GREEN from previous page

system, and a hybrid water heater), and a builder who embraced them both." This year's GHBT Green Home Tour is underway; it takes place today and tomorrow, noon to 5 p.m., at new and remodeled green certified homes throughout the area.

The 2016 GHBT Green Home Tour is a free self-guided event showcasing a variety of excellent examples of certified green home construction. Each home in the tour is inspected and third-party verified, making sure each home meets the minimum certification requirements established by the National Green Building Standard (NGBS).



SMART from previous page

to a property can either make or break a home sale.

Often, the owners of homes that are well kept on the interior are scarcely aware that their front doors look dingy, he says, because they habitually enter through a garage or back door. But those considering the purchase of your home will undoubtedly enter through the front.

"It's really cost-effective to improve the appearance of your front door. And it's usually an inexpensive fix," says Ottwein, a former president of the National Association of Exclusive Buyer Agents.

A thorough cleaning and removal of cobwebs in and around the front door is virtually free, but for the cost of a few cleaning supplies. And a door that merely suffers from peeling paint can usually be redone for no more than \$100.

Make sure you address malfunctioning door locks.

"It's ridiculous to force prospective buyers and their agent to have to struggle to enter your place for a showing," Rygiol says. "When your locks don't work, that conveys poor upkeep and causes buyers to fear that serious problems are hidden within the house."

Replacing broken or hard-to-open locks is usually inexpensive for sellers and worth every dime of the cost. And while they're at it, Rygiol recommends sellers also remove redundant locks.

Meanwhile, double-check that your doorbell is working perfectly.

"Like a malfunctioning lock, an outof-repair doorbell is a huge no-no for sellers," Rygiol says.

Focus on fine-looking landscaping for your property.

For those wishing to make a powerful impression on potential buyers, good landscaping is a must.

One common error committed by homeowners is to let their bushes and other plants grow too tall and too close to the front walls of their property.

"This obscures the view of the house from the street. The place looks cramped, as if the greenery has been shoehorned in," Ottwein says.

Creating the right landscaping

for your property doesn't require an expensive designer. But it may require the removal of trees that are positioned anywhere in the front yard so as to hide the home.

Replace bad odors with nice aromas.

As a former veterinarian, Ottwein has a soft spot for both dogs and cats. Yet he observes that pet odors can easily drive away buyers.

Homeowners with animals should get to the root of the problem of any pet odors via a thorough cleaning rather than trying to hide them with air fresheners.

"A lot of people try to use spray fresheners to cover over animal smells, cigarette smoke, or other bad odors. But air fresheners can be overwhelming and create a very negative impression, like a woman wearing too much perfume," Ottwein says.

Enhance your residence with flowers.

There's a good reason why flowers are the primary decor items used at weddings and other classy events. That's because flowers create a qualitative difference that no other design element can match, not even the most remarkable furnishings or works of art, Rygiol says.

Potted flowers add welcoming appeal when placed alongside the front door of a home. And bouquets of cut flowers can make an otherwise unremarkable home interior look extraordinary.

It can be pricey to keep your vases filled with fresh flowers throughout the period when your property is being shown for sale. But as Rygiol says, this can help create so positive an impression that many home sellers consider flowers their secret weapon.

"People can absolutely tell the difference between fresh-cut flowers and fakes. Given human nature, most buyers will touch flowers to confirm their impression. If the flowers are real, that speaks volumes about the desirability of the house they're visiting," he says.

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