

The Wilderness and Your Garden

By JANET KUZNIAR
SPECIAL TO THE COMPASS

In our increasingly hectic lives of instant communication and long commutes, the home is becoming increasingly important as a private refuge and solace. We all need something to restore the spirit. As we may not be able to pick up at will and go to a cottage whenever we like, there are ways to bring the restorative benefits of nature right to our doorstep.

As a landscape gardener with Urban Wilderness Landscaping, I advise people to create a living space around our homes that is an emotional balm, soothing us when the cacophony and technologization of the 21st century overwhelm us. Gardens can be a private world that can confer peace and quiet. They are conducive to meditation. Trees and hedges provide natural buffers from the road and privacy from noisy neighbours. Flowers attract butterflies, and bushes provide a nesting place for birds. The splash of a fountain can be calming to the ear. Plants provide 100 per cent natural aromatherapy. A smartly designed wooden fence or stone pathway can be pleasing to the eye. The curve of a garden border will generate a flow of energy around your home. A professional landscaper can help you

design your own retreat that can do much more for you (and your neighbours!) than the ubiquitous, unimaginative, and monotonous scattering of marigolds, impatiens, and geraniums. Even with a small area to work with, a landscape gardener can give you the illusion of moving through space and create the sense of a vista. For each season you can have the colours and contours you want to shape your moods and appeal to your senses.

We as Canadians like to think of ourselves as having a special bond with nature - with an unspoiled, pristine, at times inimical wilderness. Our winters, our lakes and streams, our birches and maples define who we are as Canadians. Yet one wonders how much longer this self-gratifying myth can be held intact as our cities expand and highways widen. When we get into our sports utility vehicles we might like to pretend that we (and not our cars) are the explorers and pathfinders accessing this wilderness, but in actuality we are just destroying the environment by contributing to the depletion of the ozone layer. And for all our supposed closeness to nature, Canadians in fact tend nature - in the form of gardens - much

less than do the Europeans or Americans. Perhaps the relatively short growing season is to blame for the dearth of landscaping in the 905-area suburban sprawl! But could it be instead that the absence of greenery has to do with the false sense we as Canadians have that we are already close to nature and that we don't need to tend it around us? That it is more important to purchase a minivan that will take us up to a cottage now and then, than to invest in a protective green environment around our homes on a day-to-day basis?

A little known rule of thumb in home ownership is that 10 per cent of the cost of a house should be spent on its landscaping. That so few home owners follow through on this investment might change in years to come, as our need for natural balance and for a refuge against our hectic world becomes more acute, when the art of living and the beauty of the natural scenery around us become more important. The change will mean that our personal lives will be enriched and the loveliness of our communities enhanced, so bring the wilderness to your own home, and enjoy the simple pleasures of a garden!



