

FALL FIX-UP

A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE GULF ISLANDS DRIFTWOOD
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2006 • PAGE B1

Steve Lynch garden full of year-round surprises



AFTER THE WORK IS DONE: Islander Steve Lynch has transferred his former passion for cooking to gardening on his Acland Road property. Lynch was again a big fall fair trophy winner this year.

Photo by Pat Burkette

By PAT BURKETTE
Driftwood Contributor

Steve Lynch isn't so much a gardener as he is a plantsman. His .68-acre property on Acland Road boasts bodacious botanicals which aptly illustrate the stunning diversity of the plant world.

There are 160 varieties of rhododendrons and 80 varieties of hostas in Lynch's garden, along with every imaginable tree, from redwood to handkerchief tree, and blossoms that run the gamut from ginger to clematis.

"I wanted my garden to be a botanical garden," says Lynch. "I'm more into horticulture. I like the individual plants for the individual plants, rather than what they do for the garden."

So sure, this is a REAL GARDEN, with unusual plants, not favourite flowers. But Lynch is a down-to-earth guy. So although he maintains a list of every plant in alphabetical order, in Latin, he confesses, "I have a category called Stuff that Died." And he's not afraid to use the word "weird" alongside "Aralia."

"There's a weird tree," he

says, pointing to an *Aralia spinosa*. "It's called the devil's walking stick. All winter it will be a stick." But right now, it's loaded with leaves turning saffron and red, and clusters of airy, dark pink flowers. Lynch holds up what looks like one of the tree's branches. "This isn't a branch," he explains, "It's actually one leaf."

How about the weirdly gorgeous *Leycesteria formosa*, aka Himalayan honeysuckle? Lynch fielded numerous calls after he showed the shrub's dangling maroon flowers and dark purple berries at this year's fall fair, where he won nine trophies, including one for Best Perennial Collection. He claims a lack of other entries was a factor. He's just as modest about winning the fair's coveted Scotch Egg Trophy.

The 52 year old, who came to Salt Spring from California in 1979, is now employed by B.C. Ferries. But for 16 years, he was a chef at the Bay Window and Hastings House, so has always avoided the fair's cooking categories.

LYNCH GARDEN B3

Beautiful Floors for your Home

A large advertisement for Ganges Floor Coverings. It features a photograph of a man and a woman, Andrew and Tracy Little, standing in front of a display of various floor coverings. The display includes several large, patterned area rugs, stacks of carpet samples, and boxes of flooring materials. The text lists the services and products offered.

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Check with building inspector before renovation gets rolling

By ELIZABETH NOLAN
Driftwood Contributor

Homeowners hoping to get a few repairs in before the winter are advised to take a look at the Capital Regional District (CRD) Building Bylaw before they undertake any projects.

Small fix-up projects can balloon into big jobs, and

that's when building permits come into play, warns Salt Spring's chief building inspector, Uli Temmel.

"It's a good idea to ask, 'Do I need a building permit for this?' We try to give as straightforward an answer as possible."

Some of the chores that need attention before win-

ter are, fortunately, ones that do not require a permit. For those homeowners whose yards need tidying and who'd like to add a tool shed or garden shed, no building permit is required for structures under 10 square metres in area.

Likewise, people who are looking to shore up their

weather-proofing can probably relax, as neither re-roofing nor re-siding require permits.

"Nor, for example, do you require a permit for replacing a few boards on your cedar deck because they're rotten," says Temmel.

"But quite often in the process of replacing a few

boards, people discover that they've got a little bit more of a problem than they thought. Now if they start replacing floor joists, or beams, then they start getting into things they do need permits for — structural work."

Another problem that Temmel sees come up a lot is with renovation projects that appear harmless but actually are more important than we might initially think.

"People decide to renovate and think, 'Oh it's nothing, I'm just putting a bigger window in.' As soon as you put a bigger door or a bigger window in, that's a building permit issue because it has structural implications that people don't think about."

Temmel says that renovations and repairs that get out of hand are two of the biggest reasons homeowners can run afoul of the Building Inspection office.

"We frequently go out and put stop work orders on these things. And people apply for permits sort of after the fact and continue."

Working without a permit can result in hefty fines — at least 100 per cent of the original permit fee, and sometimes more if the permit issue is not corrected.

Another potential problem that comes up in the fall is with wood-stove installation. Woodstoves are a popular heating method on the island, and these days are much more economical than oil furnaces. People who are thinking about replacing another heating system should be warned, however:

woodstoves must be CSA approved, and do require a building permit for installation.

As wood-burning devices are the only appliances the building inspector deals with, homeowners may be unaware of the need for a permit in this case.

If people do find themselves getting into bigger projects where permits are required, fall is also a good time to make sure that those projects are finished in time.

Not completing or even beginning the work outlined by a building permit can also result in fines and more trouble with the CRD. One island homeowner recently found herself in the uncomfortable and surprising situation of being fined \$500 for a shingling job that was never completed.

To avoid getting into trouble with the CRD, the easiest thing for fix-it-uppers to do is just ask. Building Inspection office staff are very friendly and copies of the building bylaw are available in the office and on-line through the CRD website: www.crd.bc.ca. And if a permit is required, it does not have to be a hassle.

