

# Driftwood

## Fall Home Improvement Guide

SECTION  
**B**



**ENERGY FROM THE SUN:** Warren Rudd stands beside the solar electric panels used to charge a battery which then powers electrical appliances in the house.  
*Driftwood photo by Ian Noble*

### Alternative sources used at hilltop home

House comes to life with wind and sun

Salt Spring residents Warren Rudd and Maureen Dmytryshyn live on a hill overlooking lush fields, rolling mountains, and a sliver of ocean.

The home's location was chosen, however, due to its potential for employing alternative energy sources and not just its scenic value.

By IAN NOBLE  
*Driftwood Staff Writer*

Summer months do not provide enough wind to meet the home's energy needs, so solar panels, mounted beside the house and on a rock face, collect the sun's energy, and power the house during this period.

Wind and solar energy is collected in a 12-volt D.C. battery. An inverter (like a transformer, said Rudd) is used to change the 12-volt D.C. to a 120 A.C. current, which provides electricity to power lights, small appliances, and other things that need to be plugged in.

The pump bringing water to the house from the well operates by changing the current to 220 A.C. Also, the "super-efficient" refrigerator runs directly off the batteries.

Even with the poor weather "we managed quite well this summer," said Dmytryshyn. "If it was a normal summer we wouldn't have any problems."

ENERGY SOURCES B4

### Home Hints Inside

October has been declared Renovation Month in B.C., Yukon.

PAGE B5

Installation of hot tubs evaluated by realtors and experts

PAGE B7

Solar pool heating system designed by islander.

PAGE B8

Winter greenhouse operation detailed by local nurseryman.

PAGE B15

# KEY PAWN TRUCKING

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- Bedding sand
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FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT

# "Winterizing" home can save heating dollars

With the threat of winter's icy breath on Gulf Island necks again, minimizing heating costs becomes a practical home improvement priority.

B.C. Hydro estimates about 50 per cent of each dollar spent on energy is eaten up by heating demands.

Exact costs are affected by a few basic factors. These are the level of insulation and weather-stripping in your home, the type and efficiency of the heating system in place.

*"B.C. Hydro estimates that about 50 per cent of each dollar spent on energy is eaten up by heating demands."*

If electric heat is used, people should lower thermostats when going out or to bed. Having an always-toasty home is an expensive luxury when it does not take long for electric heat to return room temperature to a comfortable level.

Even lowering the set temperature to a balmy 20 degrees Celsius (68 F) can make a noticeable difference in cost. For every degree maintained above this level, heating costs rise by five per cent.

Programmable thermostats are now available. Installing these in your home will ensure no heat waste occurs from forgetting to turn down

the temperature at night or when you leave home for a day or more.

If oil is used to heat your home, greater efficiency can be achieved by replacing the furnace's filter when it becomes dirty. Fall is the time to reconsider the insulation situation in your home. Money spent on insulating problem areas will easily be recovered in energy savings.

In many older homes, air leaks around windows and doors can account for up to 30 per cent of a home's wasted energy.

Windows are a major source of heat loss. Single-pane or poorly-fitted windows should be replaced with storm or double-glazed windows. Storm doors are another option for improving heat retention.

Weather-stripping reduces air leakage from doors and windows. Caulking around window and door frames is another aid to reducing heat loss in winter.

Caulk is an elastic, adhesive material that can be squeezed from a tube or pushed out of a cartridge with a caulk gun. To fill cracks, push the caulking tube along the frame with its angled opening running fairly flat along the surface. To stop the flow, twist the gun slightly as you disengage.

Proper weather-stripping and caulking is estimated to increase energy savings by up to 10 per cent.

A number of companies sell clear plastic products which cover the insides of windows and patio doors and decrease drafts.

The attic of a home is an area where insulation can quickly be added — even in an afternoon. B.C. Hydro recommends southern west

coast homes insulate attics to an "R" value of 40.

Exposed floors and those over unheated crawlspaces should have R 28 level insulation, and all framed walls, basements and heated crawlspaces should receive insulation to R 20.

A contractor may be required to complete or upgrade insulation in less accessible places.

Another easy way to save energy

is to insulate the first metre or two of hot water pipe from your hot water heater. This will minimize heat loss which customarily takes place between the heater and your taps.

Reducing the temperature setting on a hot water heater can also make a difference to your energy bill. If you have a dishwasher, the level should be set at a relatively high 60 degrees Celsius for it to work properly, but

that is a recommended maximum. Higher temperature water will be scalding.

Without a dishwasher, the temperature should be set as low as possible while still being practical for household uses such as washing dishes by hand and showers.

Heating water is usually the second most expensive energy use in an average household.

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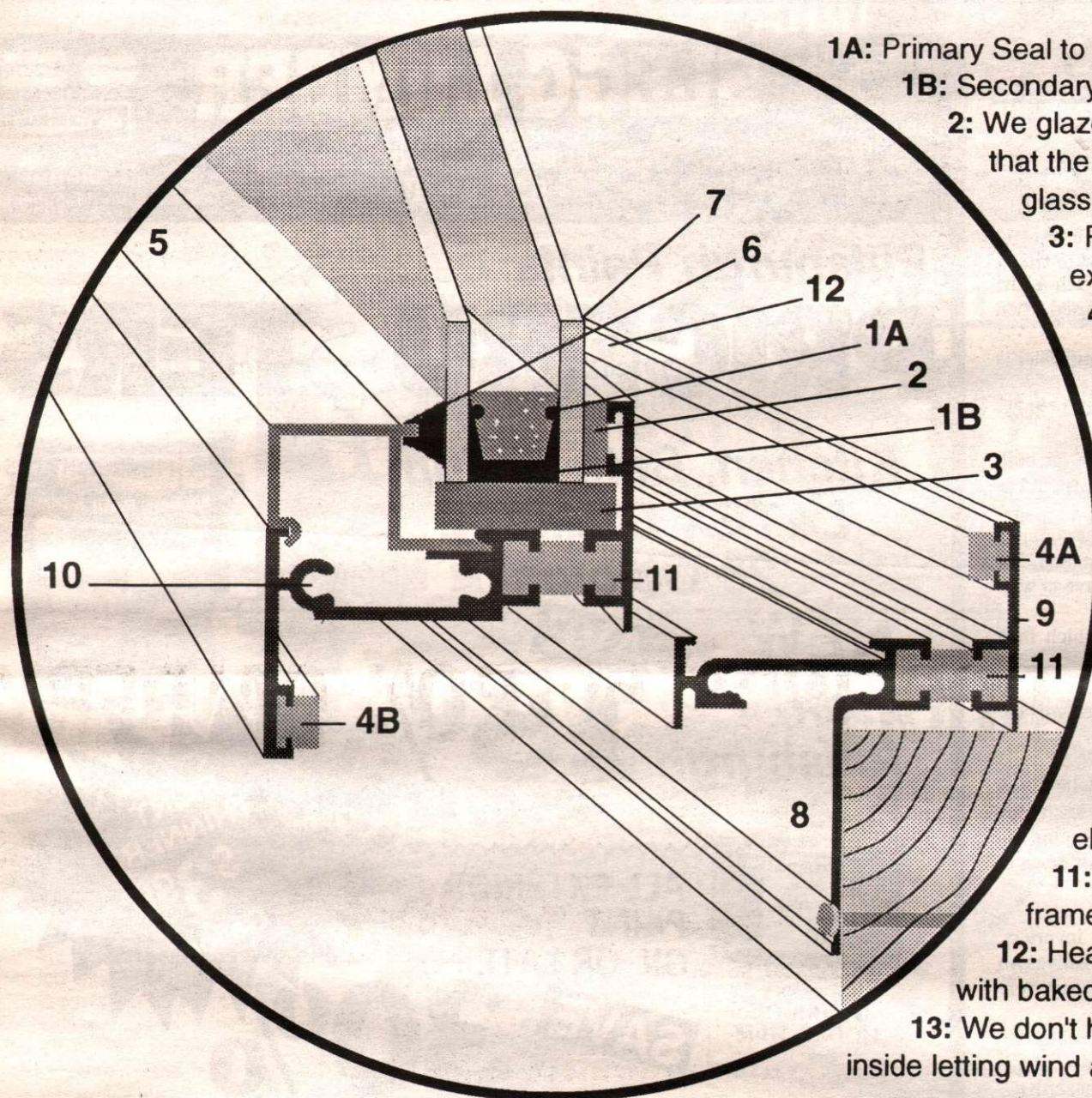
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## FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT



**ENERGY FROM THE SUN:** Warren Rudd and Maureen Dmytryshyn situated their home on top of a Salt Spring hill to capture the wind and solar energy needed to power their home.

## ENERGY SOURCES

From Page B1

However, some bugs still have to be ironed out, said Rudd.

He said they should be able to run their washing machine off of their batteries, but they did that once and blew a fuse.

"We learned our lesson."

Now, they use a backup propane generator to power the washing machine, dryer, and also other appliances that require heat, such as the stove. They also use propane for heating water, but it is only used when the solar heating system is not on.

However, the heating system is a "demand" design, meaning water is heated in the pipes as it passes through a box.

