Home Improvement

YOUR GUIDE FOR THOSE SPRING HOME IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

INSIDE

New community coming 3

A new home for you?? 4

Building tips for you 6

Home office 8

Carpet colour trends 9

Great yard ideas 11

Warm up with Harbers Flame Centre

by Sandra Lee Johnston
Chieftain Staff Reporter

While the throes of winter are all but gone for this year, we need none the less to turn our thoughts to our home heating systems.

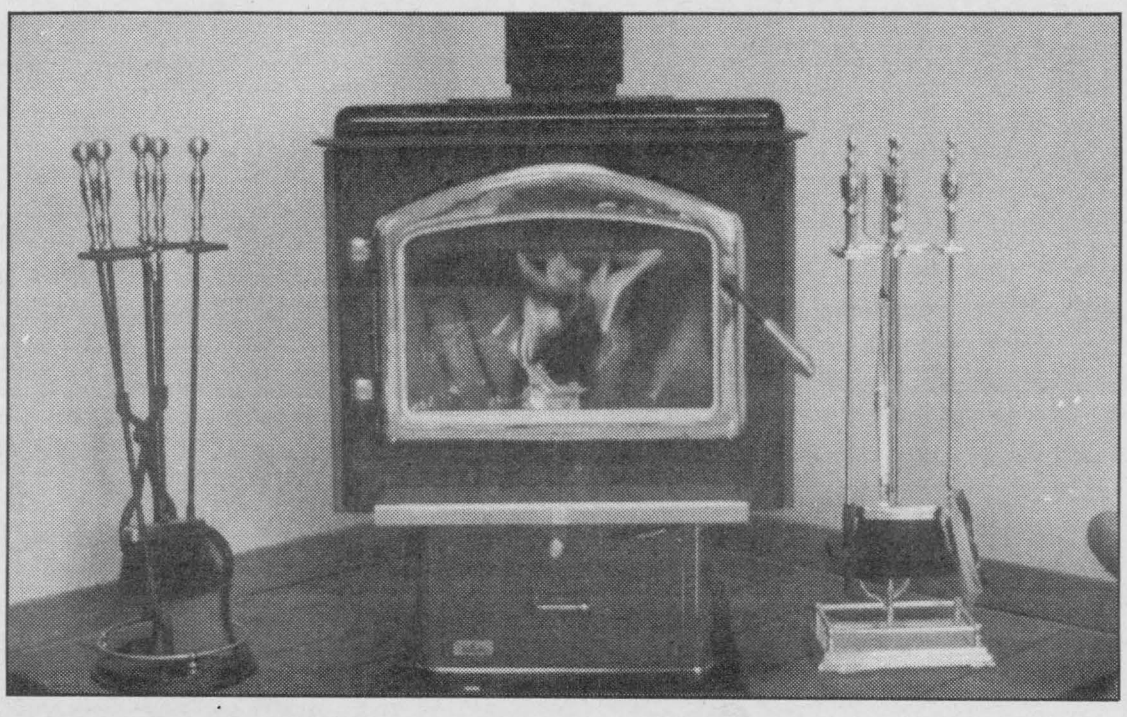
The warmth of a fireplace or a cosy woodstove provides one of the best antidotes to the freezing cold that winter in this country represents. Along with the comfort that these heating units give there exists a certain amount of risk and danger.

The Fire Marshall's office has previously issued warnings about the risk of fire associated with some chimneys. It is important to note that even if you do not have a stove or a fire place, your furnace chimney may be affected.

The Fire Marshall's notice said, "Every chimney, flue and flue pipe should be inspected to determine if a dangerous condition exists. The chimney flue and flue pipe should be replaced or repaired to eliminate any deficiencies such as cracking, settling, crumbling mortar, distortion, corrosion, separation of sections and loose or broken supports. Abandoned or unused openings must be sealed to prevent the passage of fire or smoke."

This warning was delivered after chimney manufacturers issued a bulletin about potential fire risk related to corrosion of metal chimneys. A study conducted by the Fire Marshall's office showed the problem was not limited to any particular make, model or year of metal chimney. About 6% of some 1500 factory built chimneys were found, after careful examination to have perforated outer liners due to corrosion.

