featuring roosters or cows. Conversational prints, like teacups, are another showstopper in the kitchen. Your family and friends will be impressed at this summer's party when their hostess "seams" to have it all together.

LIVING ROOM OR SUN ROOM?

If you weren't blessed with a room that catches the afternoon sun perfectly or has just the right touch of comfort, create it yourself. Add style and comfort to the living room by sewing throw pillows or recovering old pillows with a bright, colorful fabric. Create the illusion of a garden inside your home by using a fabric with a nature-inspired print when redecorating. Throw pillows, which can be sewn in a variety of shapes and sizes from simple to elaborate, add a touch of comfort to any room.

Another great way to give a room an updated look is to cover the walls with fabric. Choose the fabric for the walls first, and then build the rest of the room around it, since wall coverings are such a dominant feature in any room.

BEDROOM BEAUTIFUL

Wake up and open your eyes to all the exciting patterns, fabrics and notions available for redecorating the bedroom. A duvet cover allows you to recover an old comforter with a refreshing new fabric. Not only is it simple to sew, but at the end of the season, it can be removed, leaving the original comforter and giving the bedroom two completely different looks. Duvet covers allow you to utilize a variety of fabrics, so there's no need to choose just one. Don't forget draperies, valances, dust ruffles and lampshades, which are also easy decorating projects to sew.

Following are decorating tips for sewing at home:

• If you are new to home sewing, buy a basic "how-to" book, and keep it close by for easy reference. It will come in handy for measuring and determining yardage and for clarifying instructions.

• Start with one project, and use it as a focal point around which to build your decorating scheme. Leftover fabrics can be used to make additional small coordinating accessories.

• When shopping for fabrics, bring samples of your current wall colors and carpet to help you see how the fabrics will co-ordinate with the colors already in the room.

• Keep in mind that colors can change the mood of a room — traditional dark colors, like hunter green and maroon, evoke a cozy feeling, while pastels and neutral colors create a calming atmosphere and bright colors, like lipstick red and orange, stimulate the senses.

• Consider the amount of sun exposure the room receives when selecting window treatments. A sunny room, for example, may require lined curtains to ensure colorfastness and prevent fading.

• When purchasing fabrics, buy all the yardage from one bolt as dye lots can vary. Check your measurements carefully to make sure that you buy enough fabric to complete the project.

• To change the look of your furniture without having to purchase new pieces, sew new slipcovers and pillow covers in coordinating patterns and colors.



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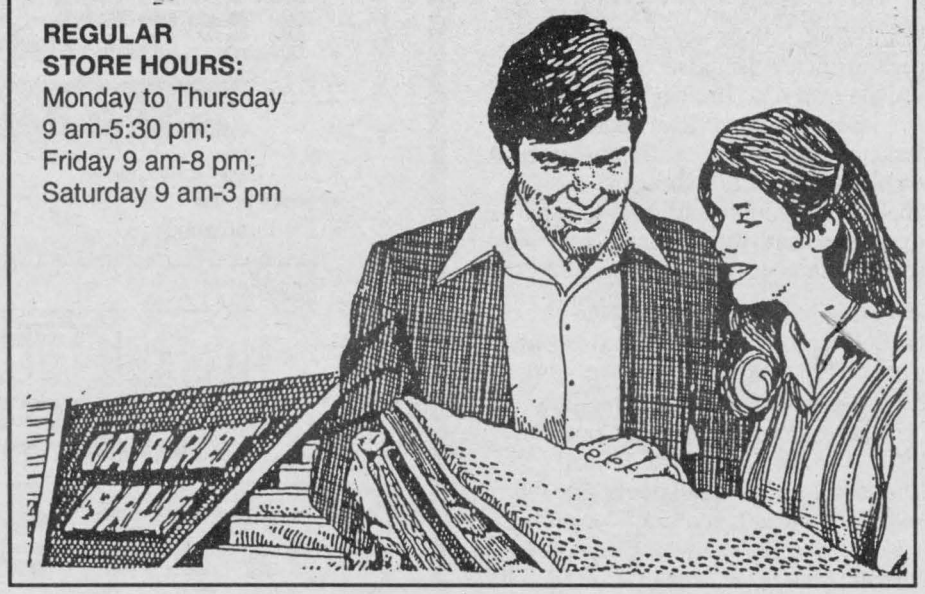

Hints on constructing a home office

by Dean Johnson, host of the popular home-improvement television show, *Hometime*, now in its 10th season on public television

Just a couple years ago, when the boss said, "It's time to relocate," you could expect a move to another city or state. Today, relocation often translates into a move away from the office to your home — giving a new meaning to the words "home office."

Because most houses were built before the home office boom, today's typical home design may not accommodate special workplace needs, like soundproofing, wiring, lighting and storage space. If you plan to build a home office any time soon, here are some suggestions to improve your new work environment.

SOUNDPROOFING

Neither you nor your client needs to be distracted by the dog barking or baby crying. If possible, convert a remote room of the house or a dry part of the basement into your office. Or, if you are building from scratch, consider separating the home office from the rest of the house altogether, including a separate entrance, or construct the office above the garage.

No matter where your office is located, installing insulation in the frame cavities of interior walls and floors is one of the best ways to absorb unwanted noise. For the best sound-absorption performance, use 3 1/2-inch-thick fiberglass insulation for two-by-four walls and in floors above and below the office. The additional sound-absorption value for insulation thickness higher than 3 1/2 inches is minimal.

To further control noise, add resilient metal channels between drywall and studs or joists. Resilient channels break the sound-vibration path through a wall's or ceiling's wood studs or joists, thereby keeping the office quieter. Once unfaced insulation is installed between the studs, nail the channel directly to the studs or joists, approximately 24 inches on center and running perpendicular to the direction of the studs or joists. The drywall is then fastened to the channel.

WIRE FOR THE FUTURE

Install an adequate number of phone lines and electrical jacks to keep the room flexible. You always should consult an electrician to be sure there are enough circuits to handle your electrical needs for both now and the future. If you plan to centralize your desk, ask the electrician to wire outlets in the middle of your floor to eliminate stretching cables and phone lines across the floor.

