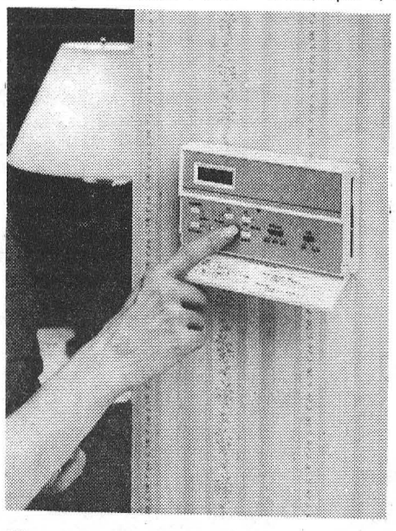


HOME IMPROVEMENT

A special supplement to the

WINCHESTER PRESS

Wednesday, April 4, 1990



Electronic programmable thermostats are sold at hardware and home products stores nationwide. They are easily installed using just a screwdriver and are guaranteed to pay for themselves in energy savings in one year.

Keep cool and save energy too

Not so long ago, people lined up outside movie theatres because they offered an evening of air conditioning along with the latest screen stars. Now that air conditioning is available for every home, more consumers are choosing central air conditioning.

How does an air conditioner work? By transferring heat — from the inside of a building, where it is not wanted, to the outside. Refrigerant in the system absorbs the excess heat and is pumped through a closed system of piping to an outside coil. A fan blows outside air over the hot coil, transferring heat from the refrigerant to the outdoor air. Because the heat is removed from the indoor air, the indoor area is cooled.

What should I do in advance to make sure that my air conditioning system will work efficiently this summer? Have the system checked each year — before the peak cooling season — by a qualified contractor or service technician. Then, remember to keep the air filter clean and the outdoor unit free of leaves and debris.

If my air conditioner stops working, what is the most likely problem? The solution could be as simple as replacing a fuse, resetting a circuit breaker, or checking to see if the thermostat is set properly. If the cooling system doesn't run cool enough, the refrigerant may be low. Most likely, if the problem involves any major part, such as the compressor, you will hear strange noises similar to those of any mechanical equipment not running correctly, or the unit might not run at all.

Which is better — letting a central cooling system wear out before replacing it, or replacing it at some point before it wears out? Because newer equipment usually is much more energy efficient than older systems, you might actually save money by replacing your old system before it completely wears out. Contact local contractors and ask for their estimates. 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 might think.

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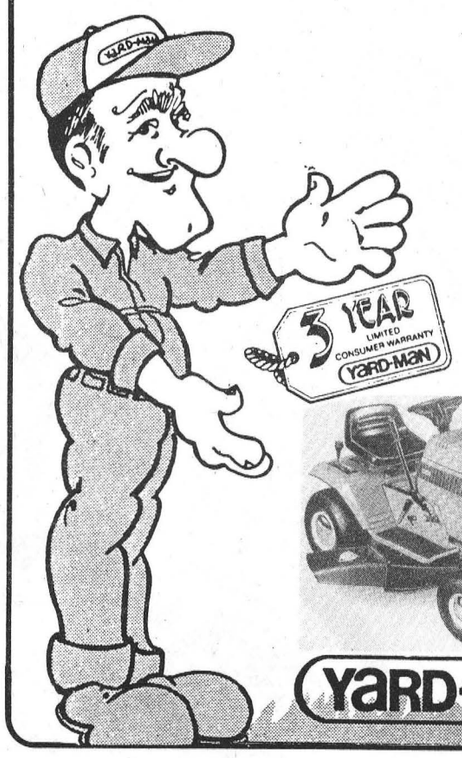

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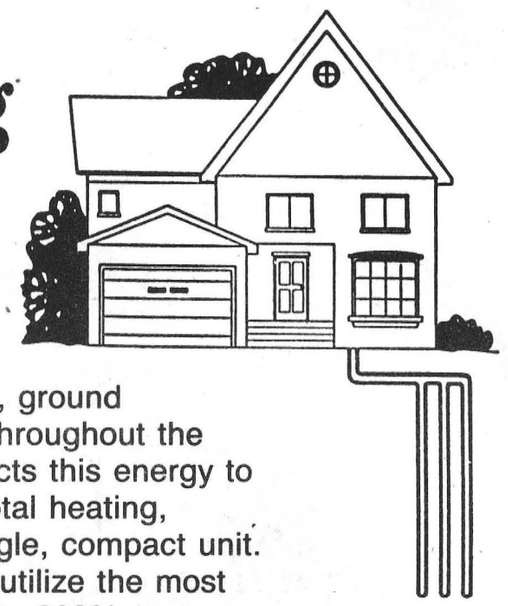

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Spring rains cause problems for many homeowners

Each spring, thousands of homeowners are faced with an unpleasant side effect of seasonal rainfall: wet basements. After the past year's above-average precipitation in many areas, this spring could well be worse than most.

Chronic basement leakage is a serious problem that can destroy personal property, furnishings and appliances, and sometimes even cause permanent structural damage to a home's foundation. Excessive moisture also can create a breeding ground for insects, mold and mildew.

Despite the pervasiveness of the problem, few homeowners are aware of the causes of water leakage. The first step in selecting effective treatment options is to discover the source(s) of basement leakage, which vary from one basement to the next.

COMMON CAUSES

• One common cause of basement leakage is improper surface drainage, such as when a house is built against a hill. In many cases, this can be alleviated simply by re-grading the yard to slope slightly away from the home's foundation or diverting the waterflow to bypass the home.

• Other common culprits include poorly positioned downspouts and missing, leaky or plugged gutters. Downspouts should direct water runoff from the roof to a discharge point several feet away from the house. A downspout that is improperly positioned to drain against the side of the house allows water to build up along the foundation wall, until the backed-up 'reservoir' finds a weak spot to enter the basement.

Gutters should be cleared of leaves and debris at least once a year. Basement leakage from either of these usually is restricted to one spot, and disappears when the external problem is fixed.

• There are a number of less avoidable, temporary sources of basement leakage including plumbing leaks, storm-sewer backups, outdoor flooding above ground level, and condensation caused by simple 'sweating' of walls in humid weather. Normal condensation usually can be corrected with the use of a good dehumidifier.

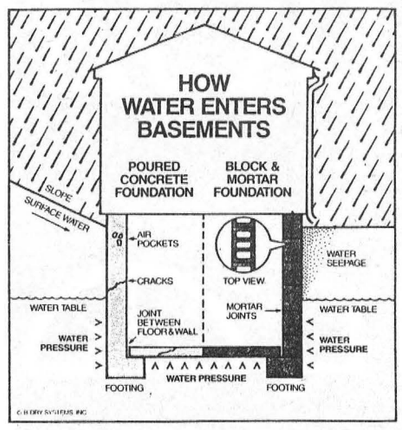
PERVASIVE PROBLEMS

A high water table is the most pervasive and serious cause of basement leakage, and is also the most difficult to correct. A high water table can affect a home in several ways:

• As the water table rises to or above the level of the basement floor, water becomes trapped underneath and leaks into the basement through cracks in the floor, points where drains enter, or at the joint between the walls and floor. This joint or 'cove' is seldom watertight, since the walls and floor are poured or placed at different times during the construction of the house (walls are first, floors generally last).

• Water also can seep laterally through the foundation walls, either because of a rising water table, or because the ground itself is saturated after heavy rains. Foundations in different parts of the country are constructed from a variety of materials, including poured concrete, concrete block, brick and stone. Poured concrete walls, especially those in newer homes, are the most resistant to leakage; however, they sometimes develop cracks or air pockets that allow water to get through, in addition to joint leakage.

• Concrete blocks and bricks are themselves quite porous, so that water may seep directly through foundation walls when the ground is saturated or the water table rises. Water also can soak through the porous mortar joints between bricks, stones or concrete blocks. In addition, the hollow cores of concrete blocks may eventually hold water; thus when the water level within the blocks is higher than the basement floor, water seepage occurs.



Water can enter basements through cracks in foundation walls or floor; the joint where floor and walls meet; and from surface water running against the foundation. The most pervasive cause of leakage is water pressure beneath the foundation.

Basement leakage that is caused by a high water table or saturated ground **can** be corrected. These situations do require professional attention, since this source of water leakage cannot be eliminated and, if left untreated, will eventually damage the home's foundation and market value.

Homeowners must be cautious, however, when selecting a waterproofing company, since some commonly practiced methods are ineffective and will not provide a permanent solution. The best waterproofing firms will do a site inspection before estimating the cost of the job and will offer a warranty on their work.

"The most effective method for waterproofing a basement that leaks," says one professional, "is an **internal** drainage system that is constructed along the **inside** perimeter of the basement, below the floor. This type of system will effectively drain water that enters a basement through cracks in the floor or walls, or that seeps directly through the walls, regardless of what material they are made of. It also helps to relieve pressure against these walls."

Many people have found that laying drains in **external** trenches is not effective.

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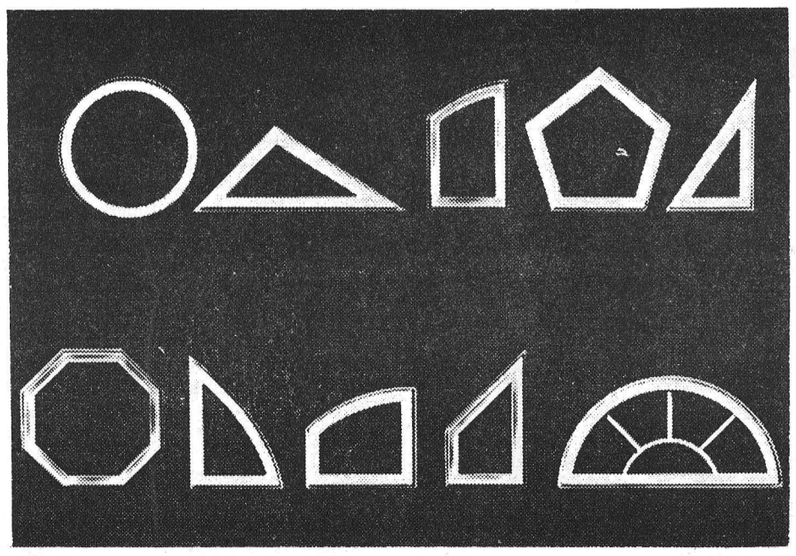

Triangles, arches, half round and hexagons are just a few of the window shapes available today.

Windows take new shapes

Have you noticed how many new and remodelled homes are displaying a truly distinctive touch with the help of custom windows in unusual shapes and sizes?

Today, choices in windows are greater than ever before. Along with traditional double-hung, casement, awning, glider, bay, bow and picture styles, homeowners can now create dramatic effects with half-rounds, hexagons, triangles, arches, rectangles and many other geometric shapes.

In addition to the sheer beauty of custom-shaped windows, the options now available enable homeowners to place windows in spaces that previously would have been unusable. This can be a real plus in rooms with sloping ceilings or limited space, where additional daylight is desirable.

You can take greater advantage of a beautiful outside view. Or, combine privacy with plenty of light by the strategic placement of custom windows. There is virtually no limit to the window designs you and your contractor can create.

Although custom shaped windows can offer many new and different perspectives on your outside and inside world, don't let beauty outweigh practicality. The best custom-shaped windows are strong and thermally efficient as well as beautiful. Look for features like double-pane, sealed insulating glass and welded frame construction.

Also, consider window materials and the care and maintenance that may be required. Solid vinyl, for example, has become a leading material of choice for many homeowners because it never needs painting and it won't chip, peel, dent, rust or corrode.

