



# Inexpensive ways to boost a home’s curb appeal



Maintaining plant life on a property won’t cost homeowners a lot of money, but such an effort can add substantial curb appeal to a home.

Curb appeal can go a long way toward making a home more attractive to its inhabitants as well as prospective buyers once the house is put on the market. Improving curb appeal is a goal for many homeowners, and while many projects aimed

at making homes more aesthetically appealing can be costly, there are ways for cost-conscious homeowners to improve their properties without breaking the bank.

- Put your green thumb to use. A well-maintained landscape can dramatically

improve a home’s curb appeal. Pay attention to the plants, shrubs and trees throughout your property, watering them during periods of little rainfall and trimming them when necessary so your lawn does not look like an overgrown, neglected

suburban jungle. Professional landscaping services can help you maintain your property, but even if your budget does not allow for such an expense, you can still make sure your landscape adds to your home’s appeal by keeping a watchful eye on the property and addressing any issues that arise. Maintain your lawn through the colder months of the year as well, making sure no one walks on the grass when frost has settled, as doing so can produce dead spots throughout the lawn.

- Redo your front door. While their eyes may initially be drawn to a well-manicured lawn, prospective buyers will eventually find their way to the front door. If your door is especially old, consider replacing it. If your budget does not allow for such an expense, you can still give your home’s front entrance an entirely new look by installing some inexpensive molding around the door before giving the

door a fresh coat of paint. Molding around the front door can make an entrance more impressive, while a new coat of paint can make a home feel warmer and more vibrant.

- Plant flowers. Another inexpensive way to make a home more appealing is to plant some colorful flowers around the property. Line walkways with flowers native to your region, as such plants will last longer than exotic alternatives that may not be capable of adapting to the local climate. In addition to lining walkways, hang window boxes filled with colorful flowers or plants outside naked windows. Doing so can make windows seem larger and add some color to your home’s exterior.

Another creative way to make use of colorful flowers is to place a few planters at the foot of your driveway and painting the numbers of your address on the planters. This can be both effortless and inexpensive, but

it can instantly make a home more inviting to prospective buyers.

- Spotlight certain parts of your property. Many homeowners focus on improving the curb appeal of their property during the daytime hours, but you can take steps to make a home more appealing at night as well. Solar spotlights placed around trees and other attractive features in your yard can shed light on those areas of your property you’re most proud of, even after the sun has gone down. Solar spotlights won’t add to your energy bill, as they are powered by the sun, and they can make certain accents on your property stand out at night.

Improving curb appeal may sound like a significant undertaking, but there are many ways budget-conscious homeowners can make their home’s exterior more appealing without going broke.

# How to improve indoor air quality in winter

Homes tend to be stuffier in autumn and winter. As temperatures outside dip, windows are closed and air quality inside homes can suffer.

Poor indoor air quality can not only be uncomfortable, causing residents to experience headaches, dry eyes and nasal congestion, but also can be unhealthy. According to the American Lung Association, poor indoor air quality can cause or contribute to the development of infections, lung cancer and chronic lung diseases, such as asthma.

Though it’s not feasible or healthy to open windows when temperatures outside dip to near or below freezing, there are steps everyone can take to improve the indoor air quality in their homes.

- Add to your decor with plants. Plants provide both aesthetic and practical appeal to a home’s interior. Houseplants can clean and purify the air in a home, helping to remove formaldehyde, benzene and other toxins that can make indoor air unhealthy to breathe. Benzene is an irritant that can cause dizziness, headache, nausea, and blurred vision, among other side effects. Formaldehyde, which is often found in homes thanks to its widespread use in a range of products, can cause watery eyes, nausea and wheezing.
- Watch what you are lighting up. Many homeowners know that smoking indoors drastically reduces indoor air quality, putting even nonsmokers at heightened risk of developing various respiratory ailments. Homeowners concerned about the indoor air quality in their homes should

ban smoking inside, no matter how low temperatures dip outside. In addition, homeowners with wood-burning stoves and fireplaces should be especially diligent maintaining these features, as they can release harmful soot and smoke if they are not taken care of. Some people may also be allergic to incense and scented candles, so keep a watchful eye on residents and guests whenever you light candles or sticks of incense. If any symptoms of allergies appear, avoid lighting any more candles or incense, waiting until you can open the windows if you want to light any again.

- Purchase an air purifier. Air purifiers are beneficial year-round, helping to remove allergens and particles from a home. High-efficiency particulate air filters, known as HEPA filters, are extremely effective at removing airborne particulates from the air inside your home.
- Pay attention to pets. Like their owners, pets tend to spend more time indoors during the winter. That means more fur and pet dander, the skin flakes in an animal’s fur or hair that can trigger allergic reactions, is likely in your home during the winter than in the summer. To combat this, bathe your pets regularly in the winter, making sure to wash the animal’s bedding in hot water on a weekly basis as well.
- Open the windows when possible. Winter does not typically provide many opportunities to open the windows, but you might get a few chances to let some fresh air in through the windows during winter. Make the most of these opportunities, and when possible crack the windows when you’re



cleaning so dust and other particles that kick up have a path outside of your home.

Clean interior air should be a year-round priority, but homeowners may have to go the extra mile to keep their homes’ interior air clean when winter arrives.

# Factors to consider when planning a home office

As technology has made working remotely easier, more and more professionals are working from home. Working from home can help working parents save money on childcare costs and help all workers avoid rush hour traffic jams and the costs of commuting to and from the office.

The right working environment is essential for men and women who work from home. An environment that’s conducive to work can help people increase their productivity and make their employers more likely to allow more employees to work from home. Professionals who are new to working from home may find it takes some time before they can create the perfect working environment, but the following are a few factors to consider when planning a home office.

## Space

One of the disadvantages to working from home is that remote workers don’t have access to the same level of equipment as in the main office, such as color copiers or scanners. If you want to include even scaled-down versions of such equipment in your office, you will need ample space. In addition, less spacious home offices can feel too tight and enclosed, making workers uncomfortable and less enthusiastic about working every day. Pick a spot in your home that affords room for your equipment and the ability to move around so you don’t feel cramped

throughout the workday.

## Lighting

Lighting is another factor remote workers must consider when they’re planning their home offices. Natural light can provide an energetic boost and improve your mood, so choose a room in your home that gets lots of sunlight during the day. Many professionals who work remotely do so from the basements of their homes, which can make it difficult to rely on natural light. If the basement is the only location in your home that can fit a home office, look for lighting sources that replicate daylight so you are not working in dark quarters. Speak with your physician about how to

arrange lighting to reduce eyestrain caused by staring at a computer.

## Connectivity

Connectivity also must be considered when planning a home office. While wireless Internet has made Internet dead zones less problematic, certain areas or rooms in your home may still be touch-and-go with regard to Internet connectivity. Such areas should be avoided when choosing a room for your home office, as it can be difficult to remain productive if your connection to your office’s external server is routinely compromised. Find an area where the wireless connection is always strong.

## Distractions

While your home might be empty for much of the day, you don’t want to be distracted when the kids come home from school or when your spouse or roommate arrives home from work. Avoid putting your home office too close to popular hangout areas in your home, such as the kitchen and the living room. Instead, choose a room where you have lots of privacy so you can focus on your work and won’t be routinely interrupted.

Working from home can pay numerous dividends, but professionals who telework must put careful thought into the rooms or areas of their homes where they plan to work.



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