



Lawn & Garden *Guide*

Special
Supplement
to the
**Winchester
Press**

Wednesday, May 9, 2001



Winchester District Memorial Hospital foundation co-ordinator Kim MacLennan and giant pumpkin grower Bert Doornwaard pose with the award winning, 695 pound pumpkin that won first place at the Metcalfe Fair last year. Those who wish to try growing another award-winning gourd should watch for *From the Pumpkin Patch*, Doornwaard's weekly column in the Press.

Notes from the pumpkin patch

Last fall, Bert Doornwaard of Winchester grew a giant pumpkin that weighed in at 695 pounds. It was the big winner at the Metcalfe Fair. After showing it at fairs, Doornwaard decided to sell the seeds of the giant gourd, with the proceeds going to Winchester District Memorial Hospital's dialysis fund. But not wanting to leave new pumpkin cultivators in the dark, Doornwaard agreed to produce a weekly column in the Press to guide pumpkin growers along. Pumpkin growers get ready. Here is the first installment of *From the Pumpkin Patch*.

by Bert Doornwaard

WINCHESTER — Well, here we are in the first week of May and I have been busy sanding your pumpkin seeds and getting them ready to germinate. For the really anxious gardener who wants to get an early start on the pumpkin season, plants will be available anytime after Friday. For the more hesitant gardener, we will be starting new plants for the next three weeks. Make sure that when you pick up your plants you are ready to put them in your garden within a few days. These plants quickly

become root-bound in their pots and transplanting is less stressful with fewer roots.

Plants can be picked up at Floral Glen Greenhouses after Fri., May 11. Floral Glen is located on Harmony Road, west of County Road 31, six miles north of Winchester. Owners Mike and Sue Kosko are responsible for getting the seeds off to a good start. They are also competitive pumpkin growers and will be happy to share their growing expertise with you.

You have probably already picked your garden location. A couple of tips to keep in mind: pumpkins require lots of sun and, if possible, protection from wind. Some growers plant corn or sunflowers or even put up snow-fence to block the plants from damaging north-west winds.

Tilling or cultivating the soil at least twice a year, in spring and fall, is a task that can't be avoided. It's the time to work in fertilizers or compost and the simple act of turning the soil is beneficial in several ways. It restores lightness to compacted soil so that plant roots get the water and air they need.

• continued on next page

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Mrs. Green Thumbs gets to work

I am on a quest. A quest for my green thumb. I'm sure I have one; I just have not yet had the chance to find out for sure. In fact, I'm not sure where to look for it first.

Oh, sure, there have been house plants that have come and gone.

Mostly gone, unfortunately.

A novice gardener is what I am. With a large expanse of gardens to take care of this year for the first time, DH (Doubtful Husband) and I are ready to go.

The deal is this: he gets the lawn, I get the flowers and the vegetables. And it seems one of us is a little

doubtful in my abilities as a gardener. Guess which one?

Okay, so there is the little matter of a mass grave of house plants

scattered in my past. And all right, so there is actually only one house plant in my house at this time.

Okay, okay. So I've had a

bit of difficulty in the past with keeping things alive, save for DH and Fletcher the Ever Expanding Cat.

But there's a reason for that. Unlike house plants, those two make noise when they're hungry. They cannot be ignored.

But I'm turning over a new leaf, excuse the pun. I vow to water my

garden, pick weeds, prune and fertilize as needed.

And I'm extremely excited about it. I am not giving out any guarantees on what this year's crop will look like. Anything could happen once you step into my garden.

I've got my pruning shears, my little gardening tools, gardening shoes and gloves - I've found gardening is a great pastime for women because there such a wide assortment of great accessories!

Last week, DH and I made a trip to get some fertilizer and other such gardening paraphernalia that is, essentially, dirt. But good dirt.

That dirt nearly ruined the shocks in our little car, so heavily did it weigh on the trunk of the car.

So this week, I've got my little seed packets ready to plant

vegetables, row by row. I can't wait to get in there - I'm even thinking of hooking a little plow to the indoor cat who inhabits our house but stares out the windows just yearning to get outside and muck about.

And flowers - I can hardly wait to get into the flower bed and make things colorful and pretty.

But still, every time I tell DH about my ambitions for these gardens, he smirks.

I just know he and the cat have a bet regarding how long it will take me to throw in the rake.

But I scoff right back.

That's because I just know he's plotting to pave the yard into a parking lot or a tennis court, because the cat refuses to help him mow the lawn, preferring instead to roll around on his back in the dirt. With me.

On gardening

by Lori Gillespie



Pumpkins

• continued from previous page

The increased oxygen content also stimulates the activity of soil life. In spring, the loosened soil warms up more quickly, giving the gardener a jump on the new growing season.

Any vegetable garden imposes high demands on soil. It must nourish a succession of closely spaced plants with a variety of nutritional needs, produce a harvest within a few months and, if the gardener wants to coax the highest yield possible from the plot, provide good growing conditions from early spring until frost arrives. The raw material that you have to work with may not seem promising, but you can boost its growing potential with compost, manure or fertilizer. I use all three. In the spring, I work in about 10 pounds of 10-10-10 fertilizer per plant. After the garden is well worked and fertilized, you are ready to plant your seedling.

I plant my seedling in the middle of the plot because the vines will grow in all directions. Depending on the weather, I try to get my plants out by mid-May. Excessive watering is not necessary at this stage, but I give each plant about one gallon of water per day. The plant will require frost protection for possibly two to three weeks. I cover my plants with plastic domes for the first couple of weeks. This helps warm the soil in the daytime and protects from frost at night. On sunny days, I open the plastic so that the plant doesn't get too hot. A temperature of 85 degrees Fahrenheit is ideal, but it will reach temperatures of up to 130 degrees if the plastic is not opened to the air. When all danger of frost has passed, the domes can be removed.

Anyone who didn't order plants last fall at the hospital will be able to purchase them at the greenhouse as we have started extras. The plants cost \$5 each and the proceeds go to the WDMH Dialysis Fund.

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What's in the bag?

Fertilizing to make your lawn and landscaping grow

With all the focus on health, most of us have a pretty good idea what to eat. However, when it comes to feeding our lawns and keeping our landscaping healthy, many of us don't know where to start.

"When the warm weather hits in the spring, homeowners converge on us to buy bags of fertilizers," said John Mansz, lawn and garden specialist for Home Depot. "The most frequently asked questions are, 'What's in the bag of fertilizer?' and 'What do those numbers mean?'"

WHAT'S IN THE BAG?

It's grainy and it smells funny, but the real answer is: three very important nutrients for your plants. Every fertilizer bag has three large numbers on the front.

"To most of us these numbers seem like a scientific puzzle we don't have time to decipher," Mansz said. "Actually, they are very important to your plants because they represent the percentage, by weight, of the three nutrients in fertilizer that your grass and plants do not get from the soil — nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium."

The higher the number, the greater percentage of that nutrient in the fertilizer. If you're not sure which

Tips for selecting lawn fertilizer

1. Conduct a soil test on your yard at least once every three years. The test results will tell exactly what nutrients your soil needs.
2. Find the right fertilizer mix to give your lawn the nutrients it needs. Read the fertilizer analysis to discover the percentage of nutrients in the fertilizer. Match your soil test results to the nutrient analysis.
3. Make sure the fertilizer you choose has a slow nitrogen release rate. Your lawn needs a constant supply of nutrients to help it grow. The release rate dictates how fast the grass will become green, how much it will grow, how heavy the clippings will be, how long the results will last and how much fertilizer will be wasted by "runoff". You want a steady and controlled release rate.
4. Notice the particle sizes of the fertilizer you choose. If the bag contains different sized granules, make sure you mix the product well before spreading. Otherwise you will have some areas getting too much of one nutrient and not enough of another.

number you need, ask an expert.

WHAT NUTRIENTS THE LAWN NEEDS

Mansz recommended conducting a soil test at least once every three years. "This way you know exactly what nutrients are already available in your soil and you are not wasting time or money putting down things that won't work," he said.

A do-it-yourself soil test kit is an easy and fast way to find the nutrients your lawn needs.

CHOOSING THE FERTILIZER

With your soil test results in hand, find the fertilizer with the nutrients your lawn needs. "Make sure the fertilizer you choose has a slow nitrogen release rate," Mansz said. "Your lawn needs a constant supply

of nutrients to help it grow and you want a steady and controlled release rate, not a fast-release."

SPREADING THE FERTILIZER

Now all that stands between you and a beautiful yard of thick, dark, green grass is spreading the fertilizer. Mansz recommended looking at the size of the fertilizer granules.

"If the bag contains different-sized granules, make sure you mix the product well before spreading," he said. "Otherwise, you will have some areas getting too much of one nutrient and not enough of another." Spread the fertilizer evenly over your entire yard and wait.

"Within days you should begin to notice a definite change," said Mansz. "With an annual program for giving your lawn the nutrients it needs, you will have beautiful, lush grass that will be the envy of all your neighbors."

Telltale signs your grass needs nitrogen:

- Grass is pale in color, not a healthy dark green.
- Grass doesn't grow, even when it rains.
- Yard is spotty in color with patches of deep green and pale green.
- Yard grows in uneven patches.

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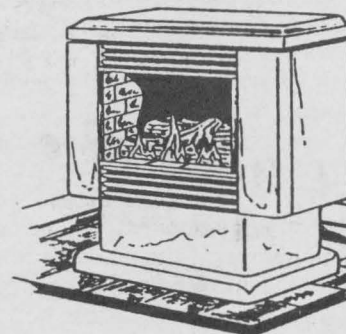
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Enjoy outdoors with bug repelling attire

by Colleen Cameron

METCALFE — The return of warmer weather is greeted with a hearty welcome every year. The return of those pesky bugs and mosquitoes that same weather inevitably brings with it, is not given the same warm reception.

