

Sun lights 2-story home

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room. From the balcony at the second-story landing you can overlook both spaces. This informal plan has no living room, which many contemporary families see as a definite plus.

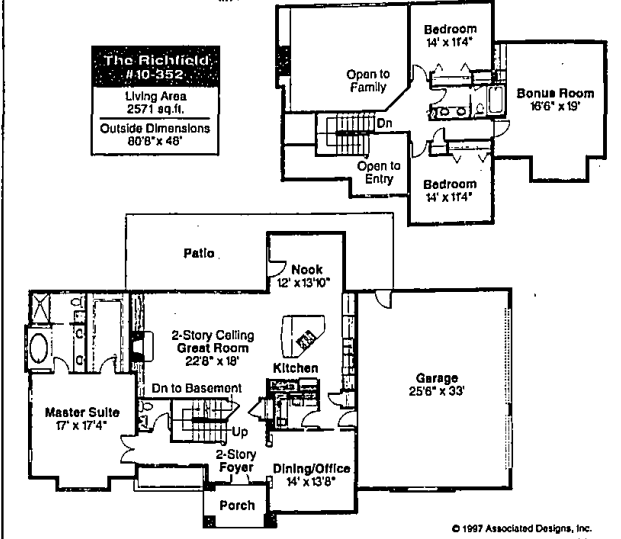
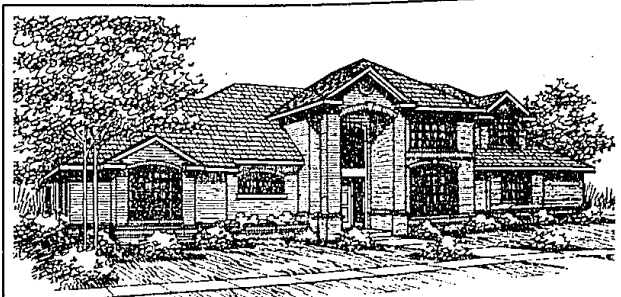
What it does have is a bright, lofty and spacious great room, open to the kitchen and nook. The fireplace provides color and warmth. It's nestled between storage shelves and an entertainment center with overhead shelves. In the kitchen, a large work island adds counter space for multiple cooks. The side out-fitted as an eating bar is a great place to hang out and chat with whoever is working in the kitchen.

Utilities are out of the way but easy to get to, tucked in an alcove off the hallway that connects the kitchen, dining room and three-car garage.

The boxed bay that expands the Richfield's master suite is an ideal location for a cozy window seat. Other features include a deep walk-in closet, and a private two-section bathroom. Soft natural light filters in through the glass block wall next to the deep soaking tub. The shower and toilet can be isolated for steam containment and added privacy.

Two bedrooms, a dual-compartment bathroom and a huge bonus room are upstairs.

For a review plan, including scaled floor plans, elevations, section and artist's conception, send \$15 to Associated Designs, 1100 Jacobs Dr., Eugene, Ore. 97402. Please specify the Richfield 10-352 and include a return address when ordering. A catalog featuring over 170 home plans is available for \$12. For more information call (800) 634-0123.



Organic matter is gardener's best tool

By Dr. J. ROBERT NUSS
FOR THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

(AP) — Organic matter is probably one of the most versatile and useful materials a gardener can use.

It really makes an impact on the physical quality of the soil. It can increase water movement through heavy clay soils or increase the water-holding capacity of lighter, sandy soils. Under ideal conditions, organic matter binds soil particles together to create pore spaces through which air, water and roots can move freely.

Organic matter also provides a food source for the many varieties of soil organisms, both animal and plant, which in turn

release limited quantities of plant nutrients for our garden crops. Regular use of organic matter will provide some plant nutrients, but its nutritional value is minimal in relation to the improvement it makes to the physical quality of garden soil.

The home gardener has an ever-increasing number of organic sources from which to select. Where the organic matter will be used should be the first consideration when selecting a type and source of the product. When amending garden soil used to grow edible crops like fruit and vegetables, you should not use products containing any form of sludge. There are health concerns surrounding sludge-containing products, as well as the possibility of heavy metal contamination.

However, products developed from yard waste, fallen leaves, garden compost, peat moss or other decomposed organic materials will be suitable for the edible garden and the total landscape. If you are certain that the area to be amended will not be converted to an edible garden in the future, sludge-containing products can be used there with great success.

All organic materials except for peat moss should be composted before they are incorporated into the soil. The composting process reduces the organic matter to a form that will not result in a nutrient drain on the crops being grown in the amended soil.

One question gardeners often ask about composted materials is the impact they have on soil pH. A recent study done by former Penn State student Mimi Rose at Ohio State University indicated that all composts

have a pH between 6.5 and 7.0 or higher, which is often higher than desired for acid-tolerant crops. Composted leaves generally have higher pH values than other types of compost, and peat moss will definitely lower soil pH because of its acidic properties.

To modify the possibly adverse effect of composted materials on soil pH, you can incorporate sulfur at a rate of 3 pounds per each 100 square feet of surface area. This rate will generally lower the soil pH 1 to 1 1/2 units for several years after application. Sulfur is slow to react, so you may not see any immediate results. Continued applications of composts may tend to slow the reaction of the sulfur with the soil. It is suspected that composted organic matter has a buffering effect on the amended soil.

The tremendous success experienced by organic gardeners over the years has been due to the greatly improved physical properties of the soil, which allows the plant roots to take advantage of the available air, water, and nutrients.

Dr. J. Robert Nuss is a horticulturist at Penn State University.

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