

# Put on your garden gloves and make that sale

Many home owners forget that a well-kept and lovingly tended garden can make a world of a difference to how quickly they can sell their house and what price a prospective buyer will pay for it.

## First impressions are paramount



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When sellers put their home on the market, they usually devote a lot of time to making their house look appealing to prospective buyers. Clutter is cleared, rooms are given a new lick of paint and each room is cleaned till the house sparkles. But, "a beautiful garden puts people's minds at ease, showing prospective buyers that the property as a whole has been taken good care of," says Jason Shaw, branch manager of the Pam Golding Properties (PGP) Fourways office.

"It makes sense that if an attractive garden has been nurtured by the owner, then the rest of the home will have been well looked after too. This is supported by the fact that there tends to be more sales of property in the summer months, when gardens look their best. Furthermore, an attractive garden adds 'kerb appeal' and creates a favourable first impact on entering the property," he adds.

PGP Fourways is so convinced that gardens and kerb appeal are important to the overall impression of homes and suburbs that towards the end of each year it holds a competition for the most attractive verges in the area, spanning from Sunninghill to North Riding. There are winners for both complexes and houses, so all residential properties are eligible.

## Tips from last year's winners



Fairfield Residential Estate: A beautiful garden puts people's minds at ease, showing prospective buyers that the property as a whole has been taken good care of.

The two 2013 winners for best verge in front of a house were Dalveen Brophy of Cedar Lakes and Pat and Tim Spiller. Although Pat and Tim don't own their house in Fairfield Residential Estate, they have nevertheless put a great deal of time and effort into their garden and verge. "We emphasise features such as birdfeeders and wind chimes, and use only indigenous plants," notes Tim. "Indigenous plants are an excellent choice as they are drought resistant and so they look good even when the weather is very dry."

The Spillers also believe that a great garden needn't cost a fortune. "All the plants in our garden and on our verge are from cuttings which friends gave us," Pat explains. "You can also make very attractive features from inexpensive elements like rocks and

pebbles."

One of the two winners of the PGP Fourways' verge competition for complexes and estates last year was Castellet Estate in Broadacres. Brenda Hawkins, one of the members of the Homeowners' Association of Castellet Country Estate, strongly believes that the verges on the outside of complexes/estates are particularly important as they entice potential buyers. "First impressions are paramount," she says.

Brenda finds that letters and emails encouraging home owners in the complex or estate can go a long way towards ensuring that the gardens and verges of each property are well kept. "An eye-catching verge in front of every home benefits everyone as it creates an upmarket and pleasant environment to live in. It also definitely contributes to the value of our properties," notes Brenda.

Janine Kusters, a trustee of the Home Owners' Association at Abbington Estate in Magaliessig, another PGP verge winner for 2013, agrees that having many attractive green spaces in an estate creates an enjoyable atmosphere for the residents.

"A well-kept verge in front of a complex is a good indication of the appearance of the property behind the gates. Our board of trustees is passionate and dedicated to running Abbington and our gardens are a reflection of this."

Janine's recipe for an impressive garden or verge is good planning, working closely with your gardening team and a bit of creativity. "There should be a nice mix between the colours, heights and types of plants and flowers planted and layout is key. Keep it simple - you don't have to spend too much to achieve results. It also makes sense to match your style of garden with the look and feel of your complex."

Shaw emphasises that your garden does not have to be big to make a big impression.

"Accent small gardens with features like benches and bird baths, which are not just aesthetically pleasing but serve a purpose too. If your property is on the market, you should see your garden as an extension of your home and pay it the attention it deserves. This will instil confidence in potential buyers and will assist you in securing better offers for your residence."



Abbington: An attractive verge adds 'kerb appeal' and creates a favourable first impact on entering the property.

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