

Natural light important in Feng Shui

The home, more than any other realm of our lives, is the place we require balance, harmony and comfort. This is one reason the art of Feng Shui is gaining popularity in the United States.

Feng Shui is the ancient Chinese art of arrangement, placement and enhancement of our immediate environment. It takes into account everything from the design of the home to the date it was built, and offers creative ways to strengthen and direct the structure's positive energy flow, or Chi. Feng Shui encourages us to promote the flow of Chi by removing clutter, adding symbols or elements of nature, and letting natural light into our environments.

One way to achieve that is to draw those energies into the home through windows. In Feng Shui, windows are considered the eyes, ears and nose of the living home and can hinder or assist the flow of Chi. They also provide the expansion of space, allowing the inside and outside to interact with each other.

One explanation for the positive feelings evoked by merging nature with our living space is the addition of the presence of shadows, said Benjamin Huntington, president of the Feng Shui Institute of America, Metropolitan New York Chapter.

"In nature, there is always a balance of yin and yang, because along with bright sunlight you always have shadows," Huntington said. "With bright artificial lighting, there are no shadows and that makes us instinctively uncomfortable. We become ill at ease when our connection to nature is broken."

Installing a window to open up a dark area or adding a skylight to a favorite room can be an excellent way to improve the energy of your home. Skylights can flood a room with up to five times more light than a traditional wall window, while specially tinted windows allow us to capture the optimum light for the room's design.

"Windows provide us with a natural connection to nature. However, these environmental enhancements should not come at the expense of energy efficiency," said Kevin Zage, director of technical services for TruScul Technologies Inc., a Beachwood, Ohio-based window sealant manufacturer. Choose windows or skylights constructed with a low U-Value, which measures heat transfer. Zage said, A U-Value of .40 is considered excellent, while .80 or higher means poor thermal performance.

One of the most important components of any window is its edge spacer, with which all double- and triple-pane windows are constructed to reduce heat loss around the window's edges. "It is important to note that the edge spacer material can mean the dif-



The arrangement of furniture and direction of light affect how you feel about a room.

ference between a cold window edge and one that is well-insulated," he said.

To bring the most light into a home, install windows at the home's southern exposure, Huntington said. However, be careful to install windows in proportion with the room because too many windows can create too much heat, upsetting the home's balance. Also, a wall of windows can leave dwellers feeling exposed and vulnerable, creating a sense of imbalance, he said.

To enhance your use of windows, Feng Shui experts offer some basic window principles:

- Keep windows well maintained and clean, as defective hardware and broken panes can adversely affect the health of the inhabitants.
- Strive for adequate cross-ventilation, which can promote the healthy flow of Chi.
- Windows that open outward are more likely to open up residents to opportunities outside the home and allow them to exercise their true potential.
- The top of a window should be higher than the tallest resident or it can lower Chi, thereby diminishing potential.
- Don't allow negative scenes to be the focal point through your windows, such as cemeteries, prisons, bars or abandoned buildings.
- Nylon screening is more desirable than metal screens, which are abrasive to Chi.
- Bathrooms should be well vented and have natural lighting. Without these, they can pull the health and success out of your home.

All furnaces need checkups

All heating systems should be serviced periodically by a qualified contractor to ensure top performance, according to the American Gas Association. Such maintenance will ensure safe and efficient operation.

Heating contractors should follow the manufacturer's maintenance guidelines for each unit in accordance with local building codes and regulations, A.G.A. says.

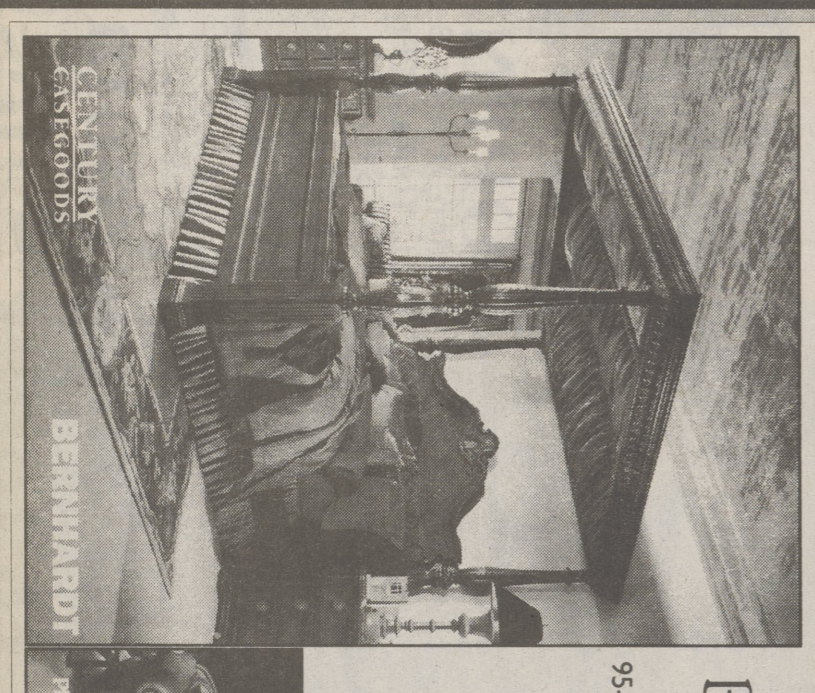
- The check-up should include:
- inspection of the furnace vent system;
 - removal of any leaves, nests or other obstructions from inside the chimney;
 - replacement or cleaning of the air filter;
 - lubrication of the blower motor;
 - replacement of blower belts, if needed;
 - cleaning of pilots and burner chamber;
 - removal of dust and lint from furnace vents, registers and baseboard heaters; and
 - cleaning and adjusting of thermostats.