"We're not wasting energy keeping water hot in a tank and, in essence, we have unlimited hot water," said Dmytryshyn.

When the sun is shining, the solar water heater is adequate for both showers and the washing machine. It saves a lot of electricity and is fairly cheap to install.

On a bad day, when there is no sun or wind, the generator supplies energy to the house. In summer the backup generator is rarely used, but because they have recently completed the system, they will have to wait and see whether they use it more in winter.

They recently filled a propane tank for about \$1,000, which they hope will last for a year.

The house is heated with a wood burning stove planted in the middle of the house, and surrounded by the living room, dining room, and kitchen. They also have a propane furnace.

"It's sometimes a little chilly in the morning," said Rudd.

Windows are two-paned, and insulated between the panes with argon gas. On the inside of the windows a heat reflective coating keeps the heat in. The windows are not cheap, but they are three times more insulating than regular windows, and will hopefully pay for themselves in a few years, said Rudd.

Walls are thicker than normal for better insulation.

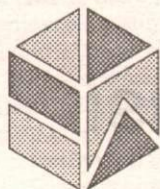
The couple's energy efficient appliances, batteries, inverters, windmill, and solar panels were purchased from Energy Alternatives on Lasqueti Island and cost a few thousand dollars more than if they were to get B.C. Hydro to hook up the property, said Rudd.

Rudd calculates it will take about two or three years to recoup the extra costs, but after that it is nearly free to run the solar and windmill power stations, and the house is totally immune from outside hazards.

"All winter long there are blackouts," said Dmytryshyn. "When it's windy people lose their power, while we have lots."

Batteries and the solar panels should last about 20 years, though the windmill will require a bit more maintenance, said Rudd, because moving parts and brushes may need to be replaced.

The windmill cost about \$1,000 but the stand was acquired free from a ham radio operator in Victoria.




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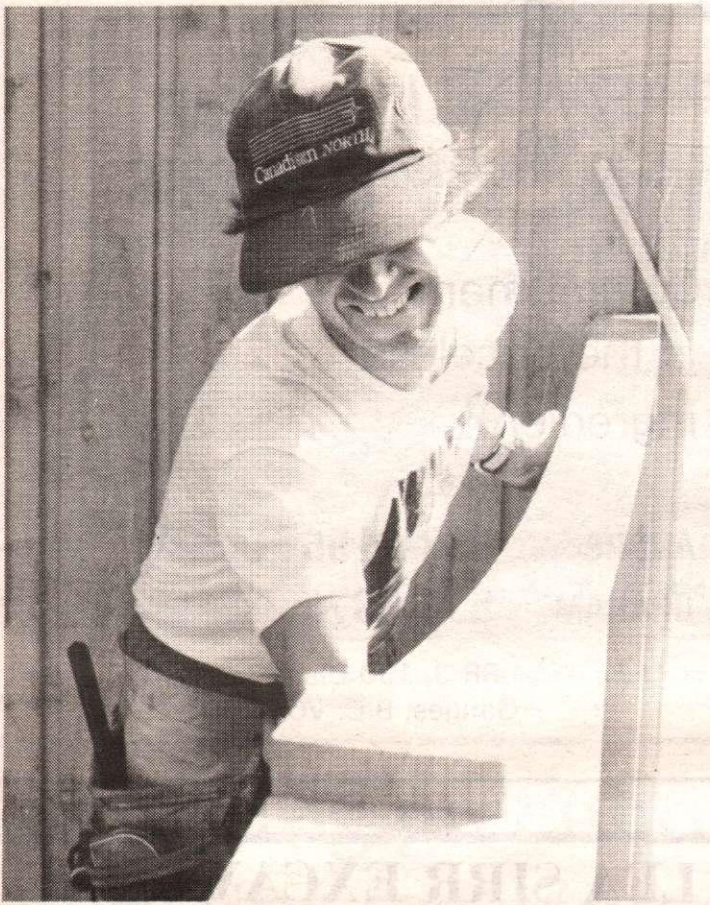
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## FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT



**FENCING:** Carpenter Darryl McAuther carefully adds finishing touches to cedar fence at a Park Drive home.

Driftwood photo by Derrick Lundy

## Renovations might offer an alternative

Canadians are finding it harder and harder to find suitable housing within their budgets.

Be it the first-time homebuyer or their move-up counterparts, high interest rates, and ever-increasing house prices are pushing their dream homes further and further out of reach. But this doesn't have to be.

Homeowners should realize the key to the solution could be right in their own backyards or more specifically, right under their own roofs. By renovating, homeowners increase the longterm value of their investment and have an opportunity to create a new living space, specific to their needs.

Granted, the task of finding a contractor and the cost of financing renovations can be daunting, but there are federal government programs and information available from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CHMC), to help consumers make informed decisions.

The CHMC, the federal government's housing agency, is also working with the Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA) on various aspects of the renovation field.

Financing home renovations can be made easier with a mortgage loan insured by CMHC. Insured mortgage

loans are available for up to 90 per cent of the value of the home, and applicants can usually obtain better terms and lower rates under this plan.

CMHC also has Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Programs (RRAP) to provide financial assistance to low-income homeowners whose dwellings are in need of repair.

## Month-long renovation campaign

October has been declared renovation month in B.C. and the Yukon so Gulf Island's homeowners will be informed about their renovation options.

Renovation Month is a month-long awareness campaign, designed to provide homeowners with up-to-date information on renovating and the renovation process.

According to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, more and more Canadians are choosing to renovate what they have instead of buying another home. Last year, Canadians spent approximately \$20 billion on home renovations.

Renovation month is spearheaded by the Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA) and sponsored by the Bank of Montreal and a group of

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### SAND

- 1/4" minus horticultural
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- #1 washed
- #2 fine bedding
- Masonry sand
- Fill sand
- 3/8" minus clay sand

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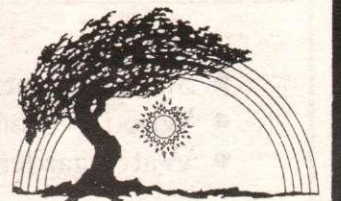
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## FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT

# Contract is an important part of renovation work

Disputes over renovation work often occur due to the lack of a contract, according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation.

The best way to avoid this is to draw up an agreement describing the work to be done and what it will cost to do it. This contract becomes a legal document, binding both parties once they have signed it.

Homeowners are encouraged not to sign anything until they are fully satisfied it describes exactly what they want and contains everything agreed upon. Assurances made in writing are binding.

Those who are unsure of something in the contract, should ask for an explanation or contact a lawyer. Both the homeowner and the contractor should sign two copies of the contract, one for each signing party.

According to a CMHC publication, "How to Hire a Contractor," the contract should include:

- Names and addresses of the buyer and the seller (the contractor).

Make sure the firm is the one named on the contract.

- A detailed description with sketches of the work to be done and the materials to be used, including all work being subcontracted, such as plumbing and wiring.

**"This written contract becomes a legal document which binds both parties involved once they have signed it."**

This is an area where many misunderstandings occur. It is extremely important to list all job specifications.

- Agreement on who is respon-

sible for obtaining all necessary drawings, job permits etc.

- Responsibility of the contractor for removing debris as soon as renovations are completed.

- A statement of the contractor's public liability and property damage insurance.

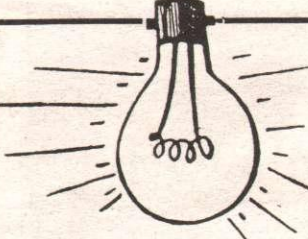
- Firm starting and completion dates.

- Price and terms of payment.
- No matter how carefully the contract has been written, changes are almost certain to be made before the job is finished.

These can be costly. For the protection of both parties, changes should never be made without the written approval of the homeowner and a signed statement from the contractor detailing extra charges.

Do not accept verbal assurances: get it in writing.

For more information on this subject, or for a complete list of CMHC publications, programs and videos on renovation, contact the Victoria CMHC office.

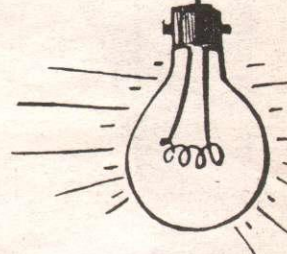


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# Owners must solicit several bids

*Best way to ensure a fair price is reached*

Homeowners need at least two bids on any home improvement work they are planning in order to ensure a fair price. However, it is wise to get three or four, according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) publication, "How to Hire a Contractor."

After contacting prospective contractors, ask them to drop around and inspect the job. Owners should make sure they do not sign or pay for anything on this first visit.

On simple jobs like roofing or painting, the contractor should be able to provide a written quotation immediately, outlining the work to be done, the materials to be used and the price.

For larger jobs like kitchen remodelling or additions, one should ask for samples and literature illustrating the products to be used, and if possible, photographs of references from similar jobs the firm has done. After settling on the requirements, the contractor should come back with sketches and a complete written estimate detailing work to be done, price, start and completion dates and the terms of payment.

When comparing bids, make sure each covers the same work, and materials, or allowances have been made for the differences. Remember, the low bid is not necessarily the best bid. Contractors who submit unusually low bids may have made a

mistake, may be low-balling to get the job, or may not know enough about the work to estimate it properly.

