



Real Estate Matters

April 2016

Dates to remember

IRS tax filing deadline – April 15

Earth Day – April 22

Arbor Day – April 29

Red Skinned Potato Salad

- 2 lbs red potatoes
- 6 eggs
- 1 lbs bacon
- 1 onion, finely chopped
- 1 stalk celery, finely chopped
- 2 cups mayonnaise
- salt and pepper to taste

1. In a large pot, bring salted water to boil. Add potatoes and cook until tender but still firm, about 15 minutes. Drain and set in refrigerator to cool.

2. Place eggs in a saucepan and cover with cold water. Bring water to a boil and immediately remove from heat. Cover and let eggs stand in hot water for 10 to 12 minutes. Remove from hot water, cool, peel and chop.

3. Place bacon in a large, deep skillet. Cook over medium high heat until evenly brown. Drain, crumble and set aside.

4. Chop the cooled potatoes, leaving skin on. Add to a large bowl. Combine with eggs, bacon, onion and celery. Add mayonnaise, and salt and pepper to taste. Chill for an hour before serving.

How to time your home sale

Choosing the right moment to sell is a personal decision for homeowners. Consider these questions to time your sale for maximum results:

Who rules in the current market?

In a buyer's market, low buyer demand and an abundance of properties is likely to decrease the sales price of your home. In a seller's market, higher buyer demand and a shortage of listed homes drives prices up. Each market has its own challenges and opportunities – but waiting for a seller's market makes it easier to find a buyer at the highest price.

How long have you occupied your house?

If you've occupied your home for at least two of the past five years when you sell, up to \$250,000 of profit per owner is exempt from taxes. Time it right and pocket those tax savings!

What time of the year is it?

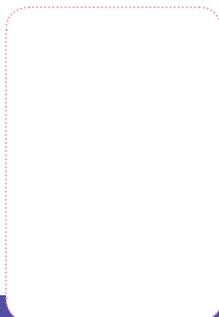
Homebuyers are more plentiful during the spring and early summer months. The market slows down around the holidays.

What's the condition of your home?

If your property is in need of some TLC, complete those needed repairs before listing your home for sale. Homebuyers want a home that is clean and move-in ready. Holding out to sell until deferred maintenance is cured will pay off in the end.

If you don't want to make repairs before selling, that works too – but a special buyer is needed and the price will adjust accordingly.

Is the time right for you to sell? Call me with any questions, or to set up a listing appointment!





Check your escrow statements

Monthly impound payments, or escrow account payments, vary each year based on changes in property taxes and homeowners insurance premiums. It's good practice to review these annual escrow statements for common loan servicing mistakes, such as:

- missing a tax payment; and
- allowing the balance to exceed the limits allowed under the *Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act (RESPA)*.

If you believe your loan servicer has lost or miscalculated a payment, send a letter to your servicer – separate from your payment – and label it a “Qualified written request under Section 6 of RESPA.” Along with the complaint, include your loan number, name and property address.

Escrow statement mistake-free? See if you can lower your escrow payments. One way you can adjust your escrow payment is to apply for a property tax reduction. To do so, you will need to submit:

- a “Decline in Value” form to your county assessor; and
- provide evidence your property's market value is lower than the assessed value by preparing an analysis of comparable properties.

Another way to reduce escrow payments is to shop for cheaper homeowners insurance. Look for insurers that offer discounts such as savings for having certain security systems and multi-policy discounts. Get quotes from at least three different companies before choosing one.

Your April Maintenance Tip

With spring comes small pests you don't want in your home. Remember, insects sneak in through wall and floor cracks, utility openings and under doors. Keep out these uninvited guests by:

- installing door sweeps or thresholds at the base of every doorway;
- sealing utility openings where wires and pipes enter the home from outside;
- using silicone or acrylic latex caulk to repair cracks around doors and windows; and
- installing wire mesh or hardware cloth over the attic, roof and any crawl space vents.

Don't forget the dark, neglected areas around the house – insects love these hiding places. Pay special attention to:

- corners of the garage (clear out spider webs as often as possible);
- closets (check inside shoes stored on the floor);
- behind large appliances (sweep away food crumbs and cobwebs); and
- under beds (use for limited storage only and keep food out).

You may also consider planting native flowers and shrubs to distract pests. Large trees encourage birds and bats to prey on insects around the exterior of the home. Keep them distracted *outside* to make sure they don't end up *inside* your home!