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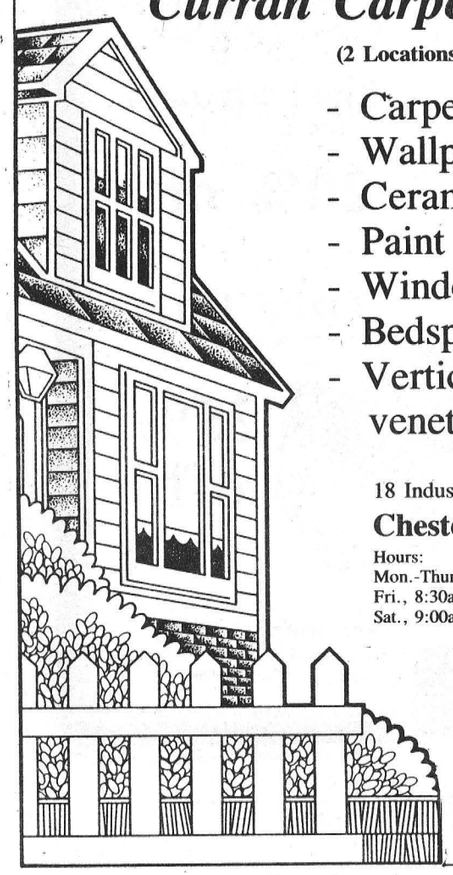

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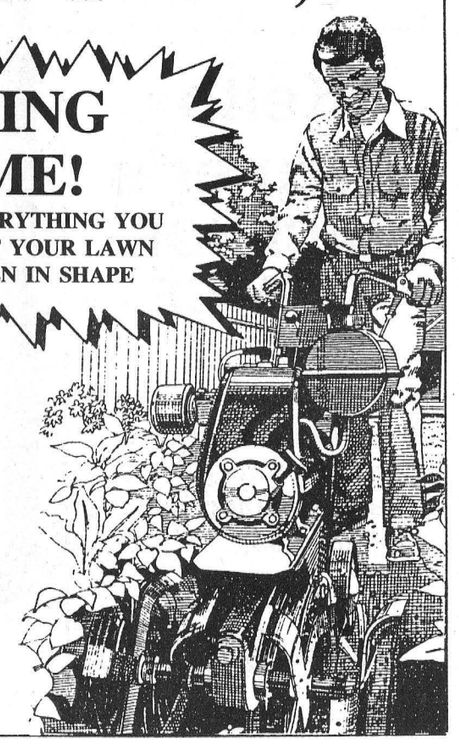

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Let paint scheme reflect your individual tastes

Choosing paint colors for the home can be as intimidating as naming your child. Should the bedroom be gingham peach or saucy cream, the family room Windsor blue or Montana sky? Should the colors be intense at the risk of ridicule? Wouldn't it be safer to just pick out a sophisticated off-white — a pearl tint, perhaps?

These concerns need not discourage you. For colors you can enjoy and share, here are some hints on selecting paint shades.

BEST COLORS

First, identify your favorite colors. If no one single shade comes to mind, consider your favorite clothing, jewellery and artwork. What colors predominate? Flip through decorating magazines and clip photos of room settings that inspire you.

Second, bring a sample of the shades you like to your local decorating centre. You may wish to select color around a favorite area rug, fabric or painting.

Third, make good use of the store's paint color displays. They are designed to help you. Paint manufacturers have simplified the paint color selection process by incorporating consumer preferences into their displays.

An effective way to begin is to stand about eight feet away from the display and look for the range of colors that most attract you. You can then concentrate your search in these color families.

A key element is the arrangement of colors. Displays that co- ordinate each row horizontally complement the natural movements of the eye.

The shopper's eye travels across the display seeking a favorite color family. Rich, clear midtones stop the eye at the chosen family and direct it vertically to color choices.

Lighting is critical to color selection. Look for a display offering bright simulated natural daylight so you won't have to view color stripe cards outside the store. Most shoppers find stripe cards easier to work with than cards of a single color, and prefer a display arrangement that shows the entire stripe card, rather than just the top one or two colors.

When you've chosen the right shades, bring the stripe cards home with you and place them on walls, cabinets, ceilings — wherever you plan to paint. Observe the colors at different times of day, and, if possible, on both cloudy and sunny days. You should also hang the cards in nooks and crannies of your room and note how shadows affect the color.

Hold the card at arm's length and rotate 360 degrees around the room you plan to paint. Envision the paint on the walls as you turn. See how the color changes in the different areas of the room.

HOW TO USE SAMPLES

At the decorating centre, most paint is viewed on a horizontal surface with a white or off-white background. Remember that you will probably never see the color again in this way. The shade will always intensify when applied to a vertical surface. This is why it's important to "live" with the stripe card for a few days before making a final decision.

Some dealers catering to the profesional design market may have available larger chips drawn from a designer library. Ask your independent retailer for expert advice on the type of paint you need.

Paint can be the fastest and least expensive way to recreate your living environment. By following these tips, you can easily choose colors that express your personality with confidence and verve.



Dave Begg from Geggies Home Hardware in Winchester, shows the variety of custom color paint available for the home. *Press Photo—Fetterly*

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Low-E catching on

Windows are a major source of energy loss in many Canadian homes but that may soon change as a new heat-reflecting technology becomes more widely used by the home building and renovations industry.

The new technology, called low-E (emissivity) glass, involves applying an invisible, heat-reflective coating on window glazing. The special coating is applied by the manufacturer and reflects up to 90 per cent of the long-wave heat radiation, a major source of heat loss for windows, back into the house.

For homeowners, that means a window with high thermal performance and virtually no condensation. In fact, a double-glazed low-E window has basically the same energy performance as a standard triple-glazed unit. Some manufacturers even offer the special coating on a thin film of plastic which is then placed between two sheets of glazing, essentially providing a triple-glazed unit with low-E.

Additional benefits

In addition to lowering heating costs, low-E windows greatly improve the comfort of a home. Condensation is less likely to occur because the surface temperature of the interior glass stays closer to that of the room. This is an important feature for pool and spa enclosures and other high humidity environments where window fogging can limit visibility and damage frames.

Low-E glass lets in almost as much light as ordinary double-pane glass. At the same time, it blocks a large portion of incoming ultraviolet rays that fade drapes, fabrics, carpets and other furnishings.

In the summer, low-E glass can reduce home cooling costs by reflecting radiant heat from the sun. However, to maximize the savings on your air conditioning bills, windows should still be shaded with awnings, shutters or landscaping.

Different types

Low-E glass is manufactured with either a soft or hard coating. A soft coat is applied by spraying the surface of the glass with tin oxide at the factory. The coating is extremely fragile and the glass must be handled carefully until it is installed in a factory-sealed unit.

Hard low-E coating is applied to the molten glass as it comes out of the furnace, making it part of the glass itself. This coating offers a very durable surface and can be handled like regular glass. Hard coat low-E glass is not yet as heat-reflective as the soft coat variety but manufacturers are constantly improving their processes.

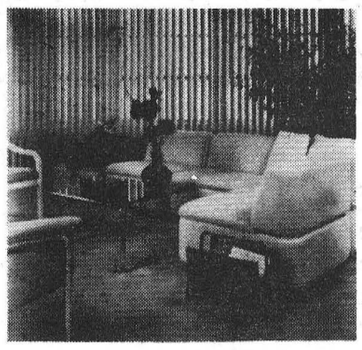
Some manufacturers offer low-E windows with the space between the panes filled with an inert gas, usually argon. This gas helps to reduce thermal convection and conduction, two other sources of heat loss.

Buying low-E glass

Complete low-E windows or individual glazing units can be purchased in standard sizes from your local window supplier. Low-E units can also be custom-manufactured to fit distinctive or odd-sized window openings. Depending on the manufacturer, costs may be up to 25 per cent higher than for conventional double-glazed windows.

You can compare the energy performance of different types of low-E windows by asking the supplier for each unit's low-E rating. You should also ask about the guarantee on the glass; low-E coating can deteriorate if the airtight seal separating the sheets of glass is broken. Coverage extends from five years to a 20-year promise of window replacement because of seal failure.

While low-E coatings are a recent innovation, the concept is quickly catching on. Industry experts predict that within five years, 50 per cent of the residential market will consist of low-E windows. They also expect the new technology to completely replace conventional glass in the renovation market.



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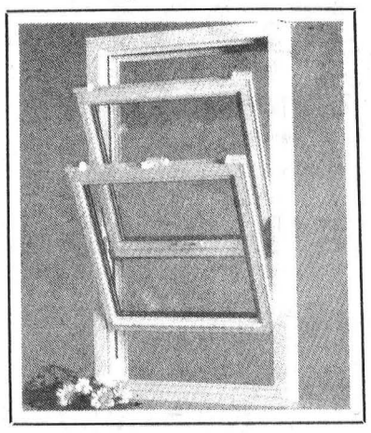
ENERGY SAVING WINDOWS



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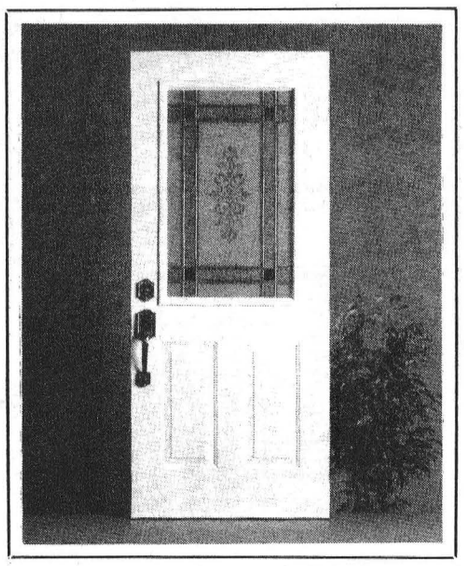

Treat furniture stripping chemicals with respect

Restoring an old piece of furniture to its original wood finish can be a richly rewarding experience. The biggest part of the job, stripping off the old layers of paint, need not be tedious if you use a paint stripper with good solvent action.

Most experts prefer to use a liquid or gel-type paint remover that contains methylene chloride. These paint strippers are quick and easy, and they won't damage the wood the way sanding or scraping can. They're also safe to use — if you follow the instructions on the can.

Here are a few safety tips:

- Choose a work site with plenty of ventilation. A screened- in porch, or outdoors under a canopy or carport is ideal. If you must work indoors, open windows and doors on both sides of the house for cross-ventilation and take a fresh air break frequently. It helps to use a fan to keep air moving. Signs of over-exposure include nausea, headache, dizziness or light- headedness. If any of these symptoms should occur, leave the work site immediately and do not return until ventilation has been improved.
- Wear a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, rubber gloves made from a chemical-resistant rubber, and safety glasses. Methylene chloride is painful and irritating if splashed into the eyes or if it comes into prolonged contact with the skin.
- Read the label carefully and refer to it often during the course of the project.

NOW YOU'RE READY TO BEGIN

1. Elevate the piece of furniture to about waist-high (this helps prevent backaches) and remove all hardware.

Cover the floor with newspapers and make sure you have plenty of rags nearby in case of a spill.

2. Using a two-inch tapered end natural bristle paint brush, lay the stripper on one section at a time, using short strokes. Within a few minutes you'll see the paint begin to soften and blister. Leave the work area and get some fresh air while the stripper does its job (about 15 to 20 minutes).

3. Scrape the wood surface clean with a flexible-blade putty knife. Dull the edge and corners of the blade with a metal file if they're too sharp. Scrape away from you, going with the grain. If the surface doesn't come clean the first time, revealing bare wood, apply another layer of chemicals and repeat the process.

4. Once the entire piece has been stripped, wash it down with lacquer thinner to neutralize any remaining traces of remover.

5. Place all rags, papers, applicators and sludge outdoors for a few hours until all the solvent has evaporated. Put the materials in a securely-lidded metal container and contact your local hazardous waste disposal service.

With these simple precautions, the job can be easy and fun. Just let the chemicals do the heavy work for you, and you can make your old furniture look like new.



Neighborhood garage sales are great places to go hunting for old outdoor furniture — metal or wood. The greatest thing about refinishing an old set of lawn furniture is that you can go crazy with color with new outdoor spray paints.