The creation of carbon monoxide, the colourless, odourless and poisonous gas which can build up to deadly levels if not vented to the outside of the house can cause death. Corrosion can also lead to fire. The best way to prevent such problems is to have an annual inspection of your chimney by a certified WETT Technician. (Wood Energy Technical Training). This would seem to be good advice even if you have a masonry chimney. Masonry chimneys can suffer exterior erosion and leaching, exterior brick and mortar deterioration and interior cracking and breaking of the tile liner. "Stats show that the majority of chimney fires do not spread beyond the chimney, and so most people are not aware that their chimneys may have suffered severe damage, which can lead to a tragedy if another chimney fire were to occur and the chimney has not been inspected and repaired. And as if safety were not incentive enough, the Ontario Fire Code makes homeowners legally responsible for ensuring the safety of their chimneys. The national Fire Code of Canada states, "Every chimney, flue and flue pipe shall be inspected to identify any dangerous conditions annually, at the time of addition of any appliance and after any chimney fire."



One stove Harbers' offer for sale.

The good news for readers is that we, right here in this area have a WETT certified technician; Brian Harbers of Harbers Flame Center has completed his training and is set to answer calls and take care of our chimney worries.

WETT is a non-profit organization that regulates those in the wood energy business. It is this organization that allows training and certification as far as installers, insurance company inspectors, building officials and fire department members are concerned.

It was in the 70s when the energy crisis lead to a large number of stoves being installed in numerous homes that the government told the industry that they should regulate themselves, or the government would step in and do it for them. In 1988 certification began and today there are some 233 WETT certified technicians in Ontario.

The Harbers, Brian and his wife and partner in business as well as life, Joy are justly proud that they are members of the WETT Association that keeps them updated on the newest equipment and code amendments etc. even when Brian completes all the courses he intends to take, he will be kept up-to-date on the latest innovations and changes in the marketplace through the Association.

"There is a disciplinarian committee set up to keep a close check on the industry itself. Members watch others and report any discrepancies in workmanship etc. Just because you are WETT certified, it does not give you free rein, you are watched and can be checked at any time. There is a Code of Ethics that we are bound by,"says Brian. Included in this Code it says, "A certificate holder will protect the rights and safety of others and use reasonable skill and judgement while engaged in the practice of wood energy technical work in accordance with the terms and conditions of WETT certification. He/she will not knowingly contravene any federal, provincial or municipal law, regulation or by-law relating to the sale, installation, inspection or maintenance of solid fuel burning systems, will charge a fee that is fully disclosed, fair and reasonable and for those services performed, will not knowingly sign or issue false or misleading certificate, report or other document, will not make a false, exaggerated or misleading statement as to the practice of solid fuel technical or advisory work or make a false or malicious statement or publication that injures the professional reputation of a certified WETT technician.

Speaking to Brian, we learn that the courses are apprenticeship types which require 80 weeks of job experience and another 80 hours of classroom theory, intensive lessons which require a mark of 70% to pass and a mark of 85% to obtain Master Technician status. It is of note that thus far in his efforts, Brian is over this 85% mark...well done!! "Once we are certified, Insurance Companies will recognize us, like if they are worried about an installation of a fire place or stove, etc. before they will allow coverage of a home under a policy, they often ask a WETT certified person to inspect and okay the installation," says Brian. He also noted that he had just done such a check on a home in the Hainsville area. "Some companies even require a WETT inspection before issuing a policy at all. This shows that the need is evident," says Brian.

"A small price to pay, the $50 to $150. that a chimney inspection costs a homeowner for an inspection," suggests Brian. He goes on to tell us that the cost depends upon the installation type. He also offers that he would recommend that everyone have their chimney cleaned at least once a year, (even if you think it doesn't need it) and spring is the best time for this service to be conducted. "Creosote is highly corrosive and if it sits all summer, it can harm your chimney beyond help. On the average cleaning runs around $65. and this certainly is money well spent."

When asked how he came to be

Please turn to page 10

PULL-OUT SECTION



Chieftain photo by S.L. Johnston

Spring renos

While renovations usually mean construction, often in the spring of the year, they also involve landscaping and lawn creation. These two gents were busy last May getting their lawn in shape for seeding. Adding flowerbeds, shrubs, trees and walkways add an attractive welcome to any home renovation.

A spa can help the family to relax

Having a spa can be especially relaxing. The swirling warm water can make a long day seem as though it simply disappeared "down the drain."

Spas and hot tubs are based on an age-old practice of soaking in hot water to relax the body and mind. In addition to relaxing tired muscles, a hot soak can promote circulation and relieve mental stress.

Spas are a popular form of home entertainment and relaxation, however, to maximize the life of your spa, while keeping it healthy for you and your family, here are a few tips.

Proper spa sanitation requires care. Once the spa water has been "balanced", a bromine or chlorine sanitizer should be added as needed to kill bacteria and keep the water safely sanitized.

Hot water, particularly if it's aerated, can result in a gradual change in pH and Total Alkalinity (TA). Therefore, test the pH every time the spa is used and check the TA weekly.

