

Gardening

To landscape, start from scratch

Early Spring - right now - is the time to be planning your landscape: whether you have an older home where the planting just needs some rejuvenation; or a new home where you must start from scratch. According to the Canadian Garden Council, by making your plans now, you'll beat the rush at garden centres and professional landscape firms that generally begins in April in most parts of Canada - even earlier in many parts of British Columbia.

One of the difficulties faced by many homeowners - whether it be in an older or brand new home - is that of a steep slope in the back garden area. Often there is a slope at the end of the property sloping up or down to a road or emergency waterway; or the slope may be along one side of the property. On older homes such

slopes have often been terraced with timbers - either old railway ties, or pressure-treated lumber - and after a decade or more, the timbers begin to rot and/or move.

On new home sites, generally, such slopes are just graded and sodded by the developer. The resulting slope is often too steep to be cut properly with a rotary lawn mower, or when it is, the grass is too easily scalped and thus week growth tends to take over, and the area has an unkempt look to it all growing season.

The answer to this problem, both on older homes where the original timbers need replacing, or on the slopes on the lots of new homes, is to use precast interlocking retaining wall systems. These were first introduced about a decade ago, and

allow a natural stone look (in several color tones), with the convenience of standard concrete units which lock together in several patterns to form a strong wall that will last for decades without deterioration or shifting.

In addition to precast blocks which provide straight walls of 60 cm (2') to 7.5 metres (25') in height, these systems are now available for curved walls, and with special planting boxes that allow clusters of plants of various types - even evergreens - on terraced slopes. Most of the precast stones come as two pre-cast stones in one unit which is then easily split apart on site by one hit with a heavy hammer and chisel. The resulting break gives a natural-stone-outcropping look to the easily-handled precast concrete unit.

Perhaps the greatest advantage of these precast stones and their use in retaining walls is that they require no poured concrete foundations. All that is needed is a level 8 cm (3") pad of compacted gravel in a shallow trench for walls up to 1.5 metres (5') high. No other foundation is needed. The freshly cut blocks are laid dry, without mortar, one on the other. Depending on the height of the wall, blocks of a greater depth are used at the base. In order to finish off the wall, a coping stone that interlocks with the stones below, runs along the top of either straight or curved walls.

These new interlocking precast wall systems are not only well suited to back gardens with awkward slopes, but also for creating planting beds at the front of the home, or around swimming pools being added in back gardens.

While the interlocking wall systems are ideally suited to do-it-yourself homeowners, most landscape contractors will contract to build what is needed, and because of the simplicity of the system, the labor is not too substantial so the added cost is not too great. Be sure to investigate all of the various systems available. The Canadian Garden Council says most of these materials are available through franchised dealers throughout Canada.

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Parenting Tips
Georgetown Parent-Child Centre

Work with 'klutz'

by **VALERIE CUNNINGHAM** R.N.

Your pre-teen or teenager cannot walk through a doorway without bumping into both sides of it. There are many trips, falls and collisions. Your pre-teen or teenager is a "klutz" because:

- the "walkman" is always in the ears
- during puberty bones grow faster than muscles
- he/she is carrying food while moving from the kitchen to the family room
- his/her feet have just grown again.

