

Five must-dos for a valuable summer home makeover

Assessing the best return for your investment is paramount when undertaking home improvement projects. This means putting a priority on the jobs that are likely to be more valuable than others.

"Summer is an ideal time to get outside and invest your time, money and resources in a project that is going to pay back when it comes time to sell your home," says Ralph Steven, a broker with Royal LePage.

He recommends investing in these top four outdoor home improvements:

1. Build a deck or patio. A deck or patio not only adds visual interest and enjoyment, it is also a way to add to the resale value of your home. There are many designs and approaches to consider so start with a trip to your local library to research ideas and choose an approach that fits your time and budget. Be sure to plan well ahead and to check your municipal building requirements as a building permit may be required for decks above a certain size and height.

2. Install a sprinkler system. On average, homeowners use 50 per cent more water than necessary on their

lawns. This increases water bills and may subject your basement to seepage and your garden from damage from over watering. Automatic lawn sprinkler systems are designed to allow proper irrigation through timing and even water distribution. Although there's an initial cost of installation, you could save money in the long run.

3. Landscape your property. Landscaping is a great way to add visual interest to an outdoor living space. Whether planning a garden or building a pond, landscaping often results in a significant return on your investment. However, always consult a trained professional before tackling a landscaping project to ensure that your project has all the elements of a professional project.

4. Build or replace a fence. Defining the limits of your property is important for a variety of reasons, including privacy, security and safety. Considering your specific needs will help you to choose the right fence. Ultimately, the fence has to fit with how you use your yard. Do your research and consult with neighbours to determine if you can complete the project jointly.

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