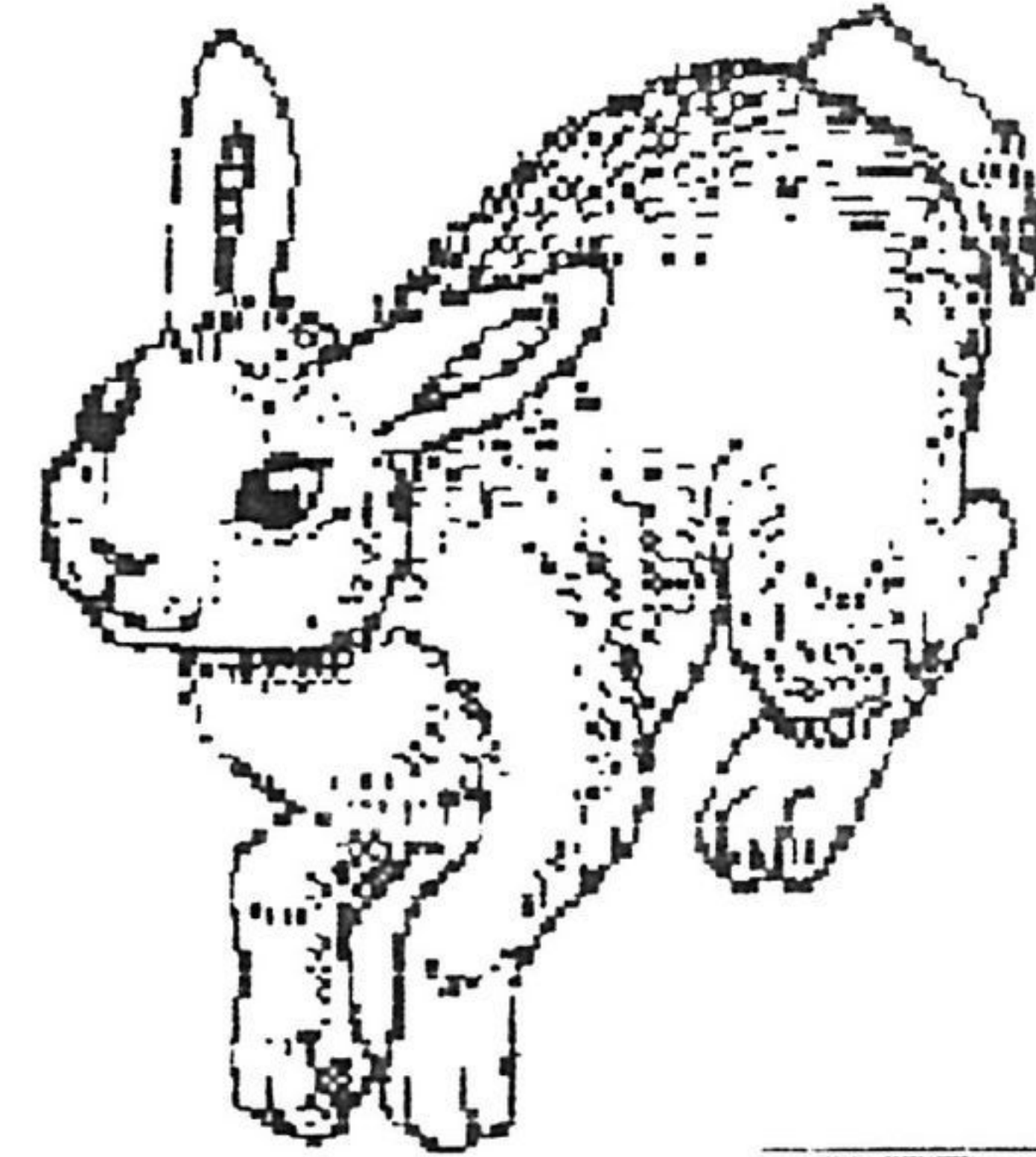


Uncle Thomas' Gardening Column



Uncle Thomas is still not up to writing his gardening column. Although spring has arrived early this year, Uncle Thomas says he's still running on last year's schedule, but hopes to be writing again in the May issue.

In the meantime, he has gleaned a selection of gardening hints from his winter reading, that he hopes will be useful.

To the bird lovers:

Don't put peanut butter out for the birds. It sticks in their throat and the roof of the beak and chokes them. Dip a pine cone in melted fat and hang that out instead.

Plant this year with an eye to attracting birds and butterflies. Most seed catalogues and garden centres can advise you on what to plant and where. If you want birds in the winter, you must start feeding early - even all summer - to attract a variety.

Nesting birds are fun to watch, hence all the bird houses one sees around. But have you ever thought of putting out materials for the birds to build their nests with. The following materials will lure more birds to set up housekeeping in your yard.

Wool: either natural or synthetic, in subdued colours. Birds see colour the same as we do, and don't want to attract attention to themselves with bright colours. Cut into three inch lengths for easy handling for the birds.

String: can serve the same purpose, but never thread or nylon line as it tangle in their feet.

Twigs: from spring pruning are used by mourning doves and bold black grackles.

