

REAL ESTATE BRIEFS

Real estate briefs features news and notes on professional associations, office activities, upcoming meetings and seminars, new services/products and consumer publications.

Write: Real estate briefs, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia 48150. Our fax number is (313) 691-7279.

Home buyers seminar

Vicky Love, mortgage consultant with Trax Financial, and Kimberly Harris, a Realtor with Century 21 Hartford, present a free home buyers seminar 6:30-8:30 p.m. Tuesday, Aug. 6, at the Farmington Library, 23500 Liberty, one block south of Grand River, one block west of Farmington Road.

Topics include how to avoid common buying mistakes, determining how much house you can afford, finding the right house, negotiating the best deal, buying with little cash and how to overcome bruised credit.

For reservations, call Love at (810) 357-9386.

Neumann/Smith project

Kenneth Neumann/Joel Smith and Associates in Southfield has been commissioned to develop a master plan for improvements and expansion of facilities and grounds on the 110-acre campus at Lawrence Technological University in Southfield.

The plan will expand on a site study completed in a 1993 reflective practice studio led by visiting professor of architecture, Gunnar Birkerts. "We have enjoyed a past relationship with Neumann/Smith in the expansion of the engineering research complex," said Charles M. Chambers, LTU president.

"We look forward to renewing our association with a firm whose work is highly regarded throughout this area," he said. "We are even prouder that many Lawrence Tech graduates, who constitute an astonishing 60 percent of their employees, have contributed to this success," he said.

Gwathmey Siegel & Associates Architects of New York also will work on the study.

Mortgage workshops

Ross Mortgage presents free, no obligation workshops "Avoiding Tragic Mistakes When Shopping for a Mortgage," Monday, Aug. 26, at Freedom Hill County Park, 15000 Metropolitan Parkway east of Schaefer in Sterling Heights, and Tuesday, Aug. 27, at International Business Center, 43000 Nine Mile east of Novi Road in Novi.

Both seminars run 6:30-7:30 p.m. "By the end of the seminar, people should have a pretty good idea how to save money and how to simplify the home buying process," said Tim Ross, president of Ross Mortgage.

For reservations, call (810) 968-1800.

Construction association moves

The Construction Association of Michigan has moved to 1626 S. Woodward in Bloomfield Hills from Troy. The new telephone number is (810) 972-1000, the main fax (810) 972-1001.

The association recently completed renovations to the 22,000-square-foot building originally designed and occupied by the architectural firm of Smith & Schurman Associates.

The work added a number of features including a training center, a spacious plan with atrium, lighting, two conference rooms and European-styled administrative offices.

"Located about a quarter mile north of Square Lake Road, the area is easily accessible from I-76, as well as other major arteries like Woodward Avenue and Telegraph Road," said Thomas Wickorsham, CAM chairman and treasurer for Roncelli of Sterling Heights.

Real Estate One

Real Estate One, headquartered in Farmington Hills, has again been included among the nation's 350 largest residential brokerage firms by newsletter Real Trends.

Real Estate One ranked 28th among mega-brokers with 9,498 residential closings in 1995.

Real Estate One has 30 company-

owned offices in Michigan including Plymouth, Livonia, Westland, Lathrup Village, Clarkston, Birmingham, West Bloomfield, Troy, Rochester and Bloomfield. The company has about 800 agents.

Avoiding liability

The Real Estate Investors Association of Oakland presents a dinner meeting focusing on implications of forfeiture cases for landlords when tenants use property for illegal purposes 7 p.m. Friday, Aug. 9, at the American Legion Hall in Royal Oak, 1815 Rochester Road.

Speaker: Steve Kaplan, assistant prosecutor, Macomb County. Cost is \$13 for members, \$23 for non-members. For reservations, call (800) 747-6742 by Aug. 6.

Licensing classes

The Birmingham Bloomfield Rochester South Oakland Association of Realtors offers a series of six-hour continuing education seminars, one of which must be completed by Oct. 31 to fulfill state real estate licensing requirements.

Each session goes 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Upcoming seminars are slated for Tuesday, Aug. 20, Walsh College, 5538 Livernois, Troy; Wednesday, Sept. 11 and Saturday, Sept. 21, Columbia Center, 201 W. Big Beaver, Troy; and Wednesday, Sept. 26, Standard Federal Bank, 2600 W. Big Beaver, Troy.

Cost is \$35 per session. To register, call Carole Kowalik at (810) 879-9560.

Apartment management

Lawrence Technological University sponsors a series of workshops on apartment management and review of the registered apartment management certification 2:30-5:30 p.m. Thursday Sept. 5-Dec. 12 on campus in Southfield.

Topics include risk management, marketing rental housing, planning for development management, financial management and maintenance.

Fee is \$385. To register, call Karen Piontek at (810) 204-4020.

