



News & Views

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Getting your home ready to Sell HOME STAGING

If you're thinking about selling your house now - or in the near future, Home Staging is a real estate term you'll want to know more about. Home staging is about presenting your home to appeal to the broadest range of potential purchasers. Staging a home is **not** about decorating, decorating is about making a home comfortable for you. Staging a home is about merchandising a property.

Why is staging so important?

★ Staged homes show better in photos. In today's marketplace most potential buyers will look at photos of your property online as part of narrowing down the list of houses they'll actually visit with their agent.

★ Staged homes attract more potential purchasers and generally **sell faster** - and **for more money** - than homes that are not staged.

Here's some advice from Home Staging Experts

First concentrate on the 3 C's.

Clean. You want your home really, really clean; walls, doors, flooring, carpets, baseboards & trim, drapery, light fixtures, appliances - everything in your home should sparkle! Pay particular attention to kitchens and baths. If cleaning is not your forte, consider hiring a professional cleaner to deep clean your home from top to bottom.

Clutter-free. This can't be stressed enough! You'll be moving soon so now is the perfect time to pack up all knick-knacks, family photos, collections, out of season clothing, footwear and sports gear. Work your way through each room in your home - including cupboards, closets, even

the pantry. Every counter top, dresser and table surfaces should be clear. Cupboards and closets; neat and organized. Almost every home shows better with less furniture. Consider removing and storing excess furniture from all rooms in your home. Leave just enough furniture in each room to showcase the room's purpose. Rooms will appear larger and there will be ample space for buyers to move around as they look at your home. This is also a good time to deal with any item(s) you may want to take with you, ie: the chandelier in the dining room that belonged to your great grandmother - pack up these items and replace as necessary.

Colour. Your goal is to create a blank canvas - one in which potential purchasers can imagine **their** furnishings, **their** decor **their** family. Walls, doors and trim should be neutral in colour. A fresh coat of paint in a neutral colour scheme will unify the house as well as making spaces look larger. If you're unsure which neutral colour will show best with your furnishings and flooring, get advice.

Now it's time to walk through your home and take a look at it through the critical eye of a buyer! Buyers notice details...missing trim, loose doorknobs, dripping faucets, stains on ceilings, cracked switch plates. Make a list of all these minor flaws, then fix them! Keep in mind that when a potential buyer sees areas of disrepair they begin to assume that there are other unseen problems as well.



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Got Questions?

Your Realtor is your partner in selling what is likely your largest asset. Whether you need advice about getting your home ready to sell or have questions about current buying and selling trends - call on your Realtor who is available to assist you, every step of the way.

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HOME STAGING **Getting your home ready to Sell**

Define Rooms.

If your dining room is serving double-duty as a home office, you'll need to redefine it. If you don't, potential purchasers will get the impression that the house isn't big enough. Ditto for spare bedrooms that have been converted to sewing rooms or yoga studios. Bedrooms count - it could cost you a sale if a buyer counts one less.

Light it up!

You want each room in your home to be as light and bright as possible. Clean every light fixture, ensure the bulbs are the maximum wattage safe for each

fixture. Clean all windows, inside and out - open drapery and blinds so that natural light streams in.

Odours.

Nothing turns off a prospective buyer more than bad smells. Have a friend or neighbour help you identify any bad smells. Common culprits; smoking, laundry & bathroom mould or mildew, garbage cans, litter boxes, pet beds, musty basement, strong cooking smells. *Don't* attempt to mask bad smells with air fresheners or deodorizers - rid your home of the source of the odour.



Mud rooms

The biggest challenges in this area of the house...

- ✓ General clutter, from mail to mismatched mittens
- ✓ Wet jackets, shoes and boots that need a place to dry
- ✓ Tracked-in mud, leaves, slush, sand and salt

Control the mess. Easier said than done you're thinking...and yes, ultimately you may want, or need to, reorganize the room. But, start with - removing all shoes that don't really need to be in the entranceway... ask yourself... *'at this time of year does anything other than winter boots and indoor shoes/slippers to change into need to be here?'* Use the same rule for all outerwear, sports gear and other out-of-season items currently stored in this area.

