

The Value of Landscaping

By ANNA CHANG-YEN | Green Shoot Media

When you think about factors that influence the value of your home, what do you think of? Location? Square footage? Number of bedrooms and bathrooms? A lesser known but nonetheless major influencer of the value of your home also can be the landscaping.

Full-grown plants that have lived a long life on your property can lend a lush, comfortable beauty. When it comes time to sell your home, a vibrant green lawn and bright flowers also can provide charm.

“Realtors understand the importance of curb appeal because when it is time to sell, a home’s exterior is its first impression to potential buyers,” said NAR President Tom Salomone. “Realtors also know that these projects — from flowerbeds to fire pits — can bring homeowners who have no plans to sell even more enjoyment and satisfaction in their home.”

LAWN

Maintaining a lawn is no small feat. It requires routine mowing, trimming, edging and fertilizing. Getting all that done can really zap your weekend or your budget. It is, however, a worthwhile endeavor, not just to lay claim to the most beautiful lawn on the block, but to add real value to your home.

In a 2016 report, the National



Association of Realtors outlined the returns homeowners can expect on lawn maintenance projects. Seeding the lawn led the list, at 417 percent of the project cost recovered at resale. Implementing a standard lawn care program followed at 303 percent cost recovery, and updating landscaping with a sod lawn was next, at 143 percent.

“Homeowners working with a landscape professional ... can rest assured that they are making a smart, worthwhile investment,” according to NAR.

OTHER LANDSCAPING FEATURES

There’s a reason you see the words mature landscaping in many home listings. Simply

put, this is one feature of a home that can’t be easily or quickly installed. Most homeowners aren’t going to transplant a 50 year old Oak onto their property. But an old oak on the hill certainly can provide a pleasant atmosphere around the home. People envision themselves picnicking under the tree, watching the kids grow up, or whatever vision they have for their life, taking place under that tree.

Alex Niemiera, a horticulturist at Virginia Tech, studied the nexus of landscaping and home value for the Virginia Cooperative Extension, he found increases in perceived value from 5.5 to 12.7 percent.

“Thus, a home valued at \$150,000 with no landscape

(lawn only) could be worth \$8,250 to \$19,050 more with a sophisticated landscape with color and large plants,” he wrote. “Interestingly, the multi-state study found that very minimal landscapes (simple design with small plants) detracted from the value of a landscape.” Even better, as plants grow and mature, their value is greater.

Even trees alone could be a big price booster. A survey of listing agents by Arbor National Mortgage found that 84 percent of agents questioned believe a house on a treed lot would fetch 20 percent more than one on a lot without trees.

If you’re going to go all-in on landscaping, your best bet might be to hire a pro.

Niemiera’s study found that “design sophistication was the highest ranked factor that added to the perceived value of a home.”

Dollar for dollar, it may even be a better investment than kitchens and bathrooms, which normally draw buyers’ focus and add value. “A landscaping investment could potentially pay a 215 percent return in home value,” Margaret Woda, a Realtor with Long & Foster Real Estate in Crofton, Md., told Bankrate.com, which notes that a kitchen renovation might garner only 68 percent.

FLOWERS

Bright flowers draw the eye and create interest in the landscaping. They’re inexpensive and easy to install, making a great DIY project.

A 2013 National Association of Realtors survey found that 71 percent of homebuyers say curb appeal is important.

If your home is on the market during the warmer months, it just makes sense to spend a little bit of money on flowers to draw the eyes of potential buyers.

As you can see, you should think of your landscaping is more than just eye pleasing, for your own enjoyment. It is an investment that is often worthwhile and deserve some consideration if you’re planning to sell.



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REAL ESTATE 101



Landscaping Red Flags

The National Association of Realtors offers this list of potentially problematic outdoor issues to avoid when buying a home:

- Water features such as ponds, fountains and brooks
- Bowed or cracked retaining walls
- Leaning or rotting fences
- Damaged railings
- Deck systems and patios that slope toward or pull away from a home
- Tilted and cracked stairs
- Cracks running from windows and doors

HOMESWISE GLOSSARY

Reconveyance: The transfer of the title of land from one person to the immediate preceding owner. This instrument of transfer is commonly used to transfer the legal title from the trustee to the trustor (borrower) after a trust deed debt has been paid in full.

SOURCE: California Bureau of Real Estate

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