

Climbing the Branches of the Family Tree

Curious about your ancestry? Sorting out your family tree can require some tricky digging. Fortunately, resources are available to help you trace your roots. There are many online genealogy sites, although many of them charge for their services. Still, it is entirely possible to build a family tree by investing nothing more than time. Family tree software and online chat rooms can help you get started. The website My Heritage offers a family tree template at <https://www.myheritage.com/family-tree>.

Once you've decided to dig into your roots, begin with what you know — your family. Ask questions to discover names, spellings, and birth places. Go through family albums. If a relative has done any research, use this as a starting point. Trace your ancestry lines as far back as you can, adding relevant details such as birthdays, marriages, and death dates. Here are a few tips as you work your way up the family tree.

Begin with a direct route, starting with yourself; then add your parents and grandparents, and add branches from there. A simple web search may help with details.

Search the census records. Since names and their spellings may have changed along the way, be diligent. Find your most recent ancestors on each census, and then work your way into the past.

Use documents and physical records such as naturalization papers and marriage and birth certificates. And remember, if you get stuck, you can always try a genealogy service.

Thinking of Buying a Home? Get My Free Guide



Buying a home is a complex process with many factors to consider.

Prepare for the decisions you'll need to make along the way by requesting my free report, "10 Easy Steps to Buying a Home."

Just call me at 951-757-5145 and I'll send it right out to you.

Could Driverless Cars Drive Real Estate Values?

Imagine a world where humans never have to worry about wasted commute times. Imagine being able to use that time to work, spend quality time with your kids, plan dinner, or catch up on some much-needed z's.

Sounds magical, doesn't it? That magic could be coming to a street near you, as driverless cars are poised to become mainstream technology worldwide.

As Tesla, GM, and BMW clamber to get their fleets on the streets, these autonomous cars could have a far-reaching effect on industries other than auto.

When the human is removed from behind the wheel, the potential for error diminishes. Therefore, safety precautions such as auto insurance, parking tickets, speed traps, and law enforcement may no longer be needed.

These vehicles could also have a significant impact on the real estate market. When autonomous cars become the new norm, public transit will no longer be the go-to for those who are unable to drive.

The loss of public transit could have a domino effect on the real estate industry, since cities would no longer be built around transit systems.

What was once considered less desirable residential real estate may become more popular *because* of the distance from transit hubs. According to an article in *Forbes*, these areas could offer a "greater appeal [that] could translate into increasing demand and rising property values."

The long-reaching impact these cars will have on society is still being mapped, but it should make for an interesting ride.

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Increase Property Value by Avoiding These Landscape Blunders

Everyone knows the importance of making a good first impression. It's no different when it comes to your home's curb appeal, which refers to your property's overall appearance from the street.

To make your home's "frosting" as appealing as possible, you'll definitely want to think about planting stunning blooms and making sure your landscaping is well manicured and maintained. Implementing a long-term landscaping plan can help increase your property value when it comes time to sell.

When you go to plant, make sure to avoid the below common landscaping mistakes that homeowners make when planting trees and shrubs.

First, avoid planting invasive tree species. Some such species, like bamboo, grow quickly and actually push out native plants, which does tremendous damage to an area's biodiversity. Another no-no is planting too much and too close together. When too many trees and plants are crammed together, the greenery doesn't have

Ask the Agent: This Month's Question

How Can I Quickly Boost My Home's Curb Appeal?

Every seller wants a great offer ASAP, but some are in a bigger hurry than others. If you need to get your home on the market quickly, and you know it needs some exterior TLC, try these tips.

First, create an inviting entry. Your front door makes a first, and lasting, impression. If you don't have time to repaint the entire house, at least paint the front door. If they're worn, replace the kickplate and doorknob (or shine them to like-new condition). Replace tired welcome mats. Next, spruce up your landscaping. Keep your lawn well-manicured. Add seasonal flowers to your walkway and porch. Ensure all fixtures have working light bulbs and provide sufficient illumination.

To make sure you've covered the most important aspects, take the same stroll a buyer will make from your parking area to your front door. Does anything stand out (negatively)? If so, do what needs to be done to make it more appealing.

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