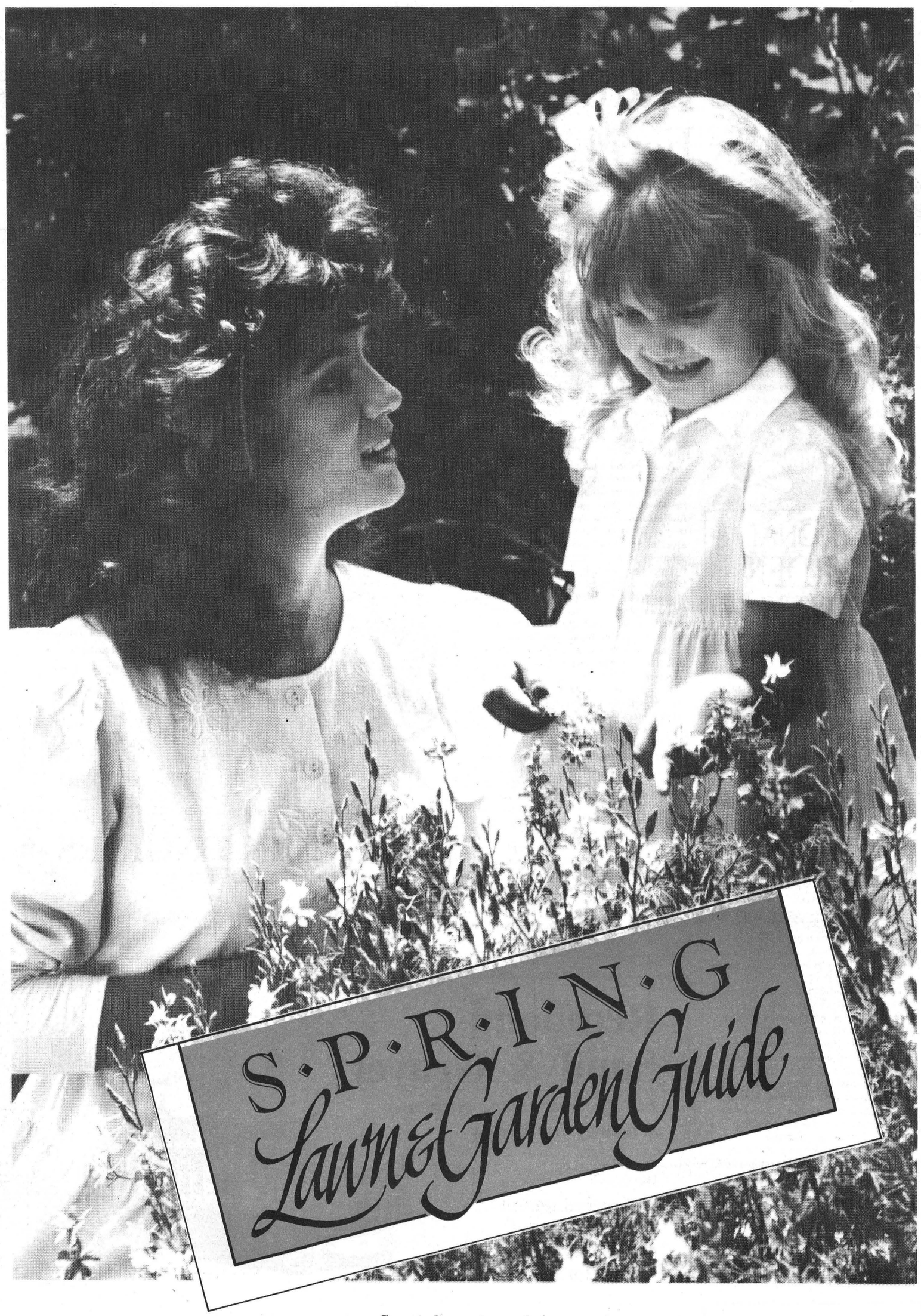

S·P·R·I·N·G Lawn & Garden Guide

Special section of the

WINCHESTER PRESS

Wednesday, May 9, 1990

National Garden month is here!

May is National Garden Month in Canada. In a special message on the subject, Don Mazankowski, federal agriculture minister said, "May signals a definite change in climate, and a time to be outdoors and capitalize on the beginning of the growing season. It is the most fitting time, therefore, to celebrate National Garden Month. And what better way for Canadians to do so, than to support the lawn and garden industry in Canada."

For centuries, individuals and families in countries throughout the world have participated in gardening. They generally did so either because they enjoyed it as a hobby or pastime, or because of the visual improvement it made to their own.

NATIONAL GARDEN MONTH

surroundings. At the same time, amenity horticulture, or the ornamental plantings in parks and around public buildings, has been carried out by municipalities, provinces and the federal government (Ottawa's Central Experimental Farm was founded a century ago, and it remains an apex of gardening activity today) for the same reasons.

Only in the last two decades have we learned that the plants we grow in our gardens are extremely valuable to us in other ways. For example, trees and other plants are much cheaper coolers of our air than are air conditioners. The trees, however, have few if any negative aspects (such as hydro consumption and the release of undesirable gases into the atmosphere when they are repaired) as do air conditioners.

In the summer months, hot sun that strikes plant material, either directly or reflected, will not penetrate it. The result is, the shaded side of a home or other building has cooler temperatures than the sun-heated side. This is likely obvious, but how often do homeowners plant their garden to take advantage of the fact?

Further, the temperature of an area may be lowered by plants even though they aren't tall enough to shade the building or area. Landscape plants and grass, or other ground covers, reduce temperatures: by absorbing much of the sun's radiation, by scattering some of the sun's rays, and through evapo-transpiration of moisture in the plants. Researchers have found that temperatures just above grass surfaces on sunny summer days, are from 10 to 14 degrees (Fahrenheit) lower than those just above exposed soils.

Deciduous trees (those such as maples and ash which lose their leaves each autumn) are excellent temperature controllers because they cool in summer, but allow winter sun to pass through. Properly placed, three trees around a house can cut air- conditioning needs by 10 to 50 per cent. Other plants, too, play a role in this. Vines such as ivies, Dutchman's pipe, climbing hydrangea and Virginia creeper on walls or trellises against walls, are excellent automatic heat control devices which cool by shading and providing evaporation *(Ed. note: check hardiness, only Virginia creeper is hardy across Canada.)*

In addition to their ability to cool our buildings, and environment generally, trees and other landscape plants are also effective air purifiers. In fact, they are the cheapest and most efficient air purifiers on earch. One of the major concerns about our environment currently is the build-up of CO2. Energy use is the single greatest contributor to CO2 build-up.

As the world's people continue to use more and more energy, countries must burn increasing amounts of fuel to meet the need. In 1987, global consumption of fuel resulted in the release of 5.6 billion tons of CO2 into the air. This fact alone gives us special reasons to participate in solutions such as planting trees.

Trees are especially valuable in cities. Urban 'heat islands,' caused by expanses of concrete and pavement such as parking lots, can be as much as 10 degrees (F.) hotter than surrounding areas. The shade that trees provide breaks up the heat islands and cuts energy needs as well as costs. In fact, the shading and cooling effect of just one tree indirectly reduces CO2 emissions close to 15 times the amount one tree can process.

On a block of eight average houses, front lawns have the cooling effect of about 70 tons of air conditioning. (The average home-size central-air unit has a three- to four-ton capacity.)

Most of us cannot do much to prevent acid rain, but we can help neutralize some of it. Rainfall is often as much as 10 times more acidic than the same water filtered through a healthy lawn.

These three of many such examples demonstrate the incredible contribution made by landscape plants to our environment. But still, the main reason people plant gardens is the aesthetic appeal plants have. What better time than May — National Garden Month — to plant up your property, for whatever reason you choose!

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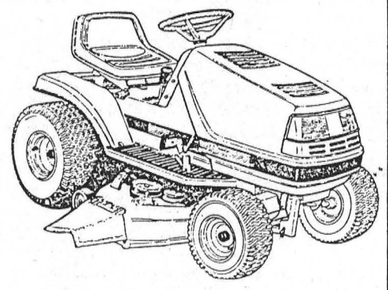

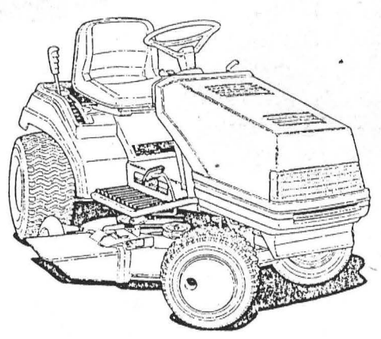

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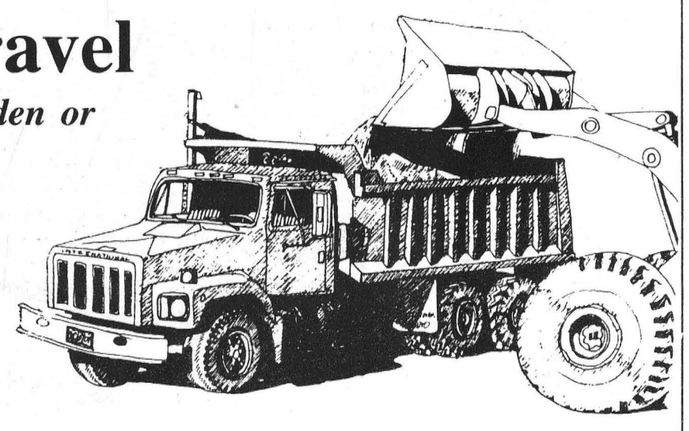

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As you sow, so shall you reap

Disease-free seed that germinates vigorously is essential for a successful garden. The wise gardener will take advantage of the breeding research done by the government and seed companies by selecting vegetable cultivars that possess high quality, good yielding potential, and especially some tolerance for various diseases or resistance to them. (A cultivar is a cultivated variety of plant, such as 'Butter King' lettuce.)

The cost of seed, compared with the value of vegetables harvested, is a small item. Seed can be purchased from seed stores or garden centres, or ordered through vegetable-seed catalogs. Certified seed potatoes should be used for planting and can be obtained from seedsmen.

It is generally not recommended that seed from garden crops be saved for planting the following year. Save seed only if the plant is free from disease and did not come from hybrid seed. Seed from a diseased plant may pass on the disease to the next generation.

Seed from a hybrid cultivar can produce plants that vary greatly among themselves in height, size of vegetable, tolerance for disease, and other qualities. If you consider saving seed, you should also plan on treating it with an insecticide or fungicide. This helps the seed to overcome diseases and insects when it is sown and germinates in a cool, wet soil.

Some seeds are extremely small and consequently very small quantities are needed for the average garden. For example, cabbage may have as many as 300 seeds per gram and celery 2,200 seeds per gram. On the other hand, much larger amounts of pea and bean seeds are required.

PREPARING THE SOIL

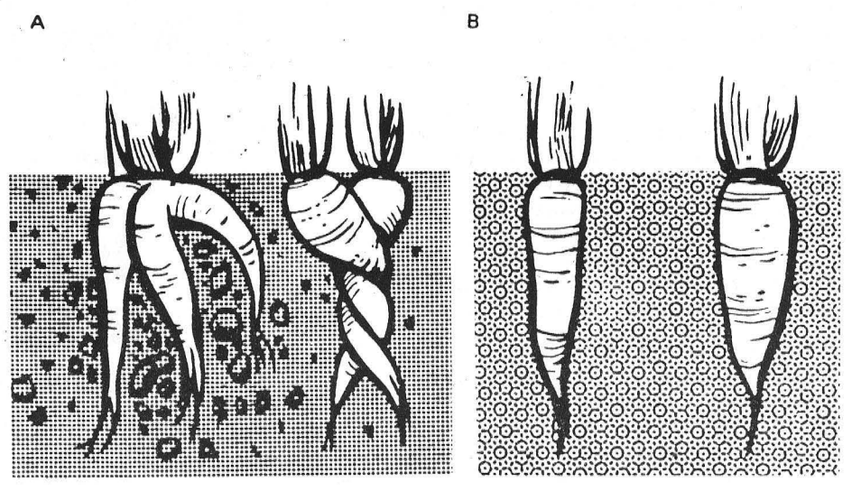
Dig or plow clay soil roughly in the fall if possible; this rough digging in the autumn allows freezing and thawing to penetrate the soil clumps and improve the soil structure. This action also helps to kill some overwintering pests. If it is available, spread rotted manure over the surface before plowing or digging.

Plan your garden in the autumn and apply manure to all areas except where root crops (such as carrots) will be grown. Crops that are heavy feeders (corn for example) will benefit from the manure. If the soil is already well supplied with organic matter or humus, 25 kg of manure will be sufficient for 100 m(2) of garden. On poorer soils, 50 kg or more can be applied.

Soil fertility can be increased by adding commercial fertilizers in the spring, as well as manure. Use a complete fertilizer such as 5-10-10 at the rate of 10 kg to 100 m(2) on light sandy soils, or 4-12-8 at a rate of 5 kg to 100 m(2) on heavier soils.

In the spring, work the garden to a depth of 20-25 cm and cover all manure or compost after thoroughly mixing it with the soil. Turn existing sod under and cover it completely. If couch grass is present, use a digging fork to shake out the roots and discard them. Thoroughly pulverize and level the surface of the soil (unless it is clay) to obtain a uniform stand of plants from seeds or transplants.

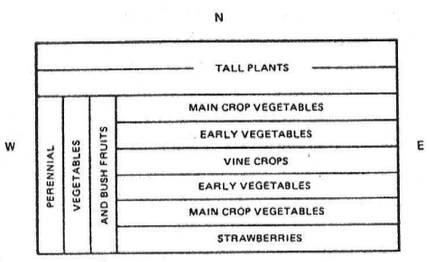
If your garden is in a low, depressed area, then you might consider forming raised beds, that is, scraping the soil from between the rows and then seeding in these raised rows. This practice is especially beneficial in gardens where water is sometimes lying on the surface of the soil.



A. Clods of earth, lumps of manure, or stones cause forked roots, and failure to thin the young plants may result in twisting. B. Friable, uniform soil produces well-developed roots.

LAYING OUT THE GARDEN

If possible, plan the garden so that the tall plants, such as corn, staked tomatoes, and pole beans will be at the north side where they will not cast shade on smaller plants. It is advisable to run rows across a slope to help prevent water runoff and soil erosion. To allow for cultivation, place asparagus, rhubarb and other perennial vegetables and fruits at the edge of the garden, about 1 m from the grass line. Plant the vine crops in the centre of the garden and the other crops on each side with two rows of early vegetables along the edges of the vine crops. These will be harvested and out of the way when the vine crops spread.



A garden plan

A square or almost square garden is usually easier to handle than a long narrow one. However, if a garden tractor is used in a square garden, more space at each end will have to be sacrificed. If possible, rotate your crops so that the same kinds of plants do not occupy the same portion of the garden year after year.

Rotation, or cultivation of areas of the garden with different types of vegetables in successive years, is done to reduce the buildup of disease or pest organisms that occur if the same soil is planted with the same vegetable every year. An ideal rotation (only possible if a large area of land is available) would be to garden in an area for two years and then grow grass sod or alfalfa there for two years to allow the sod or alfalfa to improve the soil structure. Root crops should not be planted in a soil that has had sod on it the previous year.