The Benson family is trying to alleviate spring's largest downfall this season with their latest line of bug and mosquito jackets at their family run business, Benson Bee Supplies. Located at 8358 Victoria St., Metcalfe, Benson Bee Supplies has been serving the community since 1982.

Jeff Benson, part owner of the operation, got the idea for the store's latest product when he was trying to come up with a way to take his family to the cottage earlier in the season.

"We have a cottage that we'd like to go to as soon as the weather turns nice," explains Benson. "But we can never go there until at least June because the bugs are so bad. This got me looking for something on the market that would allow us to go camping earlier."

Benson uncovered the solution to his problem when he came across mosquito and bug repelling attire last year. Benson's sells both jackets and pants at their location and Benson says he has been selling this bug-repelling wear like mad since they first started carrying it last spring.

Especially popular with fishermen and cottage-goers, Benson's also sells a number of jackets and pants from its camouflage line to hunters. The camouflage wear is available only

in adult sizes, and is also available in brown. Children's sizes are available in brown.

Both the jackets and pants are made of a mesh material that allows plenty of air to get through but at the same time works as a shield to protect your body from mosquito, blackfly or other bug bites. Both jackets and pants have tight elastic cuffs around wrists, waist and ankles. The jackets also have a mesh hood that you can choose to put over your entire face or just the back of your head.

Benson's bug jackets are made of 100 per cent fine nylon material and are completely fire retardant. An adult-sized jacket is sold for \$19.95 and the pants go for \$10. Jackets in children's sizes are sold for \$10.95 each and the pants will cost you \$8.

Benson's is currently offering a sale on their bug jackets — 10 per cent off until May 16.

Regardless of rocketing bug jacket sales, the focus of Benson Bee Supplies will continue to remain as it has for almost 20 years — on supplying the community with all the equipment necessary to beekeepers and offering a wide array of bee products.

Benson's carries all the necessary supplies to start up your own beekeeping business: beekeeping tools, signs, information, jars for honey, jams and jellies, specialty jars for herbs, 36 different shades of colored wax to make candles and bulk wax to melt down and shape your own candles.

In fact, it seems the only bee-related merchandise the folks at Benson Bee Supplies do not carry are ready-made candles and honey.



Benson's Bee Supplies in Metcalfe will be taking 10 per cent off the cost of their bug and mosquito jackets and pants until May 16. Four-year-old Jeremy Benson, son of owner Jess Benson, models the youth version of the jacket, which is currently on sale for \$10.95. The Bensons have been selling their bug-repelling mesh-wear to hunters, cottage-goers and fishermen since last spring when they first caught wind of the product.
Photo — Cameron

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All good fencing starts with a plan

This article is provided by local realtors and the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.

Most homeowners value privacy and security. One of the best ways to achieve this around the exterior of your home is through the right kind of fencing. But before thinking about replacing or adding new fencing to your property, you have to be certain about where it will go.

To avoid any conflicts with current or future neighbors, it's important to know what the exact boundaries of your property are. You can resolve any doubts by looking for survey markers on the corners of your property. If you are uncertain and planning to build expensive new fencing, however, you'd be wise to pay a professional surveyor to establish the exact boundaries for you.

Once you are certain about where any new fencing will go, consider carefully what you want to achieve. Do you want to protect your home from trespassers and stray animals, create a safe area for your children to play in, or add privacy to your outdoor living space?

Regardless of what you decide, all good fencing starts with a plan. That plan may involve installing new fencing yourself or hiring a professional to do the job. Fencing has never been easier to install, even for the do-it-yourselfer. Pre-fabricated fencing panels today come in a wide variety of shapes, sizes and materials.

FENCING OPTIONS

If you want to keep your kids in and outsiders out, but are not that concerned about privacy, chain link fencing is still among the most versatile, economical and long-lasting product around. Vinyl-coated and corrosion resistant, chain link fencing is maintenance free and

available in a variety of colors and styles.

For privacy, pressure treated and cedar wood fencing products are among the most popular because of the large variety of styles and board sizes available. All are attractive and functional. Cedar fencing is more expensive than pressure treated wood products. But it is resilient in the worst of climates and provides a natural deterrent to insect infestation.

In addition to pressure treated, cedar and other wood products, fencing is also available in vinyl products that offer privacy. These can be more costly, but are maintenance free, attractive and long-lasting. Unlike wood structures, which require upkeep every couple of years, vinyl fencing withstands the elements, won't rot, warp, shrink, dent or break. It is available in a variety of styles and colors, and usually comes with a manufacturer's lifetime warranty.

If all you want is to mark the boundaries of your property, rail fencing in vinyl or wood, may be all you need. Used for generations in rural areas to fence in livestock areas, rail fencing can enhance a home's landscaping, giving it a crisp country look.

Another choice is fencing made of galvanized coated steel or aluminum, which offers durability, strength and a clean appearance. Attractive and practical, this kind of fencing can remain structurally sound for a lifetime. The finish will not crack, chip or peel. Like vinyl fencing, it usually comes with a manufacturer's lifetime warranty.

Whatever fencing style or product you choose, be sure to select one that complements the design and look of your home. Once you've decided on size, shape, location and type of structure, consider the kinds of posts, lattice and cap tops you may want to incorporate.

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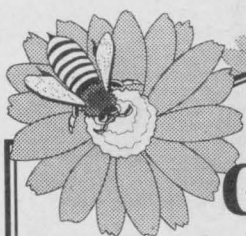
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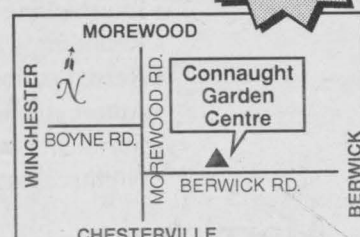
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Spring colors

One of the most exciting parts of spring is seeing the multitude of colored tulips pop up in gardens everywhere. These tulips were captured in the flower beds at the McIntosh Inn in Morrisburg. Press Photo — Gillespie

Annual solution

How to build a colorful garden

If you want color in your garden and you want it fast, annuals are the answer. Annuals only grow for one year and then die, while perennials come back year after year.

However, most perennials take two to three years before they hit their peak flowering stage and provide vibrant color. Also, they tend to bloom for just a few weeks of the year.

Annuals often bloom from spring until frost, trying to make as many seeds as possible for the following year. To get your garden looking great in no time, here are a few tips:

— Buy larger plants. The larger the plant, the more mature and ready it will be to flower.

— Prepare the flower bed soil. Bad soil will halt the flowering of the best plants. Be sure to work in plenty of compost or peat moss for an excellent base. Work at least four inches of soil in a new bed and two inches in a mature bed.

— Plant seeds outdoors. The risk of frost must have passed, but planting seed directly into the soil bed will spring like magic. Fast growers include cosmos, marigolds, zinnias and sunflowers.

— Fertilize. Especially in areas where nutrients have been flushed out by frequent watering. Fertilizing will encourage maximum height and bloom. However, don't over fertilize.

— you'll encourage plants to produce more stems and fewer flowers.

— Flowering house plants can make a great addition to your garden. Sink the plant, pot and all, into your garden. You should be able to pull it out at the end of the season and bring it back indoors.

Some other plants that provide fast color are: ageratum, begonias, celosia, geraniums, globe amaranth, heliotrope, petunias, salvia, scaevola and verbenas.

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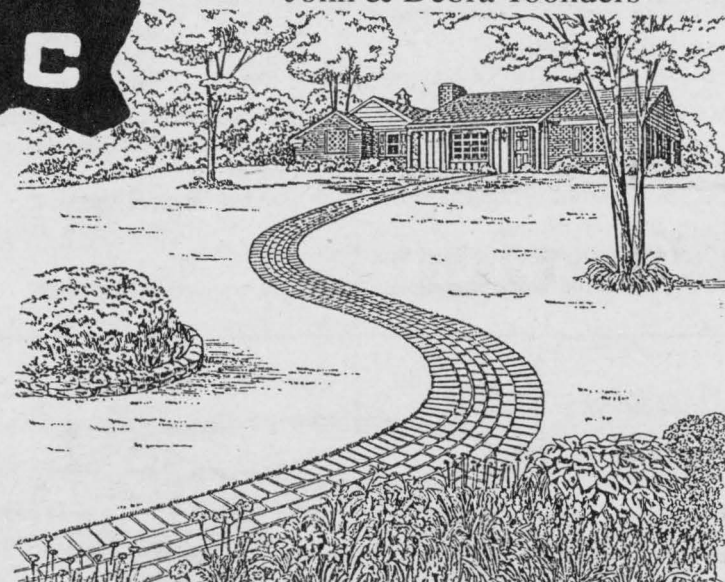
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Practical necessities lead to enviable garden plan

by Chris Zabel
Press staff

WINCHESTER — The patchy field beside the front entrance to Winchester Public School, just beside Clarence Street, has long offered a bleak and uninspiring first impression of the school. The area is generally ignored, except for use as an occasional soccer field for some of the younger grades. The few shrubs are nearly dead from being used as goal posts.

