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& garden

a supplement to the
April 22, 2012
Glencoe Advertiser



PREVENT LAWN DAMAGE *pg. 3*

RECYCLE BEFORE TOSSING *pg. 10*



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How to prevent lawn damage

Many homeowners aspire toward a pristine and lush lawn. For some a nice lawn gives them feelings of pride. Others believe a perfect lawn enables them to have the best-looking house in the neighborhood. Many homeowners spend hours outdoors perfecting their lawns or spend a good deal of money hiring professionals to make their lawn more appealing. But just because a lawn looks good now does not mean it will look good later. That is because delicate grass can be damaged by a number of different factors.

Grubs

Grubs are not very lawn-friendly. Grubs are actually the larval stage of different types of large beetles. These worm-like creatures feed on the roots of grass and are able to kill large sections of the lawn in a relatively short amount of time. It can sometimes be difficult to discern whether grubs, drought or another other pest has damaged a lawn. One way to check is to grab a portion of the damaged lawn and attempt to peel it back. If it comes back easily like a piece of carpet, it is likely grubs. Spotting grubs underneath is a sure sign these larvae are killing the lawn.

Using an insecticide for grub control in July can help kill off grubs that start hatching in August through September. Grub eggs do well in sunny patches of lawn that are well watered. More shade may deter them. There is also the option of letting the lawn go dormant and not watering it, but you will be left with a brown, unappealing lawn.

Pet urine

Pets can also damage a lawn. Pet urine can create burnt patches and significant discoloration on the lawn, particularly if the dog or cat uses one area consistently as their potty zone.

The best way to prevent urine damage is to walk your dog so that he or she will not have free reign of the yard. However, sometimes dogs get out or stray cats and dogs visit your yard and relieve themselves without your knowledge. So this method is not foolproof. Therefore, you should take added action to maintain a lush lawn.

First, make sure that soil and lawn is in good health by fertilizing and taking care

of it properly. Second, water can dilute urine and neutralize its corrosive properties. Some have found that diluted urine can often act as a fertilizer to grass. You may have noticed that the outside ring of a urine-burned spot is often greener than the healthy lawn. Try to dilute the urine prior to 8 hours having elapsed for the best effect.

Burrowing animals

Moles and voles are among the more common lawn damage culprits. Voles are small rodents that resemble mice but have stouter bodies, shorter tails and rounder heads. They feast on everything from bulbs, succulent roots, ground cover, and even dead animals in their paths. Their burrows enable them to move around relatively undetected, typically until the damage has already been done.

Moles, although they have a similar-sounding name, are not related to voles and look very different. They have a cylindrical body shape with velvety fur, very small or invisible ears and large paws for digging. Moles often feed on earthworms and other small invertebrates found in the soil. The burrows they create are essentially traps for the worms, who fall into the burrows, where moles easily access them. Moles often stockpile worms for later consumption in underground larders.

Voles can be kept away with natural vole predators, such as cats, hawks, owls and snakes. Mouse traps can also capture voles when baited. You may also dig sharp materials or chicken wire into your soil around planting beds to make it uncomfortable for voles and moles to tunnel through.

Moles can also be controlled with traps. Finding active mole tunnels will help you place the traps effectively to either kill or



Preventing lawn damage includes cleaning up after pets, whose urine can cause discoloration in the yard.

simply contain the mole. The live animal can be relocated to a site where they won't cause trouble.

Lawn damage can occur through a number of different factors. Finding out the cause can help you find an effective treatment.

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From rotten melons, to new gardening product

By Karin Ramige
McLeod Publishing, Inc.

Just a couple of years ago, Chris Schroeder was new to gardening. Now she is the inventor of a new gardening product, the Rot-Not™.

After she, and husband Dan, moved from a house with a small lot in Shakopee to a 20-acre hobby farm just outside of Green Isle, the couple started their first 12-foot-by-12-foot garden.

At the end of the growing season they found that the melons and squash were rotten. "I didn't know I had to turn them," Chris said.

She asked fellow gardeners at a local farmers market how to remedy the problem. The common answer was to set the melons and squash on cinder blocks.

After carrying one or two cinder blocks to the garden, she knew there must be a better solution.

She then cut up laundry detergent bottles to help prop the produce off of the ground. "That just wasn't sturdy enough," she added.

This began an in depth search online for a product for this particular problem and found nothing.

With good old paper and pencil, Chris drew out what she needed. An 8.5-inch-by-4.5-inch durable plastic apparatus to help keep the produce off the ground.

Not sure where to go from her notebook, Schroeder saw an ad on TV for InventHelp™.

With financial help from her mom, Kathy Hisle, she contacted InventHelp™ and started the process.

InventHelp™ did the patent search to ensure there was not another product like it out there, registered the name, and helped with a lot of the legal aspects involved.

In 2009, Chris was invited to INPEX in Las Vegas, one of the largest invention trade shows sponsored by InventHelp™.

