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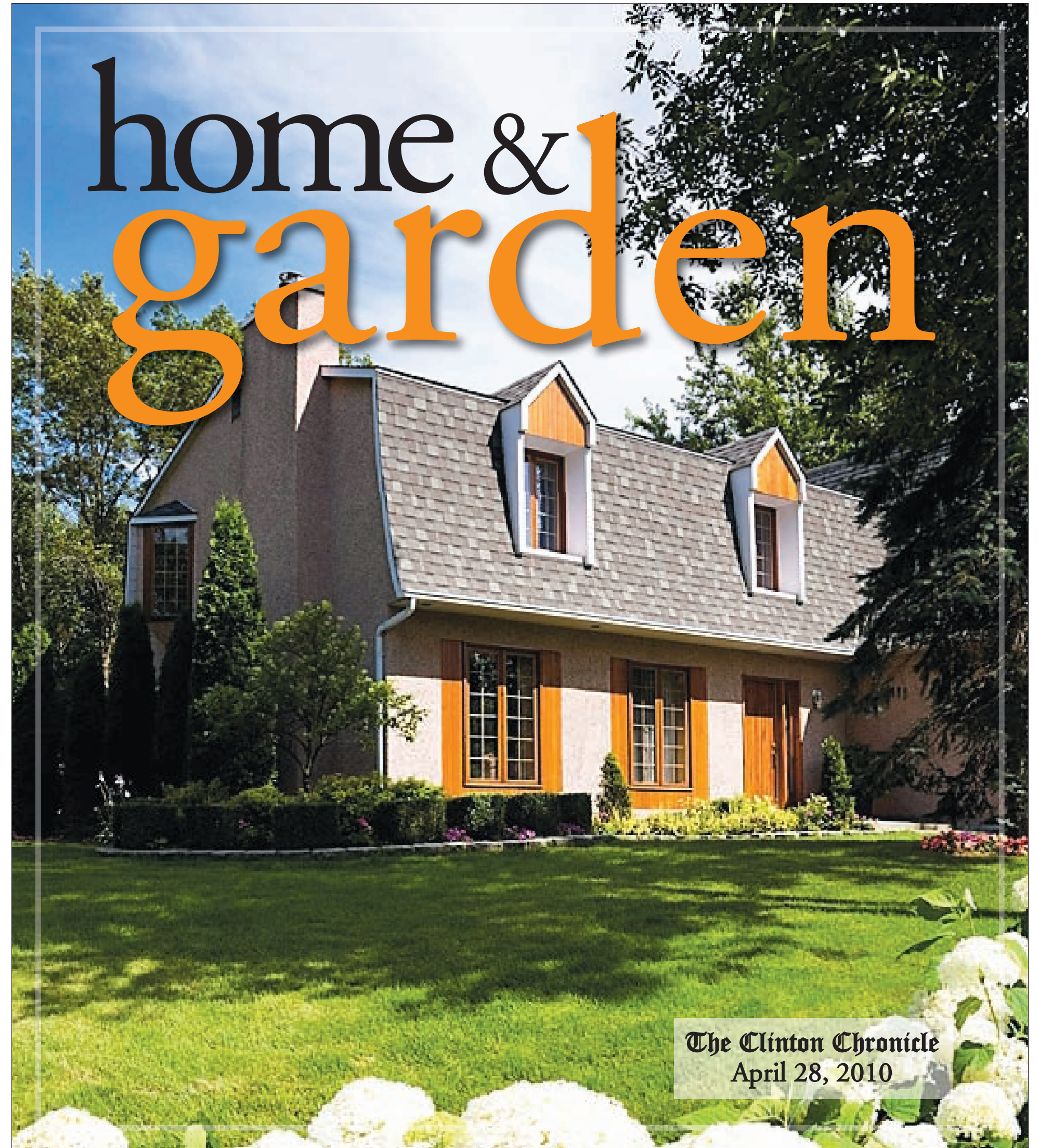
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# home & garden



**The Clinton Chronicle**  
April 28, 2010



# New apartments seek young professionals

By **Bristow Marchant**  
Staff Writer

Today, the lot on Musgrove Street is covered in dirt, backhoes and men at work. But by the end of this summer, this spot will host Clinton’s newest townhouse apartments.

Agnew Development is building an 18-unit apartment complex here, geared toward young professionals. If this one fills up, developers are already planning to move across the street, ultimately adding space for up to 100 people near the heart of downtown Clinton.

“We will pour slab by the end of the week,” said Cort Nagle, development director for the project. “When the plumbing’s complete, we’ll begin framing next week. We’ll spend three or four weeks on that depending on the weather. It will have dried by mid-May, and then we’ll be ready for the interior.”

Nagle says the building — called the Highland Park Apartments — will be open for business on Aug. 1. That’s a key date, because the development is tied to another construction project on the other side of the block.

Presbyterian College is set to open its new pharmacy school this fall in the former Frampton Hall on Broad Street. The new school will start with a class of 80 and eventually grow to hundreds of students, post-graduates in their mid-20s to early 30s, some of them married with children, all of them



looking for a place to stay.

