

## HOME TIP OF THIS WEEK

# Landscaping Pays Off

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Landscaping pays off in two. First, trees and landscaping add value to a home, giving it a higher worth and resale price. A study a few years ago found that the average added value for homes with trees was 5 percent to 10 percent, but some homes were worth 20 percent more because of the trees. A home's overall look is greatly affected by the lot and the landscaping, so putting money into improving this appearance is like putting money in the bank.

Second, you can cut your home's energy use by planting trees, shrubs, ground covers and other landscaping. Computer models have found that as few as three well-placed trees around a home can save up to \$250 each year in energy costs. A well-designed landscape can typically save enough energy that the investment is returned in eight years or less.

The U.S. Department of Energy has noted that an 8-foot tall deciduous tree (one that sheds its leaves) costs about as much as an awning for one large window. But the tree will save hundreds of dollars in reduced cooling costs while still letting winter sun into the home to further save on heating and lighting costs.

Something I've always noticed is how cool the air is around trees and well-landscaped areas. Because of the shade provided by trees and the evapotranspiration that goes on (this is the process by which plants move and release water vapor), air temperatures around trees can be as much as 9 degrees cooler than air in more exposed areas.

Further, cool air will settle near the ground, so the air temperature under a tree might be as much as 25 degrees cooler than the air above your home's driveway. Researchers at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory found that entire tree-shaded neighborhoods were 3 to 6 degrees cooler than were treeless areas.