Never let spa or hot tub water temperatures surpass 40 c. Higher temperatures can place a dangerous strain on the cardiovascular system. As a special precaution, use an accurate, shatterproof thermometer in addition to your thermostat to check the spa water temperatures.

Children should never use a spa or hot tub without proper supervision. Adults should avoid using the tub alone as well. Young children are not able to regulate their own body temperature, therefore, they should never be in a spa. (The same advice applies to the beloved family dog).

Don't risk serious consequences, never go into a spa or hot tub while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. This can lead to drowsiness which could result in an accidental drowning. If you are taking medication, please consult a physician before going into a spa.

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Swank Construction to build new community

by Sean McKibbon
Chieftain Staff Reporter

Buying a new home-- a task that deserves a self help book of its own.

When Swank Construction begins work on the new housing community of Bridlewood on the west side of Iroquois, many first time home buyers will be attracted to the affordably priced, one and two storey, semi-detached homes. Many of the novice buyers will want answers to a host of real estate questions.

Fortunately those first-timers will have Jacques Asselin of Jacques E. Asselin Real Estate Ltd. to give them advice.

"Since they have never entered the housing market they know very little about buying a house and the hidden costs and so on," he says.

Asselin is the exclusive sales and marketing agent for the Bridlewood project. He says that giving information to potential home buyers is crucial.

He provides first time home buyers with a free, no-obligation consultation in which he familiarizes them with the many aspects of buying a house. An information video helps him to tell potential clients about the relationship between the real estate agent and home buyers. The consultation also covers the hidden costs such as land transfer taxes and the GST.

"It takes an hour or so, but it gives them a total picture on how to go about buying a house," says Asselin.

He says many people don't know all of the options that are open to them. For instance many people balk at taking out a mortgage on a house because they don't have money for a downpayment. One option is a federal program aimed at first time home buyers. The program lets them use their yearly RRSP contribution for a downpayment-- even if they have never contributed anything to an RRSP.

Thanks to a federal program aimed at first time home buyers, people are allowed to withdraw money from their RRSP and apply it toward a down payment.

However each home buyer has individual needs and a consultation is essential, says Asselin, stressing that there are many different options available.

Nowadays, Asselin says, people are well educated and well informed.

"They want to know what's going on and I feel that it's my job to provide them with that service," says Asselin.

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Thinking about buying a new home this year?

Home buyers considering the purchase of a home face several crucial decisions, one of the most significant being whether to buy a new home or a previously owned, older home.

The main advantage to buying a new home in Ontario is that it is protected by a warranty lasting up to seven years backed by the Ontario New Home Warranty Program (ONHWP). Established to provide a range of warranty coverage for every new home built for sale in the province, ONHWP has warranted 740,000 single family and condominium units since its inception in 1976.

What does this extensive warranty protection mean to a new home buyer? ONHWP's provides you with $100,000 total maximum coverage on each newly constructed home or condominium unit. The three-tiered warranty system offers coverage starting with a one year warranty against defects in workmanship and materials and Ontario Building Code violations, a two year warranty against water penetration through the building even including the basement or foundation walls. Electrical, plumbing and heat delivery systems are also covered by a two year warranty.

Another advantage to buying a new home is that is should be constructed with the most modern materials and by builders using current construction techniques and standards.

High efficiency furnaces, innovative features such as thermal glazed windows and increased insulation make new homes increasingly energy efficient and help lower a homeowner's heating and cooling costs.

Air barrier systems coupled with improved ventilation systems offer homeowners all the benefits of air tightness without depriving the home of much needed fresh air.

When wiring is installed in new homes, the needs of the 'cocooning' trend (where people spend more time in the home) are considered. Home automation features like closed-circuit television, multi-room audio-video, security systems and home offices are advertised conveniences attracting many new home buyers.

New homes are outfitted with either copper or plastic pipes which are properly vented and meet current building standards. Incorporating these plumbing features into all new homes means new homeowners do not have to concern themselves with scale build-up, which weakens water pressure and creates unpleasant odours.

All new homeowners should perform regular maintenance on their new homes to ensure their new home warranty, while major exterior work such as the roof and brick work is not necessary for at least 10 years.

New homes are also constructed with low-maintenance materials such as vinyl clad windows and aluminum soffits for homeowners who are too busy to do extensive home work.

New homes accommodate the lifestyles of today's homeowners. A new home plan typically includes a family room off the kitchen, more bathrooms and closet space than older homes, central air and central vacuum.

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Carpeting questions are answered for you

Carpet like many other consumer items, is prone to certain conditions which for the most part can be treated, once the cause of the problem has been defined.