Developer Harry Agnew saw the need for appropriate rental housing to meet new demand, and set about creating Highland Park.

“He really had the foresight to recognize the lack of housing and apartments as Clinton and Laurens continue to grow,” Nagle said. “This development was well-received by the town, the design review board and the college.”

The three-story apartment building will show a neo-classical design similar to other buildings on Musgrove Street and around

style of the area,” said Nagle. “The pharmacy school will be a neo-classical building, and it’s very pleasing to look at. It matches the town and the surrounding neighborhood.”

As of Aug. 1, Highland Park will offer six one-bedroom apartments between 675 and 685 square feet. The other 12 apartments will be two-bedrooms with 1,050 to 1,100 square feet.

Four of the two-bedroom apartments will be single-story flats, and eight will be two-story townhouses. The two-bedrooms come equipped with two baths and a half-bath.

Each apartment comes with its own stove, refrigerator and washer-dryer hookup.

Price on all the units is tied to square footage, “the industry standard in places like Columbia and Clemson,” Nagle said. A one-bedroom will rent for \$675 a month excluding electricity, while a two-bedroom will cost about \$1,050 a month. Agnew Development will pay water and sewer costs to the city, but tenants will be responsible for other utilities.

Spaces are filing up before construction

## Highland Park, Page 3

downtown, Nagle said. The first two stories will have a brick exterior while the third story has a dark-speckled siding. There will also be off-the-street parking available for two vehicles per unit.

“We have to account for the architectural

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**High Land:** A tractor moves some dirt at the future site of the Highland Park Apartments on Musgrove Street. Construction will be finished by August, when 18 new townhouse-style apartments will be available for rent. — Photo by Bristow Marchant

# How to get more money when selling home

(StatePoint) When selling your home you want to get the most money possible. But with home values having dropped considerably during the past few years, today’s sellers are exploring new ways to maximize the money they can put in their pockets.

It continues to be a rough market, with statistics from the National Association of Realtors showing a median price for 2009 home sales of \$173,200, down nearly 12 percent from 2008 and more than 20 percent from 2007.

And considering that a real estate agent’s typical six percent commission will cause sellers to lose even more of their homes’ value, many are using the Internet and other modern technology to sell their houses themselves instead of hiring agents.

In addition to handling the sale yourself, there are several other easy ways to take home more cash. Experts advise every little step helps: cleaning and painting, advertising in the right place and even hiring an attorney to evaluate complicated offers.

Studies from Northwestern and Stanford Universities found that “for sale by owner” (FSBO) sellers are as effective as agents in maximizing a home’s sales price. In fact, a

report from the real estate industry’s own trade group, the National Association of Realtors, found that FSBO sellers sold their homes quicker and for closer to asking price, compared to homes represented by agents.

“Sellers have realized that paying an agent will cause them to lose even more of their home’s value,” says Greg Healy of ForSaleByOwner.com, a leading for sale by owner Web site. “Paying commission is becoming a thing of the past, because the Internet has made it easy for any homeowner to successfully price, market and sell their own home.”

Here are some tips to get as much as possible when selling your home yourself:

\* **Price it Right:** By doing research on the Internet, you can compare your home with others on the market. This enables sellers to gauge the value of their homes and accurately arrive at listing prices. Remember, the market dictates price, not what the seller thinks it should be worth.

\* **Market the Home Online:** More than 90 percent of buyers use the Internet to search for homes, so it’s critical to list yours on the right site. For example,




ForSaleByOwner.com has more than twice the amount of visits as the next-closest competitor and offers services that syndicate listings to Realtor.com as well as online real estate sections at Yahoo, Google and USA Today.

\* **Make a Great First Impression:** Buyers are attracted to clean, spacious and updated homes. Remove personalized items, such as family photos, and eliminate clutter. Simple improvements like replacing worn carpets and repainting walls neutral colors enhance a house’s appeal. If ever it was time for a thorough house cleaning, this is it.

\* **Get a Real Estate Attorney:** An experienced real estate attorney will help you evaluate complicated offers, act as escrow agent, review contracts and handle the home’s closing process. Proper legal representation should only cost a few hundred dollars and helps overcome the more confusing aspects of real estate transactions.

For more tips on selling your home yourself, visit [www.ForSaleByOwner.com](http://www.ForSaleByOwner.com).

With some solid research and the right help, selling your home can be made easier while maximizing its value.




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# Tips to organize your home and eliminate clutter

(StatePoint) Are you finally ready to tackle all that clutter in your home? Getting organized can seem like a daunting task. Unless, of course, you have a good plan and the right tools. Even then it can be challenging. But what better time to get started than the present?

If you're like most of us, you're faced with many questions: Where do you start? What tools do you need? Does it really need to be perfect or is functional good enough? How do you set up organization systems you won't abandon a week later?

All these questions and so much clutter. Now's not the time to abandon hope. Now's the time to roll up your sleeves and get organized.

So say the experts at the "Adventures in Organization" blog (<http://blog.rubbermaid.com>), which shares tips from real people who've organized everything from their closets to their photos to the garage.