Remember to forecast for the future. Don't overlook the importance of such technologies as video conferencing. While video conferencing systems are somewhat cost prohibitive today, more affordable systems with improved viewing are around the corner. Although it's unclear how these new video systems will be wired, by incorporating both category 5 computer wire and coaxial cable into your wiring scheme, it is a safe bet you won't need to rewire your office down the road.

LIGHTING

Make sure your office has good lighting, both artificial and natural. A lighting store can help you customize your lighting needs. If it's not already part of the room, I recommend installing a window or skylight in the office. Not only does a window or skylight provide an excellent light source, it offers psychological benefits as well.

STORAGE SPACE

You never can have enough storage space, and as you prosper, so do your filing needs. A couple of standard three-drawer filing cabinets can swallow the room's space pretty quickly. A craftsman can customize your storage space, matching your furniture scheme. Surprisingly, customized cabinets can be less expensive than purchasing manufactured cabinets or files.

For more information on home office construction, you can go to our HOMETIME home page located on the World Wide Web at http://www.hometime.com.

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7'6",7'9",8'	5

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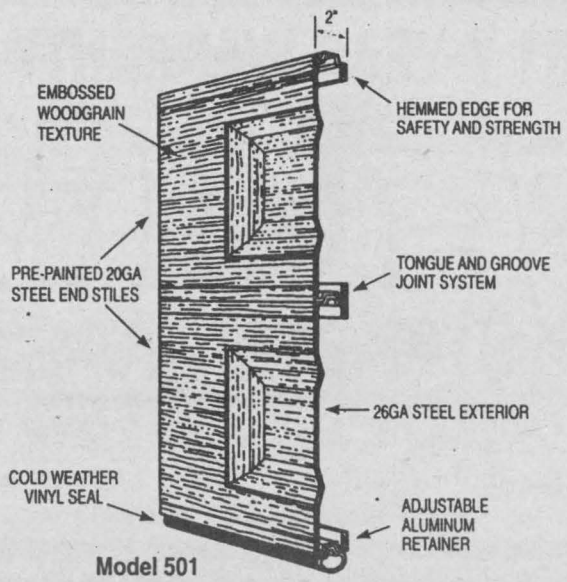

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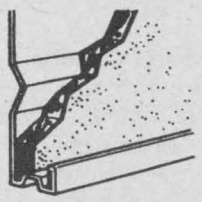

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Nightscaping adds to enjoyment of outdoors

Kim Robinson
Press staff

MORRISBURG — John and Debra Toonders are putting landscaping in the spotlight to add to their customers' enjoyment of the outdoors.

Toonders Landscape Company now offers nightscaping: creative lighting for lawns, patios, walkways and any other feature the homeowner wants to illuminate.

"I think a lot of people don't get as much use out of their yard as they could. Once the sun goes down, it's lost," says John.

The hours of visibility can be extended with a wide variety of lighting arranged around the lawn. Lights can even be set in a walkway of interlocking paving in the form of lighting "bricks."



Bright Home Improvement Idea

Night lighting can be incorporated in a functional way for a much-used patio or at a busy entrance while also adding beauty to the surroundings. This lighting has the added benefit of being a security feature.

Toonders notes, "It gives a house a lived-in look."

With an experienced eye, he selects the features in the landscape that should be highlighted. The white bark of a birch tree shines even brighter with some extra emphasis, and interesting effects are created with shadows.

In this work, the focus is on where the light falls, not on the light fixtures themselves. The hardware is carefully placed for a subtle effect so that what gets noticed are the lawn and house.

Toonders says homeowners should have this nighttime look in mind when planting their shrub beds and trees so that they can aim for striking arrangements, but the lighting scheme does not have to be preplanned to be effective. Toonders still finds plenty of material to work with in older, established landscapes.

Costs for lighting systems vary depending on the job. Toonders says a basic unit costs about $200.

The lights can be enjoyed year-round as they are of a sturdy construction that withstands cold and their warm glow melts through snow.

Planning makes perfect

Before the birds begin to sing in the trees, homeowners already have their spring home-improvement projects planned. Whether it's replacing windows, reshingling the roof or installing new flooring, they're ready to take action as soon as the weather gets warm.

Whether people are doing the work themselves or hiring professionals, proper planning is an important part of any home-improvement project. When hiring a contractor, people need to know exactly what they want done, so they can meet with professionals, explain the work and get realistic estimates. Do-it-yourselfers need to plan ahead to ensure they have set aside enough time for the project, have the right equipment and materials, and understand the work that needs to be done.

Having the proper equipment means not only having the tools specifically designed for the task at hand, but also having tools that are in good condition. It is a good idea for do-it-yourselfers to check that tools are in working order before beginning a project. All handles should be fixed firmly into the tool's working end, and jaw teeth, cutters and blades should be sharp. Any tools that are damaged should be thrown away.

If, when planning a project, do-it-yourselfers find that they don't have a tool they need, they can buy, rent or borrow it. Renting or borrowing allows them to see if they like a particular model or brand, making the decision easier when they finally decide to buy the tool. If people want to buy the tool, many home-improvement professionals recommend going to a knowledgeable local dealer. While prices may not be as inexpensive as those in a catalog, do-it-yourselfers will be able to get a feel for the tool before buying it.

After getting the proper equipment, people should follow the manufacturer's instructions when using each tool. Tools should be kept clean, dry and away from excessive heat. Before using a tool near electricity, people should shut off the current. They also should use steady pressure on jaws or cutters, instead of rocking the tool. If they are doing continuous work, it is a good idea to wear gloves or use comfort grips to help avoid getting blisters or calluses.

