

Simple strategies spruce up your vacation rental property

While some of us are still wondering why last summer's renters left the wok in the backyard shower, homeowners with rental property in vacation communities should be planning for the next "season." Whether you occupy your property in the summer and rent it out in the winter or vice versa, it's never too soon to plan the renovation projects that attract tenants and enhance your own enjoyment of the property. There are myriad ways to update a rental property easily and inexpensively to charm prospective tenants and command a higher fee:

- **Fresh paint** — The easiest redecorating job comes in a gallon can of paint. Experiment! While some people swear by white walls, others recommend very pale pastels, especially when light is limited. Rooms with dark, ordinary paneling can be brightened by painting over the paneling. Be sure to prime the surface first so that the paint adheres to it. You'll see how cheerful the room becomes!

- **Mint-condition floors** — Floors are critical to a sense of spaciousness and ease of care. For this purpose, the best floors are resilient (vinyl) flooring,

which is available in a wide range of styles and prices. Resilient flooring can replicate hardwood, marble, ceramic and saltillo tile. According to Leonard Ludovico, vice president of styling and design for Congoleum Corp., "A great floor that helps unify the space instantly improves any property, and resilient flooring eliminates time-consuming upkeep."

- **Style is everything** — Nothing helps a vacation house rent faster than a sure sense of style. Before you invest in expensive decorative items, take a look at what you already own. For example, an old wooden cabinet filled with towels keeps style in the bath close at hand, while a well-lit desk in the bedroom invites letter writing. Don't expect renters to tend to your plants — silk plants and dried-flower arrangements add panache without the bother.

- **How are the closets?** — One of the things prospective renters consider is closets, so why not make yours as appealing as possible? Install hooks inside closet doors for bags and belts, and add wire shelving near the floor for shoes. Remember that the new flooring should continue right into the closets.

Low-E glass saves money and energy

Windows have a magic quality. They not only enhance the exterior of a house, but also the interior. They let in the sunlight and offer a protected view of the world outside.

Unfortunately, some windows also let vast amounts of heat escape from the home.

In fact, an average window can lose six to ten times as much heat as the same area of wall.

One of the biggest innovations in energy efficient windows is low-emissivity or low-E glass. This specially coated glass allows the sun's heat to enter a room but ensures that heat inside the room is "reflected" back.

