



NEWS

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How a simple Pressure Washer is Helping Home Sellers Improve Curb Appeal.

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Frequently people cover the right stuff when prepping their home for sale – new carpet and paint in neutral colors. What is good for the inside is also good for the outside. Trimming bushes and removing yard debris also helps curb appeal. One more step can really improve the appeal – a few hours with a pressure washer.

Most people associate pressure washers available from local Home Centers and Hardware Stores as tools for cleaning lawn furniture and their cars. True, they have the power and speed to quickly clean all kinds of things, but for folks who are looking to spruce up their home and make it stand out from others in their neighborhood, a pressure washer can be your “secret weapon”.

Do-It-Yourself

You can buy, borrow, or rent a pressure washer. The trick is to get the right size machine for your current and future home. Small electric pressure washers are great for condo and small home owners with minimal sidewalks or patios. These compact machines are rated up to 1600 PSI, and can quickly clean concrete steps, railings, small patios, and short walkways. Larger electric machines, rated up to 2000 PSI, are ideal for bigger homes with larger surfaces. When you plan to clean around a larger home, consider using a large surface scrubber to help reduce the amount of “Zebra Striping” that can occur if you aren’t used to using a pressure washer. Mid-size gasoline powered machines are a lot like your lawn mower – pull the rip-cord and they start working. These compact machines range from 2200 PSI up to 3000 PSI.

Be sure to clean sidewalks, driveways, and wood decks. Don’t forget to wash down the shutters on your windows – dirt accumulates in every nook and cranny, and the pressure washer will quickly clean them up for you. If you have a house with Siding you can either quickly spray off the large surfaces, or spend a little more time with a soapy detergent and really make your house shine. First, consider covering any plants or decorations you may have at the base of the wall – high pressure spray can knock the petals off of your new garden! Simple plastic sheeting, plastic garbage bags, or Styrofoam covers will protect most garden residents.

Remember to wet the entire wall first (working from bottom to top to eliminate streaking), then apply the detergent (again, bottom to top to eliminate streaking). Be sure you do not let the detergent dry on the wall – just like washing your car, take it in section, if you need to. Finally, spray clean water at high pressure, starting at the top and washing downwards.



After you do the siding, shutters, and windows, it is time to move on to the sidewalks, paths, decks, and driveway. Most sidewalks and pathways gather dirt from the air and from rainfall – and you won't know how dirty they are until you clean the first one! Be sure to point the water spray away from the gardens and the house, so they water and dirt fly out into the yard. There are detergents for concrete, but for the most part you will only need that for grease or oils found on the driveway or garage.

Oil can be tough to remove from concrete with any pressure washer, because the concrete is so porous. Oil will be cleaned from the surface, but next week it looks like it is back again. What is happening is that the oil is working its way up from the concrete – so be prepared to clean it 3-4 times in a month. This will remove a huge amount of it, and return the concrete to a much nicer appeal.

One quick note about pressure and concrete - a powerful pressure washer can do some damage to concrete that is chipped or cracking. It is normal for concrete to heave and crack over time, and a lot of driveways can have crack lines or chipped areas. Do not focus on them, don't spend extra time on them, and don't use the 0° nozzle or Turbo Nozzle on them! The large flat surfaces will not be damaged by any pressure washer you might use – just be careful around the chipped areas.

Chewing Gum and Paint will be easily lifted from concrete and metal surfaces with any pressure washer. Don't hold back when encountering these surface contaminants! Get right in there and blast them loose! Most of the time you need to angle the spray so it acts like a shovel, getting under the edge of the gum and lifts it away from the concrete.

When working in the garage, if you have a gas-powered model be sure it is outside the garage, and out of the spray-path! You should consider sweeping out the loose debris first, but this isn't important as long as you are going to be washing the driveway afterwards. Start at the back wall, and work in sections, moving the water out the main door and down the driveway.

Sidewalks and pathways are important to consider, because concrete is very pale when cleaned – and it looks bright. Once you clean a surface, let it dry and look at the other concrete around it – several shades lighter will make a noticeable difference when people are looking at your house and other homes around it.

Be careful around painted surfaces – if your paint might be flaking even a little, the pressure washer will find that spot and might blast the paint loose! This is an advantage to professional painters, but might not be the thing you want to do on certain surfaces!

Another note of caution – be careful with pressure washers on wood decks. Higher pressure models (some models available at Home Improvement Centers can deliver up to 4000 PSI) can damage wood decks by driving the water into the wood, and splintering it. Be sure to start with a wide spray pattern (use a wide pattern spray, like the 25° or 40° nozzles first) to get used to the power, and start with the spray at least 14" off the deck. Within a few minutes you will become more comfortable, and begin to move the wand closer to the deck to speed your cleaning. Test in



an inconspicuous place to get some practice. Do not use the 0° nozzle on wood decks – this laser-sharp point can do damage very quickly, and is best used only to clean steel lawn tools and implements. The 25° and the 15° are the best general cleaning nozzles you will use, or a Variable Nozzle that allows you to change the spray pattern with the twist of a wrist.

Some of the newer pressure washers combine the large surface scrubber right into the machine, allowing you to walk it back and forth like a lawn mower, “scrubbing” your driveway and sidewalks. Other machines have a separate tool that snaps onto the cleaning wand, letting you wander around your cleaning area unhindered.

Have someone else do it

There are companies that do this kind of pressure washing all the time. Up to this point we have not discussed your roof – because it is best left to the professionals. Most of the time the tools you need to safely clean a roof are not available through retail channels. The pro’s access a whole different set of tools – tools that allow them to reach the roof while standing on the ground. Check your yellow pages or the internet for local pressure washing companies. You can also ask the local Professional Pressure Washer Dealer for a recommendation – they know the local professionals, and can get you in touch with them. Also, check with local Rental Houses – most have industrial pressure washers available on the weekends, and can also point you towards the contractors who rent from them during the week.

Curb Appeal

The goal is to make your house stand out from the crowd – so don’t be surprised if your neighbors come out and ask to borrow your pressure washer when you are done! This is a good thing – if your house looks great, and the neighbors’ house looks great, your house is going to have much better curb appeal than the folks who didn’t use a pressure washer! And the goal is to sell your house, so you can find the home of your dreams!

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