At the show, Chris was approached by a Chinese company that offered to produce the mold and product for a reasonable price.

It was important to Chris that the product be produced in the United States and be free of plastic with toxins and other foreign materials.

She then met with a company in North Minneapolis that wanted \$35,000 to make

the mold.

The search continued until she met with Brian Jilek of Suburban Mold & Machine, Inc. in Glencoe.

Together Schroeder and Jilek worked to make the mold locally in a price range that was reasonable.

Schroeder then found Taurus Engineering and Manufacturing, Inc. in Faribault to produce the product.

These partnerships not only accomplished the goal of having the products produced in the United States, but all within 60 miles of Green Isle.

Rot-Not's™ are made of recycled plastic and can be reused from year to year.

As melons, squash, pumpkins and gourds start forming, place them on the Rot-Not™ while the stems are long enough and flexible.

As the product started coming off the production line, last summer, Schroeder was able to secure a booth at the Sibley County Fair to promote the Rot-Not™. She hopes to be there again this year. She was also invited to the McLeod County



Rot-Not™ started as an idea on a piece of paper, now it's in full-swing production, as a product helpful to many gardeners.



Visit the Rot-Not™ website at www.rotnot.net for more information and to see the product in use.

program *Shark Tank*, and started the vendor registration process with large retailers such as Target.

Rot-Not's™ are currently available at the following locations: This Old House, Arlington; Cenex, Green Isle; Bloomers, Gaylord; Home Solutions, Norwood; Mustard Seed, Chaska; Runnings, Hutchinson; Tonkadale, Minnetonka; Prairie Farm Supply, Belle Plaine; Country Store, Belle Plaine; and online at www.rotnot.net.

Schroeder is also currently working with retailers in North Dakota, Idaho, Massachusetts, and Texas.

Today, while the Schroeders are not working full time for the Minnesota Department of Transportation or promoting Rot-Not™, they are getting ready to plant their 60-foot-by-180-foot garden.

One thing they can be sure of, their melons, pumpkins and squash will not have belly rot.

Master Gardeners Horticulture Education day, that took place at the McLeod County Fairgrounds.

What else is next for Rot-Not™? Schroeder would like to see the product go worldwide.

"'Belly rot' isn't a problem that is specific to Minnesota, it's an international problem," Schroeder commented.

She has applied to the ABC television

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Fun facts about earthworms

There are more than 2,700 different types of earthworms residing on the planet. Earthworms are often known to be workhorses in the garden, helping to aerate and fertilize the

soil while filling it with nutrients.

Earthworms recycle materials like dead leaves, decaying animals and feces so new plant seedlings can grow and have the process begin anew.

Worms have been around for 120 million years — one of the few species of insects that have stood the test of time. In just one acre of soil, there may be a million or more earthworms turning over the soil and chewing on organic matter. Without earthworms, most plants would not thrive.

Earthworms have mucous covering their bodies in order to stay moist. This helps them to breathe through their skin. You may have noticed that after it rains worms appear on

sidewalks and outside of their underground burrows. This is not because they are drowning underground, but because the environment is moist after it rains, making it more conducive for worms to breathe and move around to find mates.

Normally the dry conditions above ground make them dry out and die. Earthworms can be remarkable creatures to watch. Contrary to popular belief, worms do have a mouth and an opposite end for waste removal that is not interchangeable.



Do-it-yourself carpet cleaning

Many homeowners prefer the feeling of carpet underfoot. There are styles, colors and patterns that can please just about anyone these days — in a variety of price points. However, brand-new carpeting can start to look dingy very quickly if it is not maintained; and that is a wasted investment. Carpet cleaning is essential to the care process.

There are different steps homeowners should take to maintain the appearance and quality of carpeting. The easiest one is regular vacuuming of the carpet to remove dirt. Think about how sandpaper works. The grit smooths down rough edges of wood. If sand and dirt are on carpeting fibers, the friction of walking on the carpeting essentially creates a sandpaper effect. This can wear out carpet fibers and reduce the life of the carpeting.

Another method to keep carpeting looking new is to remove shoes when entering the house. Shoes can track in all sorts of unpleasantries, from dirt to chemicals to animal waste. These particles can transfer from the soles of shoes to the carpet. Just think of the amount of bacteria the carpet could be harboring.

Bare feet also can contribute to dirty carpets. The natural oils on the feet can end up on the carpet and eventually contribute to trapped dirt. Instead, use slippers and socks when walking around the house.

Carpeting that needs to be revived may need a thorough cleaning. One can rent or purchase a carpet-cleaning machine. There are many commercial cleaning solutions available as well. But homeowners looking for an effective, inexpensive and green solution may want to try a white vinegar-and-water mix for cleaning the carpet. This will soften the fibers and break down stains. Warm water should be used in car-

pet-cleaning machines. This will help break down the dirt and oils in the carpet.

