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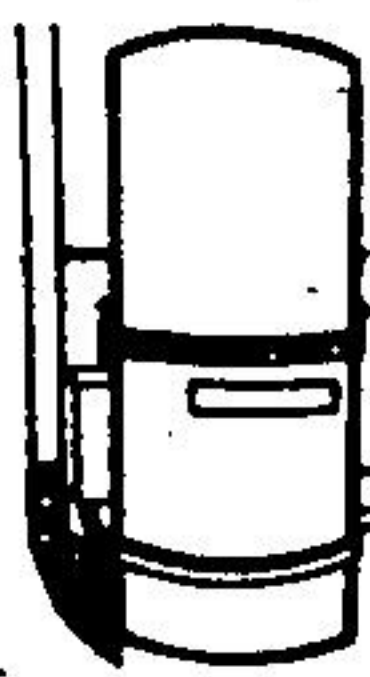
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Deck installation must be planned

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

Once again, it's the time of year when homeowners' thoughts turn to spring and outdoor living. If you're like many homeowners, you may be already anxiously planning a host of home improvement projects that you want to tackle just as soon as the last winter icicle on your eavetrough has melted.

And if you really relish the great outdoors, you may be planning to build a deck this spring to enhance your outdoor living season right through to the fall. Whether simple or elaborate, decks are popular do-it-yourself projects that the whole family can take part in planning.

Nestled in the privacy of your own backyard, a deck can provide you with a multi-function play/entertainment/utility area or a cosy, secluded retreat.

Before you start putting your ideas down on paper, think about how you're going to use your deck. How elaborate do you want it to be? Do you want an entertainment area designed for more formal occasions, or do you want a general, multi-purpose area? Do you plan to incorporate a hot tub? Are you building your deck around an existing pool or do you plan on having one installed at a future date?

Decks can greatly enhance a property and can actually make room out of space which was previously unusable - particularly if your property is situated on an incline.

PLAN CAREFULLY

Whatever route you decide to take, make sure you carefully define your needs and budget before getting started. Also take your overall landscape into account when planning. Do you want to enhance a panoramic view? Are there certain things you'd either like to highlight or camouflage?

If you have several beautiful shade trees in your yard, for instance, you may want to build your deck around them, instead of trying to avoid them altogether by simply building a smaller deck.

In fact, your deck can pretty well be as flexible as your budget and imagination; decks can be multi-tiered and can extend around the entire circumference of a home - depending, of course, on available space and local building codes.

Decks can also be built on top of existing structures, like a flat-roofed garage or an extension. (However, it's a good idea to consult a building specialist if you choose this option).

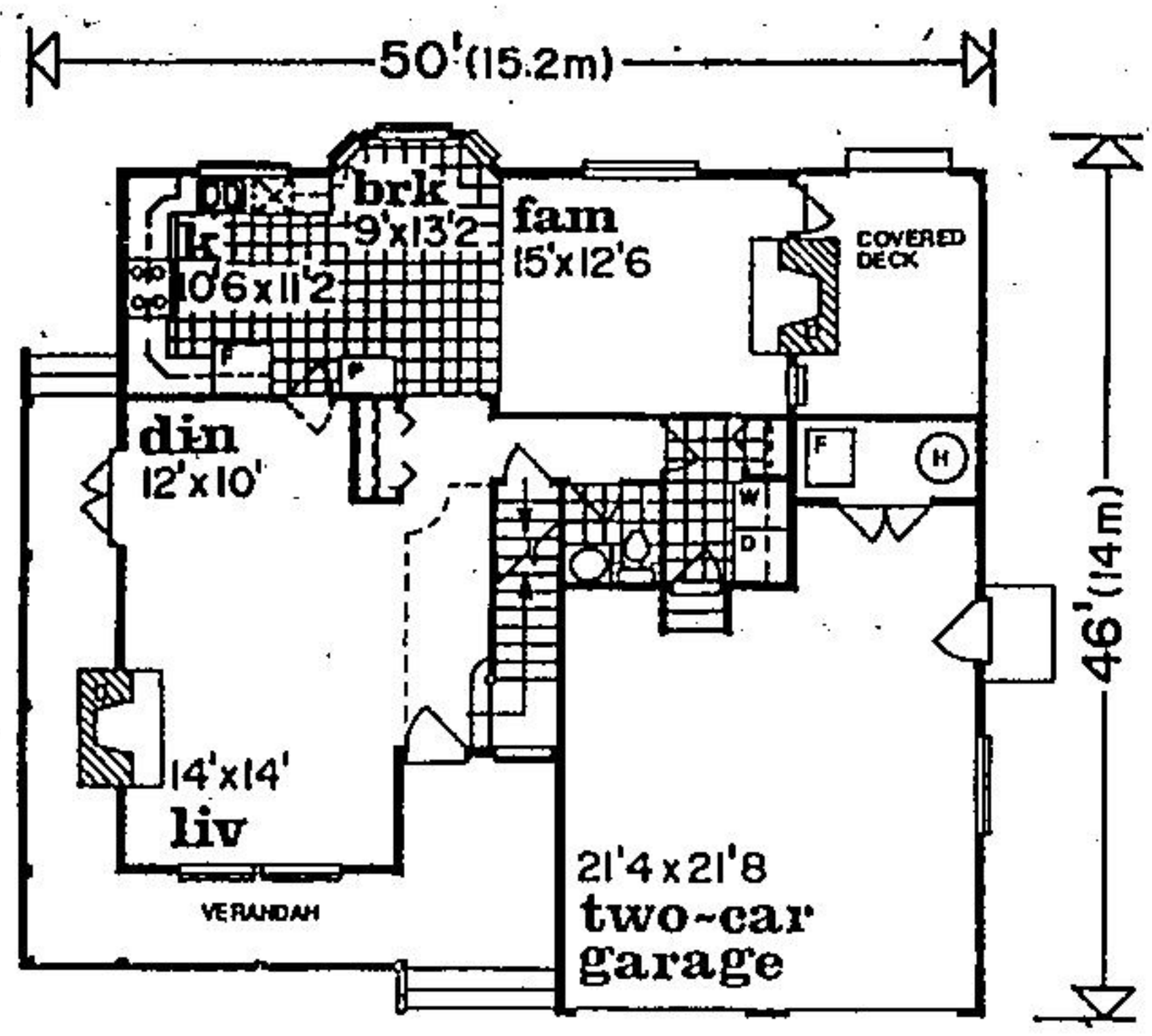
If you want to create separate areas for different functions, you can build a multi-level deck, or several, smaller adjoining decks, visually separated by attractive flowers or shrubs.