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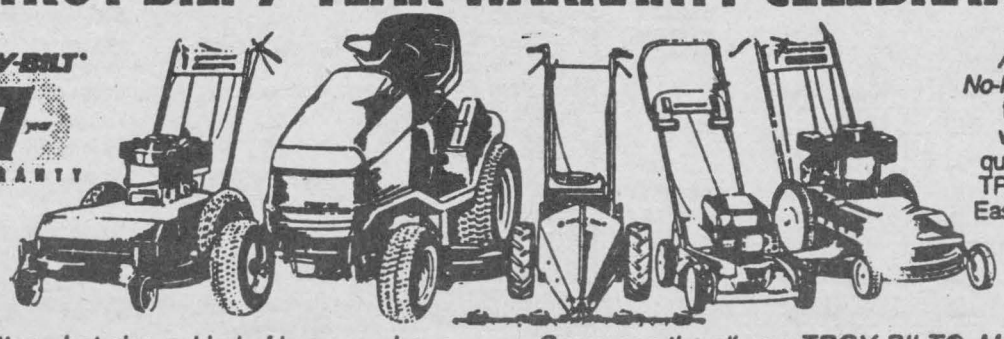

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Home buying made easy with pre-approved mortgage

Submitted by Martine Thurler, Bank of Montreal, Winchester

"Experience is the worst teacher. It gives the test before presenting the lesson." Some people go about home buying as if they believed the maxim.

For instance, there are those who spend six months or a year searching for just the right house. Then, they make an offer, and turn to the nearest available advisor - usually their real estate agent - to find out where to get a mortgage. Then comes the cliff hanger - the tension of waiting to see how much they qualify for. And what happens if they can't get sufficient financing for the home they've now decided they can't live without?

To heighten the suspense, they may have set their sights on what the real estate ads call "the charm of Victoriana" ... in other words, new plumbing, wiring and furnace needed immediately. If they intend to live in the house, an estimate of these costs will be needed if they are to be included in the mortgage financing. This may reduce the actual amount of financing available to put against the cost of the property and have the effect of increasing the down payment they need.

It all begins to sound like daytime television. And it can be de-fused by doing some serious thinking up front and using the experience of the professionals around you.

TIE DOWN THE MORTGAGE RATE

Pre-approval is a relatively recent improvement in the mortgage field. It allows you to simulate your financing before you even start to look for a house. You meet with a lender to work out the details of the mortgage. You learn how much money you can borrow based on your earning capacity and existing commitments to other debt. You will know what the payments would be at a specifically-quoted rate and you will be told how long the rate will be held for you if you are seriously in the process of looking for a home. Normally, the only condition to pre-approval is receipt of an appraisal of the property once it is bought.

How much more satisfying it is to go out and look for a new home armed with the information you need on the financing beforehand. And, you need not limit your talks to just one lender.

Get pre-approved by more than one lender. Pre-approval carries no obligation and it helps to have more than one opinion. Comparing the various offerings will allow you to tailor the mortgage to what is closest to ideal for your needs.

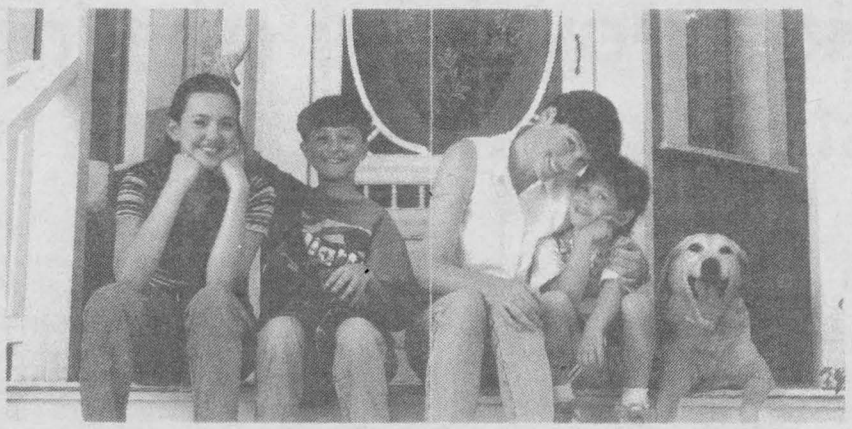
TO FIND THE PERFECT HOME

Few home buyers have excess cash to put aside for renovations. This cost most often becomes part of the financing consideration. You may borrow separately to finance the renovation with the thought of paying it down as quickly as possible or you may make renovation costs part of the overall financing. Either way, it is wise to allow at least 15 per cent leeway in your calculations for the possibility of renovating.

PLAYING IT SAFE

While the greatest advantage of a pre-approved mortgage is the rate guarantee which is usually in place for at least 90 days, the importance of getting your financial house in order before you start out cannot be underestimated. Take the time to meet with your lender.

Remember, you will want to look back on the experience of homebuying as one from which you learned a lot - not one which taught you a lesson you will never forget.



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Homeowners opt for steel garage doors

by Peter Wichers

Whether you're planning on selling your home or fixing up the appearance of the home you've bought, you'll notice when you drive in the lane, the garage door is what you see first. After living in your home for a period of time, you sometimes forget to paint the garage door on a yearly basis. Now it's almost time to do it again.

In many of the houses built the last 10 years or so, the contractors have requested wood doors even though everything else was or had aluminum or vinyl cladding such as your facia board, soffit, windows, siding, entrance door frame, etc. The only thing that needs painting is the garage door. Building contractors have now noticed the advantages of a steel garage door over a wooden garage door. They notice the easy and low maintenance of the steel as well as the added security and lasting appearance. Our increase in steel door sales over the wood garage door is quite high. Contractors want their houses to maintain that fresh new look longer, but not only because of that controversial Home Builders Warranty law, but also to help future sales and, most of all, reduce headaches and complaints.

If your door needs a paint job this year, take a close look at it and see if it is worth it or not. Take a look at what we at the Door Company would like to suggest.

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If there are parts on your existing door that need to be changed, we will discuss this with you.

I also recommend that you ask for myself, Peter Wickers, or one of my staff to check your door before you make a decision.