When they find out they may lose money, they will look for ways to cut costs or add unjustifiable extras to the bill. Any of these cases leaves the homeowner in trouble.



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## FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT



**CUTTING EDGE:** Barry Byron uses a cross-cut saw to complete trim on a Ganges-area home.  
Driftwood photo by Derrick Lundy

# Installation of a hot tub improves selling features

Benefits and drawbacks to tubs should be reviewed

Hot tubs are not only relaxing: some Salt Spring realtors say they can be a feature selling point of a home.

In fact, they say, tub owners can likely recoup tub costs when they sell their home.

"If it's there, it will help sell the house and it's a nice social amenity," said Gary Greico of Island Bound Real Estate Ltd. He said the price of a hot tub could be built into the price of the house when selling it.

a hot tub out of a house depending on how nice the hot tub is, and the type of property," said Russ Crouse of Salt Spring Realty.

Crouse agreed with Puharich, saying "I think there are a lot of other things you can do to a house to make it more sellable."

Hot tubs cost from \$3,000 for a small spa that seats two or three people, up to \$6,000 for a larger tub that can fit as many as eight people, said Bob Ellison of Isles West Hot Tubs.

Prices quoted include installation, taxes, delivery, pump, heater, filter, cover, and a starter kit of chemicals.

The cost of operating a hot tub, including chemicals and heating, is around 80 cents a day for a small tub, and between \$1 and \$1.25 a day for a large tub. However, daily costs vary according to location of the tub. Indoor tubs cost considerably less to heat, and those in windy areas more, said Ellison.

Hot tub maintenance includes daily pH, sanitizing, and total alkalinity tests, which take two to three minutes to perform, said Ellison. Chemicals must be added weekly to protect equipment and prevent cloudy water. Such tests require about five minutes of the owner's time once a week.

Monthly, a half hour cleaning of the filter system is required and once every three months, the tub has to be drained, cleaned out, and refilled with clean water. The whole process takes about three hours, but most of that time is spent waiting for the tub to drain and refill.

Anyone can do the chemical tests, said Ellison, all it takes is some time at the beginning to get used to testing procedures.

Ellison said it is important

prospective buyers install a tub suited to the usage it is most likely to have — something that 90 per cent of the time will fit the owner's needs. In other words, does the buyer want a party tub, which is bigger and more costly to run, or can the buyer make do with a smaller tub for fewer people?

Many new models have a variation in seating, providing a tub seat to suit different people and adding to tubbing comfort.

If possible, buyers should have sales representatives come to their homes, and check the proposed location and the hydro hook-up.

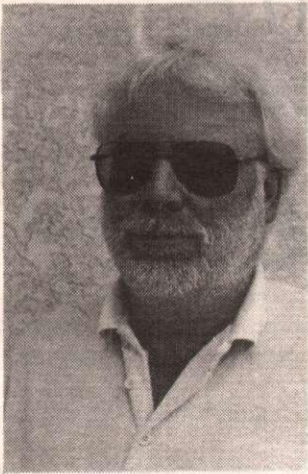
Hot tubs should be kept away from septic tanks, water lines, and large trees, which can litter leaves or needles into the tub.

Close access to a washroom is preferable, and at least a small deck surrounding the tub is recommended, in order for tubbers to sit beside the unit, and to prevent grass and dirt being transferred into the tub.

If funds for a hot tub are lacking at present, but a hot tub is an idea for the future, consult an electrician if the home is in the process of being built or renovated.

By adding the circuit for the hot tub now, money on materials and labour is saved later because walls do not have to be torn apart again.

Also, talk to friends who already own tubs, and get their opinions on hot tub care, benefits, and drawbacks.

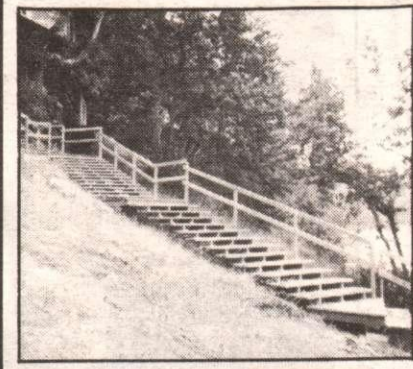


**Bob Ellison**

On the other hand, George Puharich of Century 21 Real Estate said "hot tubs are definitely a feature, but for people doing renovations there is a better way to spend their money."

Updating kitchens and bathrooms and outside appearances are more important than putting in a hot tub, but if "everything is already done, then by all means have a hot tub," he said.

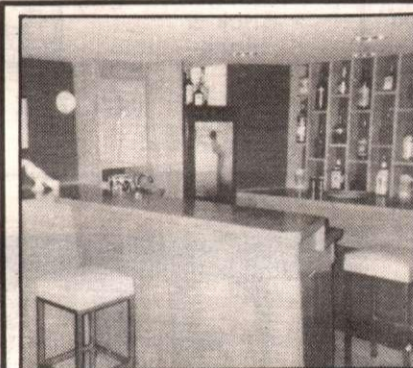
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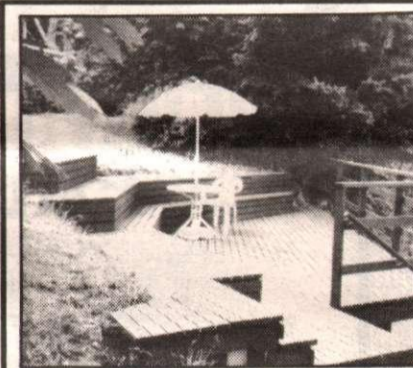
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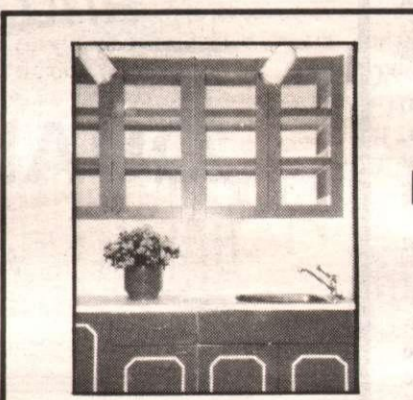
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## FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT

### Solar system regulates heating

A Salt Spring man has designed a system that extends the outdoor swimming season into the fall without incurring major expense.

Electronics expert Alex Schwarz recently developed a simple solar-powered system to automatically regulate a swimming pool's water temperature without using solar panels. A prototype has been installed at a Mobrae area residence. The system's components include a small "brain" box located in the house, and a sensor connected to the "loop," which consists of 100 metres of black rubber hose placed on the roof. The sensor determines if the pool water requires heating based on a pre-set temperature level.

Pool water is warmed by the sun as it switches through the loop. When the correct temperature has been established, the warmer water is pumped into the pool.

A five or six degree increase in water temperature can be felt in quick order, says Schwarz.

"I was quite amazed, myself," he noted.

Water depth is also monitored and the brain box transmits a water release to top up the pool, if needed. This works in conjunction with the temperature-sensing system because depth must be consistent to accurately maintain the desired temperature.

While it may not sound so simple, Schwarz believes it is.

He is pleased with results shown by the prototype to date and feels its simplicity will minimize potential problems.

"It is very service friendly," he says.

He estimates between 15 and 25 kilowatt hours of electricity are generated by the system on a sunny day during an average seven hours of sunlight. That equates to the output of an electrical heater with six-kilowatt capacity running 24 hours per day.

It would cost between \$5 and \$10 per day to create that much power, says Schwarz. Accordingly, that amount of money is saved by using the solar system.

The hose material also costs a fraction of what solar panels cost.

Schwarz was trained in communications electronics and engineering in Austria and moved to the island about a year and a half ago. He operates his own electronics repair, development and design business called Blacktronics.

Research and development of new ideas has held particular interest for Schwarz, who also developed a humidity control device for a commercial establishment on the island and uses his skills to diversify ham radio equipment.

While he is considering promoting the new pool monitoring system on a commercial basis, Schwarz says "I am more or less a scientist."

"I can also design electronic equipment that could apply to whatever you want to control or regulate," adds Schwarz. "It is just a matter of doing a new design."

"There are some things you can't get on the market exactly the way you want it," he suggests, and that is where custom electronic design has great potential.

Many people are intimidated by complicated electronic devices, notes Schwarz, or believe things can go wrong with them.



**ELECTRONICS CREATOR:** Alex Schwarz displays the "brain box" of a custom-made solar water heating and depth control system for a Salt Spring pool. Driftwood photo by Gail Sjuberg

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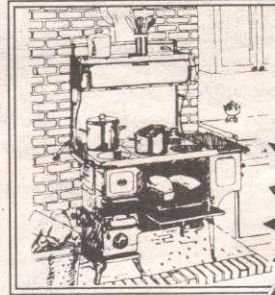


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## FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT

The hottest remodelling project across the country is the luxury master bath suite, according to many kitchen and bath experts.

As the trend has intensified, manufacturers have been rolling out an unprecedented array of luxury bath products. And one product, the sauna, is increasingly finding a new home in master baths instead of the basement.

Three trends are driving the sauna boom in bathrooms.