"We promise to have a building application processed within three weeks of receipt of a complete application," Temmel reports. "We can often do better than that; we just promise not to take any longer. If we approach our time limit we simply work overtime or do whatever it takes to make sure it gets processed."



FLOOR SEAL: Johnny Raposo and helper Jill Laird spread a seal coat on a hardwood floor at a Salt Spring home currently under construction. Islanders building or renovating are encouraged to consult first with the island's building inspection office.

Photo by Derrick Lundy

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Beside Barb's Buns in Ganges 537-5455





Pond feature in the garden.



A warning to island deer.

LYNCH GARDEN

From Page B1

"But I'd never seen a Scotch Egg before." Lynch was intrigued, and came up with his own recipe.

"I decided to cut the sausage meat with ground pork. I added garden thyme, basil and rosemary to make it savoury." Now, this Scotch Eggsperience says something about Lynch's cooking, but it also speaks to his need to find a new creative outlet.

"I think I garden because I don't cook anymore. I used to do this on plates. I'm one of those people who has to know everything about something. Once I know everything, I don't want to do it anymore."

Maybe that's why his garden is full of surprises. Some come courtesy of nature, which hasn't been eradicated from the garden.

As two pileated woodpeckers fly into view, Lynch says, "I was sitting on that bench one day and one of the woodpeckers thought I was a tree. It flew at me with its claws out." He demonstrates, clawing the air with his hands. "I scared the hell out of him and he scared the hell out of me."

Then there's the art, waiting to be found, like a wire spider on a rock, and the wooden tombstone for the "last deer that ate my garden."

"My mother-in-law comes over and hides things and sees how long it takes for me to find them. She hid a plastic duck once. It took me several weeks to find it."

But serendipity soars on the paths that are gateways

to garden rooms. "I wanted it 'pathy' without being 'pathy.' The whole thing was, 'let's make it wandery.'"

So you can amble by a bamboo wall and a knot garden, created from 113 boxwood plants that arrived in two-inch pots, meander down a creek bed with bull rushes, visit a xeriscape with cacti, agaves and a yellow-flowering Fremontodendron, or circle a huge planter with seasonal flowers

"The idea behind the planter is the English country garden. It's kind of messy in a snooty sort of way."

You can even visit Bubba's Grave. When Lynch was digging out this rhododendron and hosta bed, his wife Trudy said, "It looks like you're burying an elephant there."

And the Lynches did a lot of digging after the house was built in 1998.

"The dirt here is 100 per cent clay," Lynch says. "This was a mudbowl. It was so muddy that my wife's boots are buried somewhere in the front yard. We brought in 100 yards of dirt, one yard at a time. Rocks too, and driftwood for benches and arbours, and pipe for drip irrigation. But what about all the plants?"

"I bought uglies," says Lynch. "At least 90 per cent of the plants in this garden were 50 per cent off. I like the uglies because they're really cheap."

Uglies should whisper "take me" when Lynch comes shopping. In his garden, they're sure to turn into beauties.

Your chance to win a \$100.00 gift certificate to any business advertising in this Fall Fix Up special section

Throughout this special section of this week's Driftwood, we have hidden a number of tools shown below. We invite readers to find the tools carefully hidden within many of the ads in this section. Look for all the symbols then fill in the entry form below. Include your name, address and phone number plus the number of tools that you have found.



Name: _____

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Paintbrush: # _____ Shovel: # _____

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HOW TO ENTER:

- Send entries by fax to: **537-2613**
- Drop off to: The Driftwood, 328 Lower Ganges Road between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm Monday to Friday.
- Mail to: 328 Lower Ganges Road, Salt Spring Island, BC V8K 2V3
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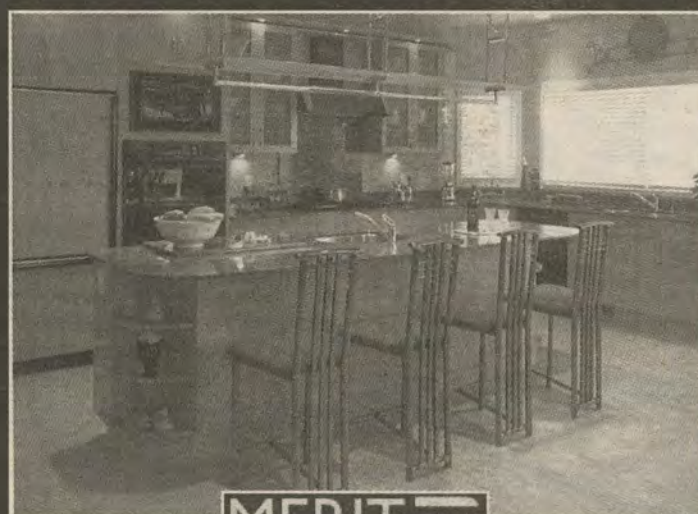
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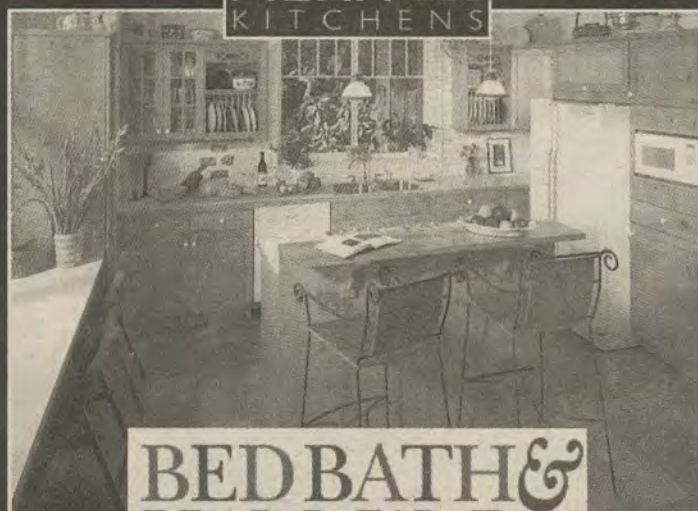
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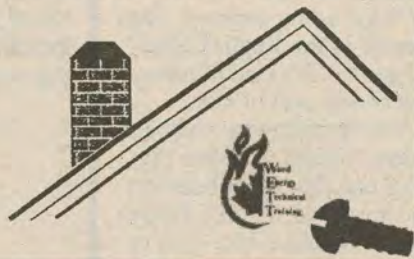
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Report details covenants' effects on property values

