

# HOT *Styling to sell* PROPERTY

Planning to sell your home? Here's what the experts say you need to do before the 'for sale' sign goes up, ■ writes **LUISA VOLPATO**.

**S**can a TV guide and it's obvious that we're a nation of renovating and property junkies. From *The Block* to *Grand Designs*, *Better Homes & Gardens* and *Location Location Location*, it seems we're a little

obsessed with buying, selling and doing up property.

If you're serious about selling for the best possible return (really, who would want less?) then *Selling Houses Australia* on Foxtel's the LifeStyle Channel is probably the pick of the bunch for a how-to guide to what to do and what not to do (which is often the more amusing part).

On the show, host and property expert Andrew Winter, interior designer Shayna Blaze (who is also a judge on Channel Nine's *The Block*) and landscape designer Charlie Albone, team up to transform homes that no one wants to buy into saleable properties.

## STREET APPEAL

Making a good first impression is absolutely vital, says Andrew Winter, and creating street appeal is what is going to get people through the front door.

"For starters, make sure you have a clear and welcome entrance to entice buyers inside, and that means having one obvious front door," he says.

It is also important to create an inviting sense of arrival for potential buyers, says Andrew.

"Sounds obvious, but that's not always the case. To create a sense of arrival, use pots to frame the

front door. A newly painted door as well as matching blinds at the front of the house can also help create a smart first impression."

Above all else the house wants to look like it is a home and loved.

Nice plants or lawn, weed-free gardens and clean paintwork makes a house look well cared for and maintenance-free and that's what buyers want, says landscape designer Charlie Albone. He says most gardens normally just need a little care and attention, which shouldn't blow the budget.

## A LITTLE TLC

"At a minimum do some general tidying up," he says. "Make sure all pathways are clear and swept, the eaves are free of cobwebs, and if you want to give the impression the garden beds are low maintenance then weed them and add a layer of mulch on top.

"Cut back overgrown plants, trim hedges and remove dead leaves and tidy up or replace any broken, uneven or lifting pavers. Plant and garden maintenance really needs to be an ongoing job during the sale campaign."

Once inside, real estate agents often say that kitchens and bathrooms are what sell houses. But not just any old kitchen or bathroom, says Andrew.

## WHERE TO INVEST

"Buyers expect different standards across different price ranges and house styles. So a well-fitted flat-pack kitchen with laminated bench top and neutral



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## LIFESTYLE Staging your home to sell



When you're selling, neutrals are always the best way to go as soft whites, stone and yellows are the easiest to blend and co-ordinate with.



\*Season Seven of *Selling Houses Australia* on Foxtel's LifeStyle Channel airs Wednesday nights at 8.30pm.

tiles is all you need in a \$350,000 house targeted at first home buyers," says Andrew.

"Whereas at the other end of the scale, 40mm thick stone bench tops, numerous under bench sinks with sleek European taps, top of the range appliances, and more task and accent lighting than you would ever need, is the bare minimum a buyer would expect for a \$2,000,000 luxury pad.

"It's about giving a buyer what they want and expect—the quality and style of the kitchen and bathrooms should match the rest of the home."

Shayna says the areas to focus on are those that people want to do the least work on, so bathrooms and kitchens are always a good investment.

### RENOVATION RESCUE

"Of course this doesn't always mean a full renovation," says Shayna. "You can often get away with inexpensive changes like new handles, bench top, sink or taps, as well as covering over old or outdated splashbacks with new surfaces.

"We've done makeovers where we have painted tiles ourselves or brought in the professionals who spray an entire bathroom. The technology these days makes it very durable and cost effective and it does actually look good."

Besides the obvious areas that need work, keep an eye on the small jobs around the house too. Things like the dodgy light fitting, the door that doesn't close properly, and fraying edges of carpet will get noticed by buyers, says Shayna.

"A lot of people only finish their house when they are selling but it is essential to get these jobs done as no-one will want to take on other people's unfinished business," she says.

### STYLING TO SELL

Once the renovation or repair work is done then it

comes down to staging your home for sale which is all about creating a great impression and making the buyer feel like they want to live there.

"No one wants to see someone else's mess so you really need to tidy up all surfaces and clean out your cupboards. Yes, people will open the doors and they don't want to catch what's falling out of them! Cupboards and storage spaces that are overflowing make it look like there isn't enough storage.

### LET THERE BE LIGHT

"Along with space, buyers like light so if you don't have lots of natural light then put a few lamps around and switch them on during the inspections. They'll also create a nice ambiance in the room. Mirrors are also great to help reflect light and space in a room.

"Of course nothing freshens up a place like a brand new paint job. When you're selling, neutrals are always the best way to go as soft whites, stone and yellows are the easiest to blend and co-ordinate with. But if you feel a need for colour, paint a whole bedroom or study area a different colour from the main rooms as a break in the neutral scheme.

### FURNITURE AND LAYOUT

When it comes to furniture, decisions include what to keep, what to hire as well as the best layout.

"There is a fine line between having the room look too empty and over-filled," says Shayna.

"You just need to have enough pieces that show the function of the room without it feeling cluttered, then add some nice accessories to add texture and interest.

"I think people often underestimate the value of hiring furniture. You don't have to replace all your furniture with hire furniture but do consider investing in some nice pieces to finish the house off," says Shayna.

### SMELLING IS TELLING

"While things might look great, my biggest hate is what you can't actually see but you can smell. Have your carpets and rugs steam cleaned and ask them to put a scent in the cleaner. If you have pets you may even consider having them kept outside or away with friends for the duration of the selling campaign; the overwhelming smell of animals can be a major turnoff for some buyers.

"You want people to imagine themselves living in your home so put away the family photos, especially the oversized wedding pictures or baby photos staring down at you from the walls—that just takes people's focus away. What they should be looking at is a property that's been prepared to sell." **PS**