Although the machines do not soak the carpet, it can be damp for several hours. It is best to do the carpet cleaning when the family can leave the house for a while to allow the

cleaned carpeting to dry thoroughly.

Carpets that only need spot-cleaning can be done with a few different methods. Automotive brake cleaner is good at removing food stains. WD-40 can remove grease or oil. General stains can actually be removed with shaving cream. Allow the shaving cream to sit on the stain for at least 30 minutes. A vinegar-and-water solution should be used after these methods are employed for extra cleaning.

Always blot stains clean on carpeting. Rubbing can grind in the dirt further.

These methods of cleaning will help keep the carpet fresh, clean and safe for the family.

Spot-clean carpeting and do a thorough cleaning on occasion to help keep it looking new.

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Spring into home improvement with weekend projects

(ARA) - Sprucing up your home for spring does not have to mean spending huge amounts of time and money. In fact, there are many projects that you can complete in a weekend that will improve the look and feel of your home. With a little guidance and the right tools, you can easily get your home in top shape by Monday morning.

Paint refresh

Commonly recognized as one of the most easy and cost-effective interior updates, painting is a weekend project that can completely transform the aesthetic of your home. When purchasing paint, a quality product will ensure your end results are beautiful. Low-quality, inexpensive paint will likely require a number of coats to get the coverage needed, resulting in more time and money spent. To avoid increased time and cost, use a premium line of paint. When choosing paint for your next weekend project, remember that a quality product will achieve the best end result and save you time and money in the long run.

Lighting update

Tired of the same old lamps sitting on your end tables but don't have the funds to revamp your lighting decor? A new lamp shade will completely change the look of any piece. You can also easily transform pieces by renewing the lamp bases; a quick walk down the spray paint aisle will

show limitless possibilities of colors and finishes. You can even renew plastic pieces with Krylon Fusion for Plastic, the first paint of its kind. Create a cohesive look by bringing that new finish to your hanging fixtures as well.

Accessorize

Adding trendy, fun accessories will give any room a new and more put-together look. Think vases and bowls, wall art and rugs. When adding accessories, look for colors that complement what is already in the room. Plants and flowers also can add energy and color, some with the added bonus of a pleasant aroma.

Furniture renewal

One easy way to update furniture on a budget is by re-covering it or using slip covers. Premade covers are available in a wide variety of fabrics and designs, or you can create a custom cover for your sofa or armchair. More ambitious crafters may actually reupholster furniture to create a completely new-looking seating option. After repadding and covering cushions, sand and stain or paint wood pieces for a completely modern feel.



Modern flooring

Carpet has seen better days? Replace it. Hardwood is scuffed and dull? Refinish it. You also can achieve the look of natural wood or stone flooring with luxury vinyl tile. This affordable option is no longer your grandmother's vinyl, now available in a variety of natural finishes that are both durable and modern. If replacing is

not in your budget, simply give your flooring a good cleaning and use accent rugs to cover blemished areas.

Check off a project on your home improvement to-do list this weekend, and enjoy the results through spring and beyond.



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Maps reveal new plant hardiness zones

Gardeners rely on a number of factors when deciding on what to plant in their gardens and around their property. One of the most important things to take into consideration is the climate.

Since 1960, the go-to source for climate and relation to agriculture has been the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Plant Hardiness Zone map. In 1967, Agriculture Canada developed their own map that took into consideration Canadian plant survival data and a wider range of climatic variables. The maps remained constant until now.

In January 2012, the USDA released an updated zone map. The map is now more precise and reflects microclimates, heat islands, prevailing wind, elevation, and generally better data. It breaks down the country into 13 unique zones from the previous 11. Individuals who once resided in a particular zone may find that they are now moved into another zone. This updated map has taken into consideration climate changes that have occurred between 1976 and 2005. You now may be able to try plants that you may have been skeptical about in the past.

The new map now offers a Geographic Information System, or GIS, -based, interactive format and is specifically designed to be Internet-friendly. The map website also incorporates a "find your zone by ZIP code" function. Static images of national, regional and state maps have also been included to ensure the map is readily accessible to those who lack broadband Internet access.

The new version of the map includes 13 zones, with the addition for the first time of zones 12 (50-60 degrees F) and 13 (60-70 degrees F). Each zone is a 10-degree Fahrenheit

band, further divided into A and B 5-degree Fahrenheit zones.

A hardiness zone describes a geographically defined area in which a specific category of plant life is capable of growing, as defined by climatic conditions, including its ability to withstand the minimum temperatures of the zone. Summer temperatures are not factored into the mix. Therefore, areas with similar winter patterns and average lows may be in the same zone despite having drastically different highs. Hardiness zones may not take into consideration snow cover, either. Snow helps insulate the soil and hibernating plants. Therefore hardiness zones are more like guidelines instead of fool-proof methods of determining viable plants.

Although a poster-sized version of this map will not be available for purchase from USDA, as in the past, anyone may download the map free of charge from the Internet onto

their personal computer and print copies of the map as needed.

