

How to pick repotting time

By Marion Bluegrass

Dear Marion: How do you know when it's time to repot a plant into a larger size pot?
Mrs. L.F., Thornhill

Generally, the best indication of when it's time to go to a larger pot size is when roots start to come through the drainage holes of the pot you're currently using.

You can also take the plant out of its pot and see whether it looks a bit crowded. If the roots are so long they're looped around the bottom, you might try a size larger pot.

And make sure you don't plant up into a pot that's too big. Go up only one or two sizes at a time.

If a plant seems to be doing well, don't bother to repot it at all. Some like to be a little crowded. This gets the top part of the plant growing well, instead of a plant's energy being diverted into root growth.

Dear Marion: The soil around several of my plants is covered with a whitish deposit. Besides looking unattractive, I wonder if this is something that could be harmful?
Mrs. J.B. Thornhill

Yes, this can be harmful eventually. The deposit is salts in the soil that collect on the surface.

There are two things you can do about it. One is to repot the plant in fresh soil.

The other is to put the plant under the tap and run water through it slowly for about an hour. This is called leaching, and it should carry the salts away through the drainage holes.

In fact, occasional leaching is good for almost all plants.

In future, water plants from the bottom except once a month when you'll water them from the top. This prevents the salts from building up on the surface, with the once a month watering from the top helping to carry any in the soil away from roots.

