

S·P·R·I·N·G HOME IMPROVEMENT G·U·I·D·E

Supplement to the Winchester Press
Wednesday, April 14, 1993

Investigating mysteries of paint failures

It's criminal when the life of your house paint is cut short by problems like peeling and flaking.

If your home has suffered such a fate or fallen victim to some other paint failure, get to the bottom of the mystery. With a little detective work, you can find out what went wrong and prevent a repeat offense.

Here are valuable clues about the source of some common problems on painted wood siding.

Peeling Paint. If your exterior paint is peeling away from your siding, the culprit is probably moisture. Peeling results when wet wood swells under paint, causing the paint film to loosen, crack and peel.

Water can reach the wood in many ways. It can, for example, seep in through uncaulked joints, deteriorated caulking or a leaky roof. Or, moisture buildup can occur in rain gutters filled with ice, leaves or debris, leading to seepage under roofing shingles.

Another possible source is excessively humid air inside the home that works its way out. This can originate from a bathroom shower area or an unvented clothes dryer, for example.

To help prevent your paint from peeling, take corrective steps to eliminate such moisture.

Blistering. Bubbles or blisters in your paint can eventually lead to peeling, so they can't be ignored. What causes them? Heat or moisture is usually the culprit.

Painting in direct sunshine, for example, can result in blistering — especially when applying a dark-colored paint.

Moisture can cause blisters in two ways:

- First, excess moisture from within the home can build up behind the paint, giving rise to blisters. (This is less of a problem with latex paints, which allow water vapor to escape without affecting the paint film.)
- Second, dew or rainfall can sometimes make latex paints blister, especially if the surface preparation is inadequate or if the paint is not of a high quality.

Checking. Characterized by a pattern of short, narrow breaks in the top layer of paint, checking usually develops if the paint loses its elasticity.

This sometimes occurs when the underlying layers of paint are oil-based products, which in time generally are not as flexible as latex paints With age, they can become brittle and fail to expand and contract when temperatures rise or fall. As the wood swells, the added stress can result in checking of the paint.

Alligatoring. A reptilian scale pattern on your paint can develop in several ways.

Often, so-called "alligatoring" is caused by the inability of paint to bond to a glossy coating beneath it. Or, it can be due to the application of an extremely hard coating over a soft primer...or because the wood was recoated before the undercoat was dry.

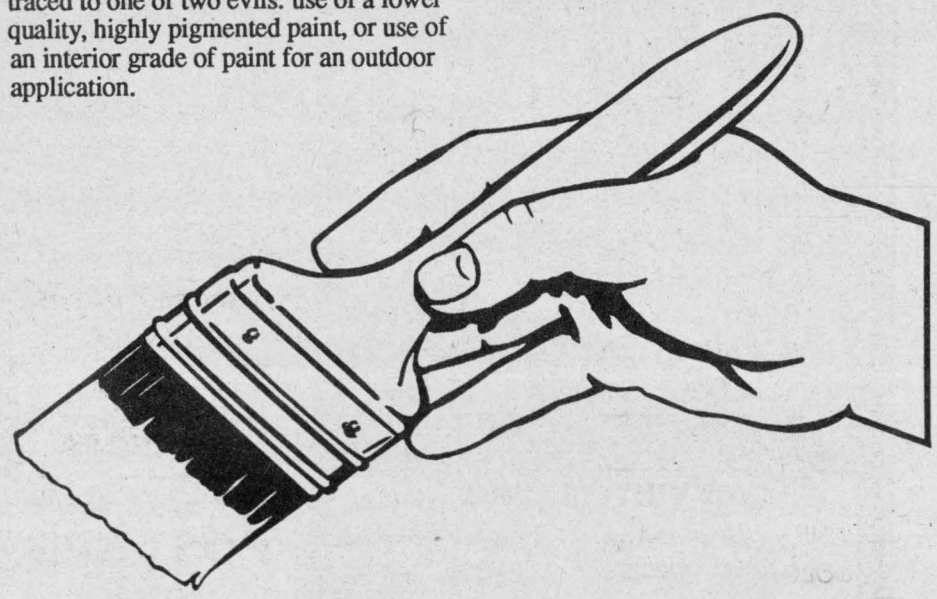
Even natural aging of oil-based paints can cause this failure, especially in extreme freeze-thaw climates, where wood siding is continually expanding and contracting, absorbing moisture and drying out. This can result in a loss of paint film elasticity and ultimately lead to alligatoring.

Chalking. This condition occurs when a fine powder forms on the surface of a paint film. Although this is a normal, desirable way for the paint film to wear, too much chalking is undesirable, since it can result in a fading of the paint color, chalk run-down over another surface, and excessive erosion.

Most often, extreme chalking can be traced to one of two evils: use of a lower quality, highly pigmented paint, or use of an interior grade of paint for an outdoor application.

Discoloration. Often, this is due to the formation of mildew, a fungus that resembles dirt. Humidity, moisture and warm weather are the key contributors to mildew. Thick shrubbery near the home can worsen the problem by shading the siding and blocking air flow.

Another form of discoloration is stain-through from woods like cedar and redwood. If you don't apply a quality latex or oil-based stain resistant primer before painting, tannins from these "staining" woods can bleed through and mar a paint job. Latex paints are particularly vulnerable to this staining if an appropriate primer is not used.



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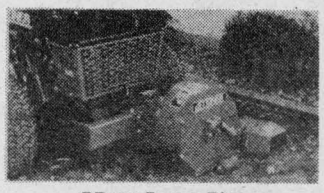
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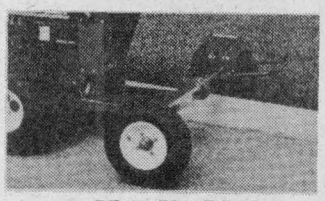
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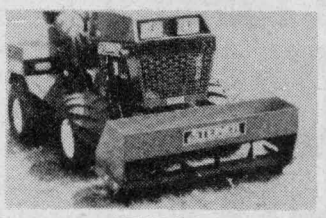
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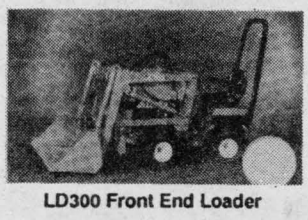
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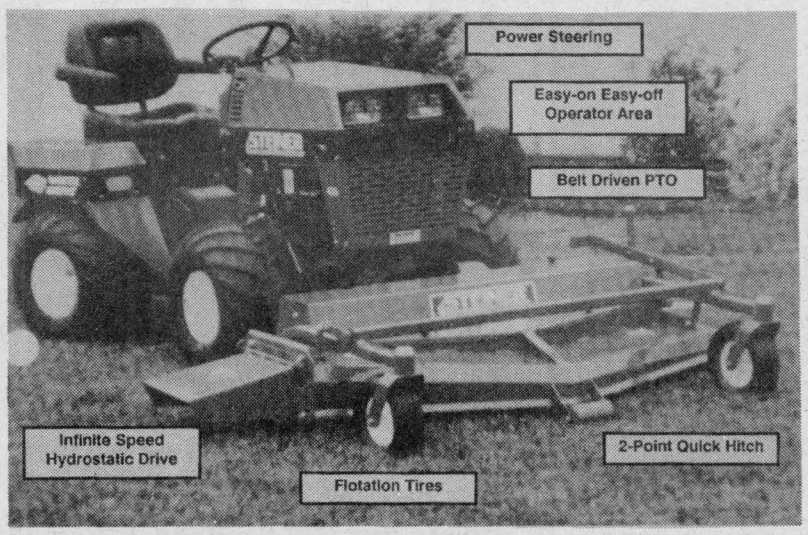


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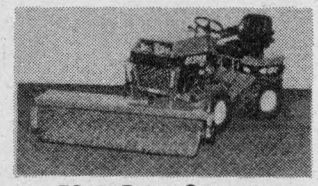
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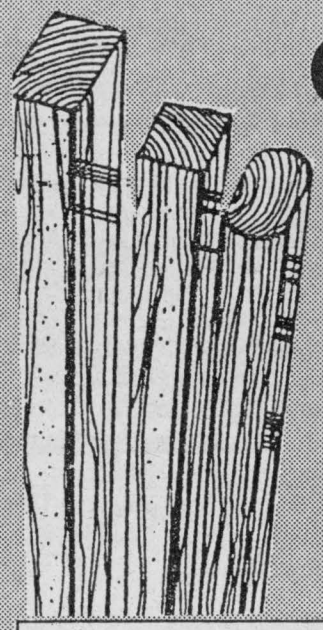

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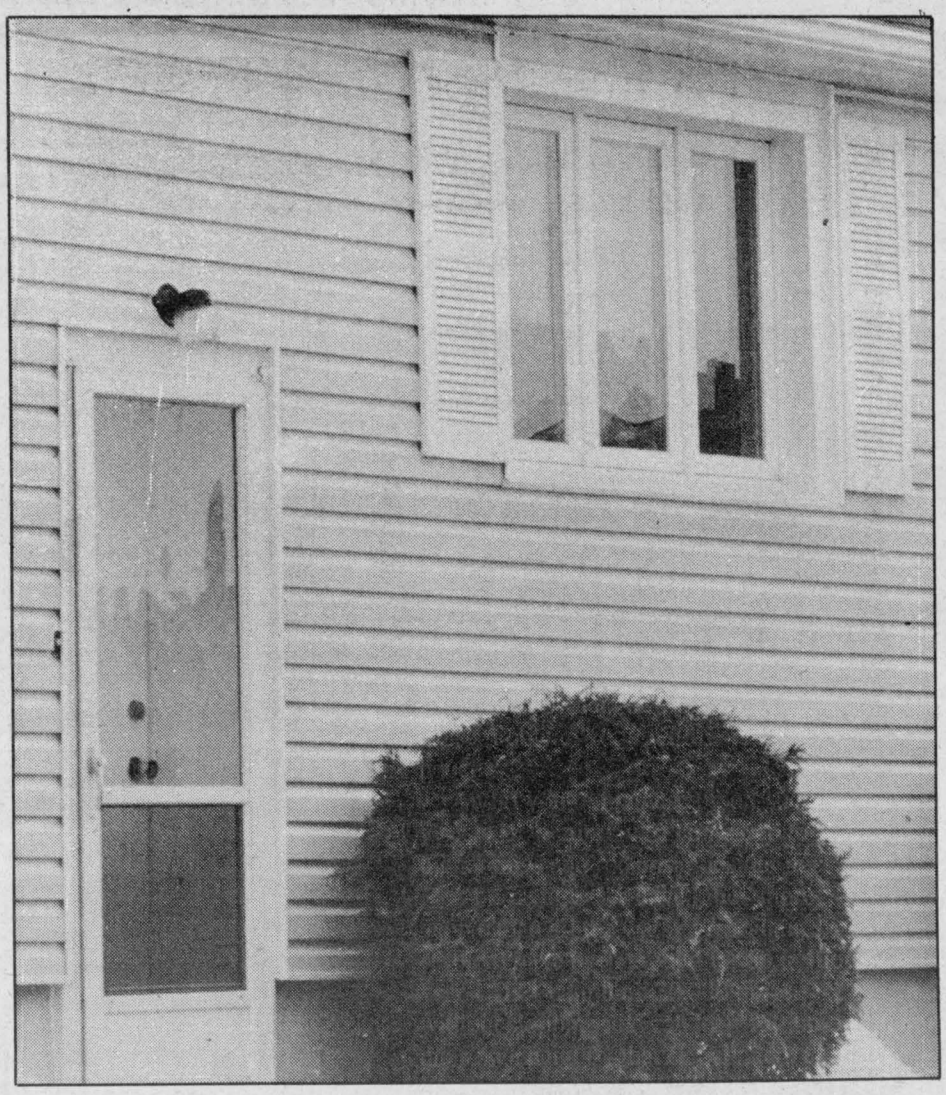


Low maintenance

Low maintenance and energy efficiency are factored into the selection of new windows, doors and exterior coverings. Press staff photo

Stands test of time

Whether your tastes are slanted toward traditional, country or contemporary, solid hardwood furniture of any style can add beauty and warmth to your home. And isn't that why people buy home furnishings in the first place?
U.S. hardwoods like oak, ash, hickory, cherry, maple, walnut and many others can be crafted into any style of furniture and finished to achieve any look you desire.

