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News & Views

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Putting out the WELCOME MAT

If you want to help sell your home fast, it pays to make low-cost repairs and improvements. Prepare your home for sale by following these suggestions from Real Estate Pros.

General Advice

Your home should be clean and tidy. Vacuum the carpets, clean the windows and make your kitchen and bathroom(s) shine. Go out during a showing. Prospective buyers tend to stay longer if owners are not home.

Curb Appeal

The more appeal your house has from the outside, the more it will draw people inside. Boost your 'curb appeal'...

- Everything should be in good repair.
- Repaint a chipped front door or window trim.
- Repair cracked or broken windows.
- Mow the lawn, trim hedges and tidy the yard. If there is snow or ice; shovel and de-ice walkways, porches and decks.

Put out the Welcome Mat

The front entrance is the focal point of any home. It should be warm and inviting. These ideas will help you make a favourable first impression:



- Add welcoming furniture...a mirror, a bench or a small cabinet, pretty (and practical) hooks on the wall.
- Wax sliders and oil all hinges on closets and doors.
- Clean out and tidy the front closet.
- Open all blinds & drapes and let the sun shine in!

Basic Repairs

- If you choose to paint, stick with neutral tones. Use a lighter shade for trim and a medium shade for walls.
- Buyers test hardware, so make sure latches work properly. Fix shaky railings and repair all broken or damaged doors or hardware.
- Replace old electrical wall plates and switch covers.

Basement Bargains

Basements are usually the last place to be checked. But, they can be key to giving potential buyers a good first impression.

- Use a dehumidifier during the summer to reduce dampness.
- Scrub any mildew off walls, sweep the floor and get rid of cobwebs.
- Tidy up and neatly stack any storage boxes on shelves.

Kitchens & Bathrooms

Nothing turns off prospective buyers more than dirty (or cluttered) bathrooms & kitchens.

- Clean all surfaces and fixtures until they shine!
- Make storage space seem larger by clearing out and packing up some items and neatly stacking the cartons.
- Fix any plumbing problems; serious buyers do flush toilets

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and turn taps on and off.

- Use a grout cleaner to remove mildew from tiles.
- Repair leaking or dripping faucets and remove any stains from sinks, toilets and tubs.
- If your cupboards/cabinets are looking tired, paint them or consider updating their look by replacing cabinet & drawer pulls and hardware with new ones.

Squirrels

Not only are squirrels notorious bird feeder bullies, they can also invade your home!

Squirrels usually live in trees or in ground burrows, but they'll just as easily set up home in your attic, walls or crawlspace. Once inside your home they can wreak havoc, chewing on wood and electrical wires, building nests - producing young, storing food and possibly infesting your pets, even you, with parasites.

Squirrels and chipmunks are welcome additions to our backyard wildlife sanctuaries, where their playful antics and chattering are a delight to watch. The challenge is to **keep them outside** where they belong! **Use Prevention as your first line of defense.**

Start outside your home; the further away from your house you keep them, the less likely they'll be to move from scampering around the bird feeder to taking up residence inside your house!



- ✓ Don't leave pet food outdoors. Keep bird seed/feed in the garage.
- ✓ Locate bird feeders far enough away from the house so that your patio, deck, and downspouts don't become a part of their usual route to a food source.
- ✓ Trim tree branches back from the roof line and walls of your house and garage.

- ✓ After barbecuing, burn off the grill and scrape clean, wipe down spills on surrounding surfaces. Don't throw 'burnt offerings' out into the yard for your backyard wildlife to enjoy!
- ✓ If your chimney has a cap, consider installing a screen.
- ✓ Carefully inspect the exterior of your home for any entry holes. Use steel wool or small pieces of wire mesh screen to seal any spot that may look like an open invitation.



This 'n That

The Three C's for Organizing Closets

1 Clean Out...

If you can't decide what should stay and what should go, follow this guideline: *Don't keep anything that isn't beautiful, useful or loved.*

2 Compartmentalize...

Divide your closet into sections. It's easier to find what you want if you only have to look in one area, as opposed to the entire closet.

3 Continue...

Keep it up, and adjust your system as needed. If clutter creeps back in, don't be discouraged. With an underlying system in place, it will be easy to get back on track fast.



Digitize!

Photographs of family and friends are often one of our most treasured possessions. They're also often stuck in bulky boxes somewhere where they are vulnerable to water damage or insect infestation. Allow yourself a couple of hours each evening over several weeks to go through your collection. Use manilla envelopes to sort into whatever categories suit. This may be an opportune time to consider sharing some of your photos - make up an envelope for each of your grown children, or grandchildren, or your sister... you get the picture. Once you've sorted, scan your collection then transfer a copy to a CD, DVD or other storage device which can be kept in a fireproof safe/cabinet or your safety deposit box. Consider making a copy, or two, to share with family members.

