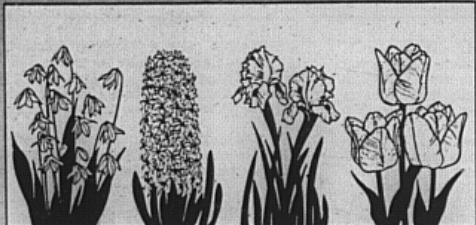


# Home/Garden



Recorder/Lucia Russon

## Windowboxes

Traditional older house decoration can add appeal to modern designs

Windowboxes have decorated the windowsills of farmhouses and graced the porches of spacious Victorian houses. It seems there are fewer and fewer farmhouses and Victorian manses all the time, but condominiums are rising from the plain everywhere, the yards ornamented with only a few sticks that the developers promise will someday be sheltering pines and shady maples.

Windowboxes can work their charming magic with this modern phenomenon as well, softening the edges of the new buildings which still have the stiff new look that won't be rubbed off until a little living has gone on in these homes.

Petunias and geraniums *pelargoniums* have been favorites for the windowbox for years and there's a reason. Both are readily available in bloom early in the year from your nursery center. They will dependably bloom, and bloom again, for most of the summer if you keep them cut back. Both are available in a full range of flower forms and colors.

The Orbit series of geraniums comes in 14 colors from pure white to violet and scarlet, including salmon, coral and appleblossom pink. They are ideal for a sunny windowbox, because the 14 inch plants have a compact bushy growth with large rounded flowers that bloom over a long season, and attractive zonal markings on the foliage.

If you prefer a smaller plant for your windowbox, the Elite geraniums will grow to eight inches, but still produce blossoms that are four inches across in red, pink and salmon. Most geraniums grow upright, but there are trailing varieties as well, like the ivy geranium, which can be planted at the front of the windowbox covering its harsh edges.

There is hardly such a thing as a standard old petunia any more. There are the Ultra grandiflora petunias that bloom in 11 colors, including the standard white and pink. The Ultra Stars are marked with very definite white star markings radiating from the center. The Ultra Crimson Star won a medal from the All America Selections this year, a tribute to its beauty, vigor and dependability.

A really eye catching petunia is the Frost hybrid which has a frosted white picotee edge around the blossom. It can be had in bright red, a winey-purple, a violet blue and a deep cherry red.

There are other bicolor petunias like Viva, which is red and white with fringed edges, and Telstar — blue with wide white stripes.

The Plum hybrids, which are notable for the prominent lacy

Pat Leuchtman  
Between The Rows



veining of the flower, are the most weather and botrytis tolerant of all the petunias.

Petunias tend to sprawl as they grow and this habit is very attractive in a flowerbox, but you can also purchase cascading petunias to plant in front to insure a pretty and graceful effect.

No matter what flowers you choose, you can plant them directly in the window box, or set potted plants in the box. Either way, be sure that the window box has drainage holes. Potted plants, especially sun loving flowers like geraniums and petunias, require heavy watering during the summer.

It's difficult to crock a windowbox properly to insure good drainage, but there's a new product on the market that will do the job efficiently without adding a lot of weight. Jobe's is a company that has been making plant care products for years. This year they have come up with Root Protector Cushions made of a thick layer of sturdy mesh. They come in four-, six- and eight-inch rounds or in 12-inch squares that you can cut to size for your own needs. These cushions allow excess water to drain away, preventing root rot, and also create an aeration zone that will allow the plant roots to breathe and grow with good vigor.

In addition to being watered generously, petunias and geraniums need to be fertilized every couple of weeks during the summer to keep them blooming. It's better to fertilize your flowers with a dilute solution more frequently than to give them a big helping once a month.

Finally, remember to snip off the spent blossoms. This will keep seed pods from forming and keep the plant blooming. If the plant gets too leggy over the summer cut it back and it will put out new, bushy growth and more flowers.

Whether you build a wooden windowbox yourself or purchase one of wood or metal, make sure you use strong brackets and supports. A box filled with flowers and newly watered soil is very, very heavy.

No matter what kind of windowbox you choose, filled with pale or brilliant blooms, attractive foliage and arching stems, it will give your home a charming note of welcome and beauty.

# Change your home as you change Safety as well as comfort a consideration in model home

By BARBARA MAJER  
The Associated Press

Living longer is its own reward. But a person's later years can be more comfortable and safe if the home accommodates changing physical needs.

That's the theory behind a model home built recently by the Hartford Insurance Group. The home, which features about 100 modifications to enhance comfort, convenience and safety, will be exhibited publicly in various parts of the country during 1988 and 1989.

According to the company, all the products used are readily available and most are from manufacturers' standard lines. The remodeling suggestions, such as lowering cabinets and raising countertops, also require only standard building materials and methods.

Research for the design choices made was conducted by Beverly Hynes-Grace, staff gerontologist, and Joan A. Pease, a consulting designer specializing in retirement housing.

Timing for the demonstration project is particularly appropriate since Americans are both living longer and staying in their own homes longer.

Government figures show life expectancy is now 74.9 years at birth and a recent survey by the American Association of Retired Persons found that 75 percent of older Americans own their own home and nearly half of those over 60 had lived in their present home more than 20 years.

Yet, according to Pease, many of these homes have significant safety hazards and detriments to comfort for older Americans.

"I see design for seniors receiving more atten-

tion than 10 to 15 years ago, but I don't see what we have learned being implemented. I find too many architectural barriers, poor lighting, slippery floors, and too few products available to make living more comfortable," she said.