First, more home owners are discovering that the sauna "bath" is as stress-releasing and relaxing as a standard bath or whirlpool.

Second, new pre-fabricated and custom panelled sauna systems can fit any space in a bath plan and install quickly and easily without plumbing.

And third, European design has hit the sauna, with light-coloured natural wood interiors, white-painted

# Saunas gain in popularity

exterior woods and stunning design elements such as arched windows and angled walls.

The way a sauna makes one feel is ideal for a bath suite design that can both pamper and help improve health. Among the benefits of saunas are help in weight loss and fitness programs. With a doctor's approval, a regular regimen of short saunas with cool showers can burn calories through sweating and can help condition the heart.

Taking a sauna also helps relieve mental strain and fatigue, helps heal sore muscles and improves the complexion by cleaning your pores.

Pre-fab sauna kits make it easy for a do-it-yourself remodeller to add a sauna to a bathroom, and cut the cost

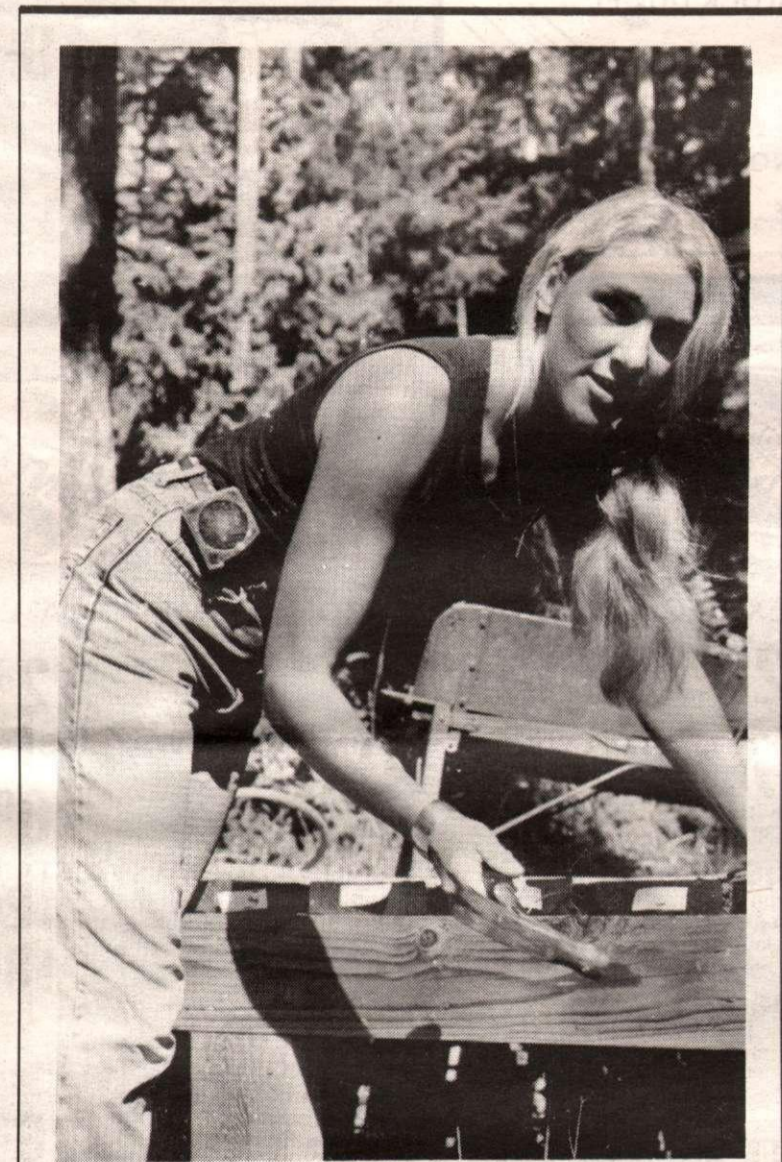
of labour for a professional installation. These ready-to-assemble kits come in a variety of sizes, even as small as 45 inches square, and can be installed in just a few hours. Again,

no plumbing is required.

The new generation of European design saunas feature design elements including round, half-round and angled windows, tinted glass,

and unusual door designs. And the new woods of choice for bathroom saunas are Nordic White Spruce for the sauna and white African Abachi for benches, backrests and headrests.

These woods provide a cleaner, more spacious feeling than the saunas made of the traditional darker cedar and redwood.



Driftwood photo by Derrick Lundy

**HAMMER AND NAIL:** One of Salt Spring's few female carpenters -- Sharon Whalen -- takes hammer and nail to this deck. The island woman has worked as a carpenter for 10 years.

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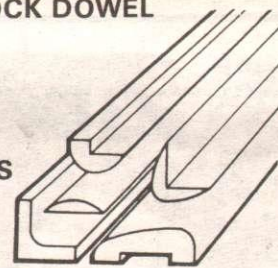
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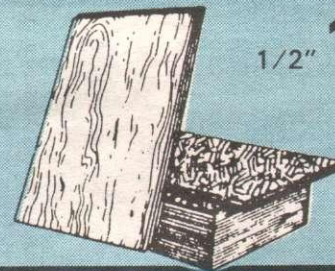
1/2" STD. FIR SHEATHING **13<sup>25</sup> sheet**

3/4" G2S CREZONE **47<sup>95</sup> sheet**

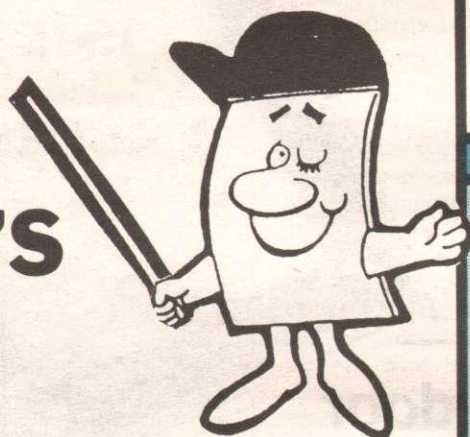
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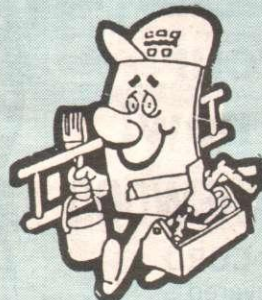
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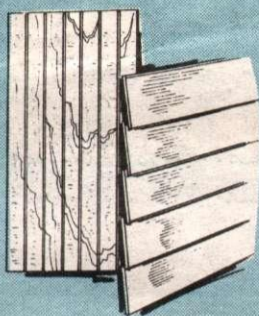
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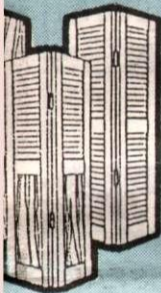
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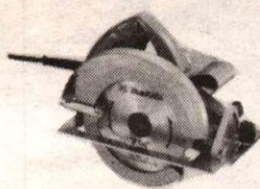
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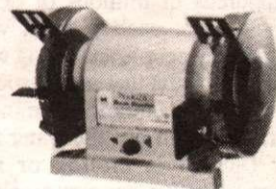
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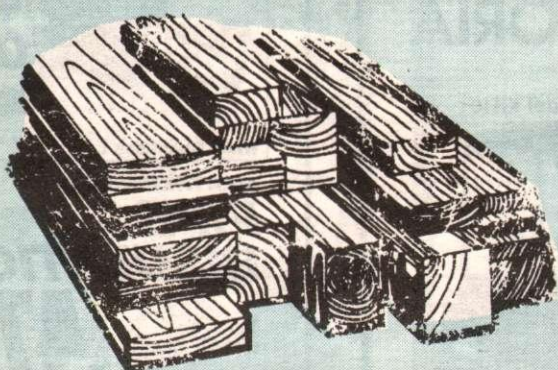
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FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT

# Plumbing technology saves \$\$

Water conservation is another important plus

"Water, water everywhere and n'ere a drop to drink."

What used to be a popular saying could soon turn into a world wide-reality. Salt water accounts for 98 per cent of the earth's water resources. Of the remaining two per cent, much is ground water or frozen in the globe's two polar ice caps. What remains is a rapidly diminishing resource to be fostered and carefully used.

Even though Canadians are blessed with abundant resources — some 25 per cent of the world's fresh-water supply lies within Canadian borders — water conservation is becoming equally important to energy conservation.

Twenty per cent of electrical energy used in the home goes toward heating water. Wasting hot water is

just like flushing dollar bills down the toilet.

Fortunately, leading plumbing supply manufacturers are quick to respond to new conservation challenges. With the help of new technology, the result is not only a more ecologically compatible system, but a better shower too.

Faucet or tap technology has come a long way in the last decade. The days of worn out rubber compression washers are fading fast. When turning off a faucet that has a washer, it is necessary to push against the water pressure before the water will turn off entirely.

The washerless technology uses a pressure-activated seal. When turning off a faucet, water pressure actually works with you to seal off the

flow. Because there is less of a struggle against water flow, these seals last longer than washers.

Faucets and shower heads fully equipped with water flow restrictors meet conservation requirements. Regardless of the water pressure, the flow will not exceed 11.5 litres per minute. Some older showerheads without the water flow restrictor can spew out over 40 litres of water per minute.

