

Home workshop file:

Choosing the proper system of underground sprinkler pipe

All the planning brochures the various lawn sprinkler manufacturers make available do an excellent job in the space available to guide the reader.

However, there are a few important additional points regarding the selection of your pipe and some timesaving techniques you should consider.

All stipulate that when you tap into your supply line (or hose outlet if it is of the same diameter as the service line) to build a manifold (a series of valves that lead to individual circuits) you should use Schedule 40 PVC plastic pipe with cemented joints or copper tubing with solder joints. However, the pipe leading from the control valves to the sprinkler heads can be either PVC or the flexible "poly" pipe - the short name for polyethylene. Both have advantages and disadvantages of which you should be aware. Poly pipe is the preferred pipe for most underground sprinkler systems because (1) it is more economical, costing about 40 percent less than PVC. (2) it is very flexible and can be bent around corners and, because

of its flexibility, it is virtually freeze-proof - an important consideration when an underground system is installed in colder areas. (3) With poly pipe the heads are connected with what are called insert fittings, which merely slip into the pipe and are held in place with stainless steel clamps. Thus, if you make an error on the location of the head all you need to do is to cut into the pipe, add an extension called an insert coupling, and the usual clamps. Poly pipe comes in coils of 100 to 400 feet which for some installations may not produce a cost-effective installation.

Why buy a large coil if you only need 40 feet? For much smaller jobs the semi-rigid PVC pipe used to build the valve manifold is a better selection because it is available in 10-foot and sometimes 20-foot lengths. But care must be taken when adding the heads because once a fitting is cemented in place the only way to correct an error is to saw the pipe and add a coupling - a more tedious chore when correcting the same problem with poly lines.

Since you will be working with both types of plastic pipe, here are a

few tested tips. First, cutting poly pipe is easy with a sharp utility knife. Dig the point into the wall and work your way around the perimeter to cut completely through the wall. Insert fittings are molded to produce a very tight fit, and if the pipe is cold it is difficult to push the fitting all the way into the end. Solve this condition by heating the end of the pipe, using a heat gun or even an electric hair dryer (Figure 2). You will find the plastic softens quickly, which makes it extremely easy to push the fitting in place. And, when you tighten the hose clamp do not use a blade screwdriver even though a slot is available in the screw head; use a nut driver (Figure 3), which will not slip off when the clamp is tightened.

Working with PVC pipe requires following a basic procedure. Cut the pipe, using a miter box and a hack saw so you end up with a square cut (Figure 4). Remove the burrs, preassemble the fitting and, once it is rotated to the correct position, mark the hub and pipe as shown in (Figure 5). Then, when joining, brush on a primer and then a coat of cement, as shown in (Figure 6) and line up the marks.

POLYETHYLENE (POLY PIPE)

L-BOW, 1/2" FEMALE THREADS, COMBINATION T, INSERT COUPLING, INSERT, CUT-OFF RISER, STAINLESS STEEL CLAMP, TEFLON TAPE, MALE ADAPTER, COMBINATION T, PRIMER, CEMENT

POLY PIPE COMES IN ROLLS OF 100-200-300 & 400 FEET USE 100 PSI RATED

PVC 160 PSI OR BETTER RATED

10' OR 20' LENGTHS

1 SHARP UTILITY KNIFE

2 WARM END WITH HEAT GUN

3 USE A NUT DRIVER

4 USE MITER BOX

5 MARK WITH PENCIL AFTER POSITIONING DRY

6

Birds bring beauty to your garden

Make your garden inviting to various kinds of birds and you'll enjoy more of its natural beauty, says the Garden Council, a national group of firms and professionals representing the lawn and garden industry. And the organization notes that the sounds, colors and movements of birds will add interest to your landscape year 'round.

The experts on the council tell homeowners to create a welcoming atmosphere by planning wisely. They say that the best way to invite birds to nest is by providing food, shelter, and water. If you don't have a pond or stream on your property, a bird bath will serve as a good source of water. Put it where trees and shrubs will provide protective cover and be sure to keep it filled with plenty of fresh water.

A protective environment is essential for building nests, and some plants provide both shelter and food. The council suggests that you select such dual-purpose trees and shrubs as dogwoods, crabapples, hawthorns, pines, cedars, hollies, viburnums and honeysuckles.