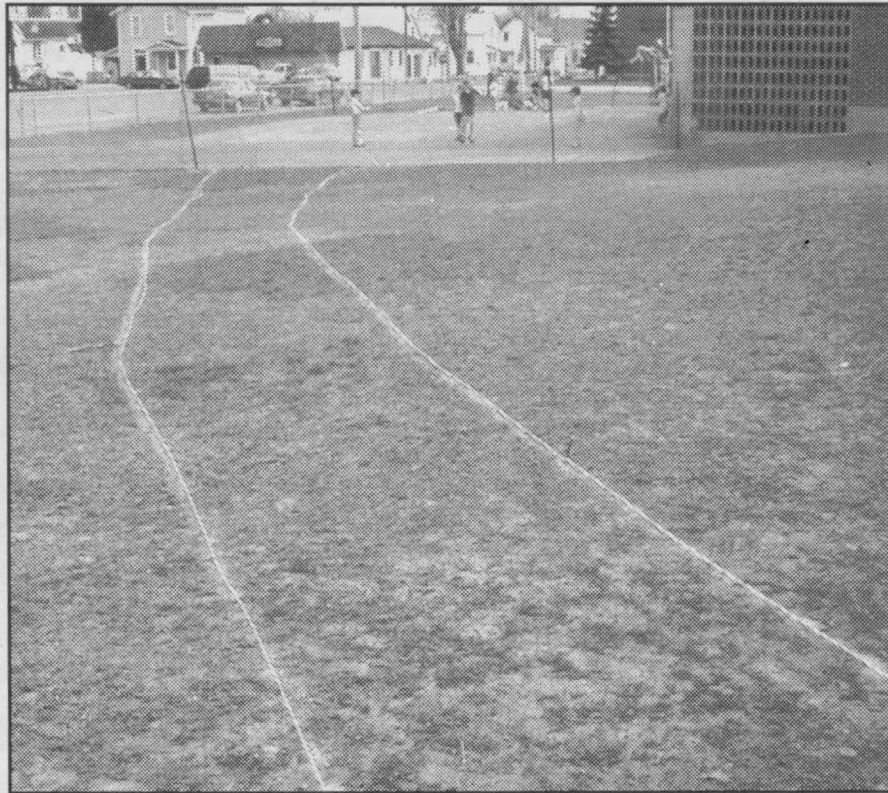
"Right now there's not much you can do here; it's just barren," said teacher Nancy Barton. That will change by the end of the school year, however, because improving this field is the latest undertaking in WPS's ongoing schoolyard greening project.

Over the past few years, WPS has had considerable success in improving and developing the natural elements of its grounds. Most notably, at the south-west corner of the school, a gazebo garden offers student a quiet spot for conversation and contemplation.

This year, WPS passed a milestone by completing its 500th schoolyard greening project, earning the school Emerald Green Status in the SEEDS Canada Foundation's national program for schools.

The goal of this latest greening project is to create a passive play area. There will be two paths through the garden and the rest of the area will be filled with low-maintenance plants, except for one area which will be a putting green. "They're all very excited about this," said Barton. "Golf's the big thing right now."

The putting green is the most unusual feature of the garden. The plan is to sink tin cans in the grass and for the school to acquire some plastic golf gear. Putting may



Schoolyard upgrade

This bleak patchy field beside the front entrance to Winchester Public School began a transformation last weekend. The path marked through the grass was paved, readying the ground for an abundance of regional shrubs and perennial plants as part of the school's greening project. Press Photo — Zabel

arguably be a sport; however, the main intent of the garden is to offer an alternative to athletics. "They really do need places to sit," said Barton of students in the playground. "I think it's a misconception that kids want to do nothing but run at recess."

Benches will be installed throughout the garden and around the school's flagpole. And there is a plan to have picnic tables painted with checkerboards so students will have an outdoor place for checkers or chess.

Before the end of May, all of the gardens will be planted by the students themselves, each class taking a plot. Barton said that it was important that low-maintenance plants be selected for the garden, which led the planners to use many plants indigenous to the area.

Hearty plants were selected, but ones that would bloom as well. There will be potentillas, evening primrose, black-eyed Susans, yarrow, lilies, dogwoods and columbine. Some shrubs producing berries — choke

cherry and juniper — were chosen because they would attract birds.

Two paths will wind through the beds. One will be paved and the other will be made of cobblestones, each cobblestone cast and decorated by a student at the school. The beds will be spread with bark chips to help keep down weeds.

WPS has managed to raise over \$9,000 for the project, mainly with generous grants from SD&G Resource Stewardship, Canada Trust Friends of the Environment and Shell Canada's Tree Canada Foundation. Notably, \$300 of the total was first prize in a school grounds beautification contest that WPS won. The nation-wide contest was sponsored by T&T Seeds.

And as luck would have it, the Upper Canada District School Board started a greening program this year where it will match funds spent improving the natural environment of schoolyards, up to \$5,000. Barton said that this unexpected bonus will probably be spent on more trees to plant around the school.

As for the future of the WPS greening project, Barton mentioned that the beds are being expanded around the gazebo garden, allowing room for the perennials to be separated and spread out. Two tree swallows have moved into the bird box. The garden will enjoy a break from daily traffic over the summer and should grow lush.

Another plan, in the more distant future, could be a fitness track around the soccer field across the street, south of the school. Barton said that a clay dust path would make her less concerned that a student might twist an ankle while running laps. And exercise stations, a chin-up bar for example, would add an extra element of fun.

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Your lawn is the basic unifying element of your exterior decorating plan that accentuates all other plantings or design elements. If you have any doubts about your lawn's aesthetic value, visualize yourself in front of your home with a lawn that is lush, green, well manicured and without a weed in sight. Then picture your home fronted by a lawn that is matted, thin, patchy and overgrown with weeds.

While most homeowners want a lawn that is a pleasure to walk on and a joy to behold, they usually settle for much less. How much less depends on how much time, effort and money they are willing to invest.

Actually, a picture postcard lawn doesn't require a lot of attention, just enough to at least compensate for the abuses a lawn is subjected to weekly. It all begins at ground level.

A GOOD GROWING MEDIUM

To flourish, lawns need a growing medium that is porous, nutritious, holds water but yet drains well and is packed with those minute soil organisms (beneficial bacteria and fungi) that are vital to a lawn's good health. Unfortunately, most homes do not come equipped with such a medium, especially homes in subdivisions where sod has been laid on a skim of topsoil that covers clay and construction debris. While sandy soil gives poor results, the most

common culprit of poor growth is soil heavy with clay.

THE TREATMENT

There is a remedy for sandy and clay soils alike; it's a simple process that will allow you to convert a sparse lawn into thick green turf in one season. The main weakness of lawn soils that are predominantly sand or clay is a shortage of organic material. Organic material in soil adds porosity and holds water and nutrients where grass roots can reach them. Organic material also encourages the proliferation of soil organisms; these organisms convert nutrients into a form that is easily taken up by the plant's roots.

There are products that can meet these criteria without causing weed or disease problems — compost and fertilizers. The recommended treatment is best started in early spring but can be initiated at any time of the year, as long as it is repeated three times over a full season, in the spring, summer and fall.

Just before your lawn needs cutting, spread composted manure or well-cured home compost over the lawn surface. Use just enough to give it a rich brown hue. Add a good quality slow-release fertilizer with a formulation high in nitrogen, such as 21-3-9, 21-7-7, 20-3-4. (Always use according to the manufactures' label directions). Seed bare patches, in spring and early fall only, by simply

roughing up the bare ground and spreading good quality grass seed (sunny spots with full sun-seed, shady areas with shade-seed) before you add the compost.

MOWING AND WATERING

From that point on, cut your lawn twice a week with a mower set at five cm (two inches). Finally, make sure you give your lawn a deep watering once a week, counting rainwater purely as a bonus. A good one-inch application of water once a week is what produces deep roots and healthy turf.

While you'll see the outstanding results after just one season's treatment, how many years you need to carry out the therapy depends on the original condition of your lawn's soil. One thing is sure; no matter how many seasons are necessary, the process is a sure way of building up a healthy lawn

that is a pleasure to walk on and a joy to behold.

IN BRIEF

To appreciate the aesthetic value of your lawn, just picture your home fronted by a lawn that is matted, thin patchy and overgrown with weeds. A picture postcard lawn doesn't require a lot of attention — just enough to at least compensate for the abuses it endures. Lawns need a growing medium that holds water but yet drains well and is packed with beneficial bacteria and fungi. Applying organic matter (composted manure or well-cured home compost) to the lawn will improve the soil quality. Enhancing that with a good quality slow-release fertilizer with a formulation high in nitrogen in spring, summer and fall and providing a one-inch application of water will produce deep roots and healthy turf.



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Lawn tips for early spring

Here are some tips for helping your lawn:

Raking — With a soft rake, remove any over-wintered leaves, undesirable brown vegetation, sticks, and other debris from within and on your lawn. This will allow the sun to begin warming the soil.

Test soil for pH — Where possible, bring a soil sample to a garden centre or soil lab. At a perfect pH of 6.5 to 7, your lawn has the ability to pick up all the essential elements. If it is lower or higher, many elements are unavailable to plant roots. In regions of eastern Canada, and B.C., the pH is as low as 4.5. Test results in this range would require the addition of limestone to increase the pH. In the prairies and in parts of Ontario, the pH is often higher than 7.5 and as high as 8.5. In these cases, the addition of elemental sulphur will be effective in balancing the pH.

Reseed — Lawn areas that are not covered with a uniform stand of grass should be reseeded. Scatter seed lightly and scratch it into the soil with a stiff rake.

Fertilize — To encourage both existing lawn grasses and new seedlings, apply a high quality turf fertilizer with high percentage of slow release nitrogen. This lawn food will adequately replenish nutrients taken up by grass plants throughout spring growing season. Fertilizer should be applied at least two or three times per growing season.

