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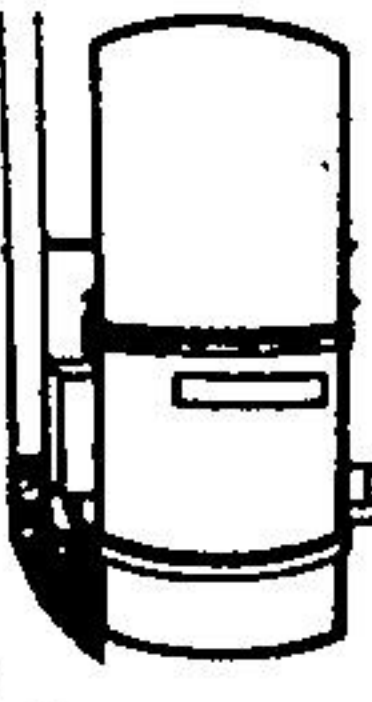
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Make gardens family project

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

Do you long for the taste of fresh-picked vegetables straight from the garden? Are you looking for a relaxing and rewarding outdoor project? If so, you may want to try planting your own vegetable garden.

Even if you're a novice gardener, you can enjoy the fresh taste of home-grown vegetables and take pride in the fact that you grew them yourself. And you don't need a huge yard or acres of land to grow a healthy crop.

A vegetable garden is a project the whole family can take part in. Youngsters in particular, take great pride in planting things and watching them grow. It's an ideal way to cultivate their interest and get them involved in household projects.

Growing your own vegetables has other benefits as well; fresh-picked vegetables have a higher vitamin content and their taste is far superior to those bought at the grocery store or supermarket. There is a notable difference between the piquant flavor of a radish served straight from the garden and one that has been packed and shipped great distances to your local store.

You can also freeze many of your own vegetables so you can enjoy home-grown goodness all year round.

Even if you have a tiny yard and growing space is a problem, remember that several vegetables, like cherry tomatoes, can be grown in pots.

The most important ingredients for growing a successful vegetable garden are sunlight and good soil. It's also important to have good drainage and a realistic idea of the types of vegetables that will flourish in your particular locale. (Growing conditions can vary greatly from area to area.)

Because light is so important (about five to six hours are necessary per day), it's best to try and avoid planting directly under any large trees.

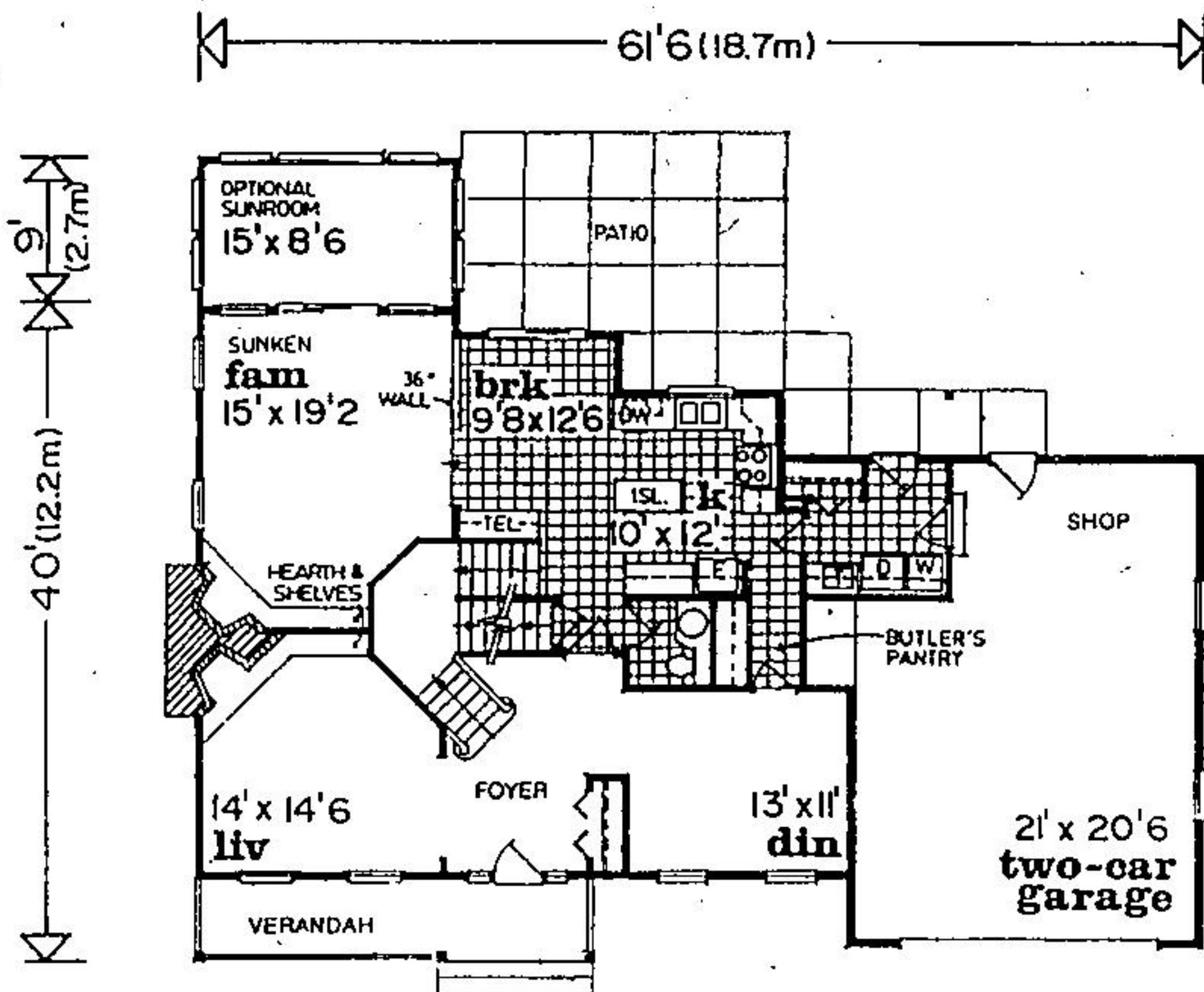
And gardening authorities recommend that you plant your garden fairly close to your house, to help discourage rodents from nibbling on your plants.