Robert Kennedy, a technical consultant to Peerless Carpet Corporation, Canada's largest carpet manufacturer, addresses some of the more commonly heard concerns:

Comment:

The carpet has buckled or developed wrinkles.

Answer:

The usual cause is periods of exceptionally high humidity in summer. The excess moisture causes the carpet (including the latex secondary coating on the back) to absorb moisture and swell.

Once the humidity levels have returned to normal, a carpet which has been properly stretched-in during its installation should return to its initial tension and the wrinkles will disappear. However, if they persist, the carpet will require a proper re-stretch by a professional.

Comment:

My carpet is wearing out.

Answer:

Today's carpet constructions made with state-of-the-art fibres do not as a rule wear out - they "ugly out".

However, cut pile carpets can change appearance due to the temporary loss of pile hight from crushing. All cut pile carpets have a tendency to show this condition. To restore the height, vacuum the affected area repeatedly.

A more serious level of this problem known as "packing" or "matting" can occur in high traffic areas. A possible cause of this poor performance is a combination of soil build-up and the lack of proper, or insufficient, grooming methods.

Other important factors to consider are the use of carpet underpad that lacks resilience (too soft), or a carpet that lacks adequate performance characteristics for your lifestyle requirements.

For more information on spot and stain removal and other smart carpet tips, call 1-800-363-3801 for a free copy of Peerless Carpet Corporations "Caring for Your Carpet" leaflet.

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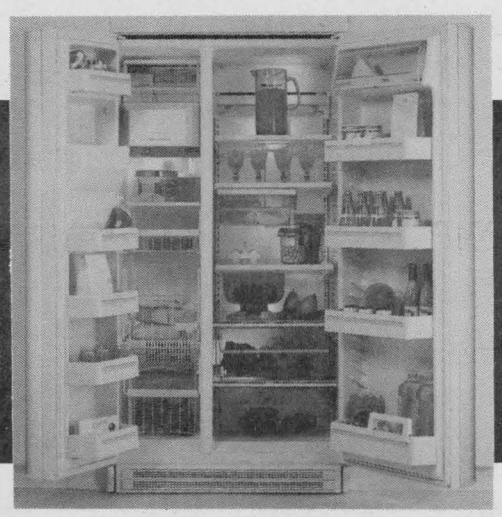
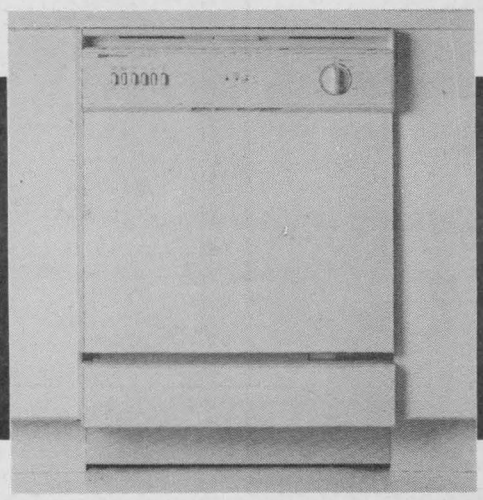


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Construction tips for you!

As with any task, knowing a few practical tricks of the trade will help make your job easier and more enjoyable. The Canadian Institute of Treated Wood offers the following pointers for a better looking, longer lasting project.

Choose the right type of pressure treated wood for the job. Wood which will come in contact with the ground should be incised. Consumers can easily identify this type of treated lumber by the staple-like cuts on the surface.

When cutting or drilling holes in pressure treated wood it is important to re-seal the ends with a good preservative. This will help maintain the integrity of the pressure treating process and ensure its longevity. End-cut preservative is available at your lumber yard.

Handle end-cut preservative carefully. Read the instructions and follow accordingly. Store in a safe place. Dispose of empty containers according to instructions.

To help avoid splitting the wood, blunt the end of the nail slightly by hitting it with a hammer before nailing. Blunt nails cut their way through the wood but pointed nails split the wood fibres apart.

Don't nail any closer to the edge of the wood than the thickness of the board. When nailing close to the sides or ends, it is advisable to pre-drill the hole in a slightly smaller diameter than the nail. This will prevent splitting but still keep the nail secure.

To increase the holding power of nails, use spiralled shanked, or annular ringed shanked nails and drive them in at angles to each other. This is an especially important tip with pressure treated lumber because it lasts so much longer than untreated wood.

When building a deck, always put the bark side of lumber facing up. That will prevent "cupping". To tell which is the bark side, check the growth rings on the ends of the wood - the rings should be directed towards the ground.