HOME TIPS SELLING

Clean up the Outside

- Curb appeal is the first impression of your house. Keeping the grass cut and edged, shrubs and flower beds neat, driveway, walkways and entranceways clutter-free and the area generally tidy will help make a great first impression.
- Wash or clean the exterior of the house. Paint if necessary.
- Wash the windows inside and out - open shutters, blinds and curtains and let the sun shine in!
- Clean out the eavestroughs and check gutters. Check all the exterior finishes; decks, patios, roofing etc. - clean or repair as needed.
- Clean the front door and hardware - touch up or repaint if necessary. A seasonal wreath on the door is a nice welcoming touch.

Touch up the Interior

- Put a fresh coat of paint in the most used areas of your home; the entranceway, main bath, kitchen. If you have any rooms in your home in which you chose dramatic paint colours, consider

repainting in a neutral palette.

- Dust and/or wash all interior light fixtures so they sparkle.
- Wash all floors, shampoo the carpets.
- Get rid of clutter! You'll be moving soon - so get a head start! Clean out all closets & cupboards, the garage, basement and attic. Pack up all seasonal items and those things you don't use on a daily basis. Choose one area; the basement or garage, to neatly store cartons.
- Repair or replace leaking or worn bathroom and kitchen faucets and fixtures. Prospective buyers particularly notice wear and tear in bathrooms and kitchens!
- Pay special attention to any bad odours in your home; ie, pets, cigarette or cigar smoke, stale or musty smells.
- Walk through your home making note of all the 'minor' repairs needed. Chipped or scuffed paint, peeling wallpaper, loose door handles, squeaking floorboards, missing switch plate covers etc. Do take the time to make these repairs - these are small but very *visible* details that indicate to a potential buyer that the house is in good repair and has been well-cared for.

Thanksgiving Day

Monday, October 9th

Gratitude is not a matter of good fortune or worldly possessions. It's an attitude derived from appreciating what we have, instead of being miserable about what we don't have. It's so simple - yet so hard to comprehend.

If the only prayer you said in your whole life was, 'thank you', that would suffice.

Edward Sandford Martin

Be kind, be thoughtful, be genuine but most of all be thankful.

Gratitude turns what we have into enough.

Fall in the Garden

How to Store Tender Flowering Bulbs

■ Dig up the flower bulbs. Do this after the first frost, or when the foliage has withered and yellowed. Using a garden fork, dig under the flower bulb and gently pry upwards. Remember to keep the dug up bulbs labelled or in groups for easy planting in the spring.

■ **Prepare the bulbs for storage.** Discard all damaged or diseased/soft bulbs. Cut off all remaining foliage with a sharp knife. Lay out the bulbs on a flat surface, in a well-ventilated area. Do not allow the bulbs to touch. Allow them to dry for 1 week.

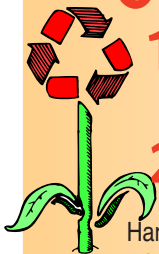
■ **Prepare storage containers** for each type of bulb. This can be anything that is not air tight such as a paper bag, open crate, or pantyhose. Half fill the container with peat moss, vermiculite, sand, or any combination of these 3 materials.

■ After a week of drying, the bulbs can be stored. Gently remove all remaining soil from the bulbs. Place bulbs into the containers and cover them with the mixture. Overwinter the containers in a cool, but not freezing, dry spot - the basement will usually do.

Begonia, Canna, Crocosmia, Dahlia, Freesia, Galtonia, Gladiolus and Ranunculus are examples of bulbs best lifted and stored for the winter.

Saving GERANIUMS

Here are 2 ways to overwinter your geraniums for next spring.



1 Bring them indoors...prune each plant back by half and place near a window. Water when soil feels dry but don't feed until March or when spring sunlight brings on strong new growth.

2 Hang upside down...remove the geranium from the soil and shake off excess soil from the root mass. Hang the bare-root plant upside down in a cool (7 to 10°C), dark place. (Note, geraniums prefer a location with fairly high humidity.) Repot, water and feed in mid-March.

Leaves

Instead of hauling those fallen leaves to the curb, turn them into compost - the natural fertilizer that gardeners call 'black gold'. First rake, then shred the leaves so they take up less space. You can easily shred by running your lawn mower over them. Use the shredded leaves under shrubs and trees, over perennial beds and exposed soil. Leaves degrade into mineral nutrients; worms will turn them into natural fertilizer.