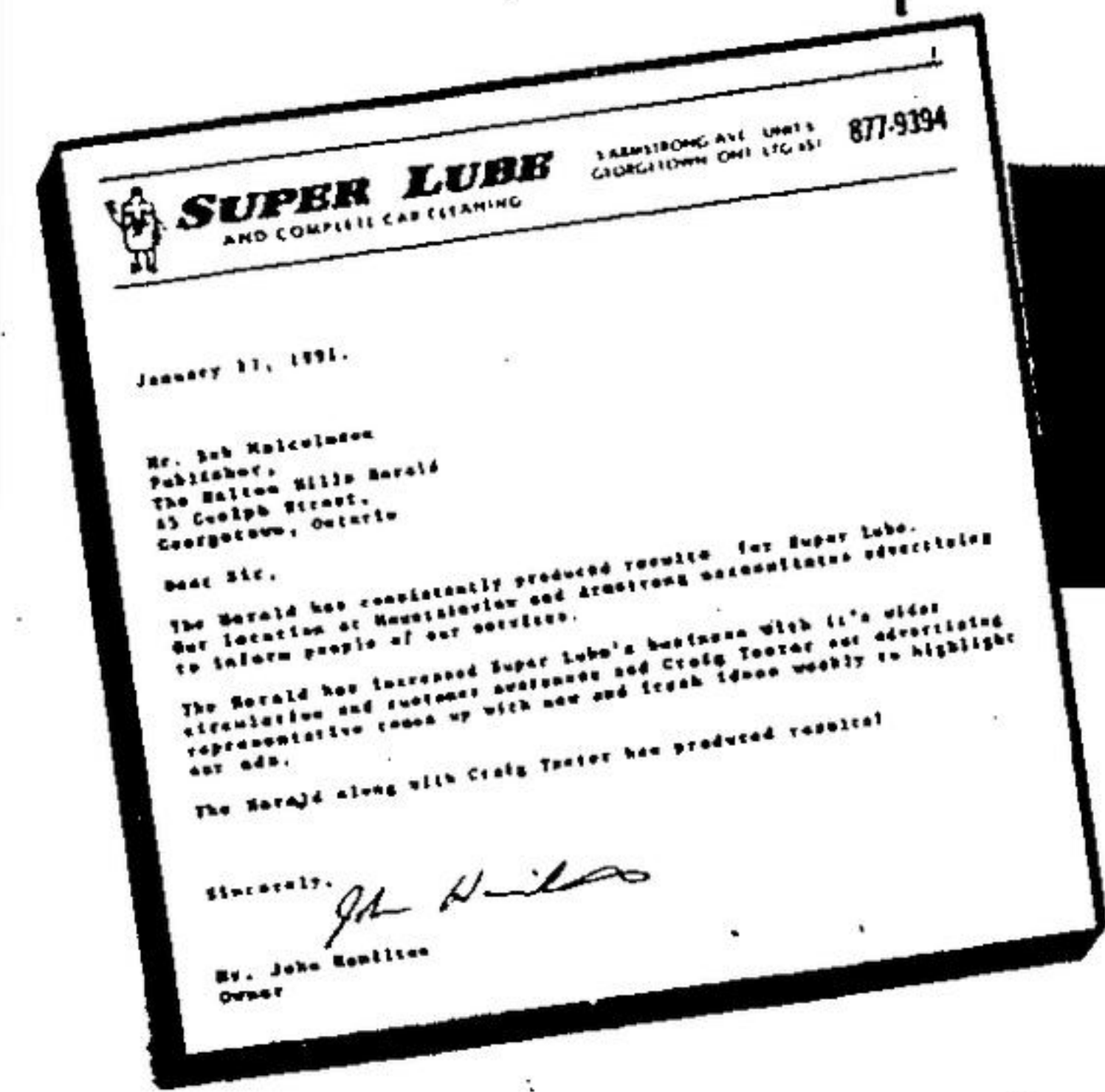
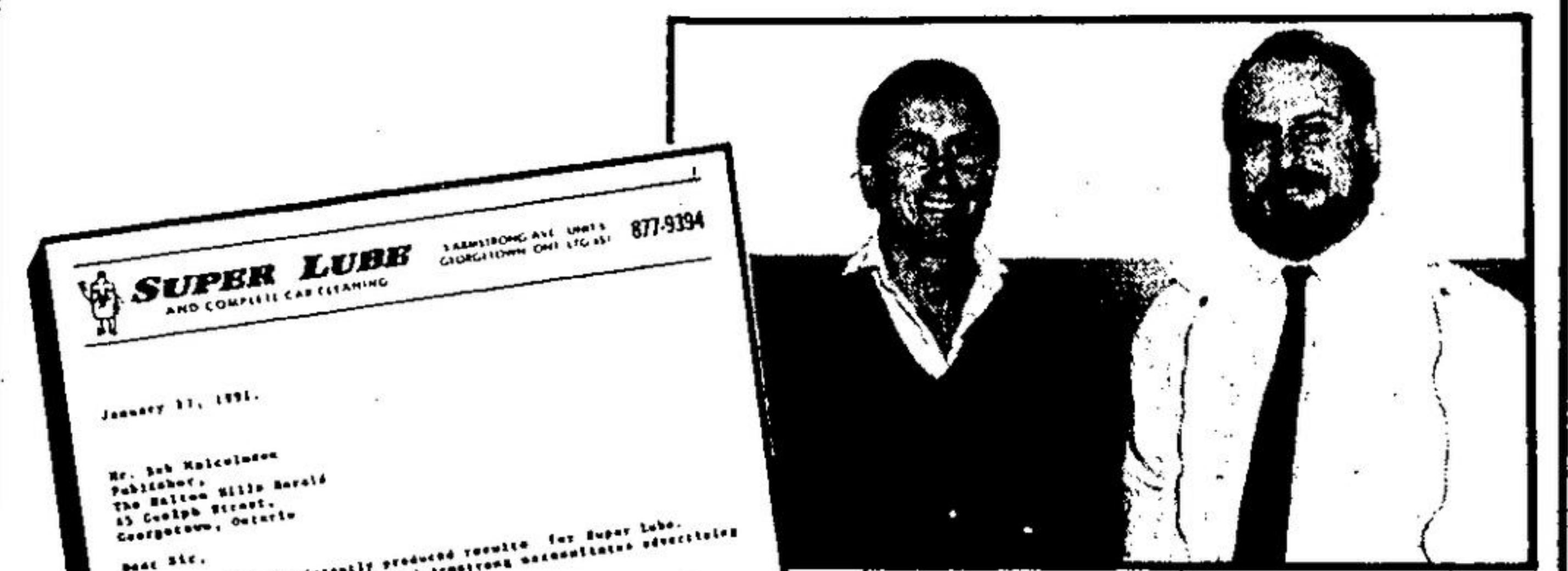
While you may be tempted to answer: "all of the above," the correct answer is "b". So what can be done? Most likely the youngster will be trying to solve the problem naturally. Exercise is the best solution. There are three main reasons for exercise: 1) flexibility, 2) strength and 3) aerobic benefit. For healthy growing children the first two are

most important as muscles develop. Aerobic benefit is important too, but most children are active and participate in gym and other sports that are good for heart and lungs. Therefore to prevent injuries, I recommend appropriate bending and stretching type warmup exercises before engaging in active sports. Repetition of flexibility exercises gives the muscle increased strength, as do some specific exercises. Exercise may help the teen to improve grace and coordination, but patience will help the parent, because this stage too will pass.

Valerie Cunningham, a paediatric nurse in independent practice, offers a variety of parenting courses and private consultations. She may be reached at 877-6398. In April and May she will lead two parenting courses for the Georgetown Parent-Child Centre. For further information call the Centre at 873-2960.

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Shown here are, left to right, Super Lube owner John Hamilton and Herald advertising representative Craig Teeler. (Herald Photo)

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