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Placement of Trees Key to Creating Privacy

For many years, that five-foot fence with the piece of lattice on top combined with a few strategically placed trees was the default method for creating privacy from the neighbours.

Then houses started to change. Bigger houses on smaller lots became the norm. More square footage on the inside meant that houses were being built taller and wider, closer to the property lines. As a result, the traditional fence was no longer enough when it came to backyard privacy.

So now what?

Trees are still a great option to create privacy, but you have to do it right! In my opinion, so many straight rows of cedars have been planted in Canada that they don't even look odd anymore.

The other challenge with evergreens is that conifers are pyramidal in shape, meaning that they are wide at the bottom, and small on top...right where you want the privacy. Instead of planting a row of cedars, try combining them with a few fast growing deciduous trees. I love using any of the poplar family like aspens or Tulip tree with my evergreens. Here is how I add great privacy using a row of trees.

- Create a line with landscape paint, string or even a hose on the ground.
- Start at one end of your row by placing an evergreen on the backside of your line.
- The next evergreen is planted 2-3' down the row on the front side of the line.
- Third tree in the row is deciduous, again on the backside of the line. 2 more evergreens on the front, followed by another poplar on the backside and so on for the length of your privacy hedge.
- The leaf trees fill in the empty spaces around the top of the conifers and by alternating types of trees along the row, it looks visually appealing in your yard.

If you can't wait for trees to grow, try a pergola which is my favourite way of creating privacy from those two-story houses that look down into your yard.

Pergolas are simply four posts and some cross pieces of wood that loosely create a roof over a deck or patio. The reason that these structures work so well is actually a bit of a visual trick.

The pergola overhead provides the eye a visual distraction. It gives the eye something to focus on and even though the neighbours may still be able to see into the yard, your guests don't notice them because of the pergola. The one down side of pergolas is the cost to install. Consider a pergola as a true investment in your home.

Not sure where you need the most privacy? Try standing on your deck or patio and really take a good look around you. Who do you see? If you can see your neighbours, then your neighbours can see you! Try some of my suggestions at creating privacy in your space and enjoy this summer in your private sanctuary.

<http://www.lfpress.com/2017/07/13/placement-of-trees-key-to-creating-privacy>



A Strong Finish for July Home Sales

The London and St. Thomas Association of REALTORS® (LSTAR) announced 1,002 homes were sold in July, the best July monthly total in 10 years and an increase of 1.2% over the same period last year. July 2007 holds the all-time July monthly record with 1,009 sales, since LSTAR began tracking sales data in 1978*. "This is an amazing year for real estate in our region. Although shy of the best July ever by a handful of units, home sales are still performing strongly, with year-to-date sales outpacing 2016 by almost 20 percent," said the President of LSTAR. "We are still seeing transactions involving out-of-town agents, but not at the levels we experienced in the spring. The activity is signifying we may be heading toward a more balanced marketplace. In the dog days of summer, we traditionally experience a quieter market, but that's not the case this year. Now's the time to get in touch with a REALTOR® to take advantage of this robust market.



August 1, 2017 - London & St. Thomas Association of REALTORS®.

Breakdown of July Residential Sales

2017 Average Prices (YTD)		
Type	Average Price	Increase from 2016
Detached	\$356,351	20.5%
Condo	\$232,854	16.3%
Total Residential	\$330,718	19.1%

Type	Units Sold	Average Price
2 Storey	223	\$455,870
Bungalow	167	\$279,125
Ranch	122	\$389,303
Townhouse Condo	108	\$207,693
High Rise Apt. Condo	56	\$225,802

St. Thomas saw a total of 85 homes sold, down 12.4% from the same time last year. The average home price in St. Thomas was \$267,106 down 4.7% from the previous month.

Do's and Don'ts for DIYers

Home makeover shows on TV make complicated projects look easy, like they can be completed in an hour episode. The reality is most DIY projects take a lot more work than what you see on TV. Yes, I accept that I'm partly to blame for that (but who wants to watch paint dry?) yet, do-it-yourself projects are as popular as ever.

As a pro, there are certain projects I won't even start without the right tools. So, I've put my top five list together for you to use as a guide to save your home ... from you!

Prepare your subfloors. I commend all of you who have the courage to install hardwood floors on your own. Give yourself a pat on the back.

An important step in your prep before installing your hardwood floors is to prepare your subfloors. First, do some research, there are some subfloors that may not be compatible with your choice of hardwood flooring. Make certain that your subfloors are flat, dry and clean.

Your finished floors may become susceptible to squeaking caused by glued-down floors that loosen over time, or an unstable floating floor. Trust me, that is not something that any home owner wants!

Remember, the goal is to not have to redo your work. In the end, this will save you time and money.

Electrical. The only tool you need for electrical work is a phone. This one should certainly go without saying, but for the safety of all the do-it-yourself-ers, electrical work should only be done by a certified electrician. Call one.

Plumbing. After electrical work, plumbing is another task that non-professionals should avoid. A misdiagnosis can lead to further damage, which means more money out of your pocket.

Although you may think you've temporarily solved your plumbing woes that solution may lead to further problems. Pick up the phone.

Permits. With the proliferation of You Tube and its many helpful videos, it's easy to think that you can accomplish anything. But if you want to take on a large scale project a permit is a must.

It would be a shame to invest all your blood, sweat and tears into your home improvement project only to have it fail inspection; do your research, get references and hire a licensed contractor.

Painting. Painting is simple, right? You're not afraid to take that project on, it's just paint. But using painter's tape is a must! The most common reason people stay away from the green adhesive is the time it takes to meticulously tape the area. Lining your baseboards, windows and ceiling with tape may feel like an eternity, but the finish will be worth it. If you want to save money by painting your home yourself, be sure to take the steps of a professional to ensure both straight lines and a clean finish.

My goal here is not to scare you away from taking on future home improvement projects, just to know when to hire a pro. We take on projects from creating the detailed architectural drawings to obtain permits, through to the finishing touches, so I've "corrected" my share of homes where mistakes could have been avoided.

Do the research, have the right tools for the job and know when to hire the right people.

Jane Lockhart is an award-winning designer and TV personality and is considered one of Canada's leading experts in the world of design.

Visit www.janelockhart.com.

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