The Chesterville Record
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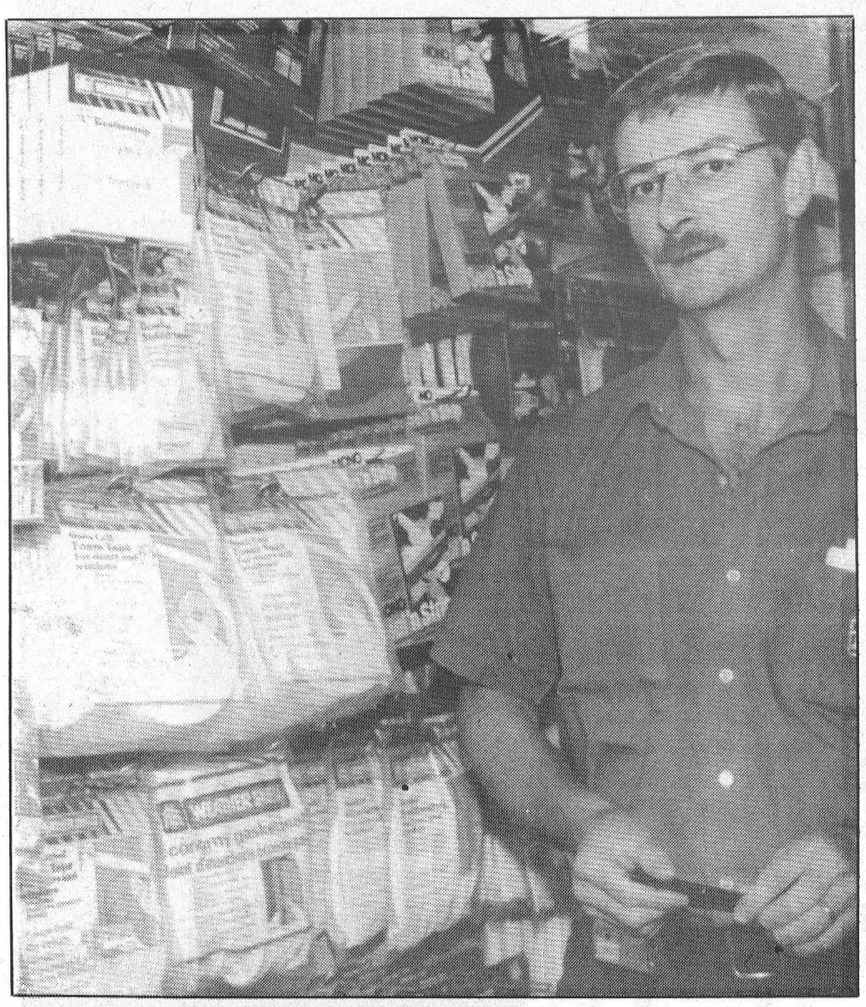
Fall Home Improvement



It wasn't too long ago that geting ready for winter in Eastern Ontario meant moving the supply of winter's firewood into the basement or adjoining woodshed after it had been sawn and split by hand. Our cover shows Alden Place of Iroquois, a member of the Interpretive staff at Upper Canada Village, with a wheelbarrow (c. 1860) of wood being moved from the woodpile into the furnace room of the Village grist mill.

Photo by J.A.H. Morris and reproduced by Windmill Web Inc., Prescott.



Filling the gap

Dave Begg, of Geggie's Home Hardware Ltd. near Winchester, displays some of the store's weather-stripping products. Although homeowners are busy preparing for winter, people are doing their best to be energy conscious year-round. Geggie's sells a wide variety of home improvement and winter preparation products.

Geggie's prepares for winter with energy in mind

WINCHESTER — Less expensive products are not always the best when it comes to preparing one's home for winter.

"If you want quality, you have to pay for it," says Dave Begg, hardware manager at Geggie's Home Hardware Ltd. near Winchester.

Although in the past homeowners made major renovations and home improvements in the fall, they are now improving their homes year-round.

However, in the fall, he adds, homeowners are kept busy preparing their homes for winter whether by weather stripping, insulation or painting.

"The rush is on to get things done now that were meant to be done in the summer."

Homeowners looking for supplies are heading for the window kits, caulking and "basically anything that keeps the heat in and cold out."

Wood-burning stoves and gas fire places are also sold far more often during this time of year.

"People are also looking for heat-exchange units for their homes." For newer homes these are vital, he explains, because they are virtually completely air-tight. "Fresh air has to be brought in regularly."

Today, more than ever, people want value for their dollar, says Begg. "However, cheap is cheaper and if you want a quality product, it means paying more. Better quality means it lasts longer and is more durable."

Energy conservation is also high on the list of homeowner's minds. "People are really energy conscious and are looking to save as much as possible."

Whether it be by insulating pipes and hotwater tanks or using energy-efficient lightbulbs, says Begg, "people are leaning towards energy conservation."

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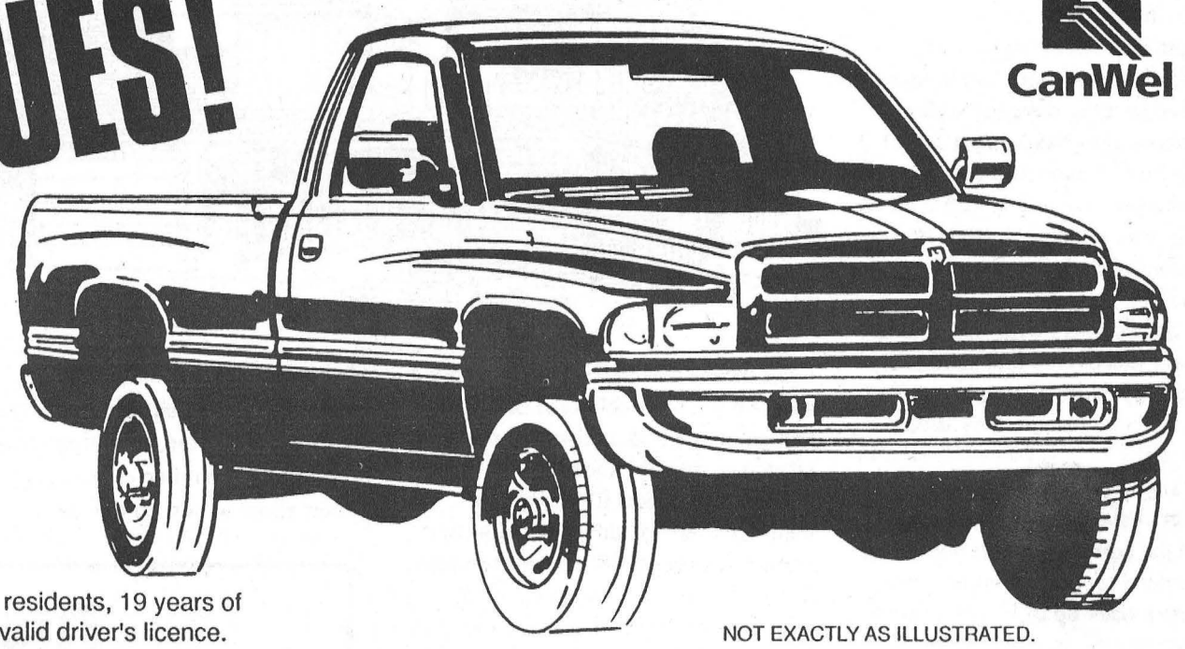