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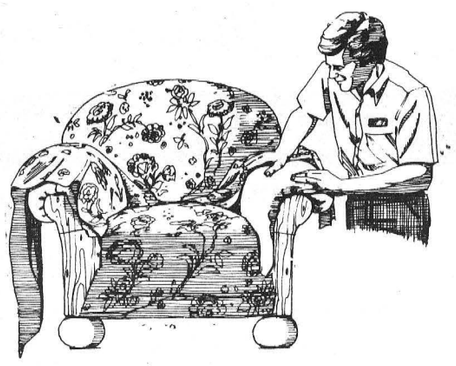

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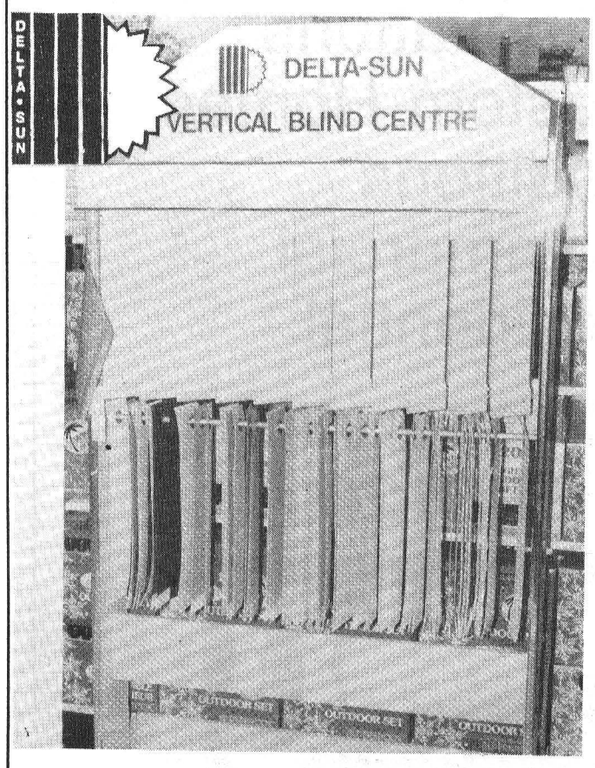

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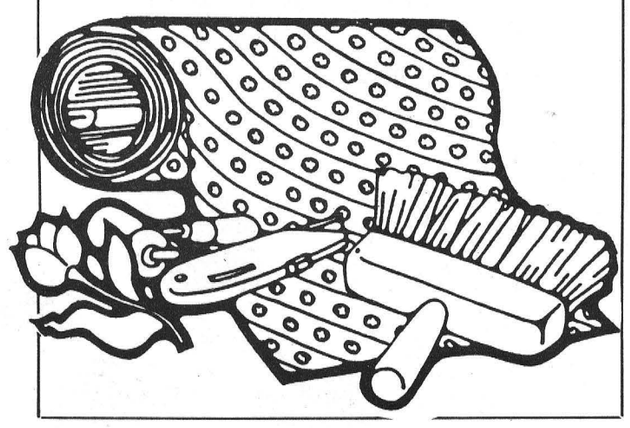

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Safety measures can help avoid tragedy

To avoid the tragedy of fire, here are some basic things you can do to help ensure the safety of your family:

- Eliminate potential fire hazards.
- Install and maintain smoke detectors.
- Develop and practice a family escape plan.

ELIMINATING FIRE HAZARDS

- Keep trash in covered containers and dispose of it regularly.
- Store paints, paint thinners and other flammable materials in their original containers...away from fire sources.
- Clean work areas of paint, sawdust or trash after every project.
- Don't overload circuits or use frayed electrical extension cords.
- Have all electrical wiring checked by a competent electrician periodically, to make sure it is not faulty.
- Use only fuses and circuit breakers which bear the label of a recognized testing laboratory.
- Never run an extension cord under a rug or behind curtains.
- Do not let large amounts of trash accumulate, either indoors or outdoors.
- Clean attics, basements, closets and garages frequently.

INSTALLING SMOKE DETECTORS

- Install at least one smoke detector in the hallway leading to the bedrooms.
- Consider installing additional smoke detectors, especially if your home has more than one level.
- Make sure smoke detectors are of a type approved by a recognized testing laboratory.
- If your detectors are battery operated, check the batteries often to make sure the unit is operational.

The ear-piercing alarm of the smoke detector may provide you and your family with the precious extra minutes that you need to escape, especially at night (when most home fires occur).

A FAMILY ESCAPE PLAN

- Sketch the layout of each floor, including windows, doors and stairways. Make sure that every family member is familiar with the layout.
- Work out **two** escape routes from each room and mark them clearly on the sketch.
- Hold frequent fire drills, including some at night, so everyone will know what to do and be able to act quickly in an emergency.
- Assign a member of the family to be responsible for the elderly or the very young to help them escape.
- Designate a meeting place outside of the home and instruct everyone to go there at once in case of fire.
- Count heads, stay together and **do not** go back into the house for personal belongings.

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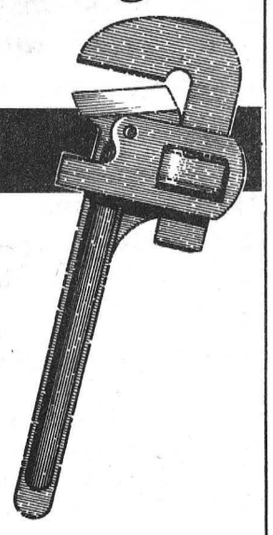

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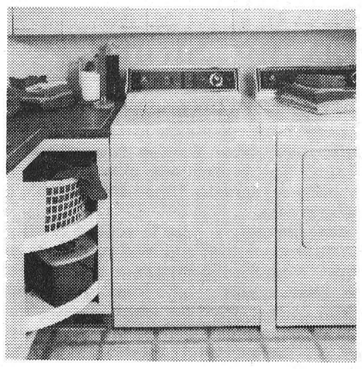
Good laundry design puts efficiency first

Now more than ever, busy homeowners juggle work, family and leisure time in an effort to maintain a balanced and satisfying lifestyle. For them, time saved on everyday tasks means time more happily spent elsewhere. So homeowners recently took time to design efficient home laundry areas and made life easier for themselves.

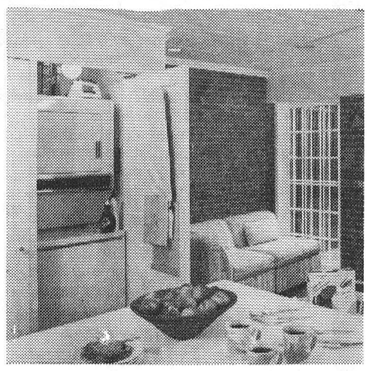
If you are busy, you too may benefit from putting these ingenious ideas to use. Consider the following:

Keep storage close to laundry equipment. A retired couple built in a two-tiered, turn-around shelf near the washer and dryer. The shelf holds laundry ready to be washed or folded.



A sink and turn-around shelving were located close to the washer and dryer by contest-winning homeowners.

Locate laundry equipment near a sink and storage. Cabinets conceal laundry supplies and, when located near a sink, double as storage space for stemware, glasses and bar items.



A stacked washer/dryer, along with a fold-down ironing board, is tucked into a compact closet.

Place related conveniences near laundry equipment. A couple with two active children installed a drip-drying closet next to the sink and laundry equipment by using a shower-floor base with a drain and ceramic tile walls. They also installed a low faucet and clothing rod.

Double up on space with stacked laundry equipment. A single mother living in an older home installed a stacked washer/dryer in a compact closet near the garden and central kitchen island. On the inside closet door, a fold-down ironing board saves even more precious space.

Locate laundry equipment adjacent to existing plumbing. When the most convenient plumbing hook-up seems awkward, consider locating appliances behind louvered cabinets and folding doors for easy concealment when not in use.

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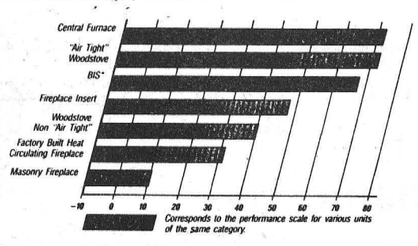

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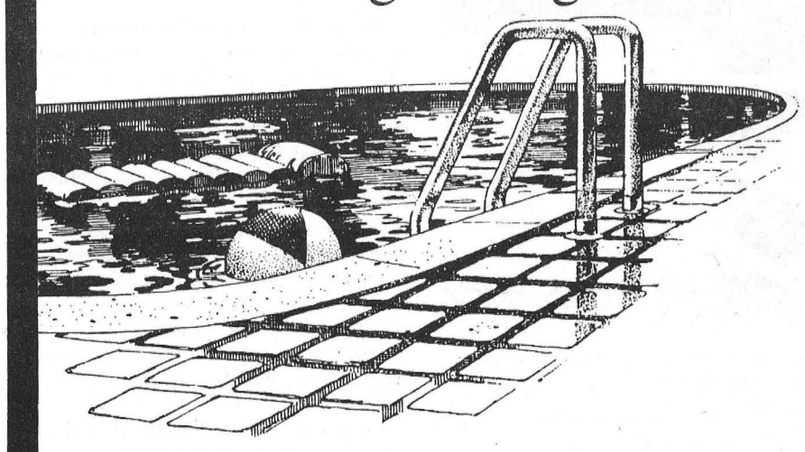

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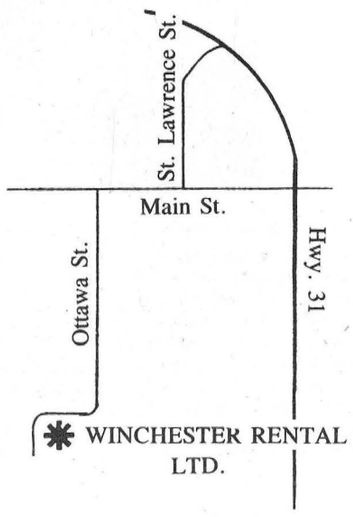

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Natural lawn care practices can yield beautiful results

Despite the horror stories about the global environmental crisis, few real solutions have existed for fighting the battle on the homefront. But that's changing. Thanks to recent breakthroughs in natural, chemical-free products for the lawn and garden, you now can do your part.

And there is a major extra benefit: Research shows the natural products actually can work better and produce lusher, healthier laws and gardens.

There is a simple three-step process for making the switch:

1. Begin using natural, organic fertilizers that outperform the chemical products you buy from stores or lawn services.

2. Switch to natural, biological pesticides, which are highly effective yet use no toxic chemical.

3. Recycle your grass clippings, leaves and garden debris into nutrient-rich compost rather than send the material to rapidly filling landfills.

NATURAL FERTILIZERS

First, the fertilizers — new natural, organic fertilizers have been proven to build healthier, lusher lawns in research at several universities for one simple reason: They enhance the natural process already occurring in the soil.

Some products actually add living micro-organisms to the soil. They speed up the conditioning of the soil by breaking down organic matter such as dead grass and feeding the living grass. These micro-organisms can also suppress common patch diseases in lawns.

Also, slow-release nutrient sources in the fertilizers, such as bone meal and wheat germ, feed the grass with 'natural food.' Chemical fertilizers, on the other hand, simply stimulate the grass plants with chemicals and actually deplete the soil of micro-organisms by failing to provide the necessary food. And excessive use of chemical fertilizers poses a threat to ground water, lakes and streams.

NATURAL PESTICIDES

For stopping pesky pests, manufacturers also have turned to nature and have enhanced natural processes with safe, new, natural products. Some of the natural products use insecticidal soaps to kill aphids and mites on contact. Others use pyrethrum, a natural pest-killing substance derived from chrysanthemum flowers.

These provide quick, knockdown results and can be used on fruit and vegetables right up to the day of harvest. But probably the most significant advancement is the use of natural bacteria to attack and kill specific pests.

WIPE OUT GRUBS

For example, if your lawn is showing the tell-tale brown spots of a Japanese Beetle grub infestation, a product such as Grub Attack controls the grubs by introducing BP, a grub-killing bacteria, into the soil, infecting and killing the grubs. The bacteria then spread and remain effective in eliminating the grubs for the next 15-20 years.

Not only are these approaches highly effective in eliminating pests, they also pose no threat to people, animals and the environment. And that's becoming a major concern regarding the chemical pesticides.

ADVANCES IN COMPOSTING

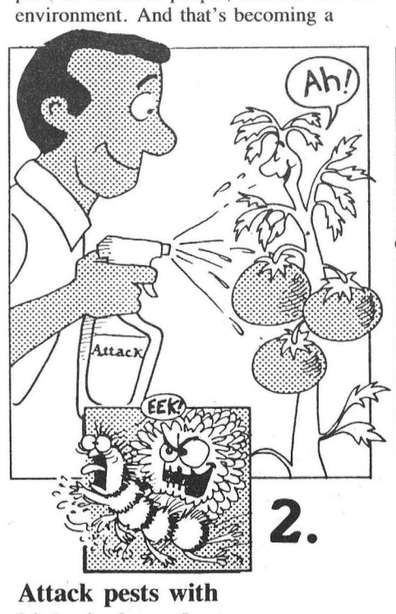
Finally, there are the new solutions to diposing of grass clippings and leaves. Many municipalities are banning the dumping of this debris in space-pressed landfills because it can account for 20 to 40 per cent of landfill material during peak periods.