When shopping for plants, most will display a hardiness zone right on the container to

help you determine whether this particular plant will be acceptable outdoors in your zone. To learn more about hardiness zones, visit www.usda.gov

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How to improve landscape before selling

Selling a house is seldom easy, and homeowners are often willing to do whatever it takes to make their home more attractive to prospective buyers. One of the areas sellers typically focus on is the home's landscaping. A well-maintained lawn and garden increases a property's curb appeal considerably, increasing the chances a buyer will have a strong first impression of the home.

But homeowners don't need to have a green thumb to ensure their lawn improves curb appeal. The following are a few tricks of the trade savvy sellers can employ to make their home an instant hit when buyers pull up to the curb.

- Color the landscape. The plants outside a home shouldn't stick out like a sore thumb, but a few splashes of color can make a home more appealing. For the cost of some annuals, which are typically inexpensive, homeowners can turn a drab flower bed into a colorful spot bound to catch a buyer's eye.



Cleaning water features around the property is one way for homeowners to increase the curb appeal of their home.

- Lay down new layers of mulch. Mulch is not only good for plants, helping them to retain moisture while inhibiting weed germination and growth, but a fresh layer of mulch also adds to a yard's aesthetic appeal. Mulch made of wood or bark

chips is also slow to decay, so apply a new batch right before the "For Sale" sign is erected and you might not have to apply another batch before selling the home.

- Prune trees and shrubs. Pruning trees and shrubs is one of the easiest and most effective ways to improve a landscape. Dead branches in shrubs and trees might suggest to buyers that the homeowners weren't terribly pre-occupied with maintenance, and this might cause them to think twice about making an offer.

Stay on top of pruning regardless of what season it is, and be sure to remove any fallen branches from the yard on a regular basis.

- Clean bird baths and other water fea-

tures. Water features create a peaceful atmosphere around a property if they're well maintained. If not, buyers won't see the yard as a sanctuary but rather a place where mosquitoes congregate and odors emanate from algae-filled water. Remove any debris from water features, including leaves and algae, and clean the filters so water is always clear.

- Invest in a power washer. Buying a power washer might be a tad over the top, but homeowners whose yards are filled

Improve landscape
Continued on pg 13

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Spring cleaning? Recycle before tossing

By Lori Copley
Staff Writer

Spring cleaning? Before you rent a dumpster so you have someplace to toss that old, snarled-up ball of holiday lights or that stained infant car seat, check out the McLeod County Solid Waste Department to find out what you can get rid of for free.

You will probably be surprised. Besides traditional recyclable products like aluminum cans, plastic and paper, the recycling center at the solid waste facility takes items as varied as old cooking oil and grease to fishing line.

“Every year, we look for new ways to serve our residents,” says Sarah Young, solid waste coordinator.

Recently, the solid waste facility expanded the types of plastics it will take in. Before, it accepted only Number 1 or 2 plastic (the type is imprinted on the product), but now takes in numbers 3 through 7.

The county finally found a vendor within the United States — the recycling center doesn’t want to ship local waste to other countries — to accept those plastics.

“We took advantage of that and now we are accepting all types of plastic,” said Young. “That includes yogurt tubs, butter containers, the plastic sleeves in cereal boxes, plastic spoons and forks — all of which can be put in the blue curbside recycling bins as well as the drop boxes.”

There is only one stipulation, Young said — the product must be clean.

A variety of other items are accepted at the recycling and household hazardous waste facilities, from wine corks to styrofoam.

Young said the solid waste department is working with municipal liquor stores to collect wine corks. They are used by companies to make soles for shoes and sandals. Last year, McLeod County collected 28 pounds of wine corks.

Another item the center is now accepting: infant car seats.

Young said the solid waste and public health departments collaborated in an effort to get expired infant car seats out of circulation.

Most car seats “have either a ‘born-on’ or an expiration date,” said Young, a factor that many people are not aware of. Over time, parts on the seats may become loose and the plastic may deteriorate from sun damage, rendering them unsafe for use.

“We wanted to make sure we got those out of circulation,” said Young. “A lot of times, you’ll see them at garage sales or sitting at the end of a driveway with a ‘free’ sign on them. Those car seats may not be safe.”

While Public Health’s main goal is safety, Solid Waste wanted to make sure the materials are used. Collected car seats are dismantled, and the fabric, metal and plastic are all reused or recycled, said Young.

Some other items the recycling center takes in:

- Styrofoam packing from appliance and other boxes. The packing needs to be taken to the center rather than put in recycling bins to keep it clean, Young said. “Otherwise, it gets dirty and yucky and the vendor doesn’t want it.” Also accepted



Photo by Lori Copley

In 2011, the McLeod County Public Health and Solid Waste departments combined efforts to recycle outdated infant and toddler car seats. Sarah Young, solid waste coordinator, is shown above with the cartons of seats that have been collected in the first quarter of 2012.

are packing peanuts, which again, are taken at the facility rather than curbside recycling, both to keep them from blowing around outdoors and to keep them clean. Also accepted is bubble wrap.