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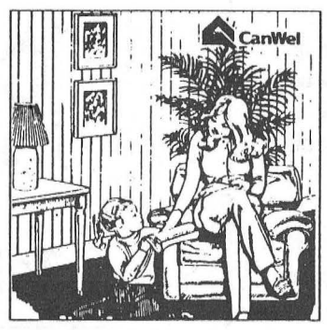

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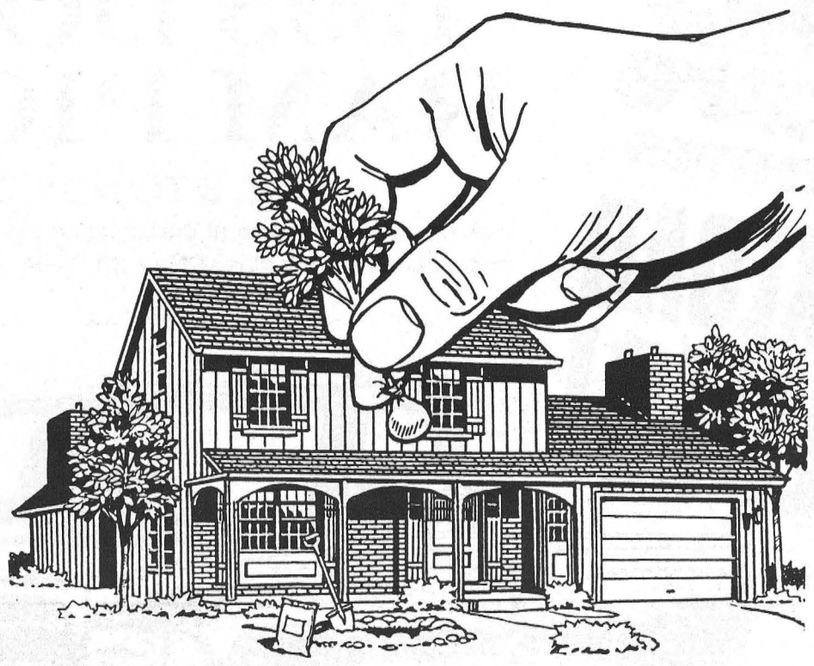
A home makeover often pays for itself



Come on. Admit it. You think you look great in those new sunglasses. The new haircut. That suntan.

So, has it occurred to you to do the same thing for your house, the one you've been referring to lately as "drab"?

Many homeowners may not be aware that exterior makeovers now include a myriad of low-cost, durable vinyl siding and accessory options.

In addition to vinyl, injection-molded exterior fittings and even new aluminum and steel designs can dramatically transform plain homes into expensive-looking designer styles.

Talk about sunglasses, haircut and suntan—how about complementing a home's bright new siding with columns, fishscale trim, window mantels or a new double door with decorative door surround?

Even homeowners with less opulent tastes have discovered that subtle makeovers of their existing home created the "new" house they'd been looking for.

More significantly, exterior makeovers have been proven to add value to the home when it is sold. Real estate experts report that homeowners have gotten back up to 100 percent of their investments on vinyl siding.

Many home repair experts consider vinyl the best material. Besides being one of the most durable man-made materials, it is also easy to care for and, therefore, retains its beauty.

One of the biggest indications of vinyl's growing popularity in exterior design was the decision by Alcoa—the company that revolutionized construction with its aluminum products—to specialize in vinyl building products.

There are additional benefits to vinyl siding products. For example, while vinyl means an end to exterior painting and will not rot, peel, flake or blister like painted wood, it also will not dent, scratch or rust like metal.

Vinyl also makes it possible for manufacturers to add more colors and surface textures to its exterior products. The company has even developed injection-molded siding that looks just like stained cedar. Unlike wood, however, the siding resists stains and mildew. It's also impervious to termites and other insects. In fact, these various siding products are so durable, some companies offer a lifetime warranty on all of them.

Homeowners considering such products should contact the contractors in this area, many of whose ads appear in this issue of The Record's Home Improvement section, for more information concerning these products, designed not only to make the exterior of your home home virtually maintenance free, but also to increase the insulation value, somethign that all homewners should be considering with winter about to descend on us.

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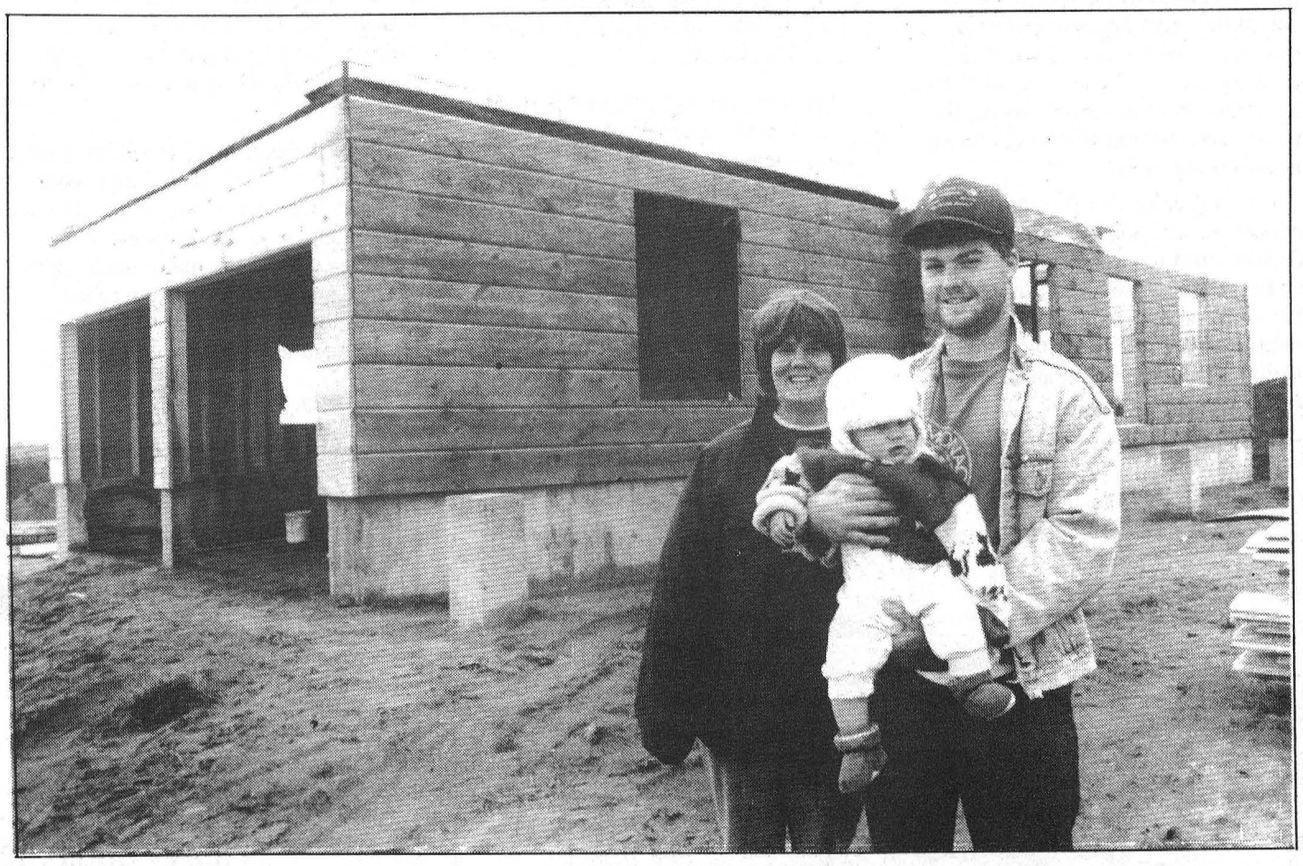
'A different kind of house'

Customized log home kit fits together like a puzzle



Under construction

Carolyn MacLean, Danny MacMillan and nine-month-old Chase will be living in their customized log home in the spring. The 1,800-square-foot home was bought as a kit, and is being reassembled like a puzzle. The photo below illustrated the dovetail joints used in construction.