What do you do with the stuff? If the term 'composting' conjures up nightmares of a stinking heap requiring constant turning via pitchfork, you can rest easy. New advances in composting systems make it a simple, clean task.



Use natural fertilizers to restore your lawn

New natural fertilizers contain health food for your lawn, including microorganisms that build healthier soil and lawns. Chemical fertilizers don't promote the longterm health of your lawn and can contaminate groundwater.



Attack pests with biological products

New natural pesticides use biological controls such as pest-fighting bacteria and pest-killing substances produced by plants and flowers. Chemical pesticides may pose a threat to people, animals and the environment.



Recycle your grass clippings

Recycle leaves and grass into nutrient-rich compost to help condition your lawn and garden. Recycling kits contain a special bag and material for speeding the natural breakdown of the debris. Composting your lawn and garden debris helps combat the growing landfill crisis.

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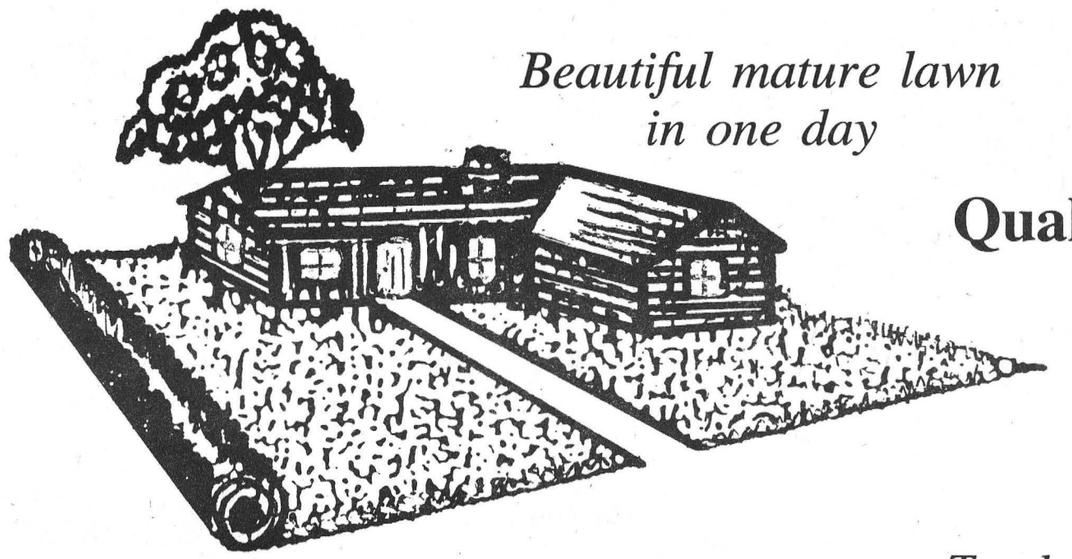

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Avoid big roof repairs with easy maintenance

There are few things more comforting than having a good roof over your head. But your roof takes a tremendous beating from sun, rain, hail — even flying debris. These conditions can cause all sorts of embrittlement problems for both the roof covering and also the sealers that keep water out around vents, pipes, flashings and drains.

TIPS FOR A LONGER ROOF LIFE

Here are a few tips for homeowners and farmers with outdoor structures that can help you prevent problems and dramatically extend your roof's useful life.

Small holes and breaks in roofs made of asphalt composition, mineral-surfaced cap sheet or smooth-surface coatings are easily repaired. Cover with a 1/8'' to 1/4'' layer of roof cement, pressed into the damaged area and over a surrounding area of about 4''. Do the same for raised edges after cutting off all loose material.

If the damaged area is more than 1/4'' wide or 2'' long, put roof repair fabric in the cement, cover completely with cement and feather the edges.

REPAIRING LARGE HOLES

When holes are larger than 6'' make sure the underlying roof structure is not damaged. If the structure is sound, cut a piece of roofing material similar to the existing roof at least 4'' larger than the hole in all directions. Then apply the roof cement and follow the other steps for small holes.

For blisters, which usually signal a damp area underneath, cut with an 'X' pattern, being careful not to go deeper than the raised area. Next, peel back the flaps, remove loose material and dry the exposed area very thoroughly. Then put roof cement into the blister, fold the flaps of the cut back into place and follow the regular procedure for repairing holes.

To repair flashings (the waterproof joints between roofs and walls, chimneys and rooftop equipment), first remove any loose material and clean the entire area thoroughly. Next, cover the damaged area with roof cement 1/8'' to 1/4'' thick, extending at least 6'' beyond the damage on all sides. Embed roof fabric, cover with cement and feather the edges.

REPLACING SHINGLES

If your roof has composition or wood shingles, you may have loose, missing or curled shingles and broken ridges. Loose composition shingles can be refastened with plastic cement. Split shingles — composition or wood — are best repaired with metal shingles sold at repair centres. Simply slide them under the split and cover all spaces where water can enter. Broken ridges must be replaced with a material comparable to the one now on your roof. See your dealer for these replacements.

Kitchen remodeling

The current style in kitchen remodeling is to go light and bright. In Canada, the popular choice is light-colored surfaces for the kitchen.

This is especially true with cabinetry, and kitchen experts recommend styles in lighter woods, laminates and lacquers. The popular wood cabinets include natural ash, spruce and oak. Whitewashing and white pigments are added to the oak and spruce to further lighten the natural wood shades.

New generation lawn tractors ease trimming

If you hate working an extra hour trimming around trees and bushes after spending the morning atop your riding mower, take heart.

A new generation of riding mowers lets you mow and trim at the same time. Known as highly manoeuvreable mowers, the machines are ideal for close trimming and can turn on a dime.

Until this year, highly manoeuvreable mowers were only used by commercial lawn care professionals because of their size and price.

This year, new frame and drive-train technologies have allowed manufacturers to produce down-sized consumer versions which have eye-pleasing lines and pocket-pleasing prices.

Highly manoeuvreable mowers fall into two categories — those with steering wheels and those with steering levers or sticks.

Units with steering wheels are designed with synchronized manual transmissions.

Each transmission is connected to its own drive wheel. When the operator turns the steering wheel more than 15 degrees, a series of levers automatically stops the inside drive wheels from turning. The outside wheels continue operating to power the mower through the turn.

These mowers have a turn radius of four inches for close trimming around trees, shrubs and other obstacles.

If you need an even tighter turning radius, consider a highly manoeuvreable mower with steering levers or sticks.

Each hand lever controls one rear drive wheel. By moving the control levers in the opposite direction, the machine will do a 360-degree turn.

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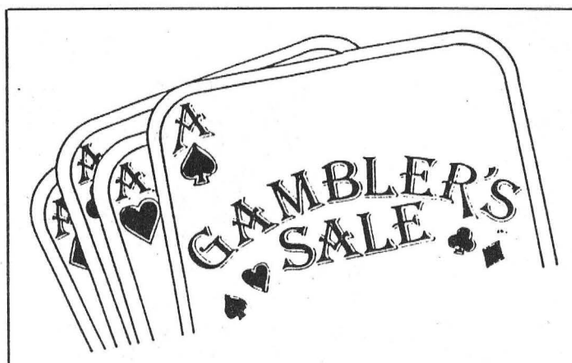

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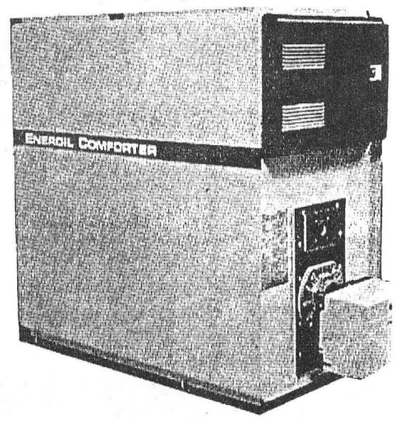

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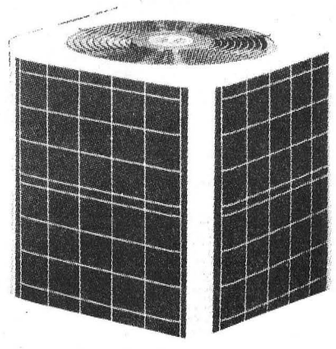

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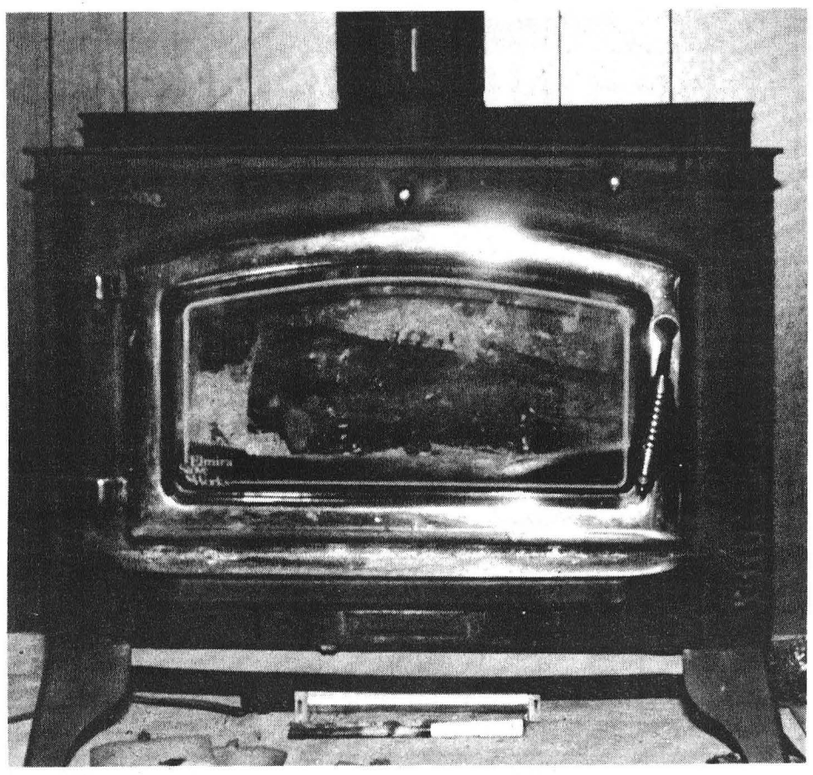

Comfort and economy
Heating with wood not only reduces heating costs substantially, but the new wood-burning stoves also add a decorative touch to the room. Press Photo—Fetterly

Lay right foundation for superior paint job

It's often said that a house is only as good as the foundation on which it is built. Similarly, optimal home painting results depend upon careful surface preparation as a foundation.

The reason it's so important to prepare the surface properly is to insure that the paint adheres well. Taking shortcuts is just inviting future problems.

How should you prepare exterior surfaces for painting? We offer these suggestions:

- Remove flaking paint. To make sure that you get down to a sound surface, use a scraper or wire brush to remove any loose or flaking paint that's present. Finish the job by sanding any slick or glossy surfaces.

- Remove any "chalk" that you see. Old weathered paint is often covered with a powdery substance called chalk, that can prevent fresh paint from adhering well to the surface. This can usually be removed by washing down the surface with a simple soap and water solution.

- Wash away dirt or mildew. These problems are most prevalent on the north and west sides of a house, according to Gozdan, who advises using a bleach solution to combat them. Wiping down the surface with bleach solution will kill most of the mildew and take away most of the blackness. Be sure to rinse the surface thoroughly with water before painting.

- Use a primer over bare wood surfaces. Primers help prevent the top-coat of paint from being absorbed into the wood. They also create a smooth surface to which paint will readily adhere. Ask your local paint retailer to recommend a primer that's right for the job you're doing.

- On concrete or stucco surfaces, fill in holes and cracks. For large cracks in masonry, be sure to use a caulking material that will expand or contract when the temperature changes.

- Last, but perhaps most importantly, paint with a top quality product.

