

Don's Home News

Brought to you by: Don Zahnle
www.DonZahnle.com

'Tis the Season ... to Decorate

The holiday season is about the only time we can indulge our decorating fantasies. Whether your dream décor is over the top or simple and elegant, the following will give you ideas to make your holiday fantastic.

- Pinterest (<http://pinterest.com/>) is a great source for inspiration and home for the latest design trends. For example, during Halloween, we saw painted pumpkins (even gold-leafed) used as flower centerpieces. For Christmas and Hanukkah, we'll see more clever ideas for reimagining and repurposing holiday décor items.
- The DIY trend continues: Make your own Christmas ball garland by stringing your favorite ornaments on fish line, twine or ribbon. It works beautifully on your fireplace mantle or stair railing (but don't forget to leave spaces for hand holds).
- Last year the emphasis was on mercury glass, but this year there'll be a reversion back to natural materials that focus on a central theme such as a classic winter wonderland.
- Consider clusters of beribboned ornaments on tabletops and use flameless candles and strings of lights to brighten up darker corners.
- Advent calendars are making a comeback – in an unexpected and fun way. Stretch a string across your fireplace and hang 24 numbered and handmade paper cones containing small gifts and candies. The kids can pull off one a day from December 1 to 24.

Searching for a New Home online?

Now you can search Metro Atlanta Listings in Real Time using the same Tools I do.

Due to recent changes in multiple listing service rules, I can now set you up with an account where you can search for properties just as I do. No more stale and out of date data like you get on the internet from Realtor.com, and Trulia.com.

Call or [email](mailto:don@donzahnle.com) me today and say; "set me up with a Listing Book account."

It is FREE and takes me only minutes to set it up for you.

Impress Buyers: Feng Shui Brings Harmony Home

Want to infuse your home with energy to make it attractive to buyers? Why not consider feng shui – an ancient Chinese science that focuses on creating harmony and maintaining balance so energy flows well through your house.

You can't control everything (such as the view from your backyard) but a tidy property will stand you in good stead. Most important, keep your house well-lit and clutter-free.

These tips may impress buyers looking for good feng shui:

- Invest in your front door – where energy enters the home. Remove distractions leading up to it, such as garbage cans and scruffy planters. Make sure door decorations fit the season. Paint the door in fire (reds and oranges) or wood (greens, browns) colors. Maintain hardware. And address squeaking hinges.
- Focus the energy in the main entrance. Create a focal spot but keep it simple, such as a table with flowers nicely arranged in a vase or a colorful rug. Never put a mirror facing the front door. If you can't remove it, put a plant in front of it.
- Keep the energy flowing in each room. For the kitchen, this means good light; paint it yellow. In the bedroom, keep beds away from doors and windows and make sure they have lots of space around them.

Need more help? Call a feng shui master to help you determine if the house you want to sell – or buy – is harmonious and balanced.

Winter Celebrations Hark Back to Ancient Times

Like it or not, winter officially arrives on December 21. The date, known as “winter solstice” or “midwinter” is the shortest day and longest night of the year. In the Northern Hemisphere, the sun is at the most southern point in the sky during the solstice.

While the date is still recognized, it doesn’t hold the same significance as it did centuries ago. Then, people weren’t certain they would live through the winter, when crops couldn’t be harvested and food was scarce.

Both then and now, events have been held coinciding with the winter solstice. In many, the focus has been on light to break up the coming darkness. In the Festival of the Sun, observed in ancient times by the Incas, priests symbolically tied the sun to a stone structure (one of which can still be seen at Machu Picchu

in Peru) to prevent it from escaping.

The annual sunrise observance at Stonehenge in Wiltshire, England, occurs on the winter solstice, while some see significance in the lights of Hanukkah (such as the lighting of the menorah around solstice time) and the light-covered Christmas tree.

This year’s winter solstice carries some significance for Doomsday believers, who fear the world will end on December 21, 2012. The Mayan calendar shows a set of zeros on this day, leading some to believe it predicts a world-ending catastrophe.