The concept of a log home might stir images of an old, weather-beaten, breezy shack, the kind seen on Little House on the Prairies.

But when a Finch Township couple decided to look into building a log home, they discovered instead a modern, spacious but still rustic home was a definite possibility.

Danny MacMillan and Carolyn MacLean are building their log home on a one-acre site south of Finch. The two-storey, 1,800-square-foot home will feature a loft, front porch, double garage and three bedrooms.

"We wanted to be unique," MacLean says. "We liked the wood to begin with, and it's a different kind of house."

The model was purchased as a kit from 1867 Confederation Model Homes in Stittsville, and was assembled at its factory in Bobcaygeon, Ont. The pieces were then numbered at the factory, taken apart and shipped to the site this summer.

It is being reassembled by MacMillan, his father Ian and MacLean's father Bill, and should be covered before snow falls.

It should be ready in the spring, after the logs are dry and won't crack when the home is heated.

The couple chose high-efficiency oil as a heating source, and a wood stove is a possible addition in the future.

The design is customized, a combination of two models the company offered. MacLean says she likes the "open concept" design of the home's interior. "You can stand about anywhere and see anything."

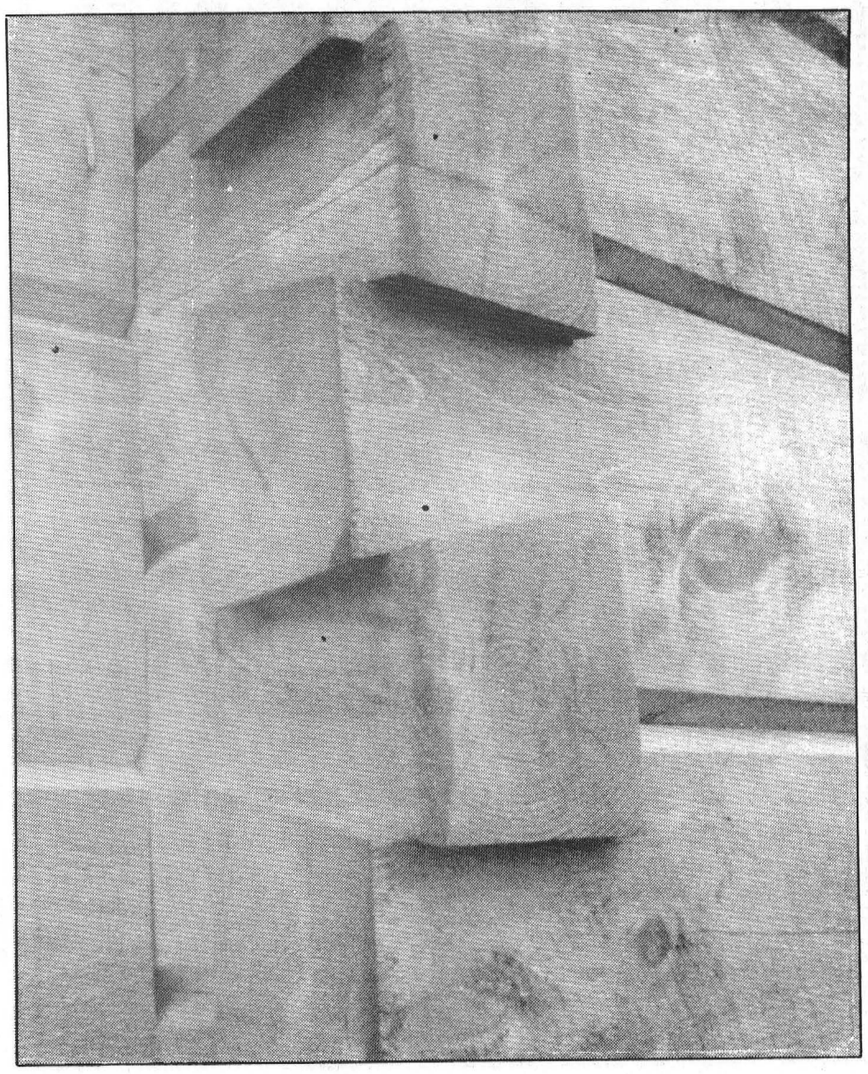
The home itself is made with 6-by-12-inch white pine logs, grown near Sudbury. The space between the logs is filled with a triple-seal tar stripping and foam gasket.

The exterior of the home is being finished with a dark stain, and a lighter stain will be used on the interior. Also available were 8-by-12-inch logs, and British Columbia red pine, which would have added to the cost, which the couple says is about the same as building a conventional home.

Insulation in the walls is not necessary, as is gyprock or paint. The ceiling will be insulated. And no well had to be drilled, as water is being piped on from neighboring properties.

MacMillan says with an instruction manual and numbered pieces, the home is assembled "like a puzzle." The logs are fitted together at the ends with a dovetail joint.

The couple visited the factory when their home was first assembled, and was given a "mini-course" in how to reassemble it. They also said the company has been excellent in terms of service and advice when needed. They said they also chose the company because surprisingly, a U.S. log home company they talked to, they said, didn't seem to take their inquiries seriously and didn't return their calls.



Arranging furniture for the way you live

We've had a lot of mail asking for hints about room arrangements—one of the most important parts of creating a comfortable, livable home. And, as much as I hate "rules," there are a few on room arrangements that really work for me when I get into a redecorating mood.

The first thing you'll want to do is choose a focal point. It might be an architectural feature such as a fireplace or bay window, an impressive piece of furniture such as a large armoire, or a great piece of art. The important thing is that it's commanding and eye-catching—and something you like to look at. Once you've found your focal point, furniture and accessories will just naturally fall in place according to their size and use.