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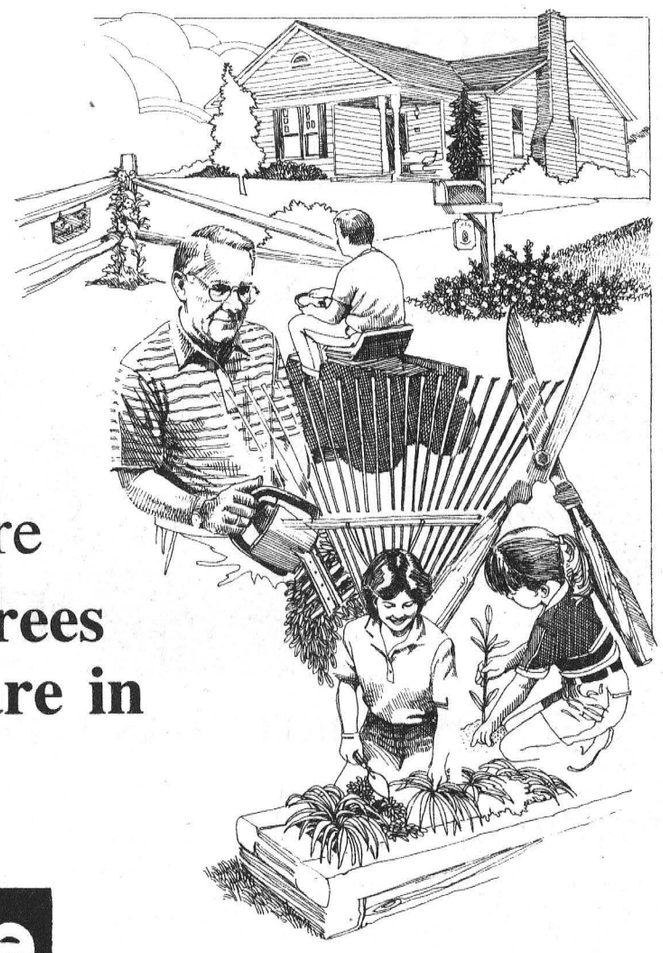

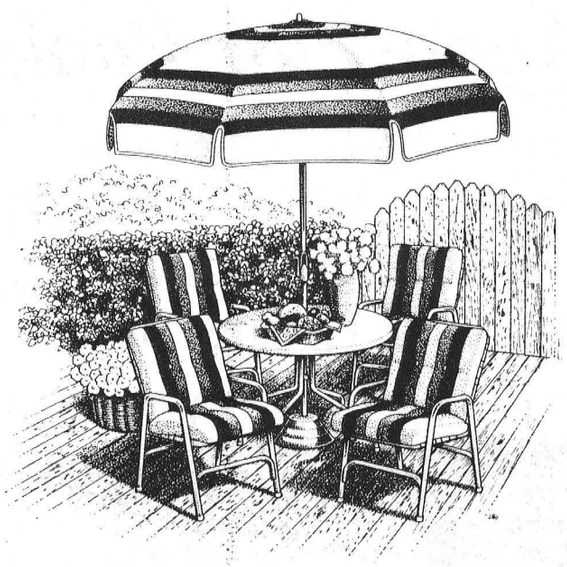

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Landscaping increases home's resale value

May is National Garden Month in Canada and federal agriculture minister, Don Mazankowski has endorsed it, saying, "I am particularly pleased to see that working for a clean environment is among the themes being promoted by the Canadian Garden Council. Conservation of our national resources is critical to the long-term health and quality of Canadian life. We all share a responsibility to ensure basic resources are available to pass on to future generations."

On the other hand, the contributions made to our environment are not the main reason Canadians spend $2.54 billion annually on exterior landscaping. There are at least two others. One is the aesthetic considerations, which we'll come back to; and the other is the ability of good landscaping to increase substantially the value of the home it enhances and beautifies.

Well-designed houses, located on appropriately-sized lots, realize a 15 per cent increase in home value or selling price when nicely landscaped, according to U.S. sources. And, on an average subdivision home, the recovery value of dollars spent on plants and landscaping is 100 to 200 per cent compared to only about 40 to 70 per cent for a similar investment in a new deck or patio.

Now, the aesthetics! On just what type of plants should you make your investment? First and foremost, if you are just beginning, either with a new house, or a re-sale, consider shade first. Deciduous trees such as ash, birches, most maples and lindens will eventually grow into large trees, providing major areas of shade for your garden and home. Evergreens such as spruce and pine, except the dwarf forms, will do the same, but the shade (though usually of a lesser nature, tree for tree, than deciduous types) will be present in the winter as well.

Smaller trees, on the other hand, will provide more confined areas of shade. Trees in this category are Ivory Silk tree lilac, amur maple and crab apples. The Canadian Garden Council advises that for all planting you'll do during National Garden Month, your local garden outlet is the place to enquire for specific, local information.

Other planting you'll want to carry out in May could include a hedge for privacy, for example deciduous Alpine current and Nannyberry which lose their leaves, or evergreen cedar. Flowering and foliage shrubs are available in a vast array of attributes from which to choose. They are useful along property lines and fences as a background for flower borders or annuals or perennials.

Examples would be lilacs, spiraea and honeysuckles for spring bloom; Sorbaria and St. John's-wort for summer flowering; hydrangea for autumn bloom; silverleaf and yellowtwig dogwood for colored, variegated foliage the entire growing season; and serviceberries and viburnums for attractive autumn berries.

The list of planting opportunities is endless; evergreens for year-round beauty, roses — the Queen of flowers — vines to dress otherwise blank walls, herbaceous perennials which bloom year after year without re-planting and, of course, annual flowers which may only be planted when all danger of frost is over.

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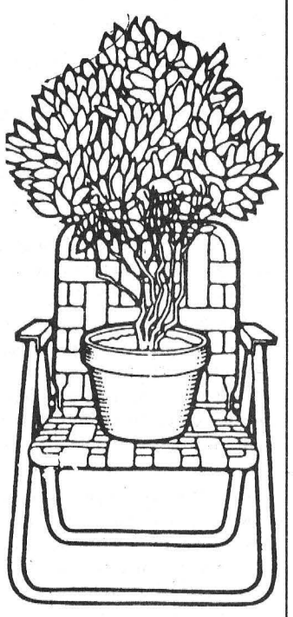

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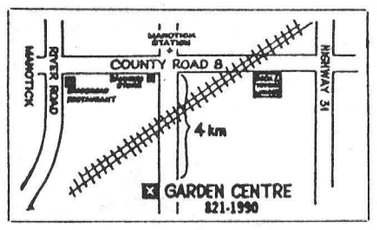

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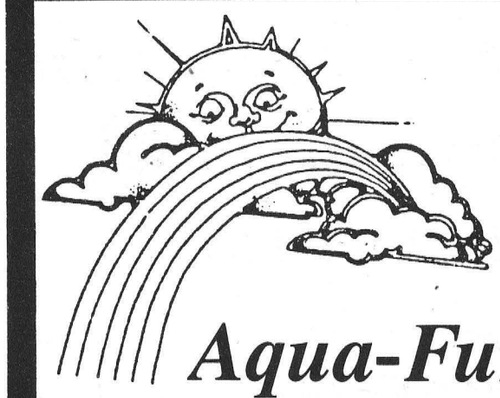

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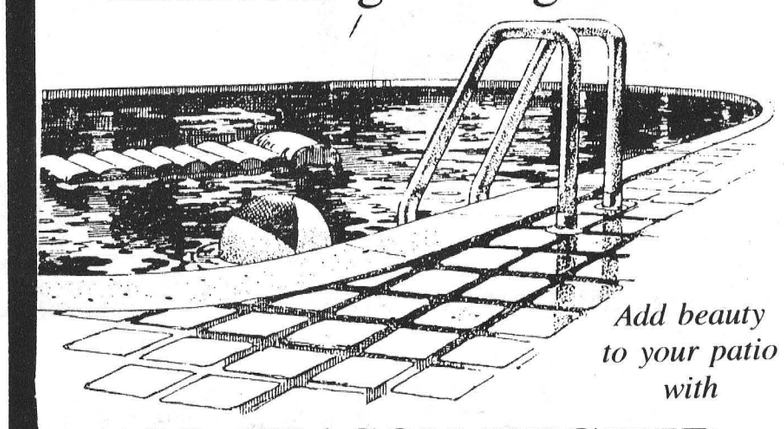

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Enhance nature with a yard pond



YARD PONDS: Easy to construct, easy to maintain, beautiful to look at.

If you really enjoy being in your yard and would like to give your yard that extra dimension to make it even more enjoyable, as well as the envy of your neighborhood, here's a great suggestion—put in your own yard pond! Too much worry? Don't know how to do it? Through new technology, all these worries are needless.

Installing your own garden pond is simple, maintaining your own yard pond is easy and, best of all, your yard pond can provide year after year of trouble-free enjoyment.

European gardens, particularly in Great Britain, southern France, northern Italy, Holland and West Germany, are almost always pictured with a yard pond.

Seven years ago, a German company the Tetra Werke, known best in the United States for its products for home aquariums, developed a bonded two-piece, heavy-duty (32Mil thick), flexible rubber pond liner. This liner allows home owners to free-form a yard pond efficiently and immediately.

The liner can withstand the warmest summers and the coldest winters, and is available in sizes big enough to create ponds almost 10 feet in diameter.

In summary, you should select a location on your property where the ground is fairly even although, because of the flexibility of the liner, some leveling can be achieved when digging your pond. The pond should be placed where it will get approximately six hours of sunlight per day.

While you can place your pond anywhere, it is not recommended to place it directly under trees since falling leaves can foul the water and tree roots will make digging difficult.

Using a heavy garden hose or a rope, free-form your pond design to conform to your landscaping scheme.

When constructing your pond, you should dig both a shallow area and a deep area. Fish benefit from the shallow area to feed on insects and the shallow area can also be used to place potted plants such as lilies.

The deep area will provide security for your fish and protect them from birds and small animals. Depending on your climate, the deep area of your pond should be anywhere from 24'' to 40'', and the shallow area from 4'' to 12''.

When constructing your pond, you should line the ground with sand, carpet padding or even old newspapers before laying the liner. This will protect your pond liner against sharp, protruding objects such as roots or rocks.

To create that professional look, build a rock border around your pond, allowing the rocks to overlap the edge of the pond by 1'' or 2''.

You can landscape back around the pond and even build a patio if you so desire.

Maintaining your pond is very easy. Tetra has an economical, permanent pond filter and a complete line of water chemicals and foods to ensure that your fish will prosper.

What kind of fish should you put in your pond? The hardiest are large common or comet goldfish. Depending on the size of your pond, these hardy fish will grow rapidly and can withstand the worst weather. As long as the water in your pond does not freeze to its lowest depth, these fish can survive the cruelest winters.

If you live in a warmer climate, you can select from the most prized pond fish: the beautiful and exotic Koi from Japan. These are increasingly available throughout the U.S. and, although they are not quite as hardy as the common goldfish, they are a treasured pond fish.

What should you do in the winter? Nothing! After the first frost, remove your filter and leave your pond alone until the onset of spring (as soon as the water temperature reaches 50° F).

Never feed your fish during the winter as their metabolism directly relates to the water temperature, and when the water temperature drops below 50° F they will not eat. In the spring, simply reinstall your filter and begin feeding your fish.

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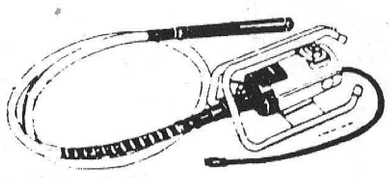

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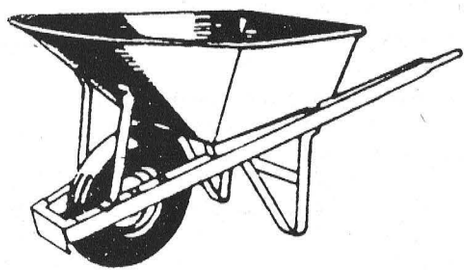

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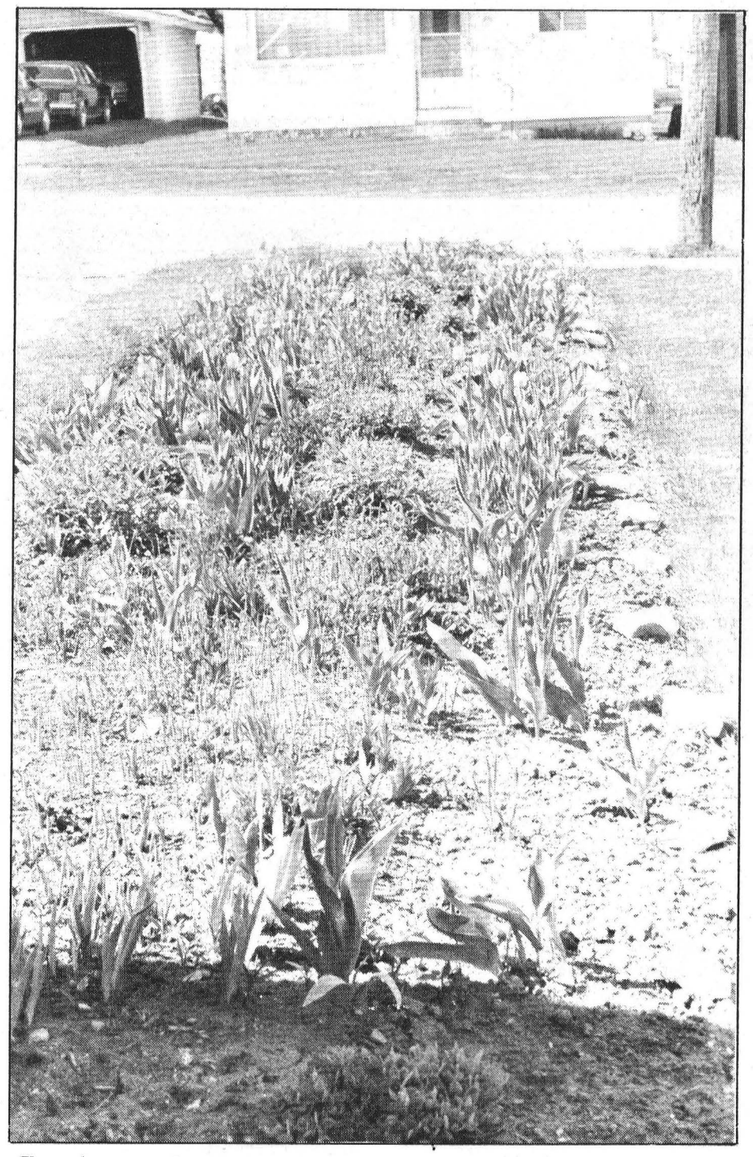

Rock garden

Rocks offer an attractive border around an open garden.

Press Photo—Day

Roses: perennial favorite

Lawrence Masson of Scarborough requests "a list of nurseries where old garden roses can be purchased/ordered."

The Canadian Garden Council replies: though roses are the "Queen of the Garden," and are sold in virtually all outlets featuring garden products, the older garden roses are not nearly so readily available. We have directed Masson to a specialized rose nursery in his area.

For him, as well as others interested in the subject, we recommend getting a book on the subject in order to be able to decide just which types of (old) roses you wish to grow. One book from England is quite definitive on the subject: "The Heritage of the Rose," by David Austin. It is well illustrated in color, and gives an excellent history of the various types of roses. The book is not easy to obtain; however, Metro Toronto's Civic Garden Centre (777 Lawrence Ave. E., Don Mills, Ont. M3C 1P2) does offer it at $90 postpaid.

Donna Harrison in Canmore, Alberta writes to ask if there are any special sources of "tomatoes that grow well in cold climates such as what we endure here in Alberta."

The Canadian Garden Council replies: Yes, one called 'Siberia' is distributed by a local Alberta seedsman whose address we have forwarded. However, one need not stick to varieties developed solely for "cold climates." The secret is to plant varieties that mature in about two months. This is easy to ascertain. All seed catalogues list the number of days it takes to get mature fruit for all vegetables.

A couple of tomatoes you should try are: 'Ultra Sweet' — 62 days; 'Sub Arctic Maxi' — 48 days; 'Swift' — 54 days; and 'Starshot' — 55 days. If it's a small cherry-type tomato you seek, try 'Sweet Million' — 60 days. It is one of the highest sugar content tomatoes, with a great taste! The plants grow to a height of 1.5 m (5') and fruit is borne in closters very similar to grapes. One Ontario gardener reported picking in excess of 2,700 of these tiny taste buds from just five plants!

Hilda Shelmardine of Moncton, New Brunswick writes asking about the pruning of roses. She says that she was "told by a friend to prune them in the fall, but winter set in and I didn't get it done. Have I made a major error in not pruning them last fall?"

