

Landscaping Maintenance for Home Value



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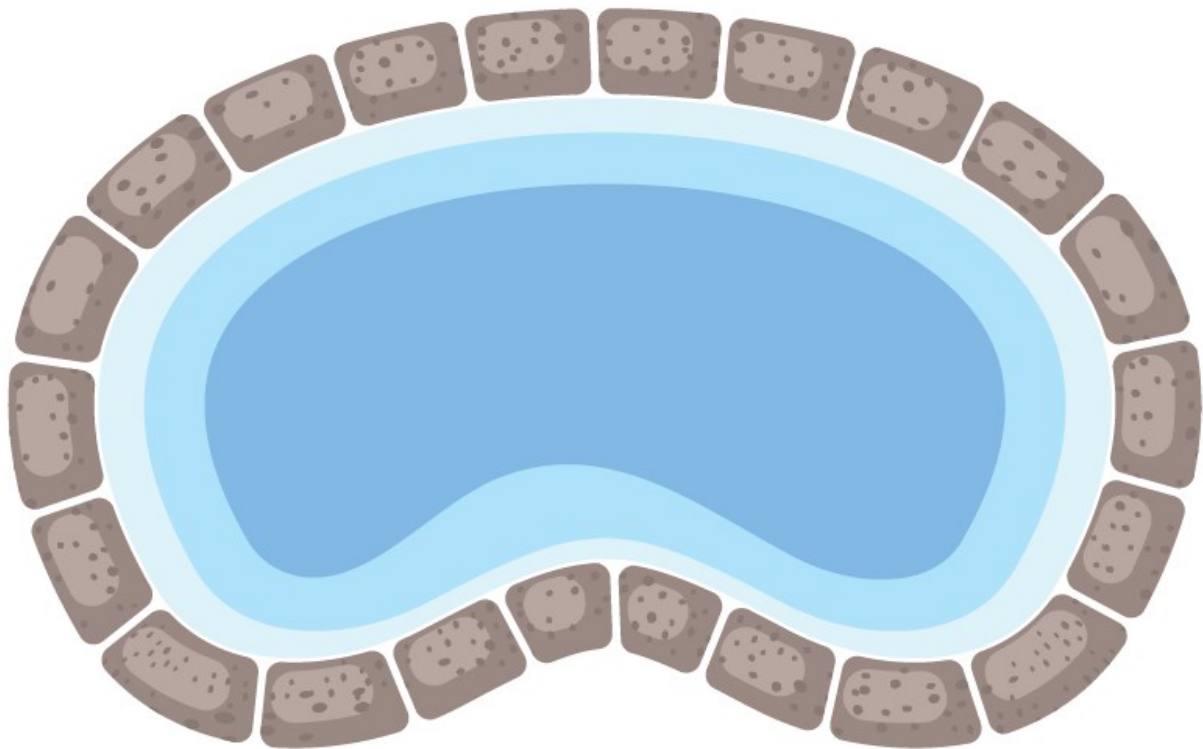
Curb appeal has the power to make or break the sale of a home. In fact, if potential buyers don't like what they see on the outside, they may not even venture inside. Savvy homeowners know that investing in their landscapes will not only yield a nice return on investment (ROI) but also will help them get more enjoyment out of their properties while living there.

There is no question that landscaping is important in terms of overall home value. Exactly how much ROI homeowners will receive may be up for debate, but in most cases they will get their investment – and then some – back. Chris Lambton, landscape designer and host of the HGTV show "[Backyard Transformations](#)," says that a good landscaping plan and design can increase the value of a home by as much as 10 to 12 percent.

"Conversely, a bad landscape design or a yard that has gone by the wayside can decrease the value of the home significantly," Lambton adds.

Some would say 10 to 12 percent is a conservative estimate. Of course, those who go above and beyond with their landscaping projects and create outdoor living rooms or poolsapes can expect even more, Lambton says.

"Adding outdoor rooms, like often seen on HGTV and DIY Network, can increase this range," he says. "I have found that ROI can be anywhere from 15 to 1,000 percent on investment in landscaping. It is a very wide range and depends on scope, type of project and the expertise of those doing the plan and installation."



