



# Real Estate Matters

February 2015

## Dates to remember

Groundhog Day – February 2

Valentine's Day – February 14

Presidents' Day – February 16

## Valentine's Pie

- 1 (8 oz) package cream cheese
- 1 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 (8 oz) container frozen whipped topping, thawed
- 1 (9-inch) prepared graham cracker crust
- 1 (16 oz) can cherry pie filling

1. In an electric mixer, beat the cream cheese and the powdered sugar until combined. Add vanilla and beat 2 minutes. Gently fold in whipped topping.

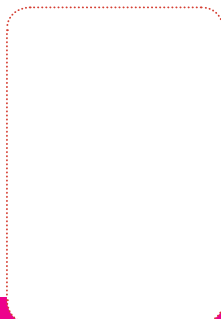
2. Transfer mixture into the pie crust. Top the filling with the cherries. Refrigerate for at least one hour before serving.

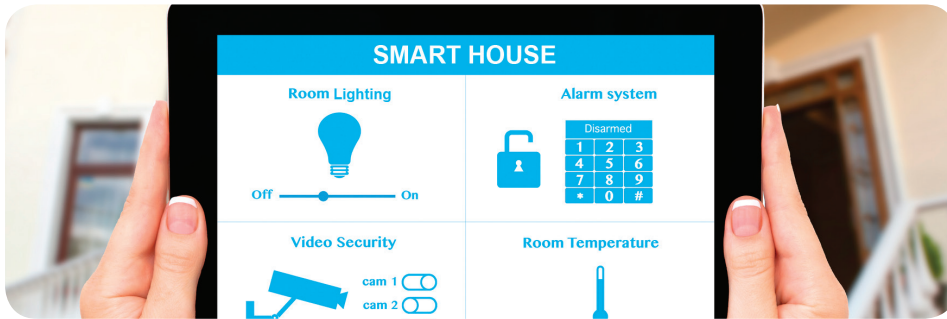
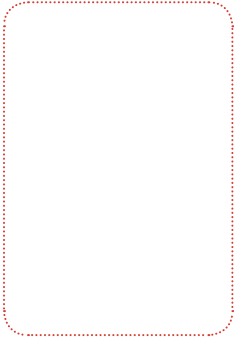


## 5 unbelievably simple DIY home fixes

Use these 5 brilliant do-it-yourself home repair tricks to make a dent in your housing to-do list.

1. **Stop a toilet from running.** Unhook the flapper chain from the plunger arm and slide a plastic drinking straw over the chain. Cut it to size if necessary and reattach. You'll never hear that tank running again.
2. **Remove carpet dents left by furniture.** Dampen furniture dents with a wet rag, apply heat with a blow dryer and coax the fibers back into place using the lip of a spoon. Let dry and repeat as necessary until those divots are gone.
3. **Keep that cupboard door closed.** Pick up a magnetic cupboard latch; most come with screws already. Use a power drill to screw the magnet to the edge of the cupboard opening and the plate to the matching corner of the cupboard door.
4. **Get your showerhead running like new.** Tame those wild or weak streams from the showerhead with white vinegar and water. Mix equal parts in a large plastic freezer bag and attach it to the shower pipe with a sturdy rubber band. Remove and check the flow every 20 minutes. You don't even have to remove the head!
5. **Breathe new life into old wood.** Pick up a package of wood stain markers in assorted shades and transform your door jambs, baseboards, bannisters, furniture and more. Start a shade lighter and go darker if needed and watch scratches and scrapes vanish.





## Smart house

Does your home do enough for you? Consider these upgrades to make your house smarter:

**Automated home security system** – Arm and disarm your home security system remotely from your smart device or computer. Access security cameras, keep tabs on who enters with personalized access codes and receive notifications each time the system is turned on or off — and by whom.

**Video doorbell** – With a video doorbell, you can screen or even video chat with visitors before you answer the door. When you're not home, the video doorbell can be set to take the picture of anyone who rings your doorbell when you're away.

**Automated smart lock** – From your smart device, you can check to make sure you've locked the door, allow for remote entry by guests or unlock your door as you pull up.

**Automated garage door opener** – Open and close your garage door with your smart device.

**Remote heating and AC controls** – Access your heating and AC controls from your smart device to turn on your heater or AC, and have the house comfortable when you arrive home from work or vacation.

**Smart lighting** – Set your lights to gradually illuminate in the morning. Adjust the quality of lighting to set the mood or simply configure your lighting needs to automatically turn on and off at set times.

**Remote irrigation control** – Turn the irrigation system on or off with your smart device when you're on vacation, or adjust it remotely on those unexpected rainy days.

**Automated gardening assistant** – As an extension to your remote irrigation control, an automated gardening assistant incorporates sensors in your garden that send you updates on soil humidity, air temperature, pH and more.

And if you're ready to upgrade to a new house, give me a call!

## Your February Maintenance Tip

Make painting the exterior of your home a breeze with these simple tips:

1. **Clean it up.** Use a low pressure hose to rinse weather stains, webs and other dirt off the exterior of your home. Be sure to move outdoor furniture, vehicles or other décor out of the way before you get started – especially if you're paying someone else to do the job.

2. **Fix it up.** Repair any small holes or cracks in the siding where moisture tends to collect. Be mindful of whether the issue is crucial to the pre-painting process, or if it's merely a cosmetic issue to address later.

3. **Scrape it up.** Tools required: 1) Paint scraper. 2) Sander. 3) Tenacity. If your house was built before 1978, the paint may contain lead. Go to [www.epa.gov/lead](http://www.epa.gov/lead) for information on how to safely remove lead paint.

4. **Prime it up.** Treat yourself by splurging on some high-quality wood primer – it will ultimately make your job easier.

5. **Talk it up.** If you're outsourcing your paint job, make sure you negotiate the details with your contractor. Once you've reached an agreement about liabilities, delegations and pricing, put the conversation in writing for easy reference.

6. **Keep it simple.** Think two-tone, not Picasso (and definitely not Pollock!) Stick with colors and designs that won't seem garish in a couple years.