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Realtor Q&A

Plants bring life to a home

Q: Does it really make a difference if I have real, fake or no plants at all in my home for staging? I don't have a green thumb and would end up killing them anyway. Any suggestions on what to do?

Answer Submitted by Karen F. Cormier, Broker and REALTOR® member of GMBR

A: I personally love real, live, healthy, green plants. They add "life" to a home! They fill up space, they have character, they add color, and they give off oxygen. You need to read the labels as to where in the house would be the best place to put them according to how much light each plant requires, how much water, care, etc. Yes, they are a lot of work, and you do need to have somewhat of a green thumb to keep them alive and healthy. The biggest mistake people make is letting them get so root-bound that the poor things choke to death, or they get over-watered and drown, or they get under-watered and starve to death. You must take good care of your plants to keep them healthy and happy. It doesn't hurt to talk nice to them either.

On the other hand, if you don't want to deal with the live ones, then I would strongly recommend you buy good quality silk plants. You can definitely tell the difference between cheaply made silk plants that look really fake versus the high quality silks that look real until you touch them. The best place I've been to so far to get great looking silk flowers and plants is Grenon's Trading Company on Route 101 in Bedford. Very, very nice merchandise. It's worth paying a little extra for quality. All of its inventory is now 50 percent off. It's worth the trip.

All you have to do to maintain your silk plants is dust them occasionally. You might have to arrange the leaves by pulling them out and bending them certain ways to make them look alive. Put them in nice containers filled with rocks for support and then top them off with bark nuggets or moss. Don't "deco-

► See Realtor Q&A,



Inside: Feature Home of the Week

Beaver Pond Estates
Have you been looking for that perfect Lakes Region weekend get-away? Or maybe you are in the market for your first home? Look no further than Beaver Pond Estates in Laconia,

New Hampshire. Information photos, Page F3

BRADY SULLIVAN
PROPERTIES

Former college campus draws interest

By MELANIE PLENDIA
Union Leader Correspondent

ANTRIM — After a few months on the market, the 400-acre former Hawthorne College campus is already attracting potential buyers.

The owners of the Maharishi Enlightenment Center, the campus's last incarnation, originally wanted to renovate it and reopen it as an all-boys private school focusing on transcendental meditation.

"They had planned to have 40 students the first year," said Peter Moore, town planner for Antrim. He said that the economy forced the Iowa-based group to decide to sell the campus instead.

The property at 100 North Branch Road is ensconced in lush forest. It's bordered on the northern end by Bagley Pond, of which 680 feet is part of the property and on the southern end by River Road and the North Branch River, which empties out into Franklin Pierce Lake.

Storied past

The property has a long and storied past beginning in 1962 when it was Hawthorne College, Moore said. The college closed in 1988 and was purchased in 1991 by the Japanese Company Maruzen Hawthorn. Renovations soon were under way to ready the campus for a flight school including the installation of a new energy efficient propane forced hot water heating system, said Tom Duffy, of Prudential Verani Realty in Londonderry.

However, the owner, the impetus for the project, died before it was completed, Moore said.

The infrastructure of the campus was designed to accommodate 1,500 people. A 250,000 gallon water tower had also been added and a large septic system services the campus. Several of the buildings over the years, including the cafeteria,

"There are a lot of learning opportunities in this area, wilderness learning opportunities, a great deal of protected land around here."

PETER MOORE
Antrim town planner

library and student union, had to be razed because of safety concerns. However, Duffy said, the cement pads and even some of the plumbing to a few of the buildings is still in place.

The buildings are open, functional, and many have been recently

renovated.

Refurbished

In 2009 and 2010, officials at the Maharishi Center invested nearly \$1 million to refurbish the gymnasium on the campus. The work was 95 percent completed before center officials decided against opening the boys school.

The renovations included new team locker rooms and bleachers, a full basketball court, additional rest rooms for spectators including a handicap bathroom and a fitness room on the mezzanine level.

Four classrooms are attached to the gym, each wired for Internet.

"There's a lot of infrastructure," Duffy said. "Someone could really just hit the ground running with even 100 students or something like that."

Several buildings and rooms are still in use on the campus including Scarborough Hall, the largest hall on the campus



The 400-acre former Hawthorne College was most recently renovated by the Maharishi Center, which invested nearly \$1 million in renovations.



