

Section B

Wednesday, September 22, 1993

FALL HOME *Improvement*

A special section of the Gulf Islands Driftwood



Gulf Islands
Driftwood

While summer failed to live up to its reputation, it's likely the fall will. In fact, cooler weather is already here — perfect weather for that fall home improvement project.

Stout pair of shoes among island architect's tools

Like other Gulf Islanders, architects are not unlike their counterparts elsewhere in Canada. But on Salt Spring Island the tools of the trade — drafting board, sharp pencils, a straight edge or two — should also include a stout pair of walking shoes.

The reason footwear is important is that home design on Salt Spring Island depends on site. One local architect starts every new job with a preliminary tramp through brush and over rocks where the client's house will be.

"The first thing I do with a client," local architect Jonathan Yardley said, "is say 'let's look at the site.' The site will dictate what the house will look like.

"The standard problem (in the city) is that city properties are 50 by 120 feet with a street front and back lot. That's the way the house is oriented.

"(But) here there are very few lots like that. That gives people much more variety as to where you site the house."

Site is one component of home design on the Gulf Islands which people accustomed to urban home building have to consider. Floor plans, building code requirements and new building ideas and methods are other aspects which may also be considered.

Yardley suggests all potential homeowners have a topographical survey done on their property before they think about designs, drive-ways and other concerns.

"(The topographical survey) contains very important site information," Yardley said. "It takes the guess work out of it. It gives people — especially those not living on the island — an idea of what the home will look like in its setting."

A topographical survey will plot the height variations of the land, view corridors and trees and other physical features which may enhance the property.

"It's money well spent," he said, "so you eliminate as many potential unknowns before you start."

A topographical study will also help determine where wells for water may be drilled, if one is required, and where septic fields may be sited. Water and sewage disposal are homeowners' problems and must be addressed to the satisfaction of the Capital Regional District before building may begin.

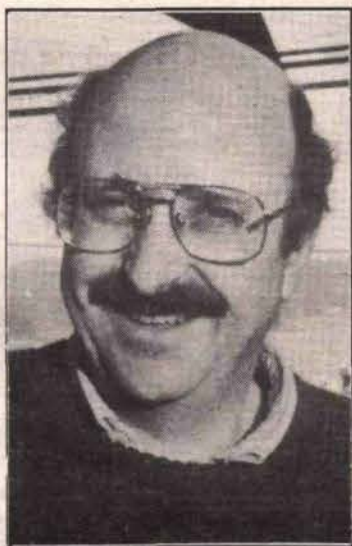
At this stage, homeowners and the architect start to talk about the design of the house.

"Most houses on the Gulf Islands are individual," Yardley said. "They are not standard houses out of a plan book."

Take advantage of the site, is advice he gives to most people who are about to build on island lots, and they usually take it.

So many island homes are built with what is called a "single, loaded corridor."

"Everyone gets the view," Yardley explained. "Keep the service stuff at the back — the entrance, the laundry room, the garage — and put the kitchen, dining room, living room, bathroom and balcony all on one side with the view."



Jonathan Yardley

People also need to think about the future. Is this a retirement home? Should the house be designed on one level? These are problems which he said are easier to deal with on island-sized lots than city-sized ones.

"All the sites are large, compared to the city, so you

can get all 2,000 square feet on one level.

"Also," he adds, "having a building all on one level is less intrusive.

"The reason monster houses appear monstrous is there's no planning, little consideration of the site, little consideration of the neighbours and maybe just a little bit of insensitivity."

More and more home builders are considering carefully words like sensitivity and sustainability when they come to build a home, particularly on the Gulf Islands.

Yardley encourages people to consider sustainable alternatives to sewage disposal, water supply and use, electricity supply and building materials, but he said there are no incentives for homeowners to follow sustainable or alternative building practices.

Yardley has had clients interested in such sustainable housing ideas as solar power, *Continued on page B3*

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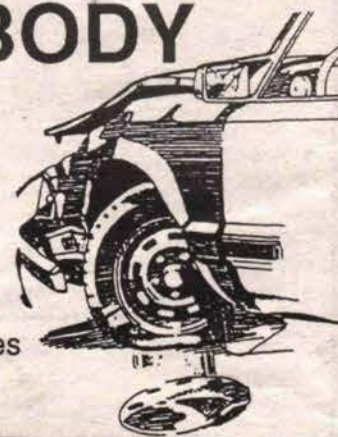
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What pays when renovating

So you're thinking of renovating your home. You figure you can make your castle a little more comfortable and increase the value of your property at the same time.

You may be right. But you may also be wrong.

People should approach renovations the same way the approach buying a house.

Your primary concern should always be meeting your own wants and wishes.

In the process, you might also increase the value of your home. But homeowners do not always recover the full price of their renovations and some projects can make your house harder to sell.

Without a breath of hesitation, revamping kitchens and bathrooms are the renovation projects most likely to pay off in the long run.

They are the two rooms that really date a house. They are also among the most expensive renovation projects. You know that, and the person looking at your house knows it too.

Windows came next on the list, especially if they are the

originals. People today want lots of light and energy efficiency.

Efficiency is a big concern to homeowners, so you should update doors and ensure your home has good insulation.

Adding a fireplace gets mixed reviews.

A fireplace is important in country properties, but fireplaces are not as popular with city dwellers as they once were.

People worry about a loss of efficiency, although adding a good set of glass doors can make a difference.

People still like fireplaces, but they're one item potential buyers will quickly drop from their list of wants.

Finishing a basement isn't worth as much as people think. This is particularly true if the house has a main-floor family room but less true if the house is small and could use the additional space.

Whatever the renovation project, it has to be well done.

Home-owners should not expect to recoup the cost of a swimming pool and may find their home harder to sell if

they install one.

A lot of potential buyers don't want the work and expense a pool entails, and families with young children may view them as a safety hazard.

Some buyers may be attracted to a house because it has a pool, but it's unlikely they'll be willing to up their offer by the full price of the pool.

Experts also warned homeowners who decide to knock down walls or put on additions to ensure the work is well done, does not disrupt the flow of the house and doesn't reduce the house to fewer than three bedrooms. They also recommended that home-owners not undertake major renovations just before they plan to sell a house in hopes of boosting its value. Renovations pay off in the long term, not the short.

It always helps to spruce a house up with fresh, neutral paint before putting it on the market, but you'll be better off dropping your price rather than undertaking any major work.

SITING

From page B2

water collection and storage, grey water use and composting toilets.

Grey water is all the water which is not used for cooking or drinking in the household: dish washing, laundry, bathing and gardening. Composting toilets are another water-saving device that is useful where groundwater problems exist.

"I'm finding a lot more clients are definitely thinking about sustainable living," he said. "They are aiming to be more self-sufficient, particularly on these islands."

Building materials is another area which has an impact on home design.

"The traditional west coast materials are wood," Yardley said, but adds, "You can buy

plantation lumber and fibre-constructed lumber. These are products that don't impact on old-growth forests.

"There is more use of small-dimensional lumber to build with. You can turn so-called waste products into building products."

Prospective house builders may also find the property they own has enough lumber on site to fill their needs. This is another aspect of sustainable living which is becoming increasingly common, he said.

"Sustainable building is to try and do it here," Yardley said,

"Electricity, building materials, heating, rammed earth: use the site, use indigenous materials."

Building a home in the Gulf

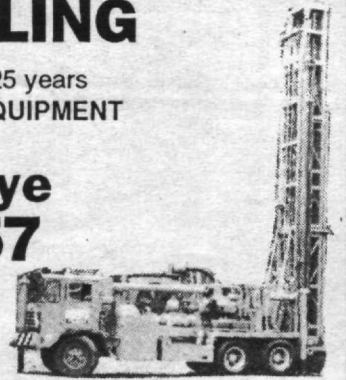
Islands, therefore, requires more thought than in the city and calls for more innovation. Site, materials, water, electricity and sewage provide unique problems and provoke unique solutions. The rewarding results are left for all to see.