Wait until the soil has frozen before mulching autumn-installed bulbs and plants. After freeze-up, a thick mulch of leaves will keep them safe from the heaving action of frost.



Think Spring ❖ Autumn is the only time to move clematis or honeysuckle vine to prevent shock to growth: both vines begin extending leaves and shoots while frost is still in the spring ground. If the vines are large, cut them back by half, and they'll leap forward next spring.

❖ Autumn is a good time for planting evergreen trees and shrubs. The evergreens' root systems pump water all winter, so be sure to water them well before the ground freezes.

Smiles and Chuckles

A 5-year-old's version of saying Grace...

'Thank you for this bounty we're about to receive....

Mom?

Why are we praying about paper towels?'



I recently visited a friend whose 4-year-old grandson was visiting.

He was wearing his batman costume for Halloween, I asked him if he'd worn the costume to school that day. He answered, 'No. When I was at school, I was Bruce Wayne.'



Thinking of Downsizing?

Here's some 'how-to' advice.

Its never too early to start. If you wait too long you'll be pressed for time and end up packing everything - moving it - then be faced with a storage and space problem in your new home! Moving to a smaller home is much less stressful when you have less stuff - and the bonus - your current home will look less cluttered and more desirable to buyers.

Use the concentric circle rule

When we acquire objects, we place them in our home relative to their emotional value to us. Generally, objects that are in the heart of the home, in the family room, rec room, and kitchen, are those we value and use the most, so they are keepers. Those objects farthest away from these rooms, in a shed, attic, garage, or basement, may have lost their importance to us. That's where to start the purging process. Then move to other rooms farthest from your home's prime living areas, like bedrooms.

Continue purging in ever-smaller circles. As you work your way through each space here are some questions to ask about each item.

- When was the last time I used this?**
- Do I own another item that can serve the same purpose?**
- Do I love this?...does it have irreplaceable sentimental value?**
- Is this something I need?**
- Is it in good condition?...or does it need repair?**
- Do I know someone who would benefit from it's use?**
- Will it serve a purpose in my new home/lifestyle?**

Do involve every member of your household

- Objects hold different meaning for different people, an item you may consider adding to the garage sale or donation pile could have great sentimental value to your spouse.

There are many reasons you may be considering downsizing...

- **more time.** Fewer rooms or smaller spaces cut down on the time expended to clean and maintain.
- **lower utility costs.** It costs less to heat/cool a smaller home. Less square footage decreases the amount of energy expended.
- **less stuff.** If there is no place to put it, you're less likely to buy it or accumulate it!
- **minimized stress.** Less responsibility, smaller workload, smaller investment - added together, they all reduce stress.

Remember, moving isn't easy, it presents a significant change that's both physically exhausting and often emotionally draining as well. If you're having a difficult time making decisions about what to keep - what to part with; take a break, talk to someone, ask for help. Remind yourself throughout the process that your goal is not to get rid of everything you hold dear, but to simplify your life.

If you're considering downsizing, you'll have questions....

Should I sell first and then buy?, or buy first and then sell? Is it better to make this move in a seller's market?...or a buyer's market?

You'll want answers to your questions - and professional advice.

Now is a good time to talk with your Realtor who can provide you with advice on the marketability of your current home and help you with finding just the right new home!



Monarch Butterflies

Monarch Butterflies are once again gathering for their long journey south to the Sierra Madre mountains in central Mexico. In March they'll begin their journey north - reaching Canada in May or June - an epic migration of up to 4,800 kilometres between ranges! No single butterfly lives long enough to complete this migration, the journey takes place over multiple generations. How information about routes is passed down from adult to offspring remains a mystery.



Facts and Trivia

- The Monarch butterfly was named in the 17th century for King William of Orange. Historical nicknames; *King Billy*, *the milkweed butterfly*, *the wanderer* and *the storm king*.
- Loss of breeding habitat, changing environmental conditions, and factors of human population growth all pose serious threats. In Canada the Monarch remains on the *Species At Risk* list (although their numbers doubled in size compared to historical lows hit in 2010).
- Monarchs depend on milkweed. The females lay eggs on leaves of various milkweed species. The leaves of the milkweed also help protect monarchs from bird predators because they contain a poison (which is eaten by the larvae and passed along to the adults) that makes birds sick.
- Herbicides kill both the milkweed needed by caterpillars and the nectar-producing wildflowers needed by adult butterflies.
- Milkweed is currently considered a noxious weed in most areas of Canada (some species are poisonous to livestock), but common milkweed, one of the least toxic milkweed species, grows in many areas not used by livestock.