- Cooking oil and grease, which is taken through the household hazardous waste facility even though it’s not hazardous, simply to keep it from contaminating other products, Young said.

- Holiday lights, battery adapters and chargers and extension cords. While holiday lights are seasonable, the facility will take them year-round as people clean out attics and garages, Young said. The coating is stripped from the cords and the copper is recaptured.

- Fishing line and lead sinkers. Berkley, a manufacturer of fishing line, will take in old fishing line and recycle it.

- Seed bags from farmers. Young said the county is working with area seed companies to reclaim the bags, but the recycling center also will take them year-round as farmers clean out sheds.

- Batteries. “From button batteries to car batteries,” Young said. “Musical greeting cards, electric toothbrushes — a lot of products have batteries. We’ll take all types — alkaline, rechargeable, acid ...”

- Recordable media, such as CDs, zip drives, VHS tapes, DVDs. A company in Washington melts the plastics and makes

new disks, Young said.

Young also noted that the annual countywide collection — which takes in tires, mattresses, appliances, scrap metal, electronics, furniture and other items, is set for May 19 from 8 a.m. to noon at the solid waste facility in Hutchinson. Some items carry a fee for disposal, others do not, Young said.

Solid Waste also will work with businesses on how they can recycle goods,

Young said.

“We’re very open to doing recycling audits for businesses and helping them out, as well,” said Young.

For more information about the programs offered by Solid Waste, visit the McLeod County website at www.co.mcleod.mn.us, call Solid Waste at 320-484-4300 or 1-800-335-0575, or visit the facility at 1065 Fifth Ave. S., Hutchinson.

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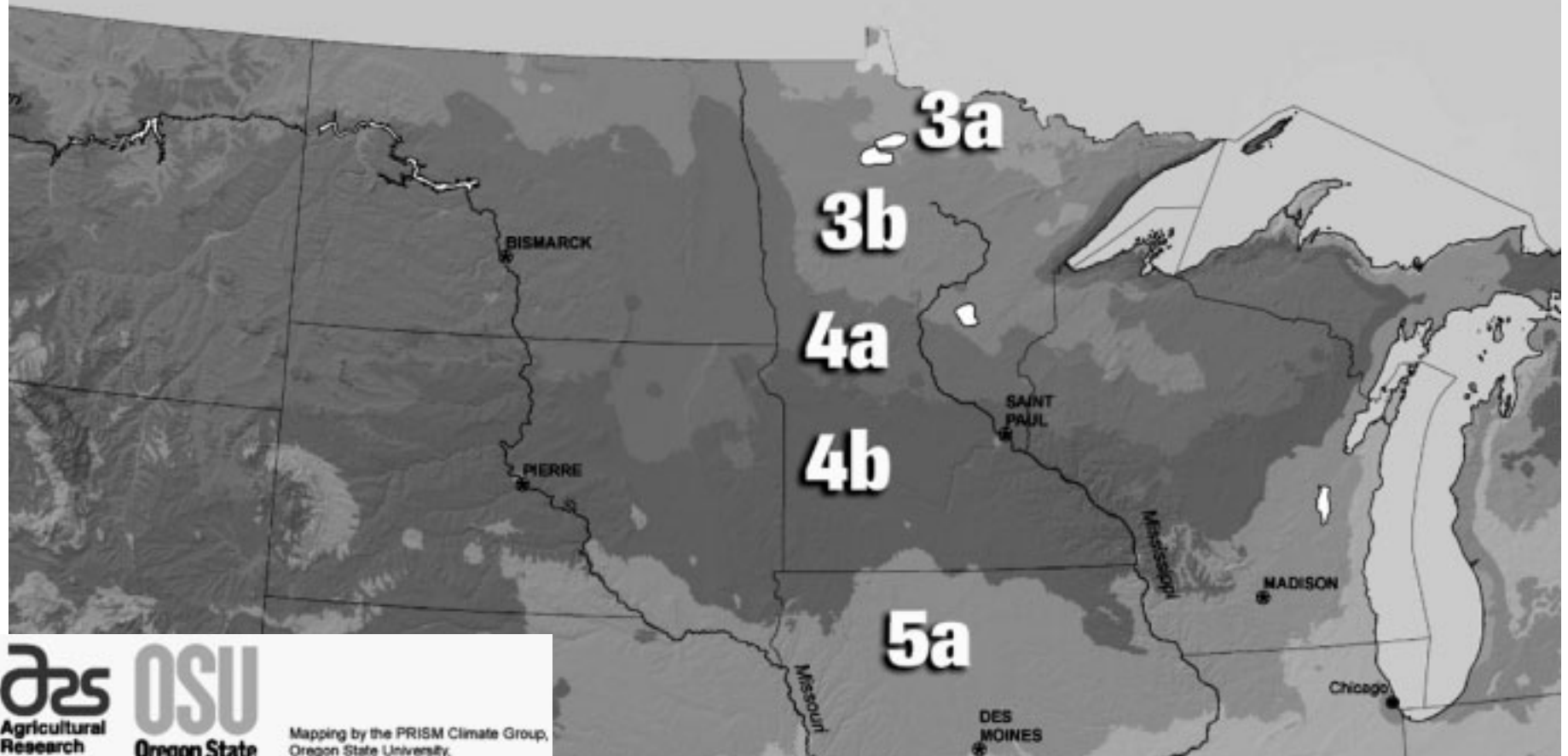
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Building permits ensure safety for all

By Karin Ramige
McLeod Publishing, Inc.