New home

There are both advantages and disadvantages to owning a new home, but when you build it yourself, or have an experienced contractor do the work, you are sure to get what you want. Depending on the size and location, purchasing a new home can often keep your mortgage payments to a minimum. First time home purchasers should check with local realtors for the best prices and special assistance packages that are available. *Chieftain photo by M.C. Bailey.*

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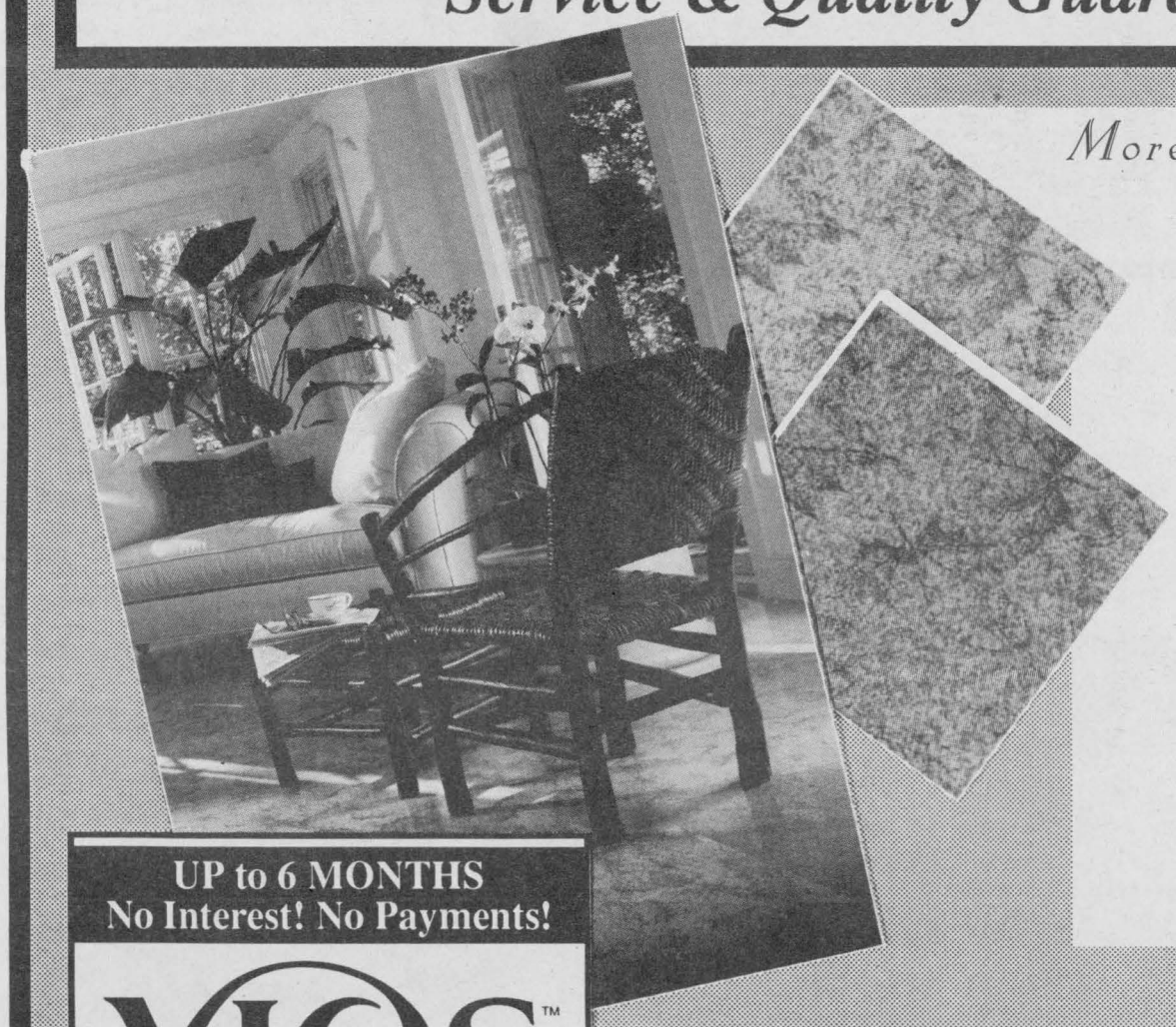

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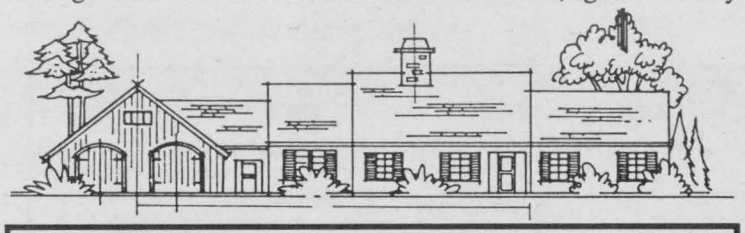
Creating living space *Chieftain photo by S.L. Johnston*

Constructing a new room can be an adventure. Whether you do the work yourself or contract it out, you will learn a lot about many things as you deal with the various aspects of creating a new living space. Bring sun back into your life and home with large windows and sliding doors... and the benefits will include warmth, light and beauty.