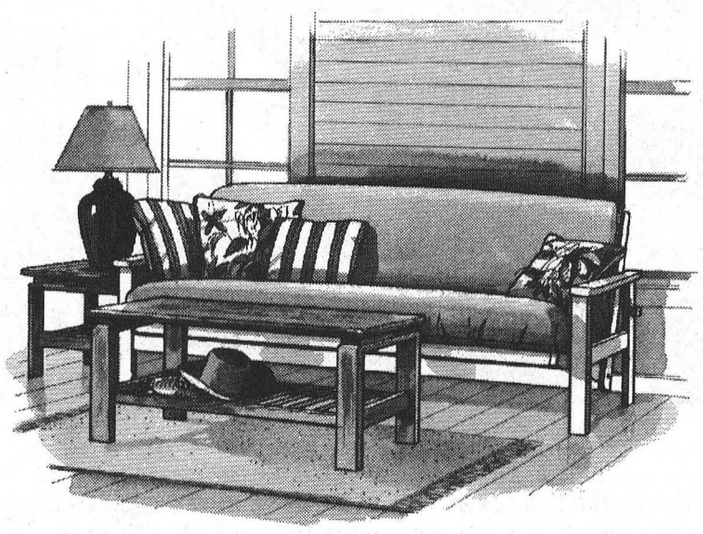
The next thing to consider is creating "traffic lanes" through the room, always leaving a two- to three-foot aisle for easy movement. Also, allow at least three feet of space around doorways—and an additional foot at major entrance doors.

Balance is the next key factor. That simply means mixing large and small, light and heavy elements in a pleasing way. For instance, to the eye, two armchairs and a table can equal a sofa in the overall visual "weight" of the arrangement. Or an armoire can balance a seating group. Just use your eyes to size things up and you'll be on your way.

One of the easiest ways to plan your room layout is to do it on paper, using 1/4-inch graph paper and templates cut to the scale of your furniture's shapes and sizes. Or use the ready-made, pull-out grid and template system in the Home Furnishings Council's free Haven decorating guide.

This way, you can switch the furniture templates around, getting a good idea of how the room arrangement will look with a wide variety of combinations before you make your purchasing decisions. It also beats moving furniture back and forth, if, like me, you have to try out every possible combination.

Most importantly, remember that how you and your family will use the room is the most important element in arranging a comfortably decorated home. If you're not sure where a particular piece of furniture should go, put it where you will get the most enjoyment out of using it!





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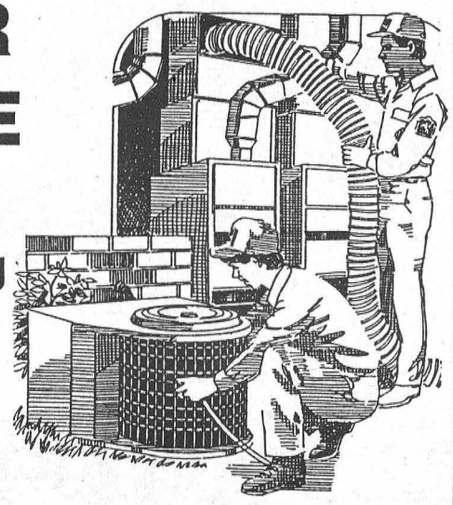

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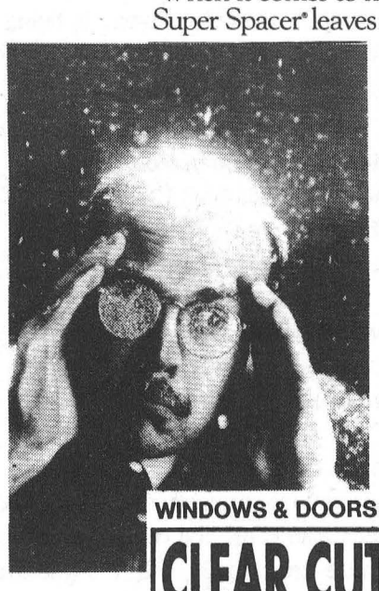

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Pellet stove the latest trend in home heating

Wood with only half the work

by Liz Edwards

WINCHESTER — It's a wood stove with about half the work. If you don't like chopping or splitting logs, a wood pellet stove might be an alternative.

The fire is fueled by the small pellets, made of compressed wood by-products. A ton of the pellets costs about $180. Since the stoves are designed for supplementary heat, the average home would go through about three tons a year, says Dave Acres, who sells the units from his Acres Equipment business in Winchester.

Acres sells the pellets himself and adds there are other suppliers in the area who do as well.

And it's handy for people who aren't home all the time to keep the fires burning. The stove is thermostat-controlled. The hopper holding the pellets will automatically feed them into the fire according to the desired temperature. A variable speed fan will direct the heat outward.

"It's too easy. Storage-wise you keep the pellets in plastic bags and then you zip them open," he explains.

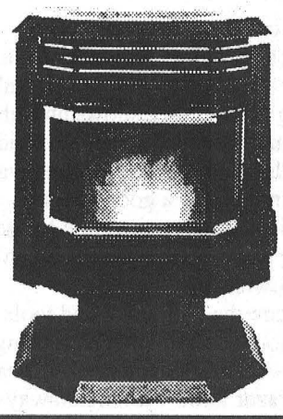
They're even easy to clean, producing about two per cent ash. A ton of the fuel will give out approximately two pounds of ash. They also produce a bright flame just like a real wood fire.

The pellet stove was invented by Dr. Jerry Whitfield in Mountlake Terrace, Washington. It was in the States that Acres first learned of the stove when he and his wife were looking for a corn stove for their own use.

He preferred the wood pellets over both corn and logs because they don't attract rodents and bugs. As well they're easier to store.

Last year he began selling two brands, Whitfield and Martin, and so far has installed about 30. He guarantees satisfaction. If within 30 days, the customer doesn't like the stove, Acres will remove it and give a complete refund.

One customer with respiratory problems had a stove installed on the condition it didn't irritate his illness as



wood stoves can. He was happy with the product.

For people with asthma who are concerned about the effects of wood smoke, these models are ideal because they are airtight, says Acres.

His models range from $1,895 to $2,695 while a wood stove can cost anywhere from $500 to $3,000, Acres estimates. The chimney is a three-inch PL vent and relatively inexpensive, averaging $250.



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Wallcoverings can bring your room to life

Homeowners can add value to any room and save hundreds of dollars by doing their own wallcovering. But, where does a "wallcovering wanna-be" begin? First, get walls in shape by doing minor repairs and patching. You want your wallcovering to stay put once you hang it, and the following tips should help.

Remove all switch plates, fixtures, and if possible, moldings. Begin by doing a preliminary dry layout of the paper, to see how many full-width sheets will be needed. Papers that are pre-pasted require submersion in a water tray. When paste is needed, it may be purchased premixed or as a powder to be mixed with water. "Plan on about one gallon per five rolls of paper.

The right wallcovering can be a perfect coverup. When selecting wallpaper for problem walls, use a heavier vinyl wallcovering with fabric backing to minimize show-through. Avoid patterns with stripes or plaids, which draw attention to uneven walls."

A plumb line is a good tool to determine a true vertical line for your starting point, so the pattern doesn't go up or downhill.

Here are the recommended tools to do the job: pencils; sponge; pasting brush; wide-blade taping knife; seam roller; razor knife with breakaway blades; casing knife (optional); wallpapering shears; water tray (for pre-pasted wallpaper); roller (may be used as alternative to pasting brush); plumb line; drop cloths; protective eyewear; gloves.

Evenly apply paste to pre-cut strips with the paste brush or roller. Do not allow paste to touch the pattern side of the paper. You may fold over the pasted area to meet another pasted area to make it easier to manage.