Properly maintained equipment is safe equipment.

After the last cut...

- ✓ Remove the spark plug, replace it if needed.
- ✓ Remove, sharpen and balance the blade. Clean the underside of the cutting deck.
- ✓ Re-install blade and add a gasoline stabilizer; then run the engine for 10 minutes.
- ✓ Change engine oil before storing.
- ✓ Lubricate wheel bushings, wheel height adjusters and hinge springs on rear bagging lawnmowers.
- ✓ Remove spark plug, squirt one ounce of oil into cylinder, (this will help prevent the inside of the engine from rusting) then rotate the engine slowly using the pull starter.



Apple & Cheddar Crumble

Makes 8 servings; 325 calories per serving

INGREDIENTS

- 6 cups..... apples peeled and coarsely chopped (approx 2 lbs)
- 1..... lemon juiced
- 2 cups..... sharp cheddar shredded
- 1/2 cup..... golden raisins
- 1/2 cup..... light-brown sugar packed
- 1/3 cup..... all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup..... quick-cook oats
- 1/4 cup..... unsalted butter softened
- 1 teaspoon.... Pumpkin pie spice

DIRECTIONS

- Preheat oven to 375°. Coat a 13x9x2 inch baking dish with nonstick cooking spray.
- In a large bowl, fold together; apples, lemon juice, cheddar cheese and raisins. Spoon into prepared baking dish.
- In another bowl, combine; sugar, flour, oats, butter and pumpkin pie spice. Mix until crumbly. Scatter over apple mixture.
- Bake at 375° for 30 minutes or until nicely browned and apples are tender. Cool at least 15 minutes. Serve warm.

BORING

but it has to be done!

Cool autumn breezes are a reminder that its time to get your home ready for winter! There are many, many chores to do before the cold and freezing temperatures of winter set in.

- ◆ Choose a dry sunny day to open up and air out the basement and crawl spaces. This prevents mold and mildew from growing in the basement areas of your home.
- ◆ Before the cold weather sets in and your heat is turned on, have your furnace and humidifier serviced by a qualified professional. Ensuring maximum furnace efficiency through effective maintenance and filter replacement could save as much as 10% on your fuel bill. Areas around the furnace should be cleaned to eliminate dust and dirt. Where applicable, exhaust fans and heating recovery ventilators should be checked and oiled according to manufacturer's instructions.
- ◆ Now is a good time to replace your furnace filter - and ensure you have enough filters on hand for a once-a-month change throughout the winter months. If you have electric baseboard heaters - vacuum to remove dust. Remove the grilles on forced-air systems and vacuum inside the ducts.
- ◆ Windows and doors should be examined for gaps allowing air infiltration. You can stop cold drafts from entering by applying weather-stripping around doors and windows and ensuring that the seal is snug.
- ◆ Check exterior finishes. Look for signs of moisture penetrating wood siding. Watch for paint that is blistering and peeling. If left unresolved, this problem can lead to water seeping into the interior of your home.
- ◆ When inspecting outside window finishes, check the caulking for signs of deterioration. If caulking it is wearing down, remove and



- recaulk with a good quality caulking compound to protect against both moisture and cold air entering.
- ◆ Vents, louvers and chimney caps should be checked for birds' nests or animal intruders. If you use a wood-burning stove or fireplace, make sure your chimney is clear...that means checking for a buildup of creosote in the chimney. Creosote can form quickly and is a major cause of chimney fires. You may be able to see *up the chimney*, or you could try *looking down from the roof*. Either way, if you see any buildup of creosote, have it removed. Like your furnace, it is a good idea to have your chimney cleaned and checked, by a professional, once a year.
- ◆ Drain and store hoses, don't forget to close the valve and drain the spigot!
- ◆ Eavestroughs, gutters and down-spouts should be cleared of any obstructions; leaves and debris. If eavestroughs are clogged or leaking, you can end up with serious water damage over the winter - damage that can be hard to deal with in cold weather. And, since you've got the ladder out you may want to consider putting up your Christmas lights!
- ◆ Check all outdoor electrical outlets to ensure they are clear of debris and operational. Check and clean all outdoor light fixtures, if you used the 'yellow' bug-friendly light bulbs in your outdoor fixtures this summer, replace with a brighter bulb.
- ◆ Remember... its time to reverse the direction on all ceiling fans.