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— Jonathan Yardley

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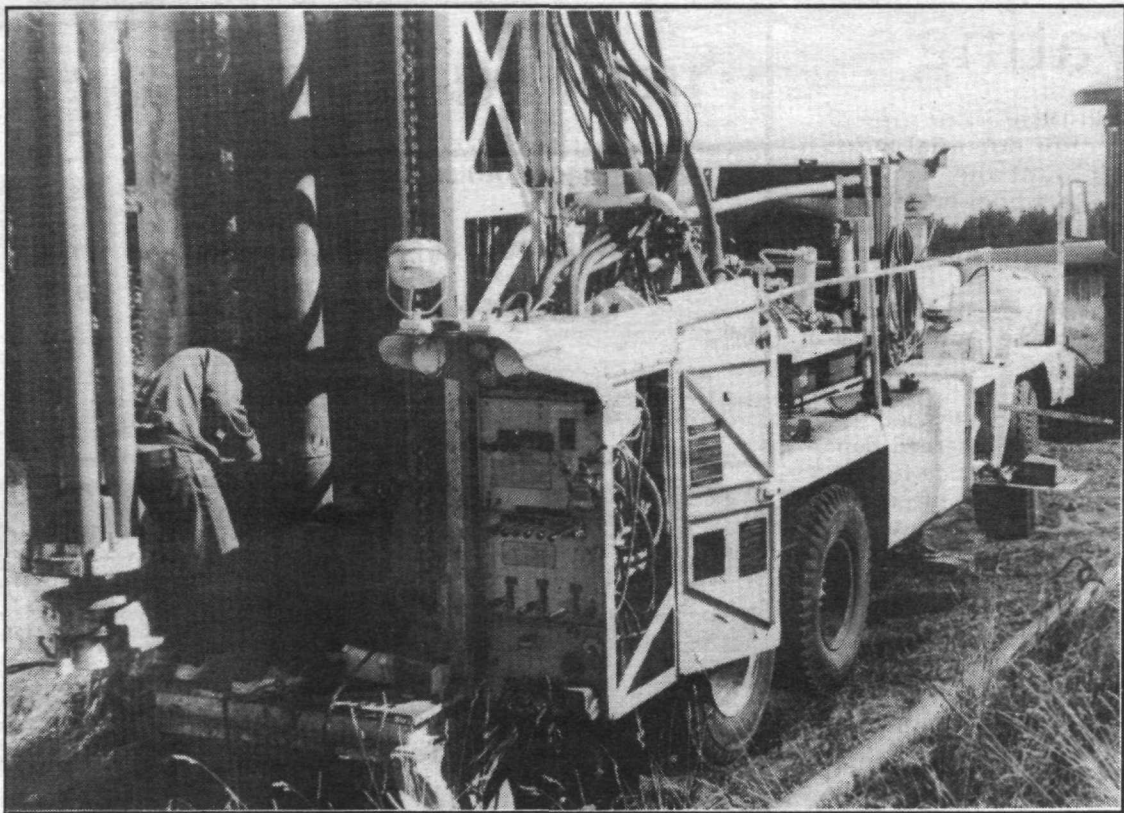
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LOOKING FOR WATER: Tri-K Drilling's rig is set to begin drilling for water on a Salt Spring property. Divining the site is recommended before drilling begins.

Divine rite: Finding water with stick is simple matter

Some people might say there's not enough water in the Gulf Islands to shake a stick at. But the Kaye family would have to disagree.

They have shaken sticks at more water on Salt Spring Island in the last quarter-century than anyone else.

The Kayes operate the Gulf Islands division of Victoria-based Tri-K Drilling. Elder diviner Albert Kaye has one daughter who can divine out of six children, and that daughter has one divining son. The knack runs in the family, it seems.

"We always divine it" when asked to drill a well on someone's property, said Albert's son, Tony Kaye. Others may scoff — and do — but they never fail to find water. And they've been doing it an awfully long time.

"(Albert) goes up there and divines it and we build (the well)," Kaye said. "He uses a stick, anything. He tried to get a fibreglass stick once.

"The stick will come back a bit. He got a cut across the eye

once because he was walking too fast and the stick came up quickly.

"One man — a geologist — didn't believe in divining," Kaye recalled. "He decided where there would be water geologically. We dug a well down 360 feet and only got a litre a minute. We pulled it out — there was no sense going deeper because we were in coal.

"So we divined the property and found a huge stream down 90 feet." The average island home will need a well that produces about one gallon per minute, Kaye said, though a retirement home

with a small garden could probably get by with a well that produced a quarter of a gallon per minute. The diviner tries to identify two or more underground streams to tap into with the same hole to get a better flow.

The best flow on the island is on top of Mount Belcher, where some wells give 100 gallons a minute. Deep, ancient streams are recognizable by the smoothly polished stone that gets thrown up when the hole is drilled.

"Granite is the best rock to go through. The water cleans
Continued on page B5

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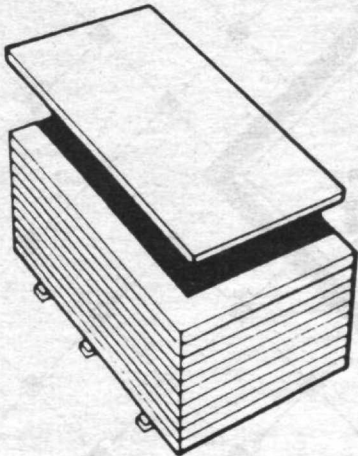
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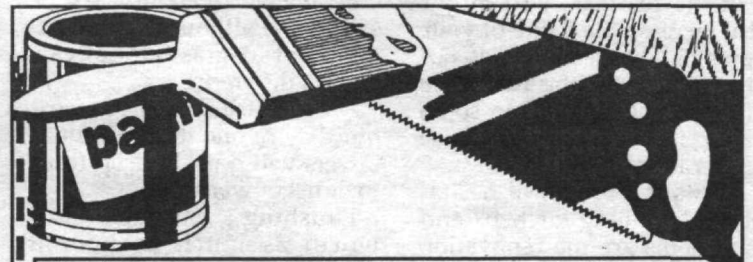
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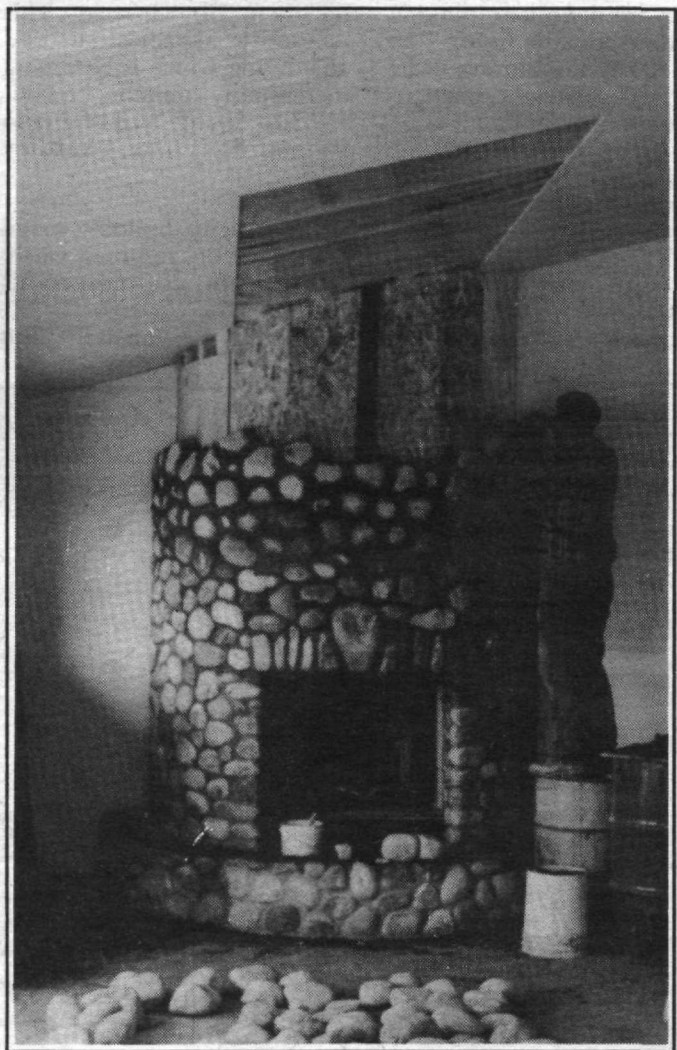
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Some basic rules to know before starting renovation

Renovation prices for the same basic project can vary widely, and the cost of item like fixtures or even paint can be quite different. So if you do decide to have some work done, there are a few basic rules you should follow.

Start by clearly defining your budget. If you want seating or elaborate gingerbread railings, or if you will be replacing fixtures, go comparison shopping so you have a ball park figure of what they will cost before you talk to the contractor.

Remember that the majority of renovation costs rise because of changes made during the work — when you belatedly decide to build in storage space, change the fixtures, have second thoughts about the paint color, or come to the conclusion that you must add that extra window.

Once you have a clearly defined set of objectives and know how much you want to spend, ask friends for the names of reliable contractors. Ideally, you should get three different contractors to bid on the work.

Get a detailed bid con-

taining subcontractors' costs, labour and materials. If there are wide variations, as why. Ask the contractors for references. Phone the references and, if possible, go to see their work. Ask their past clients if they are satisfied with both the quality of the work and with the way it was done.

Costs rise because of changes made during the work.

Sample questions: was the work site left in a mess at the end of the day? This is an important factor if you are living in the house at the time of the renovation. Were the workers polite and did they get the job done on time? If problems occurred on the job,

were they taken care of in a reasonable manner? If problems occurred after the job was completed, were they taken care of promptly?

As a general rule, the project will cost three times the amount of the materials. However, this doesn't take into account the variables. If a fancy railing is called for in the design, it may cost as much as building everything else.

And, the higher off the ground a project goes, the more it costs. This applies in particular to decks, painting, installing drywall and plastering, because the higher up something is, the harder it is to get to, and scaffolds, ladders and braces will have to be employed.

Renovation projects are usually paid for in three installments of a third each. The first payment is usually made when the deal is struck. Traditionally this is used by the contractor to pay for materials. The second payment is usually made halfway through the job, at an agreed point. The final payment is made when the job is finished and the customer is satisfied with the work.

