# Preparing the Outside of Your Home for Showings

Buyers are searching for a "home"—a place in which they will feel comfortable, secure, and happy, a place in which they can imagine settling down and raising their family. As a seller, your goal is to cultivate these feelings through the property you're selling. Look at your house as a marketable commodity. A buyer's emotional response is triggered early, so you want to ensure you have done everything you can to encourage a positive response to your house from the outset. Within minutes—even seconds—of pulling into your driveway, buyers have formed an impression that they will carry with them through the rest of the showing, and beyond. Keep in mind, this impression will not only influence whether or not they make an offer, but also what value they consider the property to have.

When homes create an immediate type of emotional appeal, they tend to sell quickly—and for more money. Use the following step-by-step guide to get your house into selling shape before you put the property on the market, and you'll be well on your way to a successful sale!

## Outside the House

Work your way from the outside in. It is essential that your home possess a certain 'drive-up appeal'. Remember, a potential buyer's first impression of your house is formed while they are still sitting in their realtor's car. So, first you need to view your house from this prospective. Go stand on the opposite curb and observe your property. Compare it to the surrounding properties and take note of anything that could use updating.

### Landscaping

How does your landscaping measure up compared to the rest of the neighbourhood? If you guess it would rate below-average, try to make a few adjustments. You might want to consider buying some bushes and planting them around the property. Unless they could provide significant privacy or shade, do not buy trees – as mature trees are expensive, and you won't see a return on your investment. Immature trees don't tend to significantly improve the immediate appearance of your house.

If the problem with your yard isn't a case of too little greenery, but rather too much, get out the pruning shears. The purpose of landscaping is to compliment the home, not hide it.

Overgrown shrubs should be sheared to a height of near the bottom of the windows. Remove any ivy clinging to the side of the house (and power wash the exposed siding). Tree limbs should be high enough that you're able to walk beneath them, and none should be touching the home itself.

Your lawn should be freshly cut and watered, and an even colour if possible. If there are brown spots, make sure you start to remedy this well in advance of putting the house on the market. You may want to re-sod areas, and you need to make sure these spots are given enough time to grow, so they will match the existing lawn. Also, if you do decide to use fertilizer, you'll want to allow enough time for it to take effect. Rake up any leaves or grass cuttings as well.

Planting a few flowers is an easy way to add colour and vibrancy to your yard, enhancing the first impression of your home. Invest in a full flat of mature, colourful flowers, especially ones which will last all season. Do not buy bulbs or seeds – they won't necessarily grow enough by the time you begin showing to achieve the desired effect. If you don't have an area in which to plant flowers, considering purchasing a few pots for your porch and plant flowers or blooming plants.

If you have a pool, keep it sparkling and leaf-free.

House Exterior

When you view your house from across the street, does it appear weathered of faded? If so, it's probably time to treat it to a fresh coat of paint. This is usually a sound investment – new paint can do wonders to increase a home's perceived value.

Stay away from unusual or loud colours. The new colour should fit in with the surrounding houses and compliment the style and structure of your house.

Examine the roof closely. Old or leaking roofs should be replaced. If there are leaks, you'll have to disclose this detail in the Property Disclosure Statement and many buyers will want a bigger price reduction compared to doing the work yourself from the beginning. If there isn't any apparent damage, however, wait for word from the home inspector before making repairs.

Front Door & Porch

The front door and surrounding area should look particularly fresh and welcoming, as this will be the buyer's first up-close impression as they enter the house. If you paint nothing else, at least give the door a new coat. Replace the doorbell if its broken and polish the door fixtures. Wash the mailbox, buy a new door mat, and keep the porch swept. All of these little updates (as redundant as they may feel) will contribute to the overall effect of a well-cared-for and welcoming home.

Ensure the lock works smoothly and the key fits properly. When a buyer visits your house, the Realtor will open the front door with a key. You don't want the buyer's first experience to be of waiting on the doorstep while the Realtor fumbles with the lock.