

Plan your lawn's exterior like you would the interior

In the past, "foundation plantings," though much better than bare walls, were somewhat thin on design, beauty, and function. Times, thank goodness, are changing.

Today's more sophisticated gardeners are looking for more variety, beauty and functional spaces in the landscape. Turf is a design element for play areas, emphasis, or unity, but not for just filling in wherever there is nothing else.

Planting beds around the house have a less formal, more interesting appearance. Use your landscaping elements like you use elements of interior design. Colorful flowering, fruiting, fall foliage shrubs, perennials and annuals are outdoor equivalents of lamps, tables and pictures.

Walkways and outdoor lighting add to the usefulness of the area while they bring out the best aspects of the architecture. Fences, hedges or careful accent planting can create a focal point or screens as needed.

Careful planning and planting can result in lovelier and lusher-looking foundation plantings with much less water use.

Here are some easy ways to do your own exterior design:

- Prepare your soil well. Soil in planting beds, no matter what its natural structure, will be more workable, retain more water and fertilizer, and grow healthier plants if it is well mixed with

organic matter.

Use whatever compost you can get, along with ample amounts of Canadian sphagnum peat moss, one of the best and longest lasting of the soil conditioners. It adds no nutrients, but soaks up water like a sponge and lets it percolate the area where plant roots can best use it.

It also makes fertilizers last longer because they don't leach away. Plus, earthworms and beneficial soil bacteria thrive in organic soil and activate such good growth that most of the pest and disease problems that can plague poor soil plantings never occur.

- Choose trees and shrubs that are either native or well adapted to the region. Group these and flowers according to water needs. Some will need regular watering. Put them within easy reach of the hose. Others will need only occasional water once established.

- Cut the turf areas around the house down to a reasonable size. Ground covers, shrub borders, wildflower meadows, even attractive mulches, can be more interesting. They're also less trouble and use much less water, since turf uses more water, work and care than any other planting.

If what you have now is not what you want, replace one section at a time. You can dramatically improve the look and the value of your house, both from the street and from the inside looking out.



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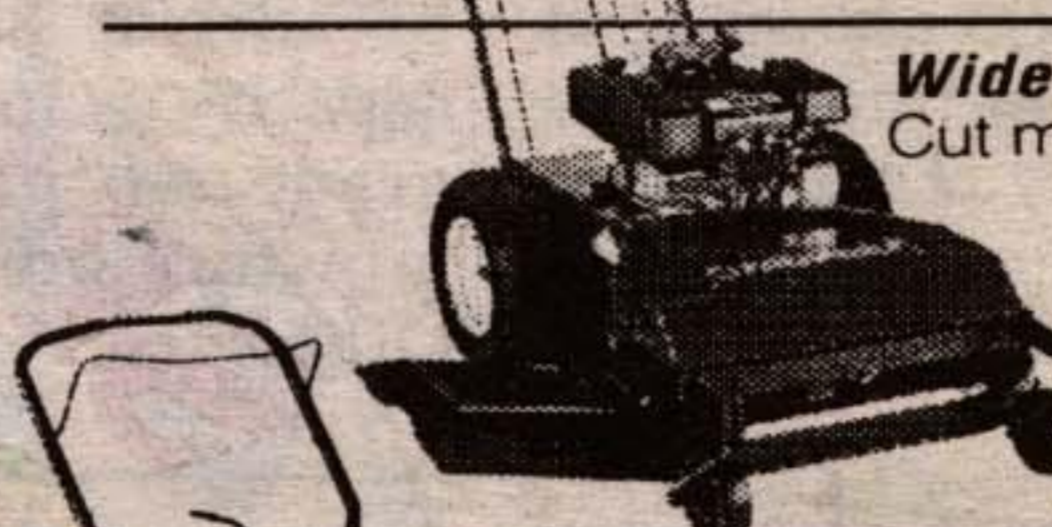
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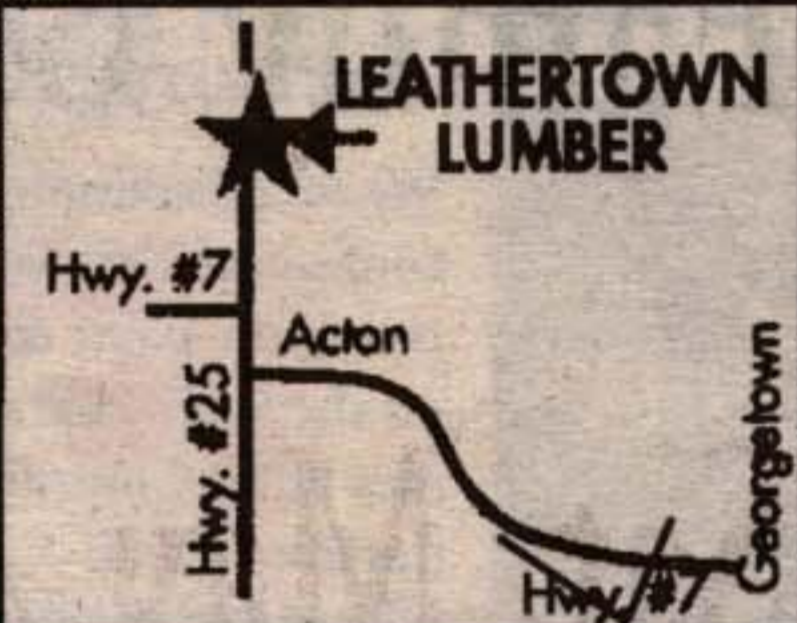
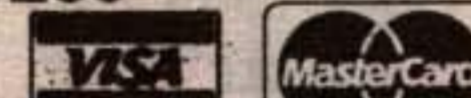
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