For a Salt Spring Landowner, a conservation covenant "allowed me to stay in the home I love. I am very happy with the program, and the costs of the baseline and other fees for registering the covenant were more than made up for in the first year's tax reductions."

When a landowner decides to protect natural areas on their property, there are some financial costs, and there are some benefits. Throughout the province, many landowners are struggling to keep natural areas on their lands, whether it is a grove of trees, a wetland or pond that is home to numerous bird species, or some other unique habitat.

However, the economic costs of increasing property values leads some owners to subdivide or clear the very elements of nature that made that home special to the landowner.

The Land Trust Alliance of B.C. (LTABC) has been working with the B.C. Assessment Authority and an accredited appraiser to determine what, if any, effects a conservation covenant has on property assessments. The results have been published in a 16-page report, Property Assessments of Conservation Lands, A Guide for Land Trusts and Conservation Landowners.

Alan Kotila, an accredited appraiser who was retained for the research, concludes

in the report, "Assessments can be reduced up to 50 per cent, though most will be much less, probably in the 10-20 per cent range. For those covenants with only nominal impacts, there may be no adjustments."

The full report is available at www.landtrustalliance.bc.ca.

Many people place tremendous value on the natural areas that they live in or near. Developers and realtors know that, and name streets and subdivisions after the birds or other wildlife that once did or still do inhabit the area. In the booming Comox Valley, a condominium developer is marketing the "...thousands of trumpeter swans [that] come home to the pristine waterfront just a short stroll from Trumpeter's Landing."

In the Highlands near Victoria, a large subdivision was created with conservation covenants that protect a portion of each site's native plants and trees, with a central natural area protected for the enjoyment of the landowners and the lives of its non-human inhabitants.

Escalating land values and the ability to use the Islands Trust Fund's Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program (NAPTEP) means that Gulf Islands property owners are eligible to an exemption for up to the extent of 65 per cent of the property's assessed value.

This is the only area in B.C. currently with this type of program. However, all other private land in B.C. has the potential to have its natural or cultural values protected — through a conservation covenant in favour of the provincial government, a Crown corporation, local governments or a designated organization approved by the Minister of Agriculture and Lands. These organizations are known as Land Trusts, and there are 32 registered voting members with the LTABC. Conservation Covenants are an effective way to protect natural areas important to landowners and the larger community, before they sell or move on. They "run with the land" which means that they remain in effect even if the property is sold or transferred to a new owner in the future.

For more information on Covenants or other stewardship or conservation options to protect our natural and cultural heritage, contact the LTABC at 250-538-0112 or visit their website to find out what local or provincial land trust works in your area.

This research and its report was completed with the funding support of the The Victoria Foundation, The Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia, and the Vancouver Foundation.

Submitted by the Land Trust Alliance of B.C.

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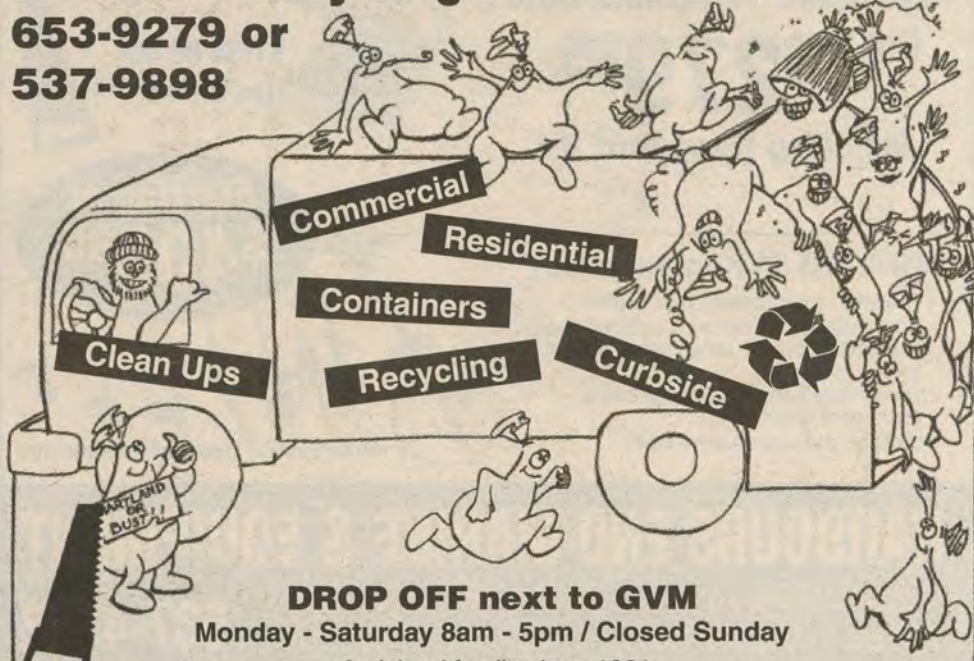