Start by laying paper where wall meets ceiling; the rest will unfold itself down the wall. Position the strip according to your plumb line marks and remember to leave some overhang at the top and bottom. Beginning at the top, smooth wallcovering out from the center in both directions with a smoothing brush. Check for bubbles and be certain seams are properly butted. A seam roller may be used to flatten paper into corners and crevices. Remove excess paste or marks with a dampened sponge.

For a professionally trimmed look, Alexander advises using a wide-blade taping knife to press paper into the crevice where wall meets ceiling and around trim. Then, run a breakaway razor knife along the crease, using the edge of the taping knife as a guide. Peel away excess wallpaper. He also recommends a casing knife (which looks like a pizza cutter) to trim hard-to-reach areas around windows and door jams.

For the next section of paper, butt it against the first strip to match patterns, without gapping or overlapping, and proceed as previously mentioned.

Now that you've prepared and covered your problem walls with one of the beautiful wallcoverings on the market, think of the money saved on installation . . . and the thousands of ways to spend it on future projects.

Borders: The design element with endless possibilities

Wallpaper borders present almost endless decorating possibilities, from ceiling accents to faux "wall panels."

And borders are so easy to use, even first-time do-it-yourselfers can create design elements with them successfully.

Here are some suggestions on decorating with borders from the experts at Waverly Wallpapers:

- Highlight an elegant crown molding by adding borders both under the molding and on the ceiling.
- Create the illusion of architectural detailing by using borders as faux "panels" on wallpapered walls.
- Use a border to highlight a staircase or to "frame" a fireplace.
- Put a border around a window frame and add one at the ceiling, too.
- Off the wall, borders can decorate a wooden valance, headboard, child's toy box, hat boxes and storage containers.

You'll find more ideas—plus how-to tips and color photos—in Waverly's Decorate With Borders idea book. For a copy, send a $2 check to Decorate With Borders, Dept. 144, P.O. Box 5110, Farmingdale, NY 11736-5110.

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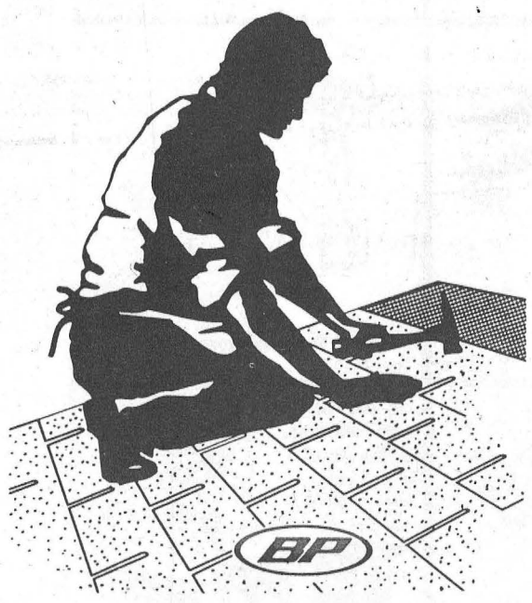

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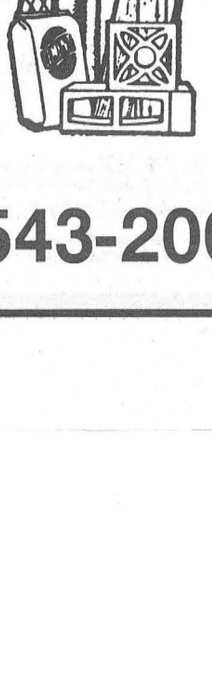

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Use your own kitchen for remodelling plans

When considering a kitchen remodel, the best place to begin is often with your current kitchen.

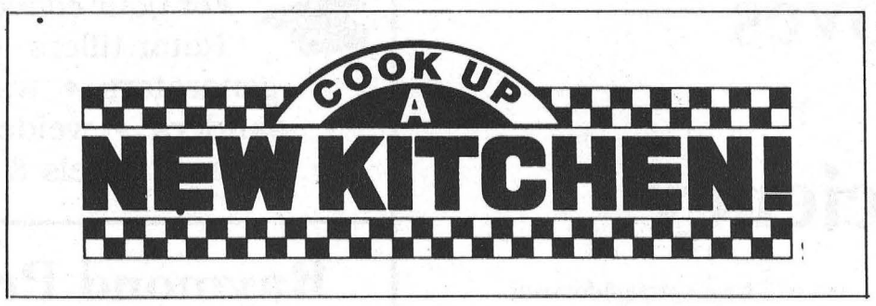
Studying photos of different kitchen designs will give you a good idea of the colors and styles your prefer. But evaluating your present space will help you determine exactly what needs to be improved and what doesn't.

When rating your current kitchen, there are several things to consider in order to find out how functional and fashionable a room is. You must carefully consider cabinet storage, appliances/fixtures, surfaces, countertops, lighting and electrical systems and room orientation and space. The following questions are designed to help you evaluate your kitchen:

* Do the cabinets feature time saving accessories such as roll-out shelves, divided drawers and lazy Susans?
* Is there enough cabinet shelf space?
* Are the cabinet door style and color up to date?
* Is there a place to sort recyclables?

When rating your appliances, it's important to consider the following:

* Is the refrigerator/freezer large enough?
* Based on the way you cook, are the oven and cooktop located where you want them?
* Do you have a microwave oven, conveniently located?
* Are all of your appliances in good working condition?



Questions to ask when evaluating surfaces and countertops include:

* Are the surfaces easy to clean?
* Is there enough counter space?
* Is the counter space located where you need it?
* Are the counters the right height for you to work comfortably?

You must also consider the lighting and mechanical elements.

* Do you have task lighting above the countertop?
* Do you have enough electrical outlets?
* Is there good ventilation in the cooking center?

Finally, you should think about the overall space of the kitchen. This entails some other questions:

* Does the kitchen relate to adjacent rooms the way you would like?
* Is the kitchen arranged so that "people traffic" is directed away from the cook's activities?
* Is there a casual dining/conversation area in the room?

The list is quite extensive and yet, it doesn't even cover everything! Suddenly, a kitchen remodel might seem like an impossible project. However, by evaluating your current kitchen, you will get a clear idea of what items need to be changed in order to create a space that's perfect for you. The evaluation will also be quite useful when you take the next step and visit a kitchen showroom.

You will be able to clearly communicate to the kitchen design professional what you are looking to achieve with your new space.

When you meet with a kitchen specialist, he or she will also conduct an in-depth interview with you to further define your wants and needs. In order to create a design that suits your lifestyle, a kitchen professional will need to know who will serve as the primary cook, what type of cooking is normally done, if the kitchen will be used for entertaining and socializing, and what type of feeling or style you would like the space to have. The answers to these questions will affect the size, layout and type of equipment you need for your new kitchen. With this information, your kitchen specialist can plan the shape of your kitchen and together, you can choose appliances, fixtures, surfaces, etc.

At this point budget becomes very important. The amount of money you would like to spend on your new kitchen will influence which components are included in the design.

Again, it's important to use a checklist. Your kitchen specialist can assist you in this process. Make a list of the various items that could be included in your new kitchen. The list should also include features such as new cabinets, a new floor, a new dishwasher, trash compactor, recycling bins, etc. When the list is complete, review the items to determine those that you "need" and those you "want." By doing this, you can focus on the features that are most important to you and ensure that they are included in the design.