WATER

From page B4

up so quickly. You can drill right beside the ocean and you'll never even get salt.

"It's beautiful water. You can drill down 200 feet and be as close to the ocean as you are to me," Kaye said, standing 18 inches away from this writer.

The deepest well Kaye knows about on the island is about 900 feet, though the deepest one he has drilled is about 600 feet. And he says he only went that far down because the stake identifying the drilling site had been moved by the property owner before they started drilling.

"Some of these streams could be as small as your finger or they could be as big as this truck," he said. "When we divine a stream we stick a

stake in the ground. Sometimes people move the stake.

"Don't move the stake! We could put a well down 250 feet and find 50 gallons a minute but if we put it 10 feet away and go down the same depth we'll find nothing."

There is more to drilling a well than you might think, Kaye said. Landowners should realize the drilling rig is a big heavy machine and needs space to move around and get at the proposed well site.

Sometimes that means taking a tree down or having branches cut to get the rig up. Landowners should think of that in advance. A backhoe may have to be called in to make the ground relatively level or to get the rig over a

stream or ditch.

"Albert does really well over here," Kaye said. "We try to help people on Salt Spring because water is so important."

"It helps that he's been here so long. I'm the third generation on the island."

And it helps that the cost of well drilling has not changed much in 10 years. The cost is \$8 per foot for the casing and \$10 per foot for the hole.

The casing is a protective shield around the well hole from ground level down to bedrock, or sometimes 10 feet into the bedrock.

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"It's beautiful water. You can drill down 200 feet and be as close to the ocean as you are to me."

— Tony Kaye

Save on energy with this winter checklist

With winter just around the corner, now is the time to take a close look at how you can improve your energy use around the home. By taking a few simple steps, you can save money and conserve energy, while staying toasty warm as winter winds blow.

We can all sleep a little easier at night knowing home energy bills aren't going through the roof.

Energy efficiency is the key. And because energy use impacts on the environmental problems, by conserving energy you'll also be helping the planet.

Here are some guidelines to help reduce your energy costs.

FIRE UP THE FURNACE

During the winter, your furnace is your best friend. With heating accounting for 75% of a home's energy consumption it's important to make sure that your furnace is working properly and efficiently. Regulating heat is also important. Use thermostat wisely and you'll barely notice the difference, except on your heating bills. Try dropping the heat by three or four degrees. Lowering the temperature by five degrees centigrade can save up to 7% on heating costs.

We can all sleep easier knowing energy bills aren't going through the roof

Have you had your furnace serviced this year?

A furnace should be serviced and cleaned at least once a year by a certified cleaning contractor. Cleaning it keeps it free of dust that can clog vents. Filters should also be changed twice during the heating season.

How efficient is the furnace?

Check with your heating contractor to make sure that your furnace is up to today's modern efficiency standards.

If you are using oil or electricity, consider switching to natural gas. Mid or high efficiency gas furnaces can save you as much as 60% on your heating bill.

Is your thermostat programmable?

It's easy to install a thermostat that will automatically adjust the temperature in your home to keep it cool when you are absent and raise the heat before you arrive.

Water heating can account for 20-25% of your home energy bill. Making sure that you use hot water efficiently will save you money throughout the year. To cut down on wasted hot water costs, insulate the hot water heater with fibre glass batts and insulate the main hot water pipes with a foam insulation material

sold for the purpose.

Another way to save on hot water bills is to install an energy efficient showerhead.

Leaky windows and doors can have a big effect on home heating costs. Not only do they let cold air in, but they let warm air out. Check windows and doors for drafts by holding a burning candle near them. If it flickers, there is a draft. Another sure sign is frost when it starts to appear on windows. Use removable caulk or weatherstripping on doors and windows to reduce energy costs and improve efficiency. If possible use double

glazed windows or cover them with clear plastic designed to go over windows and provide an inner storm "window".

And last but not least, consider increasing the amount of insulation you have in your house.

If your house is old or has no insulation, then you should make this a priority. If you do increase the level of insulation in your house, your furnace should be adjusted afterwards, because you will not need the same amount of heat production.

Conserving energy makes

economical and environmental sense. By taking the time now to take a close look at a few key areas around your

house you can make the winter a little easier to live through and lower your costs at the same time.



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Garden design is a new science for Canadians

By GRAEME THOMPSON
Driftwood Staff

It is no secret that gardeners are often philosophers. So it should not come as any surprise to discover that garden designer Andrew Lewis is also a philosopher. He lives, breathes and dreams gardens and his wealth of knowledge and imagination is beginning to be noticed.

"Although I have a very formal science-based background, to be able to design gardens, you need some kind of empathy with nature, which doesn't come from scientific training.

"Why are gardens important? To learn sensitivity to the sense of nature and by extension human life. It reconnects people to the natural world in a way we can understand.

"The garden is a microcosm of nature and man's place within nature. The modern technological age completely separates mankind from the natural world.

"When people move to this island they're making a statement about what this island is. When they ask for a garden, they're recognizing they need it."

Lewis has a degree in biology with qualifications in geography and geology. He owned and ran a garden business in England for two years before coming out to Canada with his Canadian wife.

Garden design is a very new science in Canada, although in England it has been taken very seriously for several hundred years. All the great houses of Europe valued — and often shared — artists who could not only design a house but integrate it into an estate plan that ran for miles and miles in every direction.

Integration is one of the platforms on which he bases his garden design work — even if your estate is only a half-acre.

"You've got to think about the bones and the layout of the garden. Then you can plant it according to the soil and climate. The underlying bones are the most important. They need thought and design, just like a house needs an architect.

"The simplest reason for a garden is it makes sense of the house. It ties you and your house to the greater landscape.

"Using a combination of natural and man-made materials it slowly melts a house into the landscape.



Andrew Lewis

"People are coming from a landscape that is totally different. They should do something here that fits the landscape here.

"There is a habit of using evergreen shrubs like rhodies (rhododendrons). They are indigenous to climates that have very cold dry winters and hot wet summers — the complete opposite to here. But there are drought-resistant plants, such as varieties found in the Mediterranean, that can do well here." And many of them are deer-resistant too.

But there is more to a garden than flowers.

"I like to use bricks and tiles, to combine formal geometry with French curves."

While he likes the local sandstone, Lewis said he is surrounded by granite and likes to use it.

Ponds are another favourite garden focus.

"It is a growing trend in British Columbia. People are getting interested in having their own ornamental pond.

"A pond . . . acts like a big mirror. It brings light into the garden. Moors loved ponds because they believed they captured the sky."

And they are usually self-contained, so the island's concerns with water would not affect a pond. Rainwater is almost always sufficient.

The best time to start thinking and working towards a beautiful summer garden is the fall. A garden can be planned in the fall and winter and finished before spring planting begins.

"The design process takes some time. I have to find out what (a customer) needs, what they want and try to guide them to what is practical. There are limitations to the island: water supply and deer are the obvious ones.

"It's extremely important to discuss budget, how realistic (the garden design) is," but he adds: "Gardens can be done in stages. What they do need is a ground plan and a direction to get them going."

Lewis also likes to do basic labour in a garden to get the feel of the space. "It's very hard work planning a garden. The more time I have to work in a garden — basic labour — I see so much more."

And he stresses that although he is the garden designer, the owners of the garden have to be involved too.

"It's their garden. Low maintenance is a reality but people still have to be in their garden and take time to be in it.

"I'm a catalyst. I set the stage. But it's their garden at the end of the day and they have to get involved in it to make it work."

That is the challenge Andrew Lewis sets for himself and for his clients.

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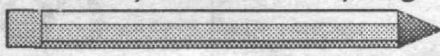
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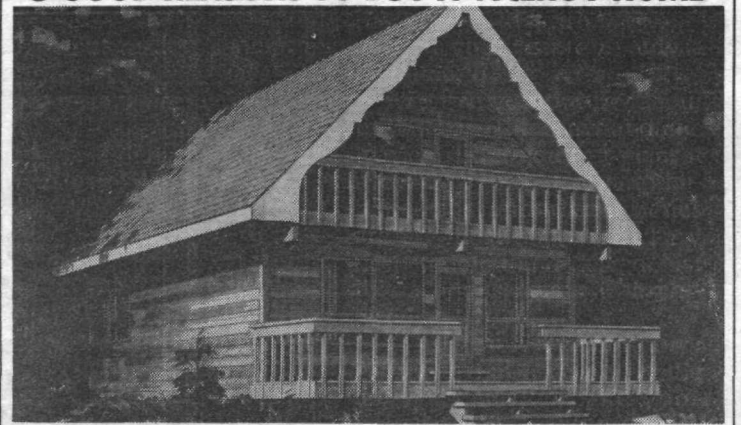
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Sustainable construction was topic of conference

How humans build their nests — and suggestions for change — was the topic of a unique Salt Spring conference held June 19 and 20.

Buildings of earth, roofs of grass, recycled water, composting toilets and solar heat were among the ideas presented to 200 people during the Sustainable Homes for the

Gulf Islands conference.

A two-hour videotape has just been completed, summarizing the most outstanding presentations of the event. The video opens with Salt Spring architect Bob Cunliffe's introduction. "As a human species we tend to be doers and sustainability is about what not to do."

