

# Real Estate Intelligence

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## Don't Curb Homebuyers' Enthusiasm with a Shabby Exterior

*Home sellers spend so much time preparing their interior for the sale that they can easily overlook what's going on outside of the home. Yet great curb appeal can increase the value of a property by as much as 15-20%.*

Mario Garcia, a landscaper in Bethesda, Md. who helps prepare homes for market, says a wellmanicured lawn is a magnet for buyers. On the other hand, overgrown trees or large bushes hiding the house are a no-no.

"Buyers associate the condition of the exterior and landscape with the condition of the interior," Garcia explained. "Curb appeal must invite buyers to view the rest of the property." Landscaping fixes include adding flowers or sprucing up the property with decorative grasses or Japanese maples. Accent the trees with rocks or boulders for a bold statement.

Consider adding a modest fountain to the yard or garden. In addition, rake leaves, wash windows and skylights, clean gutters and trim shrubs. Add low voltage lighting to highlight the yard, trees and the home's exterior.

And you don't need to spend a ton of money to make a difference. "Do something as simple as putting up a new mailbox and address decals on your home," said Anne West, owner of Wilmette, Ill.-based Redesign Doctor.

"Also, adding a new welcome mat with a grouping of potted plants by the front door makes things more inviting."

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