

YOUR HOME

MARCH
2009

TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

Go Green, Save Green

You don't have to build from scratch to have a greener home. These quick and easy home fixes will shrink your consumption and your monthly bills.

RATE IT. Look for Energy Star-rated products. This government program helps people make energy-efficient choices, which can lead to savings of up to a third of energy costs.



SWITCH THE LIGHTS. Compact fluorescent light bulbs use up to 75 percent less energy than traditional bulbs. Replace them in highly used fixtures such as porch lights, bathroom vanities and office lamps.

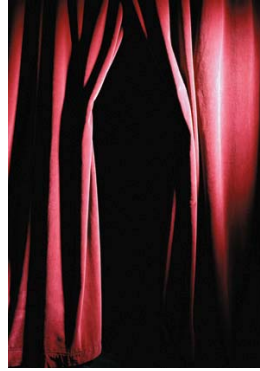
GO WITH THE FLOW. Use low-flow showerheads and consider installing low-flow toilets to reduce water usage and save on water-heating costs.

PLUG IN, TURN OFF. Use a power strip for your home office or home entertainment center. Even in standby mode, consumer electronics — which account for 15 percent of household electricity — use a little juice, so turn the power strip off when you can.

COOL IT. Turn the water temperature for your washing machine or dishwasher down to 120° F to cut water-heating energy consumption.

SEAL IT. Search for hidden air leaks in your attic, basement or crawl space, and seal them with caulk, spray foam or weather stripping. Home sealing can be an inexpensive way to cut energy consumption by up to 10 percent.

Sources: www.energystar.gov, www.eere.energy.gov



Stage Coach

Even if your bowling trophies and musty shag carpet feel like home to you, they might turn off potential buyers. That's why staging — as seen on TV — has become a popular technique to help sell houses. But home staging is more than just redecorating; it's a way to help potential buyers feel like your house could be their next home.

It might seem counterintuitive to spend money on a home that you're leaving, but the cost might be worth it. According to StagedHomes.com, a leading home-staging organization, the final sale price on staged homes increased an average of 3 percent versus those that were not. Staged homes also typically spend 80 percent less time on the market.

Staging doesn't have to be expensive or overwhelming. If you don't know where to begin, talk to your REALTOR®, who can offer advice or help you find a professional stager. A basic consultation with a home staging professional might cost \$200 to \$400 depending on the market, but some are complimentary.

If you want to do it yourself, start outside. Clean the sidewalk and driveway and, if possible, add a fresh coat of paint to the house, garage door or railings. Use potted plants and new light fixtures for flash at the front door.

Inside, keep things clean and clutter-free. Pick impersonal art over family pictures. Purge unnecessary belongings, and stow what you can't throw away in decorative baskets. Sparsely arrange furniture away from walls. Add accents with mirrors, plants, rugs, pillows, colorful cookbooks, fruit bowls and other accessories. Focus on lighting, from soft bedroom lamps to natural light from open drapes.

Sources: HGTV.com, StagedHomes.com



fast fact >>>>

Spring Cleaning Tip

Think of Benjamin Franklin when you "spring forward" on March 8. Many credit a humorous essay he wrote in 1784 as a source of the idea for Daylight Saving Time.

Source: www.realsimple.com



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Clear Choice

If you feel a draft every time you walk by your windows, it's probably time to replace them. Likewise, windows that stick, glass that is cold to the touch, and costly energy bills despite new insulation and other home repairs are all signs that you've put off replacing them for too long.

Whether you intend to buy and install the windows yourself or have a pro do it for you, do the research first. Know your window type: double-hung windows that slide up and down, casement windows that swing out, awning windows, etc. Then pick your preferred framing material, such as wood, vinyl or fiberglass. Each has its advantages and disadvantages, from style to price to longevity.

You must also consider where you live; energy needs in the Northwest

differ from those in the Deep South. Ratings for energy efficiency, light visibility, air leakage and other factors are available from government programs such as Energy Star, publications such as *Consumer Reports* and industry sources such as the National Fenestration Rating Council.

Armed with the right information, you can shop smarter. Have a target price in mind, get estimates and have the patience to wait for the best possible price.

Sources: www.energystar.gov, www.nfrc.org



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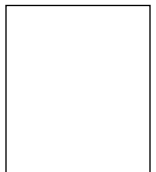
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