TRADITIONAL

Traditional furniture encompasses 17th, 18th and 19th century designs. Sometimes called "court furniture," much of it was designed for Europe's royalty and has been associated with formality and elegance. Examples of traditional furniture are the English Queen Anne and Victorian; and the French Louis XIV, XV and XVI.

American Traditional, also called Eighteenth Century American, is a semi-formal look adapted from elaborate English and French court styles to fit the simpler, less ceremonial Colonial American way of life.

COUNTRY OR PROVINCIAL

While elegant, formal furniture was being created for royalty, simplified versions were produced for those living in the provinces, thus the style was dubbed Provincial.

Colonial and Early American furniture, which could be called American Provincial, was influenced by English and French Provincial furniture.

But Colonial living conditions forced American furniture makers to produce simple, functional styles. Ladder-back chairs with cane and rush seats were popular, as were trestle tables, simple chests and corner cupboards.

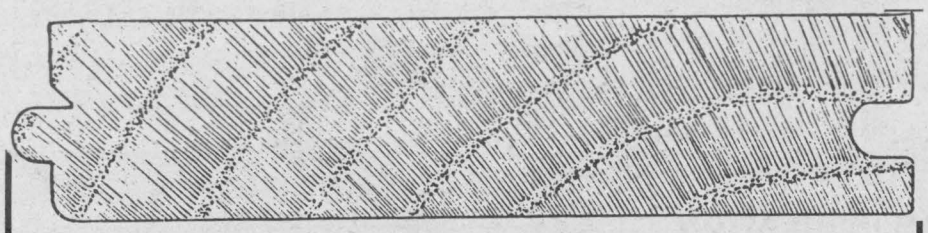
Shaker style furniture greatly influenced the American furniture styles of the time.

Developed from the mid-1700s to the mid-1800s by the religious sect of the same name, Shaker furniture features clean, simple lines. Craftsmanship was the primary concern. The Shakers used only the best lumber — all knot-free solid wood — to craft simple, well-proportioned pieces.

CONTEMPORARY

The third general classification of furniture is Contemporary. This style fuses simple forms like soft curves and rounded edges with beautiful woods, either stained or left natural.

Contemporary should not be confused with what some people call Modern — furniture that tends to have straight, uninviting lines using steel, glass, marble and stiff leather.



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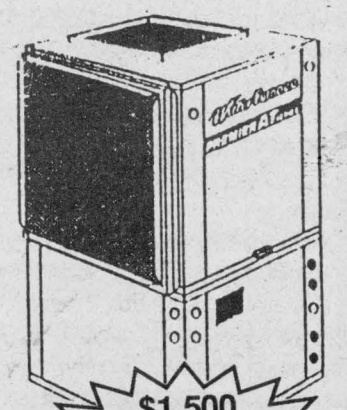

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Paint with confidence

(NU)—Painting your home can be one of the most creative and affordable ways to express your personality and taste. More homeowners than ever are choosing to give their home unique individuality with paint, and today, painting is the number one do-it-yourself project.

Using quality paint is important for a look that lasts. Working with leading brand names provides do-it-yourself painters with added confidence when selecting the paint for a project. To achieve the best results, all products should be from a single supplier.

Manufacturers create products that are compatible with their own lines. To ensure your satisfaction, most reputable manufacturers also provide guarantees with their products.

Choosing the right color combination for your home is the key to satisfying results. The experts recommend working with today's sophisticated color palettes and some creativity to develop a look that is right for your home. One tip is to use color combinations that complement the unique architectural style of your home. For example, muted Colonial Williamsburg tones work well on traditional homes, a dramatic Victorian home can carry off multi-colored accents and a stucco home can reflect a warm Southwest color scheme. Creative use of color can also give a more standard home its own style, setting it apart from the rest of the houses on the block. Coordinated trim and strategically placed accent colors can make a real difference.

With quality products and creativity, this major do-it-yourself project can be fun, affordable and long-lasting.

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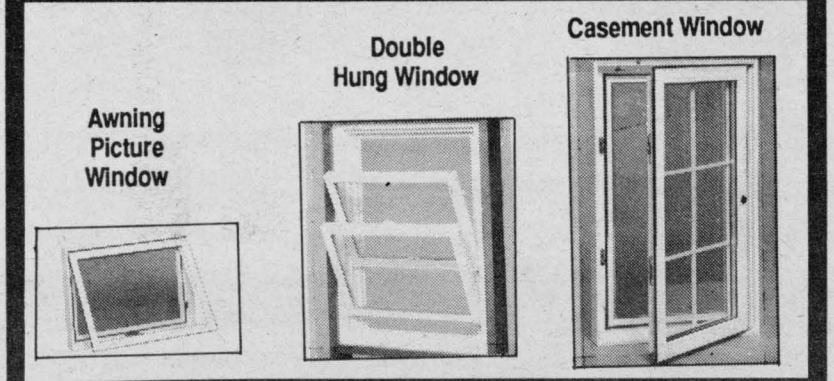

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Improve air quality

Jennifer didn't share her family's level of enthusiasm about warm weather's approach because along with picnics and beach trips, spring and summer bring her more wheezing and sneezing.

Jennifer suffers from allergies. Pollen, dust and spores in the air can turn breathing into hard work.

As many allergy sufferers know, clean air helps alleviate symptoms.

While nothing can be done to cleanse outdoor air, allergy sufferers can take steps to improve the quality of indoor air.

One effective method is an air cleaner. By removing pollen, spores and dust from the household air, high-efficiency air cleaners create a more allergen-free environment. Air cleaners come as portable or whole house units.

There are two types of whole-house air cleaners: high-efficiency media and electronic. If made by a reputable manufacturer, either one can remove up to 99 percent of airborne dust, pollen, mold and spores. These air cleaners stop the tiniest particles—the kind that escape vacuum cleaners or ordinary filters.

Media-type air cleaners use no electricity and require media replacement about once a year. Electronic air cleaners need regular cleaning to maintain efficiency.

Not all allergens come from outside. One of allergy sufferers' worst enemies is the dust mite, which flourishes in carpeted, damp areas, such as basements. Vacuuming is not an effective way to remove these critters, but there are other ways to get at them:

- Put drapes and curtains in the dryer on the fluff cycle.
- Remove carpets from basements and other damp areas.
- Cover mattresses and box springs with plastic.
- Purchase a high-efficiency media air cleaner for your heating and cooling system.



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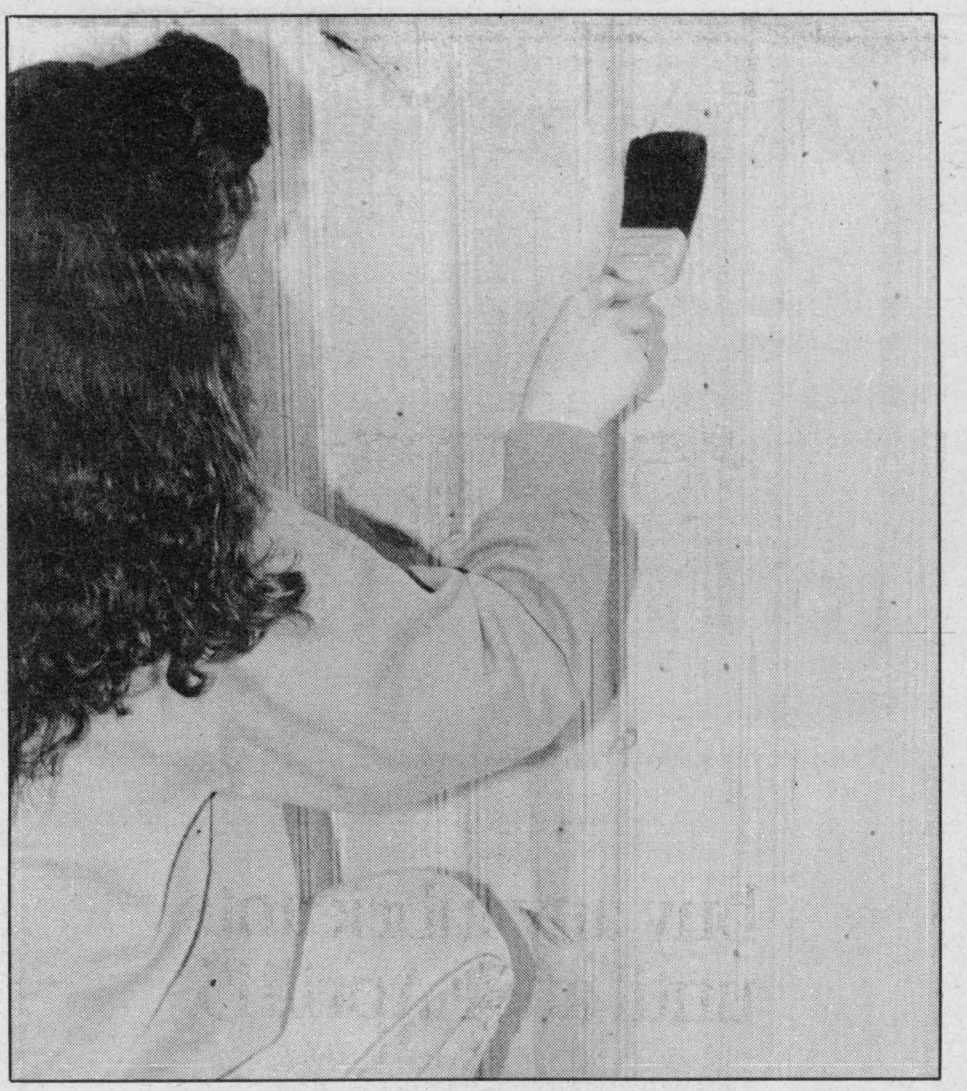

Wall protecting

Staining tongue-in-groove pine panelling keeps walls cleaner and new looking. *Press staff photo*

Ask an expert

(NU)—Exterior painting is one of the most popular do-it-yourself projects today. To take the guesswork out of this home improvement project, experts offer these answers to the most frequently asked questions about exterior painting:

Q: What is the square-feet-per-gallon ratio?

A: On a smooth surface, 350 to 400 square feet per gallon should be obtained. Use less paint on textured or porous surfaces.

Q: Can aluminum or vinyl siding be painted?

A: Both aluminum and vinyl siding can be painted with a good-quality exterior latex paint. Thorough surface preparation is recommended to remove chalking and other surface imperfections.

Q: Why can't I use house and trim paint on my deck?

A: House and trim paint is not designed to withstand traffic or standing water. To paint an interior or exterior horizontal surface, an interior/exterior porch and floor enamel is recommended.

Q: Which is better—oil or latex paint?

A: A good-quality latex topcoat will be more durable in most situations and last longer than an oil-based paint. Acrylic latex tends to retain its color and sheen longer. It is also more tolerant of surface expansion.

Bob Jarvis



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When conserving water every little drop counts

(NU)—Every Canadian uses 60–80 gallons of water a day in the home—most of it to operate bathrooms, washing machines and dishwashers.

But during the summer months, water usage increases as people use even more water to maintain lawns and gardens.

During times of drought, water systems may have difficulty handling this increased demand, and water must sometimes be rationed.

To avoid rationing, and help their water systems, consumers should implement simple household conservation practices.

Nearly 75 percent of household water is used in the bathroom, where the most wasteful fixture is the toilet.

Toilets manufactured before 1980 use between five and seven gallons per flush. In a household of four, the toilet can use 80–112 gallons of water each day.

To reduce the amount of water used by the toilet, consumers can install a displacement device, which maintains the water level in the toilet, but uses less water.

To create a simple displacement device, place pebbles in a quart-sized plastic milk bottle. Placing two of these simple devices in your toilet tank can reduce total household water use by 20 percent, or 12–16 gallons per person.

Another method for saving water in the bathroom is to install a low-flow shower head. Standard shower heads use between five and seven gallons of water per minute, and during an average shower can use up to 35 gallons of water.

