

❖ Jeanne Wolfe's Market News ❖

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Tips to Entice Buyers in Record Time

Most homeowners about to put their property on the market are most concerned with two things: getting a good price and selling their property as quickly as possible. After all, time is money, right? The last thing you want is for your home to sit on the market for months without any viable offers.

Below are five shortcuts you can take to make selling your house easier and faster. None of them will break the bank. In fact, some of these efforts do not require any cash at all.



*The Spring Selling Market
Is Blooming!*

Jeanne I. Wolfe
GRI, CRS

1. Shrink your staging costs: Staging your home, which entails hiring a decorator to make your house aesthetically appealing to a prospective buyer, usually pays off big-time. On average, staged homes sell 88% faster and for 20% more than un-staged ones. But staging can be expensive.

Stagers typically charge \$300 to \$600 for an initial design consultation and \$500 to \$600 per month per room. Most professional stagers also require a three-month minimum contract, even if you sell the home in 24 hours.

If you are on a budget, there is a cheaper alternative. Virtual staging is a service where tech-savvy professionals take photos of empty rooms and then use photo-editing software to add pretty couches, tables, and other furnishings.



These doctored photos can make your online listing more appealing to home buyers. The best part? Virtual staging costs only around \$100 per room—and there is no extra charge per month because you are not renting furniture.

Whether you opt for real or virtual staging, make sure you do not overlook the foyer, because 80% of prospective buyers said they know if a home is right for them within seconds of stepping inside.

2. Boost curb appeal: Home buyers form their first impression when they pull up to your house. It is no surprise, then, that curb appeal—how your home looks from the outside—can boost your property's sales value. Yes, primping your home's exterior can set you back, moneywise.

To cut costs, you can opt for a less-intensive standard lawn care treatment—including six applications of fertilizer and weed control—which costs on average \$330 but yields a whopping 303% return, according to the National Association of Realtors® 2016 Remodeling Impact Report. Or roll up your sleeves and tend to the front yard with your own two hands.

3. Brighten up the living space: No buyer wants to walk into a dark, dreary house. Fortunately, there are several low-cost ways you can improve the lighting in your home. Wall mirrors amplify light, so install a few throughout the home (for example, over the fireplace, behind the dining table, in the master bedroom). Swapping out lightbulbs for ones with



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higher lumens can also "up the intensity of light in the room. And make sure you remove or push aside heavy drapery in order to let in more natural light.

4. Promote energy-efficient upgrades: Making your home more energy-efficient—say, by insulating the attic, installing a programmable thermostat, or weather-stripping doors and windows—can be a huge selling point for home buyers. After all, a typical American family spends nearly \$2,000 a year on their home energy bills, according to Energy.gov; much of that money, however, is wasted on air leaks and drafts.

5. Build buzz in advance: You need to do everything you can to get people talking about your house before it hits the market. This includes promoting your home on all your social media channels, sending a mass email to your network, and knocking on neighbors' doors. Another clever way to build buzz is to have a garage sale, where you can drum up interest and sell some of your old belongings. (Bonus: Clearing out your house will make it easier for you to move later.) ❖

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Lemon Icebox Pie

The perfect sweet & tart treat to eat as we warm up this spring

Ingredients

- 1 (9 inch) prepared graham cracker crust
- 2 (8 ounce) packages cream cheese, softened
- 1 (14 ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
- 2 lemons, juiced
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest

Directions

In a medium mixing bowl, beat cream cheese until fluffy. Add condensed milk, lemon juice, and lemon rind. Mix until smooth. Pour mixture into crust.

Refrigerate at least 2 hours before serving. Garnish with whipped cream and mint leaves if desired. ❖



Color Psychology

Back in the 1940s, a Swiss psychiatrist named Dr. Max Lüscher found that colors impact your emotions and behavior. The Color Test Chart that he developed is still in wide use today in environmental.

The important test when choosing color is what effect you want it to have on yourself or others:

- If you are looking for drama, sophistication, colors that are opposite each other on the color wheel, like black and white, are excellent choices.
- Whites, greys and beiges, for example, are quiet and conservative, which may lead you to be more introspective and thoughtful.
- Both pinks and blues are tranquilizing, so they both make excellent colors for living areas and bedrooms.
- Purples and greens are refreshing and relaxing, and send a subtle suggestion of wealth and opulence and luxury in darker shades.
- It is counterintuitive, but yellow is optimistic and far from relaxing, so skip this color for babies' rooms and master suites. It is a good color for studies and kitchens.

If you are not sure what colors to put where, here is a simple rule that may help. The closer a color is to brown, the more neutral it is. If you like a certain color, you can always choose a ramped-up or tamped-down version of it for your home. ❖

Remodeling Projects To Warm Up Your Home This Spring

Home remodeling projects on the rise

As the U.S. economy continues to strengthen, home improvement project investment by homeowners has increased, according to the latest Residential Remodeling Index (RRI) study. As spring is a popular time for renovation projects, you may want to start checking out popular design trends, researching product choices and figuring out what you like and what works for your family. Here are a few projects that can help you reinvent your home this spring.

