

A home inspection can clue you in to fixes before you put your house on the market

By Kathleen Alaks
of the Daily Courier

Getting ready to put your home on the market?

Home inspections are a routine part of the selling process. Most buyers, after all, won't commit to purchasing a place until there's been a thorough inspection to uncover any structural or safety issues.

And those issues will need to be fixed before the sale goes through — leading to delays in the selling process — or they could knock several thousand dollars off the asking price, or scare the buyer away altogether.

Finding and fixing those issues in advance, before putting your home on the market, can boost your home's value and should make the selling process go more smoothly, said Thorin Halvorson, a certified and licensed home inspector with Southern Oregon Home Inspections.

Halvorson has inspected thousands of homes over the past 17 years and said he routinely finds common problems that easily could have been fixed or dealt with before a home went on the market.

The most significant issue, he said, is basic maintenance, the kinds of things that homeowners should be doing on a regular basis, but often overlook.

"Touching up exterior paint, cleaning out the gutters, maintaining the landscape, keeping vegetation trimmed and away from the house," Halvorson said. "Those kinds of things are easily taken care of up front."

Look at your home objectively and try to identify things you may not notice on a day-to-day basis, but that will stand out to a less sentimental eye.

Clean or change furnace filters and stove exhaust fan filters.

Make sure all light switches are func-



Thorin Halvorson, home inspector and owner of Southern Oregon Home Inspections, checks out the roof of a new home still under construction on May 1 in northwest Grants Pass. He suggests an inspection before homeowners put their place on the market.

Photos by ELAYNA YUSSEN/Daily Courier

tional and any burned out light bulbs replaced.

Tighten or replace loose door knobs, cabinet handles and hinges.

Check grout and caulking around tubs, showers and sinks. Repair or replace damaged window screens.

Clean moss and debris off the roof. Repair any damaged or missing roofing.

Do your best to eliminate any unpleasant odors, such as pet dander or litter boxes.

"You want to do deep cleaning and

decluttering," Halvorson said. "You want to clean it up so that anyone who walks in can envision living there."

Home buyers tend to pay close attention to major appliances, such as hot water heaters and heating and cooling systems, Halvorson said.

"The big ticket items are what home buyers look at, things that might cost them a lot later on."

Check all plumbing and pipes for any leaking or water damage. Have major appliances serviced, if necessary.

Examine all electrical outlets and light switches. Look for frayed or exposed wiring or the use of multiple extension cords.

Take an objective look at the workmanship behind any do-it-yourself repairs or home improvement projects that have been done around the house.

When it comes to home repairs, Halvorson said homeowners tend to take short cuts, doing something either inexpensively

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Halvorson checks an electrical outlet outside a new home still under construction.

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or shoddily just to get it done, not considering the long-term implications.

"Just because you made something work, does not mean it's safe," he said. "There's a difference between making it work and making it right."

Also, don't forget to look at places you don't normally get into regularly, such as the garage, the attic and the crawlspace.

"There are often issues in those places," Halvorson said, such as dry rot or wood pest damage.

The more a seller can deal with all these issues before the house goes on the market or into escrow, the smoother the selling process will likely be, Halvorson said.

He suggests a pre-listing home inspection, having the home inspected before ever listing it for sale.

"That puts you in a position where you decide how you want to proceed," Halvorson said, "whether to deal with problems in advance or leave it up to the buyer. A pre-listing inspection can save you a lot of headaches and a lot of time."

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"They're pretty perfect," Sherry said. "Everybody seems to like them. They're fun plants."

Sherry said she doesn't play favorites, but she mentioned in particular her pregnant onion plant (*Albuca bracteata*) and firesticks plant (*Euphorbia tirucalla* 'Sticks on Fire').

Firesticks lives up to its name with pencil-shaped, leafless stems in green, yellow and red. Pregnant onion plants are also aptly named with long, skinny, arching leaves that emerge from a softball-sized bulb growing above the soil. Both are houseplants as are two other keepers, the familiar jade plant and aloe.

For her indoor succulents, Sherry uses the north or east windows where the plants get bright but not direct sun. She waters them about once a month, sometimes even less. She'll stick her finger down an inch or so into the pot. If it's moist, she leaves it. Too much water will cause the roots to rot. She doesn't fertilize her succulents and they aren't bothered by pests.

Outdoors, the job of looking after hardy succulents is just as carefree. With new plants, she puts them in the shade for a day or two to let them scar over before planting. Then she pulls off the dead, outside leaves, uses a pencil to make a hole and sticks the plant in the ground in a spot that gets full sun.

"Then water it and leave," she said. "The outdoor plants take care of themselves once they're established."

The routine indoors is just as easy. Sherry uses cactus mix in pots with drainage holes. Or she'll make her own mix using regular potting soil and perlite or peat moss to lighten it up.

A few months ago, her cat knocked over a donkey tail plant. Sherry saw all the pieces and decided to see how easy they'd be to propagate. Using her potting mixture, she filled a seed tray, making sure it had drainage holes. She stuck in some of the broken leaves, watered lightly and walked away. Within a few weeks, leaves appeared. After a few months, it was time to transplant the babies into pots.

"That's all you have to do," Sherry said. "They really are the easiest plants you can grow. I've known that for a long time."



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