Use hooks mounted on the walls so coats, backpacks, keys, purses, dog leashes etc., all have a place to hang....and, best of all, outerwear can air dry while it hangs!

A bench is ideal. It can serve as a spot to sit while putting footwear on and off, a spot for what you have in hand as you come through the door (mail, groceries, purse), and boots/shoes can be stored underneath.

Use baskets, plastic totes or bins. One for each family member, to store their

stuff. If you have the space, a wall-mounted shelf above the hooks can be an ideal way to keep floor space clear. Or you could try hanging pocket-type organizers. Small bins can be used to sort and organize incoming and outgoing mail, keys, cell phones etc. Larger containers for pet toys, umbrellas, sports gear, walking sticks... whatever works - and suits - your family's needs.

Doormats. Don't go with the usual small, pretty doormat. Put down a carpet runner the length of the room or a small area rug (preferably washable). A larger landing pad means muddy feet (and paws), dripping coats and umbrellas won't muck up the floor. A larger rug will also serve you well because Fido will have a spot to lay down and dry off a bit before proceeding into the house.

Walls. If you're considering repainting, be sure to choose a durable, scrubbable paint finish (like a semi-gloss or even a high-gloss) for this high-traffic area.

Green Tip

If you are one of the many who chose to put aside commercial window cleaners in favour of using vinegar instead - **but found it didn't work** - here's why....Commercial window cleaners leave a very fine waxcoating on windows - vinegar and water alone will not remove this residue. The solution is simple - add a dab of liquid dish soap to your vinegar and water mix.

Try this recipe - into a spray bottle add; 500mL (2 cups) of water, 125mL (1/4 cup) of white distilled vinegar, 2.5g (1/2 teaspoon) of liquid or powdered dish soap. *As with all homemade cleaners, be sure to label the bottle.*



Green Season

Seed Starting Tips



1- Perfect your timing

Don't start too early! Check each seed packet to learn how far ahead of the 'last frost date' to sow, then count back accordingly. If you don't know your area's last frost date ask at a local garden centre or nursery.

2- Treat them right

Check the packet again, and, if instructed, aid germination by soaking, pre-chilling or scarifying (abrading the outer shells with sandpaper or slitting with a knife) the seeds.

3- Keep it clean if reusing

Sterilize the seed trays and pots with a weak bleach solution and always use sterile soil. If using your own soil instead of a commercial mix, spread it in a shallow pan and set in a 180°C (350°F) oven for 30 minutes to sterilize it.

4- Pick a good germination site

One of the best spots for your seed trays is on top of your fridge. Why? The heat generated keeping your fridge cool warms the soil and speeds germination. Once your seeds have germinated, move your trays to another location - preferably a window where your seedlings will receive several hours of sunlight each day.

5- Just grow what you need

Starting your own seeds is an inexpensive way to create your own plants, but only *if* you need them. So, if you want only two tomato plants - or a dozen lupins - don't plant an entire pack (unless you have family, neighbours or friends who'd like a share).

Drinking water...

Most of us know that our bodies need a minimum amount of water to help flush toxins from our systems, but, did you know that there are 'optimum' times to drink water?



Drinking water at a certain time maximizes its effectiveness on the body:

- 2 glasses of water after waking up - helps activate internal organs
- 1 glass of water 30 minutes before a meal - helps digestion
- 1 glass of water before taking a bath - helps lower blood pressure
- 1 glass of water before going to bed - helps to avert strokes and heart attacks

Water at bed time will also help prevent night time leg cramps. Your leg muscles are seeking hydration when they cramp and wake you up with a Charlie Horse.

Wonder why do we frequently need to urinate during the night?

