

Home and Garden '83

Flowers not hard to grow

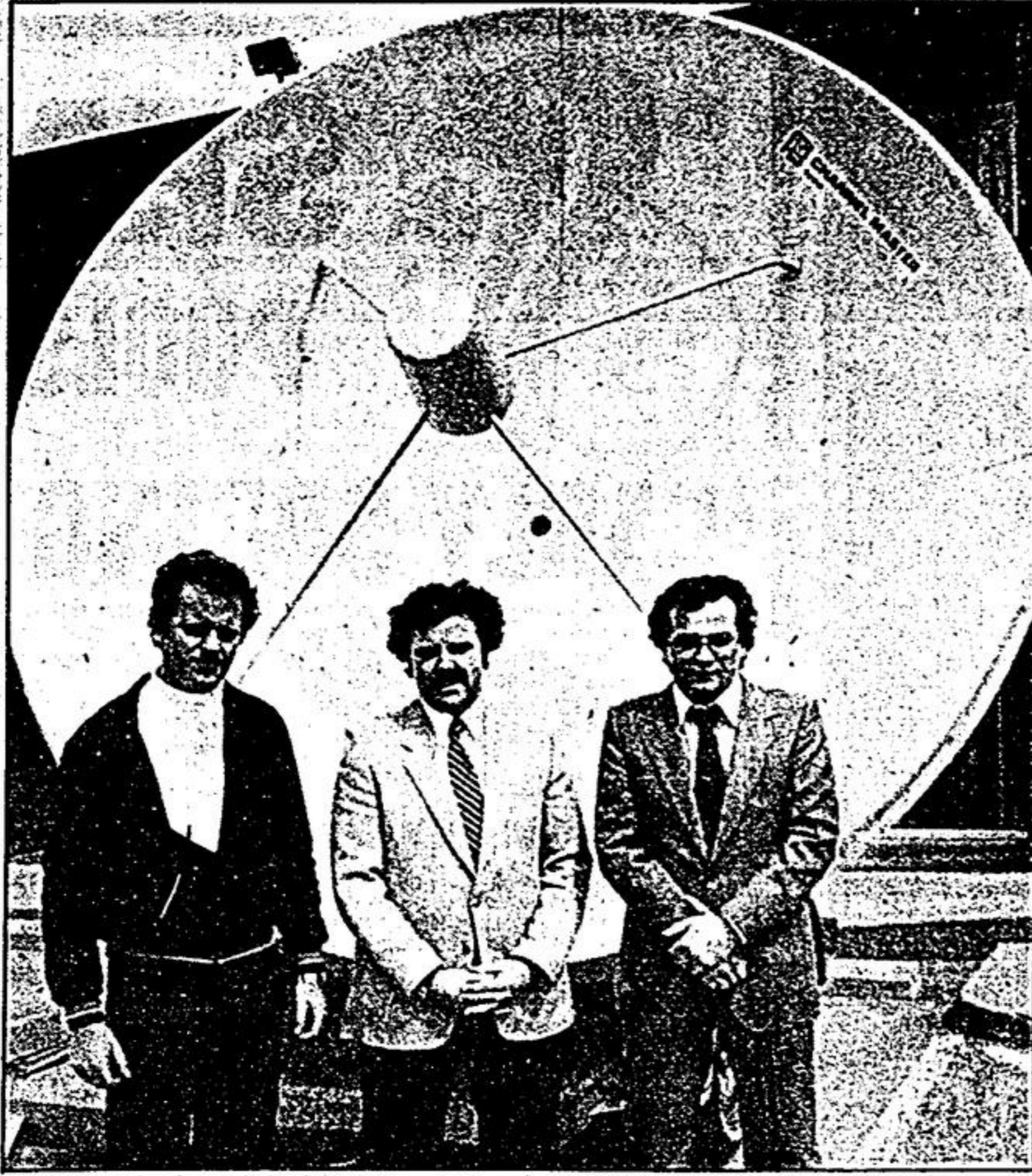
Rhododendrons and azaleas are a group of plants many people assume are hard to grow. They require an acid soil, but that is not too difficult to provide, says Burke McNeill, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food nursery and ornamental specialist.

"With this one requirement satisfied, rhododendrons are easy to grow and provide a beautiful show each year in late May and early June."

Many books about these plants suggest mixing peat moss and soil (50:50) to provide the proper medium. Rhododendrons prefer an acid soil, that is, a pH below the 6.0 level. As most peat is acid, pH anywhere from 4.5 to 6.0 (depending on the source), mixed 50:50 with soil will adjust the pH to the proper level for optimum growth. But McNeill says rhododendrons will also grow well in a raised bed of straight peat moss. He says mixing topsoil with the peat is not necessary.

The other requirements for successful rhododendron and azalea production are shade and shelter. Rhododendrons grow naturally under trees and so prefer the shade of trees or a location on the north or east side of a building. McNeill says they will also grow and flower in full sun but do much better where shade can be provided. Once the plants are established they require little attention, he says. An annual application of fertilizer in the spring and regular watering during hot, dry periods are all that is required. Removing dead flower heads improves vigor of the plant and encourages flower bud formation for next year.

If plants are exposed to wind, some winter protection should be provided. Spruce boughs, for example, are excellent for this purpose, McNeill says.



Ron Skelly recently held an open house to demonstrate the use of dish antennas for receiving satellite television channels. Here Mr. Skelly (centre) stands with his partner Anthony Kandrack (right) and Brian Ward of C.M. Peterson Co. — Greg Coates

New satellite dish receives 108 channels

Area residents can now receive satellite TV, which supplies the viewer with 24-hour viewing and virtually no advertising.

Ron Skelly, of Markham Electronics, said the system is based on a "special type of aerial," a 10-foot satellite dish, which picks up the air waves from 11 of the 15 stationary US satellites. Each satellite has the capacity for 24 channels, but Mr. Skelly said the system "supplies the 108 'really good ones.'"

Markham Electronics is now installing single-user systems from Channel Master and multi-user systems from General Instrument. CM Peterson Company of Toronto began selling the satellite equipment last September. Mr. Skelly began working for the company in November and is now marketing the systems in York Region.

The single-user system consists of the dish, a mount for the dish, a receiver and the antenna controller. Mr. Skelly explained in an interview that the dish is mounted in the back yard rather than on the roof because "it takes a lot of wind."

The Toronto company began manufacturing the systems in anticipation of a CRTC decision making it legal for com-

mercial establishments, such as hotels and taverns, to use the systems. That ruling was made about one month ago.

Prior to that time, it was only legal for residential use and because of the cost of the system, (from \$3,995 to \$8,000), the system was not in demand. "The whole market is brand new," said Mr. Skelly.

He said his customers are advised to spend \$4,500 because the \$3,995 system does not have an antenna controller and, therefore, there are not as many channels available. He said the receiver is of very high quality and the mount can withstand 100 mile per hour winds.

"You can cut costs, but we don't do that," he explained. "We may lose business, but we chose to sell a high quality product."

The multi-user system is only \$1,000 per house. There is one stationary dish for all houses, so the residents must decide on which three channels they want to receive. In both types of system, it is possible to switch back to regular programming.

The newly-founded Canadian Pay TV is on a different frequency, so it is not available on Satellite TV, but American Pay TV is.

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