

An eye-catching property

In recent months the Ottawa resale housing market has begun to heat up again, which is great news for sellers. But even in a busy market, it's essential to have an attractive home to show off to potential buyers. We all know the saying about first impressions. Making a good one is still the best way to ensure that people will get excited about possibly owning your home. That means making sure that your home looks terrific from the street, the sidewalk, the front porch and the back yard.

Summer is a great time to assess the exterior look of your property and make some changes. Some properties may suffer from a lack of landscaping, while others simply need some editing or upkeep to look fresh and inviting. A landscape designer can be an excellent resource, if you're planning a serious overhaul and don't have a lot of experience with plant life and exterior features such as decks, fences and retaining walls. Your REALTOR® may be able to recommend a designer. Don't forget that a REALTOR® looks at homes every day, and is also a good source of experience about what works (and what doesn't) to attract buyers.

There are a million different approaches to landscaping and outdoor planning, and done well, each of them can look terrific. If you're handy in the garden, then a fantastic arrangement of shrubs, trees, perennial and annual plantings might be the most fun for you. Even if you have no experience with plants, a trip to the local garden centre or nursery might be just the push you need to get going. Books like *Canadian Gardening for Dummies* can help to boost the confidence of even the most novice gardener.

Whether you're experienced or not, having a solid plan is key. Haphazard landscaping looks messy and won't draw the right kind of attention to your home. Check out home and garden magazines for inspiration, or borrow ideas shamelessly from the homes in your neighbourhood that look really well-planned and polished. Tall shrubs on either side of the front door create a welcoming focus; a climbing vine along the side of the garage breaks up a blank expanse of brick or siding beautifully. If your home is of a particular architectural style, research the plants and flowers that would have been popular during the era your home was built. (Owners of Victorian homes can't go wrong with rosebushes, for example.)

Even if you're a total "black thumb", you can still make your property attractive. Keep it simple: wash and repaint doors, siding and trim; put in an interlocking stone walkway or driveway; add some outdoor lighting to show off your home's best features; and keep the lawn and any existing plants trimmed. Just like a tidy and well-staged interior, a well-kept but spare landscape can be very exciting to potential owners who can then envision their own garden fantasies sweeping across your front yard.

In short, no matter what you do to your outdoor space, keep it clean and fresh-looking and more buyers will want to see what the inside has to offer.

Readers are encouraged to send questions or request topics to be discussed in this column. Please send your requests to info@thenewsemc.ca