Cordless tools more powerful

If you have trouble starting your gas-powered blower or hate dragging along a 100-foot extension cord with your electric hedge trimmer, take heart.

A new generation of cordless lawn and garden tools that are as powerful as electric yard tools, may be the answer to your problems.

During the '70s, cordless yard and garden tools such as grass shears and string trimmers were a curiosity. The tools performed well enough but did not match the power of corded electric models.

Now, because of high-performance batteries and battery-powered motors, newly introduced cordless tools can match the performance of electric tools.

Cordless handtools have been popular among do-it-yourselfers and contractors for the past several years. But cordless technology is just now finding its way into lawn and garden tools.

The reason? Cordless garden tools can require 10 times more power than cordless screwdrivers or drills.

But demand for portable power has caused the development of high-power, low-maintenance, sealed lead acid batteries, which are lightweight and inexpensive.

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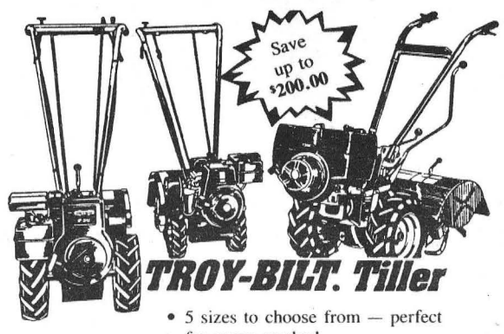

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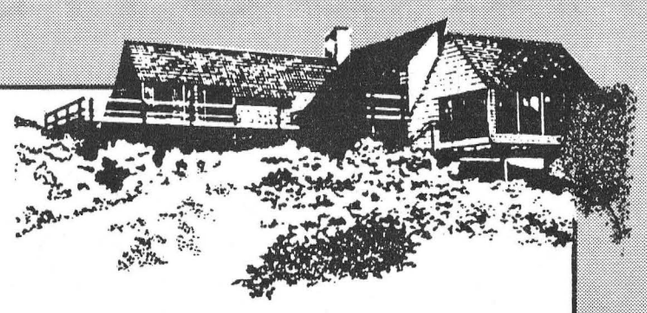

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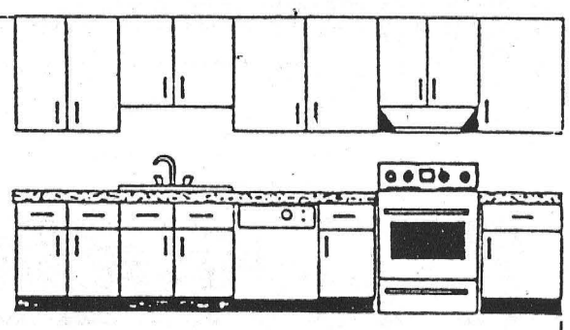

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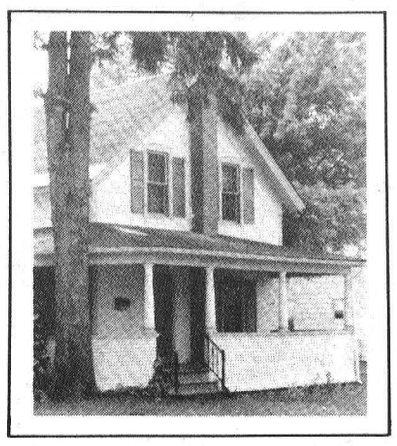

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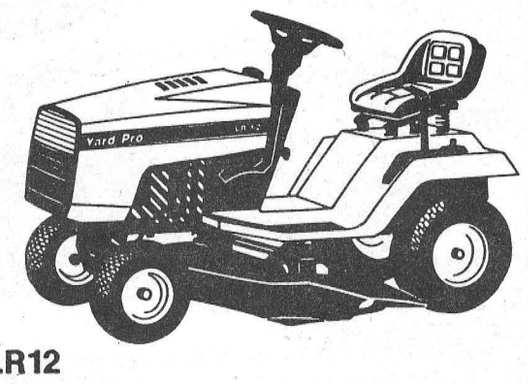

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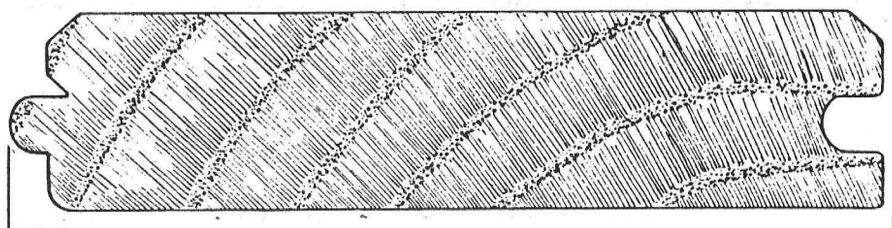

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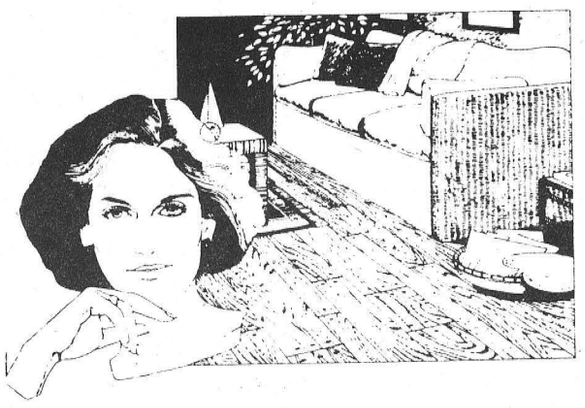

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Wallcovering borders can be combined with co-ordinated wallcoverings for added detail and visual interest.

Borders can decorate a room inexpensively

Even with a limited budget, a little imagination combined with a sense of style can make a little decorating go a long way.

The use of wallcovering borders is a good example. They are inexpensive, yet they can perform miracles in transforming an ordinary room into a fashionable one.

Available in a range of patterns, designs and colors, and in widths ranging from two to 20 inches, borders are easy to apply to plain walls to give a room a decorative accent. Or, they can be combined with co-ordinated wallcoverings for added detail and visual interest.

Applied at chair rail height, for example, they can be used to separate one wallcovering pattern from another. Borders can also be used to accent doors or windows. A border near the ceiling featuring a trompe l'oeil pattern will add architectural interest to a plain room.

If planning a do-it-yourself decorating project to make the budget go further, consider borders that have already been pasted and trimmed. All you need to do is dip them in water and smooth them onto the wall. Be sure the walls are clean and dry and that all picture hooks are removed and any cracks or holes filled and sanded.

Borders are designed for years of sturdy service. Yet accidents do happen on occasion. Should an edge work loose or a small tear appear, apply paste to the wall as well as the back of the loose or torn piece of border. Press it in place, roll it smooth with a seam roller and wipe off any excess paste.

In the case of nicks or small holes, paste a larger piece of border over the damaged spot. Be sure to match the pattern exactly. Let the patch set for an hour. Then, use a razor knife to cut through both layers. Clear the area and repaste the top piece. Wait 15 minutes before rolling the fitted edges smooth.

Like other wallcoverings, borders are available in paint and wallpaper stores, specialty shops and decorating and home centres.

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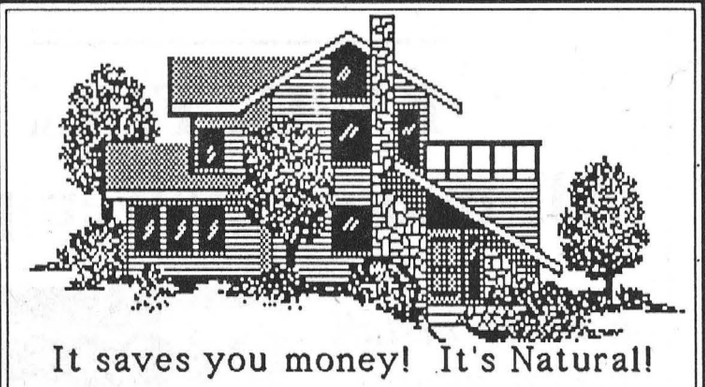

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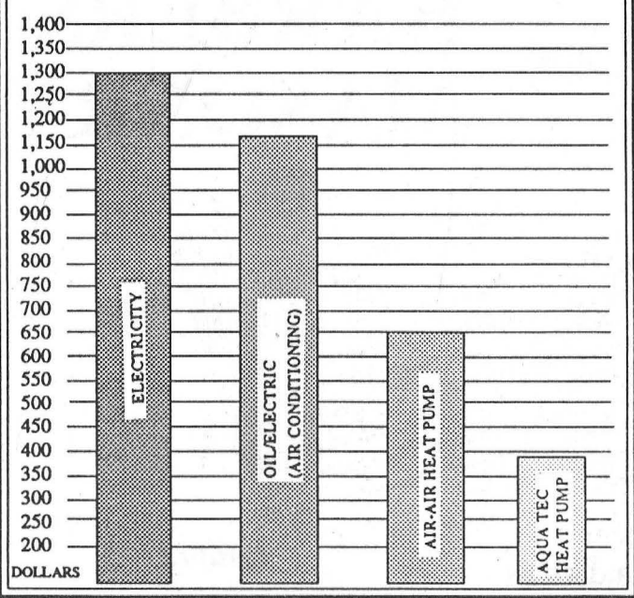

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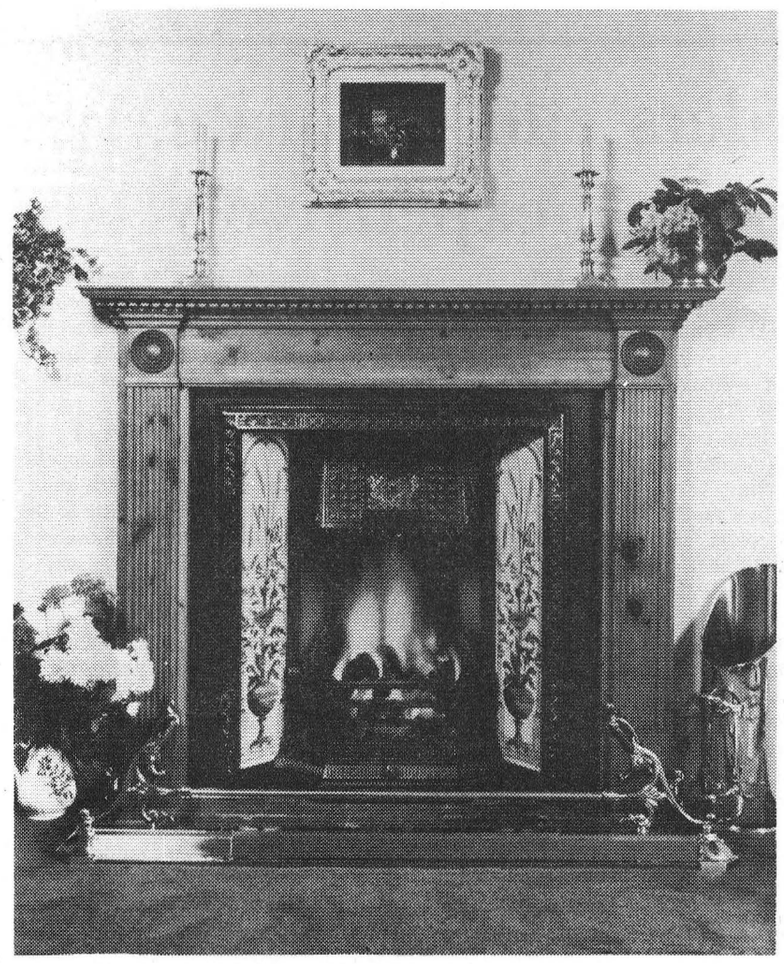


Fireplaces bring more than just the snap, crackle and pop of a fire to a room, they actually become the focal point for the entire home.

Recreate the romance of a Victorian fireplace

Before the advent of central heating, a fireplace in every room was taken for granted as a provider of heat, even in the most humble of dwellings.

