

Open houses provide valuable role in home buying

If you've ever bought or sold a home, you're probably familiar with open houses and the role they can play in the sale or purchase of a home. Open houses are a marketing tool which can help give a home exposure, allowing several potential purchasers to view properties over the course of a day or two — usually on a weekend.

In addition to holding open houses for the public, real estate practitioners also conduct open houses for other real estate professionals. This gives them a chance to promote their listings with other practitioners who may have suitable buyers who would be interested in these particular properties.

Hints for Vendors

If you're a vendor, your real estate professional will provide you with some helpful hints on how to make your property more marketable.

First of all, your property should be in top-notch condition to create a favorable and lasting first impression with potential buyers. Keep your lawn trimmed and tidy. Also make sure that all trees, hedges and shrubs look neat — not unruly. Trim branches that block the view of your home or hide some of its best assets.

Repair any unsightly cracks or holes in your walkway or steps that could prove to be a safety hazard. And don't leave tools and toys strewn around the front or backyards. These

detract from your home, making it look like an obstacle course. They could also prove to be hazardous if someone tripped over them.

If your trim or siding looks dirty, wash it using an appropriate cleaning solution. (Your hardware store can probably give you tips on what's best to use.) And if your paintwork is peeling or blistering, it's time for some cosmetic surgery. A little paint can go a long way to enhance the marketability and curb appeal of your home. If you're unable to tackle the job yourself, hire a professional for best results.

Indoors

Indoors, open up curtains and blinds to let in as much natural light as possible. This helps show your home to its best advantage. And be sure to move any clutter out of sight and rearrange furniture that might impede traffic flow.

Rooms should also be thoroughly aired and as fresh as possible — particularly if you have pets or someone in your family is a smoker.

Vacate the Premises for the Day

Your realtor will recommend that you leave the premises during the open house to help make prospective buyers feel as comfortable and relaxed as possible. If you're in the house, purchasers are likely to be more intimidated and reluctant to give your home the thorough viewing it deserves.

You want people to fully appreciate all the

attributes your home has to offer — and they may not feel like opening closets and cupboards or talking about decorating possibilities if you're in the house.

Make arrangements for you, your children and pets to have a day-long outing during the open house. (After all, you don't want Fido jumping on or barking at prospective buyers — and you certainly don't want purchasers to mistakenly let fluffy, your indoor cat, out the back door.)

Secure Valuables

Before you leave, put all personal property like jewelry, medications and fragile items well out of harm's way, in a safe, secure storage place. Don't leave any money lying around. To make sure everything is secure and ready to receive visitors, quickly inspect your home with your realtor just before you leave.

Realtors know that it's important to control traffic in and out of open houses and to have a register for all visitors to sign.

If you have any particular concerns about the open house, don't be afraid to talk to your realtor to see what suggestions he or she might have.

Tips for Buyers

On the flip side of the coin, if you're a buyer

attending open houses, keep in mind that viewing an open house is a privilege.

Also keep in mind that the realtor on duty is acting as host of the vendor's behalf. The salesperson should be treated with the same respect you would give the vendor.

When asked to identify yourself at an open house, you should sign the guest register. The vendor has the right to request that you sign the register, providing your name, address and telephone number.

It's also important to refrain from wandering through the house without the salesperson present. If the realtor is busy, wait until he or she is able to show you around. After all, the real estate professional will be able to point out the features of the home and answer any questions you may have.

When attending open house, it's also important to clarify up front who you're working with — particularly if you've been viewing homes with another real estate professional. Keep in mind that the realtor you're working with has gone to a lot of effort on your behalf and won't get paid a commission if you switch to another realtor.

This article is provided by local realtors and the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA) for the benefit of consumers in the real estate market.

Maintain the feel of summer year round with house plants

With the fall season just around the corner, you may want to take some time out from the joys of outdoor living to think about ways of making your indoor world a little brighter and more cosy this fall and winter.

Without a doubt, house plants are a perfect way to make your home cheerier, healthier (especially if you use plants which help cut down on air pollutants), more decorative and certainly more colorful. Flowering plants in particular can help you maintain the feel of summer all year round indoors — even though the temperature outside may plummet to sub-zero temperatures.

Plants are also a relatively inexpensive way to decorate and can help fill in difficult gaps and camouflage certain items — like radiators, or awkward, unusual areas where nothing else seems to fit.

On the other hand, plants can also be used to highlight special areas of your home, like alcoves, large windows and landings. They can even be placed along the sides of staircases, for a dramatic effect. (Of course, this may not be practical at all, if you have youngsters or pets.)