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Garden centre graces Winchester village



With so many flowers now lining the centre of Winchester, few residents should begrudge the parking spots lost when Andy's Foodland set up its new garden centre. For the rest of the season, Tracy Sloane will be striving to meet local gardening needs. Press Photo — Zabel

by Chris Zabel
Press staff

WINCHESTER — A strong scent of geraniums has wafted around the centre of the village for more than a week now. The source is the new garden centre on the corner of Main and St. Lawrence street in Winchester, opened by Andy's Foodland.

Behind the glint of new fencing, rows of geraniums, petunias and New Guinea impatiens hang in baskets, improving what was an unpaved parking lot. And the back of the lot is populated with a small forest of shrubs and trees.

"Whoever's getting the 'bug,' they can start planting this weekend," said owner Andy Hamel. Business at the centre has been brisk ever since it opened at the beginning of the month, thanks to several straight weeks of balmy spring weather.

"It's all weather. People are asking me for tomato plants already," said Hamel, cautioning that it's not impossible that there could be another frost. "But if the weather works, they'll have tomatoes before anyone else."

Hamel said he expects local gardeners will be in full swing by

the end of May. The May 24 weekend, traditionally the year's busiest weekend for gardening, will be celebrated with a free hot dog barbecue among the shrubs and bedding plants.

Most everything to meet the basic needs of a gardener will be readily available in the centre. To prepare the ground for planting, skids are stacked high with fertilizer, manure and black earth. Flowers, annuals and vegetable plants are coming from the Vars area, east of Ottawa. And the trees and shrubs grew their roots in Niagara on the Lake.

The corner where the centre is located was already equipped with electricity and water, everything needed to set up shop. Hamel said he hadn't even been planning to expand his gardening department this year, until the owner of the corner lot offered him the opportunity to lease.

This is the first year Foodland will be selling trees and shrubs. Whether the garden centre will become a permanent spring/summer fixture will depend on customer response. Hamel also said that public interest will dictate how many months the centre stays open this year.

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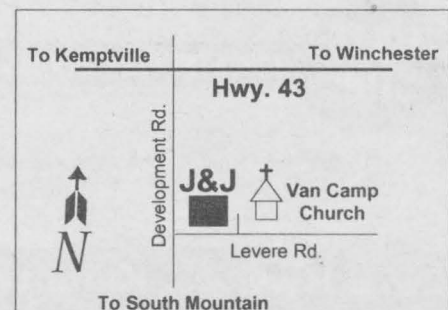
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Fertilize for a lawn neighbors will envy

Fertilizers are substances that support the quantity of plant growth by providing elements that are essential to the plant's metabolic processes. When properly applied, fertilizer can improve plant vigor, make leaves grow larger and improve plants' resistance to damage from weeds, insects and disease. The glowing green in a healthy lawn is really the colour of well-nourished and healthy plants.

What do plants require for optimal growth? Plants obtain the two most important of these elements, carbon and oxygen, directly from the air. A third vital element, hydrogen, is taken from water in the soil.

Through their root systems, the grass plants in a lawn obtain nutrients from the atmosphere, and, through their root systems, from soil minerals, organic matter, and applied fertilizer. The nutrients must be first dissolved in soil moisture in order to be absorbed by plants. Organic matter, organic fertilizers and some slow release fertilizers must be broken down by soil microbes before the nutrients can be absorbed by plants.

Fertilizers provide the most readily available source of nitrogen. The relative proportion of the major nutritional elements is listed on the package. Thus, a label with the numbers 24-6-12 indicates that the fertilizer



contains 24 per cent nitrogen, six per cent phosphate and 12 per cent potash.

Nitrogen is essential for the manufacture of chlorophyll in plants. For this reason, new plant growth is virtually impossible without nitrogen. Lawns that lack nitrogen will turn light green or yellow, and leaves will die, starting at the tips.

The nitrogen found in organic fertilizers is released more slowly compared to that in mineral fertilizers. These two forms of nitrogen can be combined to provide the lawn with

both short-term and long-term sources of nitrogen. Special slow release fertilizers are also available; they provide continuous fertilization throughout a growing season.

The second nutrient element listed on a fertilizer package is phosphorus. It is an important plant nutrient because it assists in stimulating root growth, and phosphate deficiency will mostly affect the root area. Phosphorus is most available to plants when the soil is warm and moist and where the soil pH is between 6.5 and 7.

Potassium is the third of the "big three" nutrients. It is for the manufacture of sugar, starches, and proteins by plants. Potassium is very important to plants especially during extreme cold or warm temperatures or in drought conditions. It helps plants cope with the stresses of traffic, heat, winter cold, diseases and insects.

Secondary nutrients and micronutrients: Lawns also require smaller amounts of other essential elements. The secondary nutrients are calcium, magnesium and sulphur. Other elements called micronutrients, which are required in extremely small amounts, are iron, manganese, zinc, boron, copper, molybdenum and chlorine. These are the 'spark plugs' of plant nutrition, required only in small amounts but, without them, the plant doesn't 'go' anywhere.

A thick lawn will keep weeds from finding bare spots and germinating. A healthy lawn will be better able to resist insects and weeds (reducing the need for pesticide controls) and can tolerate wear and tear from family activities.

All high-quality turf fertilizers are mixed in the proportion that meets the needs of healthy, growing lawns. Apply fertilizers two or three times per year as per the label directions, and watch your turf grow thicker and healthier.

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Trees need fertilizer for fruitful harvest

When you are planning a fertilization program for your fruit trees, your goal should be high yields of high-quality fruit for the life of your trees. It is possible to obtain above normal yields for one year, but succeeding crops could suffer as a result. While it is very important that nutrients be present in large enough quantities for the best tree growth and fruit production, the ratios of these nutrients is even more important. For example, fruit from trees with access to too much nitrogen and too little potash would be poorly coloured and have poor storage qualities.

There are 13 essential nutrient elements that come from the soil, and three elements that come from the air and water. A deficiency of one of those essential nutrients will result in poor growth and perhaps even precipitate the death of the tree.

Nitrogen: Most of the tree growth takes place in a six-to-eight-week period in the spring and early summer. Fruit buds for the following year are already formed before mid-July. For this reason, nitrogen requirements are high in the early part of the season since nitrogen stimulates growth and especially fruit set. Too much nitrogen late in the season may result in large poorly-coloured fruit that does not store well.

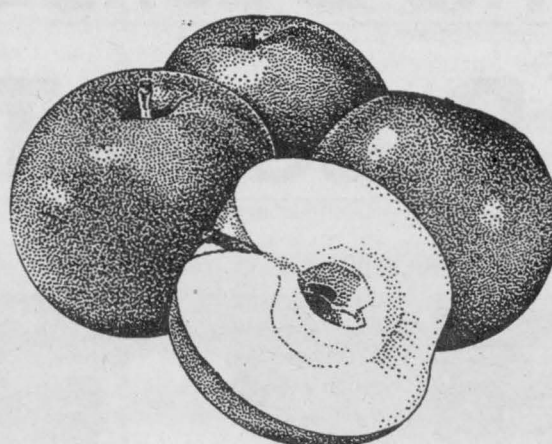
It may also cause increased winter injury of trees.

Phosphorus: Phosphorus deficiency is rare in fruit trees, since trees are better able to utilize soil phosphorus than other plants. Phosphorus is essential for tree growth and fruit production.

Potassium: Fruit trees are heavy potassium feeders, and potassium deficiency is very common in fruit trees. Signs of deficiency are small leaves which tend to curl. As the deficiency becomes more extreme, the edges of the leaves look scorched. Potassium increases hardiness and diseases resistance. Because it helps carry sugars within the tree, adequate potassium levels mean sweeter fruit.

Calcium: Trees may show calcium deficiency even though the soil in which they grow is high in calcium. Calcium available to the tree through its root system sometimes moves too slowly through the tree. Calcium sprays are often recommended as a corrective measure. A deficiency of calcium will show up as bitter pits in apples. They will not store well.

Magnesium: After nitrogen and potassium, magnesium is the most



common deficiency found in orchards. Apples deficient in magnesium will be small and immature in appearance. On some varieties, the fruit will drop prematurely.

Micronutrients: Other essential nutrients, micronutrients such as iron, boron, zinc, copper, manganese, molybdenum and chlorine, are required in very minute amounts and are usually obtained from the soil.

Fertilizing: Testing the soil in which your fruit trees grow is the most reliable way to understand the nutrients available and the fertilizer needs. If it is not possible to do a soil test, use a fertilizer with a 1-1-2 ratio. A common tomato fertilizer, such as

7-11-17, provides a good ratio for fruit trees. The first of two applications of this fertilizer should be made in April. Punch holes under the drip line (the line around the tree where rain would drip from the branches/foliage) every 12 inches.

The holes should be about nine inches deep. Pour fertilizer evenly into each hole according to this rule of thumb: one pound of fertilizer for every inch of diameter of trunk. Thus, a tree with a five-inch diameter trunk would require a total of five pounds of 7-11-17 divided evenly among the punched holes. Top up the holes with sand or compost. Repeat again before June 1, at half the rate (i.e. half a pound of 7-11-17 for each inch of diameter in the trunk).

IN BRIEF

Your goal in fertilizing fruit trees should be to obtain consistent high yields of high-quality fruit for the life of your trees. Deficiencies in one of the 13 essential nutrients will result in poor growth and poor fruit quality.

Testing the soil in which your fruit trees grow is the most reliable way to understand the nutrients available and the fertilizer needs. If a soil test is not practical, use a tree fertilizer such as 7-11-7, and follow the manufacture's label directions.

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The sweet smell of spring

Scent is not usually the first quality people think of in choosing plants for their gardens but it can add a great deal of enjoyment for the whole family.