Stories on this and several

ensuing pages — written by Driftwood staff reporter Valorie Lennox after she viewed the video — take a look at what it means to be a sustainable doer.

More information on the conference and the video can be obtained from conference coordinator Sheila Harrington at the Salt Spring Community Centre.

Rammed earth homes were popular during Depression

The earliest and most widely used of building materials, earth, is making a comeback in North America through modern rammed earth dwellings, says expert David Easton.

At the sustainable housing conference earlier this year, Easton outlined the techniques used for this construction method.

A mound of earth as large as the house-to-be is required to build a rammed earth home. If the builder is fortunate, there is a suitable soil on site — if not, soil must be imported.

Suitable soil must be a well-graded mixture of different sized particles. (Further details on soils are available in Easton's book, *Dwelling on Earth*). An attractive colour is a bonus since the home builder has the option of leaving the walls their natural shade.

Although earth homes were traditionally built without cement, Easton recommends adding cement to the soil to increase the wall strength by 50 to 75 per cent.

When building, the soil is compacted in a plywood frame. Four sheets of ply-

wood, linked by pony clamps, are enough to provide framing for a complete building. It is easier and more economical to design a rammed earth building close to the ground.

Easton has been involved in rammed earth construction for the past 18 years. He notes rammed earth buildings have existed for thousands of years and have been constructed throughout the world. "We call it field testing," he quipped.

The method was also used in North America.

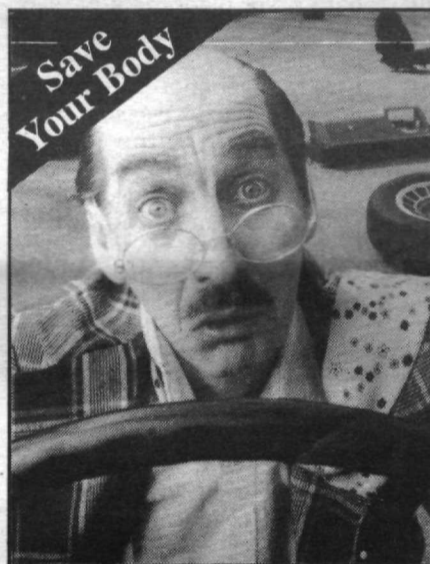
"Thousands of people built their own rammed earth houses during the Depression." Advantages of rammed earth include stability and thermal mass, making it easier to keep the buildings warm in winter and cool in summer.

"We believe earth has a place in building in the future," Easton said. "The reason for exploring earth as a building material is because other materials are in short supply."

Earth can also be fun. Different coloured soils can be layered within the walls to create the illusion of a sedimentary rock wall.

Alternatively, the thick walls are an invitation for anyone with artistic talent. "You can do some fun stuff with earth. You can carve it when it is first set," Easton noted.

"We believe earth has a place in building in the future...other materials are in short supply."
— David Easton



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Moving homes means recycling them

Entire homes can be "recycled" by moving them, according to Jim Connelly.

One of the speakers at the Sustainable Homes for the Gulf Islands conference, Connelly said moving can save a home from demolition and allow it to shelter another family.

"If you're talking about house moving, you're talking about house saving and recycling," said the spokesman for Nickel Brothers House Movers.

One significant factor in moving a house is speed. Often there is little time between the decision to demolish the house and the arrival of the bulldozer.

"This industry is really moving quickly because the demolitions really move quickly," Connelly remarked at the June 19/20 conference on Salt Spring.

"As a human species we tend to be doers and sustainability is about what not to do."
— Bob Cunliffe

— Bob Cunliffe



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Efficient water use is urged

An issue close to the surface for many Gulf Islanders — water — was the focus of Michael Pilarski's presentation on water and permaculture during the June 19/20 Sustainable Homes for the Gulf Islands conference.

Pilarski has practised organic farming and permaculture for 20 years. He recommended such measures as routing solar-heated water through a house to provide heat and storing collected water in the house, if possible, to provide a thermal mass to hold heat or cool down the home.

All water sources should be utilized, he said. In Australia, a law requires that all roofs be fitted with gutters and cisterns.

For those who hate cleaning leaves out of their gutters, Pilarski recommended a roll-under gutter. The gutter is designed to catch rain while shedding leaves and debris, which slide off the curved surface.

Water from the gutters should be directed into tanks placed up slope from the home so gravity can be used to bring the water into the home, Pilarski said.

Narrow, shallow trenches constructed on the side of a driveway will also collect water. Pilarski recommended walking around a piece of property during a rainfall, noting where the water is flowing and planning to collect it.

He also recommended re-using grey water — water from washing or bathing — to irrigate non-food plants. Pilarski has used warm grey water to grow bamboo in Washington State.

Waste water can be filtered through a leach field system to produce re-usable water. However, Pilarski suggests the leached water not be used to irrigate leafy green plants.

Humans should also try to re-use sewage waste as fertil-

izer. "When we consider there are five billion people in the world, that's the world's largest livestock herd."

Encasing a building in plants will insulate the structure in winter and cool it over the summer, Pilarski remarked, saving up to 30 per cent of heating and cooling costs.

For example, he suggested surrounding a mobile home with trellises set a short distance from the outside wall and growing vines — ideally grapes or kiwi fruit — on the trellises. The resulting greenery will conceal the boxy lines of the home, make the unit cooler in summer and warmer in winter.

Evergreen vines should be used on the north and east side of the house and deciduous vines on the south, so when the leaves fall more winter sun can penetrate. For a conventional home, the trellises can be built down from the eaves, Pilarski said.

Planning means savings during construction

David Reel's Port Townsend home is its own eco-system. Heated by solar energy, the house produces and stores food for a family of four and also recycles and re-uses grey water inside the home.

The house uses a fraction of the energy which would be used by a conventional home of the same size, Reel explained at the Sustainable Homes for the Gulf Islands conference last June. One barrier to most unconventional housing styles is cost. But Reel set out to build his home for less than the cost of a standard home.

He started by building a cement, two-room root cellar and pantry at the rear of the house. This structure is now underground and over half the house is below grade, to reduce heating costs.

Built into the base of the home is a thick solar slab, which retains heat. The slab is so effective that when the heat was turned off for five days in December, the tem-

perature of the house only dropped three degrees.

Throughout the project, Reel said he ordered exactly the materials he would need, avoiding the five to seven per cent over-ordering usually done by contractors and architects.

He controlled use of materials by contractors by insisting that any unused materials had to be taken off-site by the contractor and used for another project.

By using advanced framing and optimal value engineering techniques, he cut the amount of lumber used in the house by 30 per cent. He also refused to use large boards — the largest board in the house measures two by six feet.

"I didn't want to use any old-growth (forest) lumber," he said. Some of the savings came from good planning. When the cement truck arrived with a load, Reel had small octagonal frames ready so any excess cement could be poured into the frames to cre-

ate paving stones.

He used sliding door panels for windows as he discovered they were the cheapest form of glass. The roof holds a greenhouse and solar panels. Large clear panels set into the greenhouse floor allow light to flood the home. Since the rooms are designed to receive light from three directions, electric lights are seldom required during the day.

Most of the wiring in the home is vertical and is shielded with conduit to cut electromagnetic field emissions. Toxic emissions are reduced by the use of food grade paints.

To avoid using products containing urea formaldehyde, Reel recommends not using products which cannot be exposed to moisture since urea formaldehyde breaks down when wet.


Reel's home uses propane gas for cooking and supplements the solar heating with a small electric water heater.

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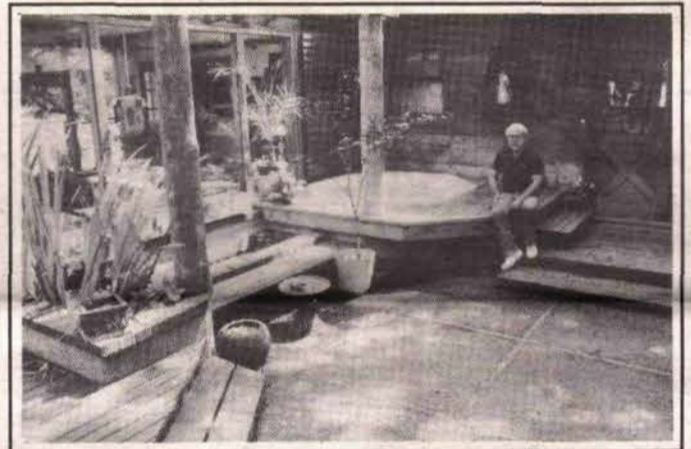