The Canadian Garden Council replies: No you definitely have not. Pruning rose bushes generally should be done just as the frost leaves the ground each spring (in your part of the country about the third week of April). Ideally (except in lower mainland B.C. and Vancouver Island), roses should have been mounded with well-compacted soil around them over the winter. These mounds are removed as soon as they are frost-free. Pruning is done a week or 10 days later. It's a task best left until the first growth buds can be seen just sprouting from the canes.

Prune out **all** thin growth (canes of less than pencil thickness), and also all dead canes. Cut back the thicker canes to about 15-20 cm (6-8"). Most important, make each cut straight across, **just above** an outward-facing growth bud. The top buds will be the ones that develop into this year's new growth on which the flowers will be produced. If these buds face outwards, the bush will have an open centre — and good growth habit for optimum flower production.

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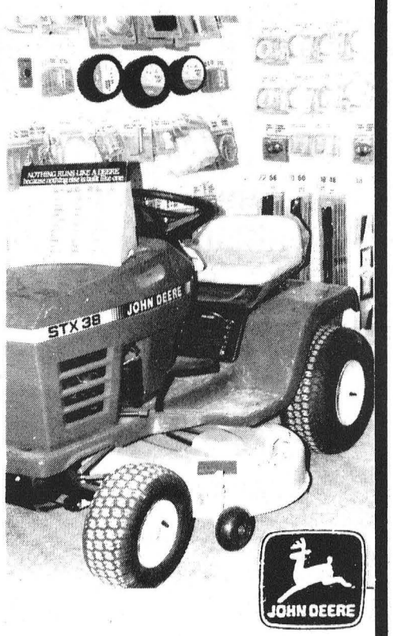

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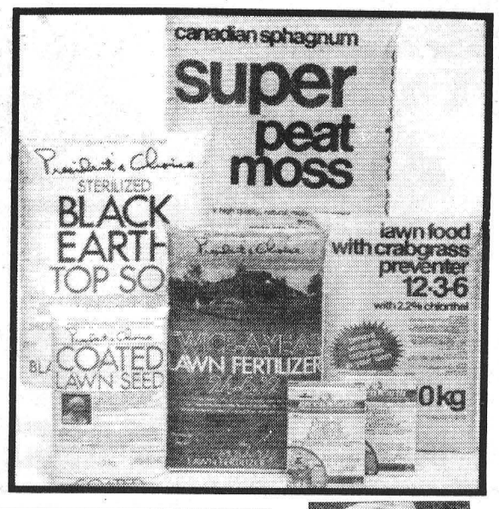

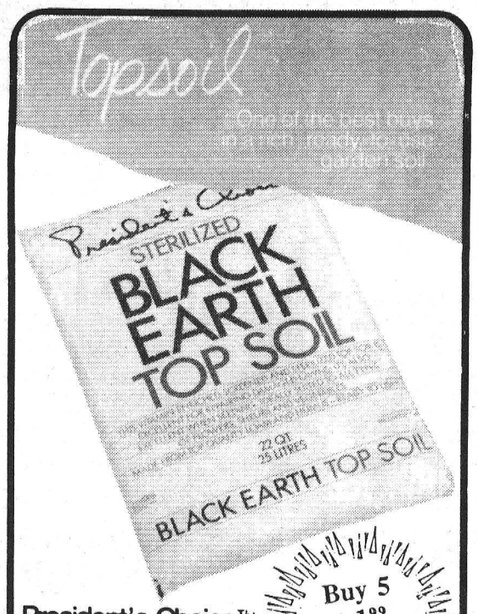

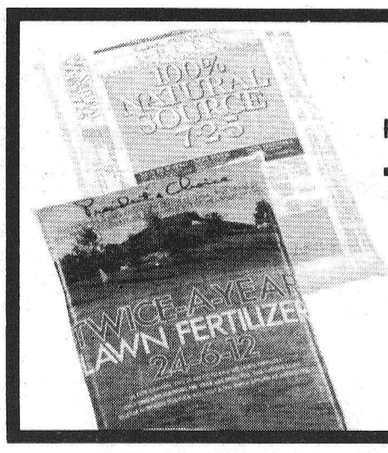

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fertilizer
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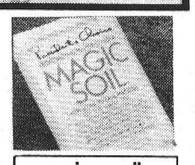
9.99 9 kg



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With time release fertilizer. Use for garden or container growing. (20 litres 2.99)
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10-6-4 or 7-7-7
Tried and true formulas, used by gardeners for years. Use 10-6-4 for lawns and 7-7-7 for gardens.
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Apply early for effective use. **11.99**

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Controls broadleaf weeds. **6.99**

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Attach to end of hose and water in. **7.99**

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Number 1 grade Hybrid Tea or climbers. each **4.99**

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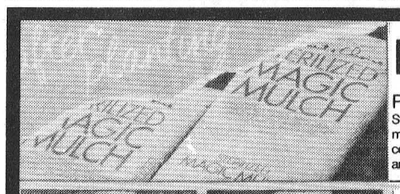
Hybrid Tea or Climbing varieties. Number 1 grade. each **7.99**



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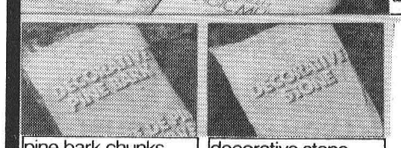

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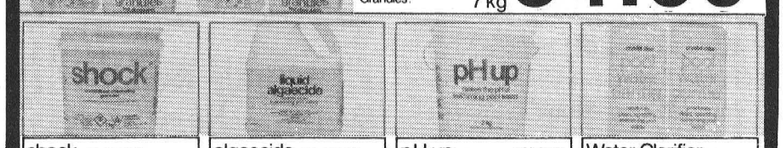

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Perennials gain popularity with home gardeners

Though the Canadian climate varies widely, most of the country has already experienced some spring-like weather, even if winter has returned again, or at least threatens to do so. Only on Canada's west coast may gardeners be assured of an early start for their activities. Elsewhere, only now are gardening activities 'heating up'.

Gardeners usually think first of their lawns, and after a good raking, apply a fertilizer for much-needed nutrition. The Canadian Garden Council advises that the best buy in turf fertilizers is *always* a premium-priced product, regardless of brand.

Ideally a spring lawn fertilizer should have a high percentage of its nitrogen (the first number of the three-number formula on the bag) available from a long-lasting organic or synthetic organic source (e.g. SCU or urea-formaldehyde). Faster-acting formulae will do the job, but will stimulate more growth than needed in the spring, with little nutrients for the grass plants later in the spring.

After the lawn, most homeowners think about additions, changes and improvements to the garden itself. Right now is the ideal time to plan such items as the addition of a bed of roses. If you have this in mind, remember that rose bushes like full sun for at least five or six hours per day. If you have that type of location, the one factor to keep in mind in deciding on the size of the bed is that you should always be able to reach into the centre of the bed, at least with a Dutch hoe, from the edge of the grass or walkway. Your soil may need to be amended with Canadian sphagnum peat moss. Your local garden centre is the best place to head for advice on planting your rose bushes. They will likely have a catalogue listing and pehaps illustrating some of the more popular varieties, of the hundreds available.

Herbaceous perennials are now the most popular form of home gardening. Plants such as peonies and iris in the spring, delphiniums and phlox in the summer, and asters and mums in the fall are just six examples of thousands available. If it's a shaded area you have, there is a good list of perennials for that condition too. For example, primroses, columbine, bleeding heart, bergenia and plantain lilies all thrive in shady gardens. There are many more — your garden centre is the place to inquire.

Before undertaking any changes in your garden, it would be well to have an overall plan so that you don't end up putting one feature where you'll later find that you have to move it due to a consideration which you have given no thought.

The Canadian Garden Council has produced on behalf of garden centres all across the country, *The Garden Planner — A practical guide to home landscaping*. It is available free from many garden centres, or you may write the council at 6 Nesbitt Dr., Toronto, Ont., M4W 2G3, enclosing $1 for postage, to receive a copy.



Russell gardeners dig into spring in this Mill Street tulip bed.

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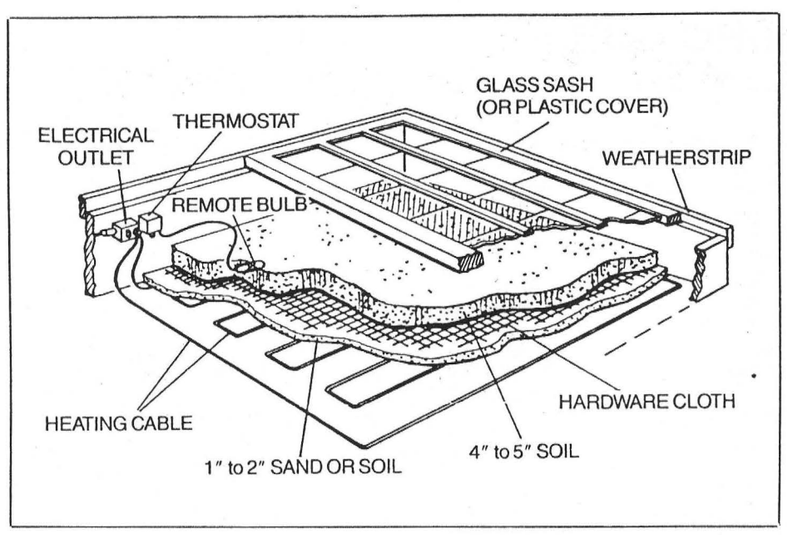

Plant-growing structures

Vegetable transplants can be grown in various types of structures such as coldframes, hotbeds and glass or plastic greenhouses. The choice depends not only on one's budget, but also on the volume of plants to be grown and on the suitability of the particular structure for other uses.

COLDFRAMES AND HOTBEDS

Coldframes in general are single, inexpensive structures, mostly plastic-covered with 1 x 2m (3 x 6 ft.) sashes placed on two frames holding single or double rows. They depend entirely on the sun for heat, unless one has a source for horse manure, which then is stacked deep enough in the bottom of each frame to ferment. This fermentation releases both heat and carbon dioxide, but releases ammonia as well, which can be detrimental to plant growth at times.

The system is rather labor-intensive and now rarely used. Soil temperatures generally are too low in coldframes for starting early transplants successfully, but may be used effectively later in the season or employed to hold or to harden plants. Therefore, one is advised to use a hotbed instead — a modified coldframe with added heat, utilizing heating pipes (hot water or steam), electric soil cables or heat-mats. Either system engages a thermostat for accurate temperatures.

Unless the added heat is supplied from the bottom, soil temperatures generally are too low for early, good plant growth.

Overall, growing quality transplants in hotbeds requires more skill and constant attention, as the limited growing space allows little room for error.

Dear John answers questions on fertilizer

Dear John: I just bought a house and have no idea what kind of grass is in my lawn. What kind of fertilizer should I use this spring?

Dear Grass Grower: Before you can determine the right kind of fertilizer, you need to know the variety of grass planted in your lawn. That's because nitrogen requirements vary greatly among cool-season grasses.

A soil testing laboratory in your area can solve the mystery. While you're at it, get a soil test to find out if the lawn is missing any necessary elements for proper growth. To prepare soil for a test, take several random plugs of grass and soil, about four to six inches deep. Then separate the grass blades, stems and roots from the soil. Place the soil in one container and the grass in another. From the two samples, the testing lab can tell you what variety of grass grows on your lawn and if the lawn has any deficiencies. If the lawn is missing certain elements, a specific fertilizer will be recommended to correct the problem.

If the lawn is healthy, I recommend using a complete fertilizer on your lawn. Look for a ratio of about three to one to two on the bag. (That's three parts nitrogen to one part phosphorus to two parts potassium.) The actual numbers will differ, but this ratio will promote green growth, encourage a healthy root system and help fight lawn disease.

Dear John: Should I use the same amount of fertilizer in the spring that I use in the fall?

Dear Food-For-Thought: Yes. Grass needs food during its peak growing periods — and for cool-season grasses, that means fall and early spring. The doses of fertilizer will vary among different grass varieties, but most cool-season grasses need about one pound of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of lawn in both early May and September. But to make sure you don't over- fertilize your lawn and 'burn' the grass, check with a local nursery to find out the specific nitrogen requirements for your variety of grass.

Dear John: I've heard that I don't have to fertilize at all if I leave my grass clippings on the lawn. Is that true?

Dear Heard-It-Through-the-Grapevine: Not exactly. But leaving grass clippings on the lawn can provide as much as 20 per cent of the nitrogen needed by your lawn. Within a week after mowing the lawn, nitrogen from the decomposed clippings will show up in the new grass growth. And you can distribute the clippings on the lawn and not have to worry about thatch if you follow the one-third rule. In other words, cut off no more than one-third of the grass blade during any single mowing to ensure that the clippings will be short enough to deteriorate quickly. If you let the clippings lie, you'll only need one feeding in the fall.

For more tips on lawn care, write for the free booklet, "Lawn Care Know-How," John Deere Limited, P.O. Box 1000, Grimsby, Ont. L3M 4H5.

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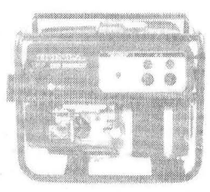
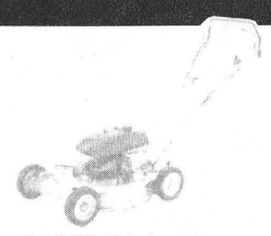


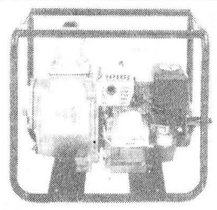
EB2200 2200 watts. AC/DC

Generators



HRS21PVC 21-inch, push, 3.5 hp, side discharge, bagging optional

Lawn mowers



WB30X (Water) 1,000 litres per minute capacity

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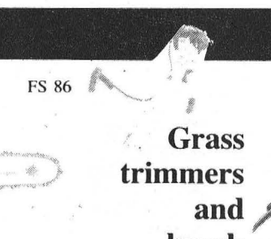

Grass trimmers and brush cutters

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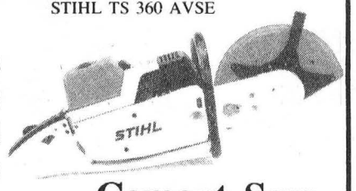

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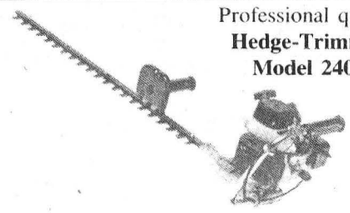

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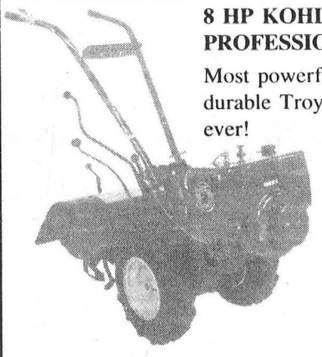

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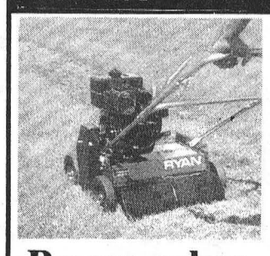

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Ren-O-Thin® III and IV

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Aerators

Designed for the professional who wants to provide core-type aerification at a high rate of speed, the new Lawnaire IV is the highest quality roll-type aerator on the market.

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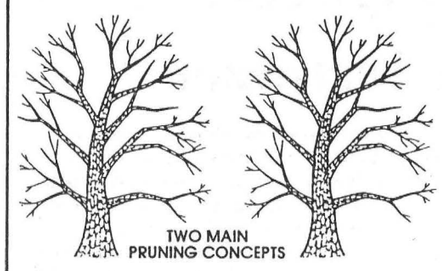
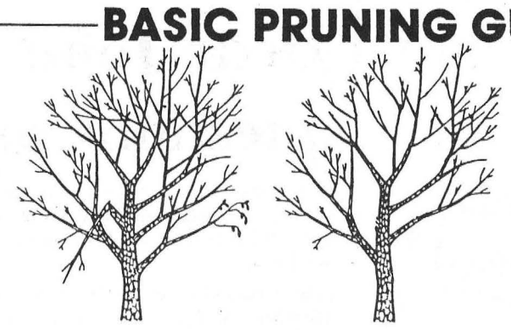
BASIC PRUNING GUIDE



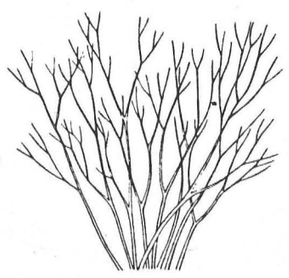
TWO MAIN PRUNING CONCEPTS

Heading Back
1. Heading back increases the density of the plant and makes it sturdier.