Here are some of their wiser tips that can keep you from calling it quits:

\* Focus. Before starting, identify the reason you are getting organized. Is it to free up time for what matters most, like

Get realistic

Things don't need to be as perfect as the photos in all those Martha Stewart magazines and books. Most of us have busy lives, kids and modest budgets. Develop a system that gets clutter out of the way and organizes things easily.

your family or hobbies? Is it to be able to keep mail organized so you can pay bills on time? This motivation will help you power through the tasks at hand.

\* Define. Identify the mess that's causing the biggest problems in your daily life. That's a great place to begin.

\* Get realistic. Things don't need to be as perfect as the photos in all those Martha Stewart magazines and books. Most of us have busy lives, kids and modest budgets. Develop a system that gets clutter out of the way and organizes things easily.

\* Have the right tools available. To organize virtually anything, you will need: stackable, clear and translucent plastic containers with lids; labels and markers or a label-maker; drawer organizers; and the right shelves or storage areas. Consider installing closet or garage organization sys-

tems with adjustable shelves if your current space does not include shelving.

\* Purge the unnecessary. Follow that old adage: "when in doubt, toss it out." Or give it to charities that could really use it. Just don't pile items that you do not need back into your closet or junk drawer.

\* Don't tackle everything at once. Organize things by project and tackle one challenge at a time. Remember: store things near where they're used. Kitchen items shouldn't live in the basement, just because they fit there neatly.

Above all, don't despair! The reward of newly found time and an organized household is within reach.



Getting organized is about finding a system that works and grows with your needs.

## Lawn

From Page 13

of about three inches. Before bringing out the mower, make sure it's in proper working order. If you use a rider mower, change its motor oil and spark plugs while cleaning the filters, lubricating the wheels and sharpening the blade. Riding lawn mowers can be used for more than clipping grass. A wide range of attachments such as lawn sweepers and rollers can complete common lawn care chores.

Sow the Seeds

Reseeding areas of your lawn that might have trouble is particularly important at the beginning of warmer seasons. While this helps repair damaged parts of the lawn, doing it with a proper spreader can ensure the seeds stay moist and the lawn grows in evenly. Agri-Fab in particular offers a variety of eco-friendly push-behind and tow-behind SmartSPREADERS, featuring safe push-handle operation. When it comes to planting, plan ahead. Bulbs are particularly versatile and add some nice color to your overall look.

To Aer is Human

Grass and plants don't just require water

and the occasional trim. Punching holes in the soil to properly aerate allows for greater fertilizer absorption. Water and air circulation also help prevent the spread of fungus while promoting healthy microorganisms that keep lawns vibrant. Gauge your yard's need for aeration by poking a screwdriver in its soil. If it doesn't penetrate easily, you will need to aerate.

Down the Thatch

Thatch can hide between layers of soil and prevent water and nutrients from reaching a yard's root zone. Left untreated, it can help pests and diseases spread. Investing in a good dethatcher can bring thatch to the surface and keep it from becoming a problem. If you have a small or mid-sized lawn, choose a push-behind dethatcher, such as Agri-Fab's new electric model that provides a no-gas, no-oil solution. For those with riding lawn mowers and tow-behind sweeper attachments, a new sweeper dethatcher ensures larger lawns are well manicured.

For more information about affordable lawn care tools, visit [www.agri-fab.com](http://www.agri-fab.com).

Just a few simple tips and tools can make proper lawn care a simple routine instead of tiresome chore.

# Choosing a SCNLA Certified Nursery Pro

Spring is here and many of us are in the process of seeking landscape and nursery professionals to assist us with installations of new planting. Whether it's a trip to the local retail garden center or a custom designed landscape project, how do we know the person or business answering our questions and concerns truly has the knowledge and expertise required?

We've all heard the horror stories of our friends that have been victims of fly-by-night businesses or individuals, how do we make sure we don't have our own horror story to tell? Doesn't it make sense that when it comes time to improve the look of our living or working environment, to seek out those who have demonstrated a proficiency in their chosen profession? Of course it does!

Since 1985, the South Carolina Nursery & Landscape Association (SCNLA) has sponsored certification testing programs for Landscape and Nursery Professionals. While not a requirement, nor a substitute for a state license, this certification is of benefit to both the Landscape and Nursery Professional and to the consumer. The purpose of certification is to establish a standard of proficiency



within the nursery and landscape industry and to provide the public with a means of identifying qualified professionals.

The SCNLA has recently reviewed, revised and printed it's 3rd edition of the Certified Nursery Professional program. The study manual and test has reviewed and updated by University personnel and industry professionals. A new logo has also been created for use by those who have successfully

passed the test or employ SCNLA Certified Nursery Professionals. This program is geared toward the owners and employees of garden centers and wholesale nurseries as it covers a number of topics and skills.

According to Ted Stephens of Nurseries and who also served as the Chairman of the SCNLA committee that developed the CNP program, "We tried to cover as broad a spectrum as possible. Landscapers, employees

of garden centers as well as wholesale nurseries are all required by their customers to know a good bit about a whole lot relating to ornamental horticulture."

