

Look up -- don't forget to check out your roof

Roof coverings fulfil three functions on most houses.

First, they prevent moisture from penetrating into the top of the house. Second, the overhang on the roof helps protect exterior walls from becoming excessively wet. Third, the roof should be aesthetically pleasing blending with the architecture of the house.

There are common areas which should be checked with any roof covering. To spot problems, examine the roof with a pair of binoculars. For your own safety and protection of the shingles, do not go up on the roof.

The weakest areas on any roof are at the joints of different materials. Look closely where chimneys, vents, plumbing stacks, and television antennas connect to the roof. Roof edges and roof/wall intersections should also receive particular attention. Valleys created where different roof angles come together are another problem area.

Although there are many types of roofing materials available for houses, the most common used is asphalt shingles. This shingle is comprised of a paper or felt impregnated with asphalt and covered with small granules. The mineral granules reflect the ultraviolet rays of the sun preventing breakdown of the asphalt. Most modern shingles

can last up to 25 years.

You can tell when asphalt is wearing out when missing granules appear as bare spots on shingles. Shingles which buckle in the middle or curl at the edges have very little life remaining and torn or missing shingles indicate that immediate repairs are necessary.

Exposure to the sun on the south and west sides of a roof causes it to age more rapidly. Also, the bottom shingles, which receive more water runoff than do upper sections, tend to wear out first.

When reroofing is necessary, it is important to determine how many layers of shingles are on the roof. New shingles can be laid over old shingles. Ideally, no more than two layers of roofing material should be used. Additional material results in an uneven surface and, more importantly, excessive weight on the roof framing members.

Slate roofs are another option to consider when roofing your house. They are high quality and can last 100 years or more with good maintenance, but do cost more than asphalt shingles. Slate shingles are heavy, brittle and come in many colours and good slates deteriorate only slightly due to freeze/thaw action, but are susceptible to

mechanical damage. The most common problem is rusting of the nails holding the slates in place. As the nails rust, the slates slip out of position allowing water to penetrate the roofing system.

Typically very steep, a slate roof should never be walked on. It's best to examine the roof with binoculars or from a flat adjacent roof. Slates are very slippery and, if the nails are badly rusted, they can easily be dislodged by the pressure of footsteps.

Wood roof coverings are usually made of machine-cut shingles of uniform shape and thickness, or rough hand-split shakes of varying dimensions. While very attractive, wood roofs are less common than asphalt shingles because of their cost. They are also prohibited in some places as a fire hazard, unless the wood has been chemically treated.

When inspecting a wood roof look for split, warped, or missing shingles. In addition, you should look for evidence of rot, particularly on the lower shingles. Sometimes a moss or fungus can be seen as evidence of excessive moisture. The moss can force the shingles apart, allowing wind-driven rain to penetrate the roofing system.

Good attic ventilation will help the wood dry quickly after a rain.

In addition to the standard roofs there are speciality roofing materials available. A Spanish tile or clay roof is attractive and long-lasting, but expensive to install and to maintain. The tiles are brittle and very susceptible to mechanical damage.

Concrete tile roofs with a life expectancy of about 50 years are becoming popular. Designed to look like Spanish tile, concrete tile is suitable for sloped roofs. Since concrete tile is very heavy, the roof structure must be designed specifically to carry the additional weight.

If you spot trouble on your roof or need some advice about your roof's condition, call in a professional roofer. He will conduct a thorough, on-the-roof inspection. An experienced roofer should be able to advise as to the advantages of different types of shingles, life expectancy of each, and comparable costs.

This article is provided by the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.

Don't wait too long for last fertilizing of lawn

If you are trying to grow a healthy and luxurious lawn, late September or early October is the time for the last fertilizer application of the year.

Grass continues to grow until the soil temperature at root level is just above freezing. The basic nourishment of grasses is carbohydrate, produced by the process of photosynthesis — the action of the sun on the chlorophyll in the individual blades. Fertilizers provide the minerals required for the formation of more complex compounds.

If possible, it is a good idea to have your soil analyzed before you fertilize.