The chapel is one of the many structures still standing and operational on the Hawthorne College campus.

with three stories. The hall has a conference center, classroom and meeting rooms, dining facilities, and overnight accommodations.

The campus also has a barn theater, a chapel, a farmhouse residence and a soccer field.

So far, Duffy said, there has been interest in the property from several sources including an Anguillan medical school, a religious group looking for space for a Bible college and an occupational rehabilitation group. Duffy declined to give

details, citing confidentiality agreements.

"Those are the inquiries so far," Duffy said. "But it's still early in the game."

Moore said the town would like to see the property remain a school of some stripe. He's already suggested a technical college or other private college to the Maharishi owners when they asked. He also said it may make a nice campus for an elderly independent housing and extended care facility.

"It would obviously bring some employment to the area, but it also could be a great use of a campus that's already there," Moore said. "There are a lot of learning opportunities in this area, wilderness learning opportunities, a great deal of protected land around here. It would just bring some diversity to this area and that would be a good thing."

The property, in realty listings under MLS# 4034959, is priced at \$4.8 million. (www.nhcampusforsale.com)

Beaver Pond Estates, These newly constructed two bedroom townhomes offer the tranquility of a wooded setting and easy access to all that make the Lakes Region of New Hampshire a premiere vacation destination or year-round haven and are only a short distance to Lake Winnepesaukee, Weirs Beach and all of the local attractions.

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PROPERTIES

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Briefs

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southern New Hampshire, the company said in a news release.

Ata named associate of the month

BEDFORD — The Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage office in Bedford announced that June Ata achieved the Sales Associate of the Month award for sales volume for February.



ATA

Ata began her real estate career in 1985. She is a member of the New Hampshire and National Associations of Realtors.

Black, Daneault join Keller Williams Realty

BEDFORD — Kelly Black and Kim Daneault have joined Keller Williams Realty Metropolitan in Bedford.

Black has been a Realtor for more than eight years and has her certified residential specialist designation and is a member of the Greater Manchester/Nashua Board of Realtors, where she serves as chairman of the membership/orientation committee and sits on the board as a director.

Daneault has been a Realtor for more than seven years and has her graduate Realtor insurance and certified residential specialist designations.

In a news release, Daneault

said the number of top-producing agents "making the move to Keller Williams Realty ... piqued my interest."

The Keller Williams Realty Metropolitan Market Center (kellerwilliamsmetro.com) is located at Two Bedford Farms Drive, established in 2005, with more than 160 associates.

Sterling society award for LaGasse

DERRY — Diana LaGasse, a sales associate in the Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage office in Derry, has been recognized with the Coldwell Banker International Sterling Society award.

The honor is awarded to the top 11 percent of approximately 90,000 sales associates worldwide in the Coldwell Banker system.

LaGasse is a member of the Granite State South Board of Realtors, New Hampshire Association of Realtors and National Association of Realtors.

The company said in a news release it recognizes the work of exceptional sales associates and sales associate teams annually through its distinguished awards program.

4 firms sign leases at 1 Perimeter Road

MANCHESTER — Matt Toolin of the Fini Real Estate Group, Inc. has successfully completed four new tenant leases totaling 28,976 square feet at 1 Perimeter Road to bring the 50,000-square-foot building to 100 percent occupancy.

Turbotek Computer Corp. leased 6,117 square feet; H&L Distribution leased 2,929 square feet; Apria Healthcare, Inc. leased 8,679 square feet; and Cushman Commercial Corporation leased 11,251 square feet — all on five-year terms, the company said in a news release.

Here's how to 'stage' your house

◆ **Appearance is all:** You can paint, remove clutter, mulch and speed the sale of a home.

By **MELISSA NEIMAN**
bankrate.com

When it comes to selling your home, appearance is everything. But hiring a professional "stager" to prepare the home for prospective buyers can cost anywhere from \$50 to \$150 per hour, according to Jessica Page, a Realtor with Innovative Real Estate in Denver.

Fortunately, homeowners can take matters into their own hands.

Page, along with veteran Florida Realtor Jennifer Radice of Coldwell Banker in Boca Raton, share expert tips for staging your home that will enhance your presentation.

Packing away personal items is one of the simplest and cheapest things you can do to sell your house or condo quickly.