■ **Take the mud out of the room.** You do not have to allow the mudroom to live up to its name. Consider installing a Fiat Molded Stone mop service basin with a multifunction hand shower to give your family a convenient and stylish spot to wash off boots and other bulky items. It is also a great place to give your dog a bath or wash off dirty paws to ensure nothing is tracked into the house.

■ **Shed a little (more) light in your foyer.** Your foyer is the entry point into your home, and the right lighting solution can make this space all the more welcoming. Newer LEDs or halogen light sources naturally generate a warmth that is perfect for the entryway. Be sure to install a dimmer switch to ensure your lights provide exactly the right ambiance.

■ **Make your outdoor space amazing.** Once the weather turns warm, spending time outdoors will be top on your list. That makes now the perfect time to plan how you'll use this outside space. A pergola is an easy-to-build addition that can give you a relaxing place to avoid the sun. Adding a flagstone seating area or creating a decorative border for a new fire pit might be perfect for your family. Try planting flowers for a pop of color or invest more with new bushes or trees to round out your landscaping project. Plants like day lilies or hostas can survive in almost any environment and are an easy, effective way to optimize your green space.

Finding the perfect project for you

The spring season is home improvement season, so do not let it pass you by. Start thinking now, while staying warm inside during the colder months. Figure out what needs to get done first, then look online or in stores for ideas and get inspired for your spring home renovations. It will be project time before you know it. ❖

"Don't be afraid to give up the good to go for the great."

- John D. Rockefeller

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10 Reasons To Plant A Tree This Spring

Did you know planting a tree is one of the easiest and most powerful things you can do to have a positive impact on the environment? It is true. Trees clean the air, prevent rainwater runoff, help you save energy and even combat global warming. And they are a snap to plant! No horticultural degree required.

From the single homeowner in Nebraska planting a maple in her backyard to the 250 Comcast employees volunteering in communities devastated by hurricanes, fires, and Emerald Ash Borer infestation by planting hundreds of trees on Comcast Cares Day (the nation's largest single-day corporate volunteer event), people nationwide are getting their tree on this spring.

Here are 10 reasons why you should join them.

Trees fight climate change: Wish you could do more than recycling and reducing your carbon footprint to combat climate change? Trees have you covered. Through photosynthesis, trees absorb harmful carbon dioxide, removing and storing the carbon and releasing oxygen back into the air.

Trees clean the air and help you breathe: Trees do not just absorb CO2. They also absorb odors and pollutants like nitrogen oxides, ammonia, sulfur dioxide and ozone. It is estimated that one tree can absorb nearly 10 pounds of polluted air each year and release 260 pounds of oxygen.

Trees prevent soil erosion and rainwater runoff: During heavy rains, water runoff finds its way to streams, lakes, and wetlands, creating the potential for flooding. It also picks up and carries pollutants along the way. The EPA and the Center for Watershed Protection are recognizing the importance of trees in managing runoff. Leaf canopies help buffer the falling rain and their roots hold the soil in place, encouraging the water to seep into the ground rather than run off.

Planting trees is easy: Gardening can be intimidating for newbies because there are so many variables. Which plants and flowers should you put next to each other and which should you separate? Which bloom in the summer and which bloom in the fall? When you are dealing with trees, there is none of that. Just choose a spot in your yard and you

are good to go. Check YouTube for videos showing you all you need to know about planting your young trees.

You will save money: Trees conserve energy in summer and winter, providing shade from the hot summer sun and shelter from cold winter winds. With trees standing between you and the elements, you will spend less on your energy bill to heat and cool your home.

Trees increase your home's value: Studies of comparable homes with and without trees show that, if you have trees in your yard, your home's value increases by up to 15 percent. It is all about curb appeal, and trees make your home and yard more beautiful.

You will attract birds (and critters): Trees provide nesting sites, food, and shelter for your bird friends. Hang a feeder in one of the branches and enjoy the birdsong all year long. Squirrels love to make their homes in trees, too, and watching their antics is a great way to spend a lazy summer afternoon.

Trees are good for your mental and physical health: A view of trees in urban areas has been proven to reduce stress, anxiety, and even the crime rate. Tree-filled gardens on hospitals' grounds speed healing in hospital patients, according to studies.

You will be giving your descendants a gift: Trees can live hundreds of years, so when you plant one, you are giving a gift to your children and grandchildren. It is a symbol of your commitment to the environment and the beauty of the world around you that will live on far beyond your own lifetime.

Free trees! Join the nonprofit Arbor Day Foundation for \$10 and they will send you 10 trees selected for the region of the country where you live, at the right time to plant them. You will also get planting instructions and other information. The trees are guaranteed to grow or the Foundation will replace them. Visit www.arborday.org to join.

An ancient Chinese proverb states: "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now." To find out more about planting trees, visit the Arbor Day Foundation at www.arborday.org. ❖

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