That is an unnecessary waste of water that can be stopped with a simple installation.

Energy and water efficient showerheads are a great example of less is better.

Everyone knows what happens when someone flushes the toilet while you are in the shower: it's called "shower shock." A product most consumers seem to be unaware of is the pressure balancing shower valve. A pressure balancing shower valve effectively prevents "shower shock."

This mechanism is sensitive to incoming water pressure. If, for example, you are in the shower and there is a change in the hot water pressure (someone starts the washing machine), the pressure balancing valve will sense the difference in the hot water flow, and will adjust the cold water pressure accordingly, so the same water temperature is maintained. With pressure balancing valve, you can say good-bye to "shower shock."

Water and energy conservation gains have not meant compromises in the fashion department. Faucets are available in a wide variety of shapes and finishes to suit all interior decor and budget requirements. Styles range from the traditional two handle type to the very avant garde single handled faucet.

So do not take your faucet or showerhead for granted.

## Homeowners looking at improving water

Whether they get their water from municipal systems, private wells, or lakes, millions of householders are voting with their pocketbooks for improved water quality in their homes.

Hundreds of millions of dollars are now spent each year on water filters. Many people are curing water quality problems that are all too obvious. The concentration of minerals or dirt is so high that the water from their faucets is cloudy or rust-coloured. Their water may smell bad and taste even worse.

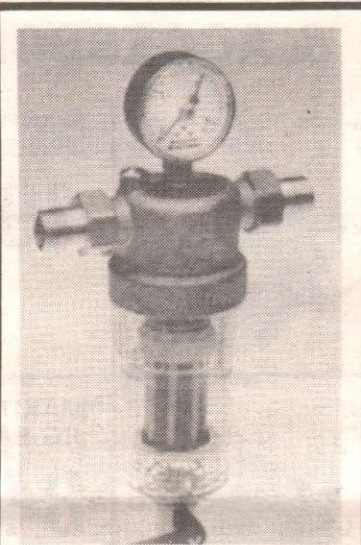
Some people choose to add devices that filter the water coming from only a single faucet. These point-of-discharge filters have to be changed regularly or removed for cleaning. They also do nothing to improve the quality of water coming from all the other faucets that do not have filters on them.

The solution for this kind of problem is a pre-filter that cleans water at the point of entry. One pre-filter, cleaning the water before sending it on to the faucets, improves the water quality in the entire house.

If sediment, sand or other debris is a problem in one's water supply, here are some tips on what to look for in a pre-filter:

- it should have quick in-line cleaning without requiring any disassembly or changing of the cleaning cartridge;

- it should be able to operate with no shut-off during the backwash cycle that cleans the filter. It should also have a built-in secondary filter so an uninterrupted supply of water will filter in during the backwashing.



**FILTER:** One pre-filter can improve the look, taste and smell of household water.

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## Jonathan Yardley-architect

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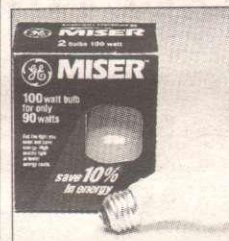
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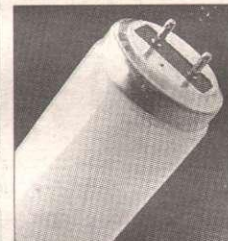


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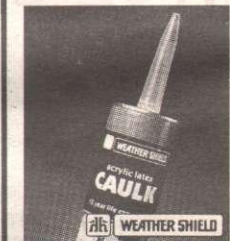


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FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT

# Consider bathroom safety if remodelling this room

Bathrooms are the most remodelled rooms in the North American home, and yet bathroom accidents are the eighth largest cause of home accidents related to furniture and fixtures.

One way to minimize the possibility of an accident in the bathroom is to pay careful attention to safety considerations incorporated into the design and/or construction of the room.

In general, bathroom accidents result from any one or a combination of factors such as hot water, slippery surfaces, collision with protruding accessories, lack or failure of grab bars, location of water fixture controls, location of electrical receptacles and switches, and use of non-safety glass in or around the bathtub/shower area.

Careful attention to the planning of this room can eliminate the possibility of potential hazards.

In and around the bathtub is one area where safety should be of primary concern.

All glass enclosures should incorporate safety glazing, non-locking latches and doors hinged to swing away from the source of water. Also, sliding shower doors above the bathtub are not recommended in homes with child bathers.

Fixtures can be hard to use if not properly placed. A good rule to remember in the placement of shower and bathtub valves is that they should be accessible by an adult while outside the shower or bathtub. Ideally, the fixtures should not be placed directly below a shower head.



**SAFETY FACTORS:** Bathrooms have become the most popular rooms in the house for remodelling, yet bathroom accidents occur all too frequently.

# Strategically placed lighting can enhance home's ambience

Real estate agents frequently recommend that home sellers turn on lights before potential buyers appear, giving the house a warm, homey look.

Used strategically, lighting can be a mood enhancer, yet many people neglect this important design aspect in their kitchens and baths.

Lighting falls into three categories: general, task and accent. General lighting fulfills living and safety needs, and is usually placed overhead in the kitchen or on the wall in a small bath. Many of today's larger two-person baths incorporate privacy zones — enclosed areas that set off water closets, bidets and showers.

Task lighting aids in performing food preparation,

cooking and clean-up chores. The fixture over the sink and the range-hood light are common examples.

Decorative lighting can be used to create a mood, define important areas and visually expand smaller spaces. For example, high-hats or recessed spotlights are frequently used to illuminate the area above open-soffit cabinets, casting a warm glow where there would otherwise be shadows.

The best way to develop a lighting scheme is with the help of a kitchen or bath specialist. These experts can not only help develop a lighting plan, but will recommend the right type of light for different applications.

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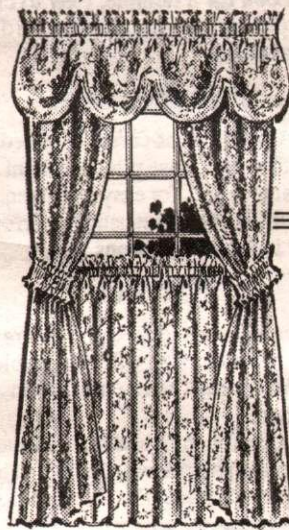
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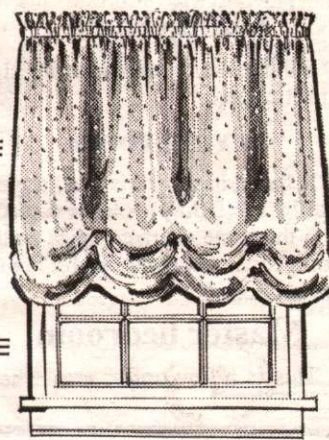
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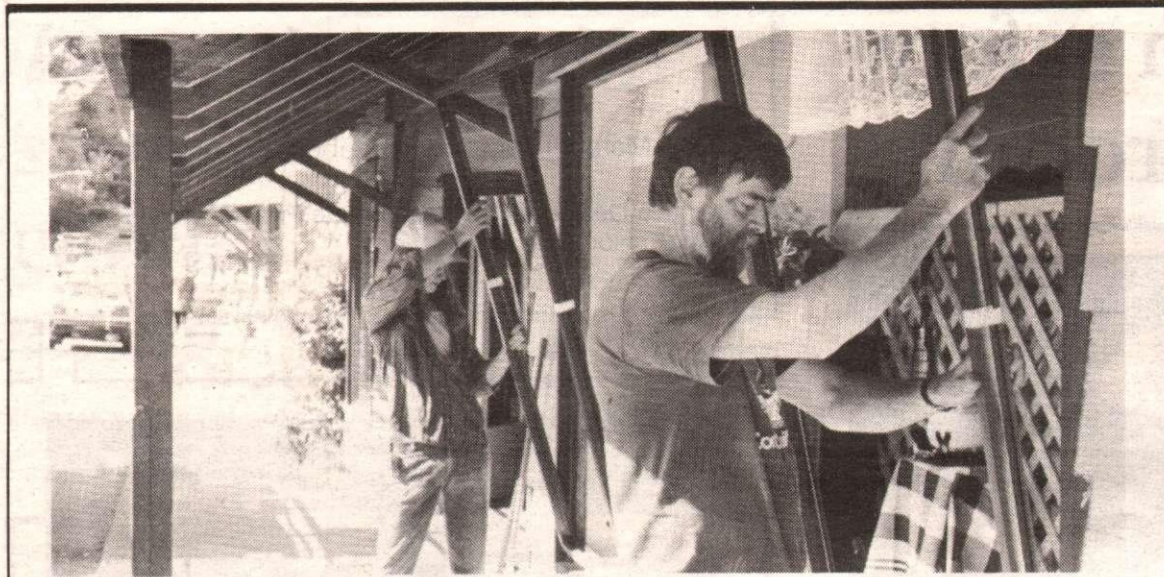
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## FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT



**A TOUCH OF GLASS:** Roy Cronin (right) and Orin Williams of Fulford Glass replace windows at Love My Kitchen business in Ganges. Driftwood photo by Derrick Lundy

## Colour: a dramatic effect

One aspect of remodelling with which homeowners seem particularly concerned is coordinating roofing and siding colours for their home's exterior.

