

## JOYCE LANDSCAPING

# Improve your home's curb appeal

**By Christopher J. Joyce**

The National Association of Realtors reports that curb appeal sells 49 percent of all houses. It starts with quality landscaping that enhances the style of the home. Landscaping doesn't have to be expensive; only well-thought-out, interesting and cohesive. It doesn't take much to make dramatic improvements, such as adding flower boxes, sprucing up the mailbox or constructing an elegant driveway.

A recent study estimated that good landscaping can add 7 percent to 15 percent to the eventual sale price of a home and, for the second year in a row, Realtors report that exterior remodeling projects return the most money as a percentage of cost. Well-chosen improvements can draw buyers into the home and add value. Both the facade and yard should say: "This house is loved." The front of your property should be so alluring that a prospective buyer, driving by slowly, will actually want to stop, get out, look and then call the listing Realtor. That is curb appeal.

Curb appeal means Web appeal too. If a house doesn't look good online, it won't attract maximum buyers. You want to get showings, whether in person or on the Internet. If people don't like what they see, they stop right there. First impressions can be last impressions.

Curb appeal also lets the buyer feel more confident in the property. If the property looks like it needs improvement, then that perception alone will introduce unnecessary risk into the transaction.

Remember, there are a number of ways to enhance a home's appearance, from smaller tasks such as weeding and mowing the lawn, to larger projects to expand living space. Here are some very easy and inexpensive tips:

- Make sure the doors and windows are not obstructed by trees or bushes.
- Have a healthy lawn in front. You don't need to invest in sod, but do work to eliminate weeds and dirt patches. A lawn fertilization program will aid in a green and healthy lawn.
- Don't camouflage your property with too many plants and flowers. Be judicious, while making sure your property is as clean and organized as possible.
- Remove any tree limbs near or touching the roof.
- Clear rain gutters and chimneys.
- Kill mold on sidewalks, roof and patio.
- Pressure wash siding, porches, sidewalks and decks.
- Remove leaves and weeds; mow and edge lawn.

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