

YOUR HOME

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TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

Light Up the Night



If you're looking to spice up the outside appearance of your home, exterior lighting offers many options. To get you started, the lighting pros at GE explain some basic lighting techniques.

Ambient lighting, such as yard lights and porch lights, provide overall illumination, while task lighting consists of low-voltage lights along sidewalks and paths. Accent lighting includes spotlights and other types of special-

effect lighting to dramatize outdoor sculptures and fountains.

To add depth and drama, try up lighting trees, landscape features and architectural elements by placing lights at an angle so objects are lit from below. Backlighting, which is achieved by angling a light against a wall or fence behind an object, creates a beautiful silhouette.

For security, make sure patios, porches and other outdoor living spaces are well lit, especially where there are steps that can be a potential tripping hazard. To prevent uninvited pests from crashing your next patio party, use bug lights, which contain a special coating that makes the light invisible to bugs, so they aren't drawn to it.

Whichever lighting technique you use, use Energy Star bulbs, which use up to 75 percent less energy and last 8 to 10 times longer than ordinary incandescent bulbs. Outdoor timers and motion sensors also can save money and conserve energy. To get maximum effect from your outdoor lighting, clean exposed bulbs several times during the season.

Once you master these few lighting techniques, your home will exude a warm glow that attracts admirers and would-be buyers.

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Dirt and dust build-up on exterior light bulbs can cause light loss of up to 40 percent.

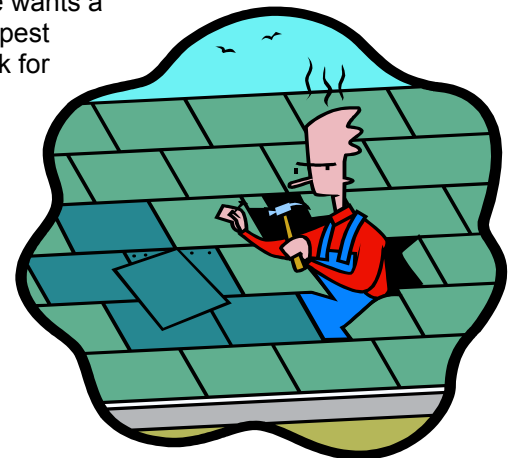


Source: GELighting.com

Home Tour Red Flags

Frontdoor.com, HGTV's real estate Web site, identifies several potential problems that buyers should look out for when touring a home.

1. **Mediocre Maintenance.** Three layers of roofing and gutters with plants growing out of them are signs that the owners have not kept up with the property. What else have they neglected?
2. **Foundation Failures.** If the yard slopes toward the house, it could cause water to run down the foundation walls or into the basement, which could result in costly repairs. Also if foundation cracks or bulges are thicker than 1/3 inch, the house could have serious structural issues.
3. **Faulty Wiring.** Make sure all switches and outlets function properly. Flickering lights, circuits that don't work, and warm or hot outlets or faceplates are all symptoms of wiring problems.
4. **Fresh Paint ... On One Wall.** New paint can spruce up walls, but they can also hide bigger problems, such as water damage, mildew or mold.
5. **Foggy or Non-functioning Windows.** Check for water in between double-paned windows and make sure all windows work properly.
6. **Structural Walls and Floors.** The house may have an open floor plan, but was it always open or did the homeowners renovate? If a load-bearing wall was removed without adjusting the framing, it can shift weight to other parts of the house.
7. **Bugs.** No one wants a house with a pest problem. Look for evidence of unwelcome creatures as you tour the home.



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Green Thumb

It's finally time to pull out the patio furniture, fire up the grill and enjoy outdoor activities in your yard. Here are some tips from HGTV.com that will keep your grass looking green all summer long.

When cutting the grass, try to keep its height at about two-and-a-half to three inches. Sharpen the blade of your mower at least three times a year to avoid grass split ends, and be sure to change your mowing pattern to prevent soil compaction, which will inhibit grass growth.

Instead of lightly watering your grass three to four times a week, give it a good soaking once a week – most lawns need about an inch of water. Watering early in the morning is best.

To combat weeds, make sure to use herbicides specially formulated to combat the types of weeds that are growing in your yard. If you aren't a fan of herbicides, weed removal tools, such as weed hounds, usually do the trick.

Over-fertilizing is a common problem and can kill your lawn. You should only fertilize in the spring and summer months if you neglected to apply fertilizer in the fall. Every time you mow your lawn the clippings provide nitrogen, an excellent natural fertilizer.

Finally, keep kids, pets, vehicles and wheelbarrows off moist soil and emerging grass. Wait until your lawn is full and dry to enjoy it.



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