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Seed saving a fun fall pastime that also nurtures food security

By ELIZABETH NOLAN
Driftwood Contributor

Dan Jason is a very busy man. Seed company owner, author and president of Canada's Seed and Plant Sanctuary, he's also the head farmer at the Salt Spring Centre of Yoga, and just now it's harvest time.

It's a crisp, sunny day in early fall when Jason takes a few moments out of his very full schedule to speak with me. In the near distance, workers can be seen amongst the colourful rows of plants and sturdy greenhouses, hurrying to get the crops in on time. There's a palpable sense of activity and well-being: the sense that this is just how it should be. I'm here to talk to Jason about seed-saving, and the irony is not lost on me that even while I'm overwhelmed by this ancient feeling of connection to the earth and its bounty, I'm aware of how much basic knowledge about plants I'm missing.

Even a small-scale, amateur grower like myself knows what a joy it is to pick my own vegetables right off the vine. Harvest doesn't have to mean the end of our gardens, however; it can also be the time that we plan for next year and extend the life of our gardens by saving seeds.

"There are many good reasons to save seeds, but probably I guess the most important reason is the sense of security that comes with it," says Jason. "It's very self-empowering. It basi-

cally means you can save your own best crops for the future, once you learn how to do it properly."

If it seems like this may mean a lot of difficult work when we can just buy new seeds next spring, it needn't be. As Jason explains, seed saving can be a fairly simple process, and one that is not only rewarding but important to our future as well.

Some preliminary research will, of course, be necessary. The first step, Jason explained to me, is "You have to learn about the different varieties and when they go to seed; you have to learn how to distinguish what a seed is." But where to start?

Essentially, seeds occur at the location of the plant's flower. With plants in which we consider the seed to be the vegetable itself, like peas and beans, the seed is easy to find and recognize. With others, such as carrots and beets (which flower every two years), we may never see the seeds because we eat them before they reach maturity. By letting some of our crops reach maturity and flower, we can therefore harvest the seeds and continue on next year.

Knowing the life cycle of a plant is an important beginning; some plants are also more likely than others to remain "true" and come back as what you expected.

"Certain plants are what's called self-pollinated, which means the seeds come true when you save them, so you



HOW-TO LESSON: Dan Jason shells some dried beans while Crystal Allinott of CBC TV watches as part of a film shoot held on Salt Spring this summer.

Photo by Derrick Lundy

don't have to worry about the crossing between the different varieties of the same thing," Jason relates. "So if you're saving seeds and you want to keep your varieties true, those are good ones for beginners."

He also recommends annuals (those that flower after one season) over biennials for the beginner. Well-known examples are lettuce, beans, grains, peppers and tomatoes.

As Jason describes the process, the initial investment of knowledge is prob-

ably the most challenging step. Seed-saving itself can be both simple and beautiful.

"After a lettuce is finished being a lettuce, it puts up a flowering stalk, and the stalk has flowers on it and the flowers become those little fluffy collections of seeds. You can pluck the seeds if they're ready, or you can shake the seeds into a paper bag or into a bucket."

After harvesting the seeds, drying and storing them are all that's required. Some tips include letting seeds dry

down in the garden first, and then to let them continue drying on the harvested plants for a few days. After removing them from the plant, spread to dry on a well-ventilated but not humid area, on newspaper, screens or trays. Seeds should dry for a few days to a week; the larger the seed, the longer the drying time.

When dry, make sure seeds are carefully labelled and stored in a cool, dry place for next spring. If your efforts are really successful, you can consider trading

seeds with other locals at the Seedy Saturday event in February. You may also choose to send them in to the Seed and Plant Sanctuary, a living gene bank that Jason runs from here on Salt Spring but which has members across Canada. The sanctuary has recently been documented by two different film crews for the important work being done there.

For as Jason reminds us, seed saving is important not just as a rewarding experience for the individual gardener; it might also mean the safety of our future food supply.

"Industrial agriculture is not going to preserve our priceless treasure of seeds," he writes in his book *Saving Seeds*. "Neither is there much chance of getting governments to return to the custodianship of food heritage. That leaves the millions of backyard growers and small-scale farmers, the people who truly love plants, to hand them on to the next generation."

Looking out at the Salt Spring Centre's bountiful gardens, I'm suddenly very inspired to do so.