Thinning
2. Thinning will make a plant grow taller and more open.



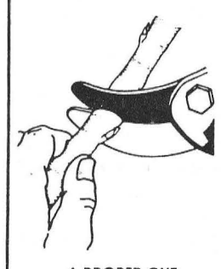
TYPICAL PRUNING NEEDS OF A TREE
1. Broken Branches: Unsightly and possibly dangerous.
2. Diseased Branches: Removal isolates disease-causing organisms.
3. Crowded Branches: Removal increases light and raw materials to remaining branches.
4. Non-symmetrical: Removal improves appearance.



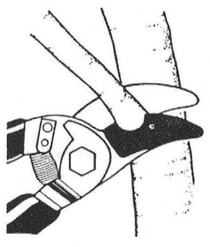
PRUNING DECIDUOUS SHRUBS
Remove all broken, diseased, and crisscrossing branches. Remove a part of each long shoot that may spoil the shape of the shrub, and prune down to ground level about one third of the oldest branches.



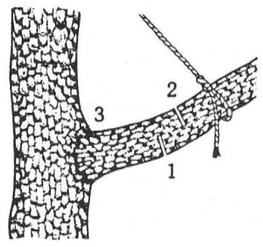
PINCHING
Frequently pinch back, with the thumb and forefinger, soft growth throughout the growing season to avoid future pruning, to redirect growth, and to increase the density of the plant. Pinching is also useful for disbudding flowers and thinning fruit.



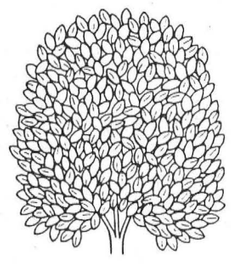
A PROPER CUT
Support the branch below where the cut is to be made. Cut at a slant in the direction you want the new branch to grow.



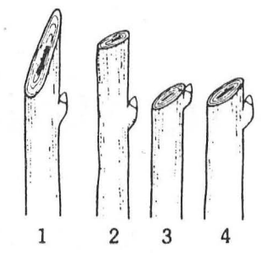
CUT CLOSE
Cut an unwanted branch in such a way as to leave the shortest possible stub.



REMOVING HEAVY LIMBS
Use a 3-cut technique to avoid damage to a tree by splitting. Cut at (1) under the limb, then at (2) above and further out to remove the limb, and at (3) to remove the stub. The heaviest limbs may be supported by a rope.



THE IDEAL HEDGE SHAPE
Prune hedges narrower at the top to allow sunlight to reach the bottom foliage.



THE CUT IN RELATION TO BUDS
1. Too Slanted: Exposes too much surface area to damage.
2. Too long: Can cause dieback of the stub.
3. Too Short: Will interfere with bud growth.
4. Ideal: Cut from opposite the base of the bud slanting upward



CHOOSING THE CORRECT BUD
Prune near a lateral (side) bud that is pointing in the direction that you want the subsequent branch to grow. Cutting off a terminal (end) bud will cause the nearest lateral bud to inherit its strength and direction.

Pointers for pruners ...

DO'S
1. Always prune away dead, broken and diseased portions of a plant at any time.
2. Prune flush to a main branch or trunk.
3. Cover cuts of 1½" diameter or more with a protective wound compound.
4. In general, prune weak plants hard and vigorous plants lightly.
5. For safety and ease of pruning, use the correct tool for the job.
6. Keep your tools sharp and clean. Clean cuts heal quicker.
7. Make a cut only with a good reason and with an understanding of what your cut will produce.

DON'TS
1. Do not leave ragged cuts or stubs.
2. Do not use hedge shears for general pruning.
3. Do not prune with sprung, dull, or improper tools.
4. Do not do all your pruning at one time.
5. Do not expect pruning to compensate for obvious defects caused by overcrowding, poor soil conditions, improper climate, etc.
6. Do not assume that every good gardener is a good pruner. Check out casual advice before you prune.
7. Do not climb trees! The hazards far outweigh the benefits. Call a professional or use a long-handled pole tree trimmer.

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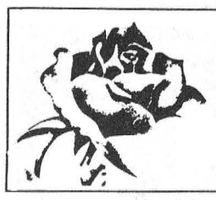

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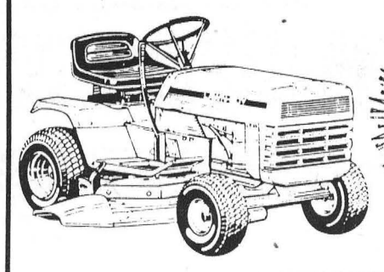

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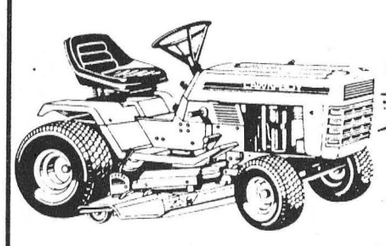

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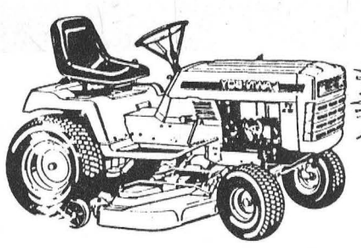

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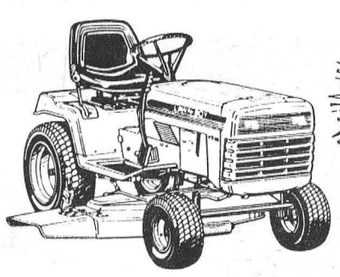

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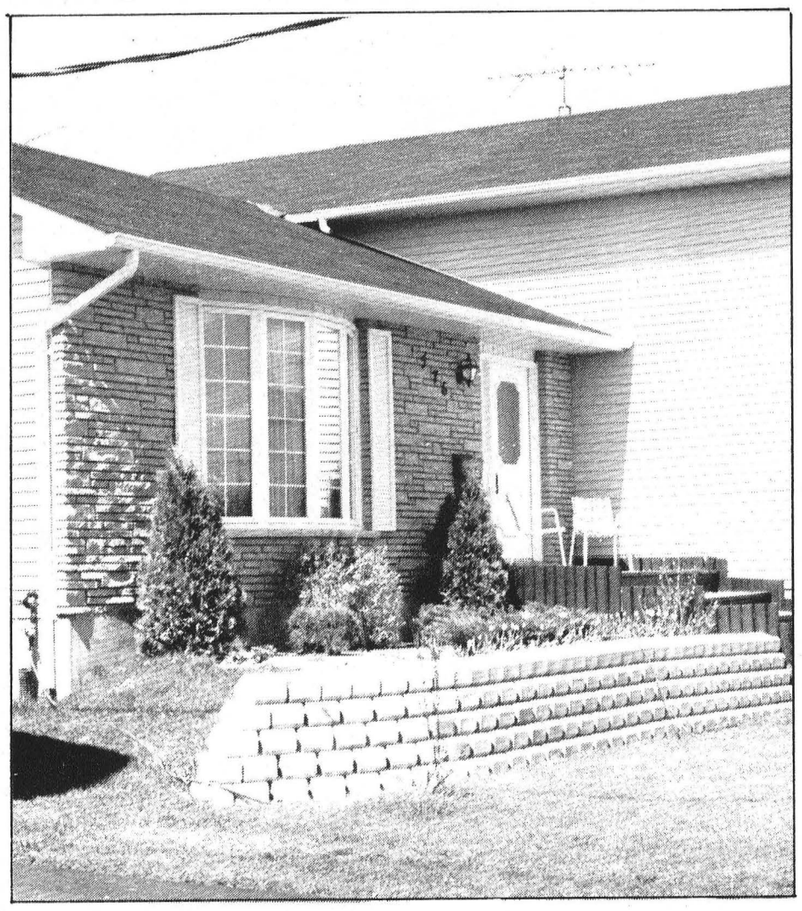

TIME OF YEAR

Spring, when it is only natural for us to be excited about the garden, has been the traditional time for planting trees. However, many trees can be planted successfully in the fall. Spring planting should begin as soon as the soil is nicely workable after the winter thaw. Do not dig or work wet soil.

Deciding what size of tree to buy will depend on your budget. Purchasing a large tree installed by a landscape contractor will be more expensive than a potted tree from the garden centre. The large tree may provide the instant functional or design result you want, while the small tree you planted can be enjoyed as it grows. Whatever the size of tree, proper planting and maintenance practices will insure survival and good growth.

PROCEDURES AFTER PLANTING

Staking: Rigid staking for two or three years results in poor trunk development, so stake only if necessary. It may be necessary to stake a bareroot or large tree in order to prevent it from being blown over by the wind. Small trees rarely need to be staked.

In most instances, one rigid stake placed 15 cm away from the trunk is sufficient. An old piece of garden hose threaded with wire makes a good tie that will not injure the trunk. Remove the tie and stake after one growing season. If staking for more than one season is necessary, soil conditions are adversely affecting proper root growth.

Watering: The most common cause of tree failure is related to watering practices. Overwatering kills trees more than underwatering. Watering should relate to the soil, the plant and the environment.

If the soil is clay, water remains for extended periods. This often results in waterlogging. When the soil is waterlogged, root growth cannot occur. Without adequate root growth, the tree will not survive.

Some species of trees survive and grow adequately in very moist soil that is low in oxygen. Trees such as red and silver maple, ash, linden, willow and sycamore (planetree) survive very moist soil provided initial root growth has occurred after planting.

During the first growing season, a thorough watering once a week is not usually too much provided no appreciable rain has fallen. Check the soil. If it is adequately moist two to three cm below the surface, do not water. If your new tree is in a lawn, a light sprinkling of the grass will not provide adequate water for the tree's root zone.

Mulching: A mulch such as bark or stone chips around the tree, extending somewhat beyond the width of the planting hole, reduces weed growth and conserves moisture. A mulch also delays soil freezing in the fall and thawing in the spring.

The mulch should be approximately five to seven cm thick. If the mulch layer is too deep, it may retard the movement of oxygen into the soil. On poorly drained soil it may be best to use a very thin layer or no mulch at all, because of excess water and low soil oxygen levels. A mulch layer such as sphagnum peat should be avoided. When it dries out, water is shed rather than penetrating through into the soil.

Pruning: Extensive top pruning at transplanting time should be avoided because it will hinder root regeneration and delay establishment. Selectively prune any broken branches, those that are too closely spaced or one that may compete with the central leader. After one to two growing seasons, when the tree has become established, it may be pruned. Remove limbs with narrow crotch angles and those that are still too closely spaced. An authoritative pruning manual will be your guide to proper pruning.

Pest control: Be on the alert for insect and disease problems. Do not indiscriminately spray the tree because you think the tree may have something. Have the something identified by a local nursery, garden centre or professional horticulturist, then follow the most appropriate control procedures. In areas where rodents may be a problem keep the base of the tree free of tall grass and weeds, install a tree guard or apply a repellent.

Winter protection: Most trees are able to withstand winter conditions. Trunk splitting is due to differential expansion as a result of extensive ice formation or extreme temperature fluctuations on the sunlit side of the trunk. Recently planted trees, particularly those species that are susceptable to winter front cracking (Norway maple and planetree) may benefit from a protective wrap on the trunk.

Splitting as a result of high water content in the trunk from a wet fall will not be prevented by a trunk wrap. One of the best ways to provide winter protection is to see that the tree does well during the growing season. Carbohydrates manufactured in the tree and absorbed nutrients are important for the natural process of winter acclimation.

Fertilizing after planting: Newly-planted trees will benefit from proper fertilization. Although there are differences of opinion, many professional horticulturists agree that surface fertilization is a good method. If you did not mix a complete fertilizer with the backfill soil, evenly distribute a high nitrogen fertilizer to the surface of the planting hole area. Apply 50 grams of a 20% nitrogen or 100 grams of a 10% nitrogen fertilizer per square metre. This amount will be sufficient for the year of planting.



Water soluble fertilizer applied with the water for the tree is an alternative to dry fertilizer. Soluble nutrients reach the root system quickly but also leach away quickly, thus multiple applications during the season are necessary. Use soluble fertilizer as directed by the manufacturer.

Relax: Now that your trees have been properly planted, sit back and enjoy them. Remember that some maintenance in the years after planting will insure good growth.

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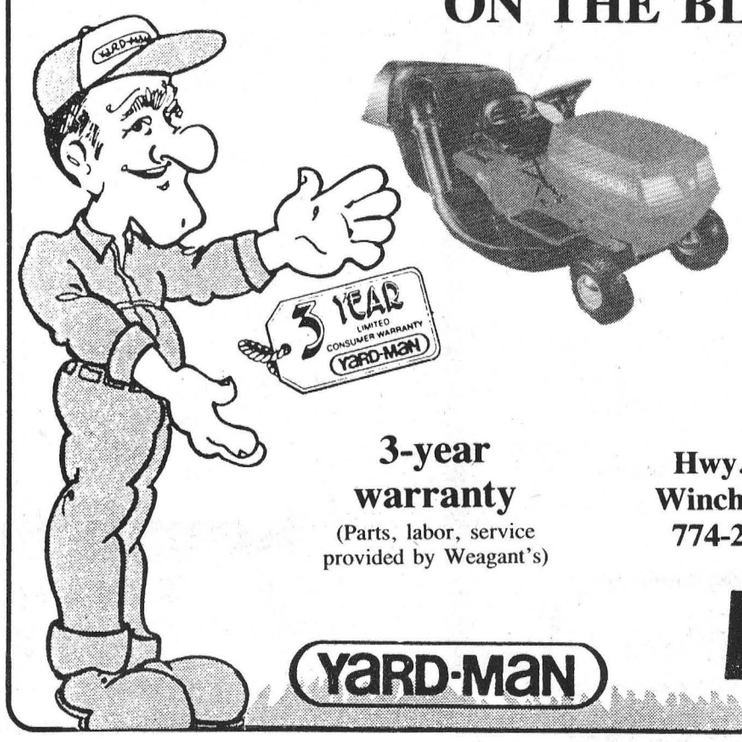

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Updated tree planting method recommended

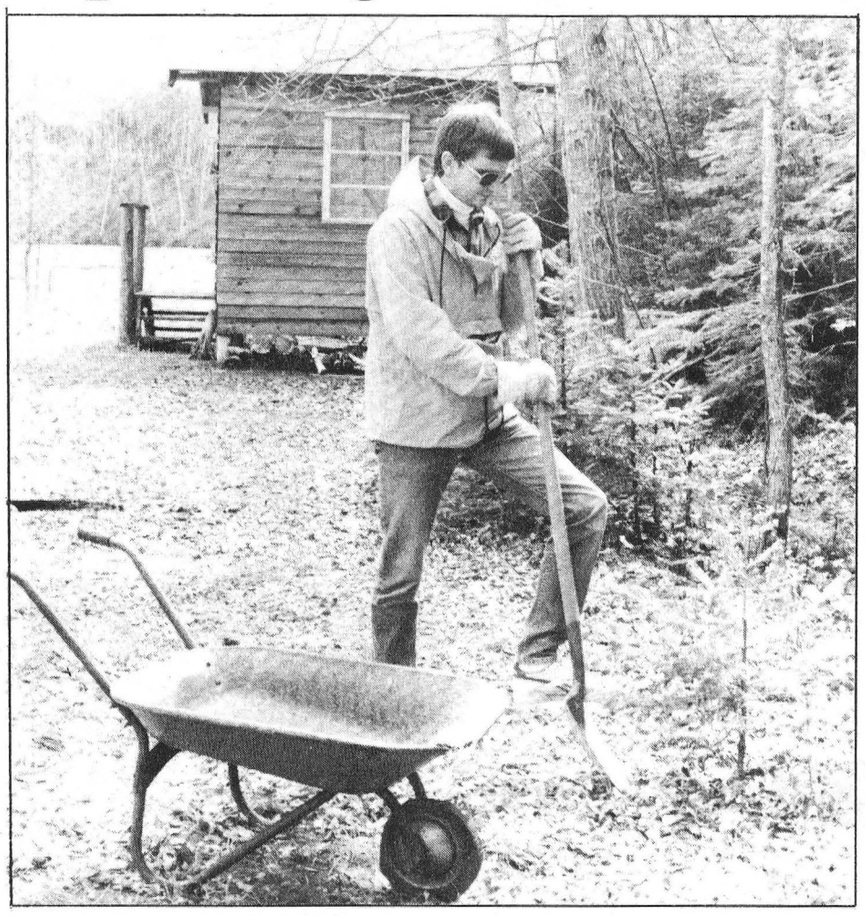
Horticulturists have been recommending a slightly varied method of planting trees for the last several years. But unfortunately, old traditions and old "professional recommendations" die slowly. The Canadian Garden Council says that often the old fashioned planting techniques hinder a home gardener's lovingly planted tree's ability to live a long life. Traditionally, gardeners dig a deep hole, surround the tree's root ball, or bare roots, with fresh new bagged soil or cattle manure, peat moss etc., and then tightly pack it all down.