Gravity holds water in the lower part of the body when we are upright (legs and trunk). When we lay down, the lower body levels with the kidneys, it is at this time that the kidneys remove excess water from the body because it is easier.

Did You Know?

Facts about rain

- Every minute of every day, 1 billion tons of rain falls on the Earth.
- The amount of water held in the atmosphere at any time is sufficient to produce about 2.5cm (1 inch) of rain over the surface of the earth.
- The technical name for rain is *precipitation*. As well as rain, precipitation includes snow, sleet and hail.
- There are 3 types of rainfall; *convection, frontal, and relief*.
- The minimum altitude of rain clouds is 1,200 metres - and they can be found as high as 10,000 metres.
- A droplet of water will stay in the Earth's atmosphere for about 10 days.
- Rain drops do not fall in a tear drop shape, they originally fall in the shape of a flat oval.
- In Canada the wettest place: *Abbotsford, British Columbia* tops the list with an average 1,538mm (5 feet) of rainfall annually - followed closely by *St. John's Newfoundland* at 1,534mm.
- *Abbotsford, British Columbia* also tops the list in Canada for the rainiest: 174 days annually with at least 2mm (.08 inches) of rainfall. If we consider snow - *St. John's, Newfoundland* heads up the list with 212 wet days annually.



Spring That in-between winter and summer season when thoughts turn to....*spring cleaning!*

Did you know that 75% of us choose to do spring cleaning - and most say that doing a thorough job now cuts down on cleaning time in the summer! Here are a few tips from the pros to help you clean like you mean it!

Declutter

Professional cleaners expect a house to be 'picked up' so they can get right to the cleaning. Give yourself the same head start by putting things away the night before.

Pet hair on upholstery

Pick up cat and dog hair with a lightly dampened sponge, or, put on a pair of rubber gloves and move your hands in a circular motion over the fabric.

Miniblinds

Dust with the brush attachment of the vacuum or, slip a cotton sock over your hand, spray with your favourite all-purpose cleaner.

Carved picture frames

Reach into nooks & crannies by using an empty plastic squeeze bottle. Squeeze a few times and blow the dust away with a 'poof' of air.

Stale carpet smell

Using a flour sifter, sprinkle carpet with baking soda. Leave on for 20 to 30 minutes, then vacuum.

Get physical

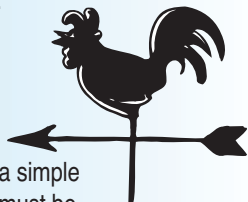
Professional cleaners use both hands to cover more ground faster. Dust using an old cotton tube sock or microfiber cloth in one hand while you move objects with the other.

Stubborn bathtub rings

Rub on a paste of cream of tartar and hydrogen peroxide. When it dries, rinse it (and the ring) away.

Weathervanes

Weathervanes get their name from the Old English *fane*, which means flag or banner. Weathervanes have a simple design, but in order to function, they must be perfectly balanced on their rotating axis. They also need an unequal area on each side that the wind can blow against. Additionally, weathervanes must be located on the highest point of a structure, and away from other tall buildings or structures that may affect wind direction.



As the weathervane spins to reduce the force of the wind on its surface, the end with the least surface area turns into the wind, and thus indicates the wind direction. The world's largest weathervane is located on the shore of White Lake in Michigan, it stands 14 metres (48 feet) tall and sports an 8 metre (26 foot) long arrow that points in the direction of the wind. **Ever wonder why so many weather vanes are in the shape of a rooster?**

In the ninth century, Pope Nicholas I ordered that weather vanes in the form of a cockerel be placed on all churches and abbeys as a symbol to remind Christians of Peter's betrayal of Christ. While these cockerels were at first not intended as weathervanes, they were eventually combined with the weathervanes that already adorned many church steeples.

Veggie Water

The next time you boil or steam vegetables, don't pour the water down the drain. Let it cool, then use this 'veggie soup' (rich in nutrients) to perk up potted plants. Both indoor and outdoor plants will benefit from a dose of this veggie soup.



