

# YOUR HOME

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TIPS AND TRENDS FOR HOMEOWNERS, BUYERS AND SELLERS

## LANDSCAPING ADDS VALUE

Is your yard helping or hurting your chance of getting top dollar for your home? According to a survey by landscape manufacturer TruGreen, nearly three-fourths of Americans believe it takes only a few seconds for them to form a first impression about a home's appearance.

Most REALTORS® agree that curb appeal is essential when selling a home. Lackluster landscaping can turn off prospective buyers and affect the home's resale value, say experts at the Appraisal Institute. But before making any improvements to your landscaping, consider how long you'll be living in the home and whether to make short-term updates or plan for the long term. Ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is the landscaping attractive enough to make a prospective buyer walk through the front door? Keep the design contemporary and in line with comparable properties in the area.
2. Does the landscaping provide a cost savings? Landscaping that requires little or no water to maintain may be more desirable to some buyers, depending on where they live.
3. Is the landscaping energy-efficient? In locations with abundant sunshine, trees should be planted where they can block some of the sunlight and provide cooling shade.
4. Are trees planted at a safe distance from the home and are they well-maintained? Old or damaged trees planted too close to a home can damage the home's foundation.

A well-maintained yard can make a strong first impression and add value to your home.



## NEW HOMEOWNER DIY TIPS

Buying a home for the first time is a huge step. But learning to maintain and improve it can be both painful and rewarding. The do-it-yourself experts at The Family Handyman ([www.familyhandyman.com](http://www.familyhandyman.com)) offer the following tips for maintaining your home that will save you money down the road.



Create a homeowner's journal. Keep insurance papers, repair receipts and all other paperwork pertaining to the house inside a three-ring binder. Storing your home's maintenance information in one handy place makes it easier to find when you need it — especially when you consider selling the house in the future.

Get to know your house before making any big changes. Live in your home for 12 to 18 months before undertaking any major renovations, since your initial perspective may change. After you've lived there for awhile, reassess what suits your needs — and your home — best.

Tackle one project at a time. If you dive right into the porch, a kitchen remodel and an outdoor fence replacement at once, you'll have the whole house and yard torn up at the same time. It might all come together, but this approach can be stressful on homeowners and their families.

Budget for unexpected repairs. Problems are bound to happen sooner or later. Set up an emergency fund to handle these unexpected expenses.

Ask neighbors to recommend good plumbers, electricians, contractors or other professionals for you to contact. Chances are, people who have lived in your area for a long time can give you the best advice.

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# GREEN THUMB

It's finally time to pull out the patio furniture, fire up the grill and enjoy outdoor activities in your yard. Here are some tips from HGTV.com that will keep your grass looking green all summer long.

When cutting the grass, try to keep its height at about two-and-a-half to three inches. Sharpen the blade of your mower at least three times a year to avoid grass split ends, and be sure to change your mowing pattern to prevent soil compaction, which will inhibit grass growth.

Instead of lightly watering your grass three to four times a week, give it a good soaking once a week – most lawns need about an inch of water. It's best to water the grass early in the morning.

To combat weeds, make sure to use herbicides specially formulated to combat the types of weeds that are growing in your yard. If you aren't a fan of herbicides, weed removal tools, such as weed hounds, usually do the trick.

Over-fertilizing is a common problem and can kill your lawn. You should only fertilize in the spring and summer months if you neglected to apply fertilizer in the fall. Every time you mow your lawn, the clippings produce nitrogen, an excellent natural fertilizer.

Finally, keep kids, pets, vehicles and wheelbarrows off moist soil and emerging grass. Wait until your lawn is full and dry to enjoy it.

## Say Yes to CRS

Buying a home is one of the biggest and most emotional decisions you will ever make. So it's important to work with someone who can provide sound advice and a steady, guiding hand when you need it. That's why a CRS agent is the best person for the job.

A Certified Residential Specialist (CRS) is among the top 3 percent of all agents in the country. CRS agents have achieved a high volume of transactions and advanced training in areas such as business planning, real estate investing, marketing and technology. They must also maintain membership in the NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® and abide by its Code of Ethics. Why work with anyone else when you can work with a CRS agent?



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## DID YOU KNOW?



Central air conditioning is the most sought-after home feature desired by prospective buyers.

Source: NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS® 2013 Home Features Surveys



Do you know someone who is thinking about buying or selling a home? **Please mention my name.**

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