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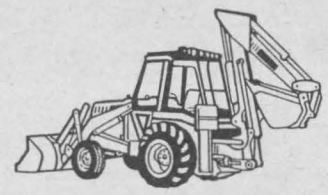

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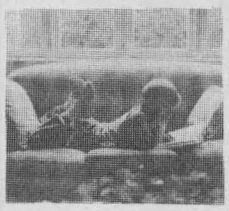

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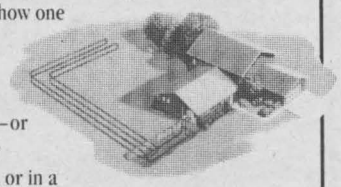

To find out how one of the WaterFurnace systems will keep you cool–or warm–in your existing home, or in a home you plan to build, contact your local authorized WaterFurnace dealer, or contact Martha Bloom at, **1-800-222-5667**.

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Leaky faucet may indicate a plumbing problem

Faucets are not only the most visible part of your plumbing system, but the best place to start a spring plumbing inspection of your home.

The familiar complaint of a leaking faucet can sometimes be a sign of other difficulties in a home's plumbing system. To make sure that you don't have problems that go deeper, the following check list developed by Frank Buck of Moen Canada, a leading faucet manufaeturer, will help determine the state of your home's plumbing health.

The right tools: First, make sure you've got the basic tools needed to make simple plumbing repairs. "A medium-sized adjustable wrench and screwdrivers that will fit faucets, valves and other parts of your system are indispensable," says Buck, "start with these."

Add a pair of adjustable pliers, a plunger, some plumber's putty and a pipe joint compound for use in connecting threaded pipes, and you'll have most of the equipment you'll ever need.

It's also a good idea, says Buck, to purchase a clean out auger, better known as a "snake", from your local plumbing supplier. They're not expensive.

Clogged drains: The second most common complaint (to leaking faucets) is clogged drains as a result of objects being dropped into them, or the accumulation of grease, hair and other debris. Most obstructions can be easily removed by turning off the water and removing the fixture trap under the sink. That's the large, curved pipe called a "P-trap" which prevents foreign objects from getting further into the plumbing system. "I always remind people to put a pan under the pipe to catch surplus water when you remove this portion of the pipe," Buck says. "If you're lucky, your pipes will have a clean-out catcher so you won't have to take off the pipe."



In the case of clogged shower drains, an effective household drain cleaner will usually do the trick. If it doesn't, remove the plate around the drain and apply the snake, cranking it by hand to penetrate the pipe and dislodge accumulated hair and grease.

Shut-off valves: Make a tour of your house to determine the location of the shut-off valves. Many homes don't have shut off valves at every sink and toilet. If not, it's a good idea to install these yourself or have the work done by a pro. In this way, plumbing repairs and replacements can be localized without having to shut off the water for the entire house.

Frank Buck suggests you carry a flashlight, a pair of pliers and a wrench when you do this. In addition to the main shut-off next to your water metre, you should find shut-off valves below your kitchen and bathroom sinks and next to the hot water heater. There'll also be shut-off valves located on or next to such appliances as the washing machine and dishwasher. Label all the valves with an identifying tag.

Next, test every valve to see that it opens and closes easily. It's a good idea to do any minor tightening up, especially if there's sign of leakage, but in the case of stuck valves you should have them attended to by a plumber. Never leave valves in the full on position. Always go to the full on and then back off a quarter turn. This will prevent the valve from seizing up.

Work-free faucets: Finally, adds Buck, turn your attention to your faucets. There's nothing more irritating than a leaky faucet, to say nothing of the water that is wasted. Leakage results from a worn washer, which can also cause a "clunking" sound when you turn the tap on. But if you want to avoid ever having to put new washers in leaky faucets, replace your present fixture with a Moen washerless faucet.

"Moen faucets contain a uniquely-designed cartridge instead of washers," Buck explains. "All the wear takes place inside the cartridge." When it's time to replace it, simply lift it out the old cartridge and slip in a new one. Instructions are included with every replacement cartridge.

Domestic water quality: While Canadian cities and towns generally provide a high quality of water, undesirable contaminants can get into any public water system. Excess acidity can be harmful to water pipes, and iron can also be present in excessive proportions. Both can be treated by filtration. Bacteria and other pollutants can be more serious if they are present, affecting taste, odour and purity. If you're seriously concerned about your water quality, you can have it tested either by your local utility or by a commercial water testing laboratory.

"None of these steps are especially difficult for the average householder," according to Buck. "A little understanding and preparation can ensure that your spring check-up puts you in good shape for a worry-free plumbing system."

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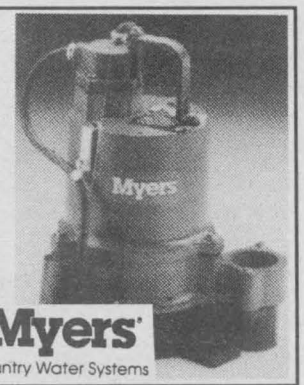

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Floral finish

The addition of flowers like these dahlias as well as other landscaping elements can go a long way in giving the exterior of a home a finished look. Dahlias are perennial bloomers, however their bulbs must be taken out in the fall and replanted in the spring.

Press Photo—Fetterly

Check cooling system

Homeowners should have their air-conditioning system checked now — before the peak cooling season — by a qualified contractor or service technician to ensure the system will work efficiently this summer.

If your air conditioner is no longer cooling properly, it could involve something as simple as replacing a fuse, resetting a circuit breaker or checking to see if the thermostat is set properly. If an electrical problem isn't the cause, the refrigerant may be low if the system still runs but doesn't cool enough. However, if the problem involves any major part, like the compressor, you would hear strange noises similar to those of mechanical equipment not running correctly.

When your air-conditioning system starts giving you more problems than seem cost-effective to fix, you should consider replacing your system. Because newer equipment usually is much more energy-efficient than older central air-conditioning, you might actually save money by replacing your old system before it completely wears out. In some cases, the money you save in reduced utility costs might pay back your purchase price of a new system years earlier than you think.

