

Starting to gear up for the great outdoors

Every seller ideally wants to sell his or her home quickly while attaining the best value. And every buyer wants to find the perfect house that is within his or her budget. Therefore, preparing and staging a home properly is crucial in order to satisfy both the seller's and the buyer's needs. A common misconception is that staging is strictly for the interior. However, the exterior of the home is just as, if not more, important since it is the first impression the buyer will see upon arriving.

"The exterior of the home rarely gets the love and attention that the interior receives when sellers are preparing to put their home on the market," said Jim Dohr, president of **Coldwell Banker Gundaker**. "The charm and appeal that make a house a home is the entire entity, indoors and outdoors."

Updating your outdoor area is one of the best ways to appease potential buyers as well as speed up the sale. Landscaping can add as much as 14 percent

to the resale value of a home and speed up its sale by as much as six weeks, according to Associated Landscape Contractor of America.

Here are a few easy outdoor staging tips:

-Spring cleaning. Winter weather can wreak havoc on the exterior of your home. Repair damage that would turn a potential buyer off such as loose bricks in walkways and loose boards in the deck. Consider power washing concrete patios and steps that may have gotten stained during the winter months by the leaves and debris that were trapped under layers of snow and ice.

-Spring is in bloom. Adding color with flowers and plants is a great way to make your property stand out and make potential buyers feel welcome. Make sure the lawn is mowed, the bushes and trees are trimmed, and flowerbeds are planted and covered with fresh mulch. Ask your Realtor for an objective, third-party opinion on what you should add or emphasize to increase your

homes curb appeal.

-Paint a picture. Tell a story through your home's outdoor amenities – whether it's a front porch, a backyard patio or a child's play set. Work with your Realtor to stage these areas so buyers can visualize themselves enjoying those spaces in the future. Use the tools you have to create an eye-catching outdoor seating area, romantic garden or kid's perfect hangout.

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