For years, flower growers, hybridizers and the home gardener seemed to forget this special attribute of so many flowers and shrubs. Cross-breeding and selection for a long time has favored the development of flower properties such as the richness of bloom, the duration of flowering and resistance to certain diseases. Happily, that is starting to change and floral perfume is making a comeback.

The flower most strongly associated with scent is probably the rose but a variety of other plants offer lovely fragrances, too; such as lilac,

honeysuckle and lavender. Many perennials, annuals and biennials also have pleasing odors. It's a little-known fact that some bulb flowers, too, are sweetly perfumed.

There are scented flowers among both the spring- and summer-blooming varieties of bulbs. Hyacinths are probably the most highly scented of the spring-flowering bulbs. All cultivars, of all colors, share this characteristic. As is often true generally with scented flowers, the fragrance is strongest when the temperature is high.

Among the narcissus the strongest scented undoubtedly are the "paperwhites". Unfortunately, it is not hardy and can only be enjoyed as a potted plant indoors. However, in the garden, well-known jonquils — such as 'Cheerfulness' (creamy-white), 'Yellow Cheerfulness' (soft yellow), 'Cragford' (white perianth and orange cup) and 'geranium' (also white and

orange but flowering a bit later in the season) — are no less fragrant than their tender cousins. The miniature species 'Suzy', a yellow and white jonquil is worthy of attention, not the least because of its fragrance.

The surprise is the scented collection, for many people, is the tulip, including both single- and double-flowered varieties. In the first group are the cultivars 'Bellona' (yellow)

'Christmas Marvel' (pink), 'General de Wet' (orange), 'Golden Melody' (yellow), and 'High Society' (orange-red). Doubles such as 'Monte Carlo' (sulphur-yellow) and 'Hoangho' (golden yellow), too, have lovely fragrance.

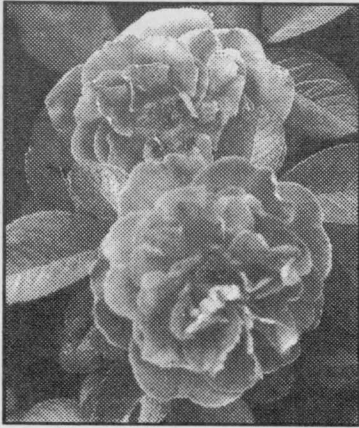
Lily-of-the-valley is an old favorite with a distinct, long-lasting fragrance. Even the

little grape hyacinth (*Muscari*) and early, miniature iris (*Iris reticulata*) boast a mild scent.

The centerpiece of the summer-flowering scent garden has to be lilies. The gold-banded lily (*Lilium auratum*), the Easter lily (*Lilium longiflorum*), the Royal lily (*L. regale*), the madonna lily (*L. candidum*) and *L. speciosum* are the best known scented lilies.

Another summer bloomer worthy of note — *Galtonia candicans* — has such a lovely fragrance, it is commonly called the summer hyacinth. Another one to try is *Acidanthera*, also called *Abyssinian gladiolus* or the Peacock orchid. Looking remarkably like small-flowered gladiolus, this one is delicious smelling.

Probably the best smelling bulb flowers is freesia. Unfortunately, it is very difficult to grow and so rarely appears in Canadian gardens. However, it is an unbeatable cut flower for home or office.



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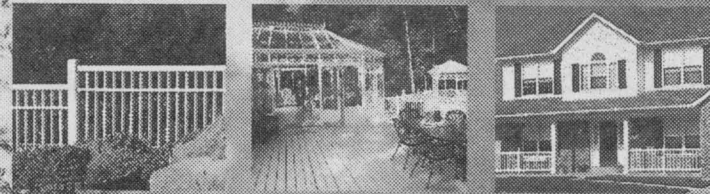
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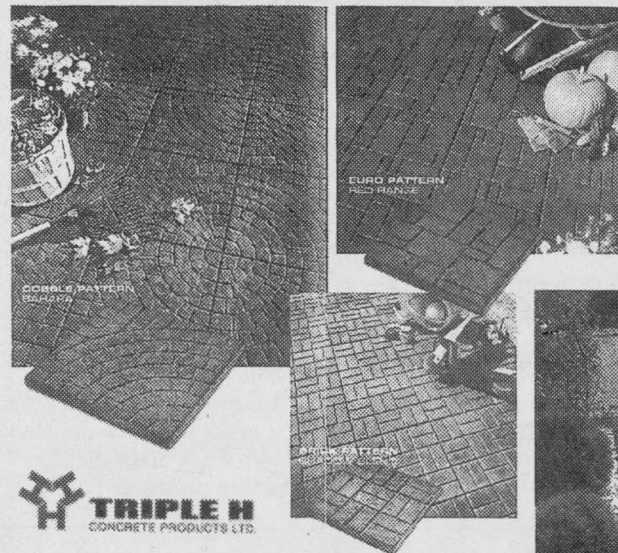


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PREMIOR

STANLEY



It's growing season again and Hamilton Farm and Garden, situated on Dawley Drive in Winchester, is prepared to handle all your lawn care needs. Parts manager Rob Smith displays the store's full line of lawn tractors, including both gas and diesel engines that range in power starting with a 13 hp, right up to a 25 hp.

Deere season gears up at Hamilton Farm and Garden

by Colleen Cameron

WINCHESTER — It's time to think about lawn care for another season and Hamilton Farm and Garden on Dawley Drive in Winchester is more than prepared to help you do that with its new line of products and services.

Parts manager Rob Smith says at Hamilton Farm and Garden you can find a full line of lawn tractors, ranging from 13 hp to 25 hp in both gas and diesel engines.

This year, the folks at Hamilton Farm and Garden are also introducing spin-steer technology with their new SST16 and SST18 tractors that steer from the rear.

"It's a much more efficient tractor," says Smith. "It spins on a dime."

Smith says this new tractor will both cut down on the user's mowing time and increase the enjoyment of the task at hand.

Hamilton's tractors range in price from \$2,000 to \$24,000, depending on what features you're looking for.

"When a customer first steps into our store in search of a new product we ask them a number of questions before we sell them anything," says Smith.

The first thing the staff at Hamilton will ask a potential client is what job they are specifically looking to purchase the equipment for. They then determine if the purchase the customer has in mind is appropriate to the task at hand and make recommendations. Lastly, after making a sale, they will determine if that customer requires any attachments to complete the job more efficiently.

Another product line Hamilton generally sees generating a great deal of interest at this time of year is its line of top quality chainsaws.

Hamilton offers saws in lightweight, heavy-duty professional and professional, tailored to suit their users' varied needs.

"All of our chainsaws have to pass rigid tests for durability, kickback and sound," says Smith.

Hamilton Farm and Garden is the place to be right now, as Deere Season has been declared there, effective immediately through until July. Deere Season is translated into special pricing on all chainsaws, lawn tractors, push mowers, grass trimmers, portable generators, lawn carts and other assorted lawn care products.

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Designer makes garden dreams a reality

by Lori Gillespie
Press staff

MOUNTAIN — Always remember, gardens are a source of joy. Never turn gardening into work.

These are the wise words of Michele White of Tawnaree Gardens, just west of Mountain. White is a garden designer with 12 years of experience, and she's making plans to offer gardening courses to teach others the joys of working with Mother Nature.

Eight years ago, she and her husband moved from Ottawa to Mountain when they ran out of room to garden in the city. They found 10 acres of paradise on Ronson Road, in the form of a corn field and forest. First, they built their home, and then they set about designing their dreams on the expansive land.

"I've always had in my mind a place where people could come and learn about gardening and nature, and have a place to relax," White says. "And if they learned something, so much the better."

A garden designer is a trained professional with extensive knowledge of horticultural and construction techniques, married to plantsmanship and design. A garden designer takes your ideals and aspirations of a garden and helps to incorporate those dreams with your house, property and neighborhood.

"I help people make their dream a reality," White explains. "People come to me with their aspirations and I help them find a way to do it."

As she explains, she helps to shape a space so that the garden is comfortable to be in and easy to maintain. A garden should enhance the value of the house, as well as be horticulturally functioning.

"I help them realize their personal vision in a way that is practical and pleasing," White says. She describes her role as providing a road map to her clients, to show them the best way to achieve their gardening goals.

"As a designer, I meet all kinds of gardeners," White says, "from experienced to novice." She says she has designed gardens for people, but there is a responsibility to the landowner to maintain the gardens.

"There are not many professionals who can keep gardening for you, so you must do it yourself," White reasons. "But I believe that true gardening is being in contact with the soil and being in the garden. It's a pleasure to be in the garden, but you need to have a grip on what you're doing."

Because of this, White has decided to offer courses in gardening, in order to help people to understand more about the art and to help them enjoy it more.

"It's not academic — it's very hands-on," she says. The day-long courses will begin with the basics in a greenhouse in the morning, so that students grasp an understanding of how things grow. The rest of the day,



Tawnaree Gardens is like a paradise for owner Michelle White and her dogs. The 10-acre property near Mountain features perennial gardens, ornamental grasses, goldfish-filled ponds and beautiful landscaping. White works as a garden designer, creating gardens for clients, but she also plans to offer courses for novice gardeners.

White says, will be spent in her garden.

The courses are expected to begin late in the summer, once White has created a curriculum. For now, she's circulating questionnaires to potential students, in order to find out what people want to learn. The courses will likely include lessons in such gardening practises as pruning, perennial care, analyzing a garden site and identifying personal gardening styles.

Through the one-day classes of up to eight people, White plans to help her students design their gardens. "So when they go home, they will have a space shaped in their minds so that they can make use of it in the way they want," she says.

White also enjoys working with children and youths, and hopes to someday be able to offer field trips for classes to come to her garden and learn about composting or nature.