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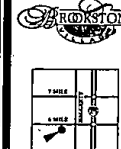
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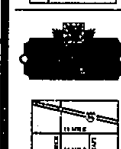
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Checklist tells how to pick best shade trees for landscaping

By J ROBERT NUSS

FOR THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

STATE COLLEGE, Pa. (AP) Because most residential properties can only accommodate a few large specimen shade trees, it makes good sense to start with a quality tree.

To select a specimen shade tree, use the following checklist:

■ Look for a fairly straight trunk and symmetrical crown. The initial growth sets the pattern for all future growth.

■ No branches should extend from the trunk at more than a 45-degree angle. Removal of these branches might alter the crown density and symmetry.

■ The tree should have a single central leader. Multiple stems on a young tree will result in splitting as the competing leaders mature.

■ Inspect the tree for damage to the trunk. Discolored, sunken or swollen areas indicate trouble. Avoid trees with visible borer damage (small holes in the trunk), unscaled (discolored patches), frost cracks or missing bark.

■ Note whether pruning cuts have callused over. Fresh cuts indicate a recently shaped tree pruned to appeal to customers. Always check under the tree wrap applied in the sales area.

■ Avoid trees with branches that cross over or have narrower-than-usual crotches for the species. Avoid trees that have a great number of branches close together on the trunk. Such branches will be weak and create pruning problems later.

■ Check the tree's height and root ball size against its caliper to see if the tree is in proportion.

1 1/2-inch caliper tree should be 10 to 14 feet tall with a 20-inch minimum root ball.

2-inch caliper tree should be 12 to 16 feet tall with a 24-inch minimum root ball.

3-inch caliper tree should be 14 to 18 feet tall with a 32-inch minimum root ball.

■ Check that the trunk is centered in the root ball. Avoid trees that are more than 10 percent off-center. Such trees may be missing part of the root system.

■ Individual roots should be no wider than the average finger. If heavy roots have been cut in the digging operation, it could mean that most of the absorbing root system is still in the nursery and the tree will have difficulty establishing a new root system in the landscape site.

■ If the tree is container-grown, knock it out of the pot to see whether it is pot bound. A tight mass of roots may not extend into the backfill soil after planting. Heavy mature roots in the container will not establish as readily as young, white, actively growing roots.

■ Remember that no matter how carefully you select a tree, if you have not matched its needs to those of the site, the tree will always be a problem. Take into consideration the overall qualities of the tree before it is planted. Find that many individuals place trees too close to other plants, buildings, and wires because they are unaware of the growth potential of the plant, which later becomes a burden to both the owner and the community.

It's OK to have a brown, unwatered lawn

SEATTLE (AP) — So you think you're green? What color is your lawn?

Ever since the drought of 1992 brought watering restrictions to many areas around Puget Sound, brown has been the color of choice for a lot of homeowners.

The advantages include avoiding high summertime water rates; freedom from the tyranny of moving sprinklers all the time; and release from the mowing ritual.

"It's all part of nature's cycle," Jan Augustin said of her brown lawn, which she used to water religiously until the 1992 drought.

Another brownie, in the North Creek area of Bothell, said he decided not to bother with his lawn "because I've got two pre-teen daughters, and I've got enough troubles."

Nancy Brown, a volunteer master gardener at the King County Cooperative Extension service, said she seldom hears from people worried about

their khaki-colored grass.

"I think most people who live here realize this is what happens, that a lawn goes dormant," she said.

"And it's good to leave them that way," she added, since it takes "a heck of a lot of water" to make a brown lawn green again.

Not everyone, however, is willing to sacrifice that lush, overgreen look.

"It's kind of a pride of ownership thing, to keep it looking its best," said Seattle homeowner Randy Reilly.

Like most green-lawners, Reilly said he waters on at night, when more water reaches the grass roots.

Some areas apparently are more prone than others to pursue the green-lawn ideal.

"The more upscale suburban neighborhoods will maintain green lawns at any cost," said Chuck Pavlich, a nursery supervisor. Some suburban developments even have covenants that require homeowners to keep their lawns green, he said.

The Seattle Post-Intelligencer, in a random tour of a dozen Seattle neighborhoods, found brown lawns all over. Without drawing conclusions, it also noted that yard signs for Republican political candidates appeared only on lush, green lawns, while Democratic signs were found only on brown lawns.

Green or brown, officials say water supplies are fine in the Everett-Seattle-Tacoma corridor, and that conservation has taken hold as a way of life.

The Seattle water system, for example, which serves 1.3-million customers, set its record one-day consumption of 348 million gallons on July 10, 1970.

The area has grown dramatically since then, but the annual record one-day consumption now is about 265 million gallons, Seattle Water Department spokesman Bart Becker said.

Loan rates
off slightly

Thirty-year, fixed rate mortgages averaged 8.23 percent this week, down from 8.42 percent last week, according to a national survey released Thursday by the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corp.

It was the lowest since July 3, when rates averaged 8.14 percent.

The 6.42 percent average last week was the highest since rates averaged 6.62 percent in early March 1995.

On one-year adjustable rate mortgages, lenders were asking an average initial rate of 5.97 percent, down from 6.01 percent last week.