Folk Art Inspires New Wall Motifs

The whimsical charm of Pennsylvania Dutch design has caught the fancy of today's designers and decorators, making this early American motif a home fashion favorite.

"While historically and geographically, Pennsylvania Dutch belongs in the broad category of Early American, it has little in common with the design elements and furniture styles generally regarded as Early American by most antique collectors," noted decorating consultant Mary Ann Wills.

"Similarities are missing because, for nearly 150 years, the rural artisans of southeastern Pennsylvania had so little to do with the world outside their own close-knit community," she said.

"What they made was for local use, not for city markets elsewhere."

* * *

SHE POINTED out that the original settlers of Pennsylvania Dutch country were really Germans and Swiss who came to America in the 1700's to escape successive wars along the Rhine River. They called themselves 'Deutsch,' meaning German.

Appealing interpretations of the old designs reflect the originators' great love or ornamentation that was a vital part of their rural German heritage.

One design, created by an early 19th century potter, has been translated into a colorful Floral Urn plaque. Another inspired a three-arm sconce with coordinated single sconces.

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THE DESIGN of a fancy dower chest prompted a pair of imaginative flower plaques. The elusive "distelfink," the Pennsylvania Dutch interpretation of a wild canary is the theme of still another plaque which represents a flowering tree with a pair of distelfinks clinging to its branches.

As in many of the old designs that defy ordinary rules of proportion, the birds are practically as large as the tree itself.

To create the new folk art series for today's decorating scheme, artists first hand-carved the various motifs in wood. These carvings were then exactingly reproduced in simulated wood and finished by hand in authentic Venetian red, mustard yellow, leaf green, and parchment tones that are as much in style today as they were nearly two centuries ago.

Drop Table Acts As Patio Server

Any kitchen window opening to the patio can be converted to a handy pass - through by building a drop - down serving counter outside, under the window sill.

Build the counter of 1 by 4 inch fir or pine boards nailed to a 2 by 2 - inch brace at either end. Hinge the counter to a ledger strip nailed just under the sill and support it on hinged shelf brackets that can be folded flat against the house wall when not in use.

During the winter months or a rainy spell, the counter can be let down, to hang flat against the wall.

New Material Aids Housewife

A special glass ceramic called Hercuvit may lighten the burden of the housewife.

According to PPG Industries, the producer, one use of the new material will be for cooking surface tops on gas and electric kitchen ranges, thus eliminating the need of cleaning burners and messy drip pans.

Nurse Corps Old

The U.S. Army Nurse Corps, oldest military nursing corps in the world, was established Feb. 2, 1901.

Fir For Floors

Nearly 60 per cent of builders use mostly Douglas fir for floor joists, a National Association of Home Builders survey shows. Hemlock and southern yellow pine are next in usage. The most common floor joist span is 16 feet, and space between joists 16 inches.

HELP SMOKEY THE BEAR -- Farmington Township Beautification Committee promoted its tree-planting program with this float in Saturday's festival parade. (Evert photo)

Growing Good Tomatoes: A reader asks: "What do you think of the practice of cutting off all the leaves of tomato plants, except the top ones. I heard you should do this, and then stake the plants."

My answer to this is, "Don't do it!" Leaves are factories for making food for the tomatoes. If you remove the factories you have nothing left to make food for the plant or fruit. A lot of gardeners I know never bother to take a single leaf from their plants and they get tomatoes by the bushel.

As for myself, I can't even see how the practice of "removing suckers" can help a plant grow better. After all, just what is a "sucker?" A tomato sucker isn't a bit different from any other part of a tomato plant. I can't see why a tiny branch growing in an axle of another branch is any more of a sucker than any other part of the plant.

So, if you don't understand what is meant by pruning a tomato, don't worry about it. Your plants will produce all the fruit you want, even if you don't prune.

If you want clean fruit, stake your plants and put a mulch of straw or plastic around the base of each. Unstaked vines will produce just as much fruit as staked, and chances are you'll have less blossom-end rot (that black, leathery condition on the bottom of each fruit) than if you staked them.

* * *

TRANSPLANTING IRIS: If your iris bed is a patch of weeds, or if the plants have been stingy with blooms, it's time to dig up the area, separate the clumps and reset. When iris becomes overcrowded it refuses to bloom. Separate the plants now and set them in a sunny spot.

Also, if you find any rotted parts simply cut them out, dust with methoxychlor and replant. Newly set plants will root shortly, but it sometimes takes two years before they will bloom, so be a bit patient.

* * *

GREEN THUMB CLINIC: A reader writes: "This spring our tulips were quite a mess. The buds came out but they turned brown and dried up. Are they worthless?"

Answer: No. They have a fungus (fireblight) which causes the buds to turn brown. Dig them up now, clean them off and soak in a solution of captan (1 tablespoon to a gallon of water.) Next spring, be sure to keep the new growth covered with a good fungicide such as captan, maneb or zineb. Make sure the buds are well covered, as they'll get the same disease next year if untreated.

Americans Still Want More Space

The American frontier may no longer exist, but Americans are still hankering for space.

A University of Michigan survey has found that an overwhelming majority of the families interviewed preferred single family homes, with emphasis on the amount of space inside.

One area that received special mention was a desire for space for spare-time activities - workshop, sewing, hobbies.

* * *

AT FIRST GLANCE, many homes seem to lack extra space to pursue special interests, but under-utilized areas can often be easily transformed and used for a number of activities.

The laundry or furnace room is most often overlooked for additional uses. By removing some accumulated storage, a workbench or sewing table can often fit in along one wall.

A vinyl asbestos tile floor adds color to this area and makes cleanup from projects quick and simple.

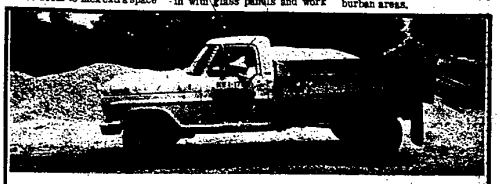
* * *

A BREEZEWAY between house and garage can be closed in with glass panels and work areas installed along the two solid walls as another area for expansion in many homes. Here also a vinyl asbestos tile floor provides an inexpensive and wear-resistant floor surface.

In warm climates, many families have found that the garage makes an ideal space for overflow family activities.

METRO EMPLOYMENT

Central cities in large metropolitan areas still account for two-thirds of their area's employment, despite recent increases in employment in suburban areas.



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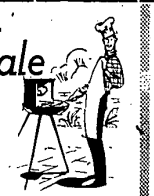

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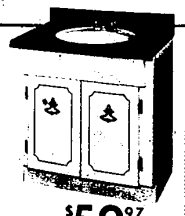

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