



the Jarvis Group

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MAKING THE JOURNEY AS REWARDING AS THE DESTINATION

the promise of SPRING!

MARCH 2016

Spring! After a very changeable winter, hitting both record high and low temperatures in Muskoka, we are all ready to start thinking about getting the cottage ready for a fun family-and- friend- filled summer on the lake! This newsletter has information that we hope might be helpful to you.

Or.... maybe you are even getting prepared for a cottage sale, if that stage has come around in your family. The real estate market has continued to be hot in Ontario, so it could be a good time to think about putting your cottage on the market.

If we can be of personal assistance to you, we would be happy to come out to your cottage to help you make some decisions about what changes, either big or small, might be a worthwhile

improvement with immediate high rate of return on investment, and which alterations may not add as much immediate value to your cottage. We love meeting with cottagers and seeing a wide variety of cottages. We have a lot of experience that we can offer to you at no cost. Just this past winter we provided a lot of guidance and suggestions on a major renovation one of our clients made, and they are thrilled with the results, really appreciating our knowledge and input.

Whether you plan to sell, or to stay put at your Muskoka cottage, our advice on improving and updating your cottage is available to you at no cost.



Photo by Lloyd Walton



Soap Stops Laundry From Being Clean

At the cottage it is likely that many different people may be running laundry through your machine, and possibly putting in too much detergent. Soap build-up takes a toll on your clothes washing machine and can dull your clothing. Running a cycle with just vinegar is a good way to reduce the soap build up in your washing machine. Spring is a good time to remember to attend to these things, getting everything ready for a summer of heavy duty. Research tells me that it is likely best to use about a third of what is recommended by the detergent companies, to prevent soap build-up graying your clothes and linens, and stop potential clogging of your machine.

A Low Price May Not be a Deal

Be very wary of purchasing motor oil for your boats or cars from dollar and discount stores without first reading the label very thoroughly.

Some of the 10W40 oils being sold are only good for engines built before 1988, 28 years ago, and some of the oils on the shelves are 10W30 and are only good for engines built around 1930, or for small engines, but is on the shelf right beside the other car oils where it could be easily picked up in error. On the oil label also look for a starburst with the words "for gasoline engines" to ensure you are purchasing the correct oil.

Use of an incorrect oil could cause major damage to your car or boat engines and could be a very costly experience.

It is also worth checking that your car and boat mechanics do not have oil from a dollar store, for use in your car or boat. Because the oil is good for older engines, the stores do not consider this oil obsolete, and feel it is up to the consumer to read the labels to ensure they are buying one that is appropriate for their boat or car.

It seems like a situation fraught with potential for ruining an engine, especially in cottage country where many cottage owners still service their own boat engines, or have them serviced by a handyman, and could think that dollar store oils are a deal.

Stronger Screens for Busy Cottages

Cathy Sandusky told me that you can purchase Doggie screening at Thompson Glass in Gravenhurst. They like this stronger screen so that their grandchildren can't accidentally walk through or put their hands through the screen doors, and pets are less likely to ruin it. It has worked well for them, protecting from so many screen accidents at their busy cottage, full of kids and dogs every summer. Thanks Cathy!

What a Yolk!

This is a neat little trick that might help you get kids interested in cooking at breakfast time at the cottage, or when helping to make lemon pie for dinner. It is a cool way to separate egg yolks! Crack several eggs into a shallow bowl. Take an empty plastic bottle and squeeze it while touching the edge of a yolk. When you release the bottle the egg yolk is sucked into the bottle. You can then expel it into a separate dish, easily achieving separated yolks.

See it done on youtube

www.youtube.com/embed/iAp8pEaWB1Y



A Natural Alternative to Every Day Shower Glass Cleaner for Your Cottage

In Muskoka we are always aware of trying to use natural products for the health of our lakes. The popular new glass showers are beautiful but require extensive daily glass cleaning. A mixture of baking soda and water makes a scum-fighting scrub that many experts swear by. To get started, try using a half-cup of baking soda, and then add water as needed to make a thick paste. Using a nonabrasive sponge, scrub the glass and rinse it with vinegar.

