

SPRING CLEAN FOR YOUR HEALTH

By Darren Lum

Spring cleaning can be the best thing for not only your home, but for your health as well.

The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit website recommends airing out homes to circulate fresh air. Regular vacuuming and cleaning will prevent mould, pollen, bacteria, dust mites and dander from collecting.

These "biologicals" can cause breathing problems, eye, ear and

throat infections, dizziness and drowsiness. These are rated second - only to second-hand smoke for asthma-related problems.

In the spring, most people have the urge to freshen up their walls with a new paint job says Gravenhurst Paint & Wallpaper sales clerk Gary Muir. He says spring puts painting at the forefront of everyone's mind.

"Nobody wants to be out there painting when the bugs are out," he says.

It's important, he says, to check for lead in the paint before sanding any painted surfaces since paint from the 1960s and 1970s can be dangerous to the environment and your health.

Health Canada's website says homes built before 1960 most likely are covered with lead-based paints while all homes built in the U.S. and Canada after 1992 used lead-free paints.

If you're unsure about the paint's contents Muir recommends using a lead paint tester. The testers are available at most paint stores and sell from \$10 to \$20. If you're in doubt about how to deal with lead-based paints, he suggests calling the professionals.

"It's not a huge issue, but you should be aware," he says.

A little organization in the home can go a long way. Muskoka interior designer and organizer Julie Ham-

mond, who runs My Organizer in Muskoka and is also a full-time personal assistant, knows personally why organization is so important.

"People have too much stuff and too much going on in their lives and if you're not organized and not using your time efficiently. You're missing out," Hammond says.

She cites the American magazine, *Real Simple*, stating women lose nearly 55.2 minutes a day, translating into 14 days a year lost due to disorganization.

"Once people start to do it. Their mind kind of clicks. Ok, this does make sense. It just becomes a way of life," she adds.

maintenance division, which boasts Muskoka's only provincial Awards of Excellence in Landscape Maintenance, operates with an organic-only agenda:

"We use strictly organic source fertilizers, and all organic pest control methods. We are all residents of Muskoka, and we need to accept responsibility for our impact on Muskoka," notes Ciphery.

So what are the residents (both seasonal and year-round) of Muskoka

looking for? According to Campbell, "the most popular (request) that I have seen is building gardens that are low maintenance and deer resistant.

Fern Glen Garden Centre even sells a product called Plantskydd which "encourages deer to dine elsewhere."

If you're looking at adding some lush foliage to your backyard, Ciphery suggests daisies, black eyed susans, purple coneflower, and lavender as popular choices. Her company's plants all come direct from award-

winning nurseries,

Campbell comments that daylilies are a great addition to any Muskoka landscape since they "are fantastic for naturalizing and slope stabilizing, mass and feature plantings."

In terms of projects, Wright says that "dry-land beaches are big, as well as patios close to the lake, in the shade."

Campbell sees "outdoor living" as one of the biggest trends. "Taking your house that one step farther and

creating an area outside that is as comfortable as inside. You can be so expressive nowadays with the different materials and products out there."

According to the website of Anthony Janssen Landscaping, a company which often collaborates with Water's Edge on projects, "our most popular professional landscape services come from Muskoka cottagers in search of stone terraces or patios to enhance their outdoor living space, and a safe and permanent route to the dock."

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