"I want people to feel comfortable and at ease in the garden," she says.

Walking through White's own gardens immediately puts one at ease. A variety of gardens await as you walk through areas of trees, flowers and grasses, and see the ponds filled with goldfish, complete with benches scattered throughout to take a break and fully appreciate the view around you.

"I feel that gardens are one of the few things left that let us participate in the world around us," White says.

While she doesn't pass along specific tips, White has some advice for novice gardeners.

"Dream big and implement small," she says. "Don't be shy. The more you let your imagination go, the more you'll become familiar with what you put in your garden. But small is important — it's a big job."

• continued on next page



Garden Workshops

Tawnaree Gardens

P.O. Box 71, Mountain

Ontario, K0E 1S0

Prop. Michèle White

Michèle White, horticulturalist and garden designer, invites you to participate in Gardening Workshops to be held this year, August through October, at Tawnaree Gardens.

Gardening Workshops at Tawnaree

Please indicate which of the following would interest you: (Suggestions welcome!)

DESIGN

- ☐ Create your own garden design
 - ☐ for small properties
 - ☐ for large properties
- ☐ Analyze your garden site and create a planning layout
- ☐ Identify and express your personal style
- ☐ Flower garden design
- ☐ The mixed garden
- ☐ Design and situate patios, structures and other hardscape and decorative features

PLANTSMANSHIP

- ☐ Appropriate gardening practices for local soil, zone and microclimate conditions
- ☐ Installing a garden
- ☐ Managing the perennial garden
- ☐ Pruning trees and shrubs
- ☐ Transplanting, division and propagation
- ☐ Putting the garden to bed

NAME & ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

Number of participants is limited



If you are interested, please complete and send in the questionnaire

Tawnaree Gardens

• continued from previous page



Plants are amazingly resilient, says White. Don't be afraid to experiment — they can take it. Even if you make mistakes, they will keep growing.

White advises novices who are not familiar with gardening to have big dreams about what they'd like to do, but to implement portions of those dreams at a time. "Nature is a live, wild thing," she adds. "It can get away from you and you can get discouraged."

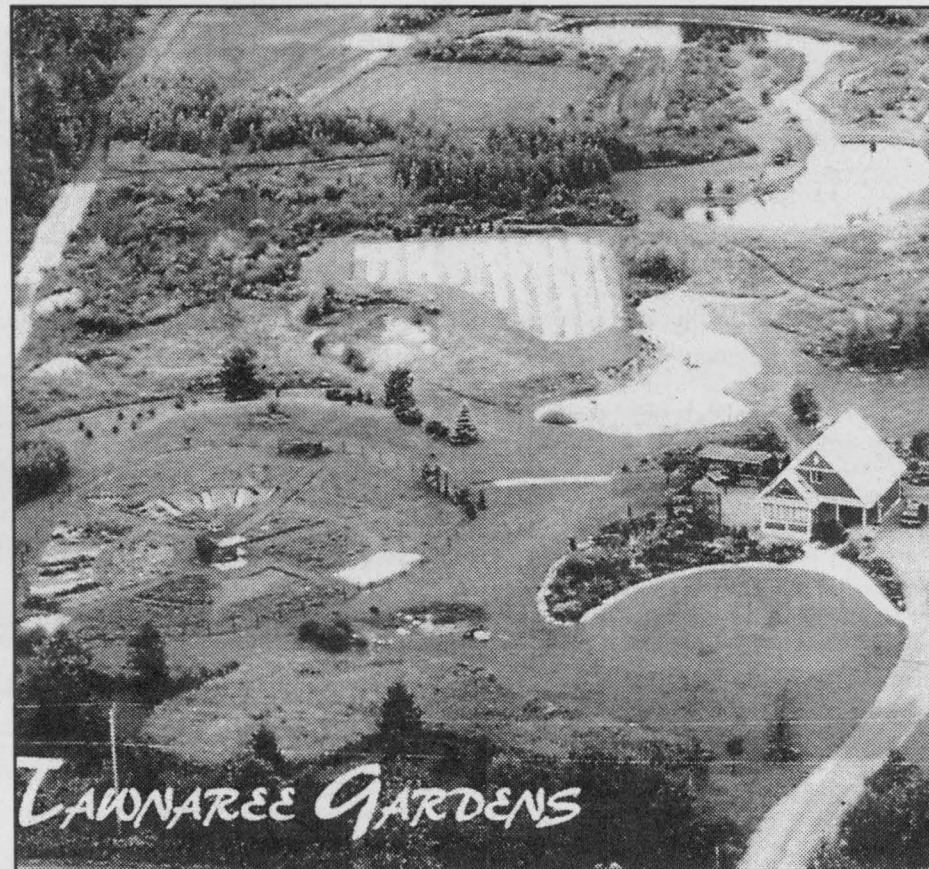
But always remember that gardens are a source of joy, she says. When a garden becomes work, it's no longer fun. "Like the Japanese, I believe that a garden is a place for the spirit; the spirit has a home in the garden," White says. "To the Japanese, every garden is a sacred place."

Another piece of advice for all gardeners is to not be afraid of experimenting.

"Plants are amazingly resilient," says White. "Don't be afraid of plants — they can take it. There are basics that you must do, but with most mistakes, they will keep growing."

Also remember that the process of nature is unending, White says. "There is no final result; it's never over. You will never get to the end of gardening," she says enthusiastically. "You just have to point yourself in the right direction and go for it. And if you lie in the hammock one afternoon instead of working in the garden, the world won't end."

Finally, less is more in the garden, White says. "In a flower garden, you are better to have a fewer number of types of flowers, and more of those



An aerial shot of Tawnaree Gardens shows the 10-acre farm in all its glory. A variety of gardens, pathways, ponds and nature in general, await as you walk through the property. Pretty benches are scattered throughout the gardens, so that visitors may take a break and fully appreciate the view from each angle.

types," she advises. "Your garden will look better and it will be easier to take care of."

White plans to hold an open house of her gardens near the end of June to

allow potential students to view the setting and see what can be learned.

"I want to share this place," she says. "It's so peaceful, and it feels really good when you spend a day here."

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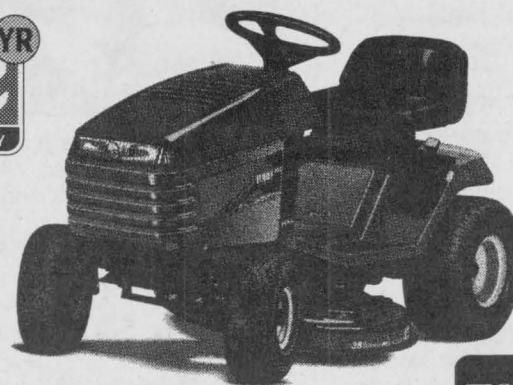
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Caring for your lawn in an environmentally friendly way

Picture a healthy green lawn: perfect for lounging, great for cookouts and playing games with the kids and grandkids, a real asset to your home. But did you know that your lawn — and how to care for it — can also benefit the environment?

Healthy grass provides a home for insects and worms that provide a rich feeding ground for birds. Thick grass prevents soil erosion, filters contaminants from rainwater and absorbs many types of airborne pollutants. Grass is also highly efficient at converting carbon dioxide to oxygen, a process that helps clean the air. Caring for your lawn properly can both enhance its appearance, improve its health, and support its benefits to the environment.

You don't have to be an expert to grow a healthy lawn. The secret is to work with nature. This means creating conditions for grass to thrive so that it can resist damage from weeds, disease and insect pests. Organic or regular fertilizers can offer an answer. A well fertilized lawn can do two things: (1) keep weeds at bay by fleshing out turf and leaving less open space for weed seeds to germinate, plus (2) it tolerates better the presence of destructive lawn insects, such as grubs or chinch bugs. Keep your lawn healthy by feeding it well, and you won't need to use pesticides as frequently.

It means setting realistic goals for your lawn, whether you do the work yourself or use a professional lawn care service. And if you choose to use pesticides, it means using them with care and with strict attention to the manufacturers' instructions.

Caring for your lawn in an environmentally sensible way can have a bigger impact than you might think. Your lawn is only a small piece of land, but all the lawns across the country cover a lot of territory. That means that you and your lawn-care activities, in collaboration with everyone else's, can make a difference to the environment.

To summarize: A healthy green lawn is a great backdrop for summer activities and for your home and landscaping. And healthy grass supports the worms and insects that feed birds. It prevents soil erosion and filters contaminants from the air and from rainwater. You and your lawn care activities, in collaboration with everyone else's, can make a difference to the environment.

Down on the farm

Sun safety a growing concern

WINCHESTER — "You gotta do the haying while the sun's shining." No one understands that saying more than farmers.

But even people whose workplace is the great outdoors sometimes need a reminder of the sun's true power... and its dangers. The risk of skin cancer can be greatly reduced, say local public health officials, by reducing exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays.

"There's a myth that farmers can't avoid being exposed to the sun, because being outside is such a big part of the job. The truth is, there are ways to minimize that exposure, and therefore minimize the chance of

developing skin cancer," says Gisèle Martin of the Eastern Ontario Health Unit.

She offers the following protective measures for farmers:

— Consult the UV index for daily forecasts of UVR intensity. Whenever possible, limit extended outdoor activities to before 11 am or after 4 pm when the sun's rays are weakest.

— Always protect yourself from the sun, but especially from April to September, between 11 am and 4 pm, and when you're near fresh snow for extended periods.

— Create shade "escapes", with shelters, canopies, trees.

— Wear clothing with a tight weave to protect arms and legs, a wide-brimmed or neck-flap hat, and UVR-absorbing sunglasses or protective glasses.

