



## From the Broker's Desk

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As I speak with potential buyers, I have found that many are considering housing options other than the traditional single family house. Many lost their homes or lost money on their real estate investments during the recession and are looking at smaller and more economical housing. Some have elected to rent which does allow for a quicker move

when not having to sell real estate and someone else is responsible for the maintenance but there is no accrual of equity and no tax benefits. Most consumers still want home ownership and have the selection of single family houses, patio homes, townhouses or condos. Many factors influence which type of housing to choose. If you need space, love yard work or need a yard for pets or children and want some element of privacy, then the single family house would best suit your needs. If you want a single family house but don't want a lot of yard work, then a patio home or townhouse would be a consideration. If you travel and are looking for security and no yard work, then a condo should address your needs. Each offers advantages and disadvantages. With single family housing you will have more privacy, more indoor/outdoor space and the freedom to make changes but all maintenance issues would be your responsibility and utility costs may be higher. The patio home or townhouse floor plans tend to have a smaller footprint so utility costs will be less but there is less privacy and many have homeowners associations which add monthly fees and more stringent rules and regulations. Unlike the patio home or townhouse units of which you own both the interior and exterior and the land under the unit, a condo owner only owns the interior walls and accompanying interior space and a percentage of the common areas. One advantage of the larger condo complexes is the availability of amenities like pools, tennis courts and club houses with exercise facilities but the more amenities the higher the monthly fees to maintain these common areas. No matter which option is selected always perform your due diligence. Securing a home inspection is money well spent. If considering a development with a home owners or condo association always review the master deed, bylaws and rules and regulations to verify that you can comply. Request copies of the minutes of association meetings for the last several months and review for issues that might impact you after purchase. Review financial records to determine how solvent the association is, amount of reserves available to address major repairs and the number of homeowners that have delinquent fees. If the funds are not sufficient and the units are older or several home owners are delinquent on their monthly fees, you could be hit with an assessment after purchase. If you will be securing a mortgage then at least 50% of the units must be owner occupied, 30% owner occupied if a new complex and the complex has to be FHA approved to secure FHA financing. Home ownership is still the goal of most consumers so let the experienced Agents of WILLOW Realty lend their expertise in your next real estate decision.

### How to prepare your lawn for spring

© foxnews.com



When the winter season ends, you will probably want to spend more time outside, appreciating the warm weather and the simple pleasures of a nicely kept lawn. Here are a few steps you can take toward creating and maintaining a healthy and gorgeous lawn.

**Remove debris** Rake away the debris from the fall and winter months, including leaves and sticks. This will give you a fresh start for the spring. If you have leftover rubbish on the lawn, this can get in the way of mowing, watering, planting seed and so on. Raking has the added benefit of loosening the surface of the soil, encouraging healthy airflow.

**Apply more grass seed** Look for areas with weak grass growth or dead grass. Use a strong rake to open the surface. Mix the grass seed with new, healthy soil. Then spread this soil/grass seed mixture over the surface. Don't forget to regularly water this area to foster hearty and fast

grass growth.

**Mulch** Mulch is a protective covering that you can apply to soil to lock in moisture. Mulching with a depth of 2 to 4 inches around the bases of trees, shrubs and in flower beds will retain water and keep plants warm.

**Water deeply** Many homeowners water their lawns often -- but with little water. However, it's better to water only when your lawn needs it with a lot of water. If you water deep and sparingly, you will train the grass roots to dig deeper into the soil. Whereas, if you water lightly and often, you will train the roots to stay near the surface, according to the Environmental Protection Agency.



#### Snow mold

This condition is caused when the grass doesn't receive enough oxygen because it's been covered in snow. Snow mold reveals itself when the snow melts. If you rake your lawn before the arrival of snow, this can reduce your risk of snow-mold. Some people, with a history of snow mold, try to avoid this condition by mowing the lawn well into the autumn and spreading snow evenly across the lawn during winter. The latter, however, is deemed excessive by many people.

**Mow high** Mow your lawn with a sharp blade. You should also mow often because grass doesn't adjust as well to infrequent mowing. If you keep your grass a bit on the longer side, it will grow thicker and healthier, with a better-established root system.

Better roots help your grass survive insects or drought. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, many turf grass species should be kept between 2 1/2 to 3 1/2 inches.



### Roasted Asparagus w/ Lemon Vinaigrette

© Food Network

- 3/4 lbs fresh asparagus, woody stems removed
- 2 tbs extra-virgin olive oil
- Kosher salt & freshly ground black pepper
- For the Vinaigrette:
- 1/2 tsp Dijon mustard
- 1/2 lemon, juiced
- 1 tbs olive oil
- Kosher salt & freshly ground black pepper



Preheat the oven to 400 degrees F. In a large bowl toss the asparagus in the olive oil, and liberally season with salt and pepper. Spread the stalks out on a baking sheet, in a single layer, and roast until tender but still firm and moist, about 10 minutes. Meanwhile, make the vinaigrette: In a small bowl, vigorously whisk together the mustard and lemon juice. Slowly drizzle in the olive oil, whisking quickly to emulsify the olive oil into the juice mixture. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Transfer the asparagus to a serving platter, toss with the vinaigrette and serve. The dish may be eaten warm or cold.

**Luck is a matter of preparation meeting opportunity.**

~Lucius Annaeus Seneca

