



# Landscaping Can Drive Property Values

The Appraisal Institute, the nation's largest professional association of real estate appraisers, today encouraged homeowners to maintain their landscaping in order to potentially enhance their property's value.

"If landscaping is properly maintained, the impact on home values can be positive," said Appraisal Institute President M. Lance Coyle, MAI, SRA. "However, it's important for homeowners not to exceed neighborhood norms when upgrading."

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star program says whether consumers are installing a new landscape or changing the existing one, they should select plants that are appropriate for their climate and should use a suitable landscape and irrigation design. Homeowners also should consider landscaping techniques designed to create a visually attractive landscape by using low-water and drought-resistant grass, plants, shrubs and trees. If maintained properly, climate appropriate landscaping can use less than one-half the water of a traditional landscape.

Curb appeal can be an important factor when selling a home, Coyle said, noting it's one of the best ways for property owners to make a positive first impression. A home with landscaping that is dated or not appropriately maintained could be a turn-off to prospective buyers and ultimately could have a negative impact on the home's potential resale value, he said.

Landscaping is typically associated with lawns, trees, bushes and flowers. But other items also can be considered part of landscaping, such as fire pits, decks, patios, waterfalls, swimming pools and outdoor lighting ... all of which could add to the value of the home.

Coyle said homeowners should ask themselves the following questions when it comes to their home's landscaping:

- Is the landscaping nice enough to make the prospective buyer walk through the front door? Keep the design modern and on-par with comparable properties in the neighborhood.
- Could the landscaping help future owners save money? Landscaping that needs minimal, if any, water to maintain could be attractive depending on the geographic area.
- Does the landscaping help with the property's energy efficiency? For example, it's a good idea to plant trees in a location where they provide shade in locations with year-round hot climates.