Any fertilizer you use on your lawn should contain nitrogen to give good growth and rich green colour, phosphorous for vigorous roots and potash to give plants resistance to disease.

The most commonly used fall fertilizer contains 10 parts nitrogen, five parts phosphorous and 20 parts potash. The ideal fertilizer program for a lawn allows the grass to grow at a uniform rate throughout the season.

Quick release fertilizers are soluble in

water and can be immediately assimilated by the plants. The result is a sudden intake of the available nitrogen, followed by a slow loss over the next two to six weeks.

To ensure a uniform growth rate over a period of time, it is necessary to make frequent small "booster" applications of nutritive materials. In contrast, materials in the slow-release fertilizers are continuously released over a long period of time. This calls for applications after longer intervals of time, which means less work for the gardener.

Without water, plants cannot take in food, so unless you are using a fertilizer combined with a weed killer, you must water heavily right after applying fertilizer.

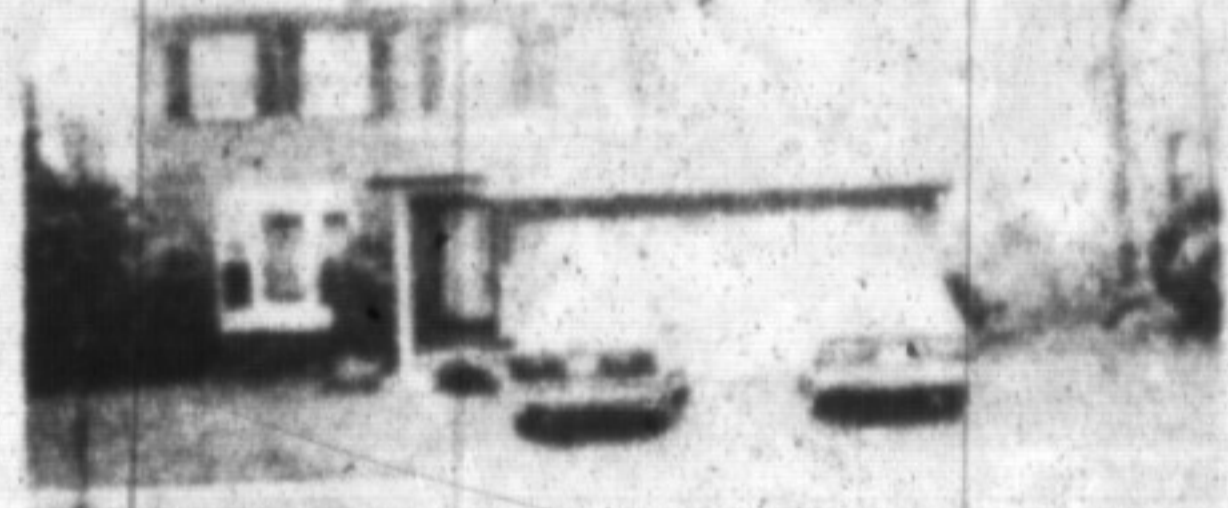
All fertilizers are thirsty for water. If they can't get it from other sources, they will exert pressure on the plant itself and pull moisture from the cells, which will in turn collapse and turn brown. This is the typical burning often blamed on fertilizers instead of on the true cause: lack of water.

