

Fixing Up the Exterior

The exterior of your house is the first impression potential buyers are going to get, and neatly edged borders, green grass, nice paint and trimmed trees are much more inviting than a messy outside, no matter how good the house is.

Realtor.com offers a number of ways to “boost your curb appeal.”

PAINT

Precipitation, wind, dust storms, the sun and of course time all contribute to fading, spotty or dingy paint. Start with power washing the exterior; this can take off years of built-on dirt that are causing your house to look faded. Realtor.com says a professional paint job comes with a warranty, often 25 years, so if it's been less time than that speak to the painter about touch-ups; if it's been longer, it may be time for a new paint job.

You may not need a complete redo; sometimes repainting the door or trim will freshen up the look and make your house pop.

TREES, BUSHES AND GARDENS

Overgrown trees can overwhelm the yard as well as encroach on the house, making it seem dark. Realtor.com suggests trimming any trees



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or bushes that are touching the house. Even if they're not close to the house, assess how the greenery makes your yard look. If it's sloppy, pull out the trimmer. No trees or bushes may make your yard look bare, however, so consider adding some. (If you live in a neighborhood with an HOA, make sure what you

plant is in keeping with the CC&Rs.)

Don't skip out on yard maintenance just because it's winter; find plants that can survive the colder weather, such as evergreen trees.

For regular maintenance, make sure the yard is mowed, the edges are trimmed, flower gardens are cleared of weeds

and the yard overall looks neat.

OUTBUILDINGS

Potential buyers will open the shed in the backyard, so clear it of cobwebs and trash, straighten your tools and fix the hinges.

Clean up oil stains and evidence of your hobbies and

REAL ESTATE 101

Put Out the Welcome Mat

Is your entryway in need of an upgrade? Replacing the front door will cost \$1,000 or more, according to U.S. News and World Report. You also could simply paint the door and update the hardware and handles for a lot less money. While you're at it, add matching potted plants on either side of the door, new lighting and house numbers, and a fancy doormat for a quick, easy refresh. Pressure washing the exterior also is a quick, inexpensive way to revive your home's exterior, instantly giving a cleaner appearance to everything from concrete and siding to railings, fences and decks.

activities.

Straighten the patio and do what you can to make it look inviting; flowers, outdoor furniture, a rug and other touches can help potential buyers imagine themselves having barbecues and reading their book in the backyard.

Got a swimming pool? Keep it sparkling clean; a dirty pool will remind buyers how high-maintenance a pool can be.



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HOMEWISE GLOSSARY

Commitment letter: A binding offer from your lender that includes the amount of the mortgage, the interest rate, and repayment terms.

SOURCE: Federal Trade Commission

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