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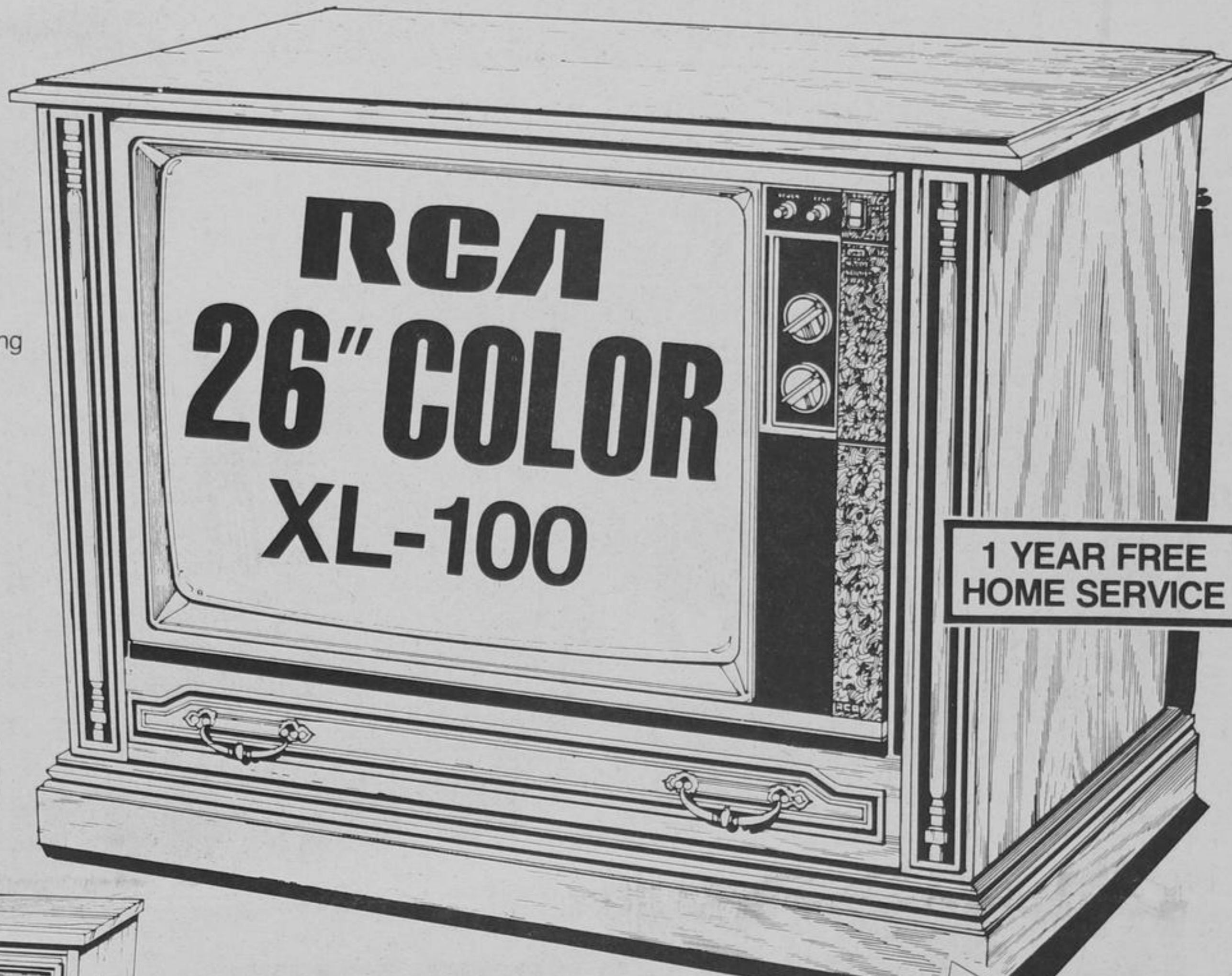
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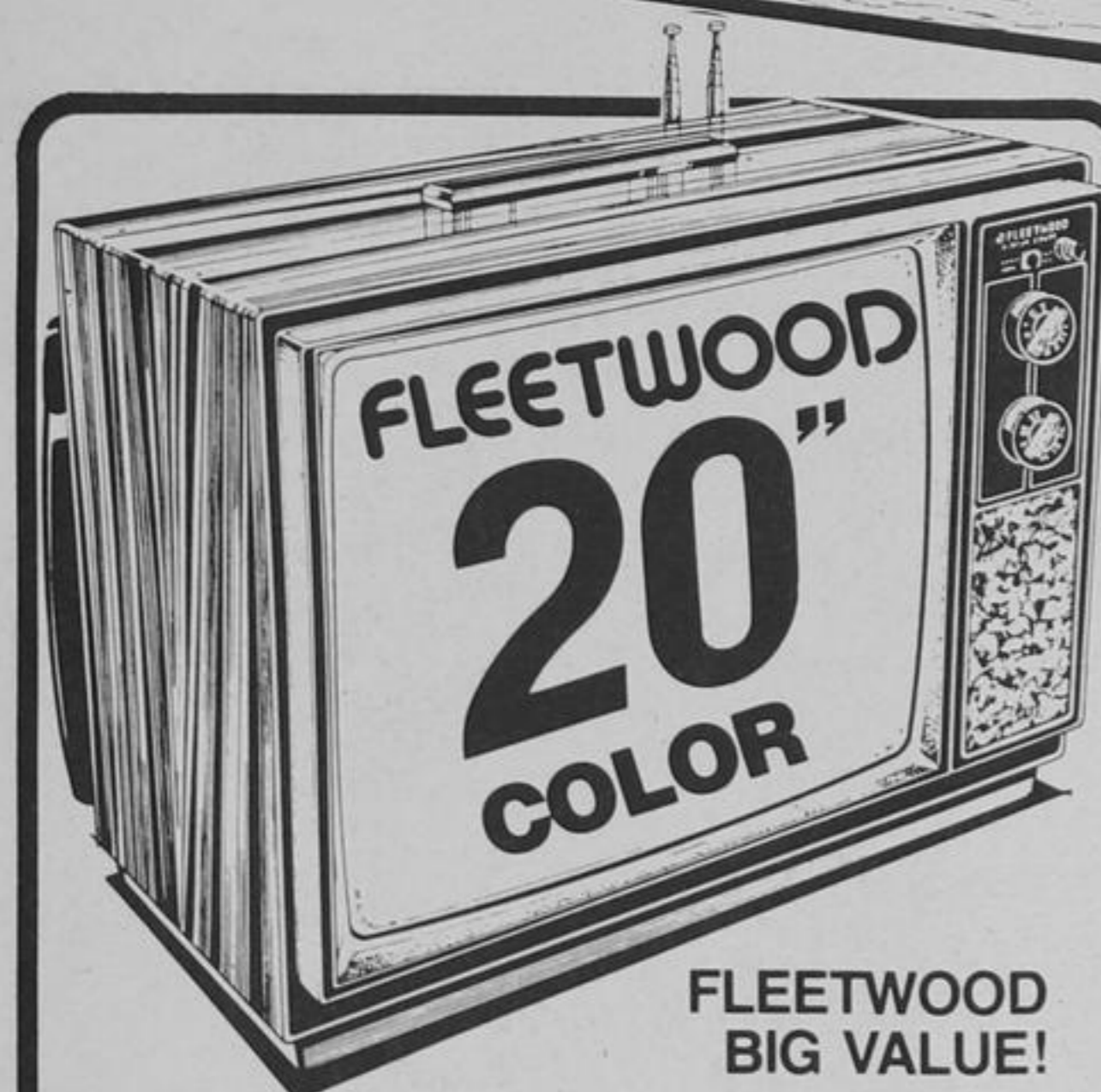
