



Rhonda Farrar discusses the “infinity” swimming pool being built at the “green home” that she and her husband, Nigel, are building near Escondido. DON BOOMER | dboomer@nctimes.com

CLOSER TO HOME

‘Green’ dream house starts to materialize

BY BRADLEY J. FIKES

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Editor’s note: Rhonda and Nigel Farrar are building a home incorporating the latest environmentally friendly technologies. This is the third installment in an occasional series about the Farrars’ construction of their “green” home.

ESCONDIDO — As home construction milestones go, septic tank installation ranks decidedly low on the glamor scale.

Yet early Tuesday morning, Rhonda Farrar and Kermit the dog watched intently as construction workers lowered the 15,000-gallon tank into the ground.

During the process, Farrar described the specifications to a newspaper reporter.

(Actually, Kermit was more interested in continuing his truncated walk; whining and straining at the leash.)

Even the most unprepossessing details are important to Farrar, a financial planner, and her husband, Nigel, an executive at Cymer Inc., which makes lasers for computer chip manufacturing. They’re planning their green home to be as close to energy-neutral and low envi-

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RHONDA FARRAR

Woman who with her husband is building their environmentally sensitive dream house near Escondido

ronmental impact as possible — while still living in comfort.

The septic system separates wastewater from solid sludge, allowing the water to percolate into a drainfield, where the water will be purified by moving through the soil, replenishing the groundwater.

“That will all go into my grove down here,” Farrar said, indicating one of several places on the 2-acre site overlooking Lake Hodges where crops will be grown on a small farm.

“I don’t think we’re going to need to do the plumbing for a graywater system, because this is our graywater system,” she said.

Down on the farm

The crops will be fruits and vegetables of varieties not commonly available commercially.

They’ll be sold to neighbors and local stores, increasing the supply of locally grown produce.

“A lot of the things you find in the store are hybridized for packing and shipping, and not necessarily for flavor,” Farrar said.

“For example, Hass avocados are all you can find in the stores. They’re good avocados, but they’re nothing like a Reed or a Bacon or a Fuerte, other varieties of avocados that don’t pack as well, but are far more delicious. So we’re planting those.”

Likewise, the Farrars plan to raise “heritage chickens,” also not raised for mass production. Their eggs are blue and green.

“They’ll lay Easter eggs,” Farrar said.

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The Farrars aren't just talking about eco-agriculture — they raise specialty crops at their home in Poway.

Taking shape

The Farrars are planning the green home in Escondido not just for themselves, but also to inspire others to use the latest in environmental technology.

They've put their quest online at www.farrargreen-home.org.

Highlights include:

- A 740-foot-deep well drilled on the property last year to provide their water.

- Solar panels to provide much of the power, greatly reducing their net electricity use from San Diego Gas & Electric Co.

- A geothermal air conditioning system taps into a year-round ambient temperature of 70 degrees six feet underground.

The Farrars have had



Rhonda Farrar takes pictures Tuesday as a 15,000-gallon septic tank is lowered into the ground at the “green home” that she and her husband, Nigel, are building near Escondido. DON BOOMER | dboomer@nctimes.com

plenty of time to plan the farm as the project wended its way through concept to architectural drawings, meetings, permits, and now construction.

The outline of the home has been chalked on the ground in preparation for

laying the foundation. A few feet to the south, a small pool has been partly completed, its inner fixtures yet to be covered.

As the septic tank from a Fontana-based manufacturer was lowered into position, talk turned to the completion timetable.

“That’s a question for him,” Farrar told the reporter, looking at their

general contractor, Phil Gaitaud.

“About eight months,” or around year’s end, Gaitaud said.

“Now that they’re preparing to trench the foundation and pour the slab, it’s starting to look very real,” Farrar said.

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