

Home, Lawn & Garden

Take it from the top – maintaining your roof and gutters

(NC)—Many homeowners are unpleasantly surprised during the winter months when their roof or foundation begins to leak because their gutters are full and overflowing. The sure fire way to prevent this type of situation is to take time in the fall to clean your roof, gutters and rain-spouts.

"Cleaning the roof and gutters seems like a huge job, but it's the best way to reduce the likelihood of leaks and save on repairs in the long run," said John Cooke, business leader, AmeriSpec of Canada. "The best part is that many homeowners can do it themselves, provided they have a

ladder and no fear of heights."

AmeriSpec suggests that homeowners follow these steps to prepare their roof and gutters each fall:

Clean your roof. The first step is to clean any leaves, twigs or other debris off your roof. Use a broom or leaf blower to clear the surface.

Clear the gutters. Old leaves, roofing gravel and other debris collect in gutters to form a layer of sediment. Use a narrow trowel or putty knife to gently lift the collection out and throw it down to the yard.

Look at the outlook. When the gutters are clean, take a

close look at the fitting that connects the gutter to the downspout. Often, downspouts turn sharply toward the house just below this fitting, slowing the runoff and allowing debris to collect. Clean out any clogs you find.

Reinforce the supports. As you're cleaning the gutter trough, check the supports. Gutters that are hung from the eaves may need a spike tapped back in or a clip replaced to ensure they are well-supported.

Check the verticals. Your downspouts need to be as straight as possible. At ground level, the downspouts should feed into underground drains, turn sharply out from the foundation and feed into leader pipes that continue out onto the yard, or they should turn out and empty onto splash blocks. The point is to lead the runoff away from the foundation and to slow it down so that the potential for erosion is minimized.

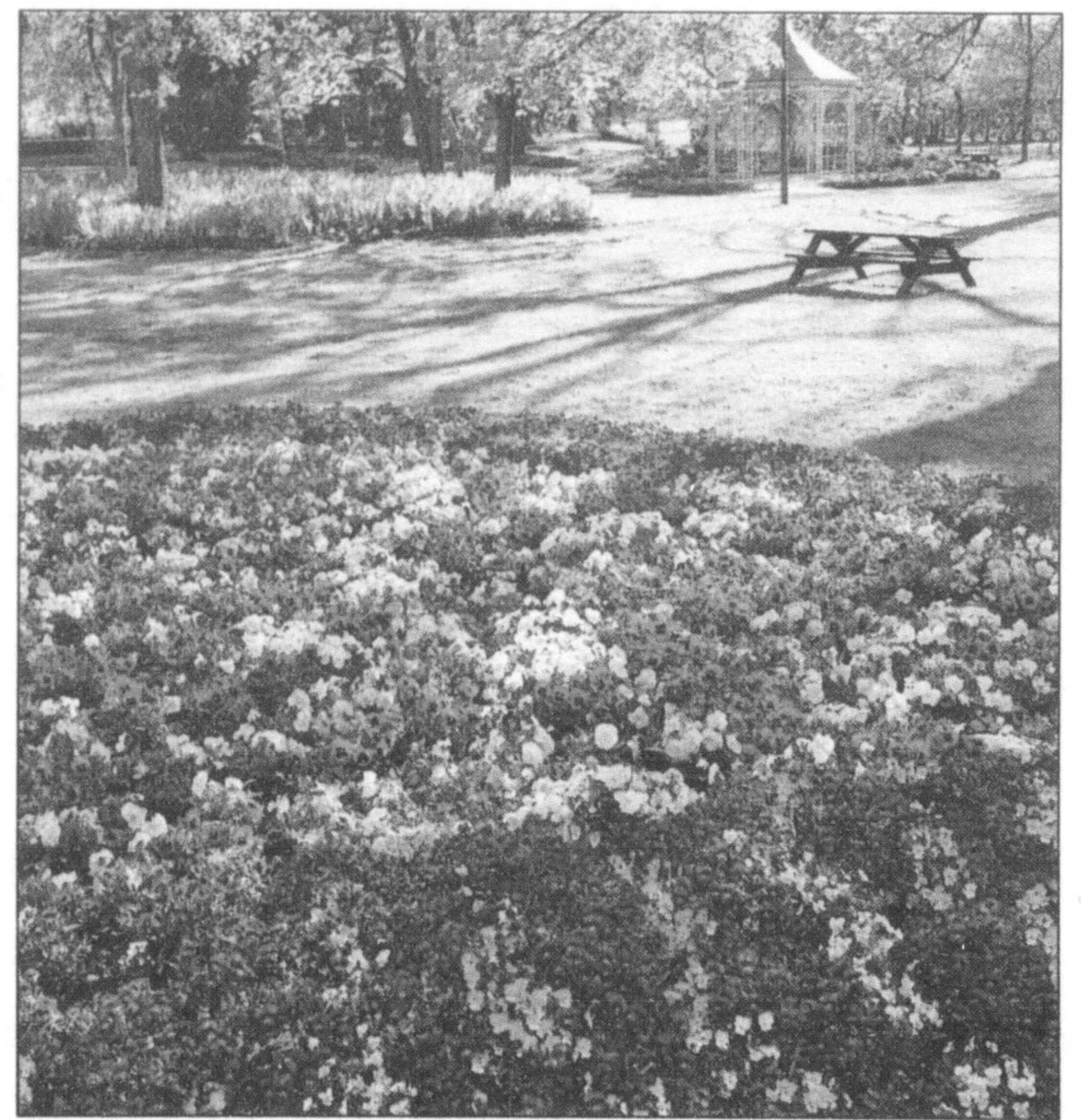
Hose it down. If everything above has been checked, you should be ready to finish the job by flushing your gutters and downspouts with water. Water should flow rapidly down your roof, into the gutters, down the downspouts and out onto your lawn, or into your underground drains.