— Apply lip protection and sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher liberally, and repeatedly — even if you're wearing protective clothing or only expect to be in the sun for a short while.

— Regularly check for skin irregularities.

— Ensure children also follow these tips.

For more information about being sun safe on the farm, call Health Line 1-800-267-0852.

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Time to dig into spring gardening chores

This article is provided by local realtors and the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.

Spring is here at last! Perennial plants and flower bulbs planted last fall will begin to unfold in all their glory, adding splashes of color to bleak brown lawns and gardens.

This is also the time to ask yourself, does your garden and exterior landscape need a new look? More and more homeowners today are looking for innovative ways to beautify their backyards, lawns and gardens — not only for their personal satisfaction, but because well-placed shrubs, trees, flowering plants and an attractive lawn can increase your property's value as much as 10 per cent or more.

Adding even the simplest patio, walkway, planters, flower beds or water feature can dramatically change the way you experience your outdoor home environment, while adding elegance and distinction to your home.

Before you start digging, planting and considering features like ponds, fountains, bird feeders and waterfalls, it's important to plan ahead how you will achieve the effects you want. Whether you're looking at a simple

revival or a major landscaping overhaul, it's a good idea to first try different designs on paper or play around with one of the new landscaping software programs.

While "virtual" gardening calls for a bit of a learning curve, it's a great way to get into the gardening mood long before the soil in your garden is actually workable. Some software packages will let you drag and drop realistic trees, shrubs, flowers, fences and paths, allowing you to do things that are next to impossible in your real garden. But it may be just the thing to help some zealous gardeners set down their hoes until the soil is just right.

In climates, such as central Ontario's, weather patterns can change from year to

year. Soil has to be monitored regularly until the time is right for digging. The rule of thumb for working soil is that the frost be out of it and that it not be water-logged.

There's also a rule of thumb for removing winter mulch — wait until tulips show 10 centimetres of growth.

DIGGING IN

Once all the worst frosts have passed, the busy gardening season begins. Digging and turning over the first 15 to 20 centimetres — and adding a combination of compost, peat moss and fertilizer as you do so — is the best thing you can do for your soil. Unlike compost, peat moss has no nutritional value,

but will add fibre and acidify your soil, which is good for most plants.

For plants that don't like the acidic effect of peat moss, you can compensate by adding lime as directed. Lime is also useful for repelling cutworms and earwigs.

PRUNING UP

Early spring is also a good time to prune fruit trees and other deciduous trees and shrubs. Be sure to dress wounds bigger than 2.5 centimetres in diameter with tree paint to prevent rot and infestation. Conifers have sap that runs in spring and are best left for pruning in early fall.

Evergreen shrubs such as creeping junipers and cedars should be left unpruned until their new growth has stopped around mid-summer. To keep them in control, trim them back at least half their new growth.

MAJOR LAWN CARE

This is also the time when your lawn needs major attention, including aeration — piercing your lawn with holes to allow for better penetration of air, water and fertilizers. This, in turn, encourages new and deeper root growth. Aeration should be done professionally, either by renting the appropriate equipment or hiring a lawn maintenance company to do it for you.

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If you plan to include a water feature, such as a pond, fountain or waterfall, plan it into your design in advance and try to keep it simple. To enjoy the visual treat and hear the gentle rolling of water, be sure to place the water feature close to your home or an outdoor seating area.



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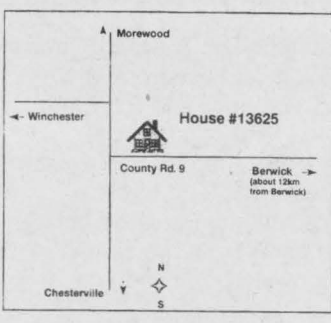
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Spring gardening

• continued from previous page

Spring fertilizing of your lawn goes without saying. It is the most important fertilizing treatment for lawns each year. Do it early, preferably using a slow-release fertilizer with a high nitrogen content and only after you've given the lawn a good raking.

Handy gardening tips

Once you've got all these things out of the way, it's time to get down to the serious business of gardening. As you decide what to plant where and how and what other features to add to your personal retreat, keep the following tips in mind.

— Garden centres and nurseries get mobbed in spring, so be prepared before you get there. Start a shopping list of what seeds, bedding plants and shrubs you're going to need to get your yard in gear.

— Think of your yard as a cluster of outdoor rooms, some for enjoying sunshine, others for growing vegetables and others for appreciating the beauty of flowers, shrubs, trees and foliage plants.

— Flower and vegetable beds need a lot of thought and planning, especially if you want continual color or growth from spring through fall. You may have to plant more than one kind of annual or vegetable in a particular location to accomplish this. You'll also have to consider other factors such as sun, shade, heat, reflected light, winds and soil conditions.

— Prepare the soil a couple of weeks before you plan to start planting. Leave the prepared soil beds idle for about 10 days to allow any weeds time to germinate. Remove weeds before sowing or transplanting the area.

— If you are planting seeds directly outdoors, make sure you don't place them too deep in the soil. Many seeds need exposure to light to germinate. If the plants don't tolerate frost well at the seedling stage, ensure that all danger of frost has passed.

— Plants grown indoors may go into shock if not hardened properly before being transported to the garden. This process takes about 10 days. Start by putting the plants outdoors for an hour or two during the hottest part of the day and gradually increase their exposure. Water transplants before you plant them and once or twice every day.

— Bedding plants purchased at garden centres or nurseries should already be hardened. Always look for stocky, compact plants that have a healthy green color. Avoid tall, lanky specimens that have yellow leaves and appear to be stretched. These are already in stress. Never judge a plant by its height. Quality transplants are short with thick stems and have side branches close to the base.

— Consider including more exotic annuals in your garden beds, in addition to the usual varieties. While these often cost more, they also often winter over well in your home, allowing you to replant them outside again year after year.

Caring for your grill lengthens its life

As the weather outside warms up, Canadians across the country start thinking about the mouth-watering tastes of food cooked on an outdoor grill. Whether you choose to fire up the grill on a chilly spring evening or a hot sunny day — you will want to follow these suggestions on grill maintenance.

Replacing your tank is a very easy step. Make sure the tank is in the "off" position before disconnecting any hoses. After you disconnect the hose that connects the tank to the burners, the tank should slide out from under the grill with ease.

This is a good time to check the gas hose to make sure it's in good condition. A cracked or faulty hose could be a serious and potentially fatal problem if not caught soon enough. Tanks and hoses have a

tendency to rust, crack and corrode over time, so it's important that you keep an eye on them and replace them when necessary.

It's also a good idea to check the burners when tuning up your grill. A faulty or broken burner will cut the grilling capacity in half. To replace the burners, all you will need is a Phillips head screwdriver or standard screwdriver. There will be one or two screws that hold the burner in place that you will need to remove. Once you remove the screws, the burner should pop right out. It helps if you take your used burner with you when buying a replacement to ensure that the new burner is compatible.

Replacing the coals is another easy and inexpensive step in caring for your grill. Wear gloves to remove the old dirty coals. When placing new

coals in the basket or pan in the bottom of the grill, be sure to spread them evenly so your cooking surface will heat evenly.

If the body of your grill isn't looking its best and you want to give it a new shine, try a coat of high-temperature spray paint. The paint is an extra layer of protection from the elements such as temperature changes, rain, sleet and snow.

Are the knobs cracked, broken or missing? Don't worry; you can also replace them with relative ease. Due to the variety of knobs available you should take your old knobs, which should pull right off, with you to the store when buying replacements.

Finally, be sure to keep your grill covered. There are several styles of grill covers available and they do a great job of protecting the grill.

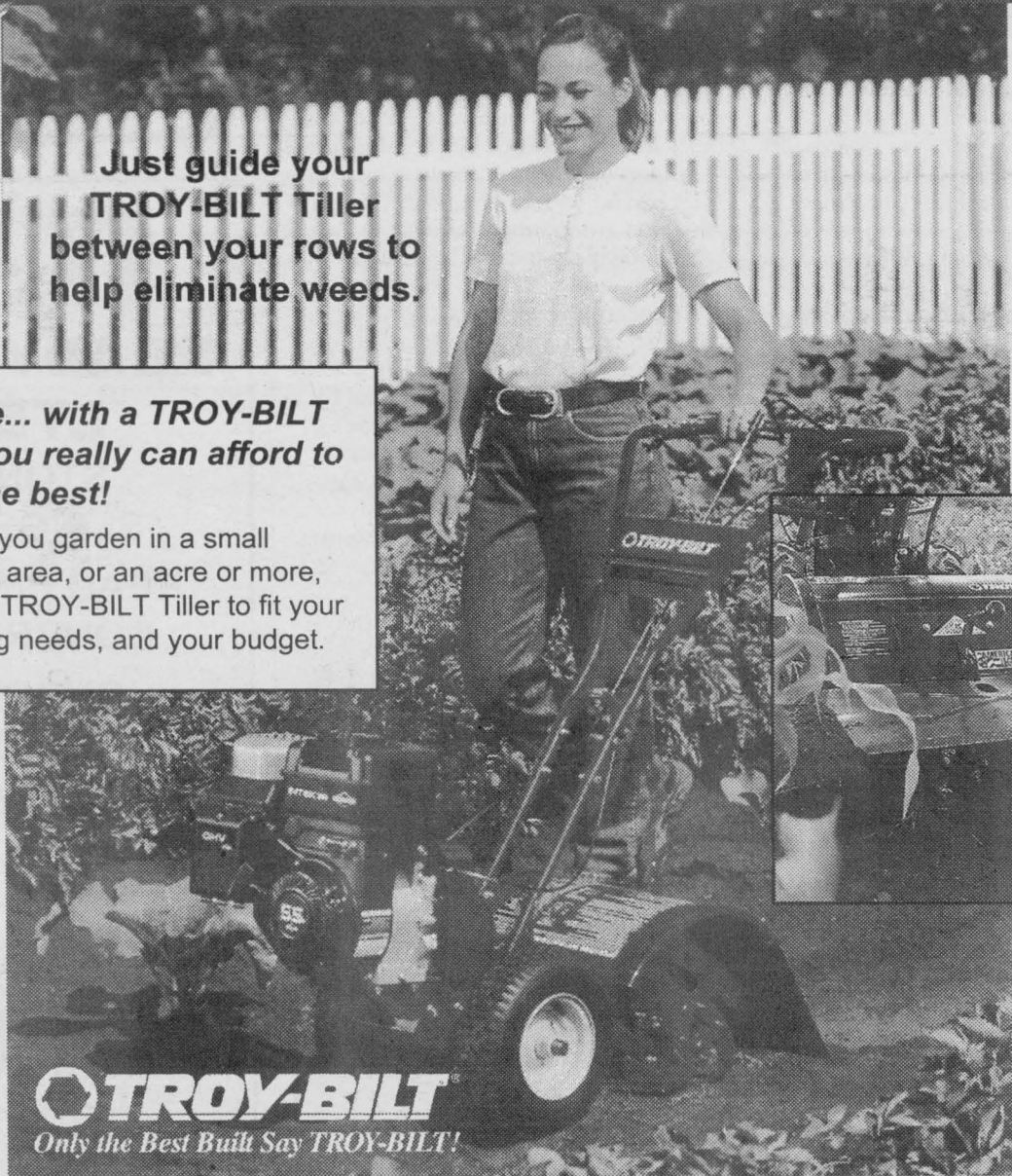
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Getting your cottage ready for summer