If you have a finished, heated solarium, you have the perfect place to create a tropical oasis — even in the dead of winter. Almost any plant will thrive in this type of atmosphere, and with some wicker furniture and colorful cushions, you can create a special tropical oasis where you can escape from the harsh realities of winter.

If you already have a number of house plants and merely want to augment your existing

stock, take a good look at what you've got and what seems to thrive under certain conditions. Consider light factors, humidity levels and heat. Some plants love low light conditions, while others need a certain amount of direct daily sunlight.

If you're starting from scratch, think carefully about areas of your home where you'd like to put plants. If they seem totally impractical because of light conditions — or simply too difficult to reach for regular maintenance, consider some artificial greenery as a viable alternative. Today's silk plants look so authentic, most people have to touch them to see if they're real or not. If you choose this route, shop around and compare prices. There are many stores available today which specialize solely in artificial plants.

A tree or grouping of tall plants can also serve as an attractive and effective room divider. For example, a ficus tree or group of peace lilies can look particularly appealing.

When choosing plants, look for colors, textures and shapes that appeal to you, then check with garden store staff to see what types of conditions these plants prefer. (Many plants should come with small cards which describe the amount of light, water and fertilizer required.)

Obviously, a sun-loving plant like a cactus won't appreciate being placed in a dark corner. On the other hand, don't expect a shade-loving plant or low-light plant to thrive in intense sunlight. Also keep in mind that certain plants such as philodendrons, peace lilies and Chinese evergreens are supposed to help filter out air pollutants.

When purchasing your plants, check the leaves for any signs of damage or insects. Many shops carry guarantees with their plants, so hang onto your sales receipt. If you see roots shooting out of the drainage holes in the bottom of the plant pot, it's a good idea to transplant the plant into a larger container with more soil.

Most plant varieties require watering when the soil no longer has any moisture that can be squeezed out of it. However, plants like cacti should only be watered when the surface soil becomes quite dry. Never over-water or under-water your plants.

Fertilizing can also give plants a boost. Check with your local gardening centre, or consult some library books to see what the experts recommend. Again, it's important not to overdose your plants with fertilizer.

JOYCE SCOTT REAL ESTATE JSR

JOYCE SCOTT
BROKER-OWNER
878-1526



SOLD

THE RIGHT PRICE!
Beautifully maintained 2 bdrm bungalow. Lovely interior completely modernized. Shows beautifully. Perfect for the first time buyers or retirees. Central to everything in town. \$122,000. Call Joyce Scott today!

TWO BEAUTIFUL HOMES ON RAVINE LOTS IN TOWN • NOW REDUCED



\$209,000
Gorgeous ravine lot in town! Move in condition, many extras including finished basement with brick fireplace, loads of upgrades. For details and to view call Joyce.

REDUCED



NEW PRICE \$224,900
Excellent condition with many upgrades for comfort including a beautiful addition on main floor and basement. Picture perfect ravine lot. For details on this lovely property call Joyce.

2.88 ACRES
Town water & hydro to the lot line
\$94,000.

Independent Real Estate Brokers Association MEMBER
MLSR MEMBER

CHRISTIE & WOODS REAL ESTATE LTD.
189 Main Street, Milton

LISTINGS REQUIRED IN TOWN
PRICE RANGE \$150-200,000
THINKING OF SELLING?
CALL YVONNE 878-2095



BEAUTIFULLY DECORATED TOWNHOUSE
Why pay rent? Move in condition!
3 bedrooms, finished recreation room.
Asking \$119,900. Call Yvonne



HANDYMAN SPECIAL
3 bedroom bungalow, living room with fireplace, situated 5 miles s. of Milton on over 1/2 acre. Asking \$129,000. Call Yvonne 878-2095.



98 ACRE FARM REDUCED
60 ac. workable, balance very scenic rolling land with forest, stream & springs. Stoe home (circa 1840) features 4 bed, separate dining & living room, updated windows, kitchen & bathroom; original bank barn with 9 horse stalls, finished workshop. Call Yvonne at 878-2095.



CAPE COD
Nestled on 1 acre with pond. Huge kitchen with ample cupboards and breakfast nook. Hardwood floors & air tight stove. Call Cameron Gall 878-2095 or 876-4532.

50 beautiful wooded acres with ponds.
Good building sites. Call Yvonne.

Yvonne Christie - Broker/Owner
(905) 878-2095

Millcreek Adult Community
Affordable Living in a Modular Home Park
One Bedroom Home as low as \$59,900
Two Bedroom, Two Bathroom
MODEL ON DISPLAY



Millcreek
(519) 763-1048
Aberfoyle, Ontario