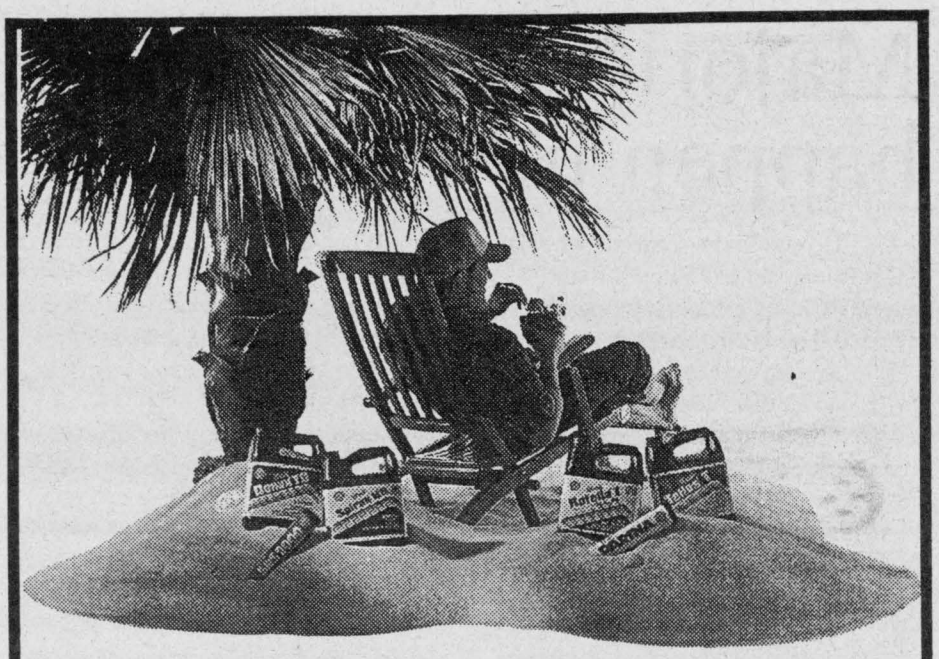
Installing a low-flow shower head is relatively inexpensive, delivers water with just as much force as a standard shower head and uses only two to three gallons per minute.

Washing machines may use up to 14 percent of the water in a home. Most washers use 32 to 59 gallons of water per cycle, depending on the size of the load.

Washing machines with adjustable water levels allow consumers to use only the amount of water they need to wash their clothes. If a machine does not have adjustable water levels, only full loads should be washed.

Wash only full loads in dishwashers too. They use about 20 gallons of water per cycle. When shopping for new dishwashers, consumers should consider an energy-saving model, which uses 25–30 percent less water and also requires less electricity.

Following these simple tips, conservation-conscious consumers can save a lot of water, and reduce stress on their water systems.



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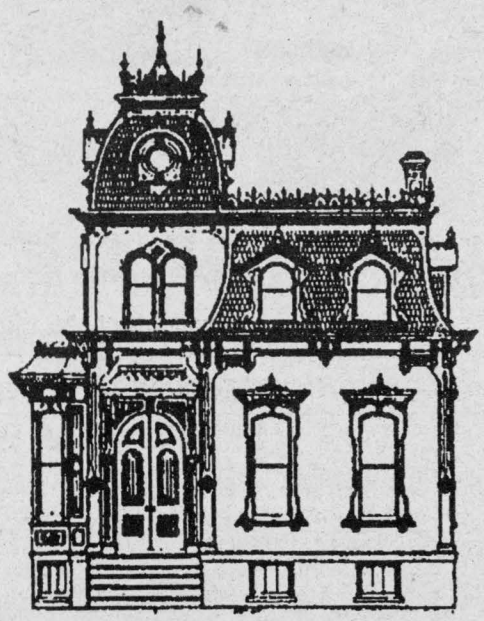

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Majority of accidents happen in the home

(NU)—Do you know someone who has fallen from a ladder? Slipped in the shower? Closed a door on a finger? Bumped their head against an overhang?

Chances are you know people who have done all these things and have received other injuries in their homes. The majority of accidents happen in the home.

Here are some tips to lessen the dangers:

• Keep hallways and stairs well lighted and clear of objects. If stairs have carpet, make sure it is secure. Every stairway should have at least one continuous railing. Remove throw rugs from landings.

• Doors should open, close and lock properly. Windows and screens also need to be checked.

• When working from a ladder, avoid overreaching. Keep your hips within the vertical rails of the ladder.

• Install night lights in bedrooms. Don't pile laundry in an area where people frequently walk.

• In the bathroom, never operate electrical gadgets near water. In the tub, use a mat or install a durable anti-slip material to keep your balance. Other kinds are available for stairs, ladders and even to place beneath your shoes.

• Scalding water can cause serious burns. Check the water temperature and lower it to 120 degrees F. Never leave children unattended in a tub or pool.

• Open buckets of water and liquid/semi-paste building materials should not be left unattended. Young children are curious, and they can fall in.



A clean start

Painting should begin with cutting in — brush painting the edges of the wall, before continuing with the roller. Press staff photo

Keep wood looking good

(NU)—Canadians are going back to basics. And this return to the traditional has made the most "basic" of furnishings, wood, more popular than ever—for floors, trim, paneling, furniture and cabinets.

Most wood is finished with a sealer to protect it from damage and give it luster. However, routine, thorough cleaning is important to maintain these finishes.

The proper way to keep wood looking its best is regular washing with a gentle cleaner designed for finished wood surfaces. Mild cleaning agents rather than harsh detergents safely clean wood without damaging finishes.

Tips for cleaning wood surfaces:

• Select the proper applicator. Use a soft cloth, sponge or mop for lightly and moderately soiled surfaces. Fine steel wool works on heavily soiled areas.

• Remove excess liquid from the applicator.

• Clean only a small area at a time, rubbing gently for lightly soiled surfaces, firmly for heavily soiled areas. Always rub in the direction of the wood grain.

• Dry immediately with a soft, clean cloth.

• Buff, if necessary, to restore the natural glow. Occasionally use a light polish for a quick shine.

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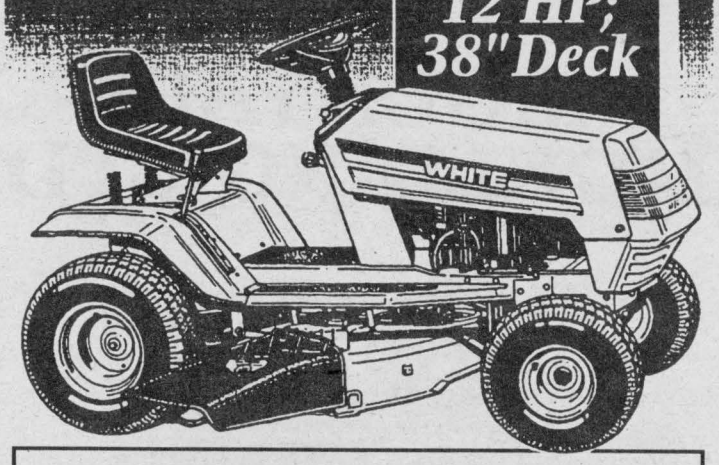

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Which sheen is for where?

When choosing an interior paint, it's important to select not only the right color, but also the right sheen. Obviously, a paint's sheen can affect the look of the paint job, but what's less well known is that it can affect paint performance, too.

Although manufacturers use a variety of names for the different paint sheens, most products fall into one of four broad categories. Here are some pluses and minuses of each:

Flat Paints. Because they are non-reflective, flat paints tend to hide surface imperfections, so they are good for general use on walls and ceilings. However, it can be difficult to remove stains from flat paints, so it's best to use them in low traffic areas.

Eggshell or Satin Paints. As the name implies, these paints have a slightly more lustrous appearance than flat paints; they also resist stains better. Eggshell finishes are well-suited for wall surfaces in halls, bathrooms and playrooms, or for trim where only slight sheen is desired.

Semigloss Paints. Having a higher sheen than eggshell, these paints are even more stain-resistant and even easier to clean. They are excellent for use on walls and woodwork that are subject to wear, including kitchen and bathroom walls, hallways, children's rooms and playrooms, doors, windows and trim.

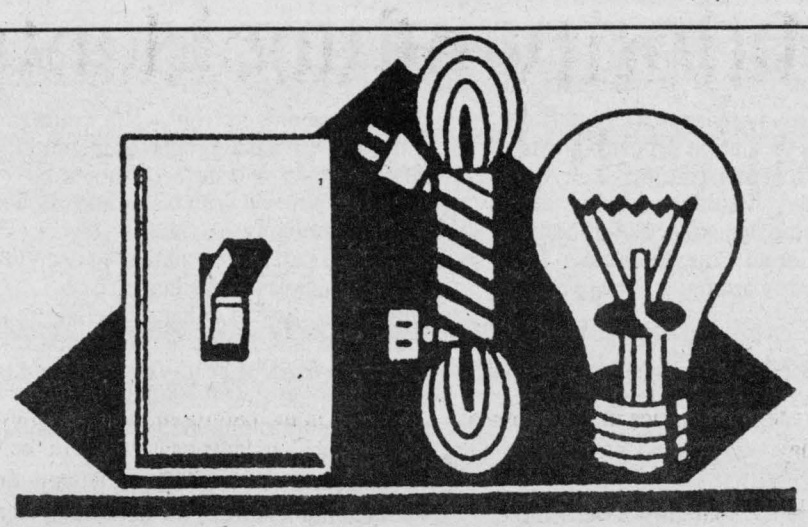
Gloss Paints. These paints are tougher, more durable, more stain-resistant and easier to clean than paints with less sheen, but their highly reflective appearance causes them to highlight surface imperfections.

Gloss paints can be used for kitchen and bathroom walls, banisters and railings, kitchen cabinets, door jambs, window sills and other trim. Some grades are also recommended for use on furniture.



It's important to note that semigloss and gloss paints are also available as "enamels," meaning they have a higher binder content than other types of paint.

Enamels are harder, tougher, more stain-resistant and more washable than other interior paints, so they too are ideal for creating a high sheen or glossy look in high-traffic areas. (When painting bathrooms and kitchens, keep in mind that latex enamels have better mildew resistance than oil-based enamels.)



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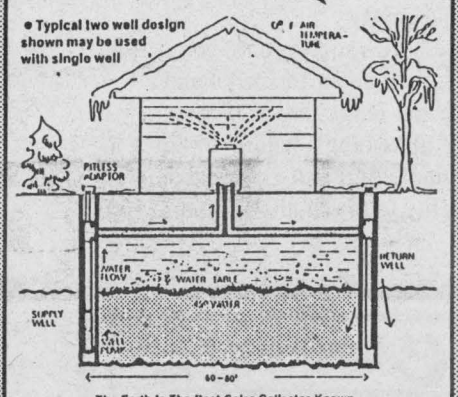

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Interior painting is as easy as one-two-three

There are many reasons why interior painting is the nation's most popular home improvement project.

Painting can quickly and dramatically transform the appearance of a room, an apartment or an entire home; it's personally rewarding; it's inexpensive; and it's fun.

Moreover, interior painting is easy. Even novices can often get professional painting results by following just three simple rules.

RULE NUMBER ONE: PREPARE THE SURFACE PROPERLY

Good paint performance depends on good paint adhesion, and paint adheres best to surfaces that are clean and sound.

Before picking up a brush or roller, it's important to make sure the surface is "inviting" to the paint.

Accumulated dirt, dust and grime should be removed from walls, ceilings and trim with a detergent-water solution. After washing, the surfaces should be thoroughly rinsed with water and allowed to dry completely.

Next, a putty knife should be used to fill cracks, holes and other surface imperfections with either spackling compound or a quality acrylic caulk. If spackle is used, after it is dry it should be sanded smooth and flush with the surface; caulk should be smoothed and feathered as it is applied.

Finally, if walls or ceilings have water stains or other serious discoloration, then before painting, it may be necessary to coat them with a latex or oil-based stain-blocking primer to prevent the stains from bleeding through the new paint.

RULE NUMBER TWO: USE ONLY TOP QUALITY PAINT

Compared with ordinary interior paints, top quality finishes are much easier to work with and offer superior long-term performance.