Dan Jason's book *Saving Seeds* provides thorough instructions in clear and simple terms, which any reader can understand and enjoy. The book is available in local book stores.

For more information on the Seed and Plant Sanctuary for Canada, visit www.seedsanctuary.com.

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Energy minister offers tips and urges people to start saving energy and taxes

By RICK THORPE
Minister of

Small Business and Revenue
With new construction at near-record levels in communities across British Columbia, I want to remind British Columbians how simple upgrades to their homes can save them money, help our environment and reduce our dependence on energy imports.

British Columbia has a long tradition of promoting smart power usage by consumers.

To bolster this, our government is taking an innovative approach that will save consumers up to \$1.2 billion by 2020.

Last September, our government launched a first-in-Canada strategy, Energy Efficient Buildings: A Plan for British Columbia, which sets the stage for sustainable environmental management and new job creation through energy conservation.

Among the 10 market and policy measures outlined in this plan is a provincial sales tax exemption on materials and equipment used to conserve energy.

Energy costs represent a major part of most families' budgets. Heating and air conditioning account for more than half of the annual energy costs in a typical home.

But there are basic, provincial sales tax-free steps you can take to save money and conserve energy.

Poorly sealed windows can

Energy costs represent a major part of most families' budgets. Heating and air conditioning account for more than half of the annual energy costs in a typical home.



Rick Thorpe

steal up to one-third of the energy from your home.

Among the easily installed and inexpensive building supplies you can use to correct this are window insulation

film, weather stripping and caulking materials.

Installing window film can immediately reduce the amount of heat loss from your home, thus cutting your heating bill.

Window film is a thin, transparent sheet designed primarily to retain heat by absorbing solar heat or reducing drafts.

It can be applied to single or double-glazed windows on the interior side.

Window film also helps to keep your home cooler in summer; however, film is only exempt from provincial sales tax if it is designed primarily to retain heat

by absorbing solar heat or reducing drafts.

Heat can also escape through cracks around doors and windows.

Correcting these leaks is effortless through the use of caulking and weather-stripping designed to prevent heat loss.

This single energy improvement has one of the fastest paybacks of all.

If you are considering replacing windows around your home or building, look for the Energy Star logo. Energy Star is an international symbol that identifies manufacturers' products as the most energy-efficient in their category.

These windows are recommended by B.C. Hydro, Fortis B.C., and other independent power companies in B.C., and are also an excellent long-term investment to keep your home warm in winter and cool in summer.

Likewise, if you are considering replacing your older, inefficient heating system, look for the Energy Star logo.

Gas-fired forced-air furnaces, boilers and heat pumps that are Energy Star qualified are exempt from the provincial sales tax until March 31, 2007.

Oil-fired forced-air furnaces are also exempt until March 31, 2007, if they have a Seasonal Energy Utilization Efficiency (SEUE) rating of 85 per cent.

Smart power use is more than a dollars-and-cents issue for

families, however. Contrary to what many British Columbians believe, British Columbia is no longer self-sufficient when it comes to meeting our province's energy needs.

In fact, for the past five years, we have been net importers of electricity.

Conservation is vital, not only to maximizing our ability to meet our own energy needs, but also to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and demand for energy from other sources.

Hydroelectric energy generation is a relatively "clean" process, and the more mileage we can get out of our hydro supply, the better.

For decades, British Columbians have benefitted from some of the lowest hydro rates in North America.

We want to continue that tradition — but it requires each of us to properly conserve our power.

I encourage you to take, at the very least, some simple and inexpensive steps to cut your energy consumption and your costs at home.

When everyone works together, it contributes to making British Columbia the best place on earth in which to live.

For more information on exemptions for material and equipment used to conserve energy, please visit our website at www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/ctb/publications/bulletins/sst_011.pdf online.