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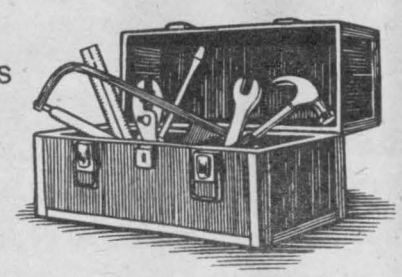

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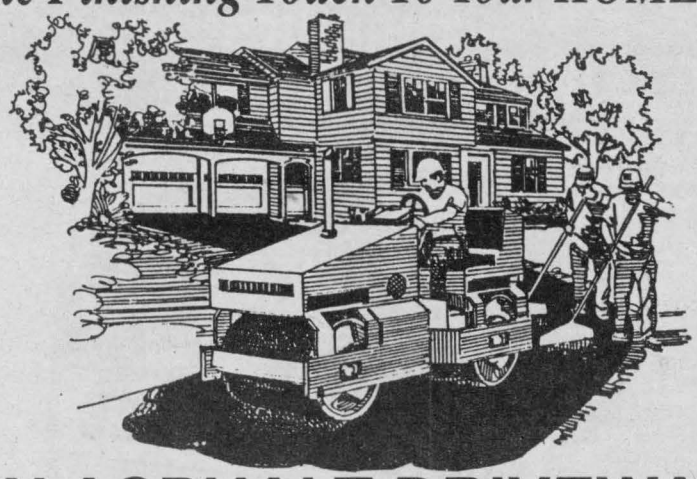

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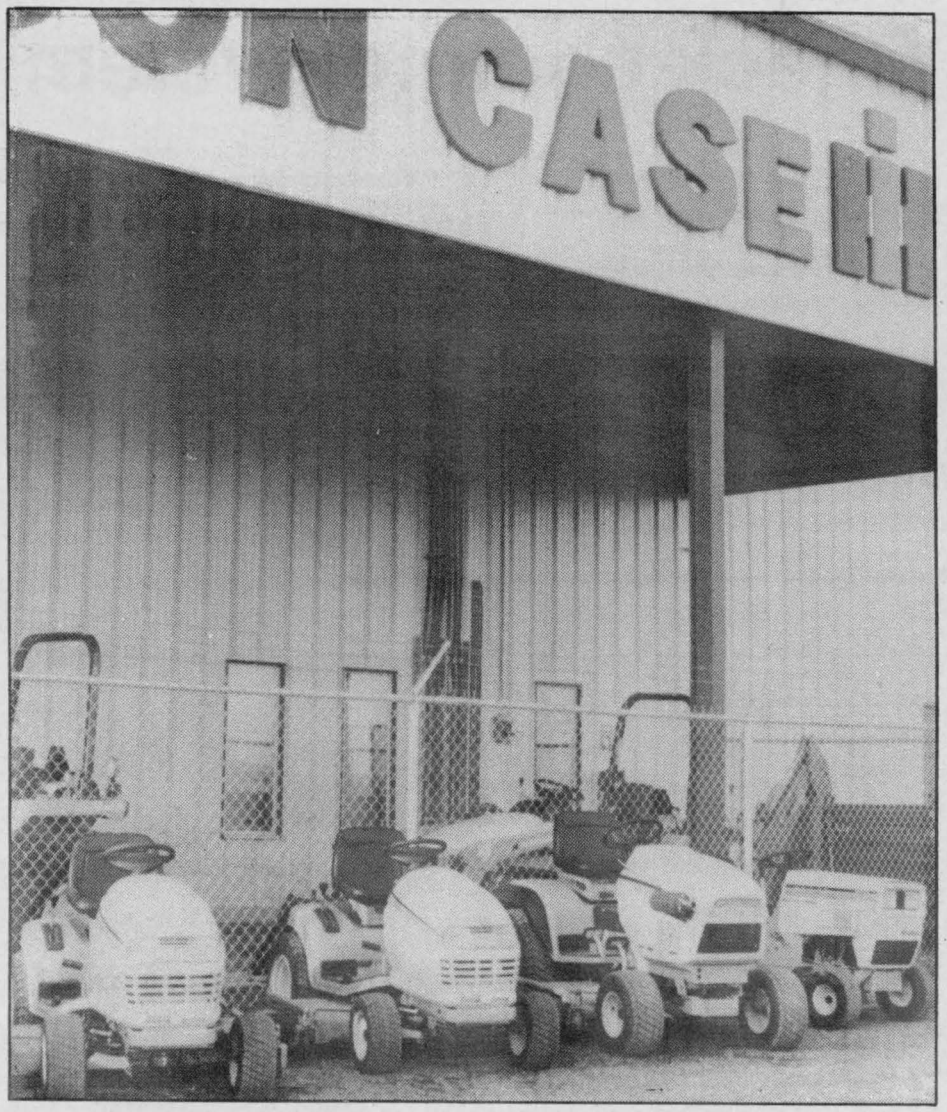

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These lawn tractors are lined up for the season at J.R. Brisson Equipment Ltd.

Spring home tuneup

by JoAnne Liebeler

Ah, spring. The sweet season — and the time when your home needs some extra loving care and attention from you. So, go on, get outside, and give your home the care it needs after a hard winter. Here is a spring home-tuneup checklist that can help:

• Clean out your gutters and downspouts. Seal any leaky joints, and make sure that rainwater is directed well away from the foundation.

• Was a winter storm hard on your roof? Check the flashing around your chimney and roof vents, and look for broken or missing shingles.

• Leaky windows and door seals can waste a lot of the money you spend on air conditioning. Replace missing or damaged caulk and weatherstripping.

• Have any cracks in your home's foundation and exterior facing repaired.

• Decks and porches need special attention. Clean out debris between the board and above the joists. Replace warped or splitting wood, and reseal, restain or repaint the deck before humid summer weather does more damage.

• Rake leaves away from the side of the house, and clean out basement window wells. Clear away debris on or around your air conditioner.

• Trim shrubs and trees, so they don't touch the house. This also helps eliminate hiding places for any would-be burglars.

• Patch or replace any window and door screens that have holes.

• In humid climates, more than half the money you spend to run your air conditioner is actually spent to remove humidity from your home's indoor air. A dehumidifier will make your air conditioner more efficient. It also can make your home healthier by discouraging the growth of mold and mildew.

• Too many people forget about cleaning or replacing furnace filters during air-conditioning season. Whether you have central air or a room air conditioner, keep these filters clean.