In terms of application benefits, top quality paints won't spatter or tend to show brush marks. And since they hide better than ordinary paints, a single coat is often sufficient to give a great-looking paint job and save on time, labor and cost.

Top quality interior paints also are tougher and more durable than ordinary interior paints. They resist fading, yellowing and staining. And even if they do get spotted or stained, discoloration can often be washed off without damaging the finish.

RULE NUMBER THREE: INVEST IN HIGH QUALITY TOOLS

To get the most from a top quality interior paint, it should be applied with high quality brushes and rollers. Not only will they apply the paint more evenly, but they will also make the job more effortless.

The best brushes tend to be well balanced, hold a lot of paint and apply the paint evenly. Look for brushes with tightly packed bristles and test them for springiness. And be sure they don't fan too much.

When applying the more popular latex or water-based interior paints, it's important to use brushes and rollers with synthetic bristles and covers. They'll maintain the proper stiffness and keep their shape regardless of the amount of water they're exposed to.

Most oil-based or alkyd paints can be applied with brushes and rollers made either of synthetic or natural materials.

Remember, interior painting can be as simple as one-two-three. But there are no shortcuts.

Brighten up the bathroom

The bathroom is often the most overlooked room in the house, but with little effort, it can inexpensively be given its own style and character.

If you plan to start from scratch, it's a good idea to measure the room and draw a plan on paper before actually buying anything. What you buy will depend upon your taste, space and cost.

Carpeting is an inexpensive way to add to the general warmth and comfort of the bathroom. In fact, you may use pieces of carpeting you have left over from other areas of the house.

A towel ring or small rail will take care of another problem, and pretty towels in the right color scheme will add to the effect.

If you have a shelf over the basin, add a pretty basket with colorful guest soaps and hand cream.

Accessories such as a mirror, a toilet brush holder, an air freshener and a waste-paper basket are also necessary parts of furnishing a bathroom. Stick to these simple tips, and give added personality to the smallest room in your home!

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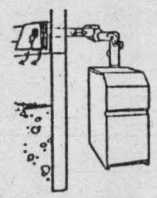

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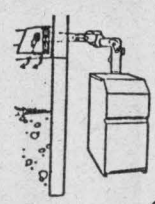

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Control unwanted noise

(NU)—With more people entertaining and staying home these days, a quiet atmosphere takes on a new priority.

To help combat the noises—produced by everything from appliances inside to sirens outside—more consumers are looking for ways to "soundproof" their homes.

If you are building a new home, or renovating or adding to your existing house, you have a perfect opportunity to add soundproofing. One of the most economical ways to accomplish this is with basic home insulation. It can be relatively simple and inexpensive, and can add greatly to the comfort and the value of your home.

How To Control Noise Level

Materials placed in walls and ceilings can provide a barrier to sound from the outside and from room to room. Some materials, like lead, reflect sound energy but aren't practical for wrapping rooms. Other alternatives exist, but experts say fiberglass insulation is best because it absorbs sound and saves energy.

When most people think about insulation, they think about insulating the exterior walls. This is important for controlling sound from the outside. But insulating the interior walls is just as important for reducing noise between rooms inside. Ceilings and floors are also a vital area to reduce noise from overhead or below.

For added sound control, insulate your heating and air conditioning ducts. If you have metal ducts, wrap them in fiberglass insulation with a vapor-retarder facing. If you're adding new ducts, consider a high-efficiency system made from rigid fiberglass insulation boards.

Practical Tips

In addition to insulation, if you are in the process of renovating or remodeling your home, here are some additional "sound" steps you can take.

- Install thick carpeting and padding throughout your home to reduce impact sound.
- Caulk around windows and use weatherstripping at the bottoms of doors.
- Choose solid wood, insulated core doors where privacy is demanded.
- Use thick glass, insulating glass and storm windows to help reduce sound transmission through windows.
- Select quiet, high-quality appliances.
- Install telephones, doorbells, intercoms or audio built-ins on interior walls only, never on party or corridor walls.
- Caulk holes made by wiring which penetrates connecting structures with elastic non-hardening caulk or dry packing.
- Seal openings around ceiling fixtures airtight.

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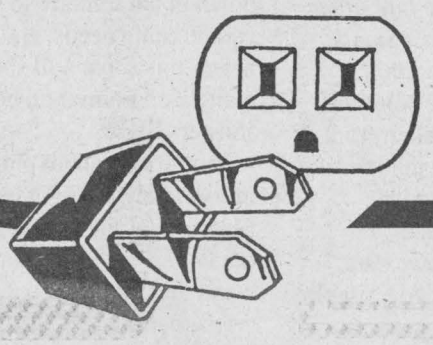



Authors have 1,000 ideas for rejuvenation projects

(NU)—There's a way to keep a shower clean without spending hours scrubbing. Just spend about 10 seconds after each shower wiping off doors and walls with a squeegee.

Saturdays don't have to be reserved for housecleaning. Cleaning during the commercial breaks on television or while talking on the telephone saves weekends for more enjoyable pastimes.

And when only a coat of paint will make walls look clean and sparkling again, there's no need to be overwhelmed. Try spacing out exterior painting jobs as do the Swedish, who commonly paint one side of their houses each year.

Harried Canadians trying to find time for spring cleaning and home maintenance this year can get some much-needed assistance. Don Aslett, author of *500 Terrific Ideas for Cleaning Everything*, and Jack Maguire, author of *500 Terrific Ideas for Home Maintenance and Repair*, offer these tips and 997 more time-, energy- and money-saving suggestions.

Sure-Fire Solutions

Aslett, founder and president of a national cleaning company, is the bestselling author of *Is There Life After Housework?* and *Clutter's Last Stand.*

500 Terrific Ideas for Cleaning Everything is full of sure-fire solutions for every household dirt problem from dust bunnies to dirty stuffed animals.

By adding clever, preventative cleaning strategies and detailed instructions for long-term home care, Aslett's book goes well beyond a simple how-to cleaning manual.

For example, he suggests ways to unclutter kitchens, closets and bathrooms, and advises specific cleaning products to buy. He recommends buying rough-surfaced appliances because they are easier to clean, and suggests customers ascertain how easy it will be to clean particular types of carpet, tile or vinyl flooring before buying.

For Experts, Novices

Maguire, an expert in his field, has written 16 books on remodeling and home repairs and is a frequent contributor to *Decorating and Remodeling* magazine.

Emphasizing the practical, *500 Terrific Ideas for Home Maintenance and Repair* suggests how to select and maintain tools and provides painting and wallpapering tips for both experts and novices. Maguire also advises on home-care jobs as simple as caulking and as challenging as refinishing walls and furniture.

Some of the energy conservation and money-saving ideas included in his book are: setting water heaters at 120 degrees rather than the typical 140 degrees to save money on monthly energy bills; taking showers instead of baths; washing clothes in cool water; insulating hot water pipes; keeping storm windows pulled down in the summer to help control air conditioning needs; and installing a water heater timer that will shut off the heater at night and turn it on before morning showers begin.

And forget about pulling the tub drain immediately after bathing in the winter. Maguire says letting hot water stay in the tub until it cools helps keep the bathroom warm and humidified during the coldest, driest months.

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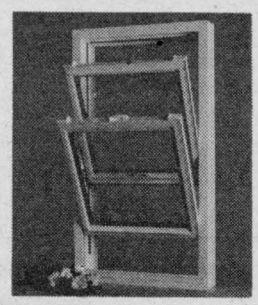
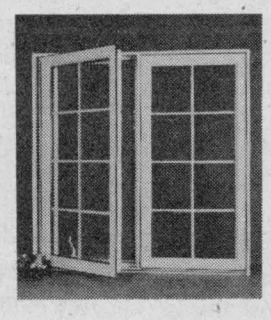
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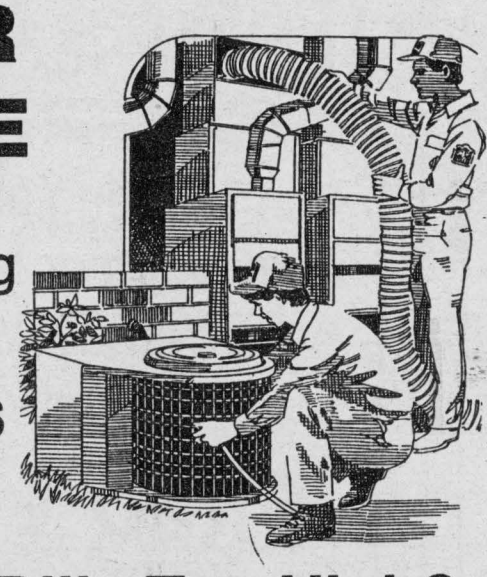
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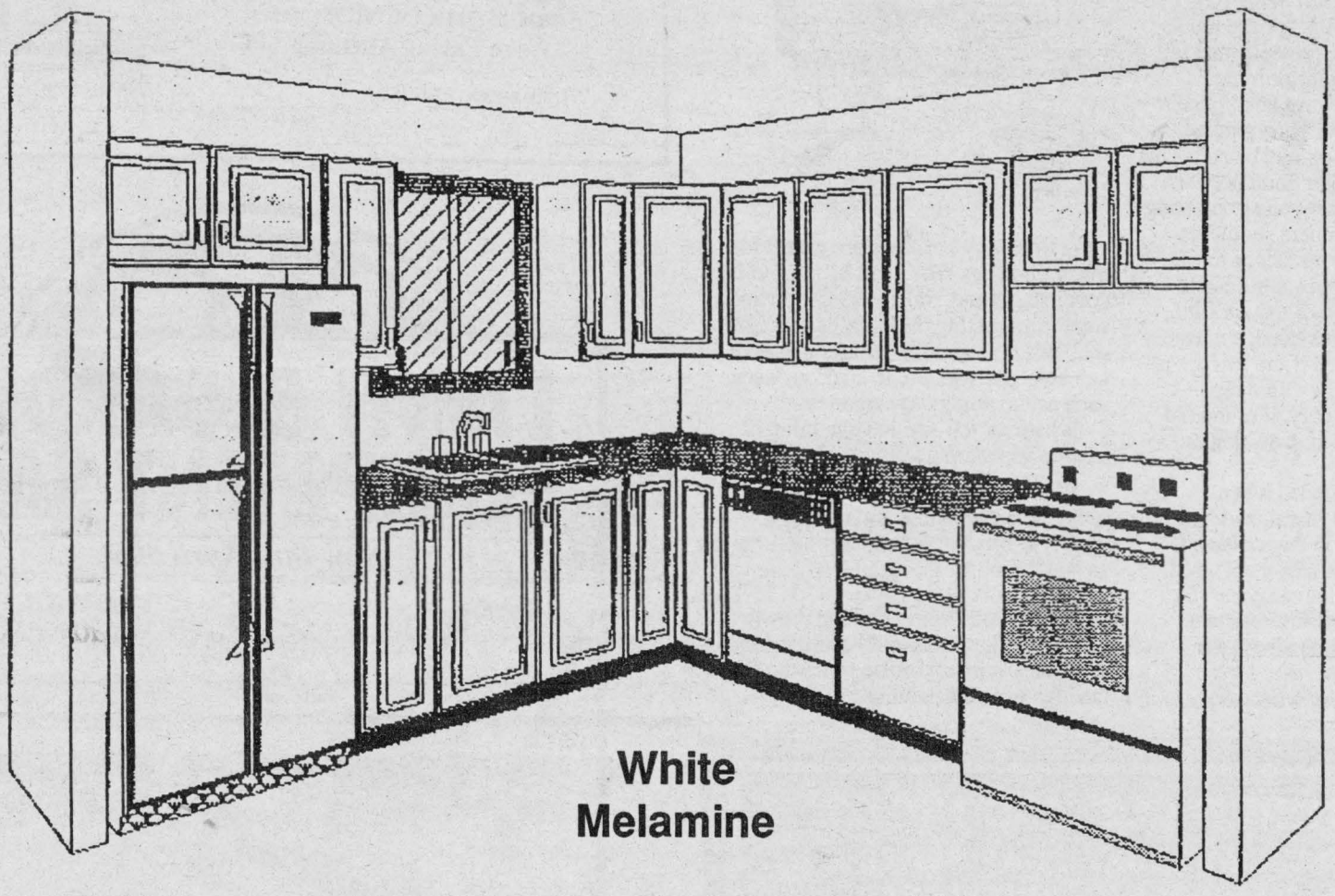

