



Taft West, Director of Property Management Training

Boost curb appeal with spring landscaping

First the bad news: If you neglect spring landscaping, your property's curb appeal will suffer for the rest of the year.

Now the good news: Spring landscaping doesn't have to be nearly as much work if you invest time in caring for the exterior flowers, trees, shrubs and lawn. This care in spring will result in terrific curb appeal, helping to retain current tenants and to attract prospects to your property throughout the year.

SPRING LANDSCAPING TASKS

■ **Clear away dead plants and trees.**

Trim overgrown hedges and mow the lawn. Turn the soil in existing flowerbeds. Wash down the driveway and remove stains, if any. As you survey your lawn in spring, see if there are any matted patches where the grass blades are all stuck together. This can be caused by a disease known as "snow mold." New grass may have difficulty penetrating these matted patches. But a light raking will be sufficient to solve the problem.

■ **Power wash the exterior of your property.**

You can rent a power washer at your local home improvement store for about \$50. This will freshen up your existing exterior. Do repaint the trim, however. Consider a new color, one that will brighten up the existing color.

■ **If your front door is in bad shape, replace it.**

If it's functional but dull, repaint or add new stain. If the door is fine, but your entryway is dull, consider adding ornamentation. Clean up or replace your porch light. Place two large planters or pots to either side of your doorway. You can often find them on sale at the end of the season. Be sure your stoop or porch is clean and stain-free. Consider painting the stair railings the same color as the trim.

■ **For your flowerbeds, choose a mix of annuals and perennials.**

Plant the perennials farther apart and mix in the annuals between them. The perennials will continue to bloom for a few years, but as their name implies, the annuals will need replacing every year. The annuals will keep your garden looking fresh and the perennials will save you money.

■ **Kill any weeds in the lawn and reseed.**

If your lawn is subjected to high levels of foot traffic year after year, it may eventually start to show signs of soil "compaction." That term describes soil which, deprived of proper aeration, suffers from excessive water runoff and poor conditions for plant rooting. The basic idea behind lawn aeration is that, like you, your lawn and the soil under it need to breathe. The process of lawn aeration can be as simple as poking holes in the soil throughout the lawn. You should also rake *deeply*, rather than just skimming the autumn leaves off the top of the lawn.

If you can't afford to replace any trees that you had to remove, fill in the holes and seed.

My next column will include more ideas to increase your property's curb appeal.

Until next time,
Taft