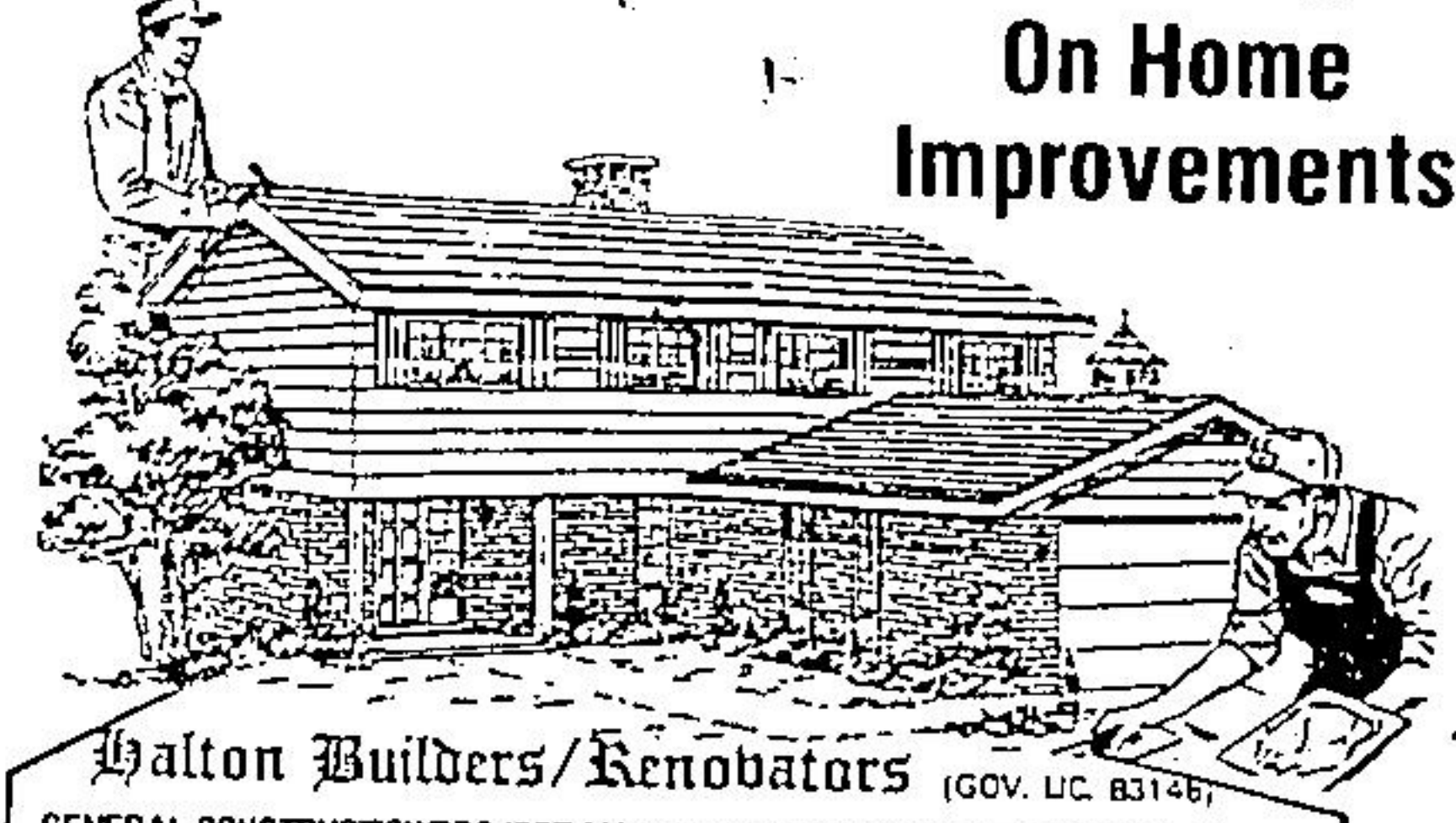
After you've identified your yard's best features for attracting birds, begin to enhance them. Council members say you should take a cue from nature. The edges of the forest or open meadow attract birds because the greatest diversity of plant life occurs in those places. Recreate this environment in your own yard by providing a variety of trees, shrubs and flowers.

The quick way to transform wide-open lawns into bird habitats is to disregard the rule about properly spacing trees during installation. Instead, plant a cluster of fast-growing trees. Under a lone shade tree plant shrubbery and flowers. Put shrubs in as a background for your flower bed and accent it with a small fruiting tree.

The council's professionals believe you should let your garden reflect your own style and taste, whether formal or informal.



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