"The reason you want to 'de-personalize' your home is because you want buyers to view it as their potential home," Page says.

"Pictures are extremely distracting. You cannot believe how long potential buyers will

stop and stare at people they do not know in photos," says Radice, who also recommends removing any religious items from plain view.

Ridding your home of clutter is another simple way to get buyers to focus on the bones of the house, not the titles in your CD collection.

"After years of living in the same home, clutter collects in such a way that may not be evident to the homeowner. However, it does affect the way buyers see the home, even if you do not realize it.

Clutter collects on shelves and countertops, and in drawers, closets, garages, attics and basements," Radice says.

Radice recommends removing items from countertops in the kitchen and bathrooms.

"If you have kids, get rid of the toys all around the house. For all you know, the buyers could be empty nesters," Radice says.

She suggests putting things in boxes and neatly stacking them in the corner of the garage. Anything extra should go in a small, rented storage unit.

Even better, ask a friend or relative to hang onto your items for free.

Rearrange the rooms in your home to reel in prospective buyers. Make sure each room has a distinct, useful purpose.

Page suggests touring builders' models to see how the rooms are furnished.

"Builders are experts on preparing their product for prospective buyers," she says.

Radice says closets should be "neat and organized." If your home has been painted recently, consider yourself ahead of the game. If not, take a paintbrush to the rooms that need it most.

Sellers who paint the interior of their home will see a large return on the investment, Page says.

"Fresh, neutral paint on the walls, trim and doors is worth its weight in gold — it makes everything appear clean and new," she says.

No one wants to look at a dirty house — especially not prospective buyers. So make sure your house or condo shines from top to bottom.

The goal is to help buyers imagine themselves living in the home, Page says.

"When buyers see an

unkempt home or smell something when they first walk in, they become turned off immediately," Page says. "They can rarely see past it to look at all of the great features in the home."

Radice suggests having the house professionally cleaned so that everything is spotless — windows, sliding glass door tracks, garage, basement, ceiling fans, etc.

"This is worth the money spent," Radice says.

Ridding the home of litter boxes is also a must.

Whatever you do, do not overlook the home's exterior.

"Curb appeal is just as important as cleaning the inside of the home — it's the buyer's first impression of your home," Page says.

Mow the lawn, make sure the sidewalk and driveway are free of clutter and debris, and ensure the house number is easily visible.

It may also be beneficial to pressure-clean the exterior of your home, driveway and sidewalk.

Another valuable low-cost solution? Mulch.

"Mulch is cheap and covers a multitude of sins. It makes everything look trim and neat," Radice says.

Military families stung by housing costs

By **VERONICA CHUFO**
Daily Press

NEWPORT NEWS, Va. — In a few months, Jennifer Hernandez's husband, who's active duty Air Force, will get permanent change of station orders.

Problem is, they're "underwater" on the York County, Va., house they bought in 2007, meaning they owe more than the home is worth, because real estate prices have fallen.

Hernandez, a real estate agent with Liz Moore & Associates in James City County, Va., said she knows of 10 other families in similar situations.

Hernandez is involved in the National Military Family Association and acquainted with Holly Petraeus, wife of U.S. Army Gen. David Petraeus, commander of the coalition forces in Afghanistan. Holly Petraeus was appointed to lead a team creating the Office of Servicemembers Affairs within the new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau.

Hernandez recently talked to Holly Petraeus about the real estate challenges facing military families. She is now partnering with the Office of Servicemembers Affairs to collect their stories to present to the Department of Defense.

"There's no statistical tracking of active-duty military, if they're going into foreclosure, if they're going into short sales," she said. "Until Washington can put a face on the issue, it is difficult to get action started in Congress or in policy circles. That's what I want to do."

At the same time, the Department of Defense is cutting billions from its budget in light of rising national debt. This makes it all the more difficult.

Hernandez often works with relocating military families. In recent months, she's encountered 10 who were getting or

face short sales or foreclosure.

Even if families tried to keep their homes in Hampton Roads, Va., their basic housing allowance when they move elsewhere might not cover the mortgage. Housing allowances in some other areas are much lower than they are here, she said.

In her case, she plans to stay in the house while her husband moves without her. They don't want to sell it for a loss, she said. They're concerned about her husband's security clearance if they take on more debt to purchase or rent another home.