Any apprehension is understandable, especially when one considers how important colour is to a home's overall appearance.

Colour combinations chosen for a home can have a dramatic impact on its appearance. For example, light colours can help make a home look larger, while darker colours tend to make a home appear smaller.

If the home has an exterior feature

the owner wants to accent, it is best to use a warm, bright colour. Studies have shown that warmer colours appear to advance while bolder, cooler colours tend to recede.

While these are the more general rules of colour usage, there are other factors to consider which offer much more specific parameters to help owners decide on the right colours for their home's exterior. Here are just a few:

- If the home has complicated lines and angles, use a limited, monochromatic colour scheme to help simplify its design;

- For a home with more simple lines, be daring in the use of colour. Try using several contrasting shades of the same colour to create more interest;

- Consider the proportion of the home and develop a colour scheme which strikes a balance between the amount of roof and siding exposure with door and window trims;

- Consider the landscaping and avoid using colours that will only blend the house into its surroundings.

While one usually wants to make a statement with the home's exterior design, he or she should not go overboard, making the look out of place in the neighbourhood.

When it comes to remodelling, there are certain decisions or recommendations that your builder or contractor can make. However, colour selection tends to lean toward the personal. In fact, many contractors shy away from making any type of recommendation when it comes to coordinating exterior colour schemes.

## Choosing a carpet

Knowing what you want before entering the carpet showroom can simplify the purchase process. A careful analysis of the type of conditions to which the carpet will be subjected is fundamental.

Do you want a luxurious carpet that you can sink your toes into? Or do you need a carpet that can survive an active family and withstand lots of wear and tear?

Knowing the traffic patterns in various areas of the home will help complete your analysis.

### Halls and stairs

These high traffic areas should be covered with a densely tufted carpet with low pile. Colour should be neutral and the carpet should possess good soil hiding properties.

### Dining room

Stain and soil resistance are high priorities here.

### Living room

If the living room is used a great deal by the family look for a carpet with the same characteristics as the dining room. Otherwise go for luxury and comfort.

### Master bedroom

This is a low traffic area where

your imagination can run free. Look for colour and comfort.

### Children's rooms

Look for a durable, easy to clean carpet with good soil hiding capabilities.

### Family room

A party-proof carpet is called for in this area. Dense pile, excellent soil resistance and, for easy maintenance, a multi-tonal carpet usually performs best in these conditions.

### Kitchen

Low, dense looped pile in a moisture resistant fibre will be capable of withstanding heavy traffic in the kitchen.

Look for stain and soil resistance and perhaps a patterned effect to help hide accidental spills.

### Bathroom

Here moisture is your carpet's worst enemy. Look for specially constructed carpet to withstand bacteria, fungus, and mildew growth.

Armed with these requirements, you can begin to examine the different types of carpets which offer various characteristics designed to meet your needs.

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## FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT



**ONE LAST CUT:** Richard Fraser cuts back a fuchsia plant to bare "bones" before putting it in its greenhouse home for winter months. Driftwood photo by Gail Sjuberg

# Salt Spring greenhouse owner offers tips for winter plant care

Few islanders with a backyard greenhouse have as much riding on survival of plants through winter as commercial growers.

However, amateurs can pick up some good ideas by taking a look at how the professionals operate.

By GAIL SJUBERG  
Driftwood Staff Writer

Richard Fraser of Fraser's Thimble Farms Nursery and Greenhouses on Salt Spring nurtures countless thousands of plants through all stages of life and seasons. About 1,000 square metres of greenhouse space is home to plants needing the healthiest possible environment during a West Coast winter.

Fraser says this means the next month or two will see the greenhouses completely emptied and all surfaces scrubbed, bleached and disinfected.

Then, he says, "everything that comes back in is cleaned." All plants are trimmed way back, stripped of dropped or dying leaves and they definitely have no flowers on them," he stresses.

"When we say clean, we mean clean — spotless," says Fraser. "That way, if there is no dead organic

material in the greenhouse you don't have anything to go moldy and rotten."

All weeds are removed from the greenhouses' sawdust floor and the roof is cleaned every autumn, after being covered with a predictable glaze of pine needles and algae.

Polyethylene plastic is stapled to walls and roof joists to create a layer of dead air space.

"It blocks out a bit more light but it is better for heat loss," he says.

"On the island, it is really important to have some sort of back-up heat," he stresses. Three to four hours of -10 degree C. temperatures can cause damage to greenhouse plants.

Some people let plants go dormant, but it is better for them to be kept alive, he says.

His greenhouses are set up with an electric heater installed well above ground. Fraser advises the thermostat be checked before winter, and that circuitry be ground fault due to the humid environment.

Ceiling fans then create essential air circulation in the cool, damp and humid environment, says Fraser. "Without it you will have mold and fungus," he warns.

He also stresses the importance of not overwatering and removing dead

leaves on a regular basis throughout winter.

Thimble Farms overwinters a number of stock plants, including over 50 varieties of fuchsias, 20 to 25 geraniums and 30 ivy geraniums. Because they specialize in growing varieties not found anywhere else, if they lose one during winter, "our only hope of getting it back is from one of our customers," says Fraser.

Deck shrubs, tender seedling perennials and plants like indoor azaleas, Christmas cactus and hibiscus are also kept in the greenhouses. Seedling geraniums and begonias for next year should be started now, he says.

People can use their greenhouse space in winter to grow certain "cold" vegetables like lettuce, says Fraser. They can also take cuttings of annuals like impatiens and petunias for overwintering.

Fraser notes that running a nursery and greenhouse operation is "extremely labour intensive." He says that behind any such operation is "a family and thousands of hours of unpaid labour. You are into the farm category and farm hours."

"Everybody does it, whether they know it or not, for the satisfaction of growing," he concludes.

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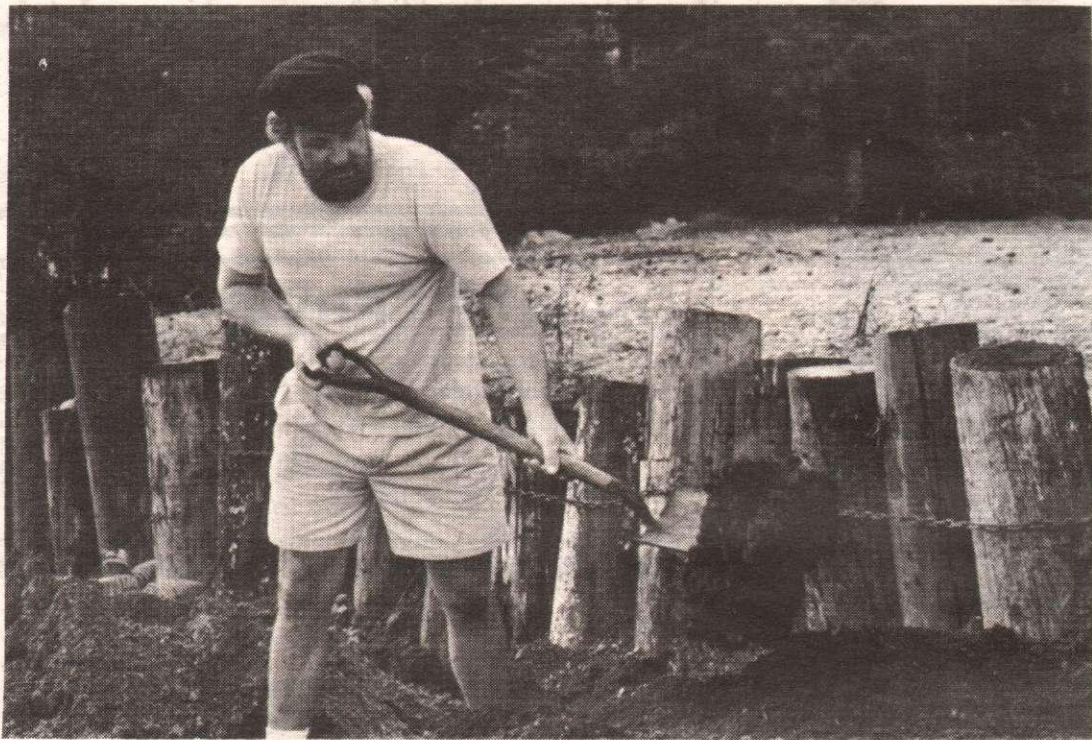
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**FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT**



**DIG IT:** Island landscaper Walter Davis prepares and delivers soil to local gardeners who are otherwise unable to find good soil on their property. Driftwood photo by Derrick Lundy

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**Fall tasks  
abound  
in garden**

Most homeowners fertilize their yards and gardens in the spring, but fall is actually the best time to perform this task. The rewards of fall fertilizing are beautiful lawns, bright flowers and juicy vegetables, as well as a revitalized yard that is ready for the rigors of the coming winter.

**Extend flowering  
season**

Geraniums, marigolds, and other summer annuals return to peak form in early autumn when temperatures begin to cool. Fertilizing in fall will help keep annuals in bloom right up to the first killing frost.

