



Beautiful Homes from the Outside In

Photography by Lisa Mangos


SIMPLE CHANGES THAT GIVE KATY HOMES TERRIFIC CURB APPEAL

Your home. It's probably the most expensive purchase you will ever make and the place you spend the majority of your time. Today's homeowners take a lot of pride in the appearance and décor of their homes, paying careful attention to many details that enhance its beauty and value. Even the media has jumped on board with every kind of home decorating show imaginable. While most of the home décor shows seem to be focusing on the interior of a home, real estate experts say the exterior of a home is just as important. Your home's curb appeal gives spectators and potential homebuyers an immediate impression before they ever walk through the front door. There are many simple ways to increase your home's curb appeal while adding value at the same time.

The Grass is Greener

Without a doubt, landscaping is such an important outside feature, one that immediately catches the eye of any home buyer or casual observer. "A lot of people are forgetting to trim their trees," says Coldwell Banker realtor Bob Christian. "Nice landscaping, manicured lawn, gardens with mulch--everything nicely trimmed away from the house is really important," agrees Keller Williams realtor Pat Welsh. "It needs to be trimmed back so they can see the house."

A little bit of shrubbery can dramatically increase a home's beauty at an affordable price. "The cheapest thing you can really do if you want to put plants in yourself is add a little bit of color," says Christian.



This Katy homeowner's beautiful double doors are enhanced by colorful florals

“With these neighborhoods all you get is one or two trees. Definitely add a little color and everything will eventually grow.” But experts advise homeowners not to go overboard. “Some people can get a little loud with color,” says Remax realtor and Katy homeowner April Fontenot. “Don’t go too crazy. You want your yard to enhance the house, not overwhelm it.”



A unique tri-fountain is the focal point of this Katy homeowner’s front yard

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Add a Splash of Color

If it's been a while, your home might be due for a paint job. Maybe you feel a bit daring, want to try a new color. No matter what you decide, there are numerous paint professionals in Katy who are always there when you don't know where to begin. But take caution! Every neighborhood association has different regulations and restrictions that need to be followed, so when in doubt check with them first. "Definitely stay within the instructions of your association, but I'd advise to stay neutral," says Fontenot. If you are selling, "you are trying to attract the masses and you don't know who your buyer is going to be. Only a few select buyers will go far left."



A neatly manicured lawn and colorful flowers make this Katy home eye-catching



The elegant stone walkway is flanked by shrubs that are trimmed and well-maintained at this Katy home

Get Rid of the Eyesores

In every neighborhood there's at least one mailbox that's a bit out of the ordinary or unusual. Sure, the homeowner might like it, but what if you plan on selling your home in the future? "Don't decorate it," says Christian. "You want it inviting but don't personalize it. You may think it's the cutest thing, but buyers might go 'oh no', and will be turned off." And they might also feel a bit estranged with statues and garden figures displayed in the yard. "As a seller

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Encircling trees with a blend of plants and colorful flowers is appealing to passersby

"Nice landscaping, manicured lawn, gardens with mulch— everything nicely trimmed away from the house is really important."

- Pat Welsh, Katy realtor

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I've seen gnomes and everything. It looks like a little party going on out there. I would definitely say remove those," advises Christian.

Experts also suggest taking time to tidy up the front path on a regular basis. Sweep away all of the dirt, leaves, debris, and soggy newspapers that somehow find their way to your walkway and yard. Keep those garbage cans out of sight when garbage day is over. And what about that neon green hose that's sprawled out over the grass? It's time to roll it up and put it by the side of the house, preferably behind some shrubs. Don't let tools, gadgets and lawn ornaments affect your home's natural beauty. "Too much going on in the yard starts to detract from the house," says Fontenot. "Keep it light and neat."



This Katy homeowner uses lighting to accentuate the trees and light up the doorway

Let There Be Light

Light gives you that warm, homey feeling when you stroll by a house in the evening. It offers a sense of belonging and creates a more meaningful sanctuary for not only the family, but any visitor or passerby. Some homeowners light their walkways, shrubs or place spot lights on specific trees and areas. "At nighttime when people drive by, it really highlights and accentuates the features of the house," says Fontenot. Outdoor lighting lends not only protection, but gives each homeowner an opportunity to personalize their home in a unique way.

From spotlights, to lanterns, there are endless ways to light the exterior of your home. There are also growing trends you might want to look out for. "People are growing to outside splash lighting," says Christian.

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"Tree splash lights are really nice. They open the house up." No matter what type of lighting you decide, it is "definitely a big thing," says Fontenot. "It's just as common as people putting blinds in their home, and it stays with the home. Otherwise, your house is just another dark point."

Increasing Home Value

With every action there is a reaction, and in this, case curb appeal brings many. Not only will you start hearing compliments from your Katy neighbors, but you might see many of them following suit and jazzing



Palm trees, trimmed shrubs, and a fountain add elegance to this Katy homeowner's front yard

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up their yards too. Christian says neighborhoods that have many homes with 'curb appeal' will also have increased value as a whole. "Curb appeal is definitely a must," says Christian. "It's the first thing buyers notice. You can have a gorgeous home from the inside but if the outside isn't great, you can really turn them off." KM

Cathy Sze interned at Katy Magazine and is a senior at Cinco Ranch High School. She is a member of the yearbook staff and lives in Katy with her family.



This Katy homeowner uses vines in a diamond pattern to enhance their homes exterior appearance

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ADD *Curb Appeal* TO YOUR HOME

15 Do-It-Yourself Tips

1. Place a pot of yellow flowers near or on the porch. Yellow draws the eye, and makes people feel welcome.
2. Restain or replace your front door. Maybe you'll want to go darker?
3. Install a new front door knob that matches the style of your home.
4. Repaint your street number or hang up a decorative one.
5. Power wash your front steps, driveway, and the soiled areas of your house.
6. Repaint your front shutters. Is it time for a new, bolder color?
7. Use lighting. Trade out your old hanging lantern for a new one or put in a spotlight accentuating a particular house feature like a tall tree.
8. Put in new mulch. The brighter color and fresh look makes a huge difference.
9. Even out and trim your bushes. Make it a nice eye line.
10. Plant colorful flowers encircling your main trees.
11. Add a beautiful park bench under a tree.
12. Keep hoses, lawn tools, newspapers, and garbage cans out of sight.
13. Add a brass door knocker or attractive wreath to the front door.
14. Hang colorful pots of flowers in the visible patio areas in the back yard.
15. Replace or restain wood fences that are becoming eyesores.



This Katy homeowner creates a nice eyeline by having shrubs and bushes trimmed evenly.

Photo by Dawn Eagan

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