



WAYS TO BOOST YOUR HOME'S *curb appeal*

Springtime is prime time for listing homes for sale in Georgia. If you plan to put yours on the market this year, don't underestimate the importance of a first impression.

The National Association of Realtors estimates 63 percent of homebuyers will drop by after viewing a home they like online. What they see on a drive-by – the home's curb appeal – can make or break a sale.

"Usually, buyers look at three or more houses during a house-hunting day. Seventy-five percent of their decision is made before they step inside," said Bruce Ailion, a 33-year real estate professional and broker at Success Real Estate Brokers in Marietta.

An eye-catching exterior – attractive landscaping and a welcoming approach – can help lure potential buyers to see what's inside, said Ailion, who is a Walton Gas customer.

He suggests these six curb appeal-boosting projects that can give you the most bang for your buck.

- 1 GET YOUR GREEN THUMB ON.** A lush lawn is the holy grail of curb appeal. Keep the yard mowed, raked, weeded, fertilized and watered at all times. While you're at it, be sure to weed flower beds and add fresh mulch. Trimming hedges, bushes and trees is also a must.
- 2 ADD HIGH-IMPACT LANDSCAPING.** Dress up the yard by planting shrubs and seasonal flowers. Walton Gas reminds you to always call 811 a few days before digging to plant a tree or shrub.
- 3 JETTISON THE JUNK.** Go for a clean, streamlined look. Remove all toys, bicycles, tools, trash, etc. Store hoses, garden equipment and trashcans out of sight. Firewood should be neatly stacked. Get rid of anything that is an eyesore, including old vehicles, unsightly outdoor furniture and empty planters.
- 4 SHED NEW LIGHT ON YOUR PROPERTY.** Replacing dated outdoor lighting fixtures can dramatically change the look of your home's exterior. If you're already using natural gas inside your home, consider investing in natural gas outdoor lights. Their soft, amber glow is ideal for enhancing a front entrance, walkways and landscaping.
- 5 FOCUS ON THE FRONT DOOR.** Make sure the door is in good working order. Replace it if it can't be fixed. Add new hardware and repaint to update a door. If you have a traditional key lock, upgrade to a smart lock.
- 6 WASH YOUR WINDOWS.** Sparkling, streak-free windows can brighten up exteriors, even on a cloudy Georgia day.



When your home makes a good first impression, a fast sale at top dollar is possible.

REMEMBER TO CALL BEFORE YOU DIG! Whether putting in a fence, planting a tree or building a deck, remember to call 811 a few days before digging. Knowing the location of utility lines before you dig helps prevent injuries, property damage and inconvenient utility outages. **Learn more at Georgia811.com.**



WASH, DRY, REPEAT

Hacks and tips to help you save time and energy while easing your wash-and-dry routine.

wash

Mind the water temperature. Use

hot water for heavily soiled work clothes, linens and towels, bedding, socks, underwear or whites. Hot water is also recommended when washing up after a household illness. Otherwise, use cold water to extend the life of clothes and lower your water-heating costs.

Keep socks paired in a mesh bag. Clip a mesh bag to each family member's laundry hamper to collect dirty socks. Wash and dry the bagged socks so they can be quickly paired and put away.

Use vinegar as a softener substitute.

Out of your favorite liquid fabric softener? Add a half-cup of distilled white vinegar to the final rinse cycle as a softener alternative.

Clean your washer. Use 1/4 cup vinegar with a quart of warm water, plus a sponge and old toothbrush, to clean in the places where wash water doesn't reach. Then, run an empty, regular cycle on hot, using two cups of vinegar instead of detergent. The hot water-vinegar combo removes and prevents bacteria growth.

dry

Switch to a natural gas dryer.

Natural gas dryers heat up faster than electric models, so they dry your clothes faster. Doing the job faster also makes a gas dryer more energy efficient. High-efficiency natural gas dryers can save up to 50 percent in dryer energy costs, estimates the Consumer Energy Center.

Bag line-dry items. Place do-not-dry item in a colored mesh bag for laundering. The bag is easy to spot when transferring clothes, reminding you not to toss it in the dryer.

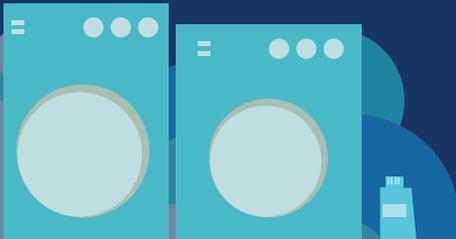
Add a towel. Speed up the drying time by putting a medium-sized towel in the dryer with wet clothes. It will help absorb water.

Throw in tennis balls. Add some fluff to comforters and towels by throwing in a couple of new, unused tennis balls when you place wet items into the dryer.

Reach for the foil. Control static clinging in the dryer by tossing in a couple of balls of aluminum foil. Replace with new foil balls every 1–2 months.

Clean the trap. In addition to removing lint from the screen between every load, periodically perform a thorough cleaning of the lint trap. Wrap a paint stick or ruler in an old dampened pillowcase and shove it down the vent area as far as it will go. Trapped lint will stick to the pillowcase for easy removal.

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gas up the stove

Ice Cream Dessert

1 gallon ice cream of your choice

Chocolate syrup

1 package Oreo cookies, crushed

Chopped pecans

1 can whipped cream



Cool down with this easy-to-make summer treat!

Crush Oreos and layer on bottom of a 9 x 13 or larger pan. Turn the box of ice cream upside down and let it get soft, then smooth it out. Drizzle with chocolate syrup. Cover lightly with pecans. Cover with whipped cream, then drizzle more chocolate syrup and nuts on top. Cover pan with plastic wrap lightly and freeze. Take out of the freezer about 5 to 10 minutes before serving and cut into squares.

You can refreeze any leftover for up to four days.

Submitted by Donna Lawton, Cumming. Featured recipes are not independently tested, so we must depend on the accuracy of the cooks sending them. Always use safe food handling, preparation and cooking procedures from the recognized experts.

Send us your recipes!

The best entry each month will appear in the Gazette and receive a FREE cookbook.

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