This article is provided by local realtors and the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.

It's that time of the year when most owners of non-winterized cottages begin to look forward to opening up their "great escape" for another season of quiet, moonlit nights, canoe rides, hikes and getting away from it all.

Just as there are feelings of regret and apprehension when many cottagers "close-up" for the winter season, there are similar feelings of anticipation and concern over "opening up". After all, it takes more than just turning the key in the lock for most cottagers to get their home away from home ready for summer.

The first trip to the cottage after the winter is the time to notice any damage caused by heavy rains, wind or snowfall. This includes the condition of any nearby woods, beach, docks and other buildings apart from the main cottage. It is also the time to list the tools and supplies you will need to bring on the next trip to fix all the problems.

Before actually entering your cottage, walk around it and check for any signs of break-ins. Look for broken windows, doors or boards. If you suspect a break-in has occurred over the winter months, check for missing items such as audio visual and camera equipment, knives, tools and other targets favored by thieves. You will need to make a list of all missing items for your insurance company. Be sure not to touch anything before police arrive.

After determining if you've had any break-ins, the next step is to look for evidence of any leaks and unwanted visitors. You will want to remove the remains of any birds or animals that may have sought refuge over the winter. And you will want to discourage any unwanted company from squirrels and mice.

If you have left the sofa, chairs and other furnishings uncovered, check the upholstery — as well as counters and other surfaces — for signs of droppings, broken cans, bottles and other items you may have left behind.

Next, turn on the electricity. Plug in or turn on large and small appliances to ensure that all circuits are working. But be sure to first check the oven and any other appliances you may have left something in when

closing for the season. Any electricity-powered tools should also be checked for signs of rusting. These may have to be repaired before you put them to use.

If you have a wall phone, check to see that it still works. Test the smoke and carbon dioxide detectors to ensure they don't need new batteries. If you use oil lamps or gasoline for powering equipment, be sure to get a fresh supply.

The final test comes when you start up the water system. Be sure to check all the water lines for leaks and other problems. Regardless of where your water supply comes from — directly from a lake or from a well — the condition can change in a season. So, it's a good idea to have it tested a few times a year.

To ensure the chimney is clear of unwanted blockages from animals, birds or debris, first burn a few sheets of newspaper in your fireplace or wood burning stove. The nights are still chilly in the spring, so be sure to bring with you a fresh supply of firewood if you plan to stay overnight.

Many cottagers now have septic systems, but if you are still the proud owner of an outhouse, remember this structure is a part of our architectural heritage — one that must be well placed and well maintained. Check the area around the outhouse to ensure that snowmelt and surface water have not left waste products on the ground or in nearby waterways.

Also check the pit to see that it is safe from seepage. If you didn't scrub the place down when you closed for the season, do so now. All inside surfaces should be cleaned, stained and/or painted at least once a year. You may also want to spray the outhouse with a disinfectant solution. The goal is to discourage insects and encourage patrons.

Getting a cottage ready for the summer season involves other chores as well. You may need to caulk the old rowboat, resurface the access road with fresh gravel, varnish or stain decks and fences, repair any damaged docks or other shore structures.

It's a lot of work. But, for those of us drawn to experience our natural heritage, it will all seem worth it when we hear the call of a loon, listen to the gentle slapping of waves on a lake, or experience the tranquility of a starry night.

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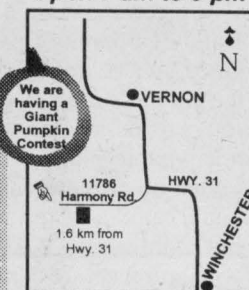
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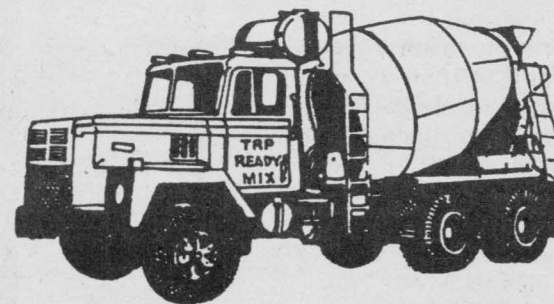
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Guide to basic landscaping

Have you always wanted to do more with your yard? Well, here are a few tips from to help you get started.

— Keep a file of magazine photos of gardens and landscapes you like.

— Go on local garden tours to get ideas. Bring a notebook so you can jot down the names of plants and trees you like.

— Take pictures of your garden to better help you see the landscape. You can draw on the pictures to see how new plantings and features would look.

— If you're new to your home, try a little gardening to get a feel for the soil, sun and regional growing conditions. Even take a peek in your neighbors' yards.

— Don't try to get everything done at once. Most gardens are not created in one season — they evolve over a period of years.

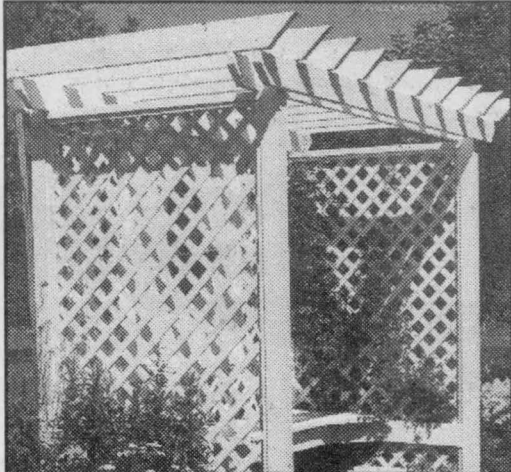
— Keep maintenance in mind. Big flowerbeds, even with perennials, take a couple hours a week to keep in good shape.

— The style of your home should be considered. While a Cape Cod

screams for a white picket fence, a rustic house is complemented by a rough cedar log arbor.

— Always outline new flowerbeds with some white flour or a garden hose. This will help you envision how well it fits in with your landscape.

— Consider consulting a knowledgeable garden specialist at a home improvement garden centre.



Throughout the year collect clippings of garden and landscaping ideas that appeal to you.

Preventing pests from taking hold

Nothing is worse than watching your hard work in the garden change from bright colored leaves to yellow and brown wilting stems. To help prevent this from happening to you, here are a few tips to keep your garden healthy.

— Invest in top-notch soil. Good soil will ensure healthier plants that are better able to ward off pests and disease. Work in plenty of peat moss or compost.

— Water your garden in the morning instead of the evening. This allows the plants to dry off quickly, preventing many fungal diseases.

— Mulch with grass clippings, wood chips or other mulches as much as possible. This will reduce the watering and weeding and prevent soil-borne pathogens from splashing onto plants during watering and rain.

— Whenever possible, seek out disease resistant varieties of your favorite plants. Many tomatoes, for example, are bred to be resistant to

blight and wilt disease.

— Don't allow your plants to get too dry. This stresses them, and stressed plants attract pests and disease.

— Look at your plants daily. Get in the habit of taking a morning or evening stroll around the garden. Most problems can be stopped easily if detected early.

— Pinch off diseased plant parts. This will often slow or even stop the problem.

— Give plants the right light. Too much sun or too much shade stresses plants, making them more susceptible to problems.

— Choose the right plants. Pick plants that are well-suited to your region. Don't try to climatize fussy exotic plants that don't do well without extensive spraying, feeding, watering or other care.

— Keep your garden well weeded. Not only will it look better, but plants that have to compete for sun, water and nutrients are more likely to get diseases and pests.



Shelley's Elephant Garden

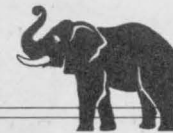
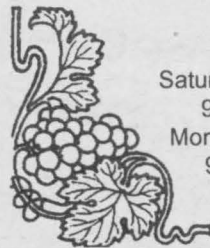


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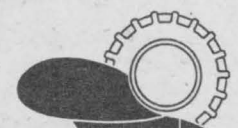
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