

An Irresistible Home Starts at the Curb

The old saying about making a good first impression couldn't be truer than when you are selling your home. That first impression has to create interest from the moment a buyer drives up to your home. Curb appeal is that subjective, intangible quality that entices buyers to think emotionally rather than logically. Perhaps it's the way the home sits on the property, or the mix of clapboard and fieldstone. It may be the expanse of grass carpeting, the stately columns, or the boisterous symphony of greenery and brilliantly colored flowers. In any case, it's love at first sight.

How can you tell where your home registers on the curb appeal scale? One way to find out is to take pictures of your property from various angles. Show them to friends, family, colleagues, anyone known for providing painfully objective feedback. Find out what's appealing about the home and grounds, and what needs improvement. Take the photos to a nursery for a professional landscaper's opinion. Even more important, consult your real estate professional. A local real estate professional has experience selling homes in your area and can be a great resource. Ask the agent to walk around the property with you and view it from across the street. Develop a "to do" list to bring your home up to show condition, then brainstorm easy, cost-effective solutions.

Surprisingly, even small enhancements can make a big difference. Building on your home's curb appeal might be as easy as replacing a broken screen and planting a few flowers near the front door.

Here are some ideas to get you going.

Paint and polish. A fresh coat of paint breathes new life into a tired-looking home. If your home looks dull or suffers from peeling, cracked or chipped surfaces, a paint job is a great investment. Many real estate professionals suggest using neutral colors such as white or gray. Whether or not you paint, you'll want to polish the doorknocker and mail slot on the front door, as well as any light fixtures by the entry.

Go over the grounds. Mow and edge the grass, and trim the trees and bushes. Also, clear away dead leaves and flowers, and mulch and weed the beds. Check to see that tree branches are not touching the home's roof or outer walls. You can spruce up the property by hanging flowering baskets and placing planters of flowers in strategic spots. Don't forget the side and back yards. Add some flowering plants to the back as well.

Make needed repairs. See if anything is unhinged, loose or just an eyesore. Fix everything including broken fencing, windows and screens. Try the doorbell. Check stairs and railings. Test doors for squeaks and rusted hinges. Don't forget to take a critical look at the property at night. Make sure the lights work, and replace dim and burned-out bulbs.

Unclutter. Tidy up the deck, patio and back yard. Rearrange the outdoor furniture to look inviting. Put away gardening tools. Clean up the barbecue area. Eliminate any "evidence" of Fido, and restrict him to the back yard when showing the home. Move extra vehicles from the view of passersby.



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Clean. You want buyers to think the home has been well maintained. To make a bright impression, clean the windows, inside and out, wash down the walks and driveway, and hose down the siding. Clean outdoor furniture and cushions. Check for oil spots on cement surfaces, especially the garage floor. Remember, a sale can be made or lost as a direct result of your home's curb appeal. Exert a little elbow grease now and you'll captivate buyers at the curb. It's a sure way to a quicker sale.

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