Once you have completed your evaluation, decided on the style, color and appliances and chosen a professional designer, the real work of designing and installing your kitchen begins. Since you have done all the preliminary work, this process will be much easier. It will also be smoother if you work with professional kitchen designer.

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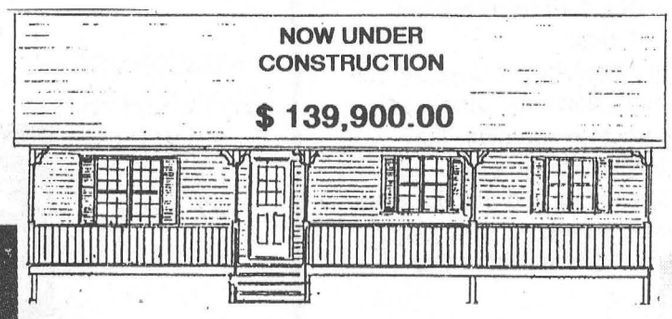

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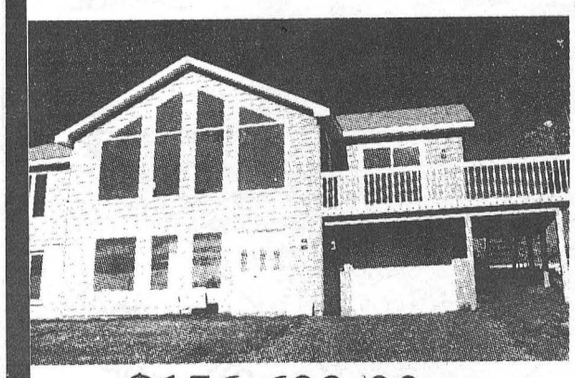

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Most Canadians support moves to home energy efficiency

OTTAWA - Anne McLellan, federal Minister of Natural Resources (NRCan) released a survey report on energy efficiency in Canadian homes Fri., Sept. 30. The survey shows that the majority of Canadians support energy efficiency standards for new houses.

"The survey results demonstrate that Canadians recognize the importance of mechanisms to encourage improved energy efficiency in the residential sector. The new National Energy Code for Houses is one such mechanism," McLellan noted.

Working in partnership, the federal and provincial governments, the National Research Council, and the electric utility companies are funding a new National Energy Code for Houses. When the provinces adopt the code, every new house will have to meet or exceed minimum requirements for energy efficiency. Each province will have a unique set of requirements that reflects its climate, energy costs, and construction costs.

"By becoming more energy efficient, we can make a positive contribution to the Government of Canada's environmental goal of limiting greenhouse gas emissions," Minister McLellan said. "As well, the reduction of annual energy costs through improved energy efficiency makes good economic sense. With a comprehensive energy code in place, provinces will have a straightforward process to update energy efficiency requirements for new housing."

NRCan commissioned the Angus Reid Group to survey home buyers across Canada on issues related to energy efficiency and housing. The survey assessed recent and prospective home buyers' agreement with a code of standards for constructing energy efficient houses.

Eighty-eight per cent of respondents favor mandatory minimum energy efficiency standards for new houses built in their province. Seventy-nine per cent agree that an energy efficient home is a more comfortable home. Support for minimum standards is highest among the respondents who are looking for, or recently purchased, a home in the $120,000 to $160,000 range.

Homebuyers also identified the features that make a home energy efficient. Highest in rank are energy efficient heating systems, good insulation, and well-sealed doors and windows. More than a third of respondents agreed that many new homes being built today are not energy efficient.

Survey respondents recognize that if minimum standards entail additional costs to consumers, they would be prepared to pay an additional cost. Most said that the extra cost should be recovered through energy bill savings within five years.

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Recycling at home

Convenience is the key to success

If you're one of the many Canadians who recycle, chances are you have discovered that a green existence has its price in space. Depending on how many materials you recycle, and how you separate them, a weekly collection of recyclables plus trash could easily become the focal point of your kitchen. And who wants to look at all that stuff piling up?

Studies show the key to maintaining recycling habits is setting up a system that blends in with your family's lifestyle and fits comfortably in your kitchen. A convenient and attractive (or hidden) sorting container system helps keep the process from becoming an irritant.

Planning Ahead

Recycling needn't take over every available inch of floor space in your kitchen. While there's no single right way to organize for recycling, a little planning helps. Recycling can be convenient, if you develop a system that's right for you.

Selecting the right system depends on what your community is recycling and how it is doing it. Some communities recycle plastic milk jugs and soda bottles. Others don't. Most recycle newspapers, aluminum cans and glass. You may be required to separate newspapers from glass and aluminum, or you may be asked to put all recyclables into one bin. If you're not sure, call your county or municipal solid waste office or sanitation department. They will have this information.

The next step is to devise a personalized system that works for your family. You're going to need a place to put those recyclables until collection day, or until you have time to haul everything to a recycling center. Whether you need to sort aluminum cans from newspapers and glass or simply to separate recyclables from your trash, a set of stackable bins in your kitchen or pantry can be a real space saver. You can designate separate bins for various materials, and eliminate the need for sorting later.

Sorting and Storing Materials

Kitchen cabinets are another great place to store recycling containers. Whether you put your recycling bins under the sink or stacked in the corner, consider adding a decorator's touch to the room by selecting versatile colors.

Convenience is the key for outdoor recycling storage. When choosing an outdoor bin, consider choosing one with a lid. This will keep recyclables clean and protect against raids by pesky animals.

Outdoor stackable bins with lids allow recyclables to be separated and stored until collection day. You also might consider a dolly for rolling the containers out to the curbside.

Preparing Recyclables

Before you throw those recyclables in the bin, give them a quick rinse in cold water. This will get rid of food residue and will keep odors to a minimum. It's not necessary to run glass jars through the dishwasher.

If you take a few minutes to learn about your community's recycling program and set up a system that works for you, recycling will quickly become second nature.

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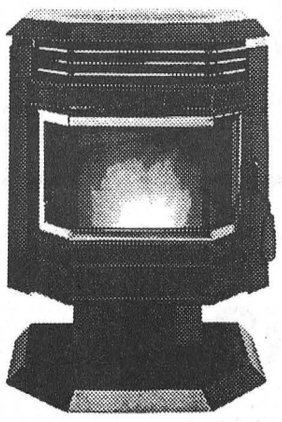

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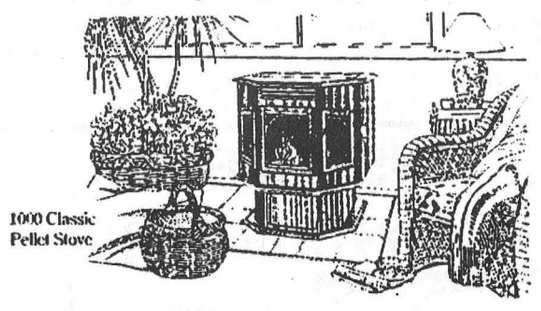

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Smart carpet shopping: Here's how to choose

The economy has left most of us feeling the tug on our wallets and pocketbooks. So, we're shopping more carefully and demanding more accountability for our dollars.