• The cooling coils on an air conditioner can be a prime breeding ground for mold and mildew. It's a good idea to have your central air conditioner professionally inspected at least every few years — when the service person comes, ask him or her to clean the coils, too.

• Want the equivalent of a free month or more of air conditioning every year? Experts say you can have optimum comfort when you're home and awake, and optimum energy savings when you are gone or asleep, if you upgrade to a programmable thermostat.

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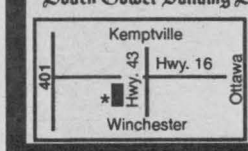

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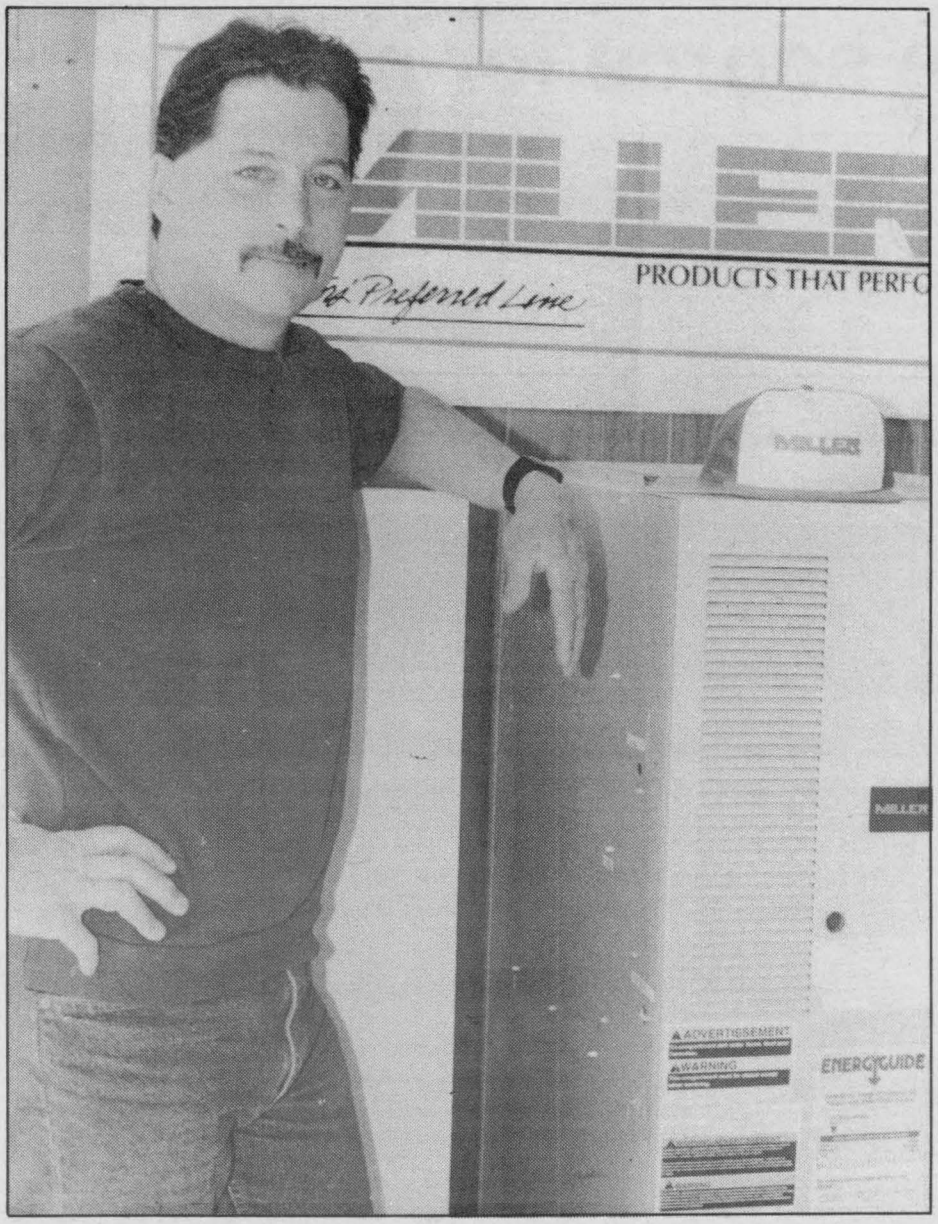

Energy efficient

Mark Miller has high-efficiency furnaces on display at the Miller Energy Systems Inc. showroom in Winchester. He carries a great variety of water heating, home heating and air conditioning products, including the Miller heating systems line.

Press Photo—Holmes

Are you water-wise?

You use water in most aspects of your daily life, from cooking to cleaning to just plain drinking. However, this fundamental "ingredient" is often misunderstood. Test your water smarts with this true-or-false quiz.

1. Boiled water is sterile and free of all contaminants.

False — While it's true that boiling kills many harmful bacteria, evaporation during boiling actually can increase the concentration of contaminants in water that boiling doesn't remove. Distillation is the most effective method of water purification.

2. Hard water makes water-using appliances and fixtures hard to clean, but seldom causes permanent damage.

False — Scale from hard water builds up on the inside of pipes and appliances just like it builds up on the outside. This buildup forces appliances to work harder and often less efficiently, causing premature maintenance problems over time.

3. Reverse-osmosis filters are the best drinking-water filters available.

False — No single filter is the best for solving all drinking-water problems; the best filter is the one that directly addresses your specific problems. Reverse-osmosis filters remove bacteria, lead, mercury, iron and other contaminants. Carbon filters reduce chlorine, organic materials, dissolved gases, and other materials that can cause water to taste and smell bad.

4. It's easy to determine the quality of your home water supply.

True — Determining your home's water quality is as easy as having a water-treatment professional conduct several in-home tests. A trained consultant can test your water for iron, acidity, hardness and other common problems. For a complete water analysis, most testing laboratories provide inexpensive kits to mail in your home water sample.

5. Water that's been softened too much won't rinse away soap and shampoo.

False — Water cannot be "too soft." Washing with soft water may give a slippery feeling like soap hasn't rinsed away, but that sensation is actually your skin's natural softening agents. In reality, hard water clogs pores with soap residue, leaving skin "squeaky," but not clean.