Initially there usually is good root growth as the young roots grow into the new soil and additives. But, once the roots reach the hard-packed original soil, this outward growth stops. Instead of spreading into the surrounding garden, the tree roots encircle the planting pit like the roots of a potted plant in a clay or plastic pot. This then stifles growth of the tree.

An additional problem with this older method is what may be termed the bath tub effect. By digging a large hole in heavy clay soil, and filling that hole with loose topsoil and additives such as peat moss, it can often become a type of French drain; ie. the place to which the excess surface water drains during spring runoff or heavy rain storms in the summer. If this happens, the tree could literally be sitting in a filled bath tub of water which will cause its demise in just a year or two. Most trees, with the exception of willows, poplars and, to a degree, arborvitae (cedars), cannot tolerate their roots sitting in water for days at a time. The roots need air just as much as they need water.

The Canadian Garden Council recommends a six-step strategy for ensuring stronger, healthier and longer-lived trees—planted not only by homeowners, but also by professional landscapers, parks departments and other institutional green space managers.

1) Choose only the best quality trees, purchased from a reliable supplier who will still be there if you have any problems.



2) Plant trees on your property where they will have sufficient room for both their roots and branches to grow without interference with the house, other structures or services such as overhead wires or sewer pipes.

3) For each tree, prepare a shallow planting area, just about 30 cm (12 in.) deep, and five times the diameter of the soil ball (or spread of the bare roots) by spading the entire area, and adding small amounts of Canadian sphagnum peat moss, cattle manure or other soil amendment (including home compost). This preparation is not a hole, but rather like preparing a garden bed for planting of annual flowers or vegetable transplants.

4) Now dig a hole in the middle of this prepared area and set the soil ball or spread out the bare roots in the hole. It is most important that the top of the soil ball be exactly even with, or perhaps slightly above the level of the soil. For burlapped soil balls, once the tree is set, the tied burlap should be cut, so that it may be folded back down the sides of the ball. For trees in paper fibre pots, make at least three cuts halfway up the sides of the pot. There is no need to remove the pot, not even the bottom. The paper fibre will rot readily. For trees in plastic pots, these must be carefully removed (with soil as moist as possible so that it will hold together).

If bare root trees or shrubs are being planted, you will note an indication or slight difference in color on the stem or trunk of each plant, where the trunk emerged from the ground when growing in the nursery. This level should also be at the level of the ground, or slightly above, when your planting operation is complete. Obviously, all roots emerging from the main stem should be in the soil!

5) Lightly pack the soil in place around the tree. Do not pack the soil down hard with your feet. Use water to remove the air pockets in the soil. If these air pockets are not removed, they may cause the roots to dry out (no moist soil in contact with them), and also will definitely be the cause of the soil around the tree or shrub sinking.

6) If the tree is unable to withstand anticipated winds, then provide a strong stake, out at least 20 cm (8 in.) from the trunk, and attach the tree to the stake with flexible plastic, rubber inner tube, or cloth ties that will not cause damage to the trunk or stem as it grows in diameter. Remove the stake and ties six to nine months after planting. A mulch of pine or cedar bark applied to the original prepared area will also help preserve soil moisture content, but it should not touch the tree trunk.

This method of planting provides your tree, or trees and shrubs, with an enlarged area for the roots to grow before encountering the original hard-packed soil. Most important, the tree's roots do not get accustomed to an ideal planting soil in a confined area, and then encounter the much more difficult-to-penetrate original clay soil.

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Lawn watering woes

Dear John: I try to water my lawn every other day. But with my new job, I'll be travelling frequently. Will my lawn dry out if I skip a few days?

Dear Frequent Flyer: Actually, you'll be doing your lawn a favor by changing your maintenance routine and watering less often. Watering every other day, as you're doing now, can actually weaken the lawn by promoting a shallow root system. When water is always available, grass roots grow near the surface of the lawn insxtead of probling deep into the soil. On the other hand, if you water your lawn only once a week, you'll encourage long, deep roots that will absorb more water and tolerate dry conditions.

The trick is to wet the soil to the full depth of the grass roots, which can grow as deep as 18 inches. To reach that depth, a lawn needs about two inches of water once a week. To make sure that your lawn is getting two inches, I suggest that you gather a few tin cans and mark the insides at two inches from the bottom with a grease pencil or some waterproof tape. Then place the cans around the lawn and turn on the sprinkler. Time how long it takes for the water level to reach the two-inch marks inside the cans. That's how long you should water your lawn each week if Mother Nature doesn't do it for you. If you follow this watering routine, you can stay out-of-town for a while and still come back to a lush, green lawn.

Dear John: Do I need to water my lawn when it rains often?

Dear April Showers: You may not have to water at all if the precipitation level is at least two inches a week. We recommend keeping a rain gauge outside to measure how much water Mother Nature provides weekly. If it's less than two inches, you'll need to roll out the hose and sprinkler. While cool-season grasses can tolerate an occasional drying-out, some grasses, like bentgrass, are very shallow-rooted and need to be watered more often. If your lawn shows signs of thirst — a dull-grey color or long-lasting footprints — water more often.

Dear John: When I come home from work, I turn on the sprinkler in my backyard. But my neighbor told me it's the worst time to water. What's the best time to water if I don't get home from work until 6pm?

Dear Nine-to-Fiver: Your neighbor has the right idea. Evening is not a good time to water grass because lawn diseases thrive on unevaporated water droplets. To water your lawn at the prime time, you might want to turn the sprinkler on in the morning before getting ready for work. Then turn it off when you leave.

For more tips on lawn care, write for the free booklet, "Lawn Care Know-How," John Deere Limited, P.O. Box 1000, Grimsby, Ont. L3M 4H5.

Emergency procedure for pesticide poisoning

Become familiar with the chemicals you are using. Keep a list of common names in case of accidents or emergencies. This information can be found on the product labels.

If a pesticide has come in contact with the skin or has been spilled on clothing, remove the clothing, and wash the skin thoroughly with soap and warm water. Repeat the wash.

If a pesticide has come in contact with the eyes, rinse them with plenty of clean water for 15 minutes.

If a person suspects poisoning from exposure to a pesticide by swallowing, inhalation, or contact with skin or eyes, read the label on the pesticide container and carry out the first-aid treatment suggested.

Immediately after the first-aid treatment has been given, wrap the patient in a coat or blanket and rush him to the nearest hospital. Take the list of chemical common names with you and identify the ones being used. If a person is found unconscious or lapses into unconsciousness, call an ambulance immediately!

Emergency advice on pesticide poisoning is available by contacting the Poison Information Centres: The names and telephone numbers are listed under Emergency Calls at the front of each Bell telephone directory.

The Poison Control Centres in the Ottawa area are: The Children's Hospital Emergency Department, 613-521-4040, and Ottawa General Hospital Emergency Department, 613-231-2121.

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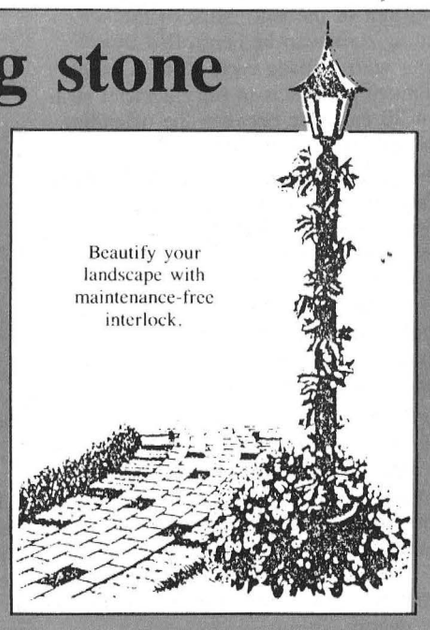

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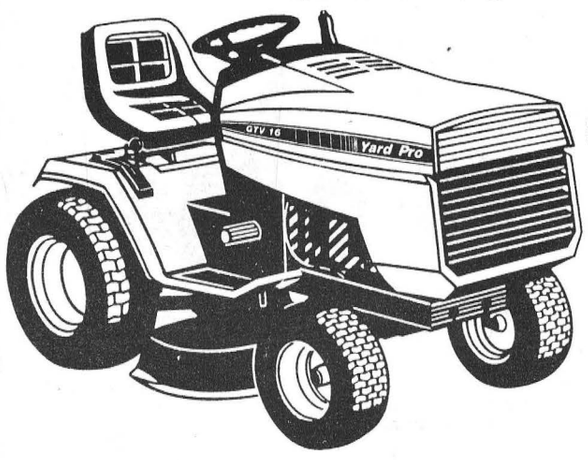

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Rock garden will beautify landscape

Except where a more formal design is called for near the house or patio, the rock garden is best kept as informal as possible. Paths, pools and water courses should be located beforehand and some thought given to the placement of rock features or groupings. However, trial and error may often be the only method of finally placing the stones.

Soil mixtures may be prepared by using existing garden soils mixed with coarse washed sand and peat moss or compost. The addition of pea gravel or limestone chips to the mixture will help alpine plants survive our wet winters.

The following mixtures are available for specific plants: Lime loving: three parts loam, two parts peat or compost, one part sharp sand; acid loving: one part loam, two parts acid peat, one part sharp sand.

Often the roots of nearby trees or shrubs may encroach on the rock garden. This can cause impoverishment and drying out of the soil. Most of the invading roots can be controlled by cutting with a spade each year. A more permanent control is to bury a metal strip about 30 cm wide between the offending roots and the rock garden.

The ground should be quite firm before placing the stones. A path, if one is desired, should be slightly lower than the surrounding ground, and can divide the rock garden diagonally, usually at its widest point. If the garden is large enough, side paths may be added so that as many plants as possible can be seen without climbing over the stones.

Paths are often built in a series of steps using large flat stones. If these are tied in with other stones, the path will have the appearance of belonging to the formation.

The stones should be arranged to resemble as much as possible a natural rock formation. Beautiful stone should be emphasized. Poor stone can be buried more deeply.

In any case, stones should be buried to at least half their depth, with the broadest face in the earth. This will give the rocks stability. Each stone must harmonize with its neighbor to give the effect of permanence, as if at one time all were connected underground.

The spaces between the stones must be filled firmly with soil. Air pockets are fatal to plant roots. Stones having a flat surface are best inclined slightly into the slope; this will conserve water and prevent erosion.

The use of cement should be avoided unless a stream, pond or waterfall is planned. The stream bed or pool should be built of concrete at least seven-eight cm thick. Concrete tinted green or brown will blend with natural surroundings. Sloping sides will minimize the danger of frost damage.



Figure 1. The correct placing of stones. Arranged in harmony, and inclined slightly backward, these stones give a naturally rugged, yet restful effect.



Figure 2. Incorrect placing of stones. Haphazard and unconnected, this arrangement offends the eye and would be unsatisfactory for growing rock plants.

Facilities for the water supply should be so constructed that piped water lines may be thoroughly drained during freezing weather. Another requirement is an overflow drain from a pool connected to a suitable outlet. A control valve is necessary to adjust the flow of water. The water need only flow at certain times — during hot weather, for instance, when the sound of running water fosters an illusion of coolness.

THE MORAINE AND SCREE

For enthusiastic alpine plant growers, these two features may be built into the rock garden, the former is a well-drained soil above an underground water course, such as is found below glaciers. The latter is constructed to simulate areas of broken rock produced by glacier action and rock slides. Screes are usually excavated to subsoil level and then built up with broken rubble or other drainage material. A special scree mixture consists of one part compost, one part sharp sand, three parts pea gravel. Thus difficult alpine plants that require perfect drainage can be successfully grown.

PLANTING

After construction is finished, it is advisable to let the soil settle for a few weeks before planting. Spring and early fall are the best planting seasons. Pot- and container-grown plants may be set out at any time during the growing season with reasonable safety.



Figure 3. Showing the proper construction of a path using flat stones of natural rock placed in harmony with the rock formation.

Several herbaceous perennial plants of one kind are best planted together in a group, possibly intermingling with another kind at the edges. Never plant in straight, formal rows.

Dwarf shrubs, and small evergreens are an essential part of any rock garden. They introduce accents and contrasts as well as providing a background for the garden itself. A rock garden is an attempt to reproduce a mountain scene in miniature; the selection of suitable woody plants is therefore somewhat restricted.

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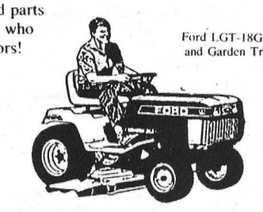

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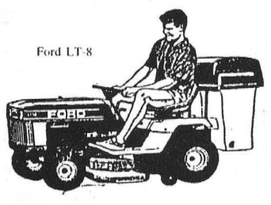

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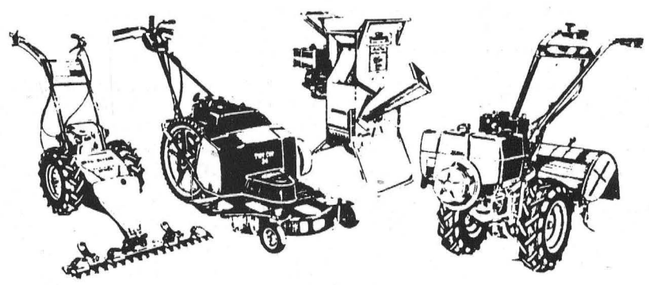

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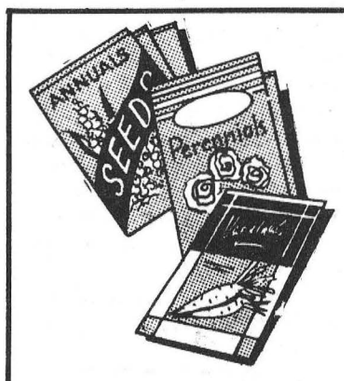

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A little planning creates a colorful garden

There are many good reasons for making changes in the family garden. Perhaps the children have grown up and the sandbox and swing are no longer appropriate. Your tastes may have changed and now you would like to try different kinds of plants, and flowers in new colors.

The first step is to put it all down on paper. Make a scale drawing of the space you have now and the plants it contains. For small gardens, a scale of 1:20 generally is most appropriate. Although it's not possible to please everyone, make a list of all the requests each family member has for this precious garden space. Then, one by one, eliminate those that don't fit into the budget, until you are left with a more manageable wish list.

Before you start designing the changes, remember to keep what is good. There may well be certain elements with which you are quite pleased. Put them into the scale drawing first and work in new materials around them. A well-developed shrub or a nicely paved path can form the basis for your new plan.

When choosing plant materials, remember that a design in which some shrubs form the framework and where perennials and bulbs predominate will, in general, provide the most satisfactory display with the least amount of work. Allow the bulbs and tubers to dominate in the spring and let the perennials take over through the summer. Here and there, the perennials can be supported by some summer-flowering bulbs and tubers.

