

## **GOING GREEN: PLANT SOME JOY AROUND YOUR HOME**

Dear Friend:

Your home is your oasis, your sanctuary from the outside world. Creating a beautiful landscape in and around your home can help promote a serene, relaxing environment. In addition, landscaping can provide financial, health and emotional benefits.

By simply improving your landscape, you can add to the value of your home. With the recent trend in home design television programs, you can easily find many landscaping options for every budget. Indoor plants can actually improve your health. Live plants are a natural way to rid your home of toxins and pollution. And surrounding yourself with plants and creating outdoor retreats can help reduce stress and provide areas to relax with your friends and family.

This month's flyer may plant a few seeds in your mind on how to improve your home's landscaping. You'll find out how to break down what may seem to be an overwhelming project into smaller, more manageable tasks. You'll also learn how to bring the outdoors inside with potted plants. The main thing to remember, whether you have a green thumb or not, is to have fun!

And, of course, should you desire some expert help in creating or implementing your plan, I have some great resources that I would be happy to refer you to. Just give me a call!

This month I also have some helpful tips of my own that I want to be sure to share with you. Please check out the back of this letter for more...

Sincerely,

***Helping to reduce stress in many ways...*** whenever you come across people who need a service provider, or who are thinking about buying or selling a home, and would appreciate the excellent service that I'm committed to, please call or email with their name, mailing address and business number. I will gladly follow up and take great care of them.

As you know, one of my goals is to share good information. Whether packaged professionally as the enclosed article is, or whether it's just something I have come across in my own life, communication is a good thing! And I have three very diverse things to share with you this month.

First is just some preventive maintenance advice from the Maytag Repairman. (Yes, unfortunately, we needed to call them. Teensy nails are easy to miss in pockets and they make a doozy of a racket when they escape said pockets and work their way into the washing machine pump. We were warned that dimes can do the same thing... apparently they're just light enough to 'float.) But watching out for dimes and nails isn't the advice since that's pretty darned intuitive. The repairman told me that the best way to keep the inner workings of your washing machine clean is to run an empty load with 1 cup white vinegar and 1 tablespoon *automatic* dishwasher detergent once a month.

Next, have you heard about Kiva? Kiva is a non-profit organization that has "taken the idea of microfinance and upgraded it for the Web." Kiva lets you connect with and loan money to unique small businesses in the developing world. By choosing a business on Kiva.org, you can "sponsor a business" and help the world's working poor make great strides towards economic independence. Throughout the course of the loan (usually 6-12 months), you can receive email journal updates from the business you've sponsored. As loans are repaid, you get your loan money back. "If you've got even \$25 to lend, you can point and click and become part of a global village promoting sustainable development." "At Kiva.org, a schoolteacher in Kansas can partner with an expert seamstress in countries like Kenya, Mexico and Ecuador to jump-start a tailor shop." This information and quotes from the Kiva.org website.

And lastly, a caution for any of you with friends or family members taking blood thinning medication such as Cumidin and Warfarin. Besides all of the normal precautions while taking the drugs, please be very cautious if the person has any kind of a fall. My dad stumbled last month, just dropping one knee to the ground, and thought all was fine. Drove himself home and only went to a health clinic because Mom wanted him to. By the time he was seen by the doctor at the clinic, his knee was the size of a football. The reason I'm telling you all of this is that the clinic did not realize that he'd broken a blood vessel under the skin – they thought he'd sprained or broken his knee and sent him to the emergency room. Where those doctors did figure out what had really happened, but still they treated the injury as they would a normal wound. Three weeks later, after his orthopedic surgeon took one look at the now huge and unhealed wound, with the dead blood still trapped beneath, he finally was sent to a "Wound Center." Now the first actions were to undo what the traditional approach had created before they could start really start the healing process. Please, just remember that people on blood thinners will have complications that traditional medical staff may not know how to deal with. Ask questions. Ask for specific experts who have dealt with that kind of issue before. Even now, one of my father's other doctors wants him to have plastic surgery on the knee. And the Wound Center doctor just shook her head and said 'we know how to heal this for you. You don't need to create another wound in trying to resolve this one.' Again, please lean into the experts! And make sure that's who you are really talking to before you agree to a course of action.

# Inside, Outside, All Around!

## Invigorating your home with plantscaping

Whether you live in a 3-bedroom ranch, a condo or a turn of the century estate, a little greenery can go a long way toward improving the image that your home projects. Consider this: according to the American Nursery & Landscape Association, landscaping can add 7% to 15% to a home's value—and that's true for condo and townhome owners as well. Patios, fountains, decks and foliage all add value to your home, while providing you and your family with recreation areas, privacy and a serene environment. Most importantly, the natural environment that you create in and around your home serves to create your visitors' first impression of your home (especially when it's on the market).

