

# HOUSECALLS



the BlueWater Realty Team's July 2015



Gabe Sanders

## Monochrome interiors called timeless and rich

No matter what your decorating style, setting color boundaries of black, white and gray will allow for vibrant flourishes.

Going monochrome doesn't mean abandoning color. Grays can range from sea-green and lilac hues to brown tones that resemble pebbles. For brighter colors, it's easy to combine pale or bleached floors with hits of natural greenery.

Writing in *The Wall Street Journal*, Interior stylist Hilary Robertson says that best of all, the

decor is remarkably simple. No more figuring out how the pattern on an upholstered chair will go with the color of the walls.

With a limited palette, you can mix pieces from different decades, add patterns and layer textures. Robertson says it all works.

In her farmhouse, Finnish interior stylist and product designer Annaleena Leina-Karlsson has matte white walls and gloss-white painted floors. The scheme offers an effective frame for the bold geometric accessories she designed.

## Special reverse mortgage lets you move to new house

If you want a smaller house when you retire, one kind of reverse mortgage might be helpful.

A Home-Equity Conversion Mortgage for Purchase (HECM) could be the answer.

If you take a HECM for Purchase, you could sell your big house, and buy another home, without worrying about mortgage payments. This can be a great tool if you want to leave your existing home for a smaller house or move closer to family.

With a regular reverse mortgage, anyone 62 or over can stay in their home and tap equity for income. An HECM for Purchase is another type of reverse mortgage that helps you buy a different house for your main residence, if you wish.

Every retirement situation is different, but an HECM for Purchase could allow you to buy either a nicer home or smaller home, for example, and still not have any mortgage payments.

To take but one example: A couple sells a home for \$120,000. They want to buy a home for \$255,000. In



qualifying for an HECM (based, in part on their ages), they put down \$95,000 on the closing on their new home. That leaves them about \$24,000 left from their home sale. Their credit history is not an issue. They never have a mortgage payment. They can live in the house until they die.

*One thing to consider:* Need-based government programs can be affected by this type of transaction. Seniors may want to get counseling from an organization like the

National Council on Aging. Social Security and Medicare are not affected by this type of mortgage.

### *How much you can get*

Lenders will determine the maximum payout you'll qualify for. It's based on the price of your new home (the lesser of appraised value or purchase price) up to \$625,000, and ages of you and your spouse. Generally, the older the homeowners and the lower the interest rate, the higher payout they can get.

### *How to save on interest*

If you take the maximum payout in a lump sum, you incur a fixed interest rate ranging from 4.75 to 5.25 percent. Interest costs accrue over the life of the loan, as does the mortgage insurance cost (1.25 percent of the balance).

You could reserve part of the lump sum payout as a line of credit with a variable rate that was recently 2.5 to 3 percent.

### *Closing costs*

You'll pay the lender's origination fee and lender closing costs, as well as an upfront mortgage insurance premium, all of which can be rolled into the loan.



## Tips for summer maintenance and curb appeal:

\* Mow to the right height. Set your mower to cut about three inches off the ground. Longer turf will retain more moisture and better shade the soil so the roots won't get dry. The shade helps to keep out crabgrass.

Tall grass is greener and more attractive. It also helps to mitigate brownouts that are common during the dog days of summer, according to money.com.

\* Upgrade your house numbers. Get larger, more readable numbers at a home improvement store. Or visit [houseofantiquehardware.com](http://houseofantiquehardware.com) for interesting numerals in all sorts of fonts. Get some that are not only attractive but that can be easily read from a distance. Avoid frilly numbers.

\* Remember to put up reflectors at the end of your driveway so visitors know when to turn in to your place. Reflectors help alert other drivers to a driveway.

\* More expensive but very effective, replace a cracked or outdated walkways while it's still summer. Interlocking pavers make it easy to do the job yourself.

\* Update your flower boxes. When fall bloom-

## How to Properly Care for Trees

Unless our trees have problems, we don't fuss about them. So long as they're green, leafy, flowery, and fruity, we let them be.

But when trees fail to leaf out in spring or drop the leaves they have; when foliage turns brown before autumn; when trees lean precariously or branches die; then suddenly our trees become the center of attention.