Most experts debunk this theory. Like the fears surrounding the dawn of the new millennium, this end-of-the-world prediction is sure to be grossly exaggerated.

Quick Quiz

Each month I’ll give you a new - question.

Just email me at dpnzahnle@gmail.com for the answer.

Out of every four known animal species, how many are insects?

Why Not Pass Me to a Friend?

If you’ve enjoyed this newsletter and found its information useful, please pass it to a neighbour, friend or co-worker.

And if you have any comments about it, don’t forget to give me a call or send me an email!

Are You Wondering How Much Your Home Is Worth?

Do you want to know how the price of your home has changed in today’s market? Do you want to know how much other homes in your neighbourhood are selling?

If you’re wondering what’s happening to prices in your area, or you’re thinking about selling your house, I can help.

Either call 404-939-1309 or [email](mailto:dpnzahnle@gmail.com) me for a no-obligation, professional evaluation.

I won’t pressure you into listing with me or waste your time. [Read about how I feel about pressure!](#) I’ll just give you the honest facts about your home and its value.

I’ll also give you the “inside scoop” on what’s happening in the housing market near where you live!

Call me at 404-939-1309 or email me at donzahnle@gmail.com and we will arrange a time to get together.

Worth Reading

Google Builds Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon into Its Search System

By Ben Child
The Guardian

The six degrees of separation phenomenon just got tastier. Google has built in a way to link actor Kevin Bacon – through six degrees of separation – to any actor in the world ... by Googling.

The original idea was devised by university students to connect every actor to the Footloose star. Now, you can join in the fun. This article tells you how.

More: <http://tinyurl.com/8g4rwnb>

No Time for Self-Reflection ...

The Telegraph (News)

To misquote a popular song: “You’re so vain, you probably think this article’s about you” ... but it just might be.

A new movement, started by three female bloggers, tells us to stop looking at our reflections – whether in the mirror or on the computer screen.

Apparently, you’re better able to separate your appearance from your self-esteem without mirrors.

More: <http://tinyurl.com/9gk8lvs>

Seeking a Peaceful Respite

By Anita Patil
China Daily

Why is being simple so complicated? It’s one of life’s great mysteries. Now marketers are tapping into our desire to be simple.

They’re doing this with buzzwords such as “simple,” “easy,” “honest” and “clear” as an “easy” choice for busy consumers.

Is simplicity the new luxury, as suggested by Kristin van Ogtrop, managing editor of Real Simple magazine?

More: <http://tinyurl.com/8uomj9l>

Trust Your Agent to Negotiate a Win-Win Deal

You're about to make one of the most important purchases of your life – a home for you and your family. But here you are, handing over those all-important home purchase negotiations to your real estate agent.

Relax. Your negotiations are in good hands.

Strong negotiating skills are among the many reasons you use an agent. He or she has been specially trained in negotiations and has many years of experience putting this training into practice.

Here are some of the reasons you should trust your agent to bargain on your behalf:

- While your agent wants to make

the best deal possible for you, he or she knows that, by definition, negotiating requires some compromise to make it work. (For example: "Give on the price, we'll loosen our demands for a 30-day close.") Both parties should emerge from negotiations feeling they've gotten a good deal – a win-win.

- The adage that everything is negotiable in real estate isn't necessarily true. You don't want to go for everything, because you may end up with nothing. Your agent will decide what mountains to die on according to your priorities. And let's face it – that refrigerator you want but the seller won't surrender, probably doesn't qualify as that mountain.

- Your agent has the experience to correctly size up the seller, which can give you a major advantage during negotiations. Is the seller motivated and prepared to give concessions, or are there other offers waiting in the wings?
- Most important, your agent negotiates based on facts, not emotion. He or she can table a home inspector's report proving that repairs are needed without recriminations and present stats to support your offer without arguing over value.