### Steps to landscaping your home

Whether you're looking to grow some visual drama on your average urban plot or completely reconstruct a yard that hasn't been touched since the mid-80s, here are some guidelines to help get you started.

#### 1. Gather your thoughts

**Brainstorm, take notes and answer the questions below:**

- What do you want to achieve with your plants, yard, deck, etc.? Are you preparing your home for sale or simply aiming to beautify your home for personal reasons?
- Are you aiming for a complete overhaul of your exterior or simple cosmetic upgrades?

Sometimes simply replacing a few overgrown bushes, painting the shutters and purchasing a small potted tree for your front entry is all you need to refresh your home's image. Don't be afraid to think big. By building your wish list for big-ticket items into your long-range plantscaping plan, you can begin to budget and plan for them now.

#### 2. Check your limitations

**Determine your budget.**

Many experts plan the landscape of a home as a multi-year project, which can help spread costs and work over several years instead of just one summer. With such a plan, you can plant your trees and annuals in year one, and by the time you finish your deck in year five, it will be surrounded by mature greenery.

#### Assess your available land and features.

How much space do you have, and how much sun do those areas get? Picture how these spaces should be connected or separated for efficient use.

#### 3. Create a plan

Here's where the hopes and dreams laid out in step one meet the reality that you defined in step two.

#### Draw it out.

Make a pencil layout of the areas you have to work with, showing the house/condo, balconies and windows (for window boxes), driveway, etc. Note where you want to eventually add plants and trees, and draw in the water features and patios that you plan to install.

#### Research costs.

Make a list of each of the above items and determine the cost associated with obtaining and installing each of them. Balance this against your budget and determine when you will tackle each step in the process.

Although this step is the most complex, it can be enjoyable if you are willing to accomplish your goals in stages. Be realistic about how much you are capable of doing in a year, and when your job is complete, you won't regret the time you invested in doing the job right.

#### 4. Consult with the pros

As you plan, design and build your landscape, don't be shy about asking for professional advice. Ask family members and neighbors for referrals on landscape

professionals that they trust. Choose someone who listens and seems open to your ideas. A professional is especially valuable if you're dealing with a job that requires permitting. In addition, working with a pro can save you money in the long run.



# Bringing the Outdoors In

Enjoy the life and energy of plants, even in the smallest of spaces.

Even if you don't own acres of property, you can still enjoy the presence and benefits of plants or a garden in a small space. If you're one of millions of Americans who rents, owns a condo or simply doesn't have a yard, there are still plenty of opportunities for plantscaping in every window, balcony and corner of your abode.

## The Benefits of Indoor Gardening

- Indoor gardens create vibrant, inviting spaces and can provide year-round enjoyment (unlike an outdoor plant in the dead of winter).
- Houseplants clean and clear the air in your home. According to a study by NASA, indoor plants along with carbon plant filters can help improve the air quality in your home.



- With a pinch of creativity, container garden arrangements and terrariums are a colorful way of providing living art in your home.
- If the above reasons aren't enough, consider this: plants provide a living, human touch that other interior elements just can't match.

## The Needs of Indoor Plants

In designing your indoor greenery paradise, remember that potted plants have different requirements than their ground-dwelling relatives. Help them thrive by following the tips below.

### Be consistent.

Read up on the plants that you purchase, and understand how much light and water they require and what temperatures suit them best. The more stable environment that you can provide for your leafy pets, the healthier they will be.



### Feeding time.

Since potted plants have limited soil resources, it's crucial to get into the habit of fertilizing your indoor friends on a regular basis. Use liquid fertilizer, a special soil mix or fertilizing sticks to keep them healthy.

### Room to grow.

As your baby blossoms outgrow their initial pots, transplant them into larger containers to keep their roots from growing out through the pot's drainage holes and coiling up around the container's edges.

## Indoor Plants and Feng Shui

Houseplants are an integral component of the feng shui approach to a healthy home by providing life and vitality to your indoor environment. According to feng shui, plants connect us to the natural world and increase the flow of positive energy throughout our home. To take full advantage of the feng shui philosophy when it comes to your indoor garden, consider the following:

- Choose plants that have round or soft edges over spiky, more aggressive-looking species.
- Get rid of sick or dying plants to avoid negative energy. It is better to have no plants at all than ones that are sick.
- Create a positive impression and energize the entry of your home by placing a plant or floral arrangement near your front door.
- In feng shui, the angles and corners so abundant in Western architecture are seen as dumping grounds for

negative energy. In order to allow energy to flow freely throughout your home, place plants or indoor trees in the corners of a room.

- Conceal electronic equipment—it gives off an artificial energy as opposed to the natural energy of plants. Drape or hang a potted plant near your computer or stereo equipment, or place a plant that can be easily moved in front of the television to counter negative energy.
- No matter where you place them, know that the best way to enhance your home's feng shui with plants is simply just to have them.

