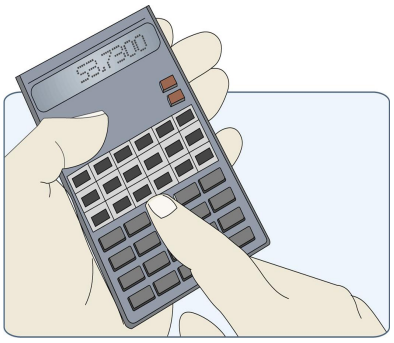
YOUR HOME
APRIL 2009
TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

Low-Cost Landscaping Tips

A beautifully-landscaped property can work wonders when it comes to selling your home. *The Free Landscaping Ideas Blog* offers these suggestions on how to save money without sacrificing quality or beauty.

- Make a plan that includes a schedule of tasks and rough sketches of your design to help you determine what items you need. For assistance, consult with an expert at a local gardening store or home improvement retailer.
- Plan the project in phases and purchase products as money is available. The phased-in plan also helps you avoid the interest and fees associated with home-improvement loans or credit card purchases.
- Don't sacrifice quality. Ask the staff at local specialty shops for recommendations about the best products available. If you are inexperienced with landscaping, consider spending a little extra for professional assistance.
- Carefully inspect plants for diseases and insect problems, especially if you didn't purchase them from a nursery. Diseases and pests can spread to other plants. Also ask the gardening retailer if they offer warranties on their plants.
- If you plan ahead, you can take advantage of off-season prices. For example, buy lumber in the winter when it is cheaper and store it until you are ready to use it. Shop for trees, shrubs, perennials, mulch and soil late in the season when prices go down.
- Purchase products online or from catalogs, or join a gardening club, which may offer discount prices as well as helpful advice.
- Your municipality may have mulch and compost available. Also, try asking people in charge of construction or demolition sites if they have used stones or bricks they might give away.
- Ask neighbors if they'll share some of the costs. By pooling all your resources, you may get some good deals on items bought in bulk, and you can split the cost of renting machinery for landscaping work.

Catch a [Tax] Break



There's good news for first-time homebuyers who plan to purchase a home in 2009. Thanks to some of the provisions in the recently enacted American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, qualifying first-time homebuyers can earn a tax credit of up to $8,000 if they purchase a home before Dec. 1. They can claim the credit on either their 2008 or 2009 tax returns, according to the Internal Revenue Service. The best news is that the credit does not need to be repaid provided the home remains their main residence for 36 months after the purchase date. Buyers can claim 10 percent of the purchase price up to $8,000, or $4,000 for married individuals filing separately. The amount of the credit begins to phase out for taxpayers whose adjusted gross income is more than $75,000, or $150,000 for joint filers.

For purposes of this credit, you are considered to be a first-time homebuyer if you (and your spouse if you are married) did not own any other primary residence during the three-year period ending on the date of the purchase.

The new law does not affect individuals who purchased a home between April 8, 2008 and Dec. 31, 2008. For these homeowners, the maximum credit remains 10 percent of the purchase price up to $7,500 for individuals, or $3,750 for married individuals filing separately. In addition, the credit for these purchases must be repaid in 15 equal installments over 15 years, beginning in 2010.

For more information about the tax credit or to find out how the new legislation affects homeowners, visit *www.irs.gov* or consult your tax accountant.

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The best time of day to water a lawn or plants is early morning, so it has the entire day to dry.

Source: HGTV.com