

FIRST IMPRESSIONS LAST

While some landlords are inclined to do as little as possible to a rental property's appearance, rental yield and capital value can be raised with a few clever tricks - none of which need break the bank, writes **Louise Richardson**.



WHETHER YOUR PROPERTY'S VALUE

IS soaring high or standing still it makes sense to maintain your asset as neatly as possible.

If you allow an investment property to become derelict, unkempt and overgrown, tenants will value it the same way you do.

On the flipside, a tidy dwelling will always attract good tenants. With much of the current generation of young people unable to afford their own home there's a whole new market consisting of families and professionals who expect to rent for years - maybe forever, and they're looking for somewhere nice to nest.



Security lighting is essential for both safety and security.



A garden shed is a must-have for renting families.



A tidy property will attract tenants.

We've compiled a list of 15 'curb appeal' ideas to inspire you to revitalise the first impression your property gives prospective tenants.

1 FIRST LOOK

A bright, welcoming front door can lift the humblest dwelling - and the amount of paint required is minimal. If you have long-term tenants they might appreciate being asked to choose the colour themselves. Complement the door with a couple of easy-care plants in ceramic pots.

2 PLAY IT SAFE

Exterior lighting isn't only good in terms of security, it's also important for safety, especially around steps. Of course it provides ambiance too - used to good effect it can highlight the features of the property.

3 PERSONAL TOUCH

If your renters are family people, chances are they will appreciate extra thoughtful touches in the porch area, which could include a seat to make taking shoes and boots off easier and if it's an enclosed, sheltered space, coat hooks are always useful.

SECURITY MEASURES ARE A NECESSITY THESE DAYS - OUTDOOR LIGHTING IS THE KEY BUT OTHER SECURITY FEATURES CAN INCLUDE AN ALARM OR EVEN A MOCK ALARM BOX TO DETER THIEVES.

4 STORAGE SOLUTIONS

For families a simple garden shed will always be appreciated as a place for storing bikes, scooters and outdoor toys. Basic, inexpensive examples can be found at hardware stores. Just make sure the foundations are well entrenched because sheds have been known to take flight in windy weather.

5 KEEP IT TIDY

When you don't live in a property yourself and only see it occasionally you won't always know when the section is becoming overgrown and untidy - unless your tenant tells

you. Scheduling a regular visit from a lawn-mowing service is easy and if there's a hedge to trim or tree branches that need lopping, ask them to attend to that at the same time.

6 EASY-CARE GARDEN

Landscaping in general can add significant value to any property and it doesn't have to be an extravagant plan. Most landscapers will talk you through an economy approach and they may have access to cheap plants that will be easy-care yet attractive to look at. Factor in a small vegetable or herb garden somewhere near the back door and invite your tenants to make use of it.

7 REINSTATE CHARACTER

If your rental is a period property you'll benefit from keeping it in character, especially if you intend to sell it sometime in the future. Even if it's a very plain and ordinary house it's possible to add instant personality with fretwork, trellis, shutters, and maybe even a pergola or over-the-gate archway. Bungalow and Villa in Auckland specialises in making and supplying hardy modern versions of the architectural features that give tired houses the



Go the extra mile for your tenants and make them a kitchen garden.

Updating your letterbox adds instant street appeal.



'wow' factor. If you prefer the genuine item try demolition yards.

8 DETER BURGLARS
Security measures are a necessity these days - outdoor lighting is key but other security features can include an alarm or even a mock alarm box to deter thieves. It goes without saying that trees and bushes close to the dwelling should be kept well-trimmed and tenants should be discouraged from leaving items such as ladders outside, to be used by an opportunistic burglar.

9 FENCING FAMILIES
A fully fenced section not only looks good and provides privacy, it's also something

DON'T FORGET THE SMALL STUFF; CLEAN WINDOWS, A NICE SHINY NEW LETTERBOX, NEW EXTERIOR HARDWARE SUCH AS DOOR HANDLES

that's always on the wish-list of renting families because it helps ensure the safety of small children. Major hardware stores have inexpensive fence panels which can be installed by a savvy DIYer, then stained or painted in colours that complement the house.

10 KEEP IT CLEAN
Don't forget the small stuff: clean windows, a nice shiny new



Planters and outdoor seating are an added personal touch.

letterbox, new exterior hardware such as door handles all keep a place looking fresh. Always be sure that the house number is easy to see in case there's ever a need for occupants to call emergency services.

11 MAINTAINING YOUR ASSET
Good general maintenance is also necessary when it comes to rental properties. Keeping paintwork fresh and up-to-date, washing the house regularly and clearing out gutters and spouting will always help enhance the overall ambiance of the place. Broken pavers, mossy decks and driveways covered in weeds can certainly spoil a prospective tenant's first impression. Resene's Karen Warman

recommends using Resene Concrete Stain to restore the colour of faded pavers and Resene Non-Skid Deck & Path paint on steps and stairs if they're inclined to be slippery.

12 FLORAL FANCY
Hanging planters can really liven up a dull porch or veranda and you can find suitable pots at garden centres or hardware stores. Your tenants will have to water them regularly though as they're inclined to dry out - especially in summer.

13 DECK IT OUT
If your investment property doesn't have a deck and you don't plan to add one, a paved patio area is easy to



A hanging planter brightens up an outdoor space.

Fencing your rental property attracts families.



HANGING PLANTERS CAN REALLY LIVEN UP A DULL PORCH OR VERANDA AND YOU CAN FIND SUITABLE POTS AT GARDEN CENTRES

create as an alternative. The pavers can be found at garden centres or DIY chains and there are installation hints and tips on YouTube. The space will be most useful to tenants if it's at least partially covered and a shade sail or large tilting umbrella may suffice.

14 KEEP IT FRESH
Garages take up a lot of visual space so it pays to keep them

looking good. You might want to paint your garage door the same colour as the front door.

15 THAT LITTLE EXTRA
Finally come the little extras: a new doormat, a container for wet umbrellas and a shoe rack, perhaps. Now that you've gone to all this trouble you'll want to keep up-to-date with regular house-washes, landscaping, lawn care and general maintenance. If you take obvious pride in keeping the property tidy then, with luck, your tenants will take extra special care of it. ■