Focus on curb appeal

If the main objective of the project is to sell a house, Lambton says the focus needs to be on curb appeal. This is going to have the most significant impact on a sale.

“When someone pulls up to a house, their first impression is from the driveway,” Lambton says. “No matter how put together the interior of the house is, if the curb appeal doesn’t look good, then the overall home value is affected. By planning out the front yard, implementing a color scheme, creating paths and walkways and creating a welcoming overall design, you instantly add value.”

"If you don't do [landscaping] properly yourself or pay a professional to do it, you're going to be paying a lot more when it comes time to sell in order to turn things around. **In the long run, it's more cost effective and less stressful to just maintain the upkeep.** You're putting a small amount of money out each year and getting enjoyment out of it rather than paying a large fee at the end to fix a bunch of problems."

— *Keith Bowman,*
McHale Landscape Design

"Landscaping is such an important part of the overall home," agrees realtor Adriana O'Toole of [RE/MAX Village Square](#), Montclair, New Jersey. "Landscaping should emphasize the house and how it sits on the property. It should lead the eye to the door. And it should play a functional role on a busy street, such as adding privacy and noise control."

All of those things are incredibly important when it comes to selling a home, says O'Toole, who has been in the real estate industry for 40 years. That's because buyers are often quick to knock a home from their list if they don't like what they see.

"People make a decision on whether or not they like a home in just the first eight seconds of being there – and that obviously starts outside," O'Toole says. "Plus, these days most people research homes online before they even look at them in person. If a home is poorly landscaped, it may be eliminated just from the photo."

Keith Bowman, maintenance division manager at [McHale Landscape Design](#) in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, agrees that landscaping for curb appeal is definitely all about leading attention to the front door.

"Landscaping is all about marketing the home from the outside," Bowman says. "People want to see color. You need to think about ways you can catch their

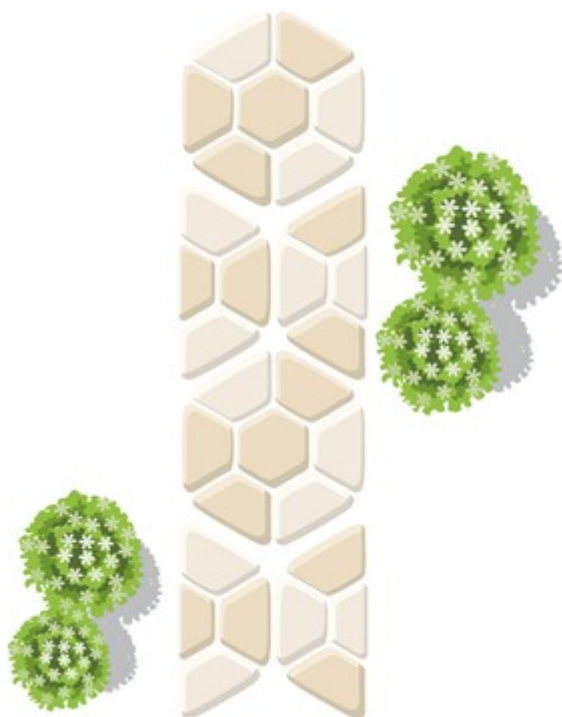
attention – maybe a tree or a flowering shrub close to the corner of the home. You definitely want nicely shaped beds and foundation plantings. And in a busy market, it's all about differentiating your home from the one around the block."

Bowman says that every market is different, but the high-end residential clients McHale Landscape services are looking for more than just flowers and shrubs. In the high-end markets, people are looking for true "outdoor living," Bowman says. They want hardscaped outdoor living areas where they can enjoy time outside with their families.

"It's one of those things where the landscapers really have to know their market," Bowman adds. "If a homeowner is in a high-end market and they install a pool, they're going to get a return on that investment."

The power of maintenance

At the bare minimum, a landscape needs to be well-maintained. It's not enough to put in a nice landscape and forget about it, says John Peterson, design and sales manager for [Exscape Designs](#) in Chesterland, Ohio. A well-manicured landscape requires upkeep.