In the spots where the spring-flowering bulbs bloom early on, annuals can fill the gap later in the season. This way, you will develop a garden which offers a succession of blooms and color from early spring through late fall.

Light is a critical factor in garden planning. If you have lived in your home for some time, you probably know which spots get the best sun and at which time of day. However, if you've just moved into a new house, you may need to observe the garden area closely for a week or two to determine what you have to work with.

If you have a shady space, avoid the sun-loving plants that will become tall and leggy without direct exposure. Among bulbous plants, tuberous begonias are best for bright shade, while the early flowering Holland bulbs, such as crocus and narcissus, bloom profusely in areas that will later in the summer be shaded by the leaves of deciduous trees.

Color, texture, form, height and flowering season: variety is the soul of the garden. Properly planned mixtures delight the eye and change continually as the season advances. Flowers certainly come first to mind for most gardeners and some, such as tulips, gladiolus, tuberous begonias, lilies and dahlias, offer a veritable artist's palette of colors from which to choose.

However, don't forget those plants with textured foliage (e.g. feathery ferns, broad-leaved hostas, etc.) to set off the bright colors of spring-blooming daffodils or colorful begonias. Remember that shape adds variety, too. Gladiolus are tall, straight and appear far too linear when planted alone while low, mounding annuals lack relief. However, planted together with intermediate types, they make a delightful combination.

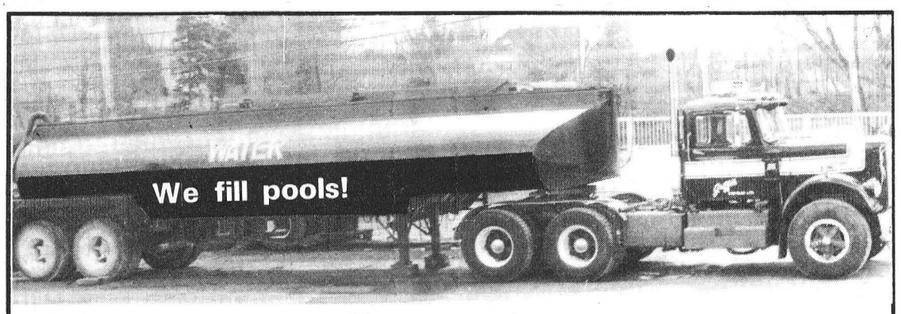
Further, plants placed against walls and fences take up little room but offer a very decorative effect, so use them generously. Outdoor containers, filled with annuals or summer-flowering bulbs and tubers bring an additional dimension to the garden. You can place them where a splash of extra color is needed and, for many of the bulbous plants, move them indoors for the winter.

The actual planting is the last step in creating your newly designed garden. Consider the soil type and the site condition before beginning. Heavy clay soils drain poorly and lead to problems with rot, while sandy soils drain too well and require constant watering. In both cases, organic matter — such as peat, compost or decomposed manure — will solve the problem.

If your garden site is steeply sloped, erosion will become a problem; a flat spot, however, is monotonous and may drain poorly. In the former case, terracing and regrading is recommended and, in the latter situation, raised beds are the easiest solution. (Raised beds also are a boon to senior gardeners for whom kneeling and bending have become more difficult.)

Overall, a combination of Dutch bulbs and tubers, perennials and annuals, make a pleasing display and form the basis of a garden that will bring pleasure to the whole family for years to come.

Home gardeners, before they plant their trees, should first consider the ways trees can improve the micro-climate around their house. Planting trees on the southeast or southwest side of the home will reduce air conditioning costs and, planting windbreaks or rows of evergreens on the north to block winter winds, will lower heating costs.



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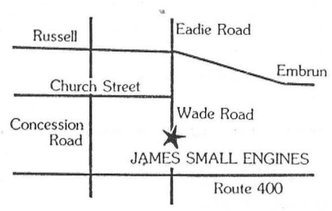

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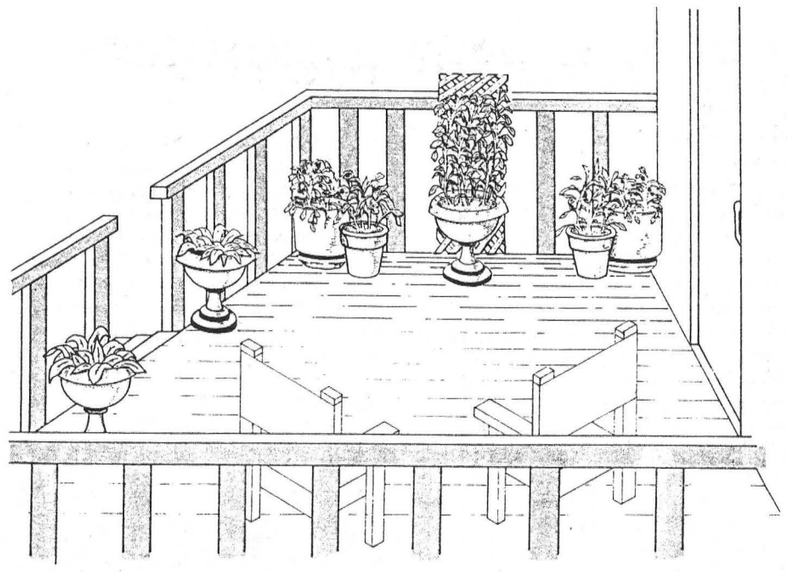


Deck landscaping tips

Decks are now the most popular home addition, and their popularity is easy to understand. They are attractive, add needed living and entertaining space, and offer the advantage of enjoying the outdoors in the privacy of your own backyard.

Maximizing the enjoyment of your deck is simple and inexpensive if you follow some basic rules. Deck landscaping presents unique problems as well as opportunities.

Since decks are generally constructed of wood, it is important that only plastic planterware be used to avoid the discoloration that occurs from water leaching through clay, wood and unglazed ceramic containers.

Also, plastic planterware comes in a variety of decorator colors and styles. And, for outdoor container gardening, plastic planterware maintains moisture twice as long as other materials, important during those hot summer days.

One of the biggest problems facing homeowners with decks is privacy, especially for decks that face or overlook a neighbor's property. Experts suggest this easy, attractive and inexpensive solution:

Place two or three tomato plants in plastic planters. Big Boy, Better Boy and Early Girl are among the best varieties, and produce fruit withing 45 to 60 days. Cherry tomatoes are also good, and give a prolific yield.

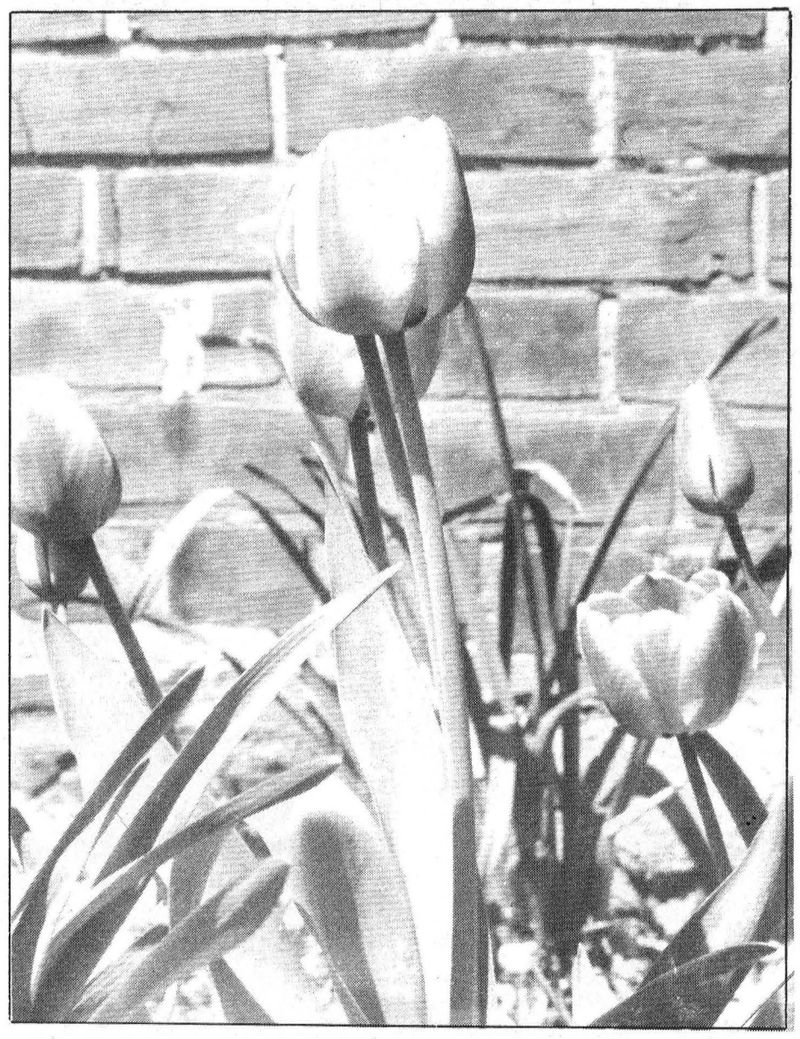
Another excellent deck vegetable, with beautiful dark green foliage, white flowers and green or red fruit, is the pepper plant. These can be grown in full depth containers, or for a more formal appearance, a Grecian urn or a Terra-Cotta® planter.

Put the planters in a line which blocks visual contact with neighbors. On either side of the tomatoes, place bean plants or sweet peas, again in full depth plastic containers, and support with a trellis to which the vines can be tied.

These vegetables not only provide excellent visual screens, with thick foliage growing to four and five feet tall, but produce flowers continuously through fall. And, when the fruit ripens, it can be harvested for your family's enjoyment.

A word of caution: be sure vegetable and flower plants receive enough sunlight. Because their rooting material is smaller and more self-contained than in a garden, they need more water and fertilizer. A water-soluble fertilizer specifically designed for flowers or vegetables should be added to the soil as directed.

Deck landscaping, the container gardening way, is easy and inexpensive. With a little imagination, a few young plants and some attractive plastic planters, you can create the perfect environment as well as produce flowers and vegetables to be enjoyed by your family and envied by your friends.



Standing tall

Long-stemmed tulips are reaching up in full bloom this time of year. The base of a brick house is an ideal spot for a tulip bed, making a pleasing backdrop.

Press Photo—Braginetz

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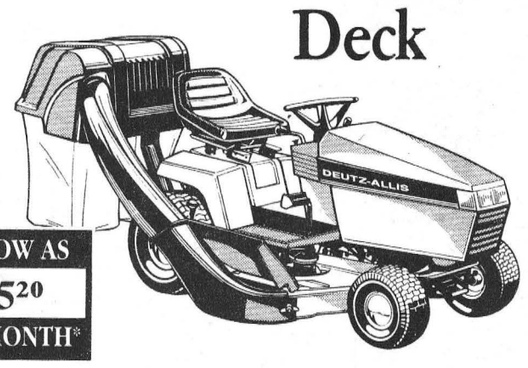

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The pineapple plant, Eucomis bicolor, is a real conversation piece in the summer garden, sporting a tuft of stiff leaves on top of a long slender flower stalk, giving it the appearance of the fruit from which it takes its common name. Easy to grow and amenable to planting in tubs, this bulb flower will attract attention in the garden or on the balcony.

Lawn mowing pointers

Dear John: We're landscaping our yard this year. Any tips to make mowing easier?

Dear Do-It-Yourselfer: You're starting out on the right foot by planning before you plant. If you landscape correctly in the first place, you can eliminate difficult mowing areas and save time on trimming.

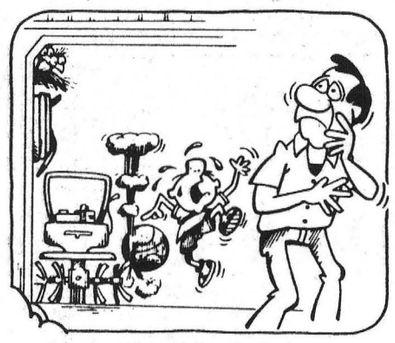
First, you'll need to draw a diagram of your property. Include the lawn, sidewalks, trees, shrubs, gardens and house. Then mark all of the sharp corners, slopes and tiny areas with a highlighter or different color pencil. If you fill in these difficult mowing spots with a decorative groundcover, you can avoid mowing them altogether.

And if you have trees on your lawn, here's another time-saving tip. Remove a circle of grass from around the tree trunk, then fill in the circle with attractive wood chips, bark mulch or groundcover so that you can mow around the tree easily. And be sure to leave plenty of space for your lawnmower to get between full-grown trees and bushes. Remember, the small shrub you plant this season will turn into a large bush in a couple of years.

Dear John: My sister who lives down south cuts her grass much shorter than I do. Should I lower my cutting height, too? What's the correct mowing height?

Dear Baffled Brother: Ideal cutting heights vary from one variety of grass to another and mowing heights can vary considerably according to climate. In the north, cutting heights for cool-season grasses can vary from three-quarters of an inch to four inches, depending on the variety of grass. Generally, cut cool-season grasses at 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 inches. And some cool- season grasses, like Kentucky bluegrass, ryegrass or tall fescue, won't tolerate mowing below one inch. If you have any of these varieties in your lawn, you should maintain a cutting height between three and four inches.

A general rule for cutting cool-season grasses is to keep the mowing height at the maximum recommended level during hot weather. However, always observe the one-third rule and mow off no more than one-third of the grass blade during a single mowing. The one-third rule helps your lawn maintain a vigorous root system.



Store your tiller with tines faced safely away, especially where children are apt to play.

Dear John: Our garbage collectors won't pick up the grass clippings anymore. What should I do with the clippings?

Dear Refuse Refused: The answer is in your own backyard. Today's yard waste can be recycled into tomorrow's fertilizer if you leave the grass clippings on your lawn. And don't worry...clippings won't create a thatch problem if you observe the one-third rule each time you mow. Short clippings will decompose quickly and return about 20 per cent of the nitrogen to the soil, which can also help cut fertilizing costs.

For more tips on lawn care, write for the free booklet, "Lawn Care Know-How," John Deere Limited, P.O. Box 1000, Grimsby, Ont. L3M 4H5.



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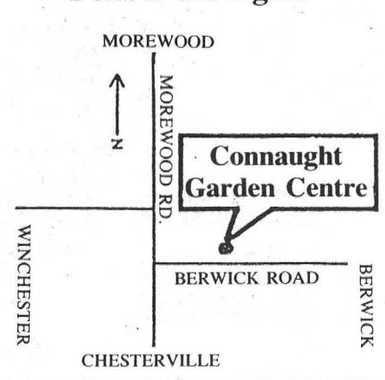

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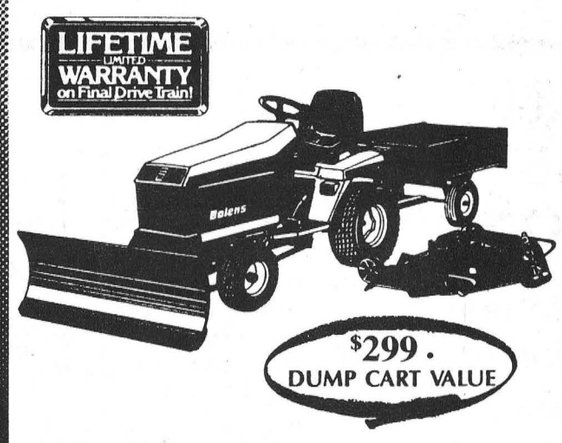

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Building tree wells and retaining walls

In every Ontario community great expansion has occured in home building. New housing subdivisions are continually being created, and often the land is bulldozed clear of all woody plants, in many cases including magnificent mature trees.

It would be impossible to preserve all the trees on land being developed for homes and industry. But certainly many could be saved at little added expense to the developer by the proper use of tree wells and retaining walls. The resulting betterment to the area would be far in excess of the costs involved.

