

Improving your surroundings



The house is no longer just a place to raise a family or live out your idea of the good life. It has also become the stuff of which good investments are made. What returns you will enjoy, be they of the present or the future, depends more and more on what you put into the dwelling.

You should ask yourself some questions. Should you buy a new house or a previously owned one or simply add on or refurbish your present house? Do you need a lot of room or are you content with just the basics? Does the neighborhood fit your lifestyle or will you be happier someplace else?

How long are you going to live there? Should you put a lot of effort into the residence or are you happy just doing the routine maintenance? Will eliminating a wall between a bedroom and the dining room or living room be a liability?

Do you need another bathroom before you need a sunporch? Do you spend more time on your front porch than in the backyard? What about a new roof? Can you install it yourself or should you call in a roofer? What are your priorities?

Can you afford the responsibility?

Many seasons will come and go and they will take their toll inside and out. Whether you decide to paint, fix or sell, go for quality in both material and design and detail. Shop around.

This home improvement issue is designed to give you some hints to keep in mind as you prepare for the winter months. Take your time and take advantage of the experts that conduct classes in area school extension courses or at community colleges. Get several estimates before you decide to go ahead with the redesigning. You'll be glad you did.

Q. The children have taken over our family room. We would like an adults only hideaway for relaxation without going to the bedroom?

A. You can find a solution for your problem designed for your budget. The low-cost approach is to arrange a quiet corner of the family room or living room for reading and conversation. The old back porch may be converted to this prized adults-only nook. An architect or contractor can be brought in to design an addition where collectibles may be displayed without child proofing.

Q. We have a formal dining room that is used for occasional entertaining. It seems like wasted space, yet we do want room for entertaining. What could we do with this space to make it more versatile?

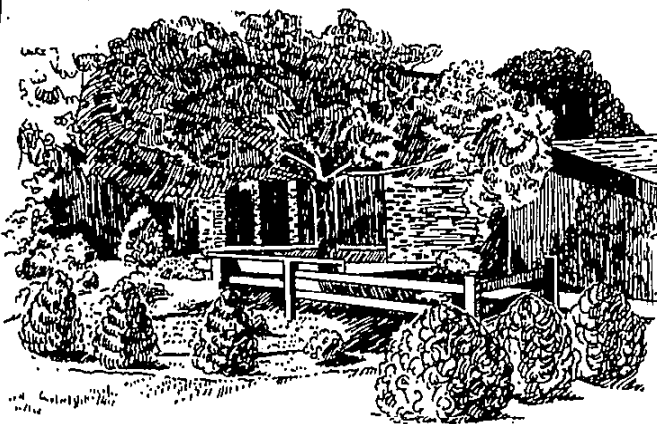
A. Consider using two smaller pedestal-base tavern tables pushed together for use as a full size dining table. Pulled apart one may be used as a game table and the other can serve as the breakfast table.

Q. Our older home needs work to cover cracked and damaged ceilings. We considered suspended ceilings, but they didn't seem appropriate for formal living areas.

A. Don't give up on suspended ceilings. There are now styles on the market made to resemble regular ceilings. The color matched grid is part of the ceiling pattern.

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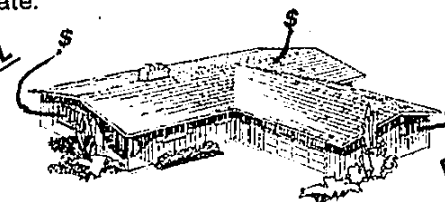
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