On the cover: Stores need upkeep too. Walter Hudzick put a fresh coat of paint on Cook's Store in Lehman this summer. The building is about 120 years old. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

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Critters

(from page 8)

Irish Spring soap (specifically this brand) hung in little mesh bags around the edges of the garden seems to work for some gardeners. All of the sensory deterrents have their champions and their detractors. Some swear by one or the other, while others say none are effective. Often what works in one garden, doesn't in another. Experimentation is the key and certainly worth a try.

Vegetative Deterrents

The idea behind vegetative deterrents is to surround the plants favored by nocturnal visitors with plants they don't like. Deer, for example, don't like thorny plants. They also don't eat anemones, astilbes, junipers, foxgloves, daffodils, ferns, grasses, and a host of other plants. In fact, there are enough things that deer don't eat that you could build a border around your garden sort of a garden around a garden.

Fritillaria imperialis is also something deer don't like and its strong skunky scent is repellent to many other creatures as well. Squirrels and other small creatures won't eat daffodils or other narcissist bulbs. These are good choices where pests are a problem.

Animal Deterrents

In the end, each gardener has to find his or her own answers. There's really no one solution. But take heart, there are several options available and one may just be the perfect solution for you.

Source: Pennsylvania Landscape & Nursery Association, Harrisburg, Pa. www.plna.com.

Now is the best time to plant grass seed

When your lawn needs seeding, the best time to plant grass seed is during the few weeks from late August through September.

What's so special about this time of year? The days of late summer and early fall are the one time when Mother Nature works with you, rather than against you, when it comes to planting grass seed. This is the time when daylight hours grow shorter and nights cooler. The soil is warm enough to stimulate seed germination, but not hot enough to cause stress on the tender young seedlings.

At the same time, dew is becoming heavier, and the general pattern of rainfall starts to mirror more closely the needs of young grass plants. In other words, this is the time when nature stacks all of the odds in your favor.

To take advantage of this once-a-year opportunity, here are a few tips from the world's largest turfgrass research facility, The Scotts Company, in Marysville, Ohio:

- **Stay away from so-called "bargain grass seed."** Plant the best quality seed you can buy. Cheap seed is often full of ugly clumpy grasses and weeds. Look for seed that's as close to 99.99 percent weed-free as you can find.
- **Work up the soil** The seeds need to find lodging places to take root and be protected from heavy rains, drying sun, and the wind. On small areas, any sharp garden tool will do. For large areas, consider renting a slicing machine from an equipment rental store.
- **Spread the seed evenly** Use a lawn spreader, if possible. Hand seeding, except on small bare spots, is usually not satisfactory, and it almost always uses more seed than necessary.
- **Fertilize the same day** This often makes the difference between a so-so strand of grass and a thick, beautiful lawn. Soil alone does not have enough nutrients to get the new seedlings off to a fast, vigorous start. Be sure to use a special fertilizers formulated for new seedlings.
- **Water regularly** More seeding failures result from poor watering than anything else. You do not have to water deeply, but keep the top inch or so of soil moist until the new grass is well established. This may require watering several times a day in hot, windy weather.
- **Be sure to use follow-up care** Once the new seedling is up and thriving, you'll want to keep it that way. That can be as easy as a few spreader applications each year to fertilize the grass and control weeds, diseases, and insects. For a free, easy-to-follow guide that explains exactly what to do and when to do it to maintain a beautiful lawn, call 1-800-543-TURF. Or, write to: The Scotts Company, 14111 Scottsblaw Rd., Marysville, OH 43041. Ask for the Lawn Success Made Easy guide. You can also get answers to lawn questions on the Internet at www.scottsblaw.com. Your local garden center can also help answer your questions about lawn care.

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