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addendum, the wording is so vague that the result is mostly to limit the liability of the appraiser. And appraisers don't have the capability to check environmental hazards unless their appraisal includes a report from a professional environmental checking firm. Unfortunately, appraisers and mortgage companies offer almost no protection from buying a home that is endangered by a hazardous waste site.

There are a handful of new environmental information companies in the United States that provide fast, accurate and inexpensive ways to look into potential hazards on or in proximity to a given property. Enviro Check of Farmington Hills is one of these

companies. It has designed an environmental information report specifically for the residential real estate industry. This report deals with issues that directly affect Realtors and their clients in accordance with the seller's disclosure, such as: landfills, shooting ranges, major and minor airports and helicopter pads.

In addition to the hazards that must be identified to fulfill disclosure statement requirements, the report provides the location and information on sites from four other hazardous waste site lists. Enviro Check has added a map overlay that shows clients and customers whether their well water might contain naturally occurring arsenic.

Environmental awareness and liability in residential real estate are on the rise. Law suits have become so common that Realtors and environmental information companies are specializing in them. People involved in such law suits include home buyers, sellers, their Realtors and the mortgage companies. All are trying to recoup the losses on homes that are harmed by environmental hazards.

There is an old saying that what you don't know can't hurt you. When you buy a home, that saying could not be further from the truth.

Steve Wiese is president of Enviro Check Inc. in Farmington Hills. For more information, call 248-474-0303.

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Ferdon as "an expandable home," is a two story that can range in size from 1,405 to 1,665 square feet, depending on how many rooms buyers want to include.

The on-site model goes the maximum and includes a living room, dining room, kitchen with island, family room, den and half bath on the first floor.

The master upstairs has a sloped ceiling, a walk-in closet and wall closet and a combination tub/shower. Two other bedrooms and a full bath also are up.

Base price is \$176,500, the model with upgrades excluding landscaping about \$188,300.

The other model under construction, the Sussex, is a Cape Cod of 1,630 square feet.

The master with a walk-in

closet and combination tub/shower is on the first floor along with a living room, dining room and laundry. Two bedrooms and a full bath are upstairs.

Base price is \$173,600.

The Homestead is serviced by city water and city sewers. The subdivision will have sidewalks.

The property tax rate currently is \$27.51 per \$1,000 of state equalized valuation, half of market value. That means the owners of a \$175,000 condo would pay about \$2,400 the first year.

An annual association/maintenance fee of \$100 is projected.

An elaborate computer system in the sales office takes prospects through all the plans and feature selection options. Plus, there's no closing costs for

buyers who finance through United Capital Financial (partially owned by the builders).

Donald and Jacqueline Green, and children Brandon and Devin will be moving into a Newhampton.

"I like the layout of homes there; I like the lot sizes, and I really like the side-entry garages," Donald said. "I like the value for the amount of home I have. I've been looking for three years. This is the best value for my money."

"The builder, I've seen some of his work in Novi. He's done quality work, and that impressed me," Green added.

The models/sales office at the Homestead, (313) 398-6500, is open noon to 6 p.m. daily.

Minimize loss of harvest

By Dr. J. Robert Nuss
SPECIAL WRITER

(AP) - Harvested fruits and vegetables are living plant parts that change, deteriorate, and die. Some of this loss is unavoidable, but you can reduce much of it if you understand some of the conditions that affect quality.

Cleanliness can be associated with quality and how well a crop stores. However, not all fruits and vegetables need to be washed before storage. Vegetables harvested from the soil, such as potatoes and roots, present a more pleasing appearance for use when washed prior to storage. The washing process must be gentle to avoid bruising and skinning the vegetables, which can encourage rotting during storage.

A simple method that has worked well for me is to wash about one-half bushel of vegetables per batch in a slatted basket or hamper.

First, submerge the basket containing the vegetables in an old tub or other container filled with water. After a 10- to 20-minute soak to soften the soil, remove the hamper, tip it slightly, and while rolling it slowly to tumble the vegetables gently, spray water over the contents until most of the soil has been washed away. Don't use a strong jet of water; this, too, can damage the thin skin of many vegetables.

Next, carefully dump the washed vegetables into a clean container and allow them to drain and dry for about an hour before you transfer them to

As soon as it's practical after picking, rinse the produce in cold water to lower its temperature, or spread it out in the coolest place possible, such as a shed or under a shade tree.

storage. Temperature is another major factor in crop quality and storage success. The first step after you harvest fruit and vegetables is to keep them cool. Remember that freshly picked material is still alive, even though it has been removed from its source of nutrients and water - the parent plant. The chemical processes within the cells of the crop continue. This action is slower at low temperatures. But if it proceeds quickly until elevated temperatures, the results may be over-ripening, undesirable changes in flavor, color, and texture, and even spoilage.

As soon as it's practical after picking, rinse the produce in cold water to lower its temperature, or spread it out in the coolest place possible, such as a shed or under a shade tree. Fresh produce also generates heat when stored. That's why it's important to provide plenty of space between crates and baskets for ventilation.

A refrigerator is useful for cooling produce. But you may not have

enough space for it all. You can use ice, but produce in the bottom of the container may become waterlogged if you leave it iced too long, unless the bottom of the container has drain holes.

Moisture loss within the harvested crop will also affect quality. It has been suggested that waxing certain vegetables, such as rutabagas, parsnips, beets, and cabbots, should be beneficial because it reduces moisture loss and subsequent shriveling during storage.

Wax might be applied to these vegetables either in a hot form or as a wax emulsion. Vegetable growers say that hot wax treatment is particularly effective in reducing moisture loss in rutabagas. However, the wax coating interferes with the normal breathing process of the vegetable, and breakdown occurs early in the storage period. The quality might be improved for a short time, but overall shelf life is reduced. Cold wax emulsion does not have much effect on moisture loss.

The bottom line is that waxing vegetables for home storage is not recommended. Storage in slightly damp sand is an easier and surer method of storing most root crops. Elevated levels of humidity or the use of plastic wraps can be very effective in reducing moisture loss from most fruits and vegetables during storage.

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

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