For homeowners looking to redecorate, home furnishings have become as important an investment as a new car. Carpet is no exception. The following tips are designed to help make you a smarter carpet shopper.

After deciding which rooms you'd like to redecorate, the next step is determining how many square yards of new carpet you will need. Measure the length and width of the room. Next, multiply the length and the width to find the total number of square feet of carpet needed to cover the floor. Divide this total by nine for the number of square yards.

How Good Is It?

Determining the quality of a particular carpet style is really very easy. Simply press down on the carpet pile with one finger and see how easy or difficult it is to penetrate the carpet backing. The harder it is to penetrate the backing, the better the carpet's quality.

Denser carpets provide longer wear and better crush resistance. Since soil and stains remain mostly on the surface, these styles are also usually easier to clean and maintain.

Another way to determine value is to check the quality of the yarn. Generally, the tighter the yarn is twisted, the better the wear and performance. Look closely at the cut ends of the individual carpet fibers. These should be neat and well defined, and should not fray or "blossom" at the ends.

Carpet padding, the cushion that lays underneath the carpet, and installation often are included in the overall price. Quality padding not only will add to the life of your carpet, it also helps insulate cold floors. Another important consideration is if the carpet features a recognized treatment, such as Scotchgard Stain Release carpet protection, to guard against soil and stains.

What's new with glue

Adhesives for all needs

When searching for what's new with glue, I turned to the adhesive experts at 3M. The folks who have created masking tapes, Scotch tape and Post-it Notes provided some very useful information about available adhesives. Here's a brief overview:

• Woodworker's glue has a faster grab than white glue, which is used for interior woodworking when a waterproof joint is not needed. Usually tinted an off-white or yellow, it is used in applications where superior water/heat resistance and ease of sanding are desired. It provides a strong, tight bond and is moisture-resistant.

• Instant-setting glues, known as cyanoacrylates, create a strong, instant bond. Regular super glues will bond almost all non-porous materials. 3M super glue gel fills small gaps better than non-gels.

• Epoxy is one of the strongest adhesives. Designed primarily for the bonding of non-porous surfaces, all true epoxies come in two parts—a resin and a hardener, or catalyst. These must be mixed together before the adhesive is used. 3M metal and ceramic adhesive is unique in that the ingredients are found in two attached plastic pouches. Break the pouch divider with a finger squeeze and the two parts can be mixed. This eliminates mixing odors and mess.

• Clear cement, familiar to youngsters as model-airplane glue, works best on porous materials. With non-porous materials, clear cement makes a good bond when applied only around the edges. The adhesive bonds within three minutes.

• Heavy-duty adhesive is a solid adhesive for flat surfaces. It permanently attaches rigid plastic, ceramic, metal, finished wood and glass. It has an industrial-strength bond and resists temperatures, water, oil, gas, detergents and vibrations. 3M's heavy-duty attachment adhesive resists temperatures from -20 degrees to 200 degrees Fahrenheit.

There are many more kinds of adhesives, but the lab folks said that there are basically two items that meet most needs.

The first is super-strength adhesive, an easy-to-use, all-purpose glue that should be found in every home. It bonds glass, metal, porcelain, leather and wood, and it resists heat, water, oil and grease.

The second is the new adhesive remover and surface cleaner, a unique product held between thumb and forefinger that easily dispenses liquid to wipe away residue, oil and grease. It eliminates pouring large amounts of harmful chemicals onto a rag.

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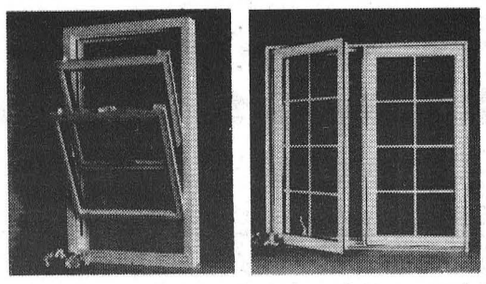

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Blowers and mulchers ease fall's tedious chores

Notice the comics page lately? Charlie Brown and the gang; Calvin and Hobbes; Nancy and Sluggo. Everybody's raking leaves . . . and hating it.

It's that fall rite—the great, albeit abhorred, tradition.

Too bad these comics kids don't have the latest equipment for leaf gathering, from leaf blower/vacuums that actually mulch—no kidding—to rideable mulching mowers. Their antics might not be as funny, but their chores would become a lot easier.

Take the new generation of hand-held electric blower/vacuums. They're more powerful and lighter than ever.

It's difficult to believe units less than seven pounds can produce 180-mile-per-hour jet streams. But they do, as well as convert to equally powerful vacuums. All for about $80.

However, these fun tools can do much more than blow debris into neat piles, says Tom Swain, a lawn expert with The Toro Company, a lawn equipment manufacturer. They can clear hard-to-reach areas such as flower beds, hedges, window wells or gravel-covered beds.

They are also good for cleaning gutters and downspouts, garages and driveways.

Swain demonstrated a model with a mulching fan, the SuperBlower, that shreds material entering the attachable bag, reducing an unwieldy eight bushels of debris down to one.

He advises against blowers with less than a 120 mph top speed. They often prove insufficient for the average user.

For maximum safety, Swain says, demand an interlock switch to prevent the motor from starting if the air-intake housing or vacuum tube is not installed properly.

Of course, as fun as a 180 mph blower might be, there are quicker ways to mulch those pesky leaves, such as a mulching lawnmower. Or, to really finish the job fast—a riding mower.

Some walk-behind mowers can be turned into mulching mowers simply by closing off the grass chute and using the mower without the bag. The machine's instructions will say if this option is available.

Any mower, however, can gather leaves and reduce the amount of debris through a simple trick—particularly if the debris is brittle and dry.

The trick: Run the machine once over the area with the unit's side-discharge attachment in place—or in the mulching mode—to cut the material into small pieces.

When the area is gone over for a second time, with the clippings bag attached, the mower or rider will chop the debris even further and simultaneously pick it up, allowing more than normal to be packed into the bag.

Now's the right time to prepare for winter

Fall is the perfect time to start preparing your home for the cold winter months ahead. Many homeowners use this time to make sure their homes are as safe, comfortable and energy-efficient as they can be. Seasonal maintenance is important in protecting the life of a dwelling, and there are certain projects that should not be overlooked.

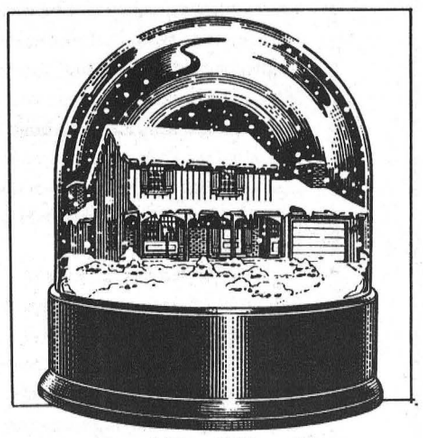
Below are some simple steps every homeowner should take before Old Man Winter comes calling.

• Seal your home against drafts by caulking and weatherstripping around doors and windows.

• Remove screens and install storm windows and doors.

• Have your furnace professionally inspected and serviced before the start of each heating season.

