

Market Ready

By TIM McKEOUGH
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Q. Is it worth spending money on flower arrangements for an open house?

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A. "If you spend \$200 on flowers, in the grand scheme of things, compared to the amount of money that you're selling your apartment for, it's totally worth it," said

Lisa Lippman, a senior vice president at Brown Harris Stevens in Manhattan. "Flowers just make a place look lived in, in a good way. It makes it seem like somebody cares about the home."

Flowers can also help ensure that buyers' olfactory senses aren't offended.

"They give a fresh smell," Ms. Lippman said. "It can potentially cover up an animal smell, stale smell, mothballs or whatever."

Market Ready is a series of articles on strategic home repairs and redecorating that can be done to prepare a home for sale.

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Sandra de Ovando, owner of the New York floral design company Ovando, said she often creates arrangements specifically for open houses.

"Flowers can make an apartment more appealing because they bring a space to life," she said. "People can relate to how they would feel in the home, because it's warm and intimate."

Just don't go overboard.

"All the flowers for an open house should be simple; I'd do bunches of flowers," Ms. de Ovando said, adding that she often prefers using only white flowers. "I wouldn't really do anything too complicated, with designed pieces."

The flowers should enhance the surroundings, she suggested, not steal the show.

Ms. de Ovando suggested putting one bunch of flowers in the foyer and another on a coffee table in the living room, at the very least.

"If there's the budget for another, I would also do something in the

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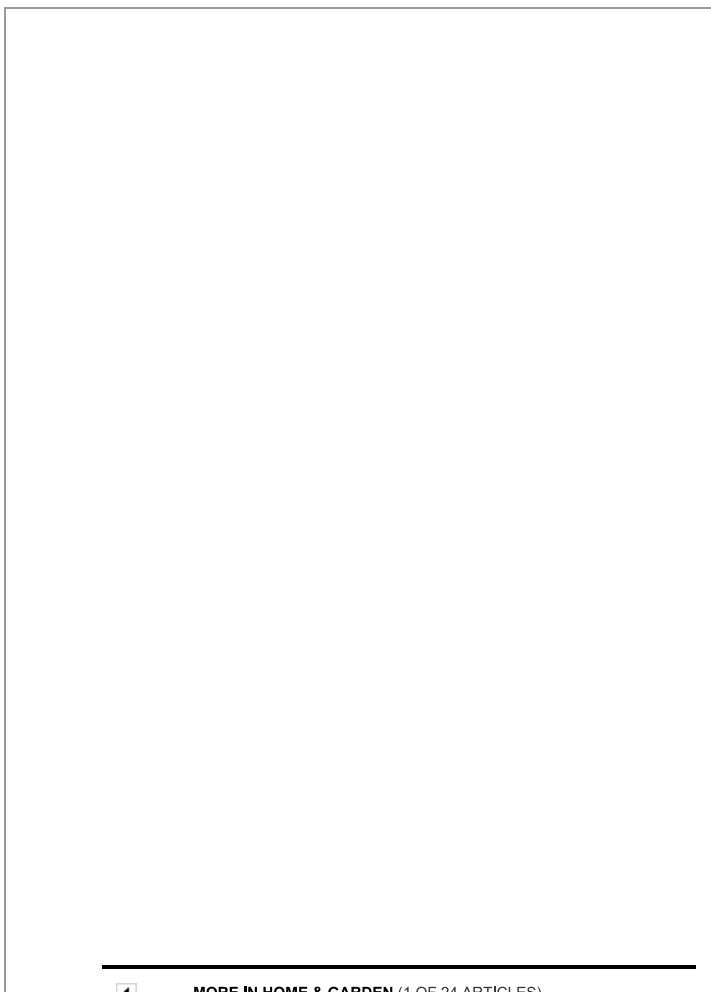
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kitchen,” she said.

To get the most for your money, she recommended using seasonal flowers whenever possible. In the spring, that might mean hyacinths and peonies.

“For summer,” she said, “I love gladiolas, because once they open you get so many flowers, and it’s such a big impact.” In the fall, she likes large mums, and in the winter, amaryllis.

If you want something fragrant, she recommended lilies or hyacinths. But for open houses held over consecutive weekends, she suggested orchids, because “they’re a little more long-lasting.”

As for how much you should spend, Ms. de Ovando advised that the cost of the flowers should reflect your home’s asking price. That means your budget could range from \$200 to \$1,000, she said, depending on whether you’re trying to sell an entry-level apartment or a more luxurious home.

And if you’re just doing a simple arrangement, Ms. Lippman pointed out, it’s possible to do it yourself.

“It depends a little bit on how good you are at arranging flowers,” she said. “But you can go get daffodils or tulips and put them in a couple of vases.”

The payoff for the extra bit of effort is clear.

“If you see an apartment that looks really neat and put together, with flowers on a couple of tables, it’s just much more inviting,” she said. “Even in an apartment that needs work, it makes a difference.” **TIM McKEOUGH**

Questions about repairs or redecorating in preparation for putting a home on the market may be sent to marketready@nytimes.com. Unpublished questions cannot be answered individually.

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