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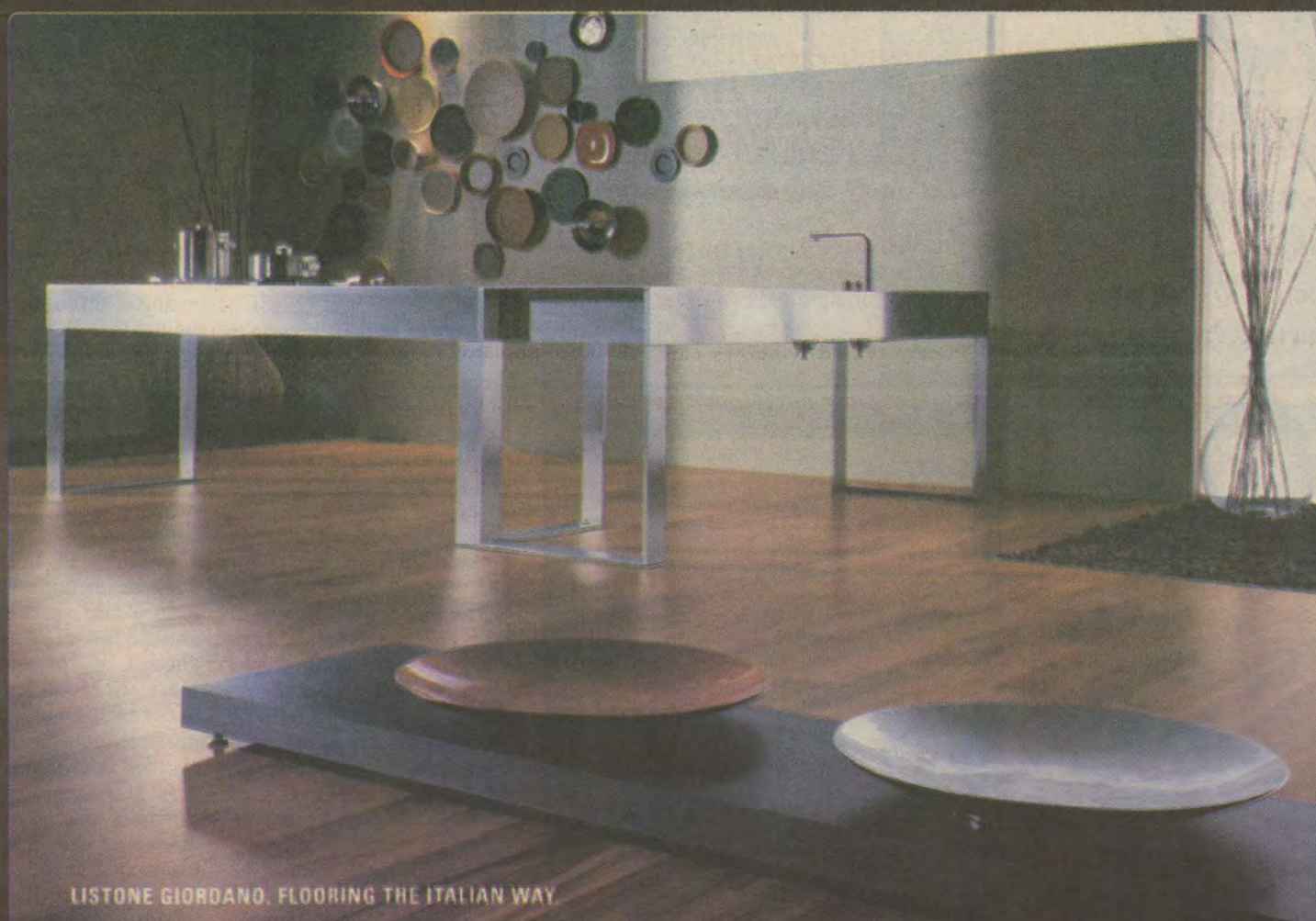
Loren, Rossellini, Versace, Armani, Ferrari, Lamborghini, LISTONE GIORDANO. Just a few of the Italian names that exude sexiness. That's right; Listone Giordano engineered hardwood is sexy.

It all starts with the material selection process. Listone Giordano uses only the finest wood species that are specially sawn to obtain the most desirable grain while maintaining the maximum stability of each board. From managed forests in South America, Asia and Africa come breath taking woods that can truly transform any décor. For an ultra clean and modern look the natural ebony colour of African Wenge is ideal. It contrasts perfectly with white and other light colours and adds dramatic flair. If you prefer a rich and unique decor why not look at Morado rosewood. This extremely hard wood with its incredible grain has been installed in the prestigious Trump Tower Toronto sales centre. Asian Teak is not just for furniture anymore. This stunning wood is great for any room and its natural golden brown colour makes it versatile enough to fit with many colour themes. If you prefer red woods the Doussie (African Cherry) and Cabreuva Vermelha (Santos Mahogany) have more life and a more elegant appearance than stained woods. And, because Listone Giordano uses only natural wood, if you ever decide to refinish the floor, you don't have to worry about staining. With engineered hardwood flooring you can have a piece of Africa, Asia or South America in you home or office.

The beauty of the wood flooring is further enhanced during the production stage. Listone Giordano's two layer engineered technology combined with special production processes results in an end product that looks extraordinary and performs extraordinarily too. Listone Giordano merges state-of-the-art technology and classic chic Italian design. The revolutionary two layer

engineered floor consists of a hardwood wear layer supported by a multi-layer marine birch base. Listone Giordano boards are double sanded during production to ensure a smooth finish and maximum adhesion of the hardwood to the marine birch support. Each piece is finished with 8 layers of mat-gloss UV cured acrylic that maintains the natural appearance of the wood. This finish is durable and incredibly resistant to cracking without having a high sheen level. Its

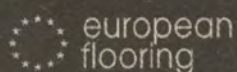
sleek milling and square edge profiling result in an ultra smooth finish that is attractive and appealing to the eye. There are no obtrusive bevels or gaps between the boards. All these factors combine to create a floor that is sophisticated, technologically advanced and truly sexy. Known the world over in cities like Rome, London, Paris, New York and Beijing, Listone Giordano is now available at the new European Hardwood Flooring Centre at 661 Alpha Street in Victoria.



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Fall the perfect time to tackle Fire Smart plan

By ELIZABETH NOLAN
Driftwood Contributor

October 15 is a date firmly engraved in most Salt Spring property owners' minds, since that's when burning without a permit is usually allowed for winter months.

We all like a good fire, and probably all have some excess debris to eliminate. While the cooler fall weather means that burning without a permit can probably resume soon (although the permit season may be extended due to dry conditions — stay tuned), it's also the time to take extra care that our homes and properties are safe.

