

Increase the Value of your Home

Besides the personal enjoyment you'll get from a prettier yard, landscaping adds more value than almost any other home renovation.

A recent Michigan State University study found that depending on where the house is located, *high-quality landscaping adds 5 percent to 11 percent to its price.*

If you have no immediate plans to move, all the better: Landscaping is the one home improvement that actually appreciates over time.

So how do you decide which projects to tackle? That depends on how long you think you'll be around to enjoy the results.

If you're selling in a year or less

Edge the beds Cutting fresh edges where grass meets mulch makes the lawn look well kept. A move as simple as curving the edge of your flower beds could increase the value of your home by 1 percent, says horticulture professor Bridget Behe, the lead researcher on the MSU study.

Also, if your foundation plants are overgrown, widening the beds by two feet will make the shrubs seem smaller.

Nourish the grass For truly lush turf, ideally you should start regular fertilizer treatments a year before listing the house. But you can green up the lawn with just a single application.

Spend \$45 on a broadcast spreader, which quickly distributes fertilizer over a lawn, enabling you to nourish a quarter-acre lot in about 10 minutes.

Scatter color throughout For about \$1 a plant, you can blanket your yard with petunias, impatiens and other small annuals that will flower throughout the current growing season.

Also invest a few hundred dollars in some larger perennials and in shrubs that stand at least four feet high.

"A few good-size plants have more sex appeal than 20 little ones," says Chicago landscape architect Douglas Hoerr.

In today's difficult market, finding every advantage possible when selling your home has become vital. By investing in a quality curb appeal, you're giving your home another eye catching quality. Not to mention that you'll find yourself smiling when you pull up in the driveway.