6. Acidic water smells like rotten eggs.

False — Water that smells like rotten eggs contains hydrogen sulfide, but is not necessarily acidic. Acidic water can't be detected by smell, appearance or feel; however, it can eat away at fixtures, corrode water-using appliances, and etch sinks, countertops and tiles.

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Edwardson goes to the source for oak floor

Liz Edwards
Press staff

WINCHESTER —George Edwardson wasn't in a hurry for a hardwood floor.

He and his wife Clara wanted one but do-it- yourself projects always take a little more time. Replacing the rug with hardwood in his 300-square- foot family room took him two years.

But Edwardson was really starting from the source, taking the red oak out of a woodlot he shares with another Winchester resident Larry Gibson near Pakenham. They own a 100-acre lot that is filled predominantly with mature white pine and red oak trees.

He and Gibson did the logging themselves, and then cut the logs into boards with a portable saw mill. They then took it to a sawmill to have it planed and cut into tongue-in-groove planks.

Red oak is one of the most expensive woods to use for flooring. By using his own, Edwardson figures he saved about half the cost, which he estimates would have been $5 to $6 a square foot, including labor.

But he was doing it for his own enjoyment just as much as saving money. Edwardson says he loves being outdoors and the only regret is he has to chop down the trees to make the floor. They originally used the bush recreationally and not for wood.

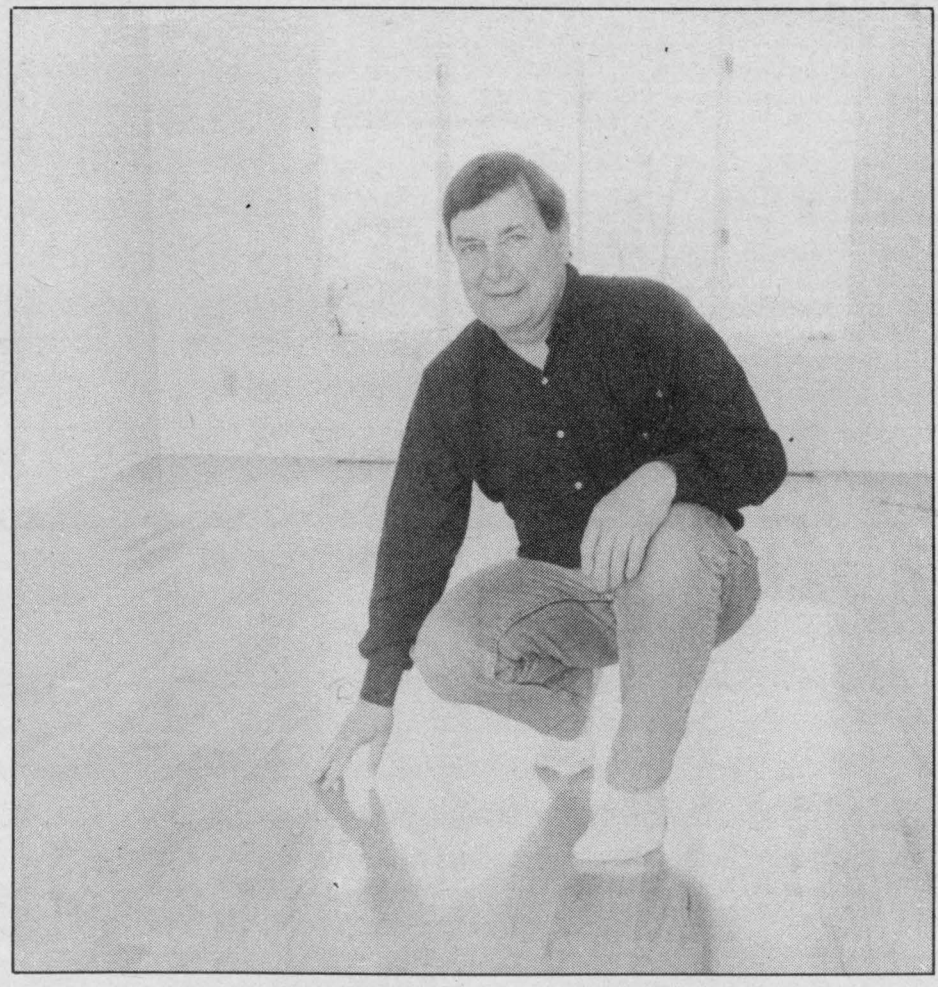
"I love the bush. I hate cutting down trees because I know how long they take to grow," he says, though he adds he doesn't take small trees and some older ones have to be cut down before they rot.

Edwardson plans to put hardwood in his front entrance as well though he says the job won't take nearly as long as the first, now that he has some experience.

When he cut the trees down he didn't know exactly how he was going to use the wood. He let it air- dry for a year and then sent it to be kiln-dried for 12 days which lowers the wood's moisture content to between six and eight per cent. The wood sat in his home for another five weeks so it could acclimatize to the house's atmosphere.

Many people consider hardwood floors as an alternative to rugs which can collect dust easily and may irritate those who suffer from allergies. His hardwood will be around longer than he is, estimates Edwardson, though it will require some care. Hardwood can be marred by scratches, especially by high heeled shoes or pets.

But many finishes are fairly resistant to floor damage. Edwardson hired Roger Desjardins of Spencerville to finish his floor. He used a moisture-cured variety that becomes harder when the air is humid or every time the floor is washed.