Handle heavy traffic

The home office is becoming a new way of working and the trend is changing the face of our society.

Advances in telecommunications and technology along with the corporate downsizing of the early 90's, have led to an increasing number of professionals opting to trade in computer traffic hassles and coffee machine gossip for working at home.

To comply with this trend, manufacturers of furniture and telecommunications and office equipment are redesigning their products to better suit the changing needs of these consumers.

A common mistake that consumers make when planning their home office is the flooring. Whatever flooring exists in the space selected for their desk is what they go with. That attitude can be costly.

"The working environment is extremely important," says Richard Ferland, National Contract Manager for Peerless Carpet Corporation, Canada's leading manufacturer. "Noise reduction, comfort, safety, static control, colour, durability and maintenance are all important considerations."

"We even recommend commercial carpet in a home office setting, because it is designed to withstand the demands of a working environment such as office chairs on casters, heavy furniture and traffic. Bedroom or dining room carpet is not appropriate for this purpose."

To help consumers plan and set up their offices, Peerless recently introduced three new "Main Street" products ideally suited for this task.

Enviable, a good entry level carpet is perfect for the homeoffice environment. A loop pile with brightly coloured accents, Enviable adds vitality, is competitively priced and has a permanent anti-static feature built into the fibre.

Graphic Square, a step up from Enviable is a cut pile made from Zeftron Nylon. It is available in 18 colours, attractively priced and adds a touch of elegance to the home working environment.

Insignia is a textured graphic loop available in 16 colours. Its exquisite styling and high performance construction make it an ideal product for the heavily-trafficked home office.

Peerless also provides a consumer information booklet on how to buy carpet for all the rooms in your house. It is available free of charge by calling 1-800-363-3801.

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New colour trends for carpets in '97

Colours impact on our moods in different ways; a certain tone of red can generate a feeling of excitement, whereas a neutral shade can have a notably calming effect.

When it comes to choosing carpeting for your home, colour trends for 1997 offer unlimited options to blend with the mood and lifestyle your want to create. Let your imagination take you on a magic carpet ride into a world of colour choices.

Primary colours have increasingly gained importance and create high voltage contemporary interiors.

The slightly burnished warm cast midtone shades like ochre and saffron exude energy, used alone or as multiples in jacquard and print designs. Work the rich yellow base colours and terra cotta for warm interiors. Invisible since the 70's, avocado returns as an accent and viridian becomes the quiet base for this group.

The "newly enriched" neutrals such as amber, linen, tan, pewter, mushroom and fig have a contemporary theme. They become classic backdrops for every interior style and exercise a calming influence. The rich shades in this group are more visual and reflect a bolder treatment of the conventional neutrals.

Traditionally a commercial feature, patterned broadloom is stepping out into the residential arena. Quiet patterns are key; delicate florals, subtle monochromatic prints and repeat geometrics work will. Touches of dark or bright tints from other colour groups add vitality when needed.

Rich and colourful, the dark shades like cherry bark, indigo, deep mint green and plum have moved out of the castle era into the lightness of the modern world. They are ideal for elegant interiors and used singly, these classic shades add depth to a neutral background.

The sophisticated pales - chantilly aqua, charolais, rose tint - can be subtle or bold. Use provincial white as a classic background choice. Intermingle warm and cool tint for contrast as an elegant statement. Choose from velvet or textured finishes, depending on the room setting or lifestyle you want to fashion.

Choosing a carpet colour is a personal decision but there are fundamental rules of colour selection. For more information on making a selection that is right for you, Peerless Carpet Corporation has published a 16 page booklet on "How to Buy a Carpet". For a free copy call 1-800-363-3801.



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Chieftain photo by M.C. Bailey.

