

Your Yard

A Shrub Makeover On A Budget

(NAPSA)—Curb appeal, according to the National Association of Realtors, helps sell about 49 percent of existing homes. If you're a prospective buyer, how nice a home looks from the street will determine whether you take a closer look.

"Your shrubbery has a huge impact on curb appeal," says Bayer Advanced garden expert Lance Walheim, co-author of "Landscaping for Dummies." "If your shrubs look healthy and well manicured, that sends a message that you care about your home."

Here are some tips to improve the look of your shrubbery as inexpensively as possible:

- **Shrubs are the backbone of the landscape:** They can be planted in curved planting beds to soften the geometry of the house. Shrubs should be organized by height, with low growers in front and the tall growers in the back. They should be used as backdrops for flower borders and to hide heating and cooling units.

- **Avoid overcrowding:** Shrubs that are placed too close to foundations can cause structural damage, crowd other plants, hide windows and appear out of balance with your house. You may have to prune or transplant some of the shrubs.

- **Prune before spring growth begins:** Remove all dead, diseased or injured branches and those that look out of place. If the shrub is still too large, remove some of the oldest branches. Be sure the tips of your shrubs are pruned back from the edge of your



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natural area to avoid ripping them up with your edger.

- **Insect control:** If the leaves on your shrubs are discolored, wilted, or have holes or rough edges, you probably have an insect problem. Bayer Advanced™ 12-Month Tree & Shrub Protect & Feed (bayeradvanced.com) kills shrub-eating insects such as aphids, Japanese beetles, leafminers and other listed pests, and prevents new infestations for up to a year. It also has a slow-release fertilizer. Be sure to read and follow label directions. (This product isn't registered in Long Island, New York.)

- **Mulch:** To reduce weeds, conserve moisture and insulate the soil around shrubs, use one to two inches of organic bark or pine needles.

Be sure to water established shrubs deeply (18 to 24 inches) during dry spells. Stick a narrow wooden dowel in the ground to determine just how deep the water went. Allow plants to partially dry out before watering again.