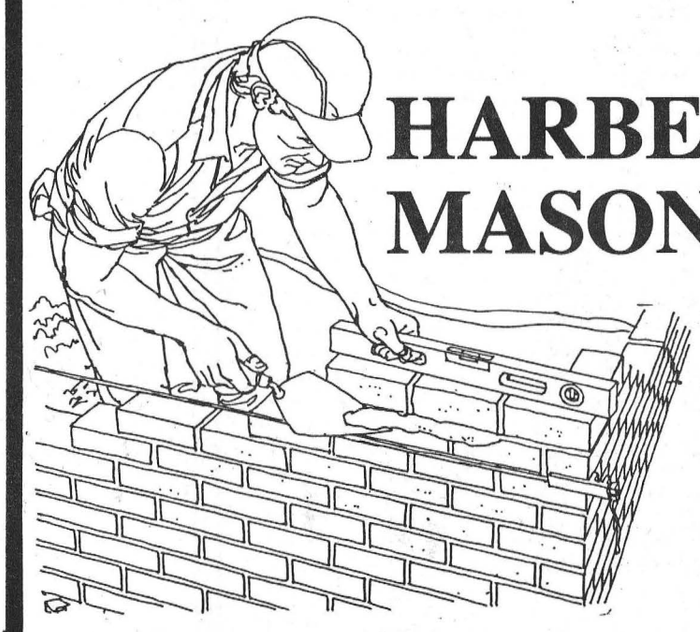
Today, with its dancing flames, woody aroma and crackling sounds, a fireplace creates a different kind of warmth — the warmth of home, family and romance.

And with the variety of designs, sizes, shapes and accessories now available, a fireplace can not only enhance any room's decor, but actually become a focal point for the whole home.

Whether you live in a house or an apartment, the addition of a fireplace can change completely the look and ambience of a room. And what many people don't realize is that fireplaces can be installed virtually anywhere in the home, not just in places where one already exists.

Living rooms are still the venue of choice for most fireplaces, but an increasing number of homes once again feature secondary hearths in other rooms — such as dining rooms, family rooms, dens, master bedrooms and even kitchens.

Many homeowners who are renovating or adding a new fireplace are opting for Victorian-style installations, which are uniquely elegant and can blend into a variety of existing decors, from colonial to modern. These fireplaces are perfect for today's lifestyles, with an emphasis on individual taste, since the Victorians themselves strove to express their individuality.



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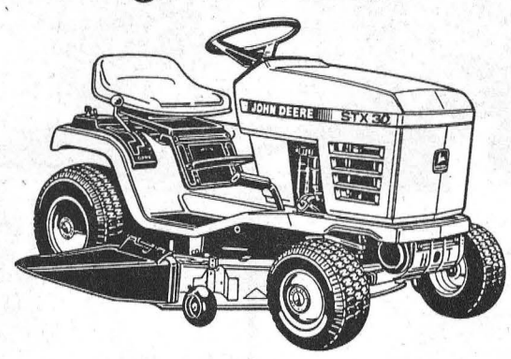

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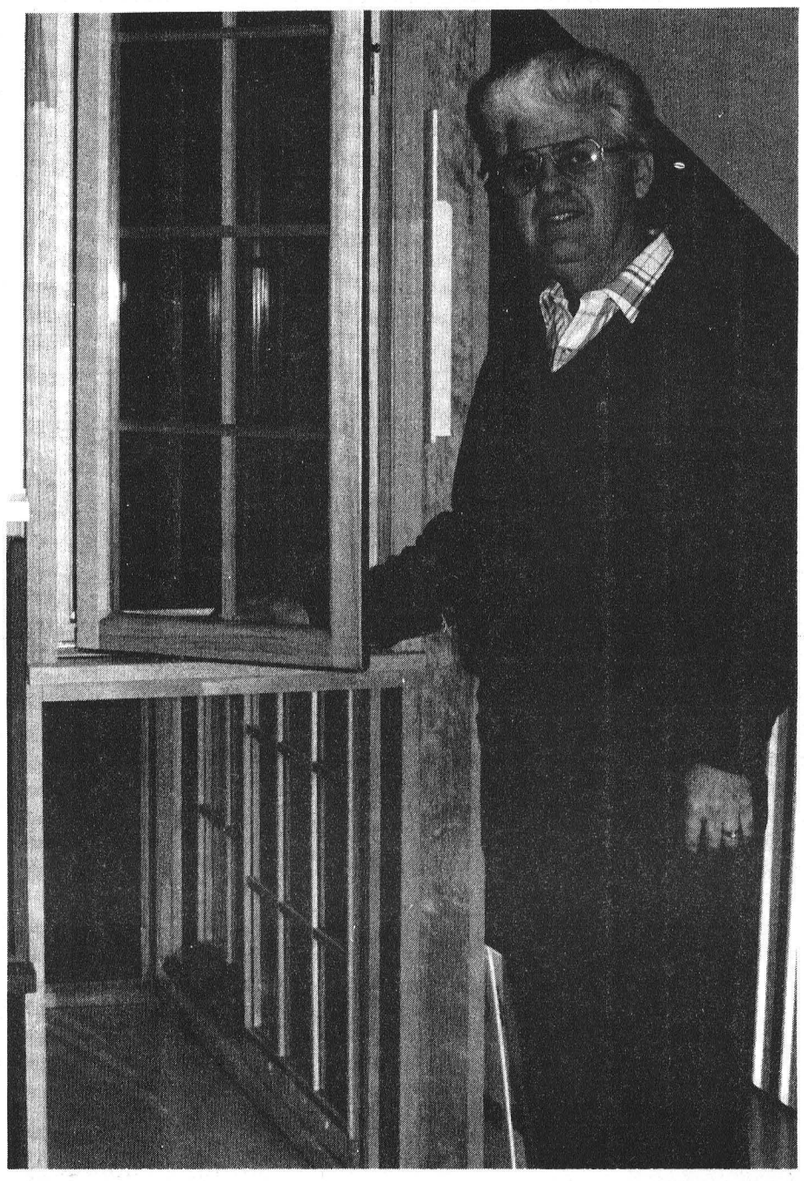

Easy cleaning

Tommy Douglas of Lannin Lumber Mart, at the south end of Winchester, shows how easy it is to clean the new casement windows. *Press Photo—Fetterly*

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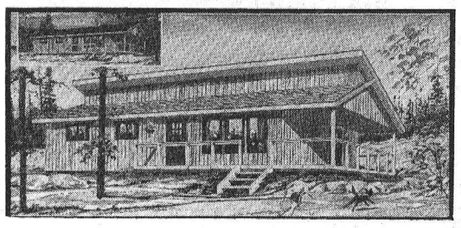

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Energy Efficient Insulation Standards

Minimum Insulation Levels*

Ceilings (flat)	RSI 7.0	(R 40)
Ceilings (cathedral and sloped)	RSI 6.3	(R 36)
Walls	RSI 3.3	(R 18.7)
Exposed floors	RSI 4.9	(R 28)
Basement walls exterior (down to footing) or Interior (down to floor)	RSI 1.8	(R 10)

*Canadian Electrical Association Double 'E' Insulation Standards

Thermal resistance values given refer only to the insulating material and not to the total thermal resistance value of the wall, ceiling, floor, etc. All insulation must meet CMHC, ASHRAE Guide, CSA Standard C2731 and Ontario Building Code requirements.

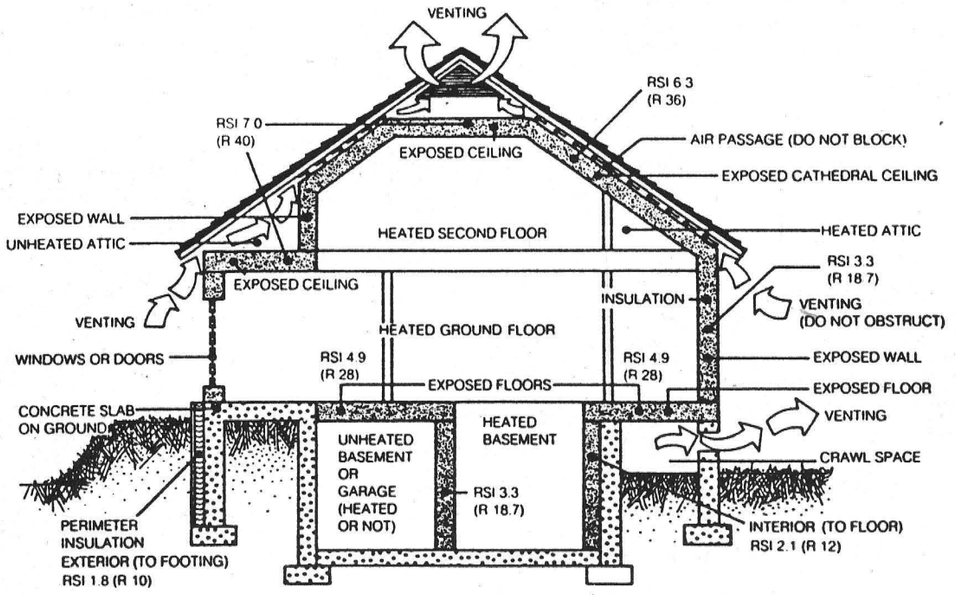
Fireplaces

All fireplaces shall be equipped with glass or metal doors and have tight fitting dampers. A separate fresh air intake is mandatory.

Windows and Glass Doors

Double glazing for all climate areas below 5,800 C degree days (10,500 FDD). (Double glass window or single glass with storm sash RSI 0.36 (R 2.04), 12 mm (1/2") air space and thermal break in metal frames.)

Triple glazing for climate areas exceeding 5800 C degree days (10,500 FDD). (Double glass with storm sash or triple glass prime construction RSI 0.45 (R 2.63) with two air spaces totalling a minimum of 12 mm (1/2") and thermal break in metal frames.)



All surfaces exposed to the outside air, to unheated areas or to a garage (heated or unheated) shall be insulated.

Doors (Non Glass)

Insulated door with thermal resistance of RSI 0.7 (R4) or uninsulated door plus storm door.

Heating

Electric hydronic, electric forced air, electric baseboard, electric hot water heat.

Air Quality

Air quality in homes can be assured with a positive, reliable mechanical ventilation system. The system should provide a continuous supply of ventilation air to each habitable room

1. A continuous supply of ventilation air at a rate of 5 L/s (10 cfm) for each habitable room, bathroom, and kitchen, and 10 L/s (20 cfm) to basements and utility rooms. The total continuous ventilation rate need not exceed 0.45 air changes per hour (based on the total house volume including any basement volume).

2. The ventilation system shall be capable of providing an additional 25 L/s (50 cfm) on an intermittent basis activated by a humidistat and manual override or timer switch.

3. Exhaust air capability of 25 L/s (50 cfm) for each bathroom and 50 L/s (100 cfm) for kitchen on an intermittent basis.

Ventilation system design and installation should be in accordance with the Canadian Home Builders' Association's R-2000 Home Program Design and Installation Guidelines for Ventilation Systems.

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Restore hardwoods to original beauty

Spring is a time of rebirth. One of the wonders of natural hardwood products is their remarkable ability to spring 'back to life' with proper refinishing. Despite the age of a piece, careful refinishing can restore the original beauty of hardwood furniture, cabinets, and architectural detailing whether the surface was stained or previously painted.

The three steps to proper refinishing are stripping away the existing finish, sanding and re-staining or painting. A clean, smooth, bare wood surface is a prerequisite before any new finish can be applied.

Most craftsmen and do-it-yourselfers agree that stripping is typically the most messy and time-consuming aspect of this process. Before you start, you'll want to gather together all the appropriate tools to complete the job. These include rubber gloves, fine steel wool, sandpaper, a putty knife and plenty of newspapers and clean rags.

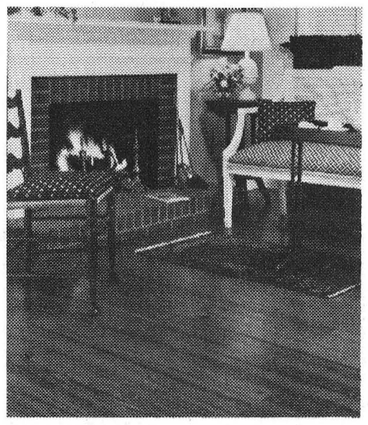
In the past, stripping away the existing finish down to the bare wood took a great deal of time because most wood stripping products require 15 to 20 minutes per application to work. Usually several applications of stripper are required, particularly if multiple layers of paints, varnishes or other finishes must be removed. In between applications, scraping and sanding is often advised to help loosen the finish.