If you are applying a weed killer with a

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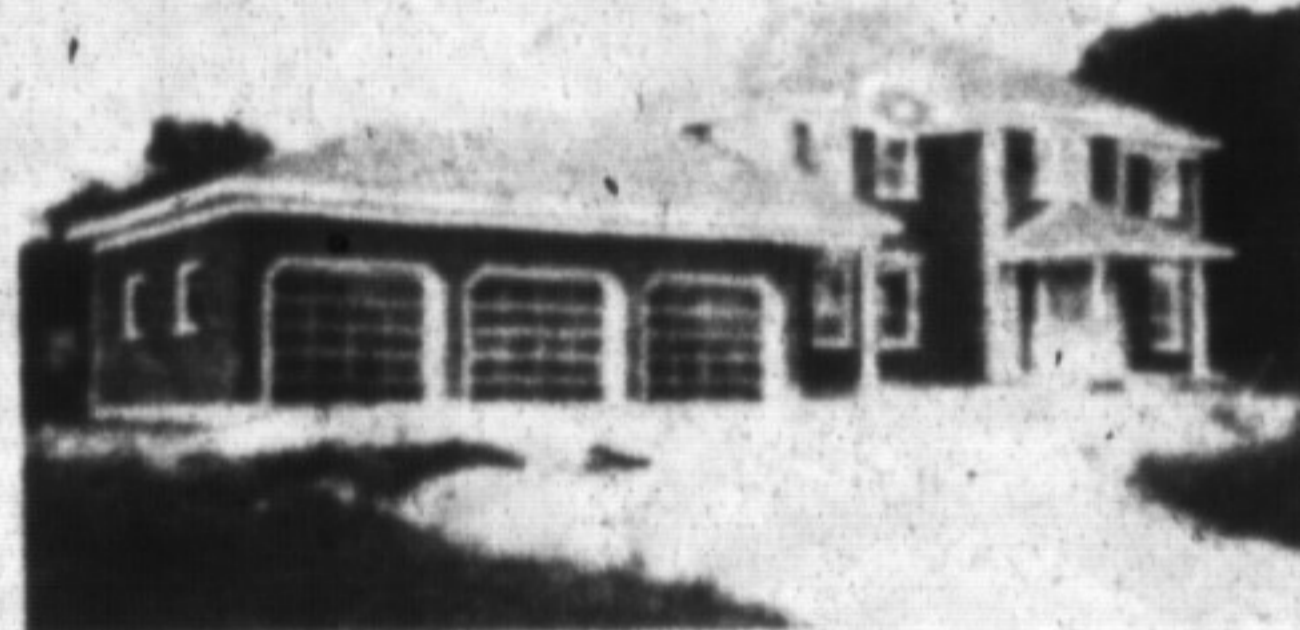
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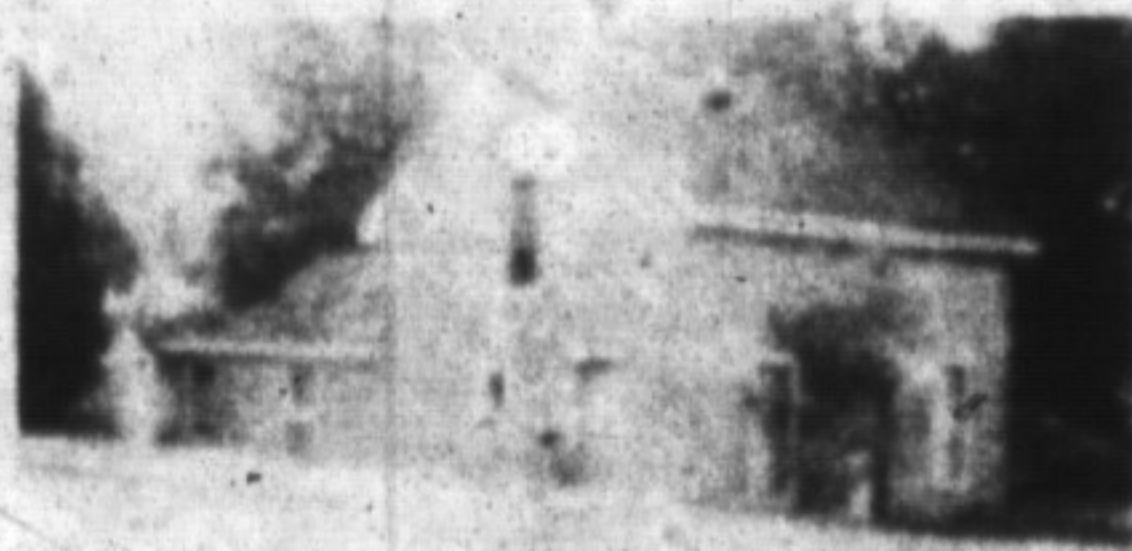
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