The SCNLA Certified Nursery Professional program requires that one pass a written test covering topics such as plant development, soils, irrigation, plant nutrition, plant propagation, and integrated pest management. Additionally, one must demonstrate their skills and knowledge of, nursery production, greenhouse production, turf grass care, and landscape design.

The second apart of the exam requires the identification of over 120 plants by botanical name. This latest edition of the program includes a 300+ page manual and a CD with descriptions and color photos of over 400 plants.

While not having a certification does not mean an individual or business owner is unqualified, having these certifications demonstrates that the business or professional we may wish to hire has taken the time to study for and obtain certification.

Additionally, it shows that they have proven their ability to other horticulture pro-

fessionals. Considering the expense and often the complexity involved in landscaping and plant production today, it makes sense to seek out those professionals that are certified. Many of those operating ornamental horticulture businesses now either actively seek applicants who have obtained certification, or offer incentives such as increased wages to those employees that obtain certification.

"It's certainly something I look for when considering any new potential hire. A number of my clients actually require that those working on their accounts have certification", said John Keeler.

Like many other professions, the SCNLA continues to provide new educational programs that can evaluate skills. The goal being to continually provide growth and development of the skills of Horticulture professionals with in South Carolina that in turn will benefit the final consumer.

As Ted Stephens said, "Like most other occupations, those that are willing to seek out opportunities to have their skills challenged and evaluated by others in their profession will ensure the overall quality and professionalism of the industry."

The good news for consumers is that the SCLA Certified Nursery Professional continues to offer the exam at least twice per year so there the number of "SCNLA Certified Nursery Professionals" continues to grow. There is an enthusiasm in the industry for continual growth and improvement.

How can we as consumers find SCNLA Certified Nursery Professionals? First, those who possess certification are encouraged to make this known to prospective clients and customers through use of the certification logo. Second, we can ask horticultural professionals ourselves and lastly we can visit the South Carolina Nursery & Landscape Association website [www.scnla.com](http://www.scnla.com).

## Highland Park

From Page 2

is even finished. Nagle said all six one-bedrooms have been leased, along with four of the townhomes and two flats.

"This is not student housing," Nagle said. "It's what's called 'Class A' apartments, and they're open for any professional."

PC's survey of its incoming class of the pharmacy school showed an average age of 24 to 26-years-old, and some of them are already working in the field.

"The building is geared toward those young professionals," Nagle said.

Apartments opening this fall are just the first phase of the company's plans for development. With six acres in all on both sides of Musgrove, Agnew Development hopes to add another three-story, 18-unit building and a two-story, 12-unit building beginning as soon as the first phase is complete.

Good news for a school and a community that intends only to grow.

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# Native plant group meets May in Charleston

Lowcountry to Host South Carolina Native Plant Society 12th Annual Symposium

Two-day Symposium features Keynote Speaker Dr. Douglas Tallamy, Nationally-Acclaimed Author and Professor of Entomology at the University of Delaware.

The Lowcountry Chapter of The South Carolina Native Plant Society is sponsoring the Society's 2010 Symposium, Nurture Nature, May 7-9 in Charleston. Held on the grounds of the historic Magnolia Plantation & Gardens, the two-day event features guest speakers, field trips, and workshops promoting best practices for sustaining biodiversity in our own backyards.

Nurture Nature will bring together a diverse group of people from across South



Carolina - master gardeners and horticulturists, home gardeners, landscape architects, nursery and landscape professionals, professors and students, as well as representatives

from state and local government - to learn and share best practices for sustaining biodiversity in South Carolina's private and commercial landscape.

This year's Keynote Speaker, Dr. Douglas Tallamy, is Professor and Chair of the Department of Entomology and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Delaware. He is the author of Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants, which was awarded the 2008 Silver Medal by the Garden Writers Association. Chief among Dr. Tallamy's research goals is a better understanding of the many ways insects interact with plants and how such interactions determine the diversity of animal communities. Calling on his research and lively personal anecdotes, Tallamy will discuss "the important ecological roles of the plants in our landscapes, emphasize the benefits of designing gardens with these roles in mind, and explore the consequences of failing to do so."

The Symposium will feature workshops by local experts, including: "Gardening As If All Life Mattered" by Judith Kramer, "Plant Diseases" by plant pathologist Kari Whitley, "Creating a Personal Herbarium" with botanist Joel Gramling, and a butterfly walk by naturalist Billy McCord. Symposium partners include Magnolia Plantation & Gardens, The Nature Conservancy, and the Charleston Parks Conservancy.

To register online, go to [www.scnps.org/symposium.html](http://www.scnps.org/symposium.html).

# Easy ways to make your home even safer

(StatePoint) When it comes to the safety of your home and family, no detail is too small. This doesn't mean you should convert your house into a fortified bunker.

From simple precautionary family activities to affordable home surveillance, there are several modest steps to beef up your security and new ideas to integrate into familiar routines.

## Be Prepared

Considering tornado season starts in spring and hurricane season in summer, some preventive measures can keep everyone safer. Set aside one day a month to discuss your family's home emergency plan.