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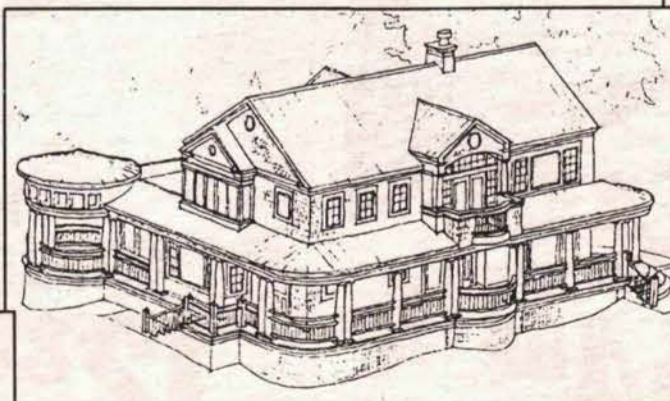
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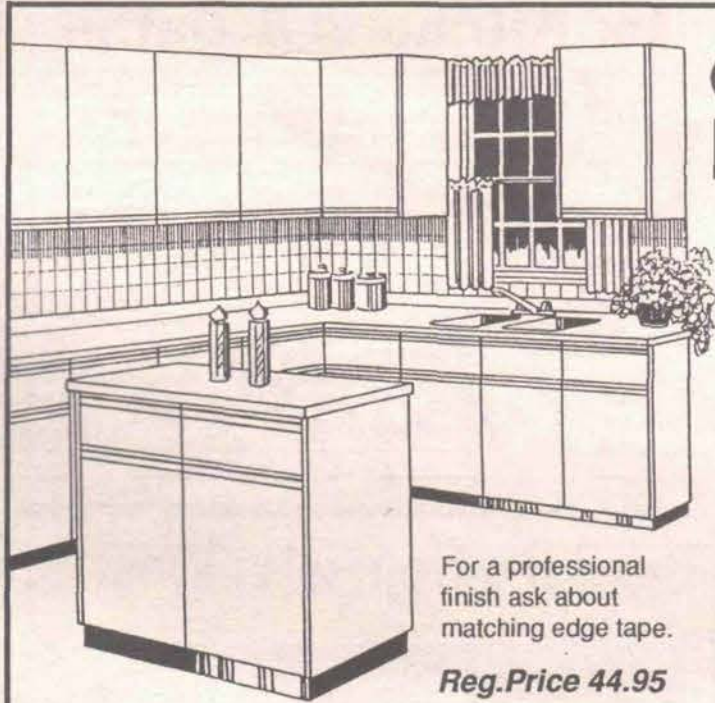
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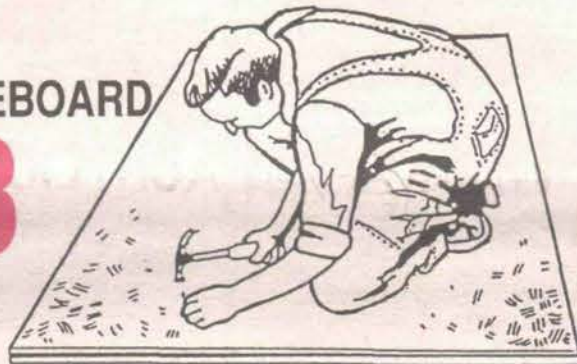
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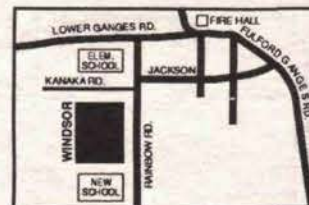
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FALL HOME IMPROVEMENTS

Underground home ecologically sound

Introductory remarks at the beginning of last June's sustainable housing conference made the point that sustainability is about what not to do.

According to Malcolm Wells, one of things humans should not do is build above ground.

In his two-hour presentation Wells outlined the advantages of underground homes.

The first advantage is ecological. "It seemed to me the only way to build without destroying the earth was to build underground." He said he wrote his first article on the concept in the mid-1960s after a successful career as a conventional architect.

Increasing demand for housing will lead to more destruction of the environment unless new housing options are found, he said.

"As the world population keeps expanding, you're going to see more building and more asphalt."

The traditional building method is to strip the land bare, build a structure and then add scattered and carefully controlled landscaping, Wells said.

In contrast to these "naked" houses built above the ground, Wells advocates underground homes which are covered with an insulating layer of sod and plants.

People can live underground but plants must live above ground, Wells notes.

"The priority appears, to me, to be living plants first because they have nowhere else to live."

Simple changes can make a great deal of difference. There are latticed paving blocks available which allow grass to grow between the openings while still providing a parking surface for vehicles, Wells said.

Although the ground may be cleared when construction starts on an underground home, the ground cover is encouraged to re-establish itself on the roof and sloping walls of the new building.

The deep soil roof provides insulation, native plants on the roof control erosion and allow gradual run-off of water and solar collectors can provide almost all the heat required by the building, Wells said.

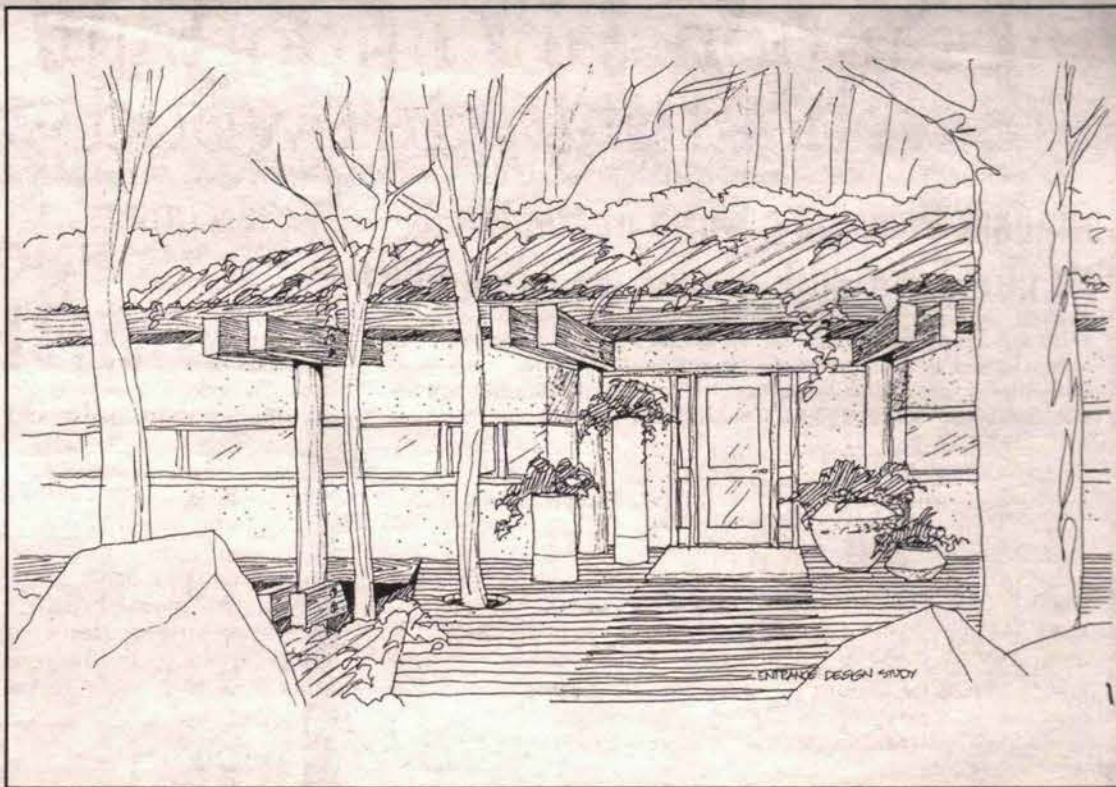
In his 1,200-square-foot underground building near

Cape Cod, Wells said he uses no more than half a cord of wood each winter for heat. Construction cost is about 10 per cent higher than a conventional building because of the need for reinforced structural support but the finished building is long-lasting and requires little outside maintenance.

Wells advocates the use of composting toilets, which he says transform human and kitchen waste into odourless topsoil within a few months.

The buildings are as bright, warm and dry as conventional buildings, Wells said. "There are not rats and spiders and mildew in these buildings."

Most building codes allow the construction of underground structures provided safety requirements are met, Wells added.



Sketch of an underground house from Malcolm Wells' book of drawings and photographs, entitled Underground Buildings. On

the left are sit-down-height windows. A cement plaster over heavily insulated walls offers energy-efficiency.

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Wood heating can be an economical way to supplement your home heating. In fact, heating with wood is a primary or secondary source of heat in about 2.5 million Canadian homes. But along with the increased use of wood burning stoves, the number of related fires has also risen.

It's important to use an approved unit and make sure it is properly installed, maintained and correctly operated. The chimney is the most critical part from a safety point of view and it must be cleaned regularly. The flue should be inspected for any needed repairs and thoroughly cleaned of soot and creosote in early fall.

When wood is burned

slowly it produces steam, unburned gases and carbon particles (soot) which condenses to form creosote in the chimney. It accumulates on the flue lining and seeps into any cracks in the chimney.

This is a fire hazard as creosote is easily ignited at low temperatures and burns with a very hot flame.

Maintaining a briskly burning fire with well seasoned wood will reduce the formation of creosote. Up to half the weight of green wood is water and may present a serious creosote problem. After seasoning, about 20 per cent of the weight is water.

Burning dry wood is not only 25 per cent more efficient, but it ignites faster, smokes less and it's a lot lighter to

carry.

The wood you burn should be clean, untreated and unpainted. Avoid railway ties and furniture treated with chemicals, which often produce toxic fumes when burned.

Hardwoods, like maple, for example, are more dense and will produce a longer-lasting fire than softwoods such as fir.