You may also want to incorporate other items that will enhance your deck, such as built-in benches and planters.

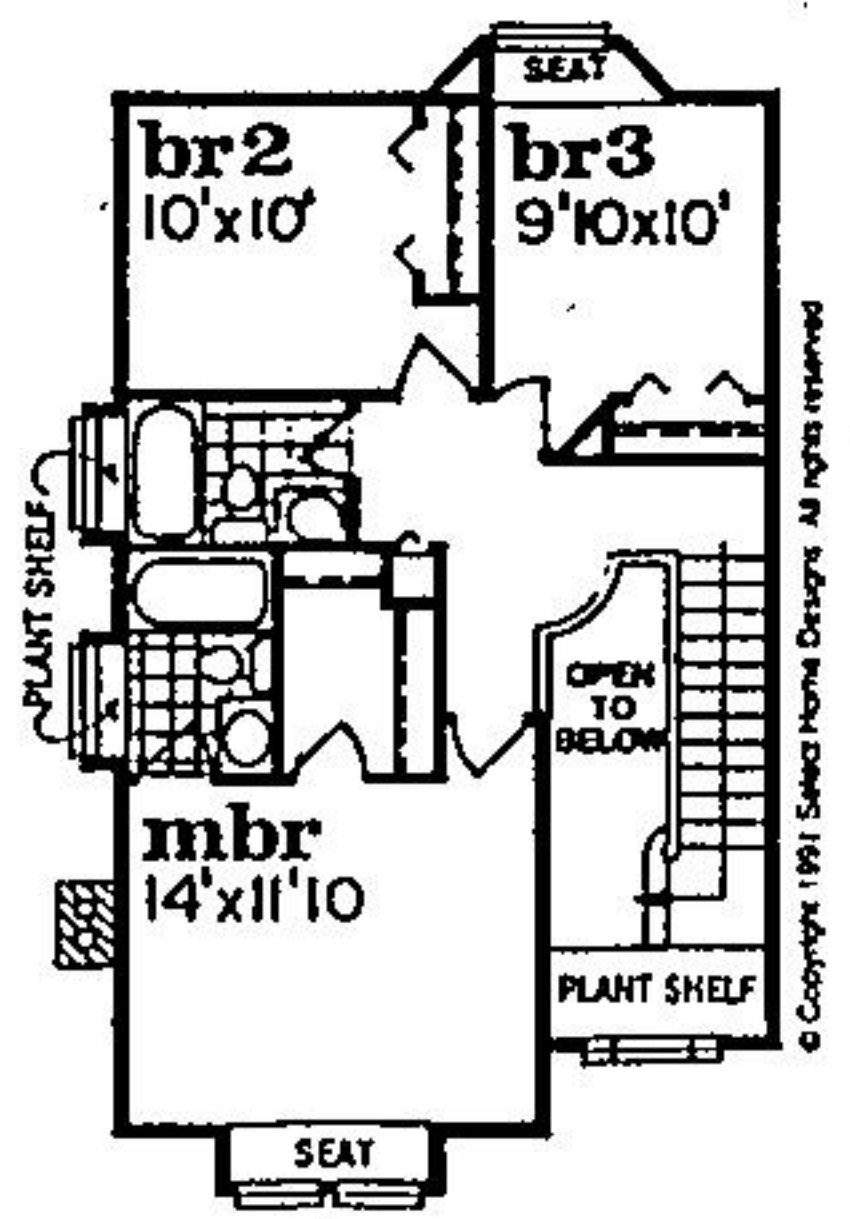
WEATHER

You should also take into account the weather in your area before proceeding too far with your plans. Which way do the prevailing winds blow? If wind is a potential problem, you may simply want to install walls around your deck to shelter it. You may also want to install some sort of roofing, such as lath or plastic, depending on your preference.

A trellis roof, for example, provides an excellent surface on which to hang attractive plants.



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