What's wrong? The likely culprit is human error. Trees often get sick because they haven't been planted and cared for properly.

The good news: It's pretty easy to give your trees the care they need to stay healthy and fight off diseases. Here are the most common errors and how to avoid them:

### Improper Pruning

Signs of bad pruning include:

- ◆ Tree is leaning more than usual.
- ◆ Tree looks top- or bottom-heavy.
- ◆ One tree is blocking the sun from another.
- ◆ Tree is too big for its space.
- ◆ Pruning cuts are jagged.

### Do it right:

Pruning is as much art as science. A properly pruned tree looks balanced and beautiful; it feels comfortable — not squished into — its space; it lacks dead branches or ones that crisscross.

Pruning techniques — where and how — are specific to each species of tree. So before you make your first cut, consult a pruning manual. Make sure your saws, loppers, and shears are clean and sharp to prevent disease.

### Mulching Mayhem

Signs of mulching mistakes:

- ◆ Mulch piled up against the tree trunk, volcano style, which can cause trunk rot and encourage infestation and disease.
- ◆ Mulch covering the tree's root collar, where the trunk flares into the root system.



- ◆ Exposed roots.

### Do it right:

Begin mulching about 6 in. from the tree base, and extend the mulch to the end of the tree's drip line just beneath the end of the tree canopy. Start with 1 in. of mulch toward the base, building up to no more

than 4 inches at the end of the mulch circle.

Use mulch only from reputable sources, not strange mulch piles that may contain material from diseased trees. To save money, make your own mulch from healthy lawn clippings, shredded leaves, branches, and bark.

### Fertilizer Frenzy

A tree planted in a sunny location with good soil and covered with organic matter doesn't need extra fertilizer: it makes its own food through photosynthesis.

Still, many homeowners mistakenly think their trees need an annual dose of fertilizer that adds minerals and nutrients to the soil. In fact, the opposite is true. Over-fertilizing can poison a tree's root system, cause excessive and weak growth, and pollute watersheds.

Signs of over-fertilizing:

- ◆ Small or yellow foliage.
- ◆ Dead branches.
- ◆ Reduced growth.
- ◆ Salts on soil surface.

### Do it right:

Many ailments — infestation, compacted soil, trauma, and nutrient deficiency — can cause a tree to show the same symptoms of over-fertilizing. So before you add fertilizer, test your soil to determine which, if any, nutrients your tree lacks. A good time to test soil is either before you plant, or every 3 years or so after planting.

If fertilize you must, add only the nutrients your tree needs, usually nitrogen, phosphorous, and potassium. Fertilize in early spring and fall; never fertilize during drought.

ers, such as mums and autumn sage are finished blooming, cut back the plants and poke in evergreen branches.

## Exurbs return to fashion:

Towns on the fringes of pricey cities are gaining new allure as spacious, less-expensive properties. Called the exurbs, they show housing is recovering even beyond major cities.

Exurbs suffered in years past because of job losses and high gasoline prices.

Though definitions vary, exurbs generally are bedroom communities, meaning the homeowners work in the nearby cities and are gone during the day.

Many of the areas are rebounding earlier

than expected for one main reason: comparatively low home prices.

## More job hunts end in moves:

An average of 15 percent of managers moved for new positions last year, and the trend is continuing, says outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas. And skilled workers are in demand nationwide as employers struggle to fill positions.

The upswing in mobile job hunters can be traced to improving housing and labor markets. Home prices have risen by nearly 30 percent since 2012, allowing the owners to sell because they have more equity and aren't underwater.

More job seekers are expanding their searches geographically as the unemployment rate is reduced and they have more confidence.

## Frozen treats earn lasting fans

Summer is the time for frozen treats, but whether you prefer ice cream, gelato or frozen yogurt, what you slurp has the same basic ingredients.

Milk and cream are the basis of all three frozen treats.

Yogurt is made with milk fermented with yogurt cultures with a base of cream, milk and sweetener.