Another valuable safety precaution for wood heat is to install smoke detectors, and have a fire extinguisher located near the wood burning unit. One smoke detector should be placed on the ceiling as close as possible to the sleeping area.

Placing an alarm in a stairwell is also a good idea, as is putting one in the basement near the furnace.

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Construction waste totals 2.5 tons

Each new home, built by conventional means, produces two-and-a-half tons of construction waste.

So says David Rousseau, who has specialized in examining the safety, recycling and environmental issues surrounding common building products. Rousseau was one of the guest speakers at the June 19-20 Sustainable Housing for the Gulf Islands conference.

Rousseau said housing design should change to recognize the shortage of large pieces of wood. Almost no trees capable of producing 2 x 10-foot or 2 x 12-foot lumber are found outside Western Canada, he said.

The conversion of trees to lumber is only 65 per cent efficient, Rousseau said.

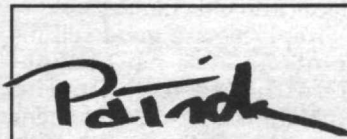
People need to reduce their expectations when building. Advanced framing techniques,

manufactured joists, scissor trusses and metal braces can reduce the amount and the size of wood required.

Of the two-and-a-half tons of construction waste produced by a new home, 35 per cent is wood. In most urban areas, 18 per cent of the material going into landfills is construction waste, Rousseau added.

For people sensitive to the chemicals or emissions from many products used in home construction, a new home built to airtight standards can create a health problems as there is no air flow to clear away toxic emissions.

To ensure a healthier environment, Rousseau recommended the use of low toxicity, water-based paints, adhesives and caulking, checking the fibre and emissions from floor covers and avoiding urea-formaldehyde bonded particle board.



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In fact, all but five of Home Hardware's 72 water-based paints required no changes to earn the EcoLogo last year as reduced-pollution water-based paints. The remaining five had to slightly reduce their content of volatile organic compounds (VOCs). VOC's allow paint to freeze and thaw during transportation without breaking down. But these chemicals contribute to chemical smog which can cause eye, nose and throat irritation and be toxic to plants.

Challenged by the Environmental Choice criteria, our researchers discovered that they could remove enough VOCs per can from those paints to meet the criteria without damaging the performance of the paint.



Home Hardware's paint manufacturing facility is a model of environmental consciousness. The factory produces no waste effluent and recycles waste water for production. Dedicated piping for each paint and mechanical flushing devices minimize the need to flush with water. At the retail level, our Earth Care program helps customers identify products that are less harmful to the environment and learn how to responsibly use and dispose of them. For example, our new paint labels urge users to donate paint leftovers to charity or to allow the dregs to dry before placing the can in the garbage. We applaud Environmental Choice for inspiring industry and consumers alike to strive for higher environmental goals.

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The Bright family are enjoying their one year anniversary on the Island. For many years Ron & Heather camped on their property at Mt. Belcher Heights or stayed at local bed and breakfast operations.

Being from New Zealand, Ron finds Salt Spring similar, with its winding roads, glorious pastoral fields and abundant bird life.

After the hustle and bustle of Vancouver, they have embraced their beloved rock and friendly islanders.

Young son Ross (he's something special) will have a great start in life, growing up on the island.

Heather, the artistic one, has plenty of company with the many talented residents here.

Ron, the practical one, operates a business called Kiwi Plumbing. He is available to serve all the islands. He can handle custom homes, renovations and service work. His background includes extensive experience in industrial and commercial piping systems as well as residential plumbing. He is able to install and advise people on all their plumbing needs.

The family business operates in Vesuvius Bay. Ron, Heather and Ross look forward to meeting even more islanders. They are invited to call 537-9717 or drop around to 109 Stonecutter Way for a chat and cup of tea.

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Kitchen, bath renovations

While renovating kitchens and bathrooms may never turn a profit, you will usually recoup 80-100 per cent of your investment in the resale value of your house. As such, kitchens and bathrooms are perhaps the safest renovation projects around.

"You can add value in a bathroom or a kitchen," says a contractor, "but it really depends on what you are taking out and what you are replacing it with. If you get rid of something that was done in the '30s, '40s or '50s, and replace it with something from the '90s, then I bet you will make money. But if you change something from the '70s, hoping to make \$5,000, then I don't think you will."

And there are other pitfalls. "If you are only spending \$2,500 on a kitchen or bathroom then it's not really a renovation, it's a waste of money.

Low-budget renovations which try to work with existing fixtures simply don't work."

Unless they are low, low budget.

"There are still some people out there making money by buying cheaply and redoing the kitchens and bathrooms. They patch the plaster, wash the windows and the skylights and then paint everything white or off-white."

The trick to all renovations is to try to keep your costs down, mainly by developing a keen eye for comparison shopping when it comes to purchasing fixtures.

"I've become a big fan of buying Canadian-made fixtures — I've seen a lot of Italian-designed sinks which turn out to be manufactured in Bulgaria or Romania and they've been disasters to work with. I would advise anyone thinking about doing anything in a bathroom or kitchen to take a plumber with them when they go to look at fixtures."

JACUZZIS

The experts agree that turning bathrooms into entertainment centres by adding Roman baths or Jacuzzis may backfire in the long run. These are, after all, lifestyle features from a lifestyle that has largely gone the way of the dodo.

"I think that Jacuzzis are highly overrated, and I know that women are concerned about them because they are real hellholes for bacteria. I've never heard of anyone who used them on a regular basis."

Jacuzzis are a waste of money because a good deep bath is better than a whirlpool or a jet tub. People use them when they're first installed, and after that, forget about them.

BEDROOMS AND SPACE CREATION

But despite the value of bathrooms, one thing you probably don't want to do, the experts say, is convert a spare bedroom into one. It lowers the resale value of a house.

No one needs a 12-by-14-foot bathroom.

They say that it's bad policy

to ever remove bedrooms. If you have a four-bed-room house, it's more valuable than a three-bedroom house.

Which brings us to the topic of adding or creating space, usually done by knocking down room divisions.

"I have this theory that you should try and keep the original wall divisions," says the contractor. "It's so hard to try and open up a wall and then not have it look like a rough opening, because there are holes left in the floor and there are breaks in the baseboard and ceiling molding." He adds that installing an arch might be the best way of opening up space.

FIREPLACES

There is an expression, the only efficient fireplace is one that has been bricked in, although there is a roaring trade in installing airtight fireplaces into old chimneys.

Fireplaces are good selling points because most people are attracted to them. The problem is that most of them are real heat thieves, though some of the new ones can help heat a home.

Fireplaces are good, second only to the recovery rate on a bathroom. You're selling the sizzle and it makes your house better than the one across the street.

ROOF DECKS & GARDENS

The problem with installing a roof deck is that you have to put supports down, and they run the risk of piercing the roof membrane, meaning there is a potential for leaks. And a roof has to be able to breathe, which it can't do if moss and leaves are collecting under the deck.

Average price \$258,000

Purchase prices of houses sold in the Gulf Islands in August averaged about \$258,000, up from about \$198,000 a year ago, according to a Victoria Real Estate Board monthly summary. The summary includes all residential properties in the Victoria area sold through the multiple listing service.

"The summer months traditionally show a levelling off in prices," board president Les Bjola said. "It's important not to put too much emphasis on month-to-month price fluctuations as there are many factors which affect prices."

He said there has been a net gain in prices of three per cent since the beginning of the year and this is in line with the board's expectations.

"We continue to have a healthy and stable supply of listings which again emphasizes the need for realistic pricing for those wishing to sell their homes."

Fifteen Gulf Island homes valued at a total of \$3.8 million sold in August for an average price of \$258,000. In July, 21 homes valued at just more than \$4 million averaged \$191,000.

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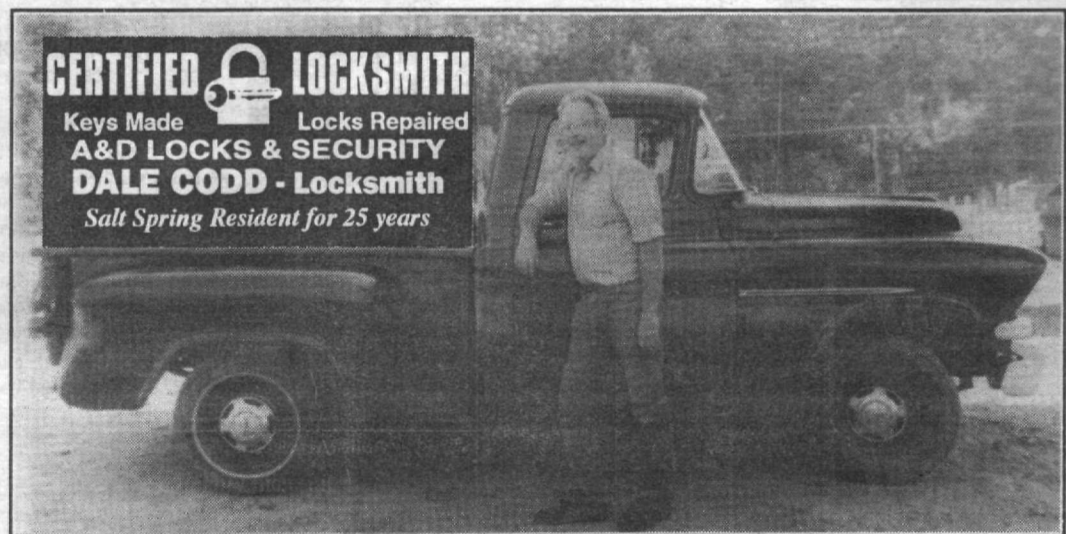


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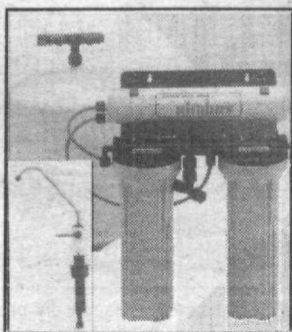
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Steve Davison with Mirage floor and tools

Pre-finished flooring is simple to install

Are you a do-it-yourselfer who loves the look of hardwood floors but is not confident enough to go through the process of installing the wood and attempting to finish it properly?