Aside from discussing things like evacuation routes and checklists, assembling preparedness kits is key. Include items like bottled water, non-perishable foods, flashlight, radio, and a first-aid kit. For more information on being prepared, visit [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)

## Electrical Safety

Depending on the age and layout of your home, there could be several lurking electrical hazards. One of them is the potentially tragic combination of electricity and water. A special outlet called a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) can prevent trouble by shutting down appliances whenever they come in contact with water, particularly in rooms where outlets are located near water sources, like the kitchen and bathroom.

When it comes to electricity, there are precautionary measures to always follow. By

## See Home When Not Home

What about when you're not home? Yes, you can make sure windows are locked and draw the blinds. But many families are going further and installing home security cameras they can connect to the Internet and view from any computer or Web-enabled cell phone. Such devices let you know your home hasn't been burglarized when you are on vacation, or that the kids have arrived safely after school and Fido isn't chewing up the furniture.

These days, installing home surveillance needn't require expensive, bulky equipment. Making the process simpler, companies such as Panasonic are producing small high-quality Internet-enabled security cameras that are reliable and remarkably easy to use. For its part, Panasonic has released its one-wire BL-C210 and wireless BL-C230, two sleek cameras providing quick plug-and-play installation and integrated Internet connections. For more information visit [panasonic.com/netcam](http://panasonic.com/netcam).

With built-in microphones and secure online connectivity, not only do these cameras allow you to watch your home from anywhere, but their special sensors can identify body heat, sound, and motion and send an instant alert to your phone or computer with a photograph when any sensor is triggered.

"It's all about peace of mind, whether you're away at work or during an extended

absence," stresses Bill Taylor, President of Panasonic System Networks Company of America. "Network cameras enable people to keep an eye on their kids, babysitters, and pets on a daily basis, or remotely monitor their property when traveling. The key is

choosing high-quality equipment that is reliable."

Ranging from common sense to high tech, there are lots of easy ways to keep your home safer.

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# Keep your landscape lush; save \$ and water

(StatePoint) It's one of springtime's most popular activities: preparing your yard for enjoyable summertime use. However, the rising scarcity of water across the country continues to drive up the cost of landscaping and gardening.

In fact, more and more states nationwide are beginning to prohibit daily watering altogether.

"Fortunately, there are an increasing number of efficient approaches to home landscaping that are surprisingly easy to get started, such as mulching and installing new nozzles that use up to 30 percent less water than the nozzles we grew up with," points out Mike Baron, Toro water management specialist. "Using less water doesn't mean sacrificing a beautiful yard."

Go Natural

There might not be an easier technique to save water than mulching. Placing a three- to five-inch layer of mulch around your plants will help to hold in the moisture and is most effective when used in conjunction with plants native to the local environment.

Easy to Save

There's no need to dig up your yard to completely replace your irrigation system with one that will save water and money.

Every spray should have a removable nozzle that you can swap out for a more efficient one — and it's literally as easy as changing a light bulb.

One of the key parts of the conventional irrigation system that has seen the most development in recent years is the spray nozzle. A perfect example is the new Precision Series Spray nozzles from Toro, which can save water and cash. Responsible for spraying water evenly around a given area, in-ground Precision Series Spray nozzles use a special, embedded chip that creates a spray pattern which offers better coverage and, most importantly, uses less water.

These nozzles offer higher overall irrigation efficiency while delivering larger water droplets, minimizing the effect of evaporation. Using up to one-third less water of regular spray nozzles, this technology can make a world of difference financially and environmentally.

All the parts of an irrigation system — controller, valves, sprinklers — work together to ensure your plants get proper watering. Replacing just one portion of a system with an efficient option helps save water. Over time, replacing all components with efficient irrigation products ensures op-



Using less water shouldn't mean sacrificing a beautiful yard.

timum savings.

Drip Efficiently

Drip irrigation is another efficient approach to green landscaping. By putting water only where and when you need it — at the base of shrubs, flowers, and vegetables — you can use up to 50 percent less water than conventional sprinklers. These systems deliver water slowly, allowing the soil to better absorb water and minimize or eliminate runoff.

Because drip systems are designed to put

water closer to a plant's roots, they offer the most efficient way to cultivate a lush garden while saving water.

"It's an opportunity to demonstrate good citizenship. No matter what type of grass and plants you choose, you can take pride knowing that you can grow a beautiful, natural landscape while still being environmentally conscious," says Baron.

For more information about landscaping equipment and irrigation, visit [www.toro.com](http://www.toro.com).

## Make your lawn the envy of the neighborhood

(StatePoint) It's a great source of pride for homeowners: immaculate lawns beaming with healthy grass, sharp color, and uniform thickness.

Fortunately, you don't need an encyclopedia's worth of expertise to turn your skimpy yard into a gorgeous lawn worth showing off to the neighbors.

"A lawn-care regimen is important," says Roger Johnson, vice president of sales and marketing at Agri-Fab, a leading manufacturer of lawn care products. "But in recent years homeowners have been opting out of expensive landscaping services and looking to DIY tools that are affordable and easy to use."

