

Kirsten Sharpe, Managing Broker/Owner  
574-339-7959 | kirstenjsharp@gmail.com  
The BEST Realtor for South Bend, Granger,  
and Mishawaka, Indiana.  
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## Improving Your Curb Appeal by Kirsten Sharpe

**Let's step outside** and take a fresh look at your home's exterior. You don't need to spend a fortune to enhance your curb appeal—just a few smart, strategic changes can make a big impact.

**1. Rethink the Yard Art:** Art is subjective, but when it comes to selling your home, less is more. Garden gnomes, holiday-themed geese, fallen-over solar lights, and whimsical stepping stones may feel charming to you, but they can appear as clutter to buyers. These distractions can pull focus away from your home and give potential buyers something to criticize. When it's time to list, pack them up and let your home take center stage.

**2. Check Gutters and Downspouts:** Proper water drainage is crucial to protecting your home's foundation. Loose gutters or missing downspouts are frequently flagged during home inspections. Don't wait for a buyer to call them out—get ahead of it. Fix sagging gutters, realign downspouts, and make sure water flows away from your home. It's a small investment that shows buyers your home is well-maintained.

**3. Remove Mold and Mildew:** The shaded, north-facing sides of homes are breeding grounds for algae, mold, and mildew. Take a walk around your house and look for greenish tint on siding, decks, walkways, or patios. Use products designed for the specific surface—whether it's wood, brick, stone, or concrete—and consider gentle power washing if appropriate. Just be cautious: too much pressure can do more harm than good. If you're not careful, you might find yourself repainting instead of just cleaning.

**4. Simplify Landscaping:** Landscaping doesn't have to mean hiring a professional or spending thousands. Sometimes, subtraction is the best addition. Overgrown or aging foundation plantings can block the view of your home and look unkempt. If you can't prune them without making them look sparse, consider removing them altogether. Add fresh mulch in their place and let buyers envision their own landscaping touches. A tidy, open exterior lets your home shine and appear more inviting.

### First Impressions Matter

Paying attention to your home's exterior sends a strong message to buyers—it says the home has been cared for inside and out. By addressing these simple yet effective curb appeal improvements, you'll set your house apart from the competition. Remember, you only get one chance to make a great first impression—make it count.

