

# The Power of Curb Appeal

*Improve your home's value with these tips*

# W

hen putting a house up for sale, one of the most important factors you should

consider is your home's exterior as this is the first step to draw potential buyers. It's what is known as curb appeal. Here are some changes that will make your home more attractive and functional, and they're also the ones that will give you the most impact for your resources.

First, create an inviting walkway for your guests and potential buyers. Lay bluestone or any other type of slate over the typical concrete steps or walkways to add warmth to an otherwise cold entry.

## **Replace old columns**

Most front porches have columns that are visually too small to support the roofs. Replace all columns that are 4"x4" with larger ones. It will look and feel better if you do.

## **Change out your light fixtures**

For some reason, porch lights are often hung at the wrong height and are not in good scale with the entry. When hanging sconces, put them a bit higher than your eye level to reduce glare. For those of you with unusually high entryways, try independent lights. It's an easy way to add elegance to your home.

## **Consider replacing the front door and windows**

Make sure your entry door does not clash with the style of your home. If you have an arts and crafts bungalow, stick with a door appropriate to that style. If you have a contemporary home, your door should be contemporary. Don't get caught up in the fads of the time. Consider, too, the style of the interior. This is also true of windows.

## **Replace your windows**

If you have an older home, it will probably benefit greatly from the energy saved with new windows. Keep the style of the windows the same as the home's architecture for the best outcome. Replacement windows are less expensive because they are made to sit inside the present frame. Most window companies can replace the windows in this manner in a single day.

## **Add dormers**

Dormers break up a large growth expanse and provide depth and balance to the front of the home.

If repairing or redoing stucco, consider getting some of the foam core crown molding made for exteriors. A little goes a long way to dress up your home. You have your stucco man cover right over the crown molding for a plush look.

#### **Add or replace shutters**

Make sure your shutters are not too small for the window. They technically should be wide enough to cover the window opening when closed. Mount operable shutters slightly away from the home. Shutters will provide a decorative element that further defines the character of your home and gives it a custom look.

#### **Add flower boxes to windows**

Flower boxes help add color to a home's exterior and make the windows appear taller from the street.

Replace older shrubbery that has grown too large for your home. If you want to make your home appear taller, use smaller shrubs. Watch out for shrubs that are overgrown as they can easily "swallow up" a small home.

#### **Landscape all the way out to the street**

For goodness sake, understand that the days of a straight hedge at the front wall of the house to the street are over. The same goes for lawn that stretches from the home to the street with practically nothing of interest. Remember that the exterior decor should utilize focal points and group your plants together. Don't string them out, soldier fashion, along the front of your house or the sidewalk leaving the in between areas bare or endless grass.

#### **Exterior lighting is important**

Exterior lighting can warm the look of a home without creating distinct points of light. Where space is limited, well-placed exterior lighting can replace pendants or sconces at the entryways. The home will be further enhanced if the materials and lighting are of the same style as the home.

#### **Improve your driveway and make it more appealing**

Use saw cut, apron pavers or stamped concrete in place of regular concrete for the driveway itself. Try changing the location of the driveway so that it sweeps across the front yard, but is still functional. You want the view from the driveway to be of the home instead of the garage door.

To disguise the garage door, build a 2 ft. trellis or arbor with vines over the garage; it will give the garage a softer cottage look and feel.

For a side entry garage, plant evergreen trees to hide the turn around area next to the garage, putting the focus on the front of the house.

### **Frame a doorway with plants**

Try using boxwoods, steeds holly, dwarf Alberta spruce, smaller holly trees or arborvitae. Potted plants can be moved around and taken with you when you move away.

### **Plant the right things in the right places**

If low sunlight is a problem, don't fight it. Low maintenance plants that can grow with little sunlight are azaleas, dwarfs and regular mondo grass, weeping Japanese maples, autumn ferns and hydrangeas. Your nursery can guide you on the varying needs of sunlight and water for each plant you buy.

### **For big results, think small**

Trench the edges of your flower beds to create smooth sweeping lines. Freshen your mulch or pine straw. Get your lawn on a regular fertilizer program. Simple low voltage lighting at entry points and specimen trees can add a lot of flair to the yard. Highlight and accentuate entryways with annuals.

### **Keep it simple**

Don't confuse guests. Have a clear and defined path from a parking area to the home's entrance. Create paths out of stone or other materials that complement the house.

### **Study the color palette of your home**

Determine the most complementary color for both body and trim of your home. Some houses look better with muted color schemes rather than the standard white trim. Consider an off white trim with a complementary color for the body of the house. I just passed a home with a white garage door, some white trim here and there, a fairly dark olive green body and a large black front door. The shutters on the windows and window trim was also black. Very stunning and quite unique.

### **Assess your roofs**

Asphalt roofs look best in either black or slate gray. For more informal homes, pressure treated cedar shake roofs have wonderful color and texture. Slate roofs give a premium look to any home. Raised-seam metal roofs are a great option for homes that seek to achieve a distinctive older look.

### **Enhance the trim**

Add wood pediments over the windows or over the front door. There are several sources for ready-made trim that is designed for standard sized openings.

### **Upgrade your door's hardware**

Go to premium hardware companies and look at the options for door latches. Georgian-style homes should have polished brass fixtures, while country French and many cottage-style homes can use fixtures with darker finishes, such as oil-rubbed bronze or pewter gray.

### **Do your research**

For older houses, look for lighting fixtures that look like old carriage lanterns or gas lanterns. Finishes should be black or aged copper. For an extra special look, replace the glass with seedy glass and use lower wattage bulbs. If you have a larger budget, consider installing a gas line to make the fixture a real gas lantern.

### **Avoid clutter**

Stay away from helter-skelter objects in your yard. Pick a focal point or two for the art and leave the rest to more clean and understated design.

### **Think about function**

If you want to use your yard for entertaining or just lazy days sipping sweet tea, make sure you have nice, clean seating and an easy to grow garden.

### **Keep it clean**

Periodic pressure washing will remove molten debris off siding, decks, driveways and walkways leaving a pristine facade on your home

### **Add planters**

Put seasonal plants in pots that will spill over with color and make the front door a focal point.

### **Make it Low maintenance**

Hardier plants will continue to look attractive in the colder months of the year, giving your yard year-round appeal.