One Salt Spring Island resident has a solution: a pre-finished hardwood flooring product called Mirage, which he installed without the dust, noise, and frustration of regular hardwood flooring. Steve Davison chose the birch mill-run flooring from four different varieties and installed it himself, an easy task for a beginner and inexpensive as well.

"Basically, it is really cost saving because being pre-finished, you just lay it down (and) nail it down in a conventional manner and it's done," Davison said. "You can throw furniture right on top of it immediately, whereas with conventional hardwood flooring you have to go through the whole finishing process...."

"You could finish a room and put furniture on top of it while you're even finishing another room. You could be furnishing your house as you're working." Davison said the flooring's random three to six-foot lengths allow installers to create their own

patterns.

Metropolitan Hardwood Floors supplies the flooring, along with a nailer, a hammer, and a video cassette which contains instructions on laying the floor, as well as what to do to prepare the sub-floor. Davison said the company basically supplies the tools free with the flooring, and will let the customer borrow them for about two weeks or so.

The cost of the hardwood floor itself is comparable to a regular hardwood floor, Davison said. But the major costs for standard flooring come from the actual finishing process which can be difficult and expensive for a do-it-yourselfer. Mistakes are easily made and they can be costly.

Mirage floors are available in four types of wood — oak, maple, ash and birch — and come with a choice of nine different stains and two types of finish, satin or semi-gloss.

Each length of flooring is finished with five coats of polyurethane, each of which is cured using ultraviolet lamps. Davison was so pleased with his new floor, he became the sales representative for Mirage in the Gulf Islands.

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Simplest of work tends to expand into bigger job

During the late '70s and early '80s, when residential real estate values were soaring, a curious breed of speculator moved into the real estate market. This speculator had but two distinguishing traits: an overabundance of elbow grease and a yuppie expectation of triumph and profit.

This zeal for hard work manifested itself in the buying and selling of homes. Usually the home was renovated in one fashion or another before being put up for resale. As the property market was engaged in one long upward spiral, the myth was born that renovations added value to a home, increased its worth, and made it sell like hotcakes.

Now, in the early '90s, if you're thinking of making big bucks on the resale market by fixing up the old shack, you'd better think again. And again. It's not that it's impossible; just difficult.

There is an unwritten law in real estate that says you can't take a house out of its setting and make it rise too much above the value of its neighborhood. A home's value will always be tied to the average price of houses in its immediate vicinity.

And so, to make money on renovations, you have to, as broker puts it, "buy the Chevrolet on a Cadillac street and figure the cost of the renovations into the purchase price."

This means that if a house is priced at \$200,000 and needs \$20,000 worth of electrical and roofing work, don't pay more than \$180,000. If you buy it for less than \$180,000, or pay less than \$20,000 for the necessary work, then, just maybe, you stand to make a profit on the renovations. That is, of course,

if you can sell the house.

Next, once you get into the renovations, there are pitfalls you should definitely watch out for. And the first, crucial point about renovations is always this: projects have a way of getting way out of hand.

If you start a project and the contractor says it's going to cost you \$20,000, by the time

Basically, there are two kinds of renovation work, cosmetic and structural.

you finish it's more likely going to cost you \$25,000 or \$30,000. This usually happens because you decide that you really don't like this or that fixture — you change the original specifications.

In other words, work, no matter how simple, tends to magically multiply. and it's black magic: the small crack in the wall spreads all over the room; the living room, once painted, makes the hallway seem dingy, calling for more paint and plaster; the bathroom wall, once removed, reveals rotting framework...

"Renovators have a bad reputation," says a contractor. "But the truth is, people have a hard time knowing when to

stop."

Basically, there are two kinds of renovation work: cosmetic and structural. Cosmetic renovations are the equivalent of makeup, or perhaps a facelift. Structural renovations, on the other hand, are crucial to maintaining the integrity of the building. These tasks — mainly maintenance and repairs — are often neglected by new home owners.

People generally aren't interested in the safety factors. Things like updating their wiring or having their roofs and plumbing fixed. They assume that it is done.

Instead, what people usually opt for are flashier, more obvious renovations. And some are more sound than others...

In short, there is really no key to getting your money back from a residential renovation project. But if renovations won't necessarily add money to the house, what they may do is make it easier to sell.

With all renovations, the important thing is that you get some enjoyment out of it. The value will come back to you in that it will make the house easier to sell.

In other words, within certain limits, renovation projects will help sell your house by making it more attractive than the one across the street.

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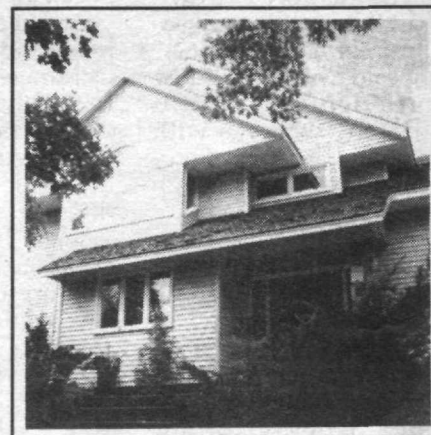
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FOCAL POINT: Large pond is the focal point in the back yard of Chuck and Elaine Bell's home. A rock wall is being built around the pond.

Pond is focal point in yard with illusion of seclusion

Sitting in Chuck and Elaine Bell's back yard in the Vesuvius area, it is easy to imagine the nearest neighbours are miles away.

The illusion is created by surrounding trees on two sides and fencing on the others. Within the confines of the back part of their less than an acre of property sits a large pond filled with goldfish and a second pond with two large koi. Chuck says he soon will add trout to the larger pond. The Bells enjoy having the fish but unfortunately so do the visiting kingfisher and blue heron.

Currently a stone pathway around most of the large pond is being created by island stonemason Amos Lundy.

When the Bells bought the property, it was very low and marshy. Digging the ponds and using the soil to bring up the area on which the house was built helped eliminate a problem.

"Otherwise the land would have been unusable," Elaine told the Driftwood.

So one pond about 150 feet in a U-shape and 30 feet across has become the focal point of the back yard. Stepping out the sliding glass doors and onto a cedar deck, visitors walk down a cedar pathway and onto the stone walkway.

Elaine said they saw similar rockwork on a new home on Vesuvius Bay Road and wanted something like it around their pond. "We loved the look of it. It's perfect and suits a pond."

She estimated it would take Lundy about a week to com-

plete the 100 feet of stone walkway.

This is the second house the Bells have built for themselves on Salt Spring Island and Chuck says he's staying in this one. "I wouldn't be doing all the extra things if we were going to leave."

He came to Salt Spring in 1988 with his brother Terry to build a house for former

This is beauty, such peace and quiet. As long as we live on Salt Spring, we'll live here.

RCMP Sergeant Larry Wendel. That one led to another and then another. The brothers have worked together since they were teenagers in Vernon, starting with their father.

As a trained horticulturalist Elaine chooses the many plants in the front and back yard that have added so much to the house. She trained through Cariboo College in

Kamloops and through the long distance education program through the University of Guelph. She also does the interior decorating on the 1,900-square-foot home.

She and Chuck plan to add two small bridges over the pond and walkway and a gazebo on the island that has been created.

"We want to keep it natural," said Elaine. "The quail and mallards like to come here and we like them to. We want to encourage as much of a natural look as possible and work around it."

In the front yard she intends to plant grass and large trees so the deer are welcome to come and visit.

Looking out over the yard, trees, grass and ponds, Elaine said:

"This is beauty, such peace and quiet. As long as we live on Salt Spring, we'll live here."