A gorgeous lawn won't grow on its own. Luckily, a few helpful tips and tools can make it much easier to do without hired help or the backaches associated with tools of the past:

Ready, Set, Mow

Maintaining a proper mowing routine is



key to a healthy lawn. Grass is typically ready to be mowed once it reaches a height **Lawn Page 14**



# Give your home an inexpensive makeover

(StatePoint) Whatever the season or the reason, it’s never a bad time to seek out new ideas for reinventing your home. Because expensive large-scale renovations aren’t a viable option for many of us, consider simple changes that can make a major difference in enhancing your house.

And these days, redecorating on a dime may never have been easier.

A few budget-conscious ideas can make a world of difference on the home front. Painting, installing new fixtures and sprucing up walls are easy and inexpensive ways to give your home — and your spirits — a lift. You can complete such projects on a weekend or even after work, bringing your house in line with the latest design trends.

Simple changes even can increase the value of your home, which is something to consider in today’s competitive real estate market.

Paint a Fresh Coat: Perhaps no addition is quicker and easier than fresh paint. Much like any other home design idea, trends evolve over time. By applying a fresh coat of paint and different colors in different rooms, any home can be given new life. With dozens of colors readily available at



Wall hangings or decorative shelving can enhance a room.

reasonable prices, one afternoon spent painting can make a big difference as seasons and trends change.

New Installations: The most far-reaching

changes can range from new floor tiling to kitchen cabinets and countertops, but there also are more modest and affordable installation options. Something as simple as new

doorknobs, address plaques or even a mailbox can add new energy to a home on a budget.

Hang it Up: By hanging some fresh decorative items on your walls, aspiring do-it-yourselfers can make big changes without breaking the bank. Whether it’s an old painting, creative wall treatments, a new mirror or shelving from the local hardware store, all you’ll need is a solid method for hanging these items around the house.

“The most common mistakes DIYers make are to hang things with any nail, screw or pushpin in their junk drawers. Different applications call for different hanging methods,” says Mike Madland, Product Manager at ITW Brands, an anchor and fastener manufacturer.

Fortunately, there are new options in your local home improvement store that provide strength, ease of use and durability no matter what you’re hanging.

For those heavier items, try self-drilling anchors like Twist-N-Lock product from ITW Brands. You actually hear an audible ‘click’ when a screw is inserted into the anchor, letting you know it’s installed correctly.

# New trends in outdoor home furnishings

(StatePoint) Brighter days are ahead. That’s the message coming from many economists, weather forecasters and even designers of outdoor furniture for decks and patios.

It couldn’t have come at a better time. After hunkering down for months, many homeowners say they’re planning to liven up their outdoor living spaces around the same time they cast off those long-sleeve shirts.

So, in designing for the 2010 outdoor season, manufacturers of outdoor furnishings have been focusing on dazzling color to brighten moods, plush comfort to ease tension and increased value to minimize the impact on wallets.

“Small improvements can have a big impact on outdoor spaces,” says Jackie Hirschhaut, vice president of the American Home Furnishings Alliance, “and that’s just the kind of psychologically rewarding purchase many of us are ready to make.”

Color

Nothing brightens a patio faster than a splash of color, and warm, cheerful red is the color of the moment. Some outdoor furniture makers are letting red stand alone, such

as Laneventure, which has set rich cherry blossoms against a near-white background. Others are complementing reds with other colors. For instance, Agio International is showcasing its new Disney Yacht Club collection in red, accompanied by nautical stripe accent pillows; while Veneman is swirling a deep crimson background with crisp, white vines.

Calming shades inspired by nature, including leaf green, sunshine yellow and watery blue, also offer dashes of color this season.

Comfort

Plush cushioning is fashionable and affordable, as manufacturers take specially-engineered outdoor foam to new heights. From deep club chairs to generous chaise lounges to sumptuous daybeds, homeowners seeking sanctuary in their outdoor spaces will find many lush choices.

Motion is increasingly popular, adding comfort to new designs. For example, a three-position recliner from Pride was added to six different collections; Barlow-Tyrie has added its “Infinity” backrest adjuster (which positions the backrest at any angle) to mul-



This season’s outdoor furniture is brighter and more durable than ever.

tiple new sun loungers; and Domus Ventures even has added massage features for two of its lounge chairs, operating on weather-resistant batteries that recharge through a solar panel side table.

Value

In all price points and styles, design details are exceedingly important because manufacturers are seeking to offer something extra to lure consumers back into stores.

Gracefully-curved stainless steel and artful wrought iron metal furniture now is being accompanied by elegant upholstered embellishments, such as rope trim, fringed pillows and lush outdoor throws.

In wood outdoor furnishings, new options range from clear finishes showcasing the beauty of natural wood to smooth, high gloss, marine-grade paints.

In the woven category, manufacturers continue to transform synthetic resin into the look and feel of natural materials, including willow, banana leaf and even birch twigs. This results in detailed and delicate patterns, but with unprecedented durability.

“I truly believe this season is the perfect time for making a quality investment in new outdoor furnishings,” concludes Hirschhaut. “The selection of stylish and functional pieces is tremendous, with designs at very reasonable prices.”

## Save money on home improvements this season

(StatePoint) The warmer temperatures make it a great time to tackle much needed home improvement projects. And contrary to popular belief, these adjustments don’t need to be expensive or exhausting.

