

Plant some trees to cool your house

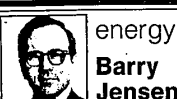
It's both a bit early and a bit late to worry about the greenery around your house. It's early because the really hot weather hasn't hit, and the cold weather is five months off.

It's late because the best time to plant green things is the spring. But you can take a look at what you have and decide what you should have.

Fast-growing shade trees can be planted in strategic spots around the house to shade the house from the sun in summer. Deciduous trees are best for blocking the sun because they shed their leaves in the fall and allow the maximum amount of sun in the winter when you need it.

Evergreens are handy for wind breaks to slow the cold winter winds, but since they remain full the year around, they are poor choices on the south and west side of your house.

But evergreens can do a fine job of keeping the external unit of a central air conditioner cool. A cooler condenser unit means the system doesn't have to work as hard. That saves energy and money.



energy
Barry Jensen

IN ADDITION, evergreens do not shed leaves to block the vents in a compressor unit.

But placing an evergreen too close to an external central unit can block the necessary air flow, creating the hot-air problem you sought to avoid by planting an evergreen in the first place.

So don't plant a shrub too close — the York air conditioning people recommend a minimum distance between the compressor unit and shading shrubbery of two feet. This probably will mean hacking off the new growth once a year, but that beats raking leaves or cleaning out the condenser unit — unless yours is easier to clean than mine.

A heavily shaded home benefits with or without air conditioning. Air is cooler in the shade, so an open window allows the house to share the cool.

WITH AIR conditioning, the sun is kept at bay, especially if trees are planted to shade your south-facing windows from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Trees recommended by one nurseryman include maple, oak, sycamore and silver maple. But don't plant a maple any closer than 40 feet from your house or you may have problems with roots. Your local nurseryman is the expert in tree selection.

Certain types of rhododendron are evergreens, so an accumulation of leaves is not a problem. Rhododendrons may be pruned immediately after each flowering season.

Mugo pine and euonymus can grow two to four feet high and as much as four feet in diameter, but they can be trimmed.

Trim the spiked growth in the center of the mugo pine each year to keep it from growing an additional three inches yearly.

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Program saves 1.3 million gallons of gas

More than 20 million vehicles miles traveled have been reduced, 1.3 million gallons of gasoline have been conserved and 119 accidents prevented since 1980 by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments' (SEMCOG) RideMatch program.

"We feel these estimates are very impressive figures, especially when you consider that prevention and conservation have been national concerns for many years," said John M. Amberger, SEMCOG executive director.

RIDEMATCH is designed to assist southeast Michigan businesses and communities in offering their employees energy-saving means of transportation to work.

Distributing applications and giving presentations to interested people, RideMatch staff helps organize vanpools or carpools for groups.

In two years, more than 2,100 carpools and 70 vanpools have been organized for such businesses as Ford Motor Co., American Natural Resources

Co. and National Bank of Detroit.

They have also organized ride sharing programs for communities such as Sumpter Township in Wayne County. In all, some 7,500 people are part of the car or vanpools that have saved those 20 million miles.

"THE PROGRAM has been a success. In addition to the other statistics, more than 78 tons of air pollution have been reduced," Amberger added.

RideMatch is a free, publicly funded

ridesharing service of SEMCOG, designed to assist commuters in finding a convenient and economic alternative to driving to work alone. It uses via carpooling, vanpooling or public transit.

SEMCOG is a voluntary association of counties, cities, villages, townships and schools in the seven-county southeast Michigan region. Its principal functions are short and long-range planning for housing, transportation, land use, public safety, recreation and open space and the environment.

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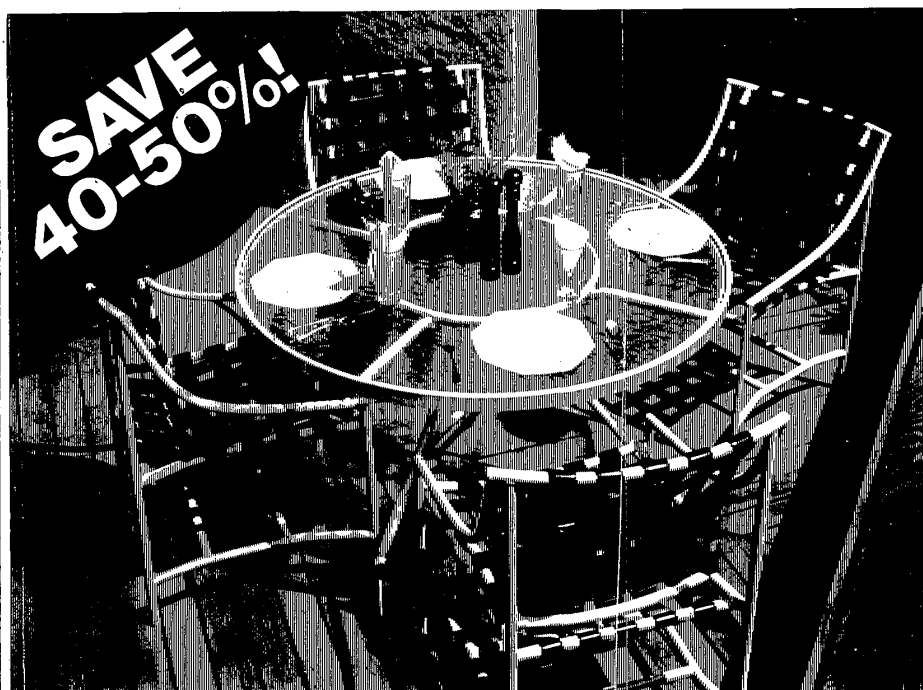
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