Available in a paste formulation to eliminate dripping, the product can be applied to large areas at a time. Using this type of easy-to-use, fast-acting stripper can save a great deal of time and eliminate much of the hassle associated with wood refinishing.

Once the finish has been removed, the next step is sanding. Use a medium-grade sandpaper and fine (No. 0000) steel wool to achieve the smoothest surface possible. Be certain to brush or vacuum all dust from the wood surface and the entire area before applying any stains, paints, varnishes or other new finishes. It's always a good idea to work in a well-ventilated area whenever you're working on a wood finishing project.

When stripping and sanding have been completed, the refinishing process begins. A number of wood stains are available which can add richness and enhance the natural beauty of wood. After staining, you will want to apply a protective finish to the wood surface. You'll need to choose from a number of different types of coatings. These include varnishes, polyurethanes and tung oil finishes.

Varnish is a clear wood protector specially formulated to provide long-lasting finish with superior weather-



ability. It can be used on all types of wood surfaces to prevent whitening, fading, cracking and peeling. Polyurethane provides a long- lasting protecting finish that resists water and alcohol. It is available in either glass or matte finish. Used as a final step in the refinishing of wood, it will enhance the beauty of wood while giving it a hard, protective coating.

A tung oil finish is used to produce a hand-rubbed finish that will enhance the rich color, beauty and grain of the wood. Water and alcohol resistant, the oil is an easily applied protective coating that won't build up and leaves a beautiful satin-luster finish.

Ultralight barrier

Patio furniture made of vinyl and plastic can be severely damaged by the effects of harsh ultraviolet rays, ozone, severe temperature changes, and normal wear and tear. A quality vinyl protectant should be your first line of defense against these corrosive agents.

Protectants shield your furniture from ultraviolet light and also lubricate the surface, preventing fading, cracking and hardening. It is imperative that you purchase your protectant selectively. You should look for a protectant designed to go far beyond a mere surface treatment — it should penetrate porous vinyl and rubber surfaces and carry the protecting chemicals deep within the material being treated.

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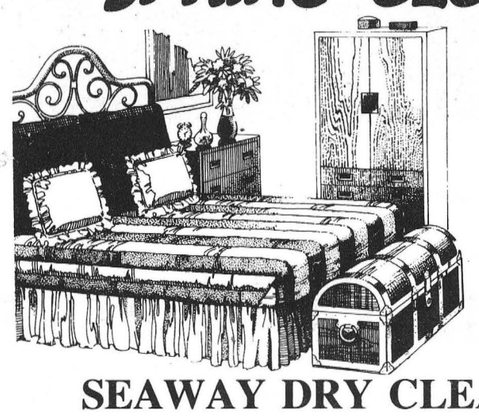

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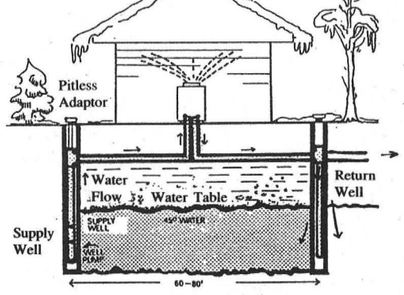

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Window treatments, such as this one highlighting a living room corner window arrangement, can take on a new dimension with a combination of pleated shades, vertical blinds and a balloon valance.

Environment-friendly products that grandmother used to use

For those concerned with the environment, as most of us are today, here is a list of natural products which clean just as effectively and less expensively than brand name cleaners with harmful, non-biodegradable chemicals:

White vinegar is good for cleaning windows as well as washing waxes and pesticides from fruit and vegetables.

Butter makes an excellent treatment for leather shoes and boots.

Pure castile soap is biodegradable and acts by dissolving rather than cutting up dirt. It is said to effectively wash woolens and silks, cure athlete's foot, and the peppermint type can be used as a natural mouthwash when diluted.

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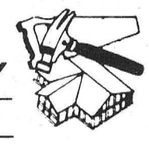

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Advice for achieving flawless job

When papering your walls, keep these helpful tips in mind:

- When hanging a large scale pattern in a room that has a fireplace, centre the first strip over the fireplace and hang to the right. Then go back and hang to the left. If you're going around the whole room, plan to end in an inconspicuous corner.
- Never 'wrap' a whole strip around inside corners, without cutting and realigning. It may look okay at first, but in a few weeks, wrinkles and creases might appear.
- When using no-match plain textured wallcoverings, reverse every other strip top to bottom for uniform color.
- Never use a seam roller on flocked wallcoverings. Gently tap the seams with the edge of a smoothing brush.
- Check the run numbers on your rolls before you start, to make sure they're the same, as color may vary slightly from run to run.
- If you're not going to paper into the inside of an arch or frameless window or door, trim the wallcovering with your razor one-quarter inch from the outside edge. This will prevent fraying or pulling from the outside edge.
- Ceilings, like walls, are not always 'true.' So plan to end the ceiling wallcovering on the less critical side of the room, perhaps above the entrance.
- When using the same pattern on the ceiling and walls, it can only be matched one way, so choose the direction most frequently looked at.

To match the pattern, trim the ceiling wallcovering, so there's a one-quarter inch overlap on the sidewall. Match the first sidewall strip at the ceiling line, overlapping two inches as usual. Smooth the strip down. To trim the overlap, score it with a pencil at the joint. Pull the wall covering back and cut on the scored line with scissors. Smooth it back down. It's matched!

- Where vinyl wallcoverings overlap in corners, at ceilings, etc., you'll probably need to use a vinyl-to-vinyl adhesive to make them stick together. Ask your dealer.

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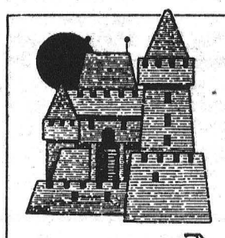

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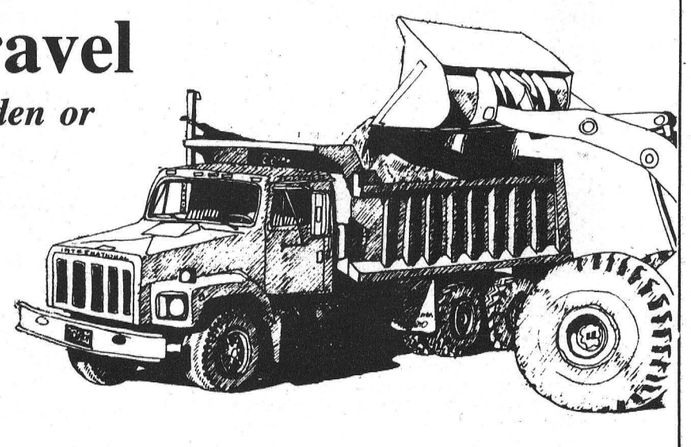

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BUYER'S CHECKLIST

Garden tractors: flexibility outweighs horsepower

Buying a lawn and garden tractor can be both exciting and exasperating.

It's exciting because garden tractors speed spring and summer cleanup tasks such as mowing, leaf bagging or even tilling your garden.

But it can be exasperating — especially if you purchase a tractor which does not meet your needs. Garden tractors cost more than most other outdoor power tools, but that doesn't mean the least expensive tractor is the best value.

Below is a listing of the most commonly asked garden tractor questions:

Do I need attachments?

Experienced tractor owners cite attachment flexibility as one of the most important purchase factors.

The best garden tractors should be able to operate other attachments such as larger mowing decks, tillers or snowthrowers.

Even if you never intend to purchase these attachments, having the capability to add on saves you from the time and expense of purchasing another garden tractor should you change your mind. Also, it increases the resale price of the tractor.

Can the mower and other attachments be easily installed?

Make sure the attachments are easily installed or taken off. It should take no more than a couple of minutes to remove most attachments.

Tractors with no-tool attachment hitch systems enable you to change attachments on the spot without the hassle of tools and complicated instructions.

Can the tractor do heavy-duty work?

Unlike other products, tractors aren't classified according to standard duty or durability ratings.

Experienced tractor owners look at two factors to determine the duty and longevity of a tractor — the engine and chassis.

Horsepower is not necessarily a gauge for engine durability. Instead, features such as a pressurized oil system, oil filters, solid state ignition and a cast-iron block increase engine life and performance.

Review the construction of the chassis. The most durable chassis have cast-iron front axles, a steel or angle-iron frame and transaxles with hardened steel gears.

Is it easy to operate?

A tractor can have all the attachment flexibility in the world, but if it's not easy to run, you'll never harness its full power.

Consider natural lighting

It's springtime — time for home repairs. But before undertaking a project, consider the amount and degree of sunlight a room will receive and choose a color scheme accordingly. For instance, light surfaces and furnishings work well in a sunny room, while intense colors from the red, yellow and orange parts of the spectrum can help cheer up northern rooms that get little light.

To tone down a room that gets too much light, consider cool blues and greens. Rough textures on ceilings or walls can also give a light-reducing effect.

One technique for remodeling is to start at the top for a fresh look. Recessed lighting, hanging plants and a new suspended ceiling to hide an old stained or cracked ceiling are all ideas to consider.

For example, a remodeled room looks great with textured white suspended ceiling panels and contrasting black grid system. (A grid system, attached to or 'suspended from' the existing ceiling, is what holds the new ceiling up. The panels rest in the grid.)

White panels in a black grid give the ceiling a striking, contemporary look that also helps reflect natural light. The ceiling panels can also be installed with a white grid.

For rooms that need extra lighting, compatible fluorescent fixtures and luminous panels can be positioned where needed. Furniture, artwork and decorative accessories seem vibrant under the soft, evenly diffused light.

A suspended ceiling can offer a lot more than good looks. An acoustical suspended ceiling helps muffle noises when family activities take place or the neighbors are over for a get- together while the kids are asleep upstairs. And washable panels are easy to maintain. Simply lift them out of the grid for cleaning.

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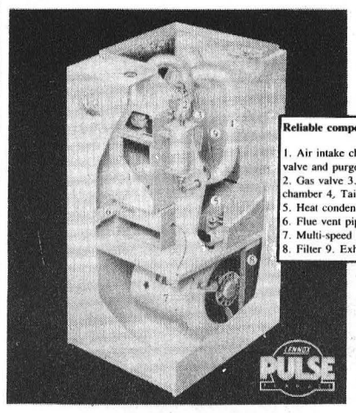
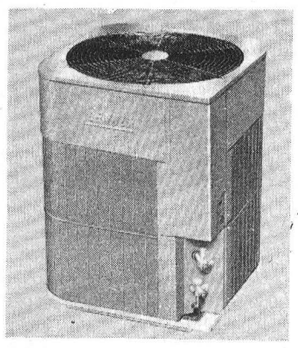


Unprecedented heating efficiency

The Lennox Pulse furnace is the most significant breakthrough in furnace design in over 40 years. It produces heat unlike any other furnace with greater efficiency than ever before possible.

LENNOX TAKES THE SIMMER OUT OF SUMMER



Lennox Air Conditioning

Lennox central air conditioning... Comfort, Economy, Value

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Take spring cleaning one room at a time

Spring is the natural time for cleaning, organizing and refreshing your home. Now is the time to begin doing the chores you're thinking about, before the kids get out of school and summer activities are in full swing. Here are ideas to get you inspired:

Clean windows first. Then let those fresh breezes blow! Sparkling windows and refreshing air will lessen the boredom of other household duties. So, put on some good music, grab your rubber gloves, and a bucket with your favorite cleaning supplies (white vinegar, water and newspapers will do the job), and go to work. Remember, window cleaning is lots easier if you do it when the sun isn't shining (to prevent streaking).

Don't let the whole house discourage you. Put one room in order, then move on. Begin where you spend lots of time, like the kitchen. Shelf liner comes in exciting new patterns, even a blue and white Copenhagen design to go with traditional blue on white dinnerware.

Arm yourself with the right cleaning tools. Look for brushes and brooms designed for the job you must do, with handles that are comfortable to hold.

Plan your strategy. Write down what you hope to accomplish as you tackle each room. Then check off finished projects. Ah, feels great doesn't it?

Kitchen tips: Place foods that leak (flour, sugar, crackers) and foods you want to keep crispy fresh in tight-sealing food containers for cabinets that don't attract insects and stay neat as a pin.