Feathers: especially white ones, are useful. Tree swallows atypically only use feathers to one their nests, but other birds use them too.

Robins and Barn swallows use mud to build their nests. Dig a small,

shallow hole that's easy for birds to notice, and fill with water.

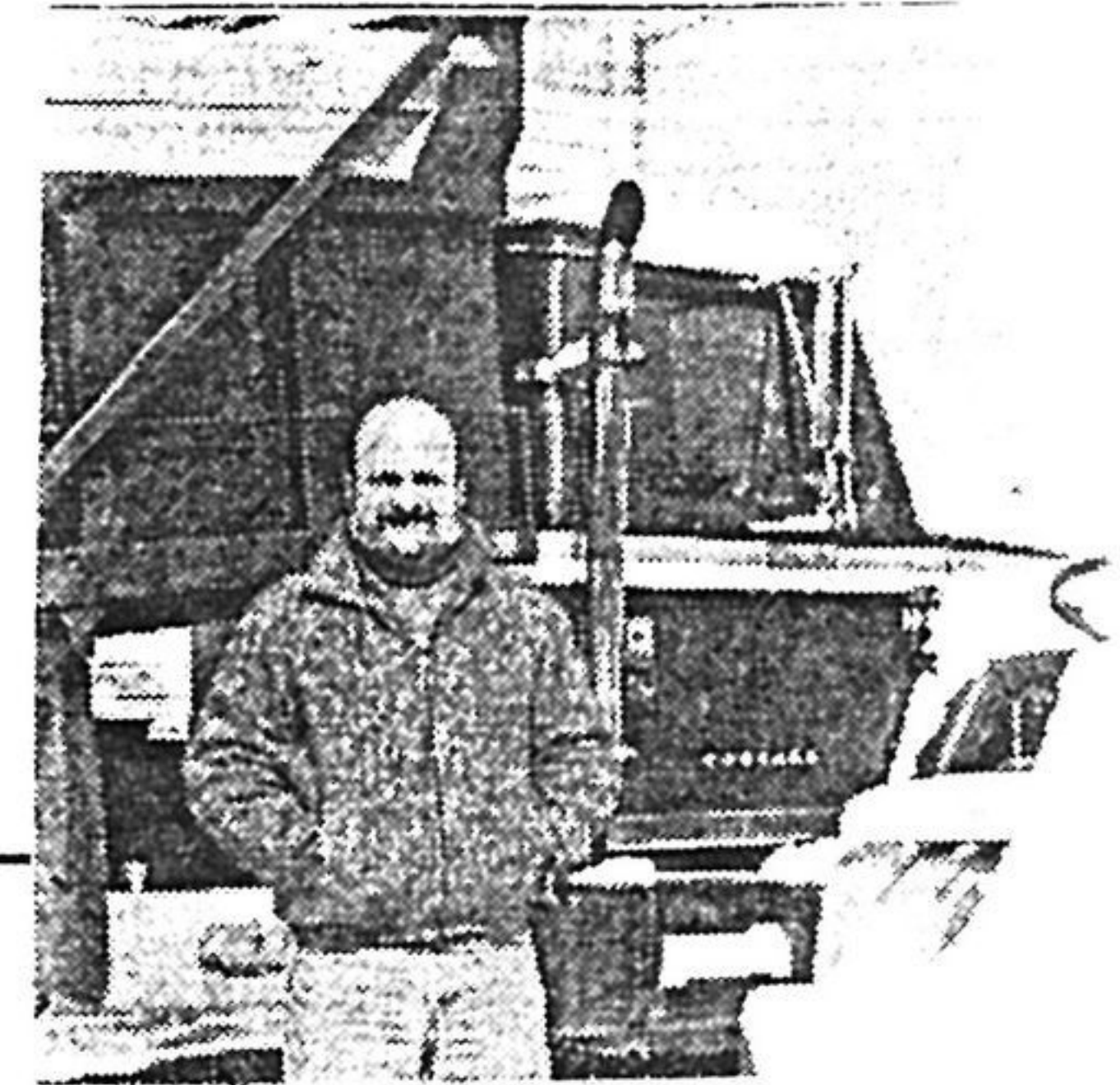
It takes material to build a house; be generous. Hang selections from shrub or tree branches, or use a bird feeder. It doesn't matter how close to your house the material depot is, but place it where you can enjoy the view of the nest building in progress.

Garden Lore:

From Canadian Gardening - (something most of us have known of for years.) Rhubarb leaves kill chickweed, dandelions and other unwanted weeds in the garden. Simply place the leavers over the problem area and in a few weeks the soil is weed free. It works great between wide vegetable paths and fence lines.

A soil preparation hint:

When your garden is dry enough to work, (at least 2 wks. before planting) work up an area. Lay clear plastic over the worked up area, holding it down at the edges with dirt and stones. Leave on until ready to plant then remove plastic, pull the weeds that have started and without recultivating, plant the seeds. The heat of the sun and the plastic cover will have sterilized the soil to a depth of at least four inches and you will have cleaned out whatever weeds germinated.



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