TIP TALK

If you never know what to do with the screw you come across while vacuuming or the game piece you find wedged between the couch cushions - *here's a great idea.*

Designate a shoebox for UFOs (unidentified found objects) keep the box on a shelf in your laundry room, in the linen closet or home office. Let all members of your household know where to locate your UFO box - if a remote cover or puzzle piece goes missing, everyone will know where to look for it!



Moon Garden

A moon garden is a great way to enjoy white - and other light coloured - night blooming plants. White flowers and light-coloured foliage reflect the moonlight, and many night bloomers are wonderfully fragrant. Not only are these gardens a beautiful sight to behold - and smell - they also attract important pollinators such as moths and bats.

Sound intriguing?...here are some ideas for creating a 'moon garden'.

Creating a moon garden is easy, and once completed, it will provide hours of relaxing 'after-the-sun-goes-down' enjoyment.

When designing this type of garden carefully consider its location. Ideally locate a moon garden by those spots where you have a comfortable place to sit; alongside a patio, across from a deck, or to be viewed through a favourite window. If you don't have that type of location in your yard, you can simply add a bench, a swing, or comfy chair in the moon garden itself.

Be sure to include plants with a variety of foliage colours; silver, gray, blue-green and variegated foliage. Foliage will add interest and dimension, as well as provide contrast for white blooms.

Here are just a few of the plants to consider when creating a moon garden.

White Blooms

- Sweet-scented Evening Primrose
- Moonflower
- White Begonia
- Daffodil
- Angel's Trumpet
- Annabelle Hydrangea (shrub)
- Creeping Phlox
- Candytuft
- Snow in Summer
- Sweet Woodruff

Intense Fragrance

- Flowering Tobacco
- Columbine
- Garden phlox
- Mock orange
- Pinks

Foliage Plants

- Silver Artemisia
- Lamb's Ear
- Japanese Painted Fern
- Caladium
- Herbs like silver sage or thyme
- Hostas with either white margins or white blooms

Around the House



Phantom carriers

...are products that draw power 24 hours a day. Appliances that have a clock or programming displays such as coffee makers, DVD players, computers, printers, and other electronic equipment are considered phantom load carriers. Up to **75%** of the electricity used to power home electronics is consumed while the products are turned off!

Taking Action...

Unplug electrical appliances and equipment when they're not in use. Use a power bar that connects all of these units and then get into the habit of switching the bar off!

Hot Water

...most hot water heaters use 15% of a home's energy, producing approx. two tonnes of carbon dioxide annually.

Taking Action...

turn down the temperature on your water heater to reduce energy consumption. When on holiday or away from home for an extended time, turn off the heater.

Laundry...the most energy efficient cycle to wash and rinse your clothes is cold-cold.

Taking Action...

use cold water to wash your clothes. If every household in Canada did this, it would reduce approx. 1.5 billion kg of greenhouse gas emissions annually!

Everyday 911

How to put out a grease fire.

Most of us have had this experience - you're frying something and whoosh - the pan erupts into flames.

Do you know what to do?

Using an oven mitt, slide a tight-fitting lid over the pan. Don't just plop it on - you risk spreading the fire. If you don't have a tight-fitting lid, use a large baking sheet. Then, turn off the heat source. Finally, move the pan to a cool burner.

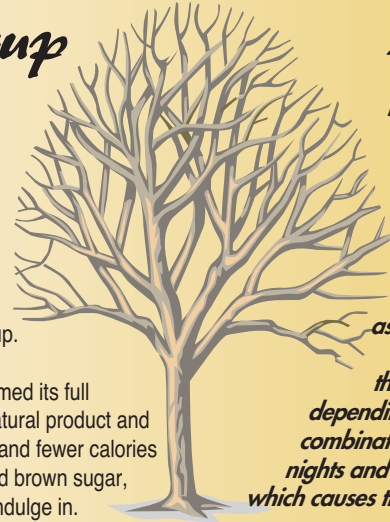
Never put a grease fire in the sink - instead, cover with a large wet cloth, throw salt on the flames or use a fire extinguisher.

