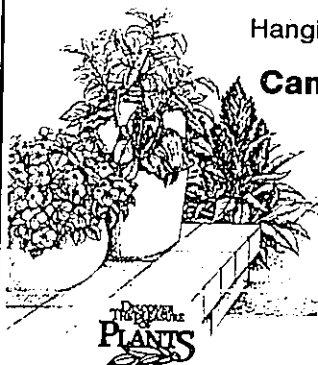


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## Eliminating barriers

Continued from Page 17

sacred old cathedral? So they've gone for products and services, we for the environmental."

He adds: "There are few buildings that are totally barrier-free to all disabled persons. Almost all have some problems because it is difficult to integrate these specialized design concepts for maximum use by everyone." On the other hand, he continues, "nearly every project now takes these individuals into consideration."

Town Square Park in St. Paul, Minn., is cited by critics as a good building for disabled visitors because, as at the Vancouver courts, they are integrated into the central circulation flow of the building. In this case, elevators and escalators built around a dramatic waterfall.

HORIZON HOUSE, a unit of The New York University Medical Center, was renovated recently so that patients and their families could become accustomed during overnight stays together to living with a handicap. The house's four rooms — kitchen, living room, bath and bedroom — were equipped with a variety of devices, from simple items like stove-top mirrors to a state-of-the-art, bedside environmental-control system that allows a non-ambulatory patient to control lights, television, even the front door by puffing into a tube hooked to a computer.

A booklet about the project, published by Whirlpool, the principal sponsor, notes that "modifying an existing kitchen can be as simple as removing cabinet

doors and adding a hinged counter at a comfortable height for seated work." And the installation of cabinets with pull-out bins and shelves — rather than units with stationary shelves — has application for both the disabled person and everyone else who has ever tried to find a pot or pan at the back of a bottom cupboard.

As for the Europeans, they've come up with a long line of products, including a sailboat for mobility-impaired persons; it has high freeboards as well as ample space for storing wheelchairs. A plate with a high edge on one side, shallow on the opposite, was devised by a Swedish firm to help those with rheumatism and others through meals, often a fatiguing task. Also for these people, a special pen was designed by another Swedish firm. Functional in its thlays, "should not draw attention to the fact that they are handicap aids."

Creativity, commitment and common sense are watchwords in planning programs and facilities for those with disabilities, the professionals say. Moreover, they point out that where progress has been made, the products, facilities and programs devised for disabled users often are likely to benefit everyone. "Designers had designed for the 'mythical' person," Salmen says, "but especially now, with an aging population, barrier-free designs are good for all." The Smithsonian's Majewski adds, "Anything we have done has improved communication in general. Simplified exhibit labels, for example, are helpful for everyone."

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