Beverly Leestma, DIY expert and author of *The Make Your Own Zone*, offers these directions for a chemical-free daily shower spray that saves both money and the environment:

Mix together a half-cup of hydrogen peroxide, a half-cup of rubbing alcohol (a natural degreaser), 1 teaspoon liquid dish soap and 1 tablespoon dishwasher rinse aid in a 32-ounce spray bottle. Next, fill the bottle with water and, after capping, rock the bottle gently back and forth to combine the ingredients without making them foam up. Store away from sunlight. Spray liberally on the shower after use and let it drip down the tile walls.



Got a New Quiet Dishwasher for Your Cottage?

In the past, dishwashers were equipped with a part called a macerator, a food-grinding component that operated along the same lines as a garbage disposal, and made almost as much noise! Many cottagers with the kitchen open to the great room are looking for quiet models.

The newer quiet models have eliminated the macerator and instead use a detachable cylindrical filter located on the bottom of the machine. When food is washed from dishes, the large particles are captured inside this filter to avoid clogging the drain. The problem is that the large particles remain trapped inside until this filter is cleaned. Forgotten filters can become clogged with large pieces of debris and may even start to smell. If there is a stale odor coming from your dishwasher, this filter may be the culprit.

For most dishwashers, removing the filter requires little more than turning it counter-clockwise and gently pulling it out, however it is always safest is to locate the owner's manual, either in print or online, to determine the location of the filter, how to remove it, and how often it should be done.

Since you will be removing the bottom rack and silverware container to access the filter, it's a great time to clean the entire dishwasher thoroughly. Pour a cup of vinegar into a dishwasher-safe container and place it on the top rack of the empty machine and run a complete hot-water cycle. This will wash away grease and grime and remove any odors that may have been present. Scatter a cup of baking soda over the floor of the machine and run a short hot-water cycle. This should brighten the appearance of the machine's interior and remove stains.

Money in Your Pocket

Our friend Steve Keilhauer emailed us to let us know that the Township of Muskoka Lakes Fire Department successfully achieved recertification for their Water Tanker Shuttle Accreditation last fall. Many insurers will provide significant reductions on annual fire insurance premiums if they are aware that your Township provides this level of fire service to residents.

Steve advised his insurance broker of this recertification and happily reported to us that he got an additional 5% off his insurance from Chubb (\$250) Easy cash is always welcome. Thanks Steve for sharing this!

We checked with Bracebridge and Gravenhurst but were told neither of those communities have this accreditation. It is time consuming and expensive to achieve, apparently.

Thicken Up

For babies, aging parents, or anyone with either temporary or long term swallowing difficulties caused by pharmaceuticals or other conditions, liquids thickened to nectar thickness are usually safer to drink. There are a limited variety of good thickening agents available in Canadian drugstores, and many of them turn liquids cloudy and add a slightly unappealing taste. We came across a thickening product from Nestle that we think is wonderful. It is crystal clear and adds no taste at all. It is called "Thicken Up" and is available on Amazon.ca. We discovered it in the States but including the shipping cost, it is about the same price on Amazon.ca as buying it in the States with American dollars, and it is handy to have it shipped directly to your home. Swallowing problems can result in choking or aspirational pneumonia, so it is great to know about this product to have on hand to protect your friends or family who could be experiencing swallowing challenges. It even works in white wine!



The Good the Bad and the Ugly in Slipcovers

If you have good quality sofas that you have tired of, slipcovering is the least expensive and most beautiful way to make a change. More



and more cottagers are wanting slipcovers made, just like in the old days. Why waste a high quality, but dated sofa?

We have some friends who have had an unfortunate experience with having slipcovers made and so I did some research, with a high quality professional upholsterer, so that we can tell you what factors create the best slipcovers.

I asked Graham Valentine (705-733-8367) what makes high quality long lasting slipcovers? Here is his guidance:

1. Durable washable fabric is key. Fabric pricing can be deceiving, so don't rely only on price to determine quality. Our slipcovers are made with 68 inch wide cotton duck that was \$5.99 a yard and has been laundered beautifully for years. I know people who found drop cloths from a paint store that made wonderful slipcovers. On the other hand, I know some people who have had poor performance from some higher priced material they selected, because it did not launder well. It is safest to buy a sample of fabric and launder it several times before making your full purchase. There is an excellent online site called On Line Fabric Store www.onlinefabric-store.net This store sent my friend a second order of her fabric for no charge, as the first order had a flaw... as well as telling her to keep the original flawed order at no cost. I got fabulous fabric from Designer Fabrics in Toronto on Queen Street for a very low price. Sunbrella fabric is washable and bleachable in any colour, but it is far more expensive than cottage duck which is also washable and bleachable if you select a shade of white.
2. During construction the fabric edges have to be hemmed on every seam. It is called "overlocking" the raw edge. If this is not done, the raw edge can unravel in the laundry, becoming weak and allowing your seams to fall apart over a short time. Slipcover seams take a lot of stress as the slipcover goes on and comes off for laundering.
3. The skirts on the slipcovers have to be lined. Sofa skirts will not launder well, and will not hang well, if they are not properly and fully lined.
4. Have arm caps made as this will reduce the number of times you need to wash the entire slipcover.
5. Be sure to wash and dry all of the material for your slipcovers several times before having the slipcovers made. This guarantees your finished slipcovers will not shrink in the laundry. You can usually do this in 4-5 yard lengths, but check with your upholsterer for guidance before cutting.
6. A hint from us - We had extra seat cushion covers made as these are the part that gets dirty fastest and get washed the most and they are least expensive to make all at the same time.



Rethinking Skylights To Brighten Your Cottage

Research shows that the most loved rooms have natural sunshine entering from two or more different directions, flooding the space with light, making it bright and cheery. Depending on your exposure, you may not have naturally well-lit main rooms in your cottage when depending on windows that face away from the sun.

Anything that you can do to increase the natural light in your cottage is a worthwhile investment, as it builds value. If you have an east or north facing cottage, having skylights could make a tremendous difference in the natural sunlight in the main rooms of your cottage, as they bring streams of sunlight in from above. However many cottagers have been afraid to install skylights after hearing about, or personally having, a bad experience with leaking skylights when using older models. It is scary to think about cutting a hole in your roof, covering it with glass, and hoping no rain gets in!

What many people don't fully realize is how much this technology has been refined with huge advances over the last five years. Properly installed high grade skylights are now reliable, elegant, energy efficient and sophisticated. To be safe, don't buy builder's grade skylights, select a well respected brand such as Velux

or one recommended by your builder, and have it installed by an experienced professional.

The latest skylights include remote control of blinds and sash position, both manual and programmable. Some skylights are also fitted with rain sensors and will close automatically when it starts to rain. The best systems use radio frequency controls that operate from anywhere in your house, as opposed to infrared control that requires an open line-of-sight between the remote and the skylight. Program blinds and skylights to open and close on a preset schedule according to the seasons and you'll enjoy the best of the sunlight and fresh air. We selected skylights with none of these bells and whistles, and just enjoy the quality of light they bring to our cottage for a more basic price tag.

We have had Velux skylights (www.velux.ca) in both our current cottage and our previous Pine Island cottage and the two storey boathouse, as the brand suggested by our builder, Rob Borne, and have never experienced any leaks. The sunlight pouring in provided us with daily delight, and the bright and sunny rooms helped the north east facing island cottage sell in just 4 days. In our experience, skylights have always been a very worthwhile investment in pleasure and in resale value. As Realtors we know that taking Buyers through a cottage that is dark inside is a negative to attracting an offer. One Buyer said to me in a north east facing cottage "Look at all that sunshine out there on the water, but I am standing in a dark cottage!"

Raise a Flag on Your Shoreline

If you want some beautiful low-maintenance flowers along your shoreline, try planting native flags. These are from the Iris family, and are native to Muskoka, growing right at the waterline helping to stabilize the shore and purifying runoff water heading for the lake.

Their blooms are beautiful, in purple, and when the flowers are finished, the spikey deep-green upright foliage is very attractive, lasting until frost.

You can purchase flags from local Muskoka nurseries, although they may need to order them in for you. These plants also make a wonderful cottage gift, that will remind your friends of you annually

Ask for Iris versicolor (purple) This harlequin blue flag iris is native from Newfoundland to Manitoba south to Minnesota and Virginia.



We make it our business to know the Muskoka Real Estate market intimately.

Here is What Our Client's Say

"Through the entire process, I felt my best interests were being served and that I was getting straight honest feedback about what needed to be done. Their knowledge of the Muskoka marketplace and the complexities of cottage country bylaws, waterfront usage rules and building requirements was invaluable."

- Donald Webb

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