Effort shines through

George Edwardson of installed a hardwood floor made of his own red oak.
Press Photo —Edwards

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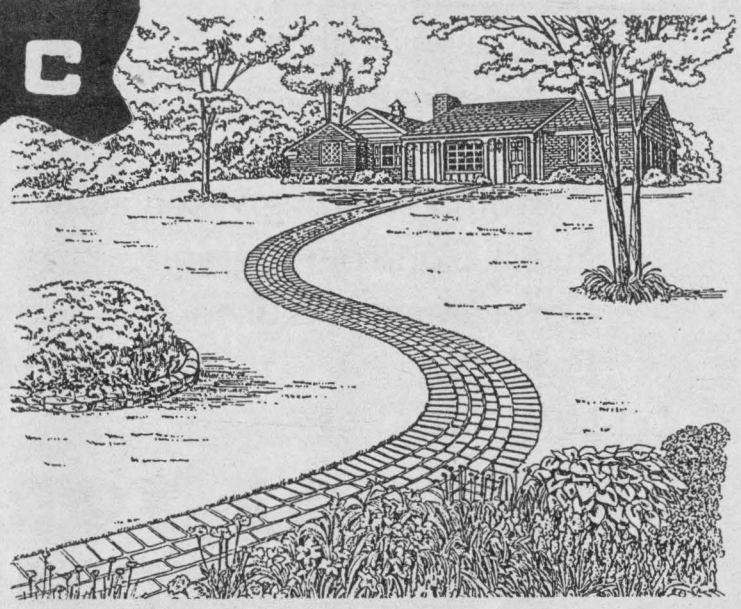

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Roof ventilation critical

A hidden problem may be causing slow but certain damage to a part of your house that probably accounts for up to 40 percent of its visible exterior — your roof.

When shingles crack, sheathing wood rots or gutters leak, your first impulse may be to blame the individual components. In fact, they may have been fine when installed, but couldn't stand the silent but steady pressure of the real culprit — attic heat and moisture caused by improper roof ventilation.

Attic heat and moisture-rot wood reduce the effectiveness of attic insulation, damage underlayment and paint, and cause cracked, buckled or leaking asphalt shingles. The condition also creates ice dams, which can destroy gutters, damage shingles and cause leaks in walls.

How can you spot attic heat and moisture buildup before damage occurs? Winter offers telltale signs. Toward the ridge of the roof, there will be no snow because attic heat has melted it, but snow still will be present near the eaves, with big icicles hanging from them."

You can prevent these problems by asking your roofing contractor to include soffit (undereave) vents and ridge vents in any new roof installation or even a partial shingle-replacement job. The following is a simple three-point checklist to review with your contractor to ensure effective vent installation:

Point 1 — Strike a balanced, 50-50 ratio in soffit and ridge vents to ensure continuous airflow along the underside of the roof ridge, thereby removing excess heat and moisture.

When you do this, you allow a free flow of fresh air in winter and summer. Air enters the attic through a low continuous intake — the soffit vent — and then moves up and out through a high continuous exhaust — the ridge vent. The continuous airflow also helps balance inside and outside temperatures for greater home comfort.

With a balanced ventilation system, even when there's no wind, the natural convection action of rising warm air maintains a continuous airflow along the underside of the roof.

Point 2 — Pay close attention to the quality of ridge vents. Some do a better job than others. The vents should be specially designed with no moving parts and no need for energy. These are available in both embossed aluminum and injection-molded high-impact polypropylene shingle-over versions.

Point 3 — Check your shingle warranty to make sure your ventilation meets the shingle manufacturer's specification. Otherwise, the warranty may be void. Getting shingles and vents from the same manufacturer can help avoid this problem.

Just how much ventilation is enough? Your roofing contractor should be able to advise you on what's required for your home.

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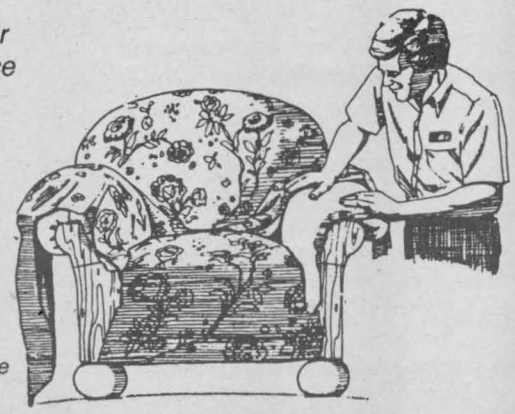

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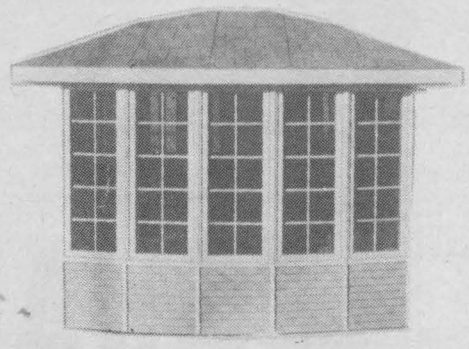

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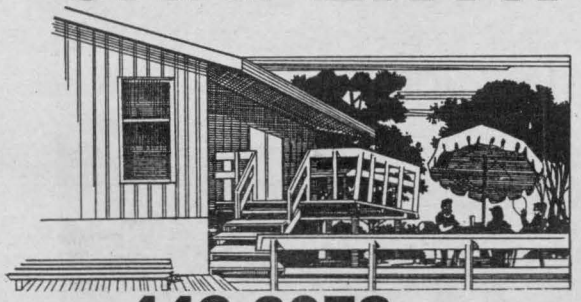

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Nearing completion

Vince and Charlene Zandbelt's Main Street home, shown here before and after renovation, was featured last year in our fall home improvement supplement. The pair have been working on the house for over two years. They have added a master bedroom, bath, utility area and garage to the west end of the house and completely refinished both the interior and exterior of the original structure. Now they are putting the finishing touches on the project. They still have some painting and trimming to do on the inside. In the current photo, only the skirting for the veranda remains to be put in place on the outside. The Zandbelts also plan to do some landscaping around the house.





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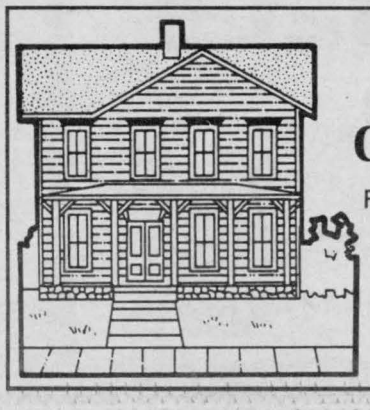

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