"Landscaping is an evolving product – you don't install it one time and then not touch it for 10 to 15 years," Peterson says. "Regular tweaks, enhancements and routine maintenance are critical. Many homeowners we visit have not done anything with their landscape for years and are then shocked how much it will cost to get it presentable. Upkeep over time would prevent the need for a sudden overhaul."

"Maintenance is a no-brainer," agrees Bowman. "If you don't do it properly yourself or pay a professional to do it, you're going to be paying a lot more

when it comes time to sell in order to turn things around. In the long run, it's more cost effective and less stressful to just maintain the upkeep. You're putting a small amount of money out each year and getting enjoyment out of it rather than paying a large fee at the end to fix a bunch of problems."

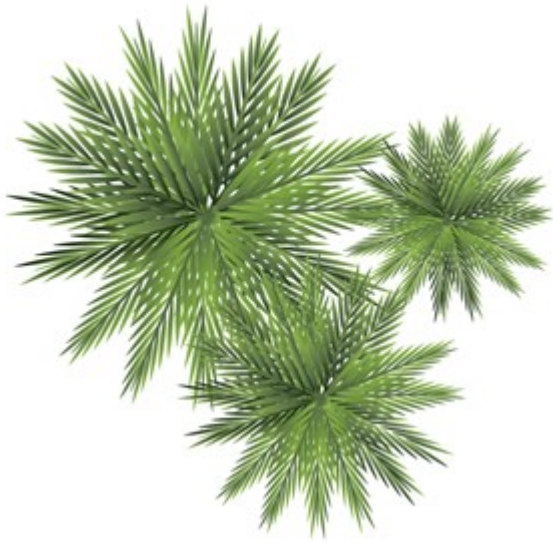
A home that looks like it has been well maintained over time also sells better. Jenn Yateman, a realtor with [Long and Foster Real Estate](#) in Lutherville, Maryland, says her buyers want to know the previous owners have cared for the home. If they see a messy landscape that hasn't been well kept, they quickly lose confidence. It sets a negative tone for the tour of the rest of the home – before they even step through the front door.

"It is comforting to a buyer to know that they will not have a long list of to-do items when they purchase the home," Yateman says. "If the property cannot be maintained once a landscaping project is complete, it's pointless to have it landscaped at all. If a homeowner cannot maintain the property themselves, it is better to have a professional maintain it while the home is up for sale."

Yateman says that when a buyer sees a home that is poorly landscaped, they automatically assume they will need to invest thousands more into shaping it up, and that could easily cost the homeowner the sale of the house. On the flip side, a landscape that has been maintained means less work and money for the buyer and could be a factor that helps make the sale.

When the objective is to sell, Bowman says it is important for homeowners to think about the "impression" the landscape might create in terms of upkeep. In other words, it shouldn't look daunting. "You don't want to create a landscape that looks like it's going to be a ton of work to maintain," he says.

That could be a turnoff to buyers, according to Bowman. The trend now tends to be toward a low-maintenance, easy-to-maintain property.



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"But above all, you never want potential buyers to see a messy yard," he adds. "That automatically looks like a lot of work and a lack of care."

Personal value

While homeowners tend to think of value in terms of cash, value should also be thought of in terms of personal enjoyment. Peterson says in talking to their clients, they always discuss the "lifestyle enhancement" a project can bring, which is hard to place a dollar amount on.

"There is truly hidden value in the enrichment a project can bring in your daily life," Peterson says. "We have had clients come back to us a year or two down the road and tell us how a project has changed their life. They may have never used their backyard before and are now enjoying it every night. Or their home has now become a gathering spot for the kids because the yard was finished."

Peterson says that value shouldn't solely be thought of in terms of how much ROI a project will bring, but how much enjoyment a family can get out of their home while they're living there.

"Instead of landscaping your house now to help sell it, we wish clients would have landscaped it five to 10 years ago to enjoy it themselves," he adds. "That really gives them the best of both worlds since it increases their home

value at the same time."