Why do we need tree wells?
Plant roots require air as well as moisture to remain healthy and vigorous. The feeding roots of trees are usually formed in the top 12 to 14 inches of soil where a natural balance of air and moisture is maintained. Removing the soil will destroy the roots. Adding soil to any depth may smother them. Tree wells operate by holding the soil over the roots where excavation might expose them, or by preventing an excessive buildup of soil or earth-fill which might smother them. They are structures to preserve the root system of a tree and to maintain the best possible growing conditions for it.

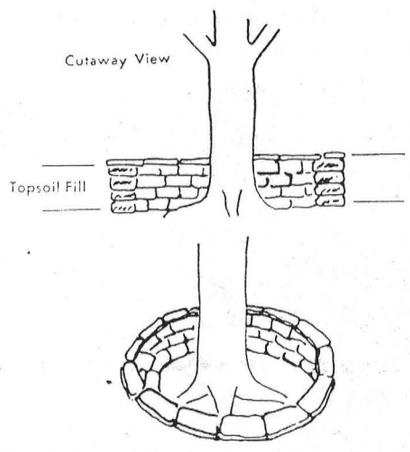


Figure 1. A common type of tree well used to preserve valuable trees when the grade is raised.

Types of tree wells
There are three types of tree wells. The standard one is a circular wall around the trunk of the tree to hold back soil which has been brought in to raise the surrounding level. The second type is an open well constructed around a part of the trunk to hold back excess fill in creating a new slope. The third is, in effect, a retaining wall to hold soil over the roots where a slope has been created from an otherwise level surface. Any one, or all of these types, could be required in any land development.

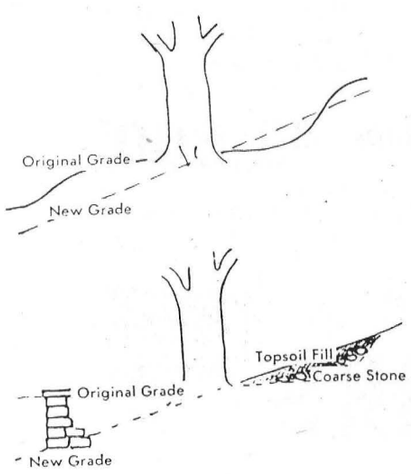


Figure 2. A retaining wall used to protect a tree when the grade is raised.

Contruction
Like the iceberg, about nine-tenths of a complete tree well will be out of sight. Merely constructing a dry stone wall or a masonry wall around the trunk will not save a tree, if the amount of fill is more than 6 to 10 inches. For large trees, a radiating grid of drainage tile or loose stone fill will be needed to maintain an acceptable air water balance. Vertical tile connected to loose stone fill or the tile grid will help in air circulation.

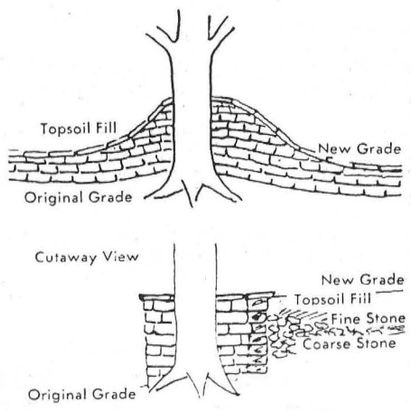


Figure 3. A retaining wall used to protect tree roots where a slope has been changed.

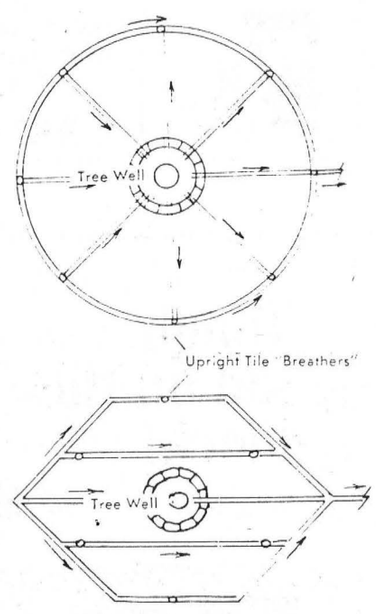
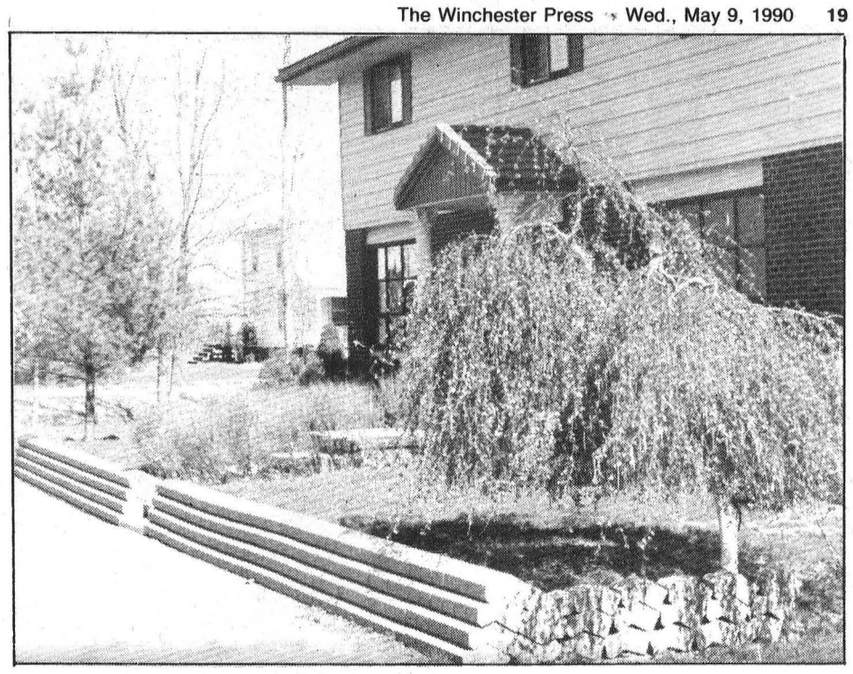


Figure 4. Tile grid systems for use with tree wells (arrows indicate drainage flow).



The wall of the tree well can be built of any sound masonry material such as tile, brick, cement blocks, cut stone or field stone. Usually only the top courses are set in mortar to allow for adequate drainage through the joints lower down. Where mortar is used throughout the construction, adequate gaps must be left to allow air and water drainage.

Depending on the size of the well, some protective covering, such as a metal or wooden grating, may be needed for safety. The size of the well may be determined by the age of the tree being protected. A mature tree will require a well with a diameter only slightly larger than the diameter of the tree trunk. A young tree may need a well much larger to accommodate the anticipated growth

The drainage tile and stone fill
The important working part of the complete tree well is the tile grid and stone fill. They help to provide the porous condition under the fill which should result in sufficient aeration of the buried root system to keep it functioning efficiently.

Where the fill is up to 12 to 18 inches in depth, a grid of properly installed tile should give adequate air and moisture circulation. Where fill is from 18 inches to 3 feet deep, a coarse-stone fill 8 to 12 inches thick is placed over the grid and sloped gradually to within about 12 inches of the top of the tree well. A layer of smaller stone over this will prevent the soil from the newly established grade from sifting down and blocking the air passages through the stone.

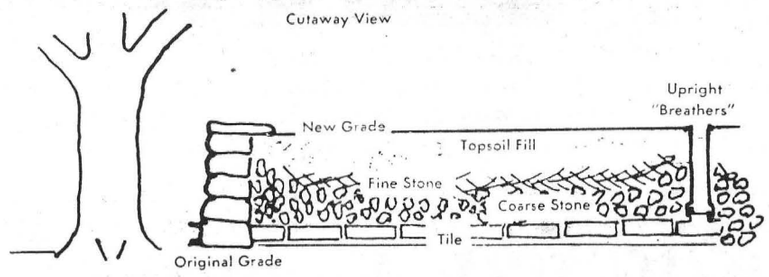


Figure 5. Cutaway view of a tree well and tile and stone fill for drainage and aeration.

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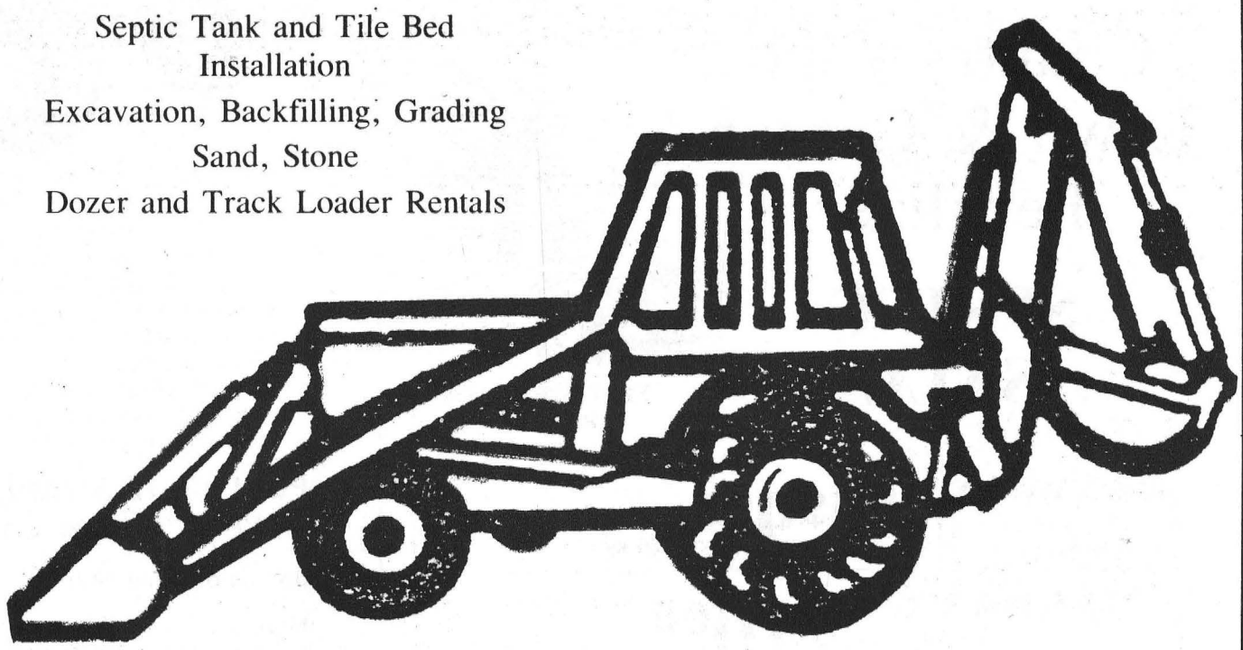

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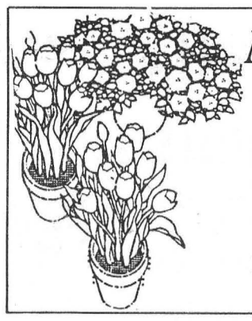

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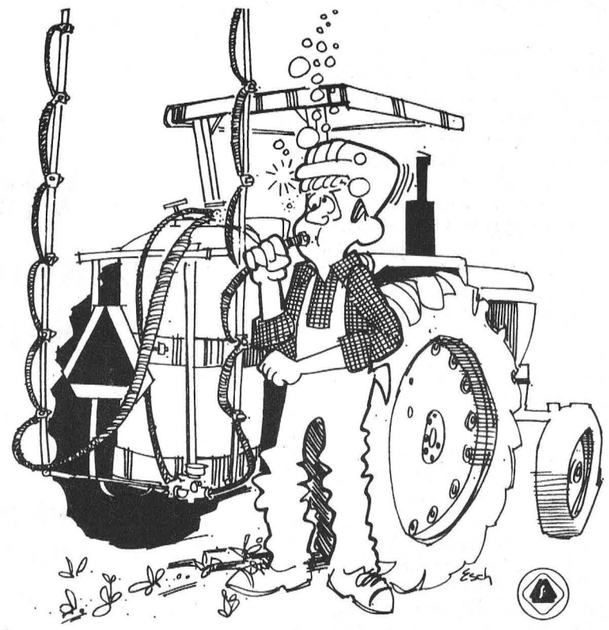
2. Use an anti-backflow device to prevent back siphoning, when drawing water from wells, ponds, streams and other sources of water. Mix pesticide into the tank with sprayer at least 50 m from the water source. Triple or pressure rinse the empty container and add rinse water to tank. Only mix enough solution to do the spray job. After loading and mixing, wash down gloves and boots with clean water before removing.

3. Never smoke, chew tobacco or eat while handling or applying pesticides. Do not carry tobacco or food items in clothes worn while spraying. Change clothing and wash before eating.

4. When handling and mixing pesticide concentrates, rinsing empty containers or repairing leaks, a full set of protective clothing should be worn, including waterproof cap, coveralls, impervious gloves and boots and eye protectors. If highly or extremely toxic pesticides are being used, a respirator should be worn. If very dusty formulations are being handled, a dust mask should be used. If volatiles or gases are being handled, a respirator must be worn. If these gases are highly dangerous or used in an enclosed space, a self-contained breathing apparatus may be needed.

5. During application, a tractor cab with charcoal filter gives adequate protection against exposure. Impervious gloves, boots, coveralls and cap should be worn when tending to stoppages. When using airblast and mist blowers and tractors without cabs, waterproof suits including caps and impervious gloves and boots should be worn. When applying fumigants in the field, a respirator should be available for problems with equipment or if the fumigant is not adequately sealed in the soil and escapes.



6. When the spray operation is complete, bath or shower after spraying to remove pesticide deposits on the skin. Avoid handling anything in the home before bathing.

7. Well, pond and surface water may be contaminated by pesticides. Every effort should be made to avoid this from happening.

It is an offence to contaminate surface waters with pesticides. To prevent this from occurring:

- Keep pesticide concentrates above flood plain in a locked storage.
- After emptying triple or pressure rinse, crush and dispose of containers.
- Mix concentrate and water at least 50 m away from any water supply.
- Use appropriate buffer zones and berms to avoid surface water contamination of wells, ponds and streams.
- If possible, do not use drinking water sources to fill spray equipment.
- Do not spray within 10 m of shallow wells or 5-10 m of other water supplies under ideal conditions and farther away if there is any air movement. Stop spraying when wind velocity reaches 10 km/hr.
- There are government programs to protect your water supply and assist in building pesticide storage facilities.

IF ACCIDENTS OCCUR

1. If an accident occurs, remove contaminated clothing including underclothes immediately, and wash contaminated skin thoroughly with soap and water. Wash gloves, boots, respirator before and after removal. Presoak clothes and double launder immediately. If the spill was serious, place the clothes in a plastic bag and dispose in a safe manner.

2. If clothing becomes wet with a pesticide during spraying, remove it immediately, wash and put on freshly laundered clothes.

3. If symptoms of illness occur during or shortly after handling or applying a pesticide, get the patient to a hospital immediately. Take the list of common name chemicals with you to the hospital.

4. Clean up any pesticide spills immediately. In case of minor spills, use dry soil or other absorbent material to remove excess liquid and sweep up powders and granulars. Contaminated soil and sweepings should be spread over a larger area of bare soil to facilitate rapid degradation. Make sure you are adequately protected when cleaning up the spill.

In the case of a major pesticide 'spill', the Ministry of the Environment, Spills Action Centre, 5th Floor, 7 Overlea Blvd., Toronto, Ont. M4H 1A8, telephone 416-965-9619 or 1-800- 268-6060 must be notified.

5. If a well becomes contaminated, follow clean-up instructions in OMAF Factsheet, Pesticide Contamination of Farm Water Supplies, Agdex 607.

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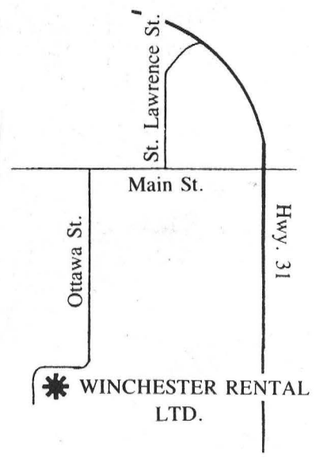

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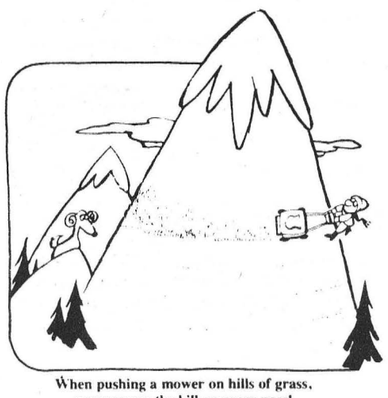
Mower maintenance tips from 'Dear John'

Dear John: How should I get my mower ready for the spring?