Cover it up. To minimize this chore in the future, you can cover your gutters with 1/4" hardware cloth. Just make sure the upper edge of the hardware cloth is mounted under the lowest row of shingles.

AmeriSpec home inspectors can offer suggestions and tips on how to maintain your roof and clean your gutters. More information is also available at www.asktheinspector.ca.

- News Canada

About face for fall with the friendly faces of pansies



Blue Orange Garden of Icicle Pansies.

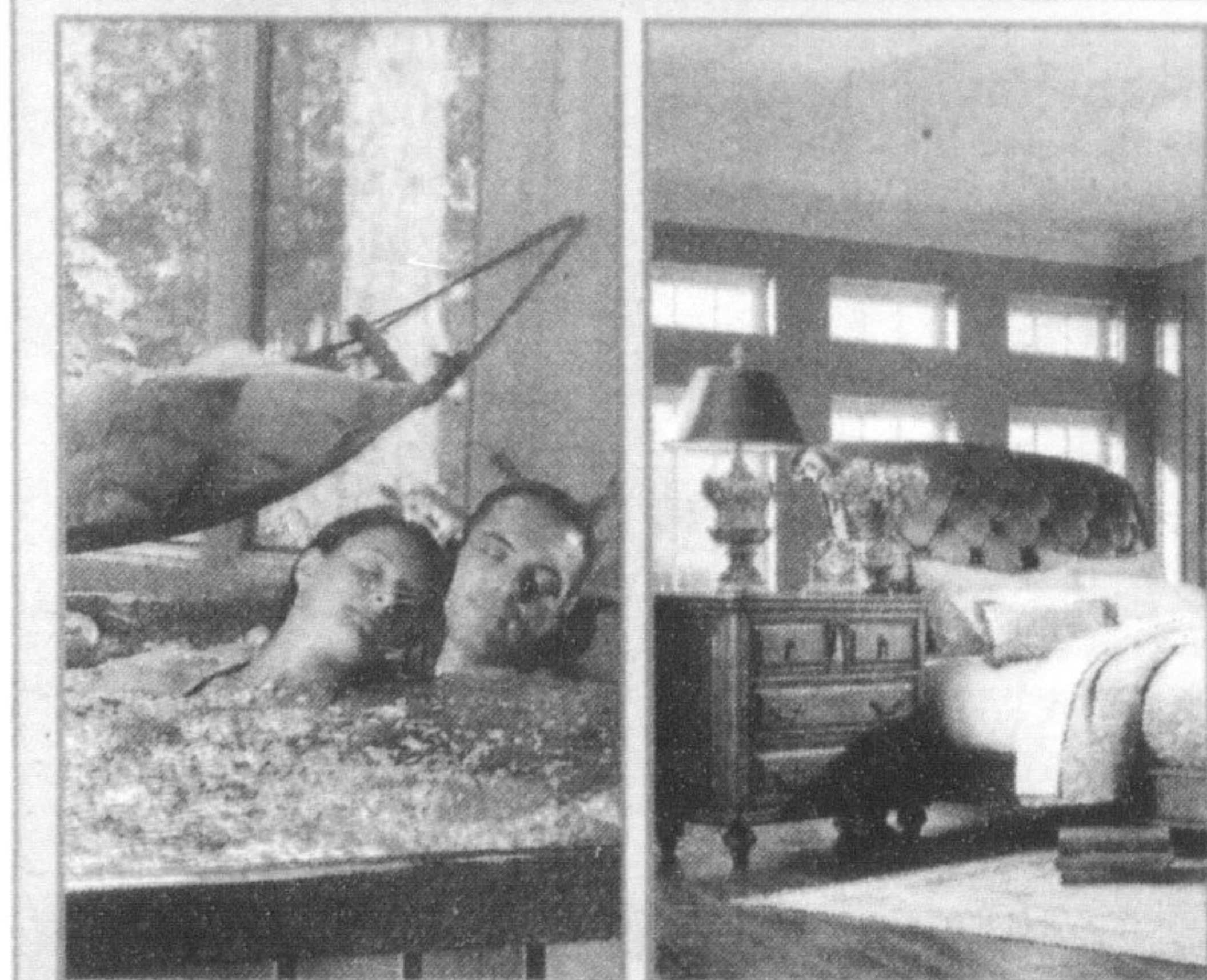
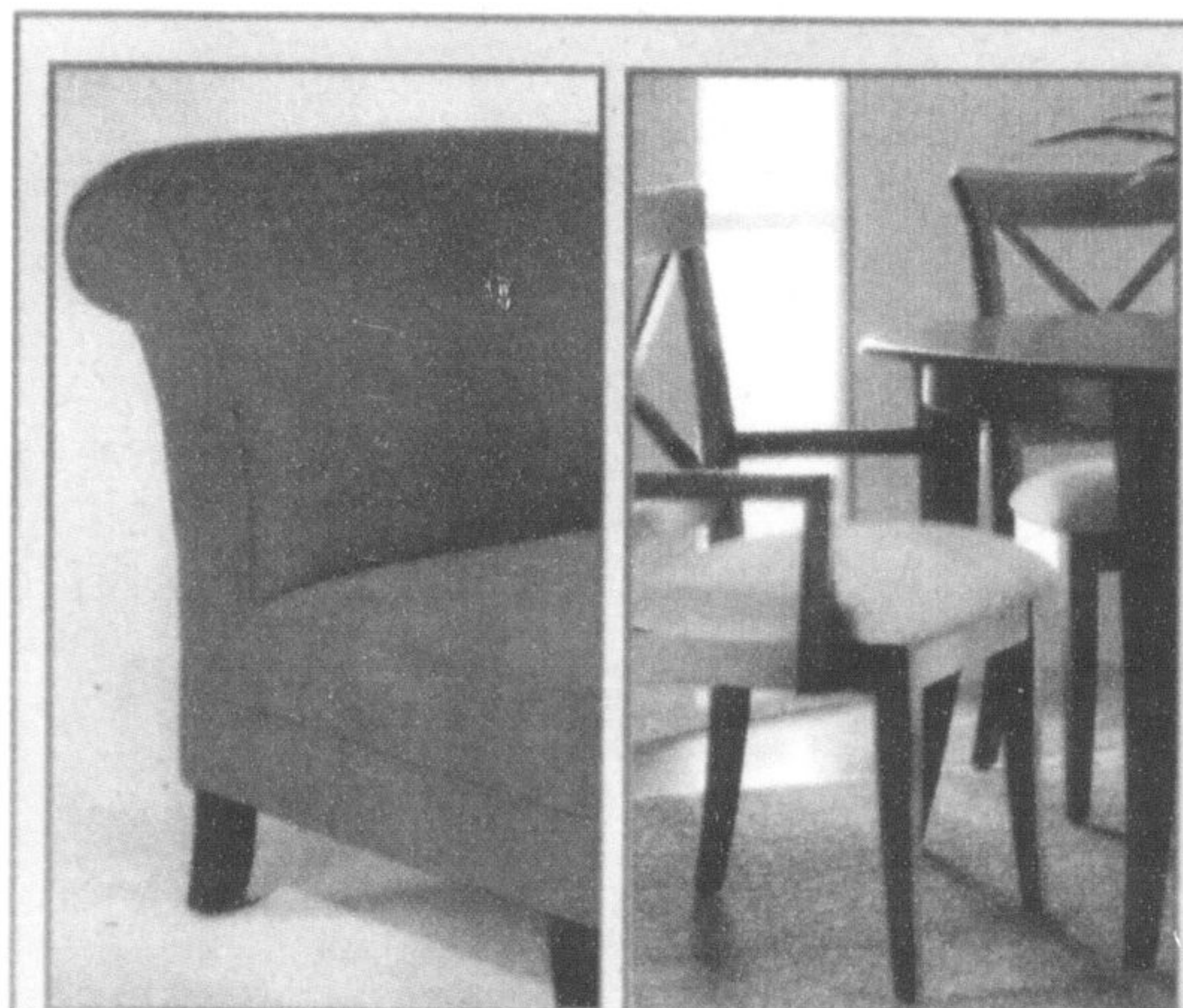
(NC)—I know that you think pansies are a great spring flower to plant, and they are, but they are just as terrific to plant in September and fall color. Surprise!

More pansies than ever before have been blooming in northern gardens. In the snowy areas, the snow acts like a 'blanket' over the pansies in winter, and then in spring, they pop up looking very colorful and lively.

Gardeners are sometimes skeptical of fall-planted pansies as this seems to violate the mainstream sequence of what blooms at what times, for example, bulbs and pansies in the spring, annuals and perennials in the summer, and mums in the fall. More gardeners are now pulling out ragged annuals around early September and replacing them with pansies, or they are planting pansies in the fall in the same beds with spring bulbs. Now the pansies do double duty with color in the fall and join in on the color frenzy with the bulbs that flower in the spring. Pansies look great in November when most other colorful plants have died and the grass is getting brown, and then again in April and May around the ankles of daffodils and tulips.

For tips on planting Icicle Pansies in the fall, or when they'll arrive at your nearest garden center, visit Fernlea Flowers at: www.fernlea.com.

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