From Italy, we get gelato, meaning frozen, and this treat is made entirely of milk. Since cream is mostly left out, it has enhanced flavor. The exceptionally creamy texture of gelato comes from the process. It is churned with very little air so it is dense and sweet.

Frozen custard is different from ice cream mainly because it contains a dash of egg yolk and more butterfat. The lecithin in the yolk gives the frozen cream a richer and creamier texture.



Sherbet has an ice cream base sweetened with fruit juice.

Today we can thank refrigeration for making frozen treats widely available. More than 2,000 years ago, ice deserts were popular with the powerful. But even they had to run up to the top of the nearest mountain to get ice in the summer.

King T'ang of Shang in China had 94 ice men to do the dirty work.

By the 1950s nearly every American had refrigeration and finally we could eat ice cream while watching Andy Griffith eat ice cream.

Still, some ice cream shops have been in business for generations: Doumar's in Norfolk, Graeter's in Cincinnati, Leopold's in Savannah, the Elliston Place Soda Shop in Nashville, Homer's in Wilmette, Illinois. The Fair Oaks Soda Fountain in South Pasadena, Calif., also whips up classics like old-fashioned phosphates and lime rickeys.



Funani kept the world waiting for six weeks before she showed off her baby, Devi. Everyone wanted to see if Devi was a boy or girl, but there was 3,000 pounds of No Way blocking the view.

Funani the mother hippo finally relented. To the delight of her fans, on Memorial Day this year, Funani and her daughter became worldwide stars of video. The curious, two-month-old baby hippo Devi went for her first swim with her attentive mom at the San Diego Zoo. When Devi insisted on dipping too deep in her 150,000-gallon pool, Funani gave her a firm boost up to shallower water. It was an internet sensation.

Meanwhile, at the zoo, humans confined to a state-of-the-art underwater cage watched the hippos dive.

That is the new zoo experience. According to design-zoos.com, zoos have moved well away from the 'jail zoos' of the 1800s into landscape immersion, where visitors enter the habitat. Recent zoo trends give animals overhead trails or walkways, begging the question as to who is watching who.

At the Philadelphia Zoo, the first U.S. zoo which opened in 1874, great apes, gorillas, and big cats all have pathways to stroll above the human sidewalks. Habitats at some zoos put many animals together in environments that attempt to mimic natural settings so that people and animals can experience the sights, sounds and smells of the habitat, such as a rainforest.

Meanwhile, at the San Diego Zoo, the big cats have paths, but they like to lounge by the visitor windows. And Devi still wants to watch the people behind the glass in her pool. But, then, the animals sort of have their own zoo now.

## New tattoo cream could offer another way to erase mistakes

At 16, tattooing the name of your soul mate, Angela, on your forearm might seem like a testimony to enduring love. At 36, your wife, Linda, may feel differently.

And so tattoo removal is a huge business. The marked among us spend about \$75 million a year for painful laser ablation. Angela cost about \$50 to put on. She's going to cost \$300 a treatment to take off. And it will take more than one treatment.

But there is good news ahead.

Have you noticed that tattoos tend to fade over time?

Well so did Alec Falkenham, a PhD student at Dalhousie University. He noticed that the body's immune system consumes



bits of tattoo ink and sends those ink particles to the lymph nodes. Thus, the tattoo fades over time.

Falkenham developed a new removal solution, called Bisphosphonate Liposomal Tattoo Removal (BLTR), to use this process.

According to Gizmag.com, the cream is still under evaluation. In tests, cream was applied twice a day at seven-day intervals. The reduction of the amount of ink in the skin was dramatic.

More testing is needed and price is still a question. But whipping some up in a lab costs about \$5. Government approval processes could raise the price dramatically so the final cost is unknown.

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Monthly Market Detail - May 2015  
Townhouses and Condos  
Martin County

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Summary Statistics	May 2015	May 2014	Percent Change Year-over-Year
Closed Sales	123	129	-4.7%
Paid in Cash	88	92	-4.3%
New Pending Sales	115	103	11.7%
New Listings	126	153	-17.6%
Median Sale Price	\$138,000	\$100,000	38.0%
Average Sale Price	\$168,203	\$118,293	42.2%
Median Days on Market	43	72	-40.3%

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