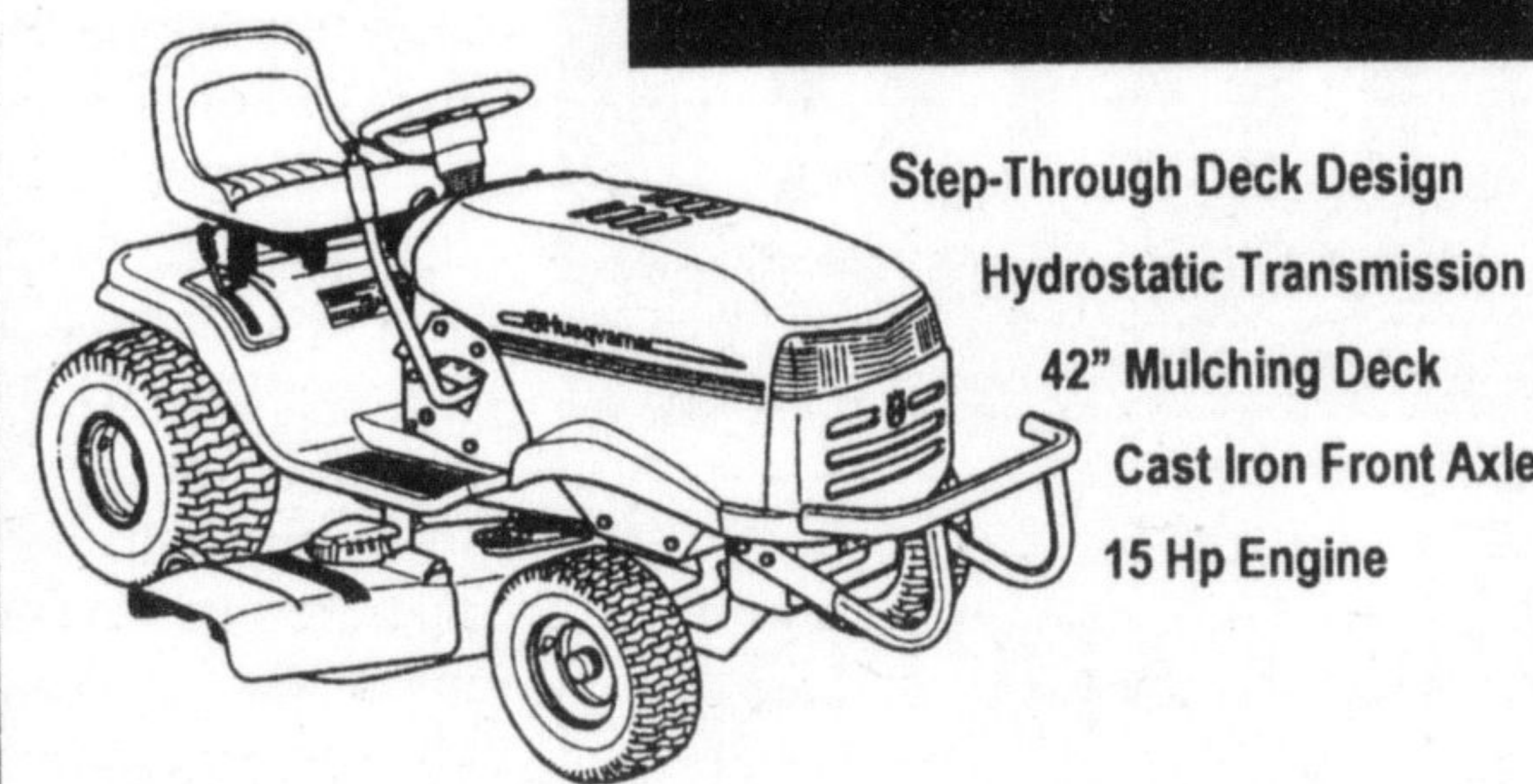
Properly installed energy efficient windows will not only save energy and money, but will also make your home more comfortable.