A sprinkling of a complete garden fertilizer — one that is rich in nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium — will do the trick.

**Fall perennials**

Hardy chrysanthemums and asters are among the flowering perennials that help make autumn such a colourful season.

Give them an extra spurt by fertilizing when buds swell and begin to show colour. This will keep plants looking their best until their blooms finally fade.

**Harvesting vegetables**

Backyard gardeners usually associate fresh vegetables with summer. But autumn, too, is a season of rich harvests.

During the first few weeks, gardeners can still pick tomatoes, squash and other warm-season vegetables. Cool-loving broccoli and brussel sprouts may be harvested later. To keep plants productive, apply a side dressing of fertilizer in very early fall.

**Cool-season crops**

Crops such as spinach, lettuce, radish and peas can be sown in autumn, especially in regions where winters are relatively mild and cool.

Prepare the planting bed by mixing in some compost and vermiculite. Then spread two to three pounds of garden fertilizer for every 100 feet of soil. The fertilizer should be worked into the top three to four inches of garden earth.

**Planting bulbs**

Fall is the season to plant tulips, daffodils and other spring-flowering bulbs. Fertilized soil enhances the

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FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT

# Proper care in fall yields great result

Plantings around the home will awaken beautifully next spring if they are put to bed properly in fall.

Start with the lawn. Before cold weather arrives, mow grass to a height of about two inches — just short enough so as not to mat under rains. All grass clippings and leaves must be removed from the lawn for winter, so be sure to rake thoroughly.

## Cosmetic pruning

Autumn is a good season to do cosmetic pruning of trees, shrubs and vines. Maple, beech and other trees that would bleed heavily if cut back in early spring can safely be pruned now.

First remove dead, straggly or weak wood — everything from large limbs to twigs. Then do some additional pruning for size and shape. Overgrown shrubs and vines will rejuvenate by summer if long or entangled stems are cut away now. With shrubs like forsythia and lilac, whose flowers develop on the previous year's growth, delay pruning until after blooms fade in spring.

Woody prunings can be shredded by machine into wood chips for easy disposal or for use as a garden mulch.

Mulch helps all types of plants survive the harsh winter. Alternate freezing and thawing of soil can cause bulb beds and perennial plantings to heave, disturbing the dormant plants. An insulating layer of wood chips, spread a couple of inches thick in autumn prevents this.

Foliage of rhododendrons and other broad-leaf evergreens can also become damaged during winter. Frozen roots typically are the cause.

A wood-chip mulch placed around the base of shrubs prevents the soil from freezing deeply and also helps soil to retain the moisture it needs to rejuvenate months later.

Evergreens then can replace water that is released through their leaves on sunny winter days, keeping the foliage green and fresh.

Roses, too, need winter protection. Insulate the base of the plants with a wire mesh collar filled with wood chips. While any drastic pruning should be left until spring, a quick trim will keep rose canes from whipping dangerously in the wind. Climbers and ramblers should be secured firmly to their supports, to avoid brushing and breakage.

Withered flowering annuals, perennials and vegetable plants may breed disease or insects if allowed to over-winter in the garden. Pull up

annuals and vegetables by the roots, and shear back perennials to about three inches from the soil.

## Preparing flower beds

Gardeners can get a head start on spring by preparing soil in empty flower beds and vegetable patches in the late autumn. Garden soil tends to become more acidic over the course of the summer, so you may need to add some ground limestone to return the soil to a pH near neutral (6.5 to 7.0).

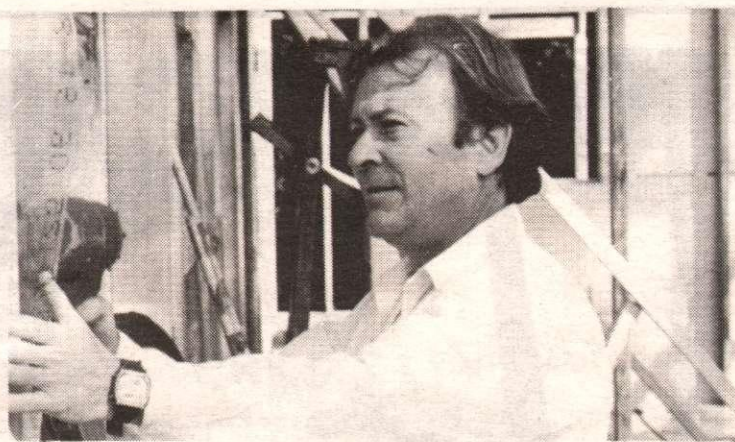
Plan on digging some compost into the soil to replenish depleted organic matter. Compost is the rich humus that results from decomposed plant debris.

The availability of compost units, designed for home landscape settings, makes do-it-yourself composting sensible and affordable. Simply use shredded garden refuse that would otherwise be thrown away, along with kitchen wastes such as coffee grounds and vegetable peels.

Winter can be tough on the yard, but with a little preparation now, next spring will bring lush lawns, bright blooming flowers, and healthy trees and shrubs.

**NAILED:** Salt Spring contractor Shaun Adams uses a nail gun as he works on a Sunset Drive house addition.

Driftwood photo by Derrick Lundy



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## TASKS

From Page B16

quality of first-year blooms. It is best to sprinkle the bottom of the planting area — eight inches deep for large bulbs like tulips, five inches for small ones, like crocuses — with an organic garden fertilizer.

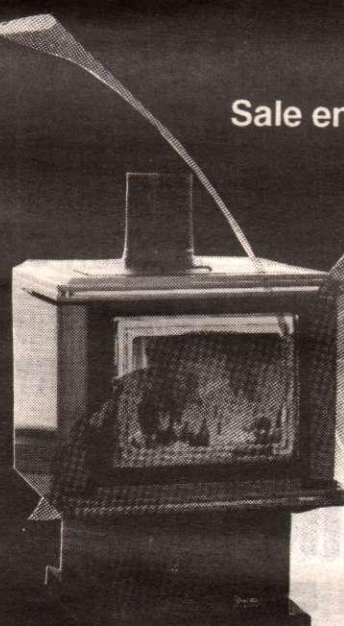
Previous bulb plantings can be encouraged to come up year after year, by fertilizing them each fall. Simply scatter feed over the top of the soil. Since bulb foliage tends to disappear over summer, use small wooden markers to locate the bulbs.

Annuals and perennials. Vegetables, bulbs and lawns. Autumn is clearly an important season for tending to the yard and garden. And proper fertilizing is the key to success.



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## FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT



**YARD PLANTS:** Fraser's Thimble Farms "backyard" contains thousands of plants representing hundreds of different species.

Driftwood photo by Gail Sjuberg

# Land value increased by good looking lawn

Planning to sell your house? A green well-manicured lawn can add as much as 30 per cent to the resale value of your home, according to real estate experts.

In fact, landscaping can have a higher recovery value than kitchen or bathroom remodelling. While homeowners can expect 75 to 125 per cent investment return on kitchen or bathroom renovations, increasing the "curb" appeal of a home can bring return nearly twice that amount.

Growing the greenest grass on the block is easy, once you know the basics.

### Choose the right seed

Begin by choosing the right seed for your particular climate and soil. Kentucky bluegrasses are sturdy enough for heavy traffic. Turf-type tall fescues are also able to withstand heavy traffic. In addition, fescues work well in dry climates, poor soil conditions and shade.

For rapid germination, try perennial rye grasses, which are easily established and provide an attractive, durable lawn.

Professional landscapers recommend using a mix of two or more grasses. Mixtures are better adapted to certain environmental conditions, and they provide increased genetic diversity for greater pest and disease resistance.

Spread three to four pounds of seed for every 1,000 square feet. Use a lawn spreader to distribute the seeds evenly, making sure not to seed any particular area too thickly. The seeds will begin to germinate in five to 10 days.

### Caring for the lawn

When grass is healthy, caring for a lawn is more like the relaxing and enjoyable pastime it was meant to be. Follow these simple guidelines to develop and maintain a lawn that will make people take a second look at your property:

#### Design for Use:

Lawns are meant to be walked on, played on and pleasing to look at. Design the lawn to provide adequate space to suit your family's lifestyle.

#### Soil Testing:

Standard soil tests determine the soil's pH as well as how much phosphorous and potash are available, and how much organic matter the soil contains. Contact your local nursery for information on soil testing.

favour of thorough waterings that penetrate the soil to a depth of several inches. Use sprinklers that minimize water runoff.

#### Mowing:

How often you should mow the lawn during the growing season depends on lawn type, weather, soil fertility and time of year. As a rule, cut lawns twice a week during spring when grass is growing vigorously, and once a week in summer or during prolonged dry spells.

In late fall, drop the lawn mower blade as low as possible for a close cut without scalping the lawn or straining the mower.

Do this once to remove tall grass

in which bugs and disease hide over the winter. Then, pick up the grass clippings and reset the mower blades to their original height.

#### Controlling thatch:

A big problem for lawns is the build up of thatch, plant debris that has not decomposed completely. At a healthy level, about one-fourth inch or less, thatch protects roots and helps the lawn retain moisture.

But a thicker layer will smother plants and create ideal conditions for insects and disease. Use a vertical mower, also called a dethatcher, to loosen the soil surface enough so that the thatch and other debris can be raked away.