• Check your home's insulation levels to make sure thay meet recently upgraded R-Value recommendations by the Department of Energy. If your attic or crawl space needs insulation, add a layer of



quality CertainTeed Fiber Glass Insulation.

• Replace your furnace filter and make sure you clean or replace it periodically during winter months.

• Wrap your water pipes and ducts in any exposed areas such as unheated crawl spaces.

Remember, prevention is the best cure. Nature can wreak havoc on a home, and a cold and drafty house can cost you plenty in fuel bills. Take the time now to avoid any problems this winter. And, enjoy the snow!



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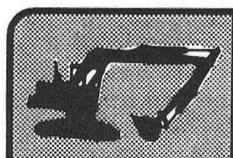

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Safety tips for the home

Despite repeated warnings about products that are combustible and flammable, it is likely that you have at least a half-dozen different cans of paints, finishes and solvents on a shelf in your workshop or garage. Here are some safety tips to avoid a fire:

• Metal waste can. An airtight, self-closing, metal can is better than a conventional plastic trash can where many fires start.

• Fire extinguisher. Hang one by the door. It should be charged with a dry chemical for use on wood, flammable liquid and electrical fires.

• Smoke alarm. Mount it on the ceiling.

• Avoid spontaneous combustion. This is one of the leading causes of shop/garage fires. A key culprit is the combination of evaporating solvents, used rags and oxygen. Unless you use safe, water-based products such as 3M Safest Stripper paint and varnish remover, the potential exists for spontaneous combustion. This stripper was developed to address health and safety concerns. It is non-flammable and does not emit unpleasant fumes.

• Water bath. Limit the amount of heat buildup from oils and solvents by soaking rags and brushes in water. Be aware, though, that once the items are removed from the water, the moisture evaporates and the chemicals continue to react and generate heat.

• Burn rags/brushes. If local laws permit the incineration of waste, this could be a viable solution.

• Spread out rags/brushes. Place on concrete floor, or hang on a nail or line to allow combustible solvents to evaporate.

• Discard rags/brushes. When all the solvents have evaporated and the solids have finished reacting, the rags will be dry and stiff, eliminating a fire hazard and permitting disposal in the trash. For brushes, the NewStroke paint brush has a handle made from recycled paperboard (eliminating wood, plastic and metal bands found on conventional brushes), is inexpensive yet performs as a better-quality brush and can be discarded after the liquid evaporates.

• Build-It-Bags. A great, new idea from respected woodworker Harry Wicks. Precut, easy-to-build woodworking projects come packaged in a bag. Each kit contains all wood parts cut to shape and ready for assembly. Fasteners, glue and 3M sandpaper are included. Harry has designed chairs for children, doll-size furniture and a Shaker-style stool for adults.

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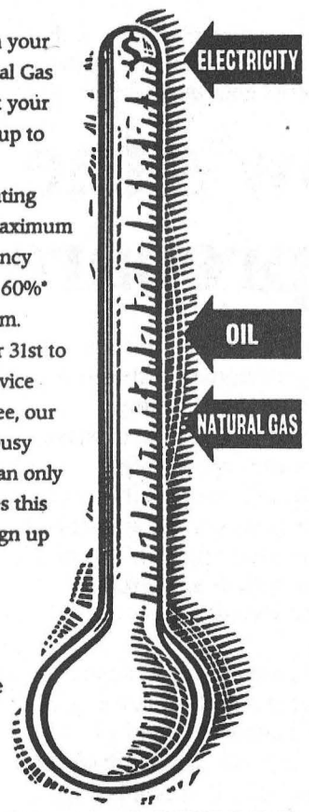

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Centra Gas

Filters improve air quality

When it comes to a clean, healthy indoor environment, more homeowners are focusing attention on air filters. Combined with a forced-air heating system or central air conditioning, high-performance filters can help improve air quality.

Homes buttoned up too tightly for energy efficiency fail to allow air to circulate and prevent the escape of pollutants. Recent statistics indicate that: indoor air can be 10 times more polluted than outdoor air; allergy sufferers (20 billion Canadians and increasing) look to high-efficiency air filters for relief; some doctors recommend the new electrostatic filters.

Filters, according to the air-quality experts, are designed to catch particulates, which is another word for household dust. The dust consists of soil particles, lint, airborne cooking grease, tobacco smoke, pet hairs, pollen, mold spores, bacteria, viruses, skin flakes, carbon particles, dust mites (and dust mite feces) and insect scales.

"About 99 percent of the particles circulating in indoor air are one micron or smaller," said Gary Smith of 3M, manufacturer of the Filtrete electrostatic micro-particle air filter. These particles can aggravate allergies and irritate the respiratory system."

The degree of improvement of indoor air with a filter depends on the kind of filter that is purchased. Here's a performance comparison:

• Filtrete micro particle air filter. Electrostatically permanently charged fibers attract and retain more micro particles. They trap most larger particles effectively. A pleated design increases surface area to capture more particles. Provides three months of filtering performance.

• Permanent, washable electrostatic filter. A flat construction provides less surface area for attracting and retaining large and small particles. Must be cleaned frequently. Fibers are not permanently charged. The open weave is less efficient at trapping small and large particles. Six times less efficient than Filtrete.

• Ordinary pleated filter. The design creates increased surface area to capture more particles. Traps larger particles but media is not electrostatically charged to capture small and micro particles. Filters with charcoal layers quickly lose odor-absorbing ability. Many recommend replacement every 30 days. Seven times less efficient than Filtrete.

• Ordinary fiberglass filter. Traps some of the larger particles but not electrostatically charged to capture small and micro particles. Flat construction gives less surface area for attracting and retaining large particles. Many recommend replacement every 30 days. Twenty times less efficient than Filtrete.

Tough conditions bring about resurgence in metal roofing

Ah, the roof over our heads. It protects us from rain, hail, snow, fierce winds. And when these inclemencies are past, the punishment continues with relentless, baking sunshine.

And what do we do for our roof in return?

Usually just forget about it.

We spend days, weeks, even months trying to decide on colors and other design schemes for the exterior of our homes. Yet how very often we forget the most prominent area—the roof.

Ironically, nature's cruel side—from Florida hurricanes blowing roofs away to California's drought leading to blazing wooden roofs—is making homeowners focus on roofs like never before.

Safety and environmental concerns are leading to higher building code standards around the country for roofing.

Changing roof standards are reintroducing metal roofing for residential and commercial building, a clear boon for the metals industry. Conversely, homeowners and builders have discovered a surprisingly diverse styling option.

Without building code improvements, most people may never have learned that metal roofs are now fashioned to simulate such traditional roofing materials as hand-split cedar shakes, expensive-looking slate or western-style tile. And metal permits every possible color from dove-white to vivid rusts to elegant charcoals and browns.

Architects are letting their imaginations run free with a stunning array of simulated designs and even adding metal sidewall trim packages, creating everything from elegant manor looks to understated rural elegance.

Beyond style considerations, metal roofs are superior for energy efficiency, wind resistance, lower maintenance costs and fire protection. They are phenomenally light—100 square feet of aluminum roofing can weigh as little as 45 pounds.

Despite light weight, they are acoustically quiet. Unlike the tin canopy clanking in the rain in the movie classic Grapes of Wrath, today's metal roofs either cover the existing roofing material or go over a sub-base.

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