Attach a space-saving organizer to kitchen cabinet doors and walls to free other areas. Foil and waxed paper slip into wrap and bag organizers that easily mount to cabinet doors with screws. Similar organizers are available for cleaning supplies, brooms and mops, and your iron and iron board too. Just hang on a door, pantry wall or whatever you like. Zippo, new space!

Bedroom tips: Empty closets and drawers one by one, placing out-of-season contents in storage boxes. Special unberbed plastic boxes make use of this hidden space in an organized fashion. It is especially nice if the boxes are clear so you can see the contents. Cleaning is easy too, if you keep items contained with the lid on! It's a simple open and shut case!

Garage tips: Plastic containers with lids come to the rescue again to contain potting soils, charcoal briquettes, fertilizer and bird seed. No more spills. No more messy appearance. Line up the containers with a label (or use see-through boxes) and keep the garage looking sharp.

Special recycling containers that stack make it easy to contain aluminum cans, plastic bottles and glass. Rubbermaid's are made of recyclable plastics to doubly help the environment! They also have ultra-violet inhibitors so containers will resist cracking and breaking in harsh sunlight (one of plastic's worst enemies).

So let the sun shine in on all your labor. You deserve a spotlight for all your work!

It can help to be square

Professionals and avid do-it-yourselfers alike use "squares" to perform complicated calculations, and to ensure the correct determination of various angles.

According to experts, a carpenter square — a flat piece of steel or aluminum cut into an "L" shape with graduated markings — is ideal for determining the length of any rafter for any given roof pitch; for figuring the volume of a board; finding the circumference and centre of a circle; calculating proportions; and laying out ellipses, mitres and hopper joints.

Combination squares, with an adjustable metal or plastic handle, are designed for marking right angles; making longitudinal lines on boards; finding depth of holes; making 45-degree angles; and for levelling and plumbing surfaces.

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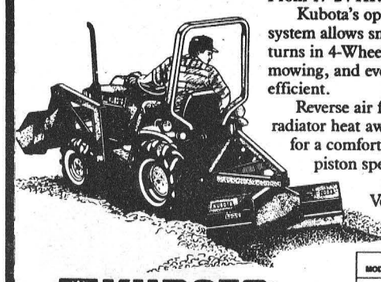
The Kubota B-50 Series. Versatile compact tractors.



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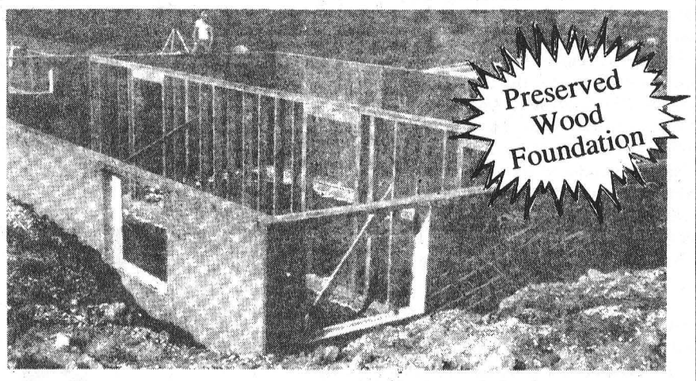

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The entry is your home's first impression. Top designers agree that homeowners should try to make guests feel welcome with warm colors, including wood tones in solid hardwood furniture and flooring.

Outdoor security lighting tips

Outdoor lighting is one of the most effective ways to deter potential burglars.

New low-voltage outdoor lighting systems are very safe and easy to install. We offer the following tips for effective security lighting.

- Make sure there's enough light in your yard to identify the color of a thief's clothing and hair.
- Use spotlights and floodlights because they emit more light than decorative accent fixtures. Choose lights with a variable focus beam to intensify light in unit areas. By adjusting the focus, you can spread the light out to cover the entire front porch or concentrate it at the front door.
- Look for halogen bulbs. The 12-volt halogen light bulbs emit more light than conventional bulbs.
- Keep bushes and shrubs pruned away from the house.
- Eliminate all shadows around windows, doors and corners.
- Integrate motion detectors into your outdoor lighting system to surprise and frighten would-be thieves away.
- Integrate audio alarms into your outdoor lighting system as well.
- Most outdoor lighting systems have lighting timers which automatically turn on the lights.
- Purchase a remote lighting control similar to your garage door opener.

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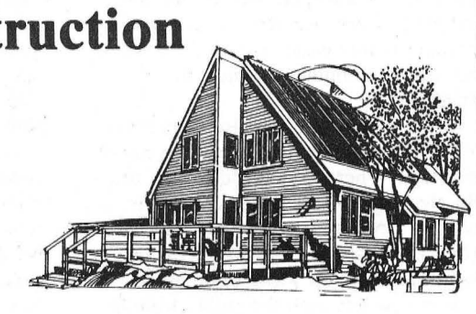

Light up the night

Imagine spending thousands of dollars on a work of art, only to lock it away in a closet every evening.

It sounds silly, yet many homeowners invest as much money in their landscaping. After the sun goes down, their outdoor living areas become shrouded in darkness.

One solution is the addition of a low-cost, do-it-yourself outdoor lighting system.

Outdoor lighting can extend the amount of time homeowners can spend outside. It can highlight the most beautiful features of their homes and landscaping. Or, outdoor lighting can lead guests safely to your front door.

The assortment of low-voltage outdoor lighting products for the do-it-yourselfer has never been greater. And costs have remained steady. You can light most front and back yards for $50 to $300.

Newly introduced fixture styles include redwood deck and path lights for modern architecture or traditional Cape Cod-style homes.

We offer the following planning tips for effective outdoor lighting:

- To determine the focal points you wish to light and the lighting angles, direct a flashlight beam at the objects.
- Remember less is better. The object is not to simulate sunlight, but to accent key elements of your landscape.
- Accent lights are best suited for paths, steps and perimeter lighting.
- Floodlights and spotlights are best suited for highlighting landscape and architectural features.
- To create depth and drama, integrate both well-lit and dark areas into your lighting design.
- A single, direct source light flattens objects, making them look two-dimensional. Grazing or washing light from different angles onto the objects creates shadows, giving them a three-dimensional appearance.
- If you're lighting deciduous trees or shrubs, place spotlights at the base to showcase tree structure. This technique is called uplighting.
- If you're lighting coniferous trees, place spotlights to the sides of the trees to illuminate the form of the tree. This is called sidelighting.
- To light outdoor entertaining areas, attach spotlights to overhanging tree branches or house eaves. This technique is called moonlighting.
- Consider decorative accent lights for warm, intimate lighting around poolside and deck areas.



Spring
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Cast off winter's doldrums with a breath of fresh air

The rite of spring cleaning is probably as old as spring itself. After a long, hard winter, the first warm breeze of the year casts our surroundings in a fresh light and stirs our instincts to rejuvenate and improve our nests, to plant and make new starts. The familiar environment we usually take for granted, its dust and dirt, suddenly becomes as intolerable as the thick wool sweaters we hibernated in all winter.

If you are considering redecorating one or all of the rooms in your house, it's helpful to make some mental notes before making any purchases or hiring contractors.

Remember that every room has a focal point. In the living room, it may be the fireplace. In another, visitors might be drawn to the window. Always identify the strong visual elements in a room and be sure to complement them — with mirrors or matching or contrasting colors, for example — rather than crowd them or detract from their effects.

Often minor, inexpensive decorations can revitalize a room you thought needed a major overhaul. Here are some inexpensive, yet versatile decorating elements to consider:

LIGHTING

Not all light bulbs need to be soft white, which, contrary to their name are rather harsh. Yellow or golden light is not as blinding and uses less wattage. Golden light even makes a nice substitute for candlelight since it provides a similar warm glow.

Rooms that are meant for relaxation rather than work should not have overhead or fluorescent lighting. Both tire the eyes. Track lights are a nice addition to any room, especially the living room, where the lights can be pointed in different directions to illuminate artwork, photographs, or a bouquet of fresh flowers.

BORDERS AND TROMPE L'OEIL

Decorative borders that run along the top of the walls can be pasted on in a short time. They come in a variety of motifs such as Ionic columns, floral patterns and trompe l'oeil, and are an inexpensive way to add character to a room.

FABRICS, GLASS AND MIRRORS

If all new furniture is out of the question financially, recovering or simply covering tables and armchairs with a fabric that matches carpeting and drapes might do the trick.

Wooden tables become elegant when covered with a fitted piece of glass. Glass shelves are a light, airy, unobtrusive addition. And why not get more use out of your crystal bowls by filling each with potpourri and leaving them permanently throughout the house?

If one room or your entire apartment is just too small or too dark, mirrored tiles can be a solution. They come in a variety of sizes and colors and can cover as much or as little wall space as desired. Or, to make a room seem double its actual size, place a standing mirror in a corner from floor to ceiling.

A SENSE OF STYLE

It is often said that the most fashionably dressed women with the most developed sense of style are never the wealthiest. Because they cannot permit themselves to buy every trendy article of clothing that catches their eye, they shop painstakingly for the perfect sweater or shoe that will see them through several seasons. The same principle applies to home decorating. It's the artistic eye of the resident, not the wallet, that makes for a beautiful home.

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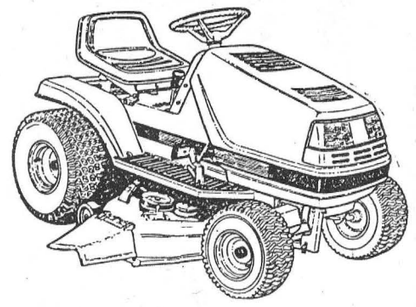

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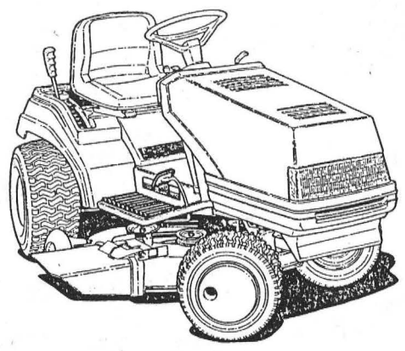

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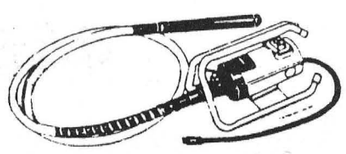

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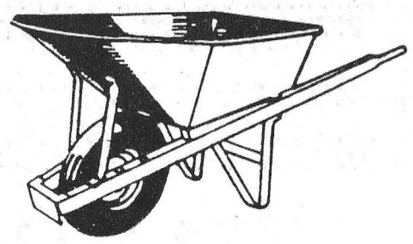

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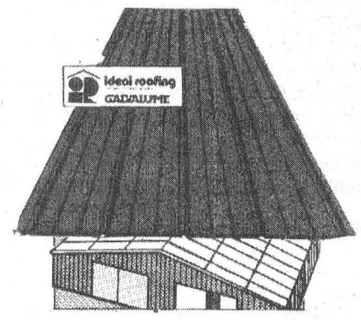

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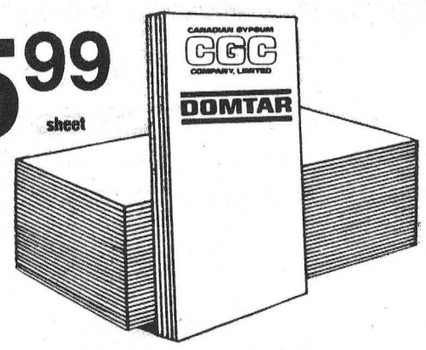

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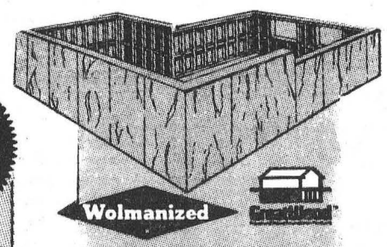

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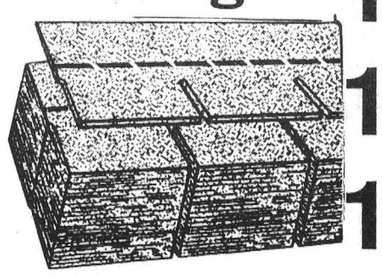

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