To prevent future thatch build up, do not overfertilize or overwater your lawn. In addition, mow lightly and

frequently. (Note: perennial rye grass and tall fescue lawns do not produce thatch.)

Maintaining a picture-perfect lawn that will increase the market value of your property does not require hours of work. All it takes is proper maintenance and the right grass seed mixture. You can bank on it.

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## FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT

# Aquarium adds unique decorative touch to room

Adding an aquarium can make home improvement projects more enjoyable.

An aquarium brightens a dark corner, adds life to an empty wall, and adds a unique decorative touch to any room. It houses great pets and becomes a wonderful conversation piece.

In fact, a recent study concluded it is even beneficial in relieving stress.

Owning a home aquarium obviously has many positive benefits. Aquariums are being enjoyed in homes, offices, restaurants and hotels.

The first step in setting up an aquarium involves locating a good dealer. A friend who owns an aquarium may be able to provide a reference; otherwise the Victoria phone book lists most tropical fish retailers.

During the visit to a tropical fish store, one should get some ideas on aquarium sizes and on the equipment needed, and look over the selection of fish.

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

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

### Aquarium location

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

It should also not be located above good carpeting — it is possible some water will splash on the floor during changes. It should be placed on a firm stand since water is heavy.

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

Tropical fish require an environment maintained at around 25 degrees Celsius (75 F). Therefore, a good heater and an aquarium thermometer are important accessories.

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

A quality filter is also required. The dealer can provide proper advice since there are several types of filters, and needs vary with the size of the aquarium.

Those keeping a lot of fish will also want a separate air pump to add oxygen to the water.

### Aquarium interior design

Decorating an aquarium is great fun. There are multi-coloured gravels, highly decorative backgrounds and hundreds of ornaments, as well as plastic plants so real in reproduction it is almost impossible to distinguish them from live plants.

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

Once the aquarium is established, one should add a chlorine neutralizer

to the water and add only a few fish initially. These few fish will help develop the proper biological conditions necessary to maintain a fully stocked aquarium.

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

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

A device called the HydroClean allows an efficient siphoning by

separating the debris in the gravel and removing it with the water from the aquarium. On a monthly basis, the filter will require minimal maintenance. Following this simple routine, chances of fish disease or any other aquarium problems are remote. In fact, one of the biggest problems people have is spending too much time maintaining their aquarium. On a daily basis, of course, fish should be fed and a good quality flake food will provide a complete diet for almost all fish.

Tropical fish are beautiful — they are easy to maintain and provide a lifetime hobby.

## Regular maintenance saves grief in long run

A house is the largest single investment most Canadians will ever make.

Failing to recognize required maintenance, however, can make that investment even more costly.

Assessing the quality of a house is not difficult if one knows what to look for and where to go for advice. This will also save a lot of money and grief in the long run.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's publication "Checklist" can help homeowners and potential home buyers determine the general condition of a home.

The checklist helps identify common problems found in a home and discusses the causes and cures. Although some aspects of house construction are best left to the experts, the list outlines areas where consumers or homeowners can identify problems themselves.

Some of the problems in older homes that are dealt with in the booklet include dampness, peeling or cracked paint, uneven floors or leaking walls and roofs.

Once the homeowner has decided to tackle that leaky roof or damaged siding, CMHC can help with renovation needs. CMHC has published other booklets to help consumers with common problems in home construction or repair.

CMHC also offers second mortgage insurance to assist borrowers in the purchase and/or improvement of housing.

For a full list of CMHC publications, programs and videos, including the CMHC Inspection Checklist, contact the Victoria CMHC office.

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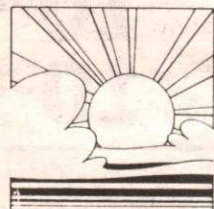
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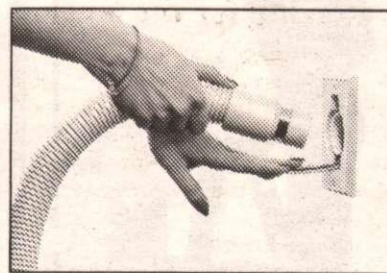
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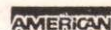
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FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT

# Mobiles and modular homes: two alternatives

Islanders eager to move onto newly purchased land might consider ordering a mobile or modular home.

Delivery will occur within six to eight weeks, and it takes only four to six days to set up "a completely livable home," says Grace Bond.

Bond, who sells modular homes for Parksville Homes in Parksville, says modular homes come in many different sizes and designs. Customers just come in, look at a variety of floor plans, and order it to their own specification.

Modular homes range in size from 239 square metres (784 feet) up to 579 square metres (1,900 feet). The smaller homes come with two bedrooms and one bath, with a kitchen, dining room, and living room. With taxes, delivery and set up within 100 kilometres of Parksville, the cost of this unit is about \$45,000, Bond said.

An average size home, eight metres (27 feet) by 16 metres (52 feet), or 417 square metres (1370 square feet), comes with three bedrooms, two baths, a kitchen, living room, and dining room. The price for such a home is about \$68,000 for the basic model.

Then there are the options. Modular home options include skylights, solid oak cabinets throughout, pot lighting, sliding glass doors to the patio, double vinyl windows which cut down on condensation and drafts, and upgraded carpeting, among other features.

The manufacturer can also change the house plan. For example, a bathroom can be deleted to make a bedroom bigger.

"We don't often sell a home exactly as you see it," said Bond. "There are usually changes made."

Standard equipment in modular homes include a stove, refrigerator, and dishwasher. Customers also get a \$400 lighting fixture allowance, which provides money for lighting fixtures. Anything customers spend over \$400 on fixtures they pay for, Bond said.

Customers are responsible for having a foundation put in and getting water and other hookups in place, though the company can contract someone to construct the foundation.

Because Salt Spring is an island, there would be an extra freight charge to bring the home here by barge. Bond estimates the price would increase by at least \$1,000 for a four-metre (14-foot) wide model, and \$2,000 for a eight-metre (28-foot) wide model, but it is necessary for the company to see the site before quoting a price.

Guarantees vary on different parts of the home, said Bond. There is a one-year guarantee on the home's workmanship, meaning if a customer

## A quick, relatively inexpensive way to set up home

notices a crack in the wall or that the baseboard is not attached, the company will send a repairman to fix it, Bond said.

Shingles are warranted for 25 years and items such as appliances are guaranteed by the manufacturers.

In some areas, modular homes can not be put in, but there "shouldn't be a problem with residential properties

or mobile home parks," said Bond.

Joe Cosgrove, president of Nortec Design Group Ltd. in Abbotsford, said modular homes are built to meet all B.C. building codes for residential housing, while mobile homes conform to a nationwide construction code that is slightly different than that for modulars.

However, people should check if

they can put a mobile home on their property before purchasing one.

Nortec builds both mobile and modular homes. "You could put mobile and modular homes side by side and you couldn't tell the difference," Cosgrove said.

Cosgrove said mobile homes are about the same prices as modulars, and a little cheaper if anything,

though prices are determined by specifications and location. Once again, many options are available.

"The only thing that would hold you back is how much you want to spend," he said. The larger the home, the less it is per square metre, he said.

He said mobile and modular homes come in four (14) and eight metre (27 foot) widths because four metres is the maximum width allowed on B.C. highways. Eight metre homes come in two pieces and are put together on-site.

## Common sense prevents burglary

A burglary takes place about once every three minutes in Canada.

Most often burglars do not choose specific victims. Rather, they look for favourable circumstances — like a house hidden from view, or a door or window left ajar.

Some burglars cruise neighbourhoods looking for homes that seem unoccupied.

If no one responds to the doorbell, they may test the door locks and windows for easy access. Once inside, they steal quickly and indiscriminately, preferring items that are valuable and easily portable.

Many people who have left their doors unlocked "just long enough to go to the corner store," have returned to a burglarized home.

According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing publication "Protecting Your Home Against Burglary" knowing the conditions favourable to burglars and making simple home renovations to eliminate them, one can greatly reduce the chances of burglary.

Attending to insecure doors and windows, providing good exterior lighting, or installing a suitable alarm may be required. Once these concerns have been addressed, good home security becomes a matter of common sense, the publication says.





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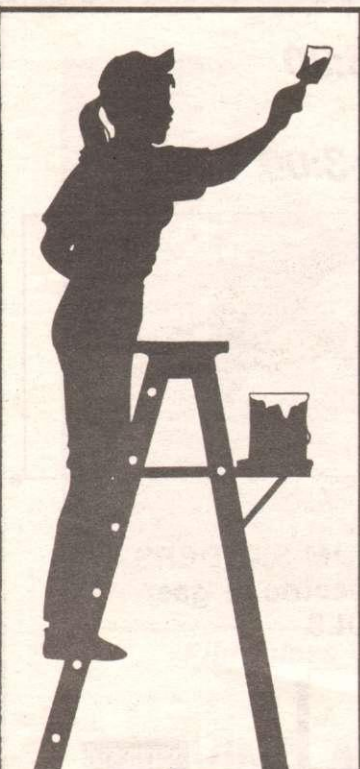
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