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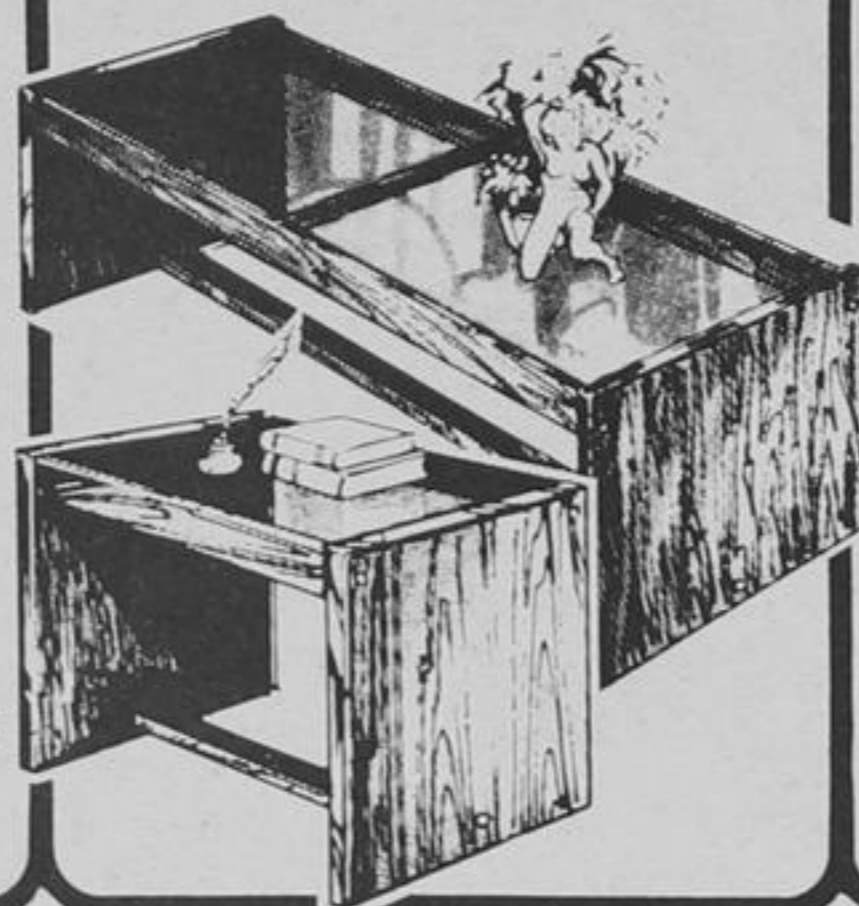
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