There are many cost-effective, eco-friendly design and renovation projects you can undertake that will spruce up your home and positively impact the environment.

“Simply put, environmentally-friendly home renovation projects create a healthy home and save energy and money,” says Tove Anderson, principal of Tove Anderson Architecture and the past chair of The American Institute of Architects Committee on the Environment DC Chapter. “Whether it is reusing what is in your home or incorporating new materials, there are a variety of environmentally-

friendly design options that can fit anyone’s taste and budget.”

To start, consider the following practices:

Find Hidden Gems

Before shopping for costly new pieces of furniture, take a second look at unused pieces in your basement, garage or guest rooms. In many cases, long-ignored decor can be refurbished with a new coat of paint, reupholstering or another creative makeover. If you can’t fight the urge to splurge, shop locally first or visit a high-end, second-hand store. This eliminates manufacturing and transportation costs and is a more sustainable approach to furnishing your home. You might also browse online stores for environmentally-

Home Improvements, Page 6

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# Home improvement

## From Page 5

friendly furniture, paint or artwork.  
Use What You Have

Enlist an architect to help you reconfigure existing space in your home, rather than make costly structural modifications or additions on your own. These professionals can help you assess how you can create the home of your dreams by working with already existing space.

For example, if you've always wanted more sunlight or an open floor plan, an architect can help you make the needed adjustments — such as new window treatments, adding windows and skylights, or knocking down walls. To find an architect in your area, visit [architectfinder.aia.org](http://architectfinder.aia.org).

### Say It With Color

A new coat of paint can do wonders in changing a room's look. Make sure to choose low-VOC (volatile organic chemicals) paint, which uses water instead of oil, thereby reducing toxins and limiting the impact on your home and the environment.  
Be Energy Efficient

Insulation leaks and cracks can exist in both new and old homes, leading to energy waste and inflated bills. A free home energy audit can provide ways to save money and energy. Your local energy provider usually can assist in setting up an appointment. Reseal windows, walls, ceilings and attic to start making a sizable, positive impact.

Additionally, if you are looking to purchase a new appliance, consider Energy-Star qualified appliances, which use 25-40 percent less energy than conventional options and can result in savings of up to \$100 (or more) a year on energy bills.

If your water heater is more than 10 years old, it might be time to purchase a new one. If that's not possible, cover your old one with a water heater jacket, which can eliminate heat loss by 25-40 percent.

And remember to shut off and unplug electrical devices when not in use.

"By making the decision to adopt sustainable renovation practices that are eco-friendly, homeowners will help the environment and be rewarded with extra money savings, in the short and long term," says Anderson.



# Ways to increase the value of your home

(StatePoint) It's a busy time in the wild world of real estate. After a nationwide crisis, there has been a surge of home sales across the country and homeowners once again are looking for ways to increase the value of their houses — regardless of their intent on selling them.

Experts say there are a number of simple ways to help your property see a rise in value.

"To draw buyers in, you need to create a visual story of how they could live in your home," says Starr Osborne, founder of moving-management and design company Tailored Transitions and author of "Home Staging That Works: Sell Your Home in Less Time for More Money." "You need to prepare your home in such a way that it tells them a tale of the wonderful life that awaits them."

With a few quick moves, telling that story can be easier.

### Consider an Inspection

When it comes to the inner workings of any home, a lot can go wrong. There are also plenty of inopportune times for a house's plumbing or electricity to suddenly go out. Plan a proper home inspection and rest eas-

ier knowing your property is up to code.

### Get a Fresh Perspective

By bringing in a home stager for a couple of hours, you'll gain insight into your home from someone with an established background in real estate. By offering the odd decorating idea, he or she can help bring your home in line with the latest and most popular design trends.

### Stage Your Home

There are many ways easy or temporary upgrades to your home that can come in handy if you're showing it to prospective buyers. "Home staging has infiltrated the selling process all across the country," says Osborne. "Clearly, staging boosts sales prices."

According to a recent HomeGain survey of 2,000 realtors nationwide, 91 percent recommended staging before selling. Simple solutions from replacing faucets to moving furniture can dramatically impact your home's sale price.

### Unclutter

If you're looking to sell, improve that first impression. Make sure your lawn, shrubbery, walkway and driveway are all tidy. Get rid of messes and consider a new



doormat or some nice planters. Removing books and lamps helps unclutter a living or family room.

### Fix The Easy Stuff

Repair paint cracks with spackle and a new coat. Fix cracked or missing baseboards, thresholds and tiling. Make sure hinges are well oiled and that doors and win-

dows open and close easily.

### Add Some Color

By investing in some nice paints and applying a fresh coat, any home can be given new life quickly and easily. Assign specific colors to different rooms, and you'll find that walking around the house is a whole new experience.

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## Garden at PC part of environmental push

By Nick McCormac  
Staff Writer

With events like the recent green auto show and a stronger push to be more eco-friendly, Presbyterian College's Green Hose initiative has brought environmentalism and sustainability to the forefront.

One of the projects that school officials consider the most promising is a student-run greenhouse on the school's campus that acts as part educational tool, part sustainability effort, and part food source for students.