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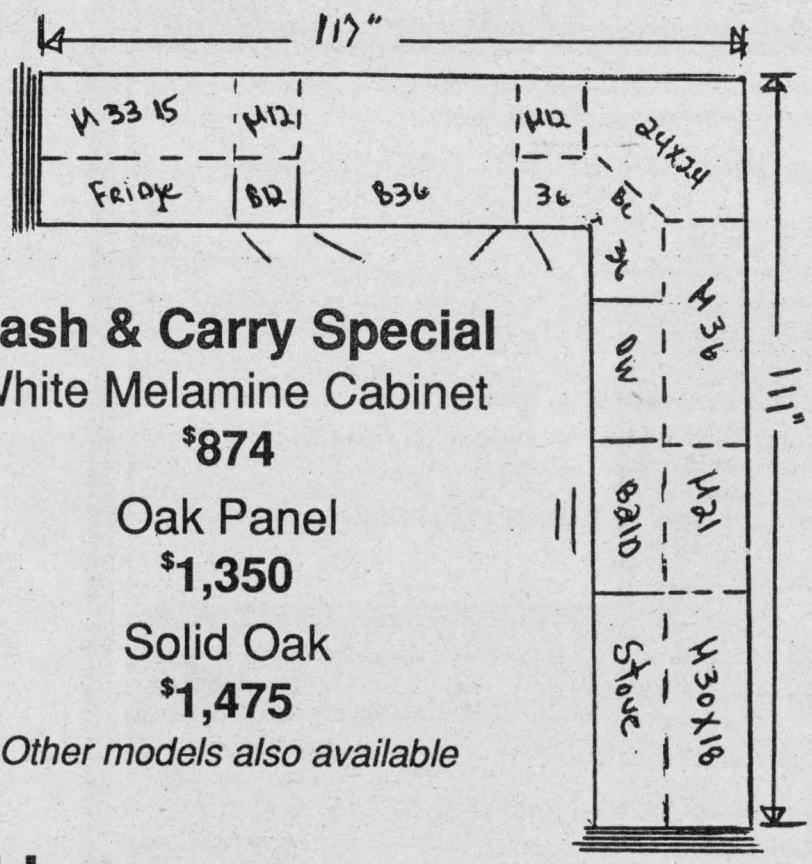

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Of prime importance

The use of a primer is often an indispensable part of a quality paint job. Acting as an "intermediary" between the surface to be painted and the topcoat of paint, primers render the surface more uniform and allow the topcoat to get a better grip on the surface.

While not necessary for all exterior painting jobs, priming is especially important when painting over surfaces such as new and weathered wood, ferrous metal, and porous masonry.

The following tips will help you decide whether or not it's "prime time" on your home painting project...and tell you how to go about your priming.

• Primers should always be applied to surfaces that have never been painted before — like new wood and plaster. This will help to create a tight bond between the paint and the surface you are painting.

• On new wood, primers should be applied only when the surface is dry in order to achieve good penetration and help ensure application of a thick film.

• With masonry and stucco, a masonry sealer should be applied if the surface is weathered or very porous. In a repaint situation, use a sealer only after the old paint is removed by wire-brushing or scraping.

• Primers are not needed when painting aluminum or galvanized steel, unless rust is present on the surface. If there is rust, remove it with steel wool and apply either a high quality acrylic latex or oil-based corrosion-resistant primer. (Follow the same advice for ferrous metals.)

• When repainting, it is necessary to use a primer when the previous paint is so deterioriated that the surface underneath shows through. In these cases, it may be sufficient to prime only the affected areas rather than the entire surface.



• "Specialty" primers are useful for many purposes. They can be used to help cover stains and graffiti; keep iron and steel from rusting; hide water damage; seal off knots and sap streaks in wood; and help paint adhere to slick surfaces such as tile and glossy enamels.

Whatever job you have in mind, it pays to use a top quality primer or sealer.

While alkyd products were once the only choice available, today's high quality acrylic latex products perform just as well in most cases...and they are easier to work with. However, on severe staining woods like cedar and redwood, many alkyd primers still have the edge over latex primers for stopping the bleed-through of tannin stains.

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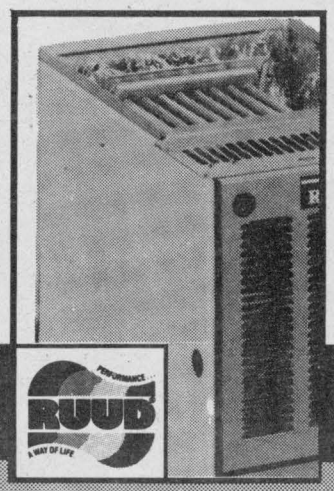

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It beautifully brightens a dark corner, adds life to an empty wall, and adds a unique decorative touch to any room. It also makes a great pet, as well as a wonderful conversation piece.
In fact, a recent study by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania concluded it is even beneficial in relieving stress. What is it? It is an aquarium filled with tropical fish.

Undoubtedly you have seen at least one and may have wondered, "How do I or my youngsters (kids love tropical fish and easily get involved in the simple maintenance) get started?"

First, you will want to locate a good dealer in your area. If you have a friend who has an aquarium, ask for a reference; otherwise the phone book lists most tropical fish retailers.

During your visit to a tropical fish store, you will want to get some ideas on aquarium sizes and on the equipment you will need, and look over the selection of the fish so that you can choose the ones you will want to keep.

It is advisable to purchase a book that provides complete instructions on setting up and maintaining an aquarium.

One basic rule to follow, however, is to buy the largest aquarium possible, since the greater the water environment, the less chance there is of water problems.

THE BEST PLACE TO PUT IT

When determining where to put your aquarium, several factors should be considered. You will not want to put it in direct sunlight, since this will cause algae to grow on the glass and plastic accessories.

You also will not want to put it on your best carpeting, because during water changes, it is possible for some water to splash on the floor, and you will be sure to want to put it on a firm stand, since water is heavy.

After you have decided on the aquarium, your first accessory will be a tightly fitting canopy cover equipped with a fluorescent fixture. Fluorescent fixtures throw off a cool light and will not cause fluctuations in the water temperature.

While on the subject of water temperature, tropical fish require an environment maintained at around 75°F (25°C). You therefore will need a good heater and an aquarium thermometer.

A recent development in this technology is the liquid crystal digital thermometer, which affixes to the outside of the aquarium, yet measures most accurately the water temperature.

You also will need a quality filter. Your dealer can give you proper advice since there are several types of filters and your needs will vary with the size of your aquarium. If you are going to keep a lot of fish, you also will want a separate air pump to add oxygen to the water.

AQUARIUM INTERIOR DESIGN

Decorating an aquarium is great fun. There are multi-colored gravels, highly decorative backgrounds and hundreds of ornaments, as well as plastic plants.

Most good retailers will have a complete assortment and your selection should be based on the size of your aquarium and the amount of money you decide to spend.

Once you have set up your aquarium, you should add a chlorine neutralizer to the water and add only a few fish initially. These few fish will help develop the proper biological conditions necessary to maintain a fully stocked aquarium.

After three to four weeks, assuming everything is functioning properly, you can then go ahead and add the rest of the fish.

Aquarium maintenance is a lot simpler than people think. Every two weeks a partial water change (not greater than 20 percent) by siphoning the water from the bottom of the aquarium is all that is required.

A device called the HydroClean allows an efficient siphoning by separating the debris in the gravel and removing it with the water from the aquarium. On a monthly basis, your filter will require minimal maintenance.

Following this simple routine, chances of fish disease or any other aquarium problems are remote. In fact, one of the biggest problems people have is spending too much time maintaining their aquarium. On a daily basis, of course, fish should be fed; a good quality flake food will provide a complete diet for almost all fish.

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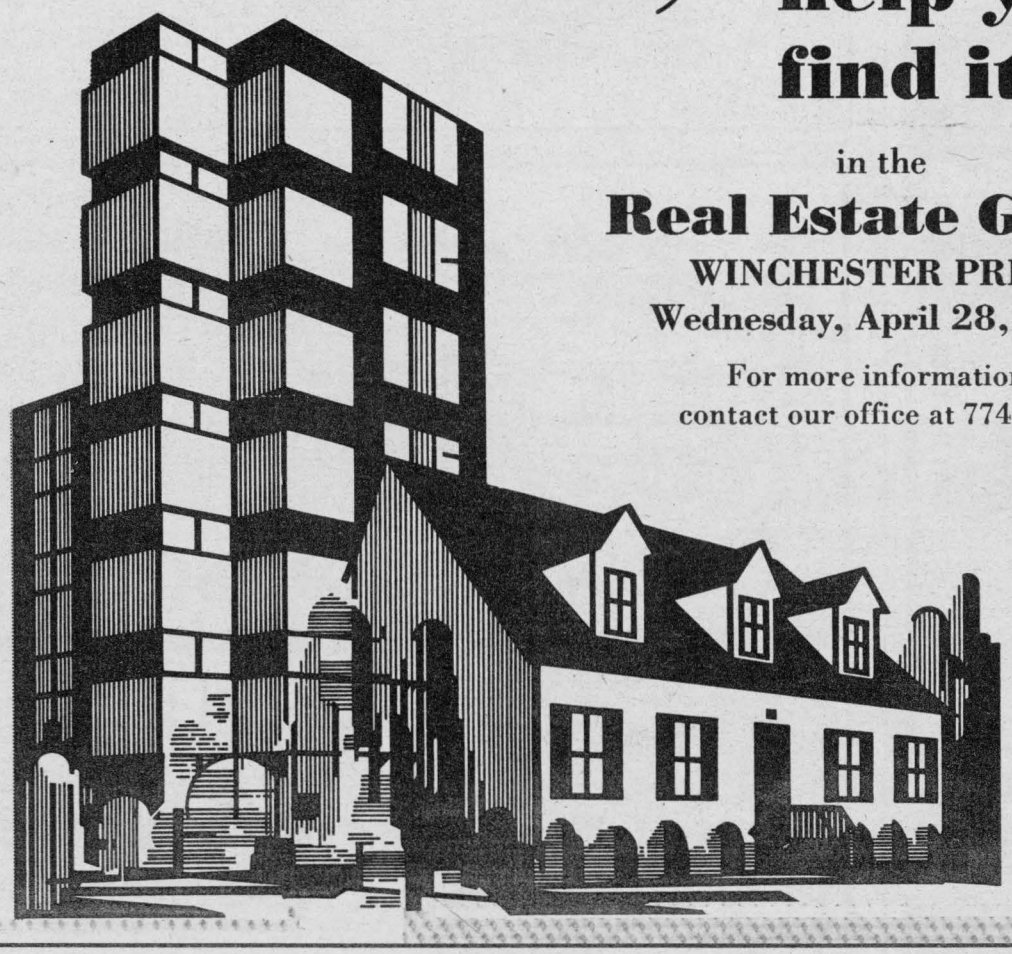

in the
Real Estate Guide
WINCHESTER PRESS
Wednesday, April 28, 1993

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Suite dreams: Choosing functional living room furniture

The three-piece suite in its many permutations is the focal point of most living rooms—ideal for relaxation, perfect for entertaining visitors.

Today, the choice of chairs and sofas available is immense and you can choose a two- or three-seat sofa, an armchair or recliner, or even a sofa bed in the same design and coordinated fabric.

Arrangements

Usually, only two people tend to sit on a sofa so you will probably need to add to the seating arrangements with a chair or two. Or, if the space allows, you may prefer to have two small sofas in the same or differing sizes. And if you have a guest staying overnight, you may like to have a sofa that readily converts into a bed.

Fixed backs and loose-cushioned backs offer options, and you may opt for removable covers if your suite is to get a lot of family use. Foam type furniture does not require plumping up, but you should turn it regularly to spread out the wear.

