

Simple steps to stellar curb appeal

By Erin K. Witt

Curb appeal—the attractive presentation of a home’s exterior—is one of the most effective tools sellers can use to market their home.

The blooming flowers and sunshine of spring and summer make curb appeal easily attainable for most homeowners. But the following tips from the Do-It-Yourself Network can help.

Tip #1:

Homeowners should plant colorful flowers along the sidewalk leading to the front door. Even potted plants can add a nice touch to the front door, and can be maintained easily if you don't have time to devote to gardening. The long life cycle and hardy nature of many potted plants, such as chrysanthemums and geraniums, can also help them decorate your entrance well into autumn.

Tip #2:

Pay attention to paint. Make sure the trim around windows and doors is in good shape. If the paint is peeling or cracking, scrape it off and apply fresh paint. The front door is especially important—painting it a bright shade such as red or forest green can attract attention and help liven up the rest of the home.

Tip #3:

Tidy up. Sweep walkways frequently, and keep all windows clean. If you have children's toys, pet remnants or other “obstacle courses” in the front or back yards, make sure they are taken care of. It's also a good idea to polish the front-door handle. Remember: The front door is one of the first things guests and potential buyers see when they visit.

Tip #4:

A welcome mat is an easy way to add color. Choose one with a color that coordinates well with your door. Naturally, a mat is also a practical way to keep your home's interior tidy—guests and potential buyers can clean their shoes before entering.

Tip #5:

Display the street number of your house to help guests find it easily. One creative way of displaying the address is to post decorative numbers in your flowerbed. Pre-cast brass or chrome numbers can be also be affixed near the front door, or painted directly on your home.

Tip #6:

Don't just choose plants because you like their color or the fragrance of their blooms. Make sure the plants you choose accent your house well. Taller plants at the corners of the house will help anchor it with the landscape. Shorter plants near your home's entry bring attention to your front door. Long and low houses look best with colors that

emphasize vertical elements such as doors and shutters, while tall and narrow homes should contrast horizontal elements like fascias and gutters.

Tip #7:

Keep bushes trimmed, and add fresh mulch around trees and shrubbery. Prune trees if necessary, and make sure the entire yard is manicured regularly.

Tip #8:

A simple power washing of the home's exterior, decks, and porches can enhance the view from the street tremendously.

Tip #9:

Develop a plan for outside décor, choosing elements that will accent your property. The plan could include simple touches like purchasing pretty hanging baskets for porches and patios, cleaning patio furniture, and maybe investing in some new, bright cushions for that furniture. Remember not to overdo, though—some buyers may not find your collection of yard gnomes as endearing as you do!

Tip #10:

Although curb appeal focuses on the home's exterior, what's inside can be revealing, too. Visually inspect your windows from the street and remove any visible clutter, such as knickknacks that detract from the beauty of your home.