Dear Early Bird: Proper maintenance affects a lawn's health, as well as the mower's. Begin by cleaning dirt and debris from the underside of the mower housing and greasing the fittings as necessary. On a walk-behind mower, remove the spark plug and sharpen the mower blade. A sharp mower blade is essential for a clean cut, which reduces the amount of water lost through open tissue and the incidence of disease. A dull mower blade tends to rip the grass, resulting in withered, brown grass tips and a pale cast to the entire lawn.

When you sharpen the blade, use a file or grinding wheel and make sure to leave 1/64-inch of metal on the cutting edge. Then rest the centre of the blade on the edge of a ruler to check for balance. I suggest sharpening the blade after every 25 hours of use. Or have the blade sharpened professionally once or twice during the mowing season.

Just as you change the oil in your car for better performance, change the oil in your mower — usually every 25 hours. You'll also need to clean the spark plug and replace it when it gets pitted or corroded. Next, replace the air filter or clean it according to the instructions in the operator's manual. Also, remember to tighten loose nuts and bolts, check for worn or cracked parts and repaint any bare metal spots with anti-rust paint. And be sure that all the wheels are at the same setting for an even cut. Finally, start the season off right with fresh gasoline.



When pushing a mower on hills of grass, move *across* the hill on every pass!

Dear John: I need a new mower for my large yard. What time-saving features should I look for?

Dear Short Cutter: Since the size of your lawn determines the type of mower you should buy, you'll want to look at riding equipment if your lawn is larger than a half-acre. The larger the mowing machine, the more time you'll save.

This year, look for a new type of riding mower — called a front mower — that virtually eliminates trim work. On a front mower, the mower housing is in front of the riding unit, rather than underneath, so that you can trim as you mow. The front mower can even reach tight spots under fence rails and bushes. Also, take a look under the hood for other time-saving features.

New engine choices include electronic fuel injection for quick starts and overhead valves for increased power and fuel efficiency. To make mowing easier and more comfortable, look for hydrostatic or "no-clutch" drive and power steering.

For more tips on lawn care, write for the free booklet, "Lawn Care Know-How," John Deere Limited, P.O. Box 1000, Grimsby, Ont. L3M 4H5.

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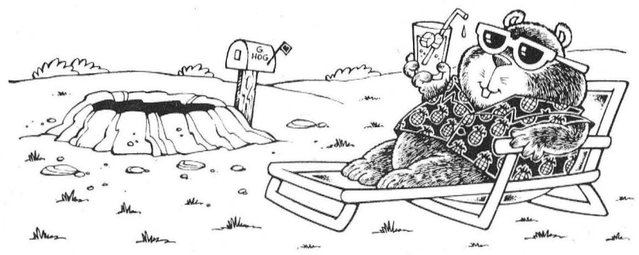

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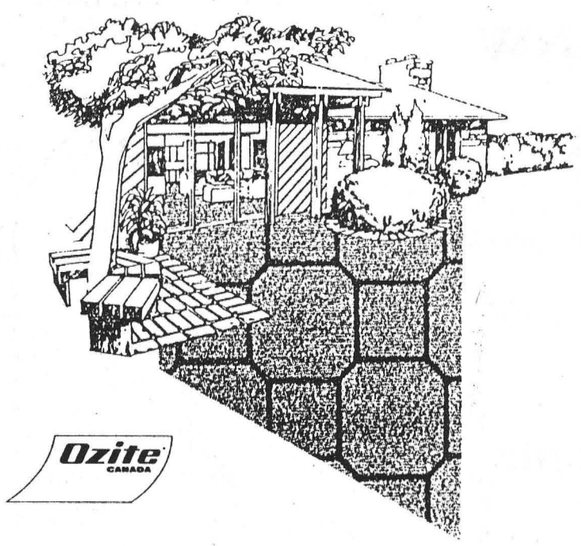

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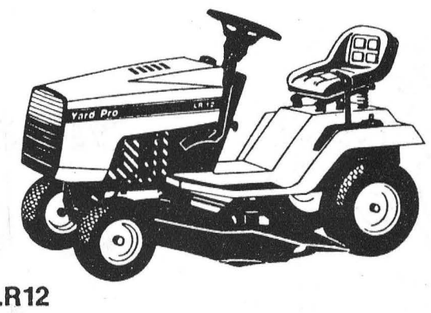

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Planning guide popular with gardeners

Valentina Elderfield of Calgary writes "I recently read that you offer a garden planning kit. As this is what I am in the midst of doing now, I'm quite interested. Could you either send me one or write and tell me where in my area I could pick one up."

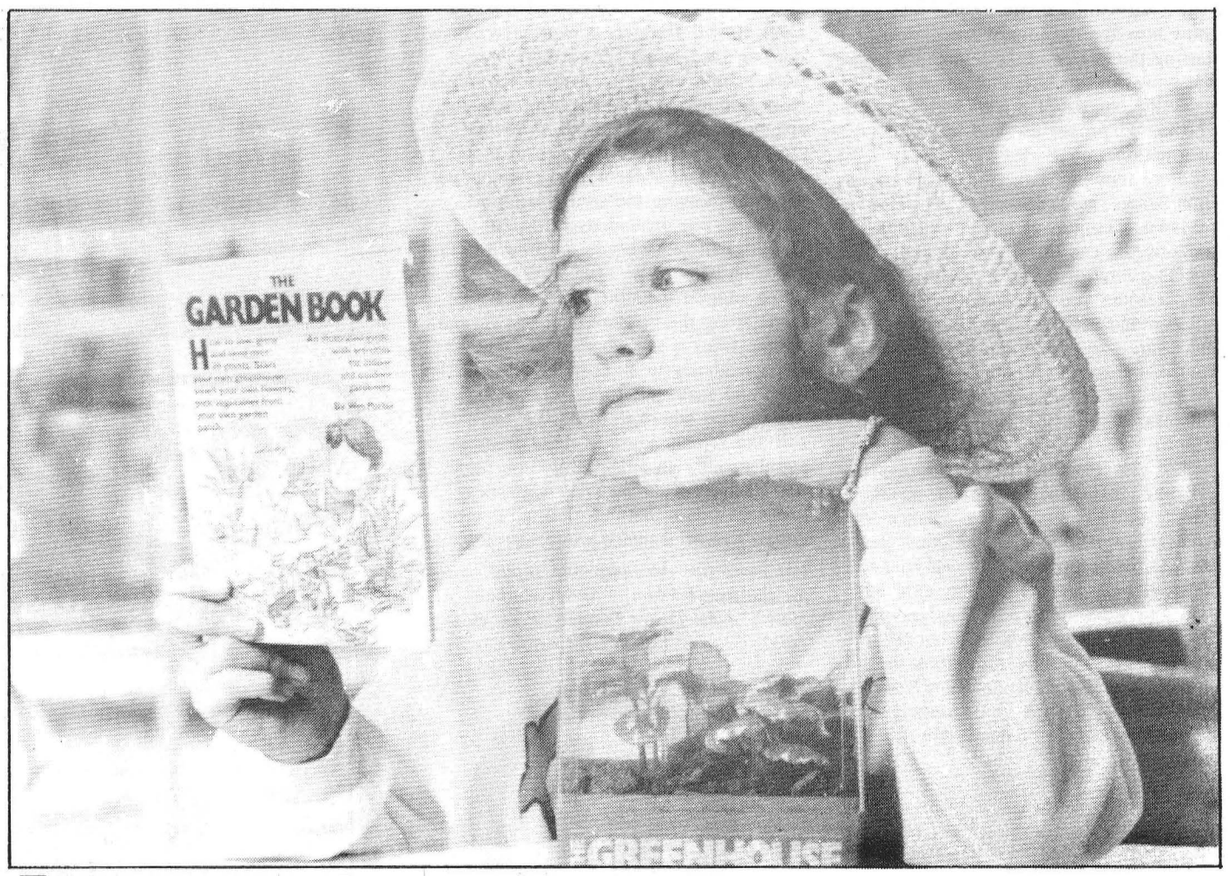
The Canadian Garden Council responds that its Garden Planner has proven extremely popular. almost a half million were distributed across Canada in April. The Council itself is now out of stock, but many garden centres still do have free copies. Contact your local garden or landscape outlet.

James Brown of Newmarket, Ontario asks "In various parks and gardens here and overseas I have seen pin-cushion-like evergreens whose needles resemble pine trees. These mound-shaped plants are perfectly shaped and often exceed a metre in diameter. What are they, and can I grow one here?"

The Canadian Garden Council says the mound-like pine trees are the Mugho pine (Pinus mugo mugo), a hardy variety in virtually all of Canada. The secret to the perfect pin-cushion shape is an annual pruning or shearing. Each year these pines (like all other varieties) put out their new growth (usually by mid-June, depending on what part of the country) in the form of short, thin, candle-like spikes. Before these develop into branches with needles, each and every growth should be pruned back at least two-thirds. If this is done each year, the perfect mound shape will be achieved and retained, with just a slight increase in growth each year. Not pruned, Mugho pine will easily grow to three metres (10 ft.) in a decade or less, depending on conditions.

Hilda Schofield in Oshawa, Ontario wrote asking for general information about ponds and water gardens.

The Canadian Garden Council responded saying that the subject area is a large one, and will be the major topic in the next article in this series. In a nutshell, water gardening is easy. Even balcony gardeners may have a small water garden in a large half-barrel. The most important element in water gardening is full sun exposure for at least six or seven hours each day. Visit your local garden centre, and if they do not have water garden supplies and information, they should be able to advise you of the closest supplier.



For young gardeners

A new Canadian children's garden book, published by Somerville House Books, comes with its own miniature greenhouse to help kids learn how to prepare soil, sow seeds, grow their initials in garden cress, start a cactus garden or terrarium. Ideal indoors and out.

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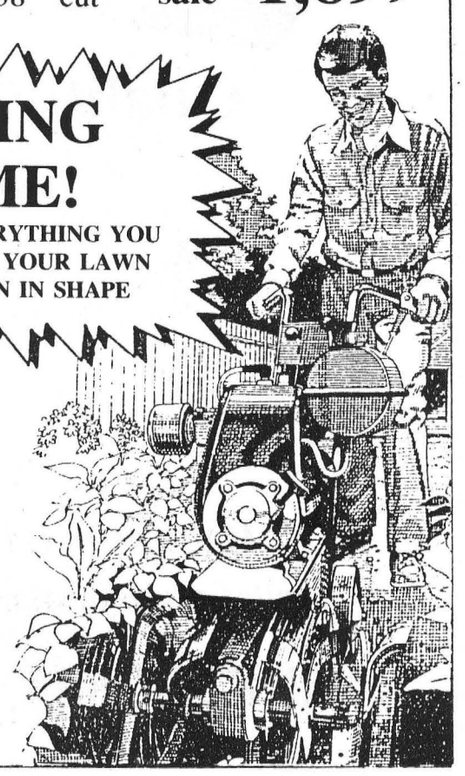

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Dear John: Safety first

Dear John: My teenagers will be mowing the lawn for the first time this spring. Are there any special instructions to give them?

Dear Mothering Nature: The first thing you should give your teens is the operator's manual for your mower. Have them read it thoroughly so that they know how the machine works before starting the engine. Like a car, a mower is a powerful machine that should be under the control of a responsible person who knows proper use and safety information.

Before mowing, have them pick up any tools, sticks, stones or other debris on the lawn. The mower blade, whirling at high speeds, can throw overlooked objects a long distance in any direction. Also, remind your teenagers to get children and pets inside the house to make sure they won't run unexpectedly in front of the mower's path. If they have to add gasoline to the mower, remind them not to do it while the engine is running or hot.

Once they're familiar with the controls and functions of the equipment, stand nearby to offer immediate assistance for the first few mowings. If the chute gets jammed, demonstrate how to disconnect the spark plug and remove the clog with a stick or gardening tool. They should always keep their hands away from the mower deck — even if they think the blade isn't engaged. By teaching your teens these safety tips, you can help prevent bad mowing habits before they lead to an accident.

Dear John: I like to catch up on my tanning while I mow. Is it okay to wear shorts and sandals?

Dear Fashion Maven: When mowing, be sure to dress for safety first. Swimsuits and bare feet are a no-no, so save the suntanning for later. Instead, wear long slacks and close-fitting clothes to protect your skin. Likewise, wear sturdy non-slip shoes to guard your toes and provide traction. And don't wear dangling jewelry or scarves that could get caught in the mower's moving parts.

Dear John: Can you give me some safety tips for mowing in tricky areas?

Dear Artful Dodger: If you have slopes in your yard, mow across them with a walk-behind mower to prevent the mower from tipping. However, riding mowers are more stable going up and down slopes. If a slope is too steep to mow securely, plant a decorative groundcover to avoid mowing the area altogether. Likewise, use groundcover in tight corners that require you to mow forward and then back up.

We suggest installing bark or wood chips along the borders of the lawn and around trees if the wheel of the mower has a tendency to slip off the edge of the lawn and scalp the grass. You should fill depressions where trees once grew with soil and replant grass in these areas to avoid turning an ankle while you mow. If you have trees on your lawn, prune lower branches that can flick an eye or knock you off balance while mowing.

For more tips on equipment safety, write for the free booklet, "Safety Know-How," John Deere Limited, P.O. Box 1000, Grimsby, Ont. L3M 4H5.



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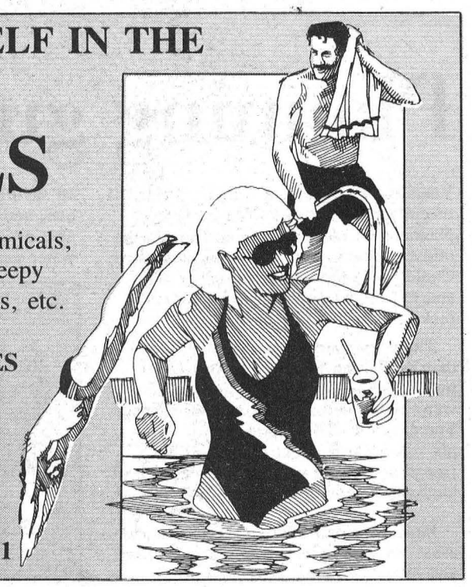

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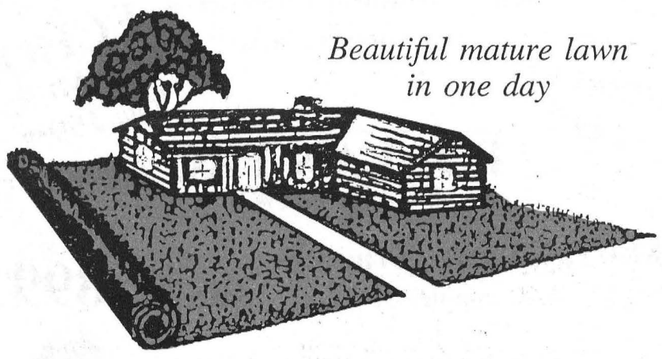

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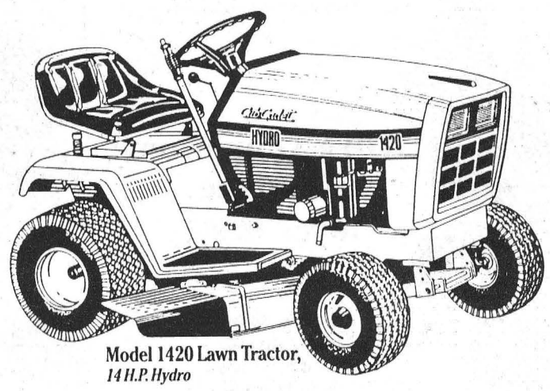

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