Time

When buying upholstered furniture, take time to try it out. If it is too deep you will find your legs hanging over the edge. Your feet should touch the floor easily. Very low seating can make it difficult to get up, and if you like sewing or similar activities, an upright chair should be included in your scheme. It's suggested that you bounce lightly on a seat to make sure that no part of the frame can be felt—particularly the front edge.

If you buy an expensive suite it's likely to have a solid wood frame—otherwise the frame may be made of chipboard or fiberboard. Check the cushion filling to be sure it does not feel particularly light. If it is too light, it may not have adequate padding.

The choice of upholstery fabrics is enormous. You may have a preference between chintzy florals and modern geometrics. You can also choose easy-care and stain-resistant fabrics.

Leather covering is an option, but usually rather expensive. It wears well, however, and it fits with modern decorating schemes.

Cushions

If you choose a solid color in preference to a pattern, you can lift the entire color scheme with the use of pillows. Tapestry pillows can add a really distinctive look.

Don't be afraid to brush or vacuum your sofa and chairs frequently. Any accidental spills or stains should be dealt with promptly and appropriately. However, you should avoid soaking the fabric. Arm protectors and chair backs will also help take care of your furniture.

Professional cleaning is worth considering as well. Fabric protector can be applied in the home to make it resistant to stains and spills, but this is a fairly expensive procedure.

It is possible to buy an uncovered suite and have it covered in fabrics of your own choice. However, this is likely to cost a lot more than buying your suite already covered.

Unlike some items in the home, the upholstered suite is expected to do heavy duty over many years, especially if there are children or animals in the home.

Choosing blinds

(NU)—During the past 10 years, miniblinds have evolved to become the window covering of choice for many Canadians.

So how can a consumer pick out a high-quality miniblind from among the many that are available?

1. Start by choosing a brand name. But remember, every manufacturer offers products of differing quality. A brand name is just a starting point.
2. Metal is best. If the slats and front edge of the miniblind are made of metal, you're holding a quality miniblind.
3. Look for miniblinds with parts which can be replaced if broken. Lower grade miniblinds are fastened together with rivets or non-replaceable screws.

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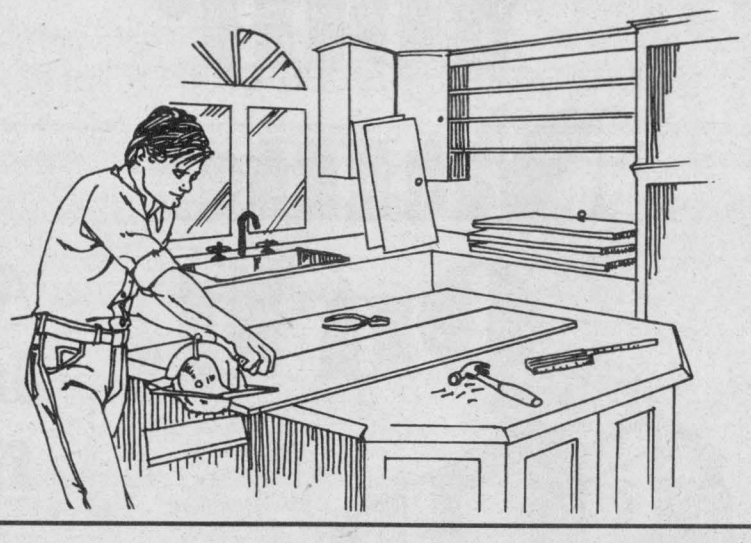

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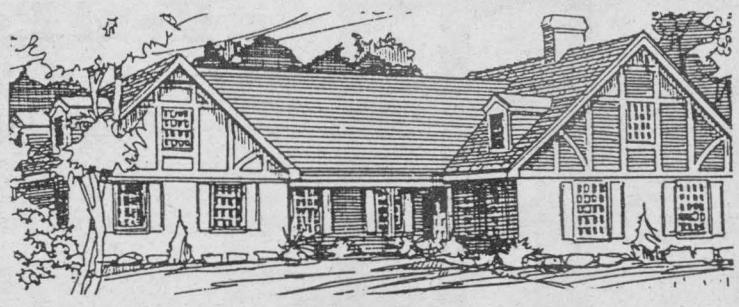

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Creating office space in the home

Do you constantly lug home work from the office, only to discover you have to vie for kitchen or dining room table space with your children or your spouse? Or are you one of a growing number of people who are thinking of going into busines for yourself and working out of your home on a permanent basis?

In either case, you need a place where you can have lots of peace, privacy and plenty of room to work — without having to worry about getting butter stains or sticky fingerprints all over your important papers. The perfect way to achieve this is with a home office.

You can create your own office by either designating an existing room within your home for this purpose, or by creating a brand new space. Once you're all set up, you'll have fewer distractions and you'll be able to easily access everything you need. You'll find that this will help you get your work done much more quickly and efficiently.

If you're considering using existing space for your home office — such as a family room or spare bedroom — your main concern will be how to furnish it, so that it's practical, comfortable and attractive.

If the office is only for occasional use, you can incorporate a lot of extra homey touches. But try to avoid choosing an area of your home where most of the household activity occurs — like a room just off of the kitchen or living room. Also try and choose a room with a good, solid door so that you can shut out any disruptive sounds.

BASEMENT OR ATTIC

If you have room available in your basement or attic, you may want to consider renovating this usable space into an office — providing your budget will accommodate such a project. These areas of the home are ideal for office space because they are generally far enough away from the regular hustle and bustle of family life to afford the appropriate amount of peace and privacy you need.

These areas also convey a sense of "separateness" from the rest of your home, so you won't be as readily tempted to wander through the house if you become distracted or bored.

GARAGE AN OPTION

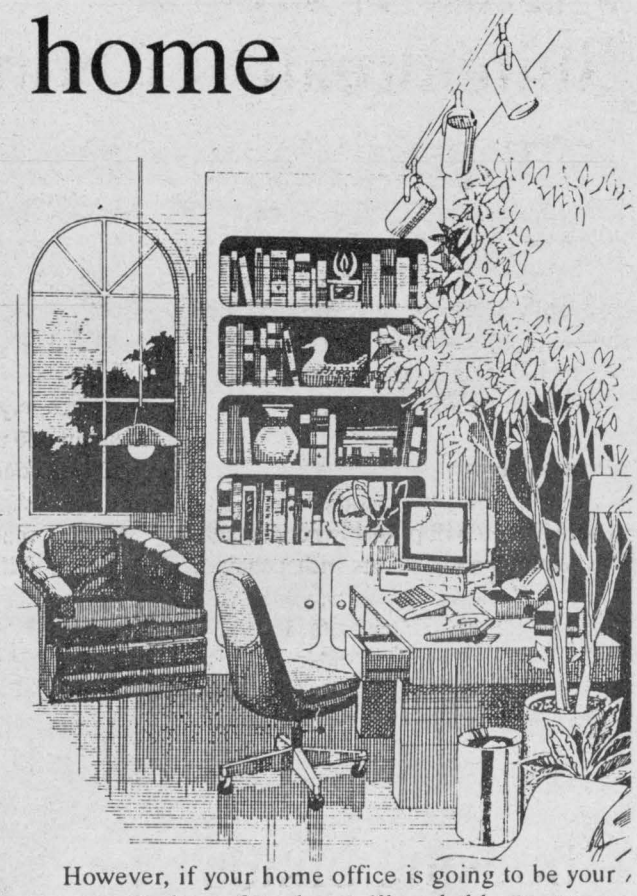
If you have a garage but rarely use it, you may want to explore this option as possible office space — particularly if you plan to work at home on a permanent basis. By using your garage, you have a separate entrance for business clients and contacts. This also provides you with a working environment that is totally separate from your home — but close enough to it for quick accessibility.

Keep in mind however, that with any type of major renovation project — like an attic, basement or a garage, it's essential to check your local building code to see if you'll be able to get a permit for your plans.

Also seek professional input to see how much this type of undertaking will actually cost you. You might be surprised at how quickly costs can build up, so it's imperative to check first.

WHAT TO PUT IN YOUR OFFICE

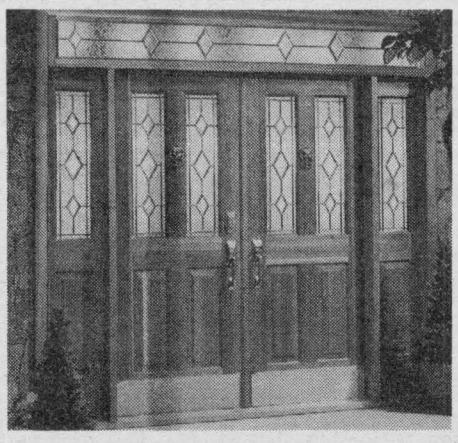
If your home office is only for occasional use, you can incorporate a lot of extra personal touches designed specifically with your own comfort and tastes in mind. Or, if the room you choose also does double duty as a spare bedroom or den, your choice of decor shouldn't matter as much.



However, if your home office is going to be your permanent place of work, you'll probably want to create a more professional setting where you can meet with business associates and/or clients.

When choosing furnishings for your home office, keep comfort and durability in mind. Good lighting is another essential element to think about when planning.

Check out furniture showrooms and specialty shops to see what types of furnishings would suit you best. If you're unsure, try talking to a design consultant.



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Finishing touch

Colorful borders can add life to a wall. Many are pre-pasted for easy installation. *Press staff photo*

Color treatment

Deciding on the color to paint your home's exterior can be fun, yet challenging...even for the most confident colorist.

It's not uncommon to find several hundred color cards at your neighborhood paint store. And some service-oriented paint retailers, hardware stores and decorating centers will mix paint to your own color specifications.

So, the choice is yours. But how do you go about making the right selection? This six-step procedure can help with the decision, making your exterior decorating fun-filled and carefree.

1. Find out if there are local restrictions on color. Before you fall in love with "Desert Sand," "Brilliant Blue" or any other paint color, check to see if any local authority restricts the colors you can use. This is especially important if you live in an historic area, newer subdivision or townhouse community. It's not uncommon to find a list of "approved colors" in these types of neighborhoods.

2. Look to the natural environment for inspiration. Try to choose a paint color that is compatible with the appearance and ambience of your local environment.

3. Consider the colors of your neighbors' homes. This is an important, but often overlooked, factor in color selection. Most people want their home to be distinctive, but it should also be compatible with the neighborhood color scheme. So, take a long, hard look at nearby homes before choosing your paint color.

4. Take into account the style of your home. There are some paint colors that seem to best complement certain architectural styles. For example, white works well on formal colonial or Greek revival homes, while bold color treatment seems to enhance the appearance of Victorian-style "gingerbread."



5. Consider the "fixed" colors on your home. In selecting a paint color, factor in the color of any brick, stone or unpainted masonry on your home. Also make sure your paint is compatible with the color of your roof and any other surface that won't be painted.

6. Go with what appeals to you. Now comes the fun part. Even after following the first five steps, you should still have a rainbow of exterior paint colors from which to choose. Let your selection reflect your individual personality — and enjoy!

