

Go the Extra Yard with your Lawn

Whether you like it or not, people do judge books by their covers. Take for instance homes for sale.

Curb appeal is important to 71% of homebuyers when choosing the home they want to buy, according to a National Association of Realtors survey.

An investment in landscaping could potentially pay a 215% return in home value, according to Margaret Woda, a Realtor with Long & Foster Real Estate in Crofton, Maryland, who spoke with Bankrate.com.

PLANNING AND MAINTENANCE

You can't just decide to sell your house today and expect the landscaping to be ready tomorrow.

"If you're thinking of moving in the fall, then this spring you should be working on your landscaping," said Woda.

Start by cleaning up the yard, removing dead branches, dog droppings, weeds and anything broken, said Woda.

"The most important thing in landscaping is maintenance," she says.

Eric King, of King Landscaping in Atlanta, recommends investigating the unseen, ensuring the down-



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REAL ESTATE 101

Landscaping Can Increase the Value of your Home

In one HomeLight survey, 94% of top agents said that great curb appeal equals money in your bank account at closing — and you don't have to break the bank to wow buyers, either. For more information on how landscaping can benefit you at sale time, visit bit.ly/3hPJWvV.

spouts are clean and functional, and making sure drain pipes are properly buried and draining so water doesn't pool. Then make sure your hard-scapes (things such as patios, walkways and fences) are level and that roots haven't pushed up sidewalks or patio stones. If your deck has wobbly railings or loose steps, fix them, King said.

PLANTS

In the front yard, landscaping's role is to help people notice the house first, King said. The landscaping should pull your eyes to the front door. While the Realtor is opening the lockbox, buyers will be looking around at the landscaping, so have pots of blooming flowers nearby.

Trees, bamboo and other

screening plants can be used to hide anything unsightly, such as your neighbor's garage door or the trash cans, says King.

Trees can add value, providing canopy, shade and insulation from sun, but they have issues, too, says Lucco. Tree roots can damage the foundation, die or be too close to the house. Buyers may not want fruit- or nut-bearing trees.

"Some buyers won't pay one penny extra and might even cut them down," he says.

LANDSCAPING FEATURES

In the backyard, people like a comfortable spot to hang out, King said. Like decks or patios.

Other personalized options, such as fire pits, outdoor kitchens, fountains and lighting, are things that make a backyard more of a paradise.

Only install a fire pit, outdoor kitchen or water feature if you want them because you likely won't recoup your money. "A small statue fountain is less money and maintenance and may not be overwhelming," King said.

"Anything over \$5,000 that's hard-scape in those categories, do it because you want it, not because you're doing it for resale."

These features can positively impact an appraisal if they're quality construction and well-maintained, said Woda. Some materials are better than others. A cobblestone patio is better than poured concrete. A stacked-stone retaining wall is more appealing than railroad ties.

"That said, railroad ties and a poured concrete patio are better than one lacking any patio or any retaining wall where one is needed," Woda said.



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HOMEWISSE GLOSSARY

Interest: What a lender charges to borrow money. The part of the borrower's monthly payment that goes to the lender after the principal has been applied against the loan balance.
SOURCE: MLS.com

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