So you can relax; your agent's negotiating skills will get you that deal. And chances are it will be a win-win.

Textophiles Love the Lowly Pen

Guess what remains one of today's most popular instruments of communication? Here's a hint: Look around your desk, your car and your briefcase and you'll find a common denominator.

Do you need another hint? It's everywhere, it's accessible and it's the solution to leaving your smart phone at home. The answer is the pen, and don't go writing it off anytime soon.

The pen's importance to consumers was investigated recently in a study cosponsored by BIC Graphic USA, a well-known company selling – you guessed it – pens. The study interviewed 1,114 consumers on their writing habits, and as researchers fast discovered, we consumers love our pens. Here are some of their findings:

- Of those surveyed, 73% carry a pen at all times.
- Almost 92% of car owners keep one or two pens in the car.
- And, somewhat surprisingly, respondents under age 35 ranked the importance of pens higher than did those over age 65.

Deep Six the Eight-Glass Myth

Your mother always told you to drink eight glasses of water a day. Now it seems she's wrong.

More and more health experts agree that drinking eight glasses of water isn't necessary to stay hydrated.

Why not? Because we tend to get enough fluids from the foods and beverages we ingest throughout the day – even from drinks like coffee and tea.

Foods like lettuce and watermelon contain enough water to keep you satiated and hydrated for a few hours, so you don't have to chug a glass or two with every meal to feel virtuous.

What do the experts recommend? Drink when you're thirsty. And while it's not a *bad* thing to drink eight glasses of water a day, it's not been proven scientifically that it's the only way to stay hydrated. Sorry, mom.

Ask the Agent: This Month's Question

What things concern sellers most about the selling process?

As a seller you are often told to consider buyers' concerns when placing your home on the market. And that makes sense. But you also have concerns, and they're not about renovations.

A recent survey found many sellers are more concerned about understanding the legal documents and processes involved in selling their homes than they are with their homes' physical appearance. Unlike the quick-fix decorating solutions offered on TV shows, legalese is confusing and overwhelming.

Your listing agent will likely recommend an experienced real estate lawyer to provide these answers.

Real estate agents can help address your other concerns, such as the state of the current real estate market. Like the lawyer who can explain complex legal documents, your agent can demystify the real estate market.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

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		6			9	5	2	3

Sudoku instructions: Complete the 9x9 grid so that each row, each column and each of the nine 3x3 boxes contains the digits 1 through 9. Contact me for the solution!

Recipe: Artichokes Stuffed with Brie

Serves four as an appetizer for holiday dinner parties.

- 4 large artichokes
- 8 ounces Brie
- 4 tablespoons chopped shallots
- 2 cups dry white wine
- 1 stick of butter cut in cubes
- 8 ounces whole grain mustard
- 4 tablespoons white wine vinegar
- 4 tablespoons lemon juice
- Salt and pepper to taste

Cut off the top ends of the leaves and the bottom stems of the artichokes. Cook in boiling water for 10-15 minutes or until the bottoms are easily pierced. Run under cold water.

When cooled, cut the inner chokes away from the hearts, removing the inner leaves and keeping the outer ones. Cut the Brie into 1/2" chunks. Stuff the centers of the artichokes and between the leaves with the Brie. Bake on a cookie sheet at 350 degrees until the Brie melts (approximately 10 minutes).

Combine the shallots and white wine in a saucepan over high heat. Gradually whisk in the butter and remove from heat. Stir in the mustard, vinegar, salt, pepper and lemon juice. Drizzle the mixture over artichokes and serve.

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Don's Home News is brought to you free by:

Don Zahnle, *ABR, SRES, C-CREC, CSP*

Atlanta Communities

3113 Roswell Rd. Suite 101

Marietta, GA 30062

404-939-1309

donzahnle@gmail.com

www.AtlantaHomesOnline.com

Thanks for reading! If you would like to tell me what you think about this newsletter, or if you're thinking of buying or selling real estate, please get in touch.

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