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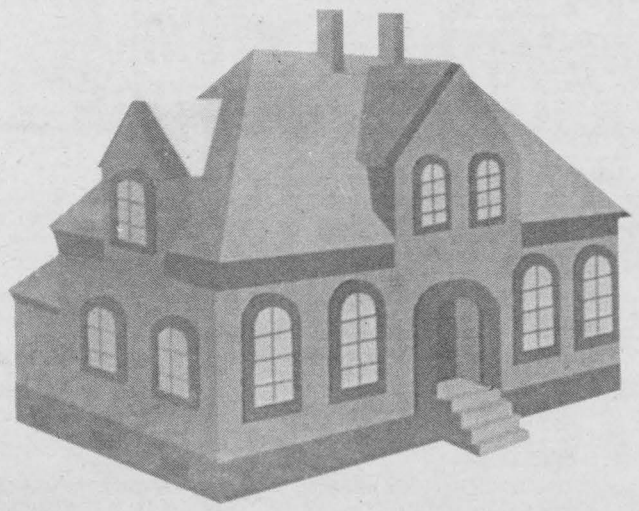

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CONTINUED

Harbers Flames

Continued from the front

in the business of selling stoves and fireplace inserts as well as chimneys, Brian and his wife, Joy both explain that Brian had been in the masonry business prior to 1995 and since he was not busy during the winter months, needed a business that was year round, so this kind of fit in with the chimney constructions and "during my work cleaning chimneys, it occurred to me that there was a market for stoves and inserts. The resurgence of wood burning facilities pointed the way for us."

At Harbers a customer can choose from wood, natural gas, propane or pellet stoves and inserts for their fireplaces. According to Brian, "Personal preference dictates what people will decide to buy. It boils down to convenience and what is available to the homeowner." He continues explaining that "Wood does not harm the environment, as long as proper chimneys and ventilation systems are installed and the equipment itself is certified, there should be no problems, just years of enjoyment. Wood releases carbon dioxide, the same amount as the natural decaying process will in the bush when a tree falls."

He tells The Chieftain that a lot of his time is spent these days relining chimneys. "Ninety-nine per cent of the time if a chimney fire has happened, the liner will be cracked. If this is not repaired, the creosote will leak through masonry and you will be able to tell you have a problem."

"In the chimney business today clay liners which were the norm in days gone by, are not used; rather steel liners are utilized. They have a life-time warranty and there is not much that can go wrong with them," says Brian.

If a stove or an insert for your fireplace is in the offing as you look to renovate or improve your home this year, Harbers Flame Centre is the place to check out. If you have a chimney, you will want a WETT certified technician to clean and check for deficits, and again Harbers can get the job done correctly.

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WETT certified technician

Chieftain photo by S.L. Johnston

Brian Harbers of Harbers' Flame Centre poses with his wall of certificates. Keeping abreast of the latest technology Brian has just completed the third of four courses to achieve Wood Energy Technical Training certification. Congrats Brian, it is good to know we have such experts to deal with our home heating systems.

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Great ideas for backyards

As the days become warmer Canadians emerge from hibernation to start those backyard renovations that have filled their dreams all winter long. A romantic gazebo to enjoy those pleasant summer evenings; a backyard deck, planters, a mini playground climber to keep the kids safe in your backyard; the choices are endless.

Whatever your dream project is, you're not alone. Creating attractive and functional outdoor additions to your property is a 16 billion dollar business annually.

"Over the past several years, people have discovered that it is more cost efficient to invest in the home you have than to buy a new one. Because of this there is a renewed interest in backyard renovation projects that will provide considerable enjoyment for a relatively small investment," says Henry Walthert, Executive Director of the Canadian Institute of Treated Wood.

To meet this trend, CITW members have put together a series of plans for more than twenty outdoor projects.

"The advantage of these plans is that homeowners with little time can get to work on these projects," continues Walthert. "Everything is there from the ideas, designs, measurements, instructions and a materials list." The best news is these plans are free!

Pressure treated wood is ideally suited to these outdoor applications because it lasts longer than untreated wood, requires less maintenance and is environmentally beneficial.

The pressure treating process involves forcing a preservative solution deep into the wood cells under pressure in a vacuum tank. The preservative fuses with the wood's natural sugars to fight the decay caused by fungi and bacteria.

Chromated copper arsenate, the preservative used in consumer treated wood, not only reduces maintenance but adds years to the normal service life of the wood.

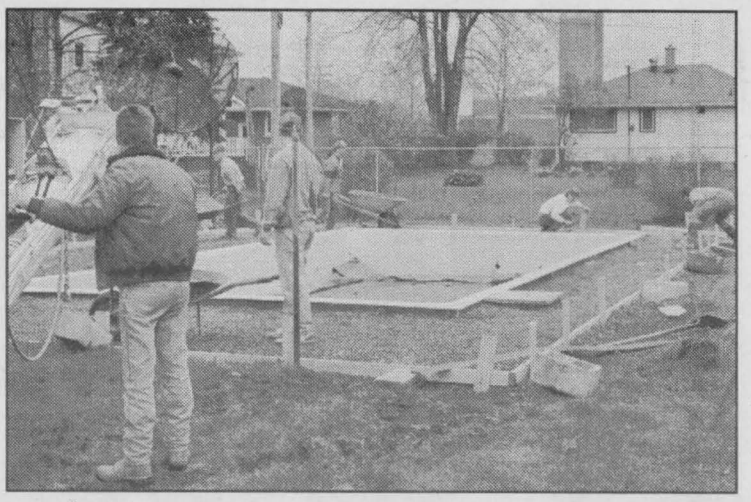
An average backyard deck will require lumber from two to three mature trees. If the wood is untreated a part or all of the deck may have to be replaced every few years. By using treated wood your deck will last much longer, saving tees, time and money on maintenance and rebuilding.