She added that thinking about changes to remove potential safety hazards and comfort drawbacks should start long before one has aged enough to need them. "That way people could incorporate features to enable them to stay in their homes, especially since the vast majority of older people live in a home they've owned for many years."

As one ages, a loss of sensory acuity often occurs, said both authorities. Some 95 percent of older adults experience decreased visual perception. Reading fine print becomes difficult; glare from sun or over-bright lights reduces concentration on close-work tasks and as the lens of the eye yellows, colors like blue, green, brown and black may appear similar.

It becomes harder to hear over competing background noise, harder to detect odors such as smoke and gas and more difficult to distinguish sensations such as being too hot or cold, or feeling pain. Illness may also affect a person's strength, stamina, mobility, dexterity, agility and balance.

Home furnishings choices can produce a safer home without sacrificing good looks, said Pease. For example, glare from windows can be controlled through the use of miniblinds which don't obstruct the view.

In place of highly combustible materials for walls and upholstery fabric, fire retardant materials and fabrics can be substituted. Instead of a dense, thick carpet which Pease says can trap air and feed a fire, a flat weave or dense cut pile cov-

ering can be chosen. These are also easier for the wheelchair-bound and those with arthritis to walk on than thick pile.

Instead of standard mattresses and foam upholstery filling, which can emit deadly smoke if ignited, choose bedding and furniture made of fire retardant materials.

One such material, used in mattress covers and as an interlining between fabric, is a fiberglass. It does not allow flame to reach the stuffing. The mattress cover is widely available at moderate cost, according to Pease.

Some tips everyone can make use of include the following:

- Trip-proof the living room by removing throw rugs, coffee tables and other low-placed pieces. Slip-proof the bathroom with strategically placed grab bars and non-skid flooring.
  - Choose seating that is easy to get in and out of, avoiding low, very deep upholstery.
  - Replace round doorknobs and faucet handles with levers. Opt for C-shaped drawer pulls and cabinet door handles for easy opening.
  - Buy heat-generating small appliances such as toasters and irons with automatic shut-off features.
  - Install smoke detectors and alarms near the bedroom.
  - Buy an electric range oven to eliminate a potential gas leak that can't be detected with a diminished sense of smell. Choose a range that has controls at the front for easier access.
- These and other ideas are detailed in a free booklet, available by request. Send a stamped self-addressed business envelope to Hartford House, Hartford Insurance Group, Hartford, CT 06115.

## Furniture: For repairs, try a wood patch

The Associated Press

Finding a chip, gouge or hole on a piece of furniture does not mean it's ruined. Damaged furniture can be restored with a patching material made just for wood.

Most furniture will receive some damage with heavy use. Chances are that furniture bought at a yard sale or auction will have at least one chip or gouge.

Restoring furniture is simple, rewarding, and saves money on professional repair bills. The trick is knowing what materials to use and how to do the work.

For your repair work, a premixed, synthetic compound gives good results. One kind is made of latex and pulverized wood for a patch of maximum workability and woodlike texture.

For generations, cabinet-makers made their own patching material by mixing hot animal glue or vinyl resin with fine sawdust. Some purists still make their own wood patch, substituting woodworkers glue for animal glue.

Synthetic latex compounds are easy to use. You apply them from the container with a putty knife, or directly into voids from a plastic squeeze tube. They can be nailed, sawed, sanded or drilled, and can be

used for repairs both indoors and out.

Patching damaged furniture, whether unfinished, painted or stained, is easy enough for any do-it-yourselfer.

First, to remove dirt, grease, oil and loose particles from the damaged area, rub the surface with a lint-free cloth dampened with mineral spirits, paint thinner, or a liquid sander.

Wait 30 minutes for the surface to dry, then dampen the area to be repaired with water. Water stops the wood from absorbing moisture in the latex wood patch. Otherwise, the patching material cures too quickly and might shrink and crack.

John Moliski, technical director of United Gilsonite Laboratories, Scranton, Pa., offers these tips for using a latex wood putty:

"Press the patching material tightly into the void with a putty knife. Fill holes that are less than one-quarter inch deep and wide in one application. Make sure the patch is slightly higher than the surrounding wood.

"Wipe off the excess material around the hole with a dampened cloth. When the patch is dry, sand it until it's level with the surrounding surface."

Holes more than one-quarter inch

deep and wide, Moliski says, should be filled with several layers of patch. Let each layer dry before applying the next.

Sand the repair, using medium-grade sandpaper attached to a sanding block. Failure to use a sanding block can result in ripples on the patch and surrounding wood. This is especially true when sanding softwoods like pine.

Always sand with the wood grain. When done, wipe the surface with a tack cloth or clean rag dampened with mineral spirits to remove dust.

The drying time for wood patching products differs. Read the label before sanding, painting or staining.

Follow normal surface preparations before refinishing the damaged area.

A refinishing tip: to improve the color match between the latex patch and the wood, mix some finish with the patching material before repairing the damage. Test the patch on an inconspicuous part of the wood — the underside of a table, for instance —

to see if it blends with the original finish.

If you have trouble matching the patch with a stained surface, mix a combination of maple, mahogany and walnut stain with the patching compound. With a little work, you can match almost any stain using these three colors.

Do not confuse wood patching products with paste wood fillers. The fillers are designed for filling the open grains in certain hardwoods like oak, mahogany and walnut prior to finishing.

Hiding minor scratches does not require the use of a wood patch. For a simple fix, rub a wet tea bag or shoe polish on the scratch. Specially designed wax sticks can also be used. They are available in different colors.

If you're looking for the country look, repair major damage such as broken legs or rotted wood, but leave surface blemishes and minor scratches alone. These random markings give the piece its character.

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