

## **President's Column**

**Feb. 1, 2012**

### **Don't curb buyers' first impressions**

Even if the Texas weather has your yard looking less than its best, it's important not to neglect your home's exterior when you decide to put in on the market. When you're selling your home, you're selling the whole package. And a buyer's bad first impression of the outside could influence her opinion of the interior.

Fortunately, there are a few simple tasks you can add to your to-do list to spruce up the exterior. Once your home is listed, buyers will be driving by to check it out and will definitely be looking at photos online. You can make a few improvements before your REALTOR® takes listing photos or puts a "for sale" sign in the yard and expect to see the greatest return on your investment.

### **Don't add, just subtract**

Just as you should tidy up the interior of your home when you decide to sell, take this same approach with your home's exterior. Get rid of any clutter, junk or toys left in the yard and clear out dead tree limbs and overgrown vines. You don't necessarily have to landscape your entire yard to make it appear attractive. Instead, maintain what you already have or add a few simple touches.

A few flower pots filled with colorful blooms are relatively inexpensive and can instantly make a home more attractive. Spreading mulch is a great way to tidy up neglected or empty flowerbeds. A few bags or shovels full of new mulch can make a huge difference. Just be sure to keep the yard mowed and edged, rake leaves and pull weeds regularly.

If you've been using your garage to store stuff other than your cars, now would be a good time to clear out items and make room for your vehicles. This task serves two purposes: Buyers can more easily imagine their own vehicles in a two-car garage if they actually see that two cars fit, and you get a clear driveway.

### **Make a grand entrance**

Could the front door use a fresh coat of paint? This do-it-yourself project takes little time, is relatively inexpensive and makes a great first impression. You can also easily spruce up the area around the entrance with some pots or planters full of seasonal flowers and a new welcome mat.

If your porches have railings or steps, this is the ideal time to give them some attention, too. Tighten any loose screws, replace broken railings or steps and give them a good coat of paint to help make them look new again.

## **Keep it clean**

If your home's exterior or siding is looking drab, consider using a pressure washer to clean it and the walkways and driveway. And don't forget your gutters. Clearing them out and inspecting them will help you identify any issues such as clogs, leaks or broken clips. You'll need to get out the ladder or call in a professional.

Even if you don't do windows, take the time to clean the glass inside and out. You can take the labor out of it by using a cleaning product that attaches to a garden hose for the exterior.

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