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Hopefully your summer has been enjoyable. With any luck, you'll be able to stretch it a bit longer so you can get together with friends or get reacquainted with old friends you may not have had the chance to spend time with this summer.

Typically, people like to talk about change when fall rolls around. So, if you happen to be thinking about moving in the next few months, or maybe looking for reliable real estate advice, we'd be very appreciative if you called. You can be assured we'll assist you with professional guidance and attentive service.

Item of value

Even if you don't have plans to sell your house any time soon, a well-maintained yard can improve the value of your property by as much as 20%.

Take advantage of the sunshine and the longer days to give your landscape a fresh look. The information we're sending along this month will help you get started. Page one offers useful tips that are sure to make your yard the star of your neighbourhood, while page two delves into a few new trends that you may want to incorporate into your current landscape.

Pass along this information to family and friends to help them renovate their landscapes and boost the curb appeal of their homes.

Coupon of the month

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ROASTED CHICKPEAS



A slightly spicy, crunchy and healthy snack that's high in protein, diabetic friendly and often requested by our vegan daughter. Adjust seasonings to your taste.

- 2 19-oz cans chickpeas (garbanzo beans) -- drained and well rinsed, then patted dry with paper towels
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon cumin
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher or sea salt

Preheat oven to 400 F. Line a large, rimmed baking pan with foil that has been lightly sprayed with non-stick cooking spray.

Place the chickpeas, oil and seasonings in a large resealable plastic bag and mix everything up well without squishing the chickpeas. Spread in a single layer on prepared baking sheet. Bake for about 40 minutes or until they are dry and have a slight crunch to them. Let cool completely before bagging.

July sales strong and steady

Sales last month were up 5.6% over those of the previous July, with 630 detached homes exchanging hands and 158 condos. This represents a 1.6% increase in sales of detached homes and an increase of 25.4% in condo sales. "Condos have been moving a little slowly over the last several months, so it was good to see them rebound so nicely in July," says Doug Pedlar, President of London and St. Thomas Association of REALTORS® (LSTAR). "As for detached homes, the market for those continued strong and steady last month - almost as if this year's Spring market extended into the summer months." He adds, "New listings were up 6.9% and listings end of period - or inventory - was up 0.9%, indicating that, now and for the foreseeable future, we can expect our market to continue to be a balanced one - good for buyers and sellers alike."

The City of St. Thomas continued to perform well in July ... with 78 homes exchanging hands in that City over the course of July - up 13% - and an average sale price Year to Date of \$195,398.

The average price for a home in LSTAR's jurisdiction Year to Date stands at \$247,274, an increase of 3.5%. The average price for a detached home over that same period stands at \$262,627, up 3.2%, while the average price for a condo stands at \$178,848, up 4.3 % from January of this year.

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What Should You Expect From Your Realtor?

You probably know that a Realtor does more than just post a FOR SALE sign on your front lawn, or guide potential buyers through your home. But how much more? What exactly will a real estate agent do for you?

Taking the time upfront to understand what to expect from your agent will help to reduce misunderstandings, and make the selling process less mysterious and stressful. You'll be able to anticipate what's going to happen next, be prepared to ask the right questions along the way, and be aware of whether your Realtor is meeting expectations.

Typically, you should expect a good real estate agent to:

- Explain the Listing Agreement to you. (This is your contract with the real estate firm.)
- Describe the home selling process, and answer all your questions and concerns.
- Prepare a realistic appraisal based on the expected market value of your home by comparing it to similar property sales in your area.
- Provide you with advice on how to make your home more appealing to potential buyers, especially during showings and open houses.
- Create a comprehensive marketing plan to promote your home.
- Screen enquiries, schedule appointments, and show your home to potential buyers.
- Field offers from potential buyers, deal with counter-offers, and negotiate the best terms and selling price possible for your home.
- Help you throughout the entire selling process to make it as easy and stress-free as possible.

These services should be the minimum you expect from a good agent. The best agents will actually do more. They will be there for you in the weeks, months, and even years after the sale to make sure everything continues to go smoothly in your new home.



Identifying Your Home's Unique Features

It is surprising how often homeowners fail to recognize the unique value their individual property holds. The distinct property characteristics that set a home apart from other homes provide important selling perspectives that often become decision-making factors for interested buyers. The key is to understand your home's most "marketable" features - those which hold the greatest importance to most homeowners. Consider them the "micro market values" by which you must compete, should you ever decide to sell your property. So, before you actually decide to list your home, you should be aware of its features. To get a better perspective on them, and their importance to you, ask yourself the following question about:



Tips for Checking References

You have no doubt heard this tip before: Always check references before you hire a mover, lawyer, decorator, contractor, or other home professional.

But for some people, picking up the phone and calling strangers to ask for a reference can feel awkward or even intimidating. Here are a few tips that can help:

- Call in the early evenings. This is the most convenient time for most people.
- Explain that you are checking references and that the professional or company you are considering hiring suggested you call.
- Ask if this is a convenient time to speak.
- Ask if they were satisfied with the services.
- Ask if there were any surprises with the final bill.
- Ask if they have recommended that professional or company to their friends?
- Thank them for their time.



notable, quotable... quotes!

"One of the marks of excellent people is that they never compare themselves with others. They only compare themselves with themselves and with their past accomplishments and future potential."

Brian Tracy

"I am aware that success is more than a good idea. It is timing too."

Anita Roddick

"Never mistake motion for action."

Ernest Hemingway