Obtaining a building permit for what seems like a small repair or project may seem to be an unnecessary expense, but it is an important step that cannot be ignored.

Building permits ensure that construction projects and new construction meet the standards that are regulated by the Minnesota State Building Code. It ensures that buildings are safe and pose no risk to the welfare of the public.

The city of Glencoe, and most other cities, has a building permit process to help home owners and contractor ensure they are meeting the required safety guidelines.

Once a project is complete, the city has contracted MNSPECT, Inc. to work with homeowners and contractors to complete the building permit process.

Permit applications can be obtained at the Glencoe City Office for the following types of projects:

- New home construction.
- Finishing a basement.
- Remodel.
- Decks.
- Detached garage and accessory buildings.
- Additions.

The building permit process for commercial projects varies slightly from the residential procedure.

The biggest difference being that three sets of the project blueprints are required at the time of the building permit application. These plans are reviewed by the building inspector prior to the issuance of the permit.

General permits are issued over the counter at the city offices for the following projects:

- Re-roofing.
- Re-siding.
- Window replacement for same size openings.
- Fences.
- Utility sheds (less than 120 sq. ft.).
- Mechanical permits are required for the replacement of furnace and air conditioning units.
- Plumbing permits are required for the replacement of water heater, lawn sprinkler systems with 1 ft. meter installation.

For more information on the city of Glencoe's building permit requirements visit www.glencoe.mn.org/city-government/services/building-inspections or call the city offices at 320-864-5586.

To schedule an inspection, contact MNSPECT at (952) 442-7520 or (888)-446-1801.

Do I need a permit?

Air Conditioner: A mechanical permit is required for new installation and replacements

Cement Slabs: Slabs for small sheds with no permit must be placed on property within required setbacks from property lines. Slabs without any construction do not require property line setbacks.

Deck: A building permit is not needed if the floor of the deck is less than 30 inches high and not attached to the house. Mobile home owners need a building permit for a deck if it is larger than 3 feet x 3 feet.

Demolish garage: Need a building permit only if utility runs to the garage. Minimum fee.

Fence: A general permit is required if the fence is to be higher than 30 inches and the following requirements must be met: height limitation - 30 inches in front of house and 78 inches on side and rear of property; property line set back - 2 feet on side yard (also on corner lot), 5 feet on backyard, no set back on front yard (can be on property line). Fence over 6 feet high requires a variance permit. Check for easements on property.

Furnace Permit: A mechanical permit is required when a complete replacement is done.

House moving: A building permit with two pictures and a special use permit are required when moving a house onto a lot.

Outdoor Pool: No permit is required for

an above ground pool less than 5,000 gallons. In a residential area. For insurance purposes, a fence of minimum height of 4 feet plus gate is necessary. Pool over 5,000 gallons requires a special use permit.

Retaining wall: A building permit is required if the wall is over 4 feet in height from the bottom of the footing to the top of the wall. Set back requirements are the same as a fence.

Satellite dish: A building permit is required if it is placed on top of a building, but not if it is placed on the ground.

Sign: A building permit is required for all signs. A sign cannot be placed on the boulevard. It should be placed on private property.

Steps: If the step is attached to the building, a building permit is necessary because footings are required. If the steps are pre-manufactured and not part of the building, no building permit is required.

Underground sprinkler system: A plumbing permit is required and the applicant needs to contact the building inspector because he needs to make sure a back flow check valve has been installed. Must have 1 foot water meter installed in addition to plumbing permit fee.

Windows: A general permit is required when replacing windows of same size or smaller. A regular building permit is required when making the window opening larger.

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Furnishing the empty nest

For parents, experiencing their kids leaving the nest cannot only be a momentous event, but it can also be one sometimes tinged with a bit of sadness. After all, your little boy or little girl is all grown up now. However, looking at the bright side, this means you now have one or more rooms that can be turned from a kid's bedroom into a space you can now enjoy.

You may have been making due with storing your personal effects into rooms in the house simply because of necessity. But now that the kids have flown the coop, it's possible to take over their rooms and turn them into something tailored to you and your spouse. The following are a few transformations that can take place.