When a large anonymous donation was made to the school last year, officials created a committee for all things green.

Daniel Parson, a local farmer who runs Clinton's Community Supported Agriculture program, saw an opportunity to use the funding to help teach students about gardening and farming.

"A lot of people, including students, have no idea where their food comes from or what goes into harvesting the crop," said

**PC Garden, Page 8**



Salad bar in the making: The crops growing this in garden on the campus of Presbyterian College helps students learn about local crops and how to garden. It also supplies food for campus dining facilities. Crops such as carrots, radishes and various salad greens are grown in the garden and sold to Sodexo, Inc., which runs food services on campus. About \$700 worth of crops have been purchased from the garden since it started about a year ago. — Photo by Nick McCormac

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**Helping the garden grow:** Daniel Parson crouches in a field of cover crops growing at a student-run garden on the campus of Presbyterian College. The garden started about a year ago as part of PC's Greenhose initiative to help teach students about where their produce comes from and how to harvest it. Parson, a local farmer, wants to build a high tunnel enclosure for the garden to help crops grow year round. - Photo by Nick McCormac



PC garden

From Page 7

Parson, whose wife is an English teacher at PC. “Starting this greenhouse gave us the opportunity to teach students about that and have them actively participate in the harvest.”

Cover crops, like rye and clover, were planted at the beginning of the fall semester to help enrich the soil. Parson and PC students put up a fence made of bamboo - supplied by PC Professor Dr. John Inman - around the garden, making the enclosure green as well.

This setup allowed for crops to be planted and ready for harvest by the time graduation rolled around. But Inman and Parson plan to take it a step further by erecting a high tunnel to help make the garden a year-round effort.

High tunnels, also called hoophouses, are plastic, unheated greenhouses that cover gardens to help extend the growing season. Parson said he hopes PC’s garden will reap the benefits of a high tunnel enclosure.

“If things go well enough, I’d like to see

planting, harvesting and caring for the greenhouse become part of the curriculum,” said Inman, a biology professor. “We want these kids to get their hands dirty. Literally.”

The garden covers about one-third of an acre but Parson would like to see it grow to cover a full acre at some point.

Another benefit that has blossomed thanks to the garden can be seen and tasted in PC’s dining hall. The garden acts as a small contributor to campus dining, with salad greens and crops like carrots and radishes being supplied.

Sodexo, Inc., which operates dining on campus, buys food from the garden, and that money is in turn used to help support the garden.

So far, Sodexo has bought about \$700 worth of food from the garden, said Parson.

Said Parson, “We’re not doing this with the goal of making a profit. We’re just glad we can supply students with locally-grown crops and get them involved in the gardening process.”

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Fun outdoor seasonal activities for kids

(StatePoint) Between the computer, television and video games, it can be difficult motivating kids to partake in fun activities that don’t involve sitting and staring.

But with a little direction and some good ideas, a child’s interest in more active, stimulating recreation can be heightened. And all the while, the bond between child and parent or grandparent can be strengthened.

Enjoy Nature Together

“My grandmother taught me that nature isn’t something only enjoyed on a vacation or a drive,” says Sharon Lovejoy, a grandmother of four and author of “Toad Cottages & Shooting Stars,” a trusty new book filled with imaginative children’s activities. “Experiencing nature together means you open yourselves to the myriad mysteries unfolding around you.”

For many children, outdoor adventures can take place right in their backyard. By creating a backyard explorer’s kit or attracting butterflies to your garden by making it critter-friendly, kids can be completely engaged in outdoor activities. Or how about teaching them to make a solar oven and then enjoy treats baked in it?

There even are indoor pursuits involving

nature, including planting everything from flowers to pumpkins to peanuts.

Find a Meteor Shower

While there are many natural phenomena children can enjoy, Lovejoy touts the wonder of meteor showers, particularly how they give children opportunities to enjoy the outdoors at night. “While you’re waiting, tell your



child a story about these sparkling pieces of heaven,” says Lovejoy, who even provides a calendar of annual meteor showers in her book.

If you can’t find enough sparkling objects in the sky, try making your own firefly lantern together.

Fun in the Kitchen

Generally speaking, any activity that involves eating is going to be appealing to children — and the

spring and summer are great times for recipes featuring seasonal fruits and vegetables.

By choosing some fun cooking and baking ideas and engaging your children in the process, families can keep busy for long periods of time, something especially appealing on rainy days. Whether their responsibilities involve mixing ingredients or timing dishes in the oven, children will be rewarded with the fruits of their labor.

Find Ideas Online

Finding good ideas for kids’ activities is tricky. Turn their love of sitting in front of the computer into fun in the physical world. There are many online resources providing calendars and ideas for seasonal kids’ activities. Engaging sites like [www.123child.com](http://www.123child.com) and [www.theideabox.com](http://www.theideabox.com) offer recipes, crafts and games. Visit [www.sharonlovejoy.com](http://www.sharonlovejoy.com) for gardening and outdoor ideas and for information about her book, “Toad Cottages & Shooting Stars.”

With many parents scrambling to stimulate fertile young minds, good ideas are key in the quest for family fun.

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