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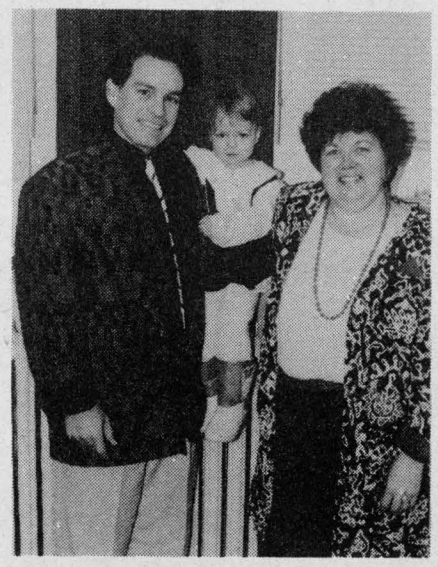

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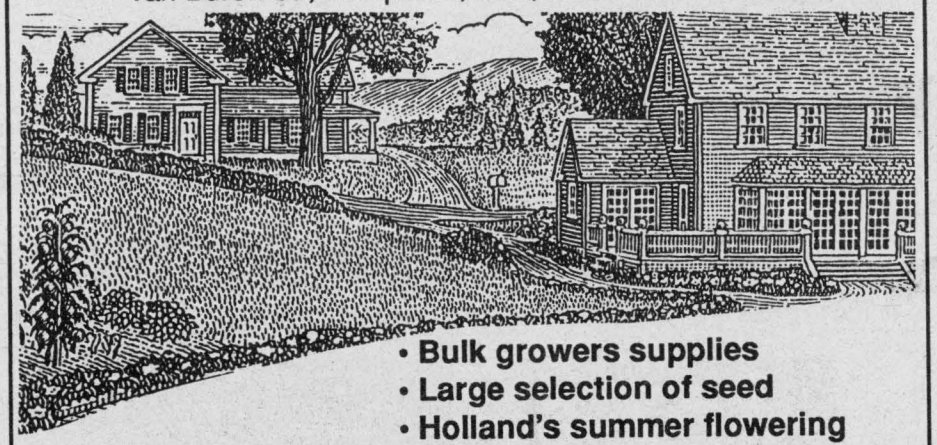

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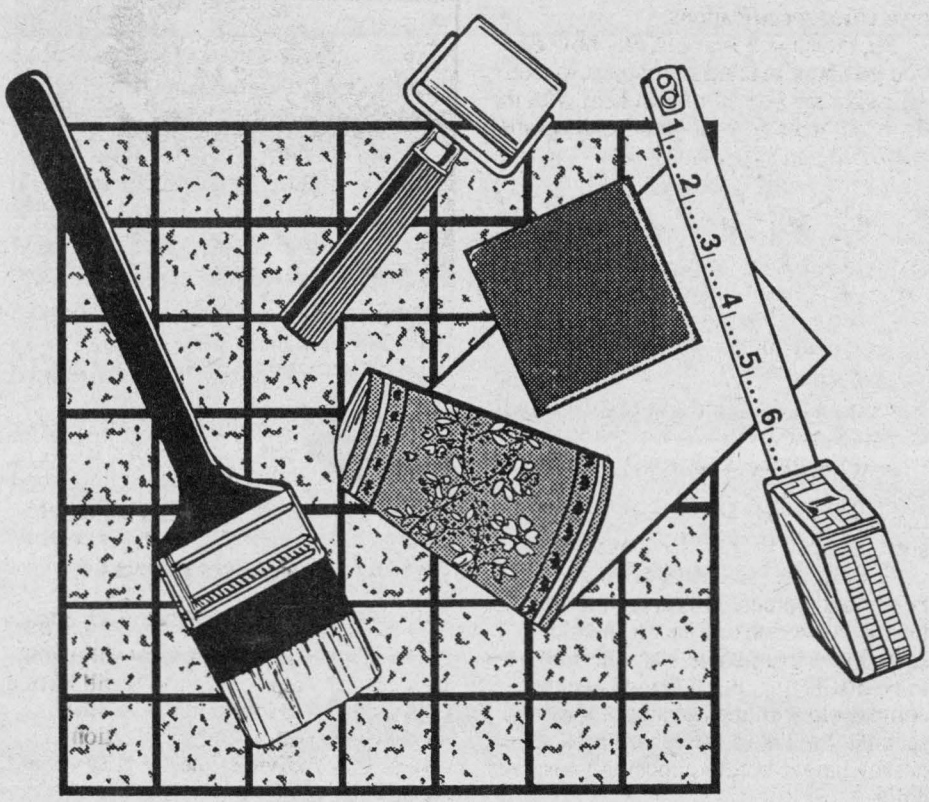
Create the mood when planning renovations

When you look around at the walls in your home, are you pleased? Do they reflect the moods of your rooms, providing an attractive, yet subtle backdrop? Or do they bear the telltale battlescars of an active household: fingerprints, nicks, cracks, gouges and the occasional muddy pawprint — courtesy of "Fido"? In other words, have they become a real eyesore?



While covering your walls with heavy duty plastic may seem like the only viable solution, there are many things you can do to spruce them back up and enhance the overall look and feel of your home.

Before you decide to paint, wallpaper or cover the walls in one of your rooms, take a good, close look at them first to determine what type of shape they're in. You also have to determine the type of surface you're dealing with. Are the walls plain plaster, or have they been covered with wallpaper — or papered and painted over? Are any of them stippled or panneled?

You may discover that some of the walls in your home have one or two layers of old wallpaper which have been covered by layers of paint. And while the thought of removing these layers may seem impossible at first glance, it's not. However, be prepared to spend some time at it if this is what you want to do. You can rent special equipment that will help remove wallpaper — especially if you're dealing with more than one layer.

If you have panelling and intend to remove it, be prepared for what may possibly lay underneath — like large cracks or badly damaged walls.

PAINT PLUSES

If you plan to paint, consider the effect you want to create. Do you want a matte or glossy finish? Painting is probably the easiest and quickest way to revitalize a room. You can do many creative things with paint, including glazing — which can give you unique patterns — like flecks, or streaks or even a marble-like effect. This can be done by applying glaze with a sponge or brush, or applying glaze and then smudging it.

CONSIDER EFFECT

When planning, carefully consider the overall effect you wish to create. For instance, do you want to make a small room — like a front hallway — appear to be larger? Or do you want to visually downsize a large room to make it look cozier. Wall color plays a major part in enhancing or diminishing the size of a room.

For instance, a deep, dark color can make a room seem smaller, while light, neutral tones can make a room look larger — particularly if the accompanying woodwork is painted the same color.

Also think about any contrasts you want to create. Take a look at the texture of your furniture and try to envision how it would look with a number of different backdrops. Also carefully consider any patterns you want to incorporate — particularly if you plan to use wallpaper or material as wall coverings.

DETAILS AND ACCENTS

Details and accents should also be considered at the planning stage. For instance, you may want to apply borders or stencilling around the tops of your walls, to give them some subtle distinction and set off your decorating scheme. You can use borders or stencils to highlight special areas.

A popular choice with many homeowners these days, stencilling is not terribly difficult to do and there are numerous stencil patterns to choose from. Consult some decorating or "how to" books for examples and directions. You may want to practise with different color combinations on a large piece of paper first.

However, if you want to go with a very ornate, special pattern, it's a good idea to consult a design expert.

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Winning the war with unwanted visitors

(NU)—Few things are more annoying than losing a battle against pests in your home. The following tips will help you spot these pests and give you an advantage over the enemy.

Termites Swarm, Dig Into Your Home

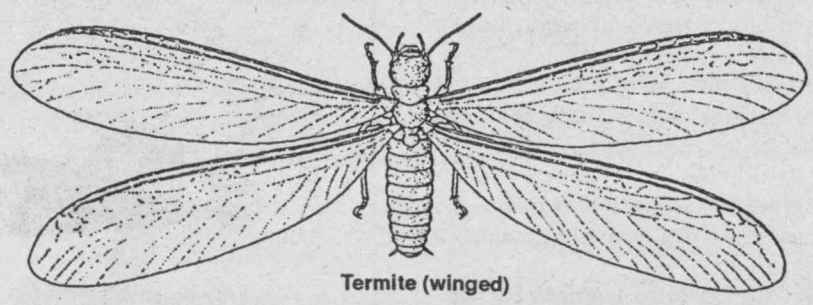
If all the termites and all the people in the world were put on opposite sides of a scale, the termites would weigh more than humanity, experts say.

And that means substantial potential for damage.

Since termites do their dirty work out of sight, it takes a trained eye to detect an infestation. Subtle signs include termite wings on window sills, tiny mud tunnels on the ground near the house and thin patches of paint on the baseboards where the insects have eaten through the wood.

There are preventive steps you can take to avoid damage to your home:

- Always stack firewood away from the house.
- Do not allow structural wood for a porch, patio or deck to come in contact with your home's foundation.
- Replace decorative wood chips with stones.
- Keep heavily watered gardens away from the house.



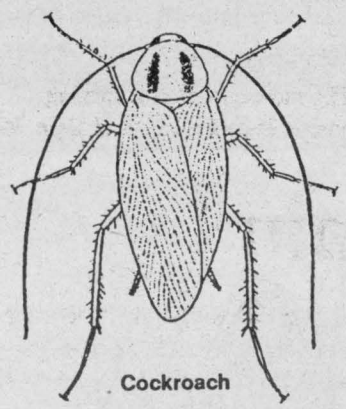
Termite (winged)

Bar Free-Loading Roaches

Your home can be a luxurious resort for the most bothersome pest in the nation, the lowly cockroach.

German cockroaches, for instance, will feast on everything from dirty garbage cans to the glue in a dresser drawer.

It's easy to see why cockroaches are consistently picked as the most hated pest, since they spread disease and bacteria rapidly.



Cockroach

There are things you can do to control cockroaches:

- Store food in airtight glass or plastic containers.
- Wipe up food spills immediately; keep counters, floors and cabinets clean.
- Vacuum frequently.
- Keep garbage cans tightly covered.
- Seal cracks and crevices, caulk openings around pipes, fixtures and cabinetry.

Mouse In The House?

You don't have to see a mouse scurrying across your kitchen floor to know you have an unwanted visitor. Telltale signs of a resident rodent include chewed wires, furniture, books, or food storage containers, or the presence of droppings.

Rats and mice are no small nuisance. They cause structural damage with their burrowing, and spread disease.

Many rat bites are reported each year, mostly to children under six years old. In addition, some 20 percent of fires of unknown origin are thought to be caused by rodents gnawing through electrical wiring.

To control rodents:

- Clear away boxes, lumber, firewood and other debris that might harbor rodents.
- Plug foundation cracks and crevices and openings around pipes entering the house.
- Don't leave food outdoors for your pet.

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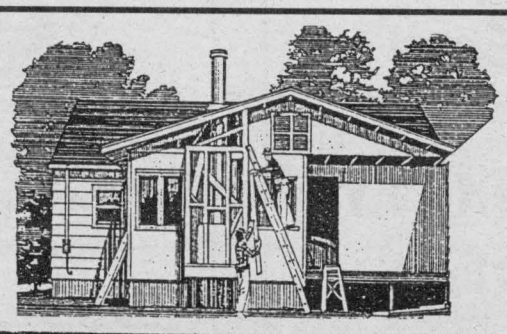

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Water softeners benefit home consumers

(NU)—From heating efficiencies to reduced bathtub scum, softening water corrects the most common water quality defect found in many homes

Ground water, which is 60 percent of the earth's water, picks up minerals like calcium and magnesium as it travels through rock and soil. These two contaminants can be measured to determine how "hard" the water is. Hard water can cause a ring around the bathtub, scum on shower tiles, clogged pipes, an unexplained increase in water heating costs, reduced soap sudsing, or dull hair and dry skin.

In addition to treatment provided by the local water utility, consumers may wish to soften their water further. Domestic softening makes economic sense, because it only softens water for home use—not firefighting or street washing.

Ion Exchange

The most common softening technique is called ion exchange. Ions are electrically charged atoms, and hardness ions (calcium and magnesium) can be exchanged with sodium ions. This occurs when tiny beads attract and hold positively charged ions such as sodium, but exchange them for another positively charged ion, such as calcium or magnesium. Washing the beads with a strong saline solution regenerates them, and the released hardness ions are discharged as waste.

Water softeners can be fully automatic or have a sensor that regenerates according to usage. Before purchasing a softener, consider the number of people in the home, how much water is used, and the amount of hardness in the water.

Sodium bicarbonate, which is the result of softening, is not the salt (sodium chloride) which sometimes affects blood pressure. Drinking water represents a very small part of sodium intake in most persons. Even water-softening systems using salt don't introduce enough sodium to be of concern.

Vampire vermin

(NU)—Pet owners beware: Fleas can cause problems for your favorite feline or pooch.

And if you think these blood-sucking insects are a minor pest compared to bigger bugs and rodents, consider this: Flea-borne diseases have killed more people than all the wars ever fought.

Fleas have been around for 60 million years. They can jump 30,000 times without stopping and can leap 150 times their own height—that's equivalent to a person being able to hop almost as high as the Empire State Building.