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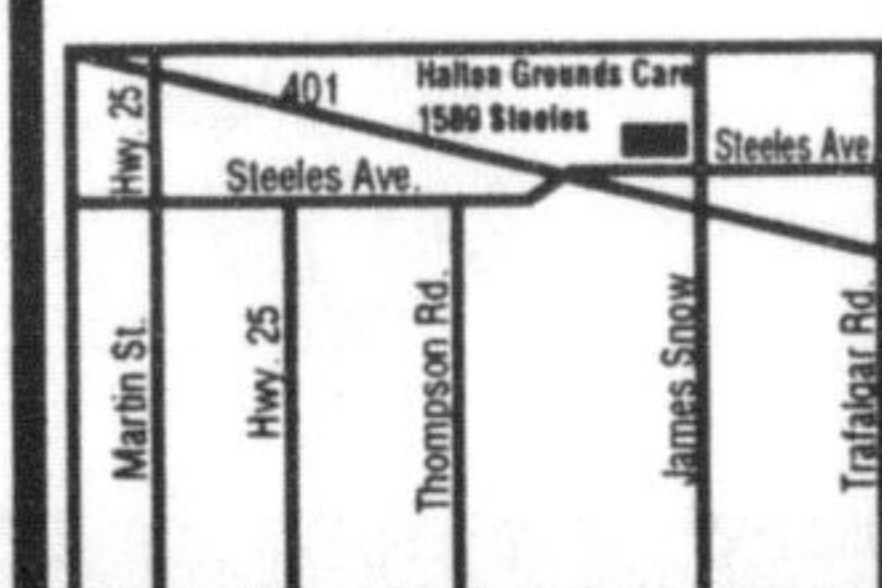
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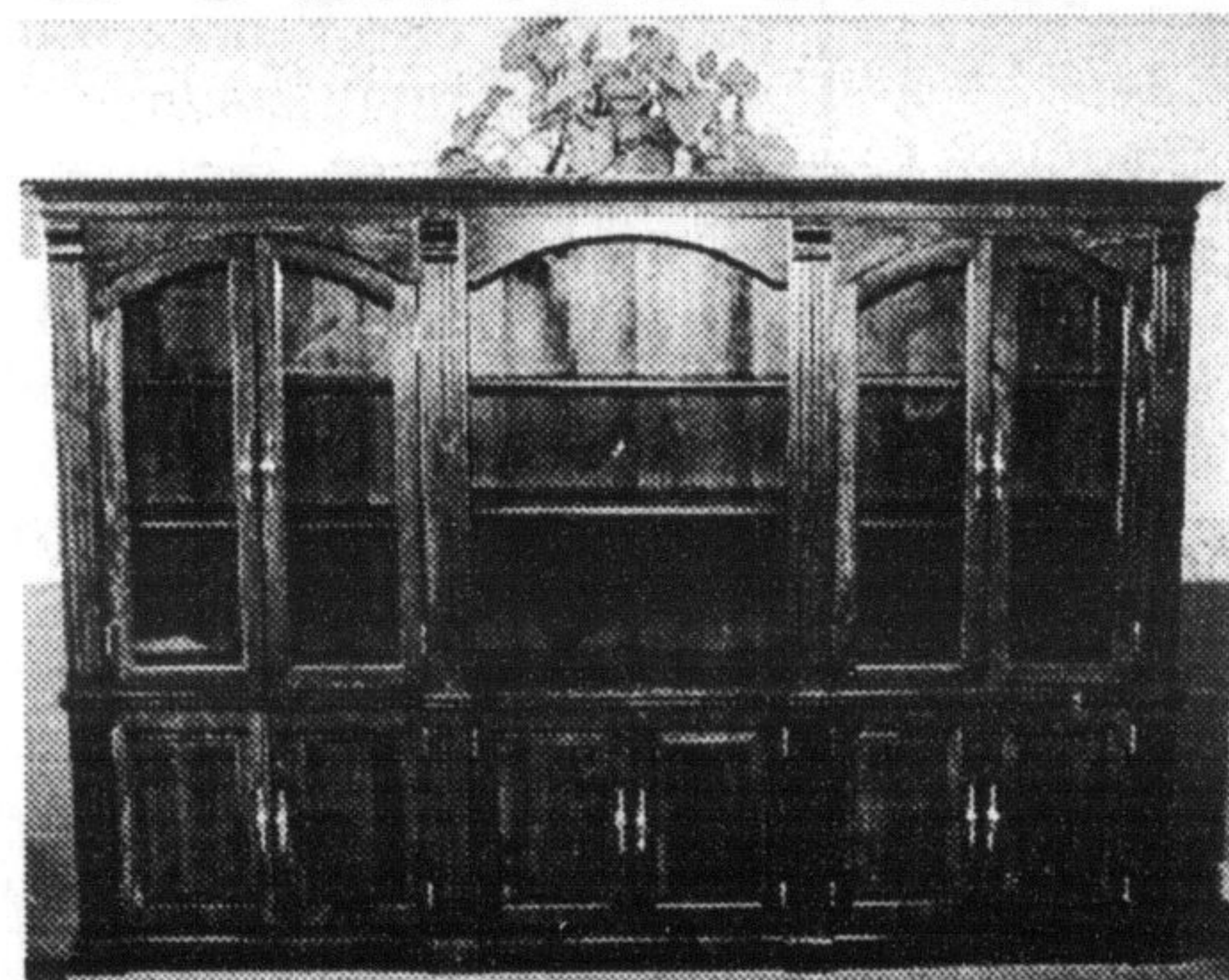
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