Should the fire escape the pan, don't try to put it out. Get out of the house and call 911 for the fire department.



Maple syrup

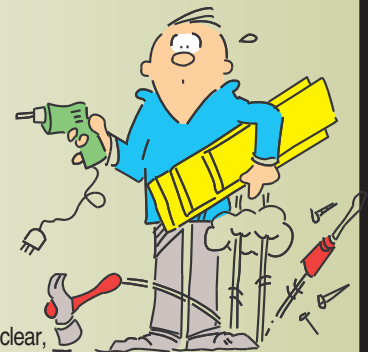
Maple syrup is graded by colour, clarity and flavour. Canada #1 Maple Syrup comes in 3 categories; extra light, light and medium. The darker the syrup, the more intense the flavour. First-run syrup, like Canada #1, is light and delicately flavoured - and the most expensive. Darker Grade A Medium and Grade B syrups are produced later in the season, as the weather begins to warm up. Grade A Medium amber syrup is the best for traditional breakfast pancakes, if slightly warmed its full flavour is released. Maple syrup is a pure natural product and has no additives. With no fat or cholesterol, and fewer calories per volume than honey, corn syrup, white and brown sugar, maple syrup is a natural sweetener we can indulge in.



It takes about 40 litres of sap to make 1 litre of syrup, carefully collected drop by drop.

Sugaring season can start as early as late February and run until the end of April, depending on the right combination of freezing nights and warmer days, which causes the sap to flow.

Exterior Home MAINTENANCE Downspouts, Flashing & Gutters



- Inspect your gutters frequently, depending on the amount of leaves and tree seeds in your area. They should be cleaned at least in the autumn after all leaves have fallen and again in the spring. If you have heavy rains and lots of trees in your area, you'll want to clean them more frequently to avoid buildup of debris.
- When inspecting flashings for leaks, use roof cement to patch any thin spots or gaps along a flashing joint, at a chimney, or along a valley. This will prevent major repairs.
- Use a ladder tall enough to reach the gutters, but take care if you prop your ladder on the gutter - it could bend the gutter out of shape, causing low spots where pools of water will collect when it rains.
- Clean gutters by hand using a whisk broom to remove leaves. Remember to wear gloves. Hose them down after you've removed debris, this flushes out the debris remnants and gives you an opportunity to observe the flow of water and check for low spots or improper pitch.
- When cleaning gutters, inspect each hanger for bent straps and popped nails as you work your way along the gutter. If the house has a fascia or board trim, check the gutter's alignment with it. The gutter should rest firmly against the fascia.
- Check nails or screws in the straps holding the downspout to your house. These can work themselves loose with use or age, or when a downspout has been used as a ladder support.
- To keep downspouts clear, flush them frequently with a garden hose.
- For best wear and protection, paint the outsides of gutters with oil-based exterior house paint and coat the insides with asphalt roofing paint, which will make them resistant to rust. When painting galvanized gutters, you'll first need to neutralize the zinc coating. If you don't, the paint will quickly peel. While commercial washers are available, an inexpensive and effective home remedy is to mix a 50/50 solution of warm water and white vinegar. Apply at least three coats of this solution to the gutters, allowing for drying time between coats, and rinse thoroughly before painting.
- If you are replacing only a section or two of gutter, take a cross-sectional piece with you when buying a new one. You'll need an exact match of shape and material.
- Using a spray-on auto undercoating is a quick and easy way to repair your rain gutters. If you notice any gaps in the gutter, simply spray. If you have to patch a small hole, put a piece of screen wire over the hole and then spray on the undercoating.
- When installing a new gutter, get someone to help with lifting the gutter sections. Positioning long sections cannot be done by one person.

Remember....like the pros, take safety precautions whenever you're undertaking a home maintenance job...wear safety glasses, gloves, and proper footwear.