Living in a heavily forested, rural area without many water sources, island residents are already aware that a house or brush fire can have devastating effects for the entire community.

Recent fires on Galiano Island and at Salt Spring's Maracaibo area have only underscored that awareness, but there's still a lot of work to do. I recently sat down with Salt Spring fire chief Dave Enfield and assistant chief Arjuna George to learn more about Fire Smart.

The most basic Fire Smart principle is just common sense: keep fuel sources contained and away from your home.

As chief Enfield states, "If you own the fuel, you own the problem, so you've got to be responsible. We're not asking you to clear-cut your property, we're just asking you to Fire Smart so we can defend you. And now's the time of year that people go out and do those things for us."

The Fire Smart Manual, a B.C. Forest Service publication, suggests dividing your property into three zones. The first priority zone, or the first 10 metres of space around the home, should be free of fuels and consist of lawn or non-combustible material.

Propane tanks should be at least 10 metres from the house and clear of vegetation on all sides. Cord wood should never be stored in or against the house, or even under the deck.

"That's just creating a massive fuel load," says



Assistant fire chief Arjuna George



Fire chief Dave Enfield

George. "You can have your day's load, your six logs or whatever, but it's best to have your wood at least 10 metres from the house."

Trees, shrubs and deadfall within that zone should also be removed.

The second priority zone occurs from 10 to 30 metres around the home. The goal in this zone is "to reduce fuels by thinning and pruning so combustion cannot be supported."

Underbrush, thick shrubbery, or anything that could help a fire spread upward should be cleared. Trees should be spaced with at least three to six metres between the crowns and, if possible, conifers should be avoided in this area.

In fact, many new homeowners are choosing to landscape with fire-resistant trees and shrubs. Banana Joe Clemente has recommended dogwood, magnolia, Japanese maple and sumac, among other ornamental trees.

Some Fire Smart shrubs include lilac, nadina, palms, lavender and rosemary. The

fire department can provide a full list of suitable plants for our area.

The third priority zone extends from 30 to 100 metres away from the house. According to the Fire Smart Manual, "the idea here is not to remove all combustible fuels from the forest, but to thin the area so fires will be of low intensity and more easily extinguished." Again, tree crowns should be spaced at three to six metres.

Once you have attended to your property and are ready to burn some brush, it is important to keep fires contained and under control.

Assistant chief George explains: "The key to burning is to burn small and hot — it doesn't have to be a massive fire, and you actually burn through more debris. Start small and it will burn nice and clean, it will be better for the environment and won't pollute the air as much."

Using a burn barrel is also recommended.

A final step in helping protect your property is to make sure you are prepared for the fire department in the unfortunate event that a fire does go out of control. Addresses should be clearly marked and visible even in the dark (using reflective numbers), and driveways must be trimmed for height as well as width.

A minimum clearance of 12 feet high is necessary for the fire truck to get through. Having a pond or tank with an emergency water supply is also a great idea.

If all this information seems overwhelming, help is available. The Fire Smart Manual and other printed material can be found at the main fire hall in Ganges.

The fire department has also customized an on-line Fire Smart self-assessment form for Salt Spring needs, which can be downloaded and filled out at any time (see www.saltspringfire.com).

"We're also happy to go to people's houses and do walk-throughs," Enfield reports. "We've probably done two or three a week since the Maracaibo fire."

This fall, why not see what you can do to protect your home and community from wildfire?



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CARVED IN STONE: Stonemason John Heath chisels a stone for a fireplace at a Salt Spring home under construction.
Photo by Derrick Lundy

Some Fire Smart tips . . .

- Remove all vegetation (except well-watered lawn) and combustible materials from within 10 metres of the house
- Store fire wood and propane tanks 10 metres or more from house
- Prune trees to a height of 2 metres or more
- Thin trees (with 3-6 metres between crowns) and clear underbrush for at least 30 metres from house
- Thin underbrush for up to 100 metres from house
- Contact utility company if trees or branches are not clear of power lines
- Keep driveway clear of trees for 3 to 4 metres, and clear of overhanging brush up to 12 feet
- Keep address clearly marked and visible (day or night)

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Septic regulation changes don't impact maintenance