Depending on the nature of your soil, you may have to prepare it before sowing your seeds or planting your seedlings. Compost is an excellent soil conditioner. To find out the best way to treat your soil, you may want to consult your local nursery. You may also want to get a sample of your soil analysed by a soil testing lab.

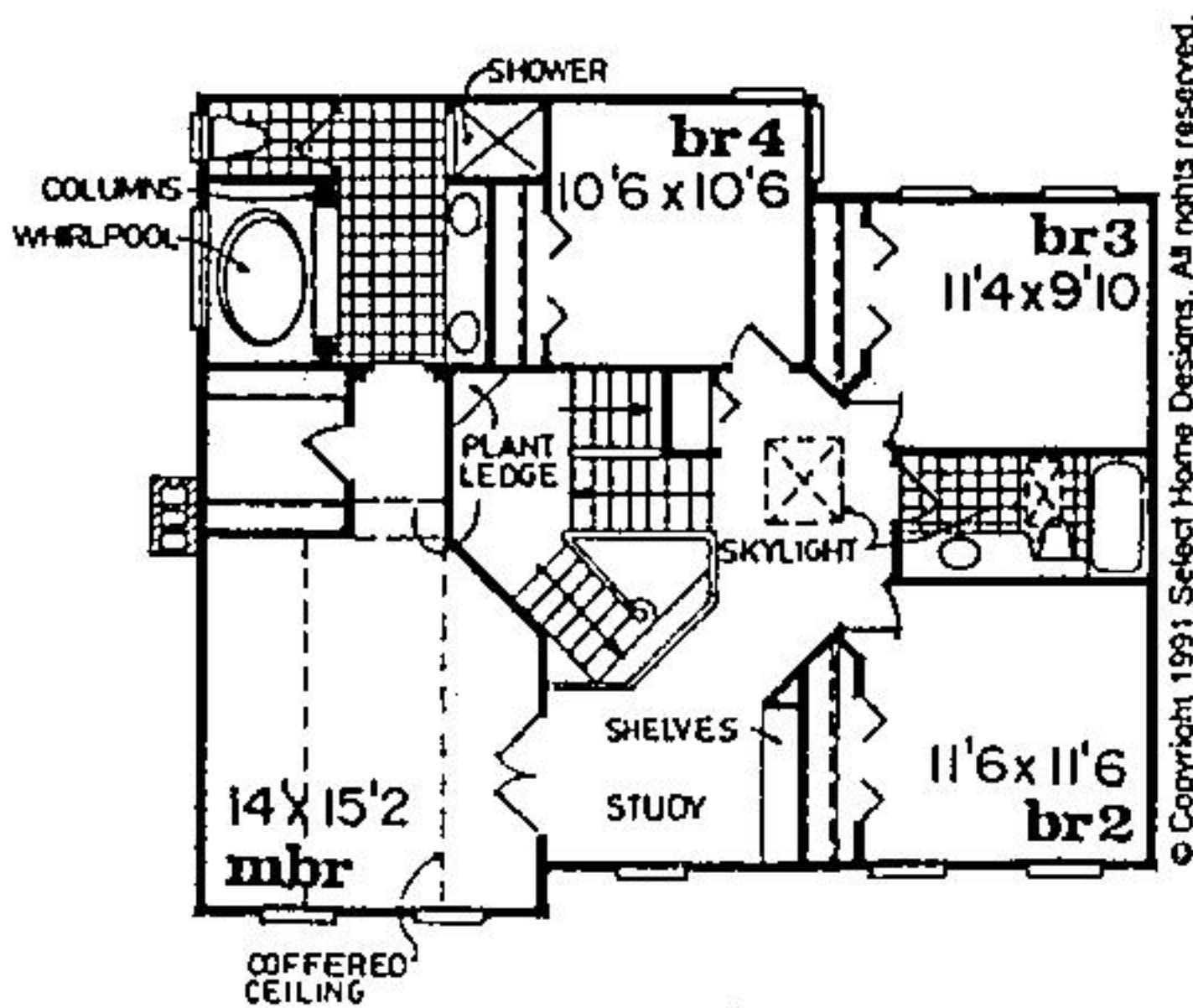
Once you've determined the makeup of your soil, you can consult with the experts at your local gardening centre as to how to best prepare it for planting. (They might also be able to give you some tips on what will grow best in your particular soil type.)

If your soil is in very poor condition, you may want to consider using raised beds. These units - usually constructed of wood - are preferred by many gardeners because they sit on top of the ground and can be filled with various soil mixtures. They are also generally easier to maintain.

You can also plant your vegetables in large free-standing containers or planters - also an ideal way to conserve space.



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