

Nest Building

HOUSE RULES!

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What's with all the rules these days? There was a time when a man's home was his castle and he had complete and absolute dominion over it. Everyone chose his or her own décor, paint colours and shrubberies. Sometimes it looked a bit odd when one half of a semi-detached home had a red eavestrough that met a white one at the halfway mark, but at least it showed two distinct individuals lived in the conjoined homes and each was free to present his or her own personality.

Today many communities ensure such obvious expressions of individuality are well and truly squelched. There are subdivisions where only timber siding is permitted, or only earth tone colours may be painted on outside trim. In many urban condominium blocks, there are even rules about the colour of interior window blinds—anything other than cream might ruin the look of the building if everyone chose to close their blinds at the very same time ... imagine!

Some home-owner associations prohibit the use of outdoor washing lines, limit the selection of planting materials and location of vegetable plots, enforce lawn height standards, and hold lengthy meetings to determine if a homeowner may have a shed, a composter, or a chicken in the garden. In a new town development just outside Shrewsbury, UK, residents are forbidden to park their company car in the driveway if it has a commercial logo on it.

Caring for the nest is a fundamental human drive. Our homes nurture and support us while protecting us from—and representing us to—the outside world. Some of us enjoy wildflowers and red paintwork while others like manicured lawns and garden gnomes.

It's diversity that makes life, people, downtown streets and residential enclaves interesting—courtesy and consideration instead of laws and restrictions, should suffice.