



# What's on the outside counts

*We've all been warned not to judge a book by its cover. But, hey, consumers do anyway.*

Encourage sellers to spruce up their listing's exterior, so buyers will have no reason to turn on their heel. Well-chosen improvements can draw buyers into the home and add value. Both the facade and yard should say: "This house is loved."

Sources: Steve Berges, Symphony Home-LLC, homebuilders, Davison, Mich.; Kevin Gladd, Potomac Valley Brick & Supply Co., Rockville, Md.; Donna Kozik, author, *29 Days to a Smoother Move* ([www.29DaysToASmootherMove.com](http://www.29DaysToASmootherMove.com), 2003); John Kucowski, Kucowski Development Co., Littleton, Colo.; Gabe Pasquale, Spectrum Communities, homebuilders, Valhalla, N.Y.; Kathy Peterson, author, *Kathy Peterson's Great Outdoor Decorating Makeovers* (Watson-Guptill, 2004); Cary Senders, GroundScape Technologies, Brooklyn Heights, Ohio; Tim Thoelecke, Garden Concepts Inc. ([www.gardenconceptsinc.com](http://www.gardenconceptsinc.com)), Glenview, Ill. For information about caring for masonry, call Prosooco Inc., at 800/255-4255, a formulator of specialty cleaning products based in Lawrence, Kan.

**1.** Touch up painted surfaces. Sellers should remove peeling paint and repaint the affected areas. Do a good deed for the planet: Encourage sellers to use environmentally friendly paint. Look for No-VOC or Low-VOC labels.

**2.** Perk up a front porch. Give sellers a blueprint to turn a porch into an outside room. Add large seasonal flowers in big pots, planted window boxes, a new welcome mat, and some comfy furniture. If they already have seating, make sure they clean the upholstery. Advise them to repaint or stain worn wooden floorboards in a color that complements the facade and door.

**3.** Make windows sparkle. Use a garden hose to wet outside windows before washing; it helps loosen dirt. Second- or third-story windows may necessitate professional help.

**4.** Clean dirty masonry. Atmospheric pollution and Mother Nature can take their toll on all types of exterior materials, such as brick and stucco. Use a nylon rather than a steel-bristle brush, and avoid cleansers that damage color and finish. Manufacturer Prosooco Inc.'s Web site, [www.prosooco.com](http://www.prosooco.com), suggests safe cleaning choices.

**5.** Paint gutters to match the trim. Sellers will find a large selection of colors in enamel paints that adhere to metal.

**6.** Illuminate the site. Too many lights make a walk look like an airport runway. But a home should look safe and attractive. Add a few lights in trees for a special glow.

**7.** Tidy landscaping. Recommend sellers remove dead trees and leaves, prune overgrown shrubs, edge beds, and plant seasonal flowers. To keep a tip-top lawn, sellers should plant, fertilize, and water according to a schedule that reflects the climate and soil conditions. Instead of traditional mulch, consider GroundScape Landscape, made from shredded recycled tires and colored to simulate natural mulch or wood chips. It's heavier than mulch so it won't blow away; and it repels weeds, insects, and mold.

**8.** Remember the *pièce de résistance*. A front door should be clearly visible since it's the entry and focal point for prospects. A polished knocker adds cachet.

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