Craft center

Many people enjoy making things with their hands, be it painting ceramics or knitting sweaters. A room that is set aside for different types of craft projects can keep work undisturbed and organized. Walls filled with shelves and storage containers alongside bulletin boards will create a utilitarian feel to the room. Have a large task table so you can spread out work and comfortable sitting chairs. Stick with a flooring material that can be cleaned quickly, like tile or wood in the event of spills.

Sports room

Sports enthusiasts may want to set up a room devoted to collections of trophies,

collector cards, memorabilia, and any other sports-related items. Add a sofa or recliners in the room as well as a big-screen TV, and this spot can be the perfect place for watching the game undisturbed.

Home office

For those who have been doing bills at the kitchen table or trying to work from home amid the noise of the kitchen or the television in the family room, a home office can be just the solution. If the room is large enough, place two desks face-to-face so it can be a his-and-her work center. Use neutral paint colors so that it will be more of a gender-neutral space.

Private bedroom

Although topics of the bedroom are often kept hush-hush among friends and family, many men and women aspire to one day having their own bedrooms. After



time retreating from the master bedroom because of a spouse snoring or simply because of being on opposite schedules, separate bedrooms enable you to create rooms that cater to you. Put in the amenities you desire and encourage your spouse to re-vamp the other bedroom according to his or her desires as well.

Guest retreat

Many times guests are forced to sleep on a pull-out bed or sleeper sofa when staying over at a loved one's. Having an extra bedroom available can enable friends and family members to stay overnight with comfort and ease now. Decorate the room in neutral colors and invest in comfortable, hotel-quality linens for the utmost in luxury.

Library

Some people simply enjoy the ability to curl up with a good book in a quiet space. Turn a vacated bedroom into a cozy nook complete with bookshelves, a plush chair and decorative reading lamp. Fill the nook with favorite books, decorations and a side table to house a cup of tea or coffee.

Regardless of how you feel when your children leave home, redecorating empty rooms into new, functional spaces can help add a positive spin to your suddenly empty nest.

Improve landscape

Continued from page 9

with grimy surfaces might find a power washer can work wonders at restoring a home's external appeal. If plants in pots that are covered in years-old dirt and grime, a power washer can restore the pot's luster in a matter of minutes. Spray down walkways and even home siding that has fallen victim to dirt and grime over the years.

- If planting trees, don't go too big. Especially large trees are not always attractive to prospective buyers, who likely won't want sight lines obstructed or won't want to worry about a tree falling and destroying their home during a storm.

- Address issues with weeds. A prevalent problem with weeds around the property is another situation that some buyers might feel is indicative of neglect. Weeds are a pretty simple problem to remedy, so buyers might be correct to assume weeds around the proper-

ty are there because the homeowner was not concerned with maintenance. Lay mulch around flower beds and gardens to reduce weed growth, and pull any weeds from sidewalks and the driveway. Once weeds are pulled, spray areas that were infested with a weed-treatment product to ensure weeds don't grow back.

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Hang pictures the professional way

Dressing up rooms is easily achieved by hanging artwork on the walls. However, hanging them at the right height, ensuring they are straight and avoiding errant holes in the walls can prove more challenging than many would like to admit.

Some people hang pictures at the wrong height. Others miss the stud in the wall and have to keep trying over and over to get the picture to stay vertical. There are some tips to follow that cut down on needless work and make the process a bit easier.

Using templates is one of the easiest ways to hang pictures. Simply trace the outside of the frame onto a piece of paper or cardboard for each picture that will be hung. Then use a tape that is not very tacky to temporarily hang the templates on the wall. Play with placement so that an idea of layout and the finished product can be realized. This is particularly helpful if multiple framed photos or artwork will be displayed.

This method enables homeowners to step back and view the entire picture, instead of having one hand on the picture frame while eyeballing placement. Plus, it eliminates the need

to punch holes into the wall only to find the frame is not placed where one desires.

After the placement is finalized, hang the actual frames, one by one, removing the templates in the process.

Another key tip to remember is that it is not essential that a wall beam is tapped into when hanging a picture on the wall. While homeowners should certainly attempt to locate a beam when hanging heavy items, sometimes the stud does not fall where it will be aesthetically pleasing to hang the frame. In such instances, expandable wall anchors can provide more stability. There are different anchors available depending on need. Some are plastic and can be pushed into a hole in the drywall. Once a screw is used in the anchor, the anchor will fan out and grab onto the backside of the drywall. Metal anchors may be spring-loaded and provide even more strength.

Here are some other pointers to keep in mind.

- Try grouping four pictures together in a square or rectangle to create the illusion of one larger picture.
- Always hang pictures at eye-level.

- When hanging a picture or artwork over the sofa, only leave a few inches so the picture is the focal point.

- Keep scale in mind. Do not place one small picture on a large wall. Conversely, do not put a large picture on a small wall.

- Consider the use of similarly hued picture frames or ones all of the same style to lend a cohesive look to the photo arrangements.

- When hanging art over a piece of furniture, it should not be longer than the width of the furniture.