And perhaps most disconcerting, two fleas could theoretically produce nearly two trillion descendants in nine months.

Also, a bad flea infestation can cause a pet to become anemic over time.

Experts suggest these tips for fighting fleas:

- Vacuum carpeting and furniture, and around favorite pet areas daily. Remove and seal up the vacuum bag for immediate disposal.
- Take your pet to a veterinarian or other professional for treatment.
- Wash or replace pet's bedding.

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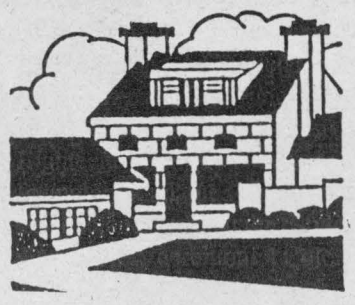

FREE ESTIMATES **Andrew Nyentap**

Handy hints

by Jeff Keller

NU—Do-it-yourselfers, here are some tips for taking care of chores around the house:

- Many clothes dryer-related fires occur each year. Some are caused by lint build-up in the exhaust duct. Be aware that corrugated vinyl ducts seem more likely to lead to a fire than metal ducts. And make sure to clean the ducts frequently.
- Want to top off a 4 by 4 post in the ground? First, draw lines all around the post at the point of the cut, making sure they are all square. Then, fasten 1 by 2 "guide" cleats at the cut and you'll end up with a square cut across the post.
- Nothing can be more of an eyesore or can make you sorer than a stud which has bowed out in a freshly framed wall. There's a trick you can employ that will remove the bow without having to remove the stud. With a handsaw, cut a V-shaped groove at the point where it bows the most, about two-third of the way through the stud. Push against the stud and have a helper drive a nail at an angle down through the groove. No more bow.
- If your toilet runs periodically for a short time, then stops, you probably have a worn out flapper or tank ball. The rubber becomes soft and allows water to leak out of the seal at the base of the flush valve. Replace with a new flapper or tank ball.

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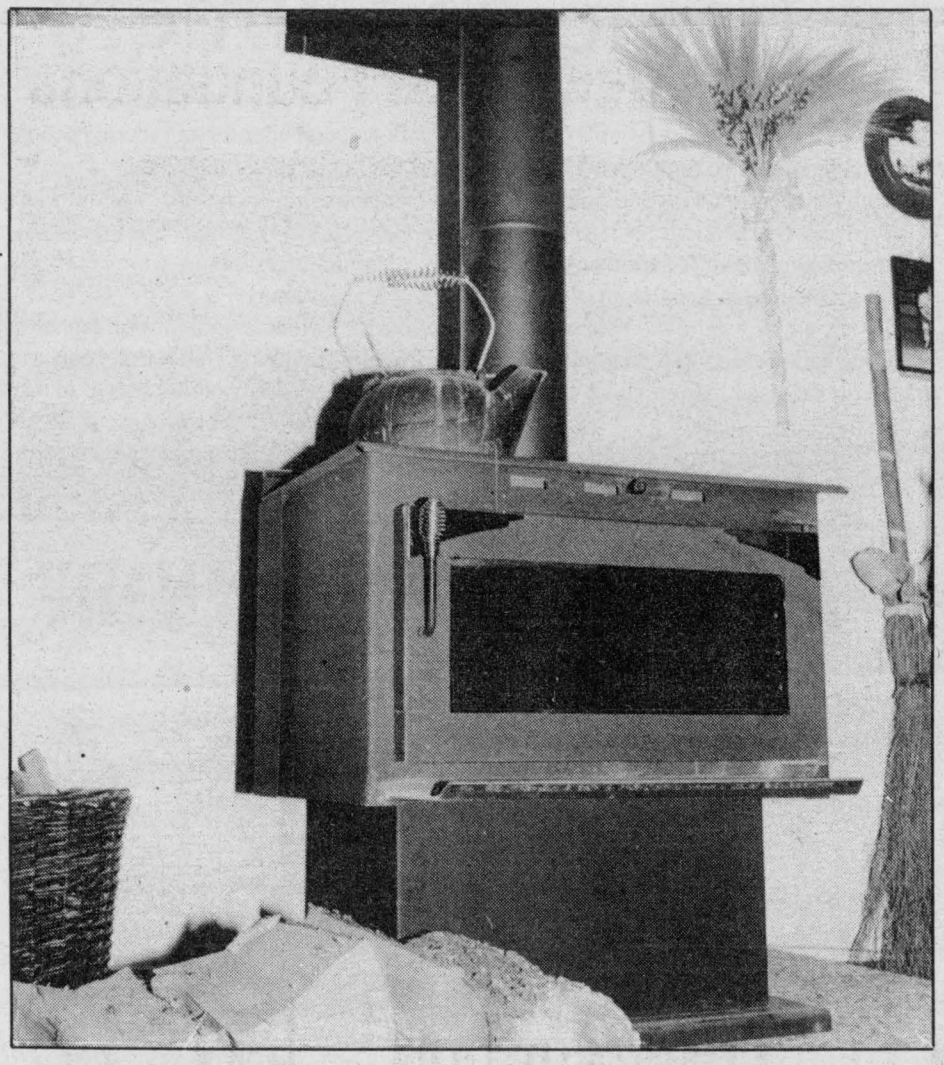

Cost cutting

Efficient wood burning stoves can supplement existing home heating systems and help the home owner reduce energy costs. Spring installation is often recommended. *Press staff photo*

Insure your investment

(NU)—If you add a room to your home or buy an expensive diamond ring or computer system, don't forget to cover the investment by insurance.

In the case of home improvement, be sure the dollar value of your homeowners insurance would cover the cost of replacing your home if it is destroyed.

If you buy a diamond ring that exceeds the maximum limit for jewelry in your homeowners insurance, you will want to have an endorsement added to your policy so the ring would be covered.

The same might be true for a computer system or certain other high-priced items, depending on the type of insurance policy you have.

The smart thing to do whenever you make a major purchase or investment of this type is to talk to your insurance agent or representative and be assured that you have the protection you need.

It also is always a good idea to read your insurance policy carefully.

Some homeowners policies, for example, exclude coverage of a computer that is stolen from an unattended motor vehicle. Whether your auto insurance would cover such a theft would depend, again, on the type of policy you have.

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- Soft Window Coverings
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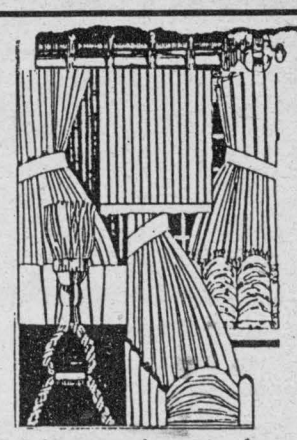
- Pleated Shades
- Horizontal Blinds



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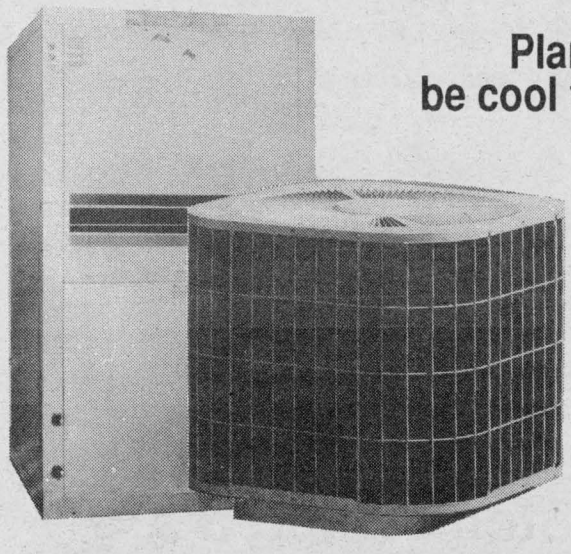

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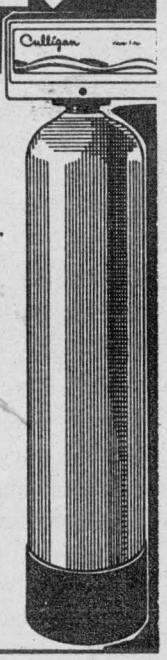

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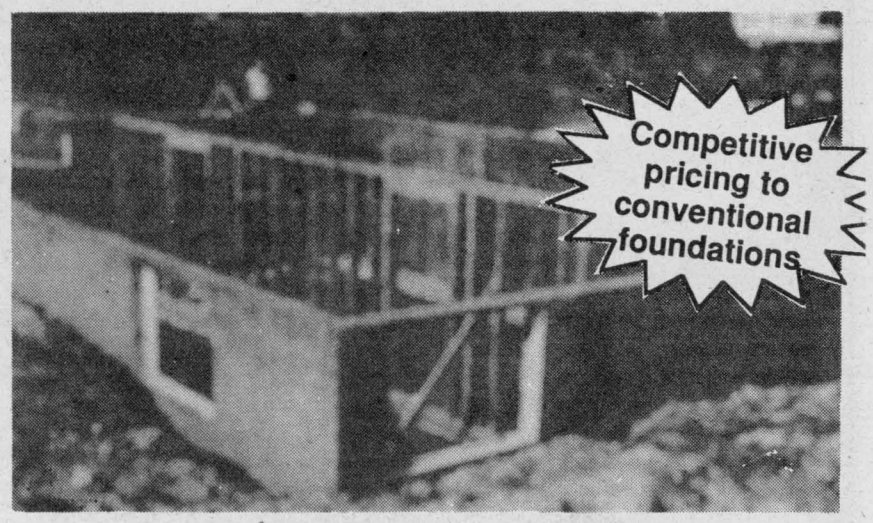
Window replacement

Homeowners can consider many types of window replacements including vinyl-clad or solid vinyl models. *Press staff photo*

Preserved Wood Foundations



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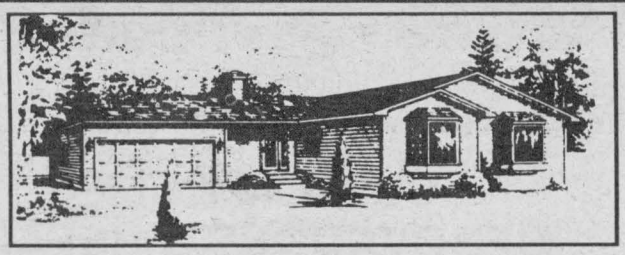


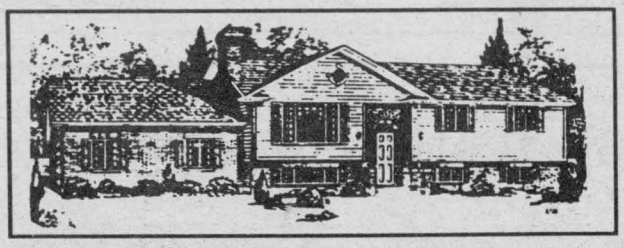
THE CARLETON 1620 sq. ft.

REGULAR	$ 107,640
NOW	$ 99,640
SAVE!!	$ 8,000



THE BIRCHWOOD 1118 sq. ft.

REGULAR	$ 79,900
NOW	$ 73,900
SAVE!!	$ 6,000



THE ASHWOOD 1129 sq. ft.

REGULAR	$ 82,900
NOW	$ 75,900
SAVE!!	$ 7,000



THE EMBREE 1791 sq. ft.

REGULAR	$ 126,400
NOW	$ 117,400
SAVE!!	$ 9,000

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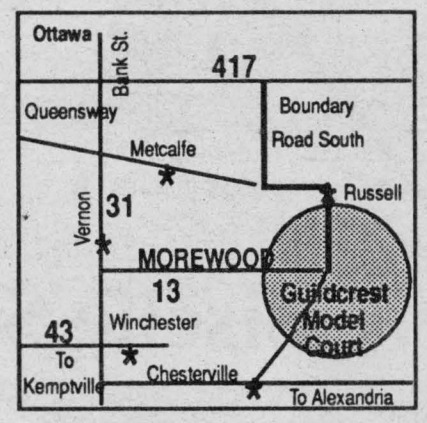

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