"There is no doubt that treated wood saves trees," Walthert says. "But people tend to overlook the low maintenance advantages of treated wood."

Not all treated wood is the same. CITW advises consumers that wood coming into contact with the ground should be incised. "This is a super pressure treating process," Walthert explains. "By incising the wood with small slit like incisions, the preservative will penetrate more deeply into the wood cells. We recommend incised wood for the infrastructure of all outdoor decks, fences and landscaping applications."

Incised treated wood is an excellent landscaping tool. It not only makes for attractive and environmentally friendly borders, but is great for retaining walls and walkways throughout your garden.

Free design plans for backyard projects can be obtained by calling CITW at 1-800-463-TREE.



A recreational project *Chieftain photo by S.L. Johnston*

Besides offering cool comfort from the raging heat of an Ontario summer, a pool can bring hours of fun and physical fitness. Coupled with these obvious benefits is the social plus of the pool party. Just think of how much you'll enjoy relaxing in the pool-- while you work at installing it.

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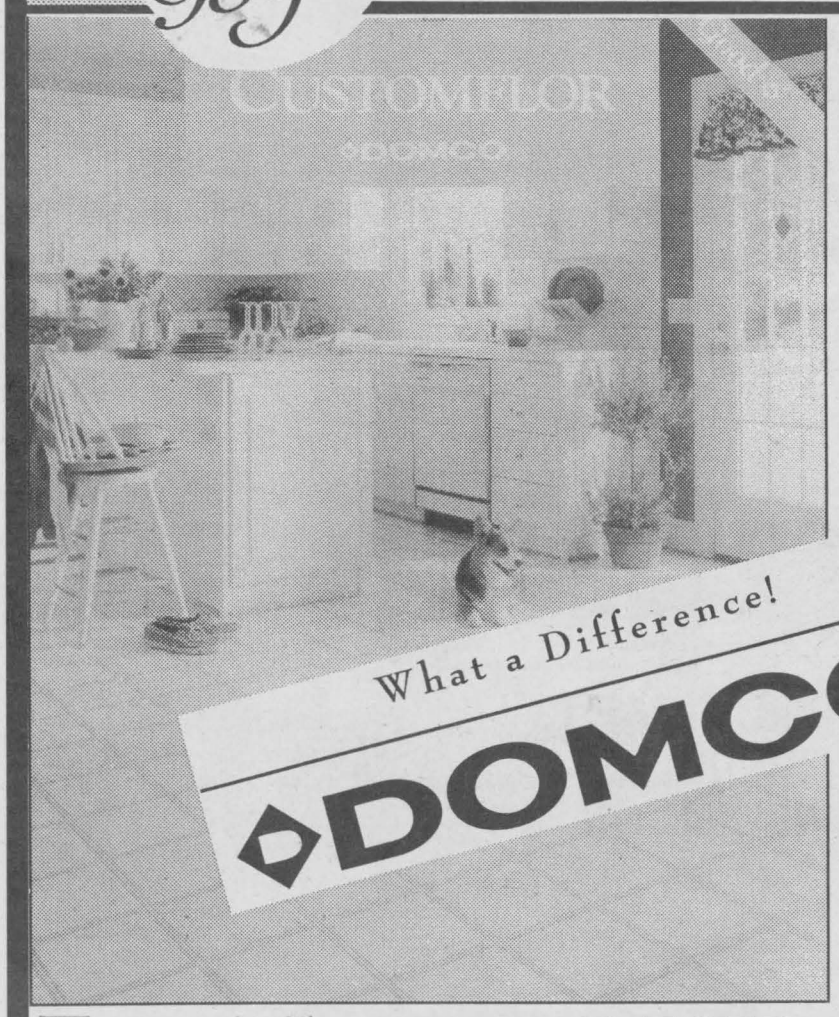

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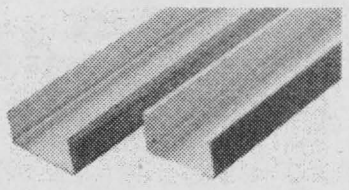

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