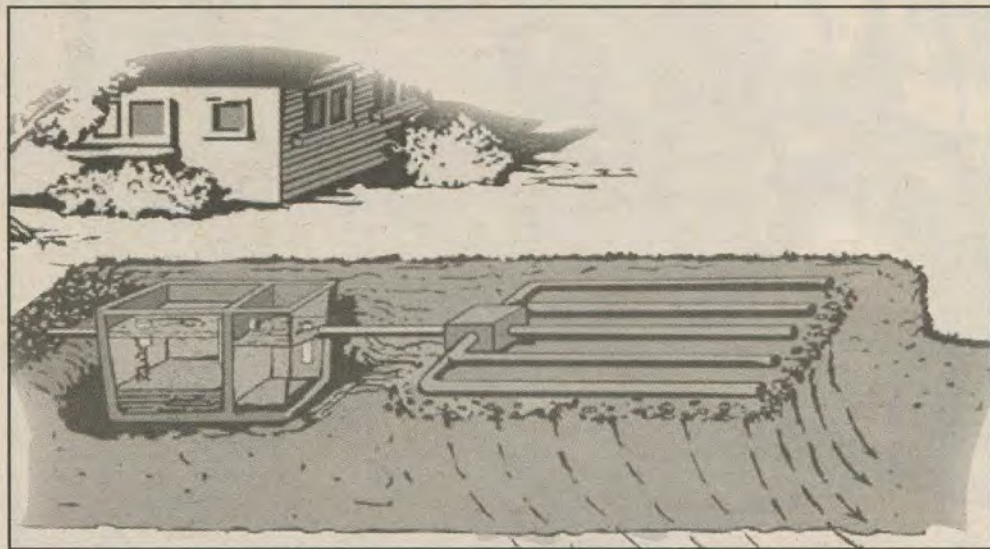


Diagram of model septic system

By ELIZABETH NOLAN
Driftwood Contributor

Regulations concerning the installation and maintenance of septic systems changed in May of 2005, taking responsibility away from government and giving it to the industries involved.

Formerly, septic work could be completed by anyone as long as it passed inspection by a Vancouver Island Health Authority health officer. Now, any installation or maintenance must be done by a registered "on-site wastewater practitioner."

This change was meant to remove bureaucratic red tape and provide more flexibility to the industries involved. With an estimated 32,000 residential septic systems in the Capital Regional District (CRD), it makes sense that the people putting in such systems, whether excavators or septic companies, can authorize their safety.

The CRD estimates that some 20 per cent of the region's septic systems are malfunctioning. This can result in untreated sewage leaking into your property and groundwater, threaten-

ing the health of your family and the community at large. While the new regulations mean that homeowners can no longer include septic tanks and fields under their list of do-it-yourself projects, there are plenty of things to do to keep systems healthy and avoid costly maintenance and repair. Using some preventative measures and paying attention to malfunction warning signs will lengthen your system's life and help protect the environment.

Homeowners can start by familiarizing themselves with the particulars; i.e. where the tank and drainage field are located. The drainage field should be planted only with grass, and should never be parked or driven on.

Warning signs that your septic system is not functioning properly include backed-up or slow drains and toilets, septic odour around the property, or if the drainage ground is wet, soggy, or covered with lush growth. Sewage seepage into the septic field indicates a definite problem.

Monitoring what enters the system goes a long way

towards insuring its health. Use environmentally friendly cleansers to keep important "good" bacteria in the tank, and avoid pouring in or flushing hazardous materials. Reducing water usage will help keep solids in the tank rather than sending them into the field; so will using an effluent filter.

Regular pumping and inspection (every three to five years) are also strongly recommended. Most solids are taken care of by natural bacteria in the septic tank, but some build-up does occur, making periodic pumping necessary. These practices will need to be done by licensed professionals.

The CRD offers free workshops around the region on how to properly care for your residential septic system. Upcoming workshops on Vancouver Island are at Royal Roads, October 14; Prospect Lake Community Hall, October 18; and Panorama Recreation Centre, November 8. To register for a workshop or for more information, contact the CRD Hotline at hotline@crd.bc.ca or 250-360-3030.

Septic 'do's & don'ts'

- Don't put hazardous household chemicals down your drain. Take them to an approved hazardous waste collection depot.
- Practice water conservation.
- Have your tank pumped out and system inspected every 3-5 years.
- Plant grass on your drainfield, rather than trees or shrubs.
- Install an effluent filter.

- Don't allow anyone to drive or park over any part of the septic system.
- Don't use your toilet or drains as trash cans by dumping non-degradable materials in them.
- Don't make or allow repairs to your septic system without obtaining the required permit.

From the Capital Regional District website.

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ON THE JOB: Pete Aust and Jon Macdonald work on the soffits at a new house on Salt Spring.

Photo by Derrick Lundy

Hydro offers tips for vacationers, seasonal residents

Many homes on the Gulf Islands are used on a seasonal basis — either by people whose main residence is elsewhere, or those who spend some time during winter months in a sunnier climate. B.C. Hydro Power Smart reminds Gulf Islands residents to limit the amount of energy used by their homes while no one is home.

“What people don’t realize is that your home can still use substantial amounts of energy even while you’re on vacation,” said

Simi Heer with BC Hydro Power Smart. “However, the amount of energy your home uses while you are away can be reduced through a few simple steps.”

Heer recommends unplugging appliances that still draw energy while plugged in even if they aren’t being operated, such as VCRs, cell phone chargers, stereos, clocks, coffee makers and microwaves.

“If you vacation frequently, you may want to invest in a power bar to plug these appliances into

and easily turn off before you leave,” she added.

Heer also suggests closing all blinds and curtains to prevent air transfer through windows and resulting indoor temperature changes. Lighting is another area where improvements can easily be made.

“Some people like to leave lights on for added security while they are away. If this is the case, considering setting up indoor lamps on timers and connecting outdoor lights to a timer, motion

sensor or photocell. This is a one-time job you can continue to use and benefit from even when you’re back,” said Heer.

To help make homes energy-efficient before departing, Power Smart recommends using BC Hydro’s online vacation checklist.

“The list clearly outlines what you can do before you go away and is designed to help you easily reverse those steps when you get back,” added Heer. To access the checklist or for more information, visit www.bchydro.com/vacation.

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