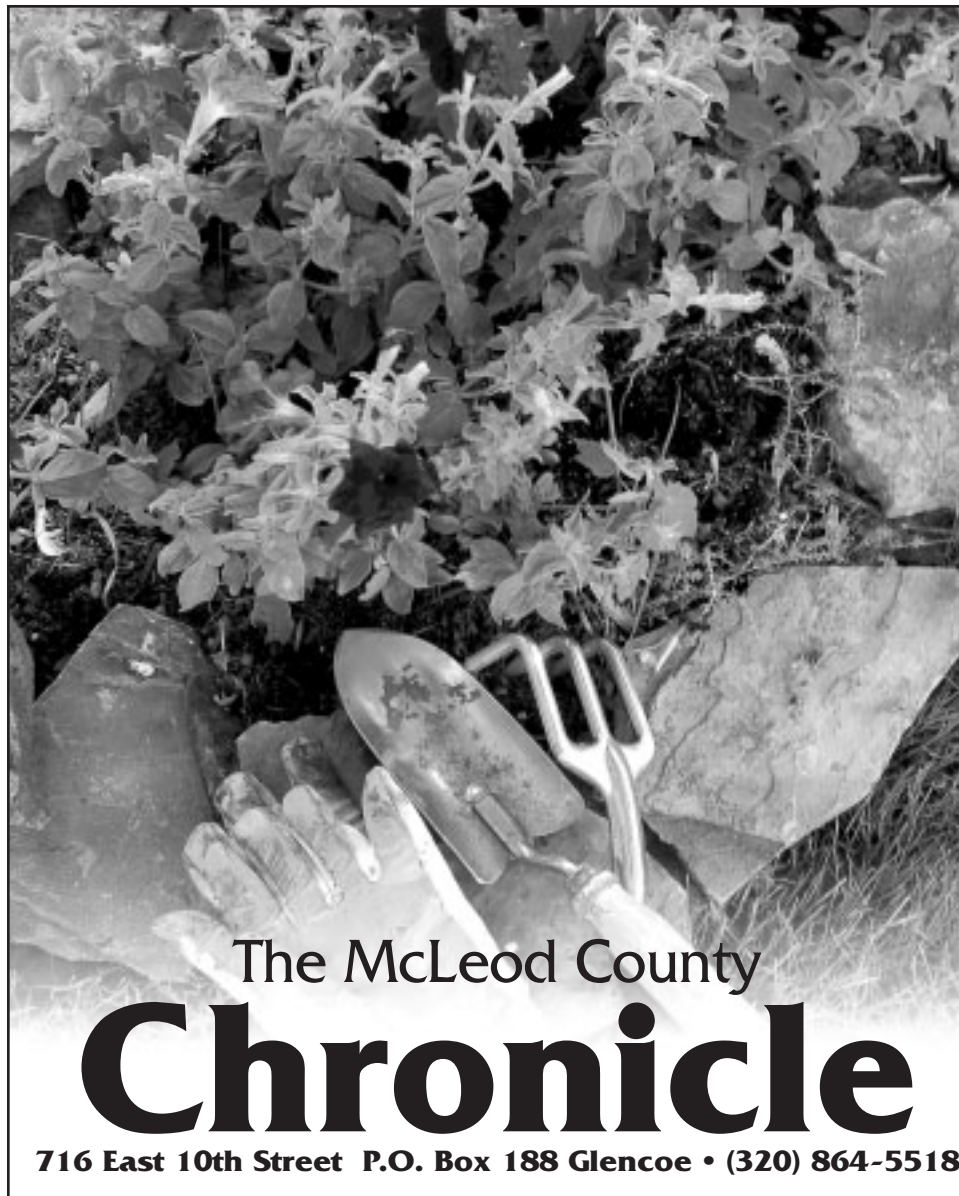
- Pull colors from the furniture and other decor so that photos or artwork coordinate with the design style.

- Think about illuminating the artwork. An upward or downward facing spotlight can make the picture pop in the room.

- Use an art shelf to display photos and other knick-knacks. It will take up less space on the wall and can offer a contemporary feel to the room.

- Pictures can be hung diagonally going up a staircase or anywhere there is a natural progression of height.

- Hanging pictures vertically gives an air of refinement and looks good next to a doorway.



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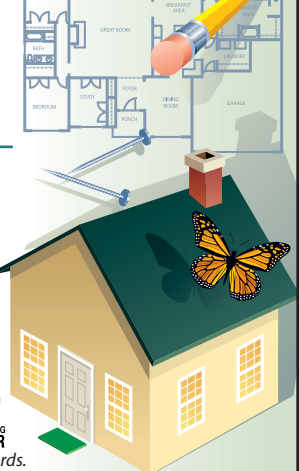
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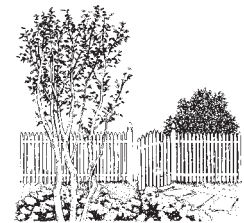
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