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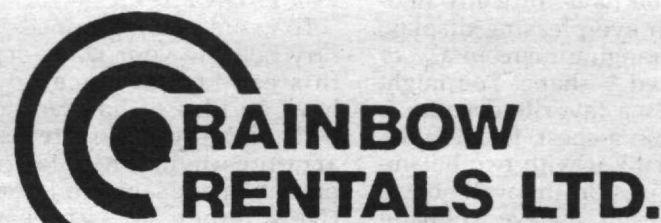
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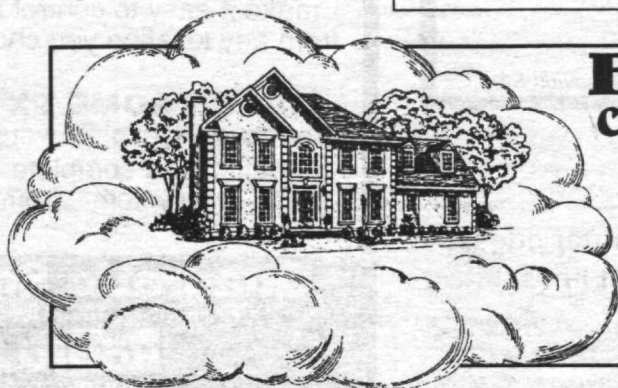
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Tips for artful arrangement

By thinking of your walls as blank canvases, you can — with framed prints, photographs, and decorative accessories — turn them into personal galleries. If, however, you're unsure of where to drive the first nail, follow these tips for an artful arrangement.

If you have several smaller items or an especially large wall on which to showcase your favorite artworks, an arrangement of pieces is probably your best bet. This kind of assemblage can give decorative impact to small pieces that would otherwise be lost if they were displayed separately.

In groupings, artwork can be keyed by color, subject matter, or by matching frames or mats. For interest, however, consider varying sizes and shapes of items in an arrangement. Another way to add variety is by varying the depth of the frames.

ORDERLY CONDUCT

To keep a grouping from looking disorderly, create a geometric shape with the outer edges of the grouping, and plan for at least one or two straight lines to run through the arrangement (aligning, for instance, one side and either the top or bottom of the grouping). You can also achieve cohesiveness by hanging items relatively close together, so they appear to be a unit. Make sure that one item in an arrangement doesn't over-shadow the others, though. For example, a delicate watercolor can be overwhelmed if hung next to strong oil paintings or posters.

If you have difficulty finding an eye-pleasing display, try arranging items in a V or inverted V shape. You might display a favorite decorative plate on a chest, for instance, and flank it with two botanical prints on the wall above. As a result, the eye will naturally be led from the prints to the plate.

LOCATION COUNTS

What good is a work of art

if you can't see it? In a place where you and guests are likely to be standing, such as a hall, be sure to hang pictures at standing level. Otherwise, pictures should relate to your eye level when seated. Be sure to place a picture so that the head of a seated person will not obscure it.

It's also best to mount items no more than one foot above furnishings. You want to compose a grouping in which the picture and the furniture seem related; closeness gives this connection. If you do need to hang a picture higher than one foot above a table or chest, however, fill the gap with a vase of flowers.

By thinking of your walls as blank canvases, you can turn them into personal galleries

PUT IT ON PAPER

To avoid making unnecessary holes in your walls, try this easy trick: Once you have an idea of how you'd like to hang your items, arrange them on a large piece of paper on the floor. (Newspaper or grocery sacks that have been split along one side and taped together work well for this approach.)

With a pencil, marker the

spot on the paper where each nail or hanger should be placed. Then, tape the paper to the wall, hammer each nail through the appropriate mark, and pull the paper over the nails. Finally, hang each piece of art in the appropriate place.

HANGER HINTS

Just as important as composition is how your treasured artworks are hung.

— Light weights. Anything weighing up to 10 pounds can be hung from nails, even on drywall.

Adhesive hooks are also ideal for lightweight use. They do, however, require several hours to set.

— Medium weights. For heavier items (up to 25 pounds), drywall hangers are easy to use and require no tools; the pointed end of the hanger easily twists into the hollow wall.

Brass hangers and nails come prepackaged according to weight and require only a few taps of the hammer. Hard-surface hangers and loops can be hammered into concrete, cinder block, hardwood, and soft brick. To hang something on a hard brick wall, however, be sure to use a masonry nail.

— Heavy weights. To hang heavy objects on hollow walls, doors, and ceilings, you'll need a drill, a screwdriver, and anchors.

Metal expansion anchors have a shaft that spreads out and grips the back side of the wall when the bolt is screwed in tightly.

Toggle bolts require bigger holes than expansion hangers and are installed by pushing the bolt and hinged wings through the hole until the wings open. There is one drawback, however: The object must be held in place while the bolt is being installed.

Combination bolts are designed for hollow, thick, or solid walls, or wherever you wish to avoid making a large hole.



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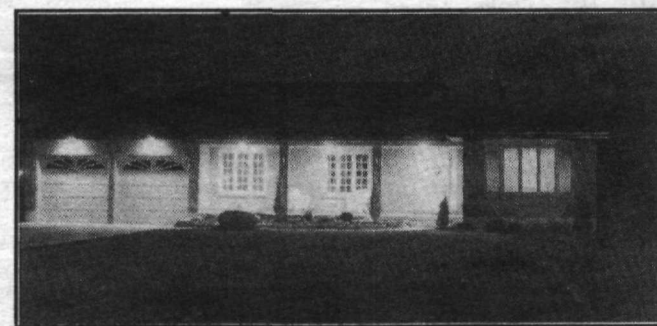
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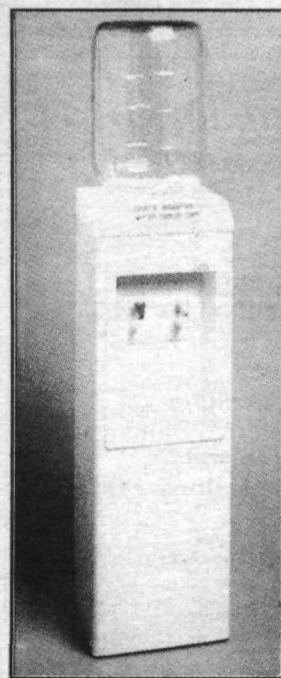


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To keep a group of pictures from looking disorderly on the wall, create a geometric shape with the outer edges of the grouping, and plan for at least one or two straight lines to run through the arrangement.



Jim Hamilton's Chu-An Drive home

New home could have been built 100 years ago

An old Victorian home on Chu-An Drive is not what it appears.

The Madrona Valley Country Inn has all the appearances of a home built 100 years ago. But in actual fact it was built only last year by owner

A large kitchen is reminiscent of the old days...it was the room in which families would eat

Jim Hamilton as a replica of a 100-year-old house.

Inside, it resembles its 19th Century predecessor in almost every detail.

A large and spacious kitchen is reminiscent of the old days, when it was the room in which most families

would eat. Of course, this kitchen is a little more up-to-date with its cabinets and modern appliances.

Hamilton's dining room is actually the room that would have been used as a parlour, a room where special guests would have been entertained, or where special events would have taken place.

Throughout the house is a light-coloured, Douglas fir floor which Hamilton said should last at least 100 years. Other types of flooring, such as oak, he said, would last only half as long.

Prior to the discovery of electricity, high ceilings were common. They allowed for high windows, which would let in lots of light.

While Hamilton's home enjoys the amenities of electrical service, the extra large windows also allow for maximum daylight.

One window came out of an old home in Victoria. Hamilton was doing a renovation when he came across a stained glass window that had been plastered over. He salvaged it and installed it in the en suite of his Salt Spring home.

Other historical furnishings include an old-style bathtub and a 100-year-old coal burning fireplace which has been placed in an upstairs bedroom.

In Hamilton's back yard is an outbuilding that in early days would have been used as

a coach or carriage house. The modern version is actually a mini-condo with kitchen, sitting room, and a bedroom which Hamilton rents out on a weekly basis.

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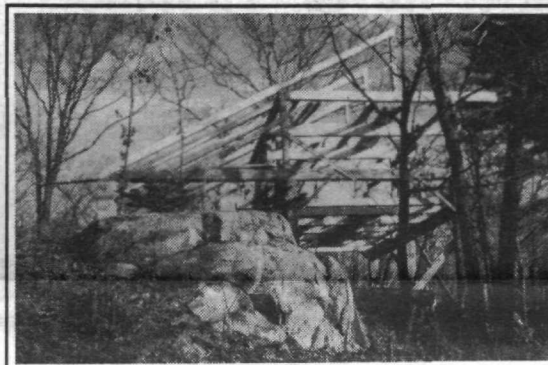
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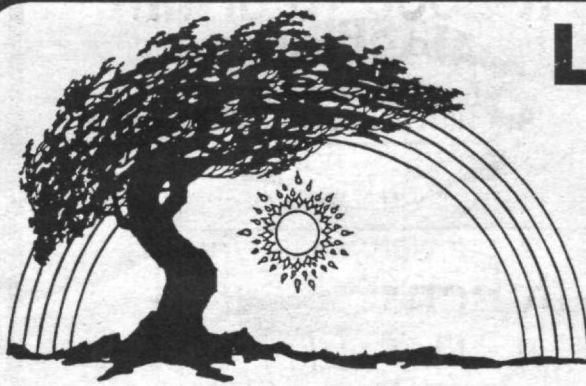
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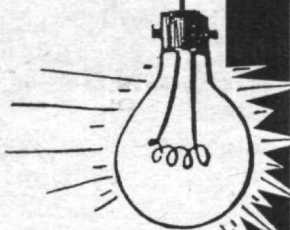
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