

Haste Makes Waste In Remodeling

When it comes to home improvement, haste can make waste a lot of money.

Building Supply News, a leading building material retailer magazine, advises homeowners that the best assurance of dollar value and job satisfaction is to plan remodeling projects carefully.

Before you begin, says BSN, get professional advice

and specific information. It can help you avoid common and expensive pitfalls.

The magazine offers these suggestions:

- Decide exactly what the improvement should be. Make a list of the benefits it should achieve, and a sketch of how it should look. Set a realistic price range.
- Take your plans to a reliable contractor or building

supply dealer. If you don't know the local "pros," ask friends for recommendations, or ask contractors for names of customers you can contact.

• Get a detailed written job specification from the remodeler. This should include a complete list of materials to be used, labor and services to be provided, and carefully estimated costs.

• Check on local building codes, on building permits and on who will pay them.

• Find out if the remodeler carries public liability insurance. Be sure you're protected if someone is injured on the job.

• Decide on the best method of payment. Be sure you

understand the terms of a financing plan or bank loan.

• Be sure you've read and understood — ALL contract terms before signing. Get all guarantees and warranties in writing.

• Show the high-pressure salesman who tries to sell you things you don't need, or offers a "something for nothing" deal.

• Shop the local building

materials centers. They carry a wide range of materials and have helpful "remodeling ideas" displays. Many offer consulting and/or contracting services.

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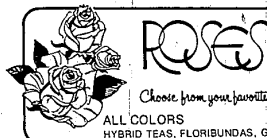
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DIVIDER WALL of wormy chestnut paneling incorporates a fire place. It divides the kitchen into three parts. The food preparation area at the right is convenient to the dining area on the other side of the divider. The relaxation area in the foreground is perfect for a "koffee klatch" with the neighbors or reading while dinner is cooking.

Caging Beats Staking; Increases Tomato Crop

Here's a "cagey" way to keep your tomatoes off the ground, increase yields and cut down on labor — cage them.

Caging, a new method perfected by Michigan State University horticultural scientists beats staking tomato plants because no tying or pruning is necessary.

The cage, a mesh-wire cylinder 15 to 22 inches in diameter and two to five feet tall, is simply placed over the tomato when it is transplanted. The plant grows up and through the cage and tomatoes hang high and dry. Cages are usually made from 6 by 6-inch or 8 by 8-inch 10-gauge mesh-concrete reinforcement wire. However, any type of mesh wire can be used if the mesh is large enough to permit harvesting through it.

"If concrete reinforcement wire is used, a 10- to 24-inch diameter cylinder is made by hooking together the ends of a four- to five-foot section of wire. The bottom rung is cut away and the prongs are pushed into the soil for support."

"Caging has several advantages in addition to eliminating staking and pruning," according to Robert Hermer, MSU horticulturist. "It keeps the fruit off the ground so that there is not so much problem with slugs, ground stain and rotting, especially in wet weather."

Hermer cites MSU research that shows more of the tomatoes are larger and higher quality when caged, compared to ground or staked tomatoes. And, regular pruning necessary with staking has been shown to decrease total yields.

"The cages can be unhooked, laid flat, and stored and should last several years, especially if painted to protect against rust," Hermer says.

Hermer recommends small vined tomato varieties for caging. Tall cages or cages made from chicken wire or

woven wire may require staking (around cage) for support, he says.

Alyssum Belongs In Every Garden

Alyssum is a compact, low growing plant that's surprisingly versatile in the flower garden.

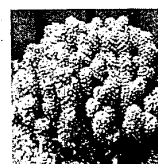
Its best use is as an edging to a flower border, but it is equally at home used in a rock garden, window box, along the side of walks, between stepping stones and blended in a container with taller growing plants.

It is particularly effective when alternated with other low growing plants of contrasting colors — such as blue lobelia and ageratum.

The most popular color for alyssum is white, but there are violet and pink varieties. Best of the white is Carpet of Snow, popular because of its early, free-flowering habit.

Rosie O'Day is a lovely pink, and Royal Carpet is the most popular violet variety. All these varieties grow no more than four inches high, and they can be planted in a row of alternating colors.

Alyssum grows well in every kind of soil — even poor soil — and it tolerates bad weather with ease. The seeds are tiny, and although they



CARPET OF SNOW alyssum continues to grow all summer creating a dense mass of sparkling white flowers.

Can be sown directly into the garden starting them indoors is a preferred way to handle them.

In addition to these annual varieties there are some beautiful varieties of perennial alyssum, colored golden yellow. They bloom early in the spring about the same time as tulips, and look truly magnificent cascading over a dry wall, or planted in clumps in a rocky among flowering bulbs.

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