



I N C O R P O R A T E D

Bright ideas for enhancing the value and beauty of your home!

Spring renewal for your home's exterior: irrigation, lighting, landscaping are all key

By Kathleen Wilson

Come every spring, we become a little more conscious of the way our home looks to all those who pass by. Often times it is out of our budget to repaint, or remodel the exterior of our home. Here are some great tight budget tips for dressing up the outside of your home

1. Stand out on your sidewalk and take a picture of your home from the street

Often times we do not really "see" what is there because we have become so accustomed to it. Take your photo to a copy shop and print out a few copies of it, blown up to fit the paper. Now you can spend some time drawing in your wish list for changes, add a fence, draw an arbor over your entry walk, add planters, and come up with some low cost ways to accomplish it! (Kind of a low cost version of that expensive software) This one step could save you a lot of time, money, and work, not to mention get you to the home you want in a much smoother fashion!

2. Consider learning some woodworking skills

With just a little education and a rented saw, you can build arbors and decorative fences for a fraction of what it would cost to have it installed. You can often get free instruction at your local home improvement center. Check out <http://www.hgtv.com> or <http://www.bhg.com> for some help. Now remember, if you can't afford to totally fence in your yard, or build a big gazebo, how about just adding a little decorative fence at the corners of the yard, and a simple decorative gate marking the entrance to your yard? It only takes a little to add a whole lot of character.

3. If you already have a concrete drive and walkway, and you find it boring, dress it up by lining it with brick

It doesn't cost much, and all it takes is a little elbow grease digging a trench to lay the brick in alongside the walkway, then pack the dirt back around them to hold in place, no

mortaring necessary for this! Another low cost option? Use porch paint and stamp a brick walkway with a large rectangular sponge. You can use a basket weave pattern, or lay it on the diagonal, whatever works for you!

4. Add shutters to your windows

Now, you don't have to buy those expensive premade ones that everyone else has, you can make simple ones yourself. You can use plywood and edge it in wood trim, then paint, or just hang a few vertical 1x2's 4 inches apart to form the a rectangular shape alongside your window, indicating shutters. You may be able to find much of this wood in scrap piles. Just make sure the pieces are not warped. Now paint with exterior trim paint, and watch the charm go up! Be sure to use galvanized screws or nails to build and hang them so they won't rust.

5. Finally, add some personal touches to your entry, to make your home more welcoming

Hand paint a wood plaque from the craft store with your family name or a favorite quote and hang it beside your front door. Add a wreath or a swag to your entry door. You can make one easily from a grapevine or straw wreath and add your own touches, some garden tools, silk flowers, small wood plaques with the family member's names, seashells, whatever represents your tastes.

Fill a planter with flowers or shade plants and place it right by your door to add life, add a chair or bench if you have room. If you have a table and a covered porch, don't be afraid to bring out candles, throw pillows, and even a throw rug to create your porch "room"! Just remember to use your creativity, add your personal touch, and use that elbow grease, and soon people will stop when they pass your home impressed, by your creativity!

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