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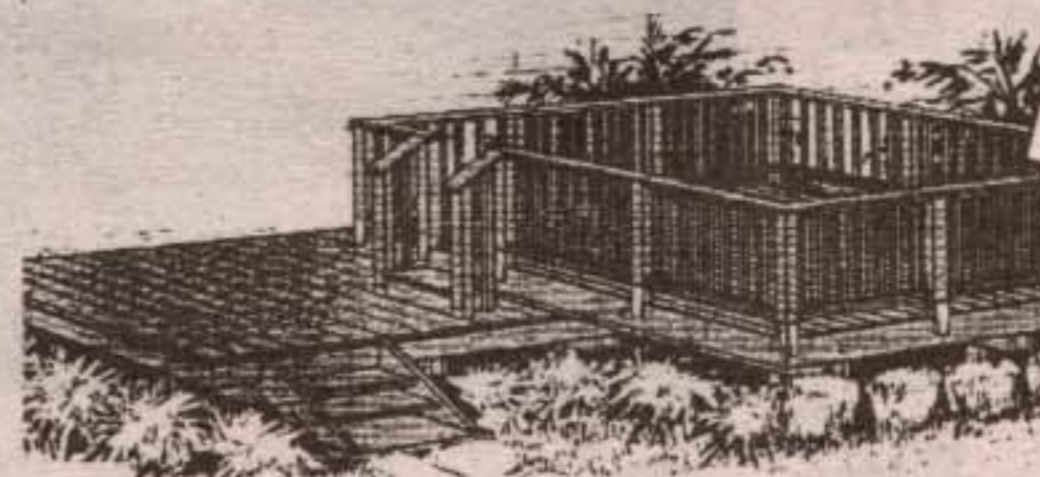
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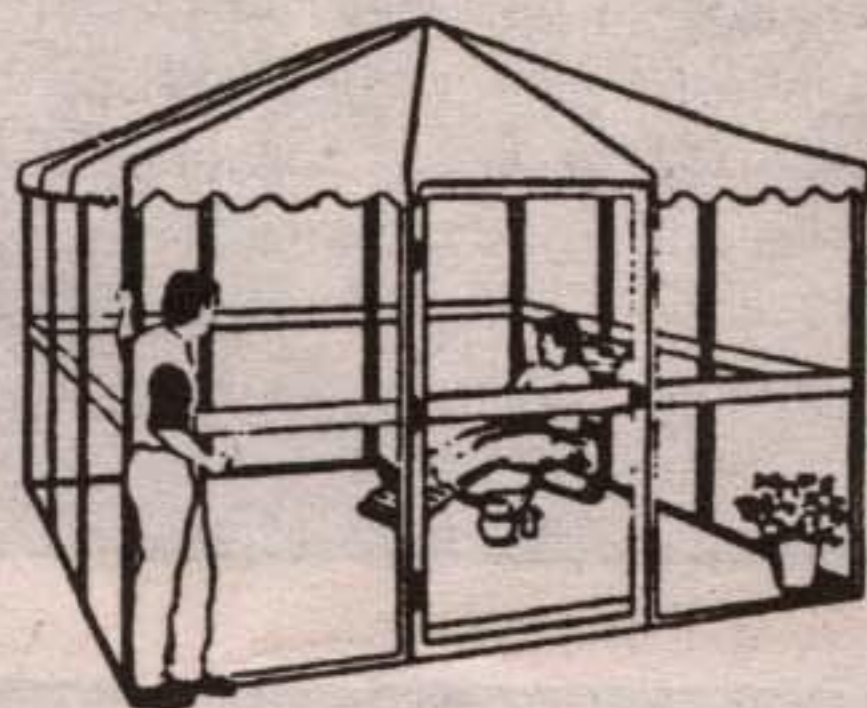
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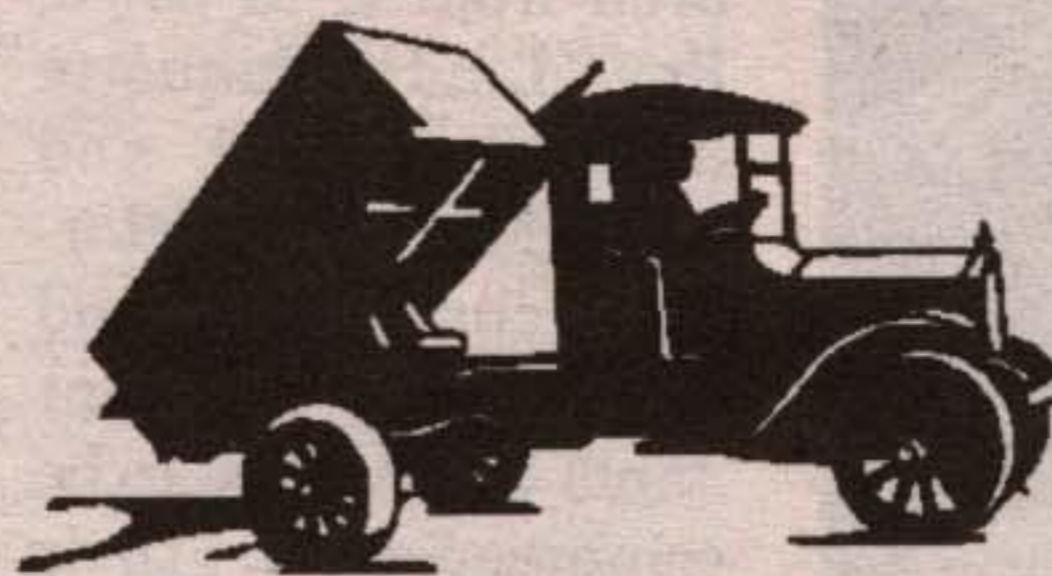
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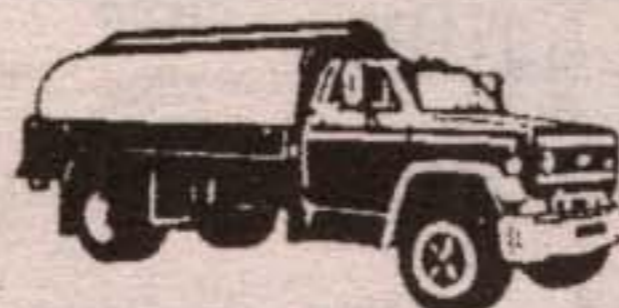
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