

The New Story Festival and the Compassionate Austin Co-op!

Info at compassionateaustin.org

Questions? Contact compassionateaustin@gmail.com

You are invited to the New Story Festival, a new annual gathering for community, creativity, and the common good. The Festival is March 29-31, 2019 at Huston-Tillotson University. This is the "signature festival" of Compassionate Austin (an inclusive Austin movement to create a more compassionate city).



We are launching a new collective initiative, the Compassionate Austin Co-op and will host the inaugural Offers & Needs Market at the Festival on March 31st from 5:00-6:30 pm! Join the Co-op today! Join a diverse collective of organizations and individuals across our community who commit to enacting the City Council's Compassionate Austin Resolution, practicing compassionate action on behalf of Others, Self, and the Earth.



We welcome businesses, schools & educational entities, civic organizations, faith-based groups, advocates, artists, musicians, news representatives (TV, radio, newspapers, etc.), design-thinkers, innovators, healers, family, friends, neighbors, etc.... (basically any and everyone who is committed to compassionate

action on behalf of others, self, and the Earth). We invite you to attend the Festival and, of course, to join the Compassionate Austin Co-op and participate in the Offers & Needs Market.

Co-op Members receive both public recognition & tangible benefits:

- Free pass to the New Story Festival, the signature festival of Compassionate Austin.
- Invitation to the Offers & Needs Market, an innovative way to connect and collaborate with likeminded organizations.
- Recognition on compassionateaustin.org and at the New Story Festival.

- Half-off on exhibitor fees at the New Story Festival.
- Discounted rates on the Compassionate Integrity Training group workshops.

**There is no cost to join the Co-op or attend the Offers & Needs Market.

How to Join the Co-op!

Step 1: Complete the online membership form found on the "Compassionate Austin Co-op" page at compassionateaustin.org.

Step 2: Download and display the Co-op badge on your website, social media, and/or establishment.

Step 3: Participate in the Co-op's Offers & Needs Market at least once a year.

Participate in the Co-op's Offers & Needs Market!

An Offers & Needs Market is a 90-minute guided process for participants to identify and exchange knowledge, skills, and resources.

The Market combines community asset-mapping and sharing-economy principles, to enhance your own work exponentially through collaboration with others!

Whether for free, barter, or a set rate, participants might offer or need things like:

- Professional skills or services
- Consulting in various areas of expertise
- Tools, vehicles, food/drink, meeting space
- Volunteers or financial support
- Anything else they are able to share!

There is no cost for Co-op Members to participate.

The first Offers & Needs Market will be held at the New Story Festival at Huston-Tillotson University on Sunday, March 31, 5:00-6:30 pm.

The New Story Festival is a Festival where we all belong. Join the Co-op and Offers & Needs Market where we share, connect, and support each other! We look forward to seeing you there! Thanks so much!

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Aeration Now Can Help Your Spring and Summer Irrigation



In order to prepare your lawn for a healthy spring growing season, you should employ basic lawn care practices at this time of year, which includes aerating your yard. It is important that nutrients reach the soil beneath your grass, and aeration can help you get that done.

Aeration involves making small holes in the soil to allow air, water and nutrients to get to the grass roots.

This helps the roots grow deeper and produce a stronger, more vibrant lawn.

Aerating helps alleviate soil compaction. Compacted soils have too many solid particles in a space, which prevents proper circulation of air, water and nutrients within the soil. Excess lawn thatch or heavy organic debris buried under the grass surface can also starve the roots from these essential elements.

So when is the right time to get this aeration done? These next six to eight weeks leading up to the spring season, when grass begins to grow again, is a good time to aerate.

The two main aeration tools are the spike aerator and a plug aerator. The spike aerator poke holes in the ground with a solid piece of metal. Plug aerators remove a core or plug of grass and soil from the lawn. Most landscaping companies and horticulturists recommend the use of the plug aerator. The machines can be rented or you can have a lawn care service aerate for you. After aerating, it's always a good idea to apply about a half-inch of compost over the aerated yard. The compost fills in the holes left by the plug aerator and brings organic materials into the root zone.

If you have noticed that your turfgrass isn't looking its best or that water has difficulty penetrating through the soil surface, it may be time to aerate your lawn. Lawns with clay soils that get a lot of foot traffic typically require aeration more often as they become compacted over time. Here's a great tip to check to see if your yard needs to be aerated.

Using a shovel, dig a square-foot section of grass about six inches deep and take a look at it. If the grass roots don't extend further than two inches deep into the soil, your lawn would benefit from aeration.

If you plan to aerate your own yard, here are a few helpful tips to get the job done.

(Continued on Page 3)

(Continued from Page 2)

- Before you get started, make sure the soil is moist enough. There's nothing more frustrating than trying to aerate soil that is bone dry. Aerating the day after a rain shower or watering your lawn the day before is advised.

- Most aeration machines cover only a small percentage of soil surface per pass, so make multiple passes over the most compacted areas. Save resources (and your energy) by leaving unaffected areas alone.

- The soil plugs can be left on the ground after aeration and allowed to decompose. Or, you can rake them into piles to throw in the compost bin. However, this isn't necessary as it should take about two to four weeks for the soil cores to break down naturally. Sprinkle compost (sand or peat moss can be used instead of compost) over the lawn to fill in the holes.

- An aeration myth is that if you apply a pre-emergent herbicide on your lawn in the spring, aerating your lawn will destroy the herbicide "barrier." This is not true — research shows that aeration will not affect crabgrass control or weed prevention.

After aerating, it's important to continue appropriate lawn care practices.

Aerating will help you save water over the spring and summer seasons. Instead of running off or only penetrating a few inches,

water will be better absorbed in an aerated yard. That makes your entire landscape and your water bill happier.

Did you know...

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, outdoor water use varies greatly depending upon geographic location. In dry climates such as that in the Trinity Glen Rose District, a household's outdoor water use can be as high as 60 percent. Some experts estimate that as much as 50% of that irrigation water is wasted due to inefficient watering techniques, wind and evaporation.



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and health insurance. All you provide is room/board and three meals a day. Oh and TLC...but that's free.

Live in the middle of no where? Small town? Not a big deal. Some kids prefer to get away from the hustle and bustle of big cities. The exchange students also do pretty well in small schools, as they usually get to be the center of attention and make friends rather quickly. Our students also get chances to travel to New York, Washington DC, Hawaii and California...so they can get their fill of the city life and return back to the peaceful sounds of nature.

Do you consider yourself a boring person? More than likely this is not true, and you should quit being so hard on yourself. Your student

will make friends. Your student will meet other exchange students. Your student will attend activities offered by our program. Your student will get involved in sports and school clubs. Your purpose is not to entertain them. But you might find that you bring a little adventure to each others lives.

Kids are too young? Great! Lots of students love young kids, and your kids will love them. It's beneficial to introduce your kids to new cultures at a very young age. You're preparing them to accept people no matter what the religion, color of their skin, or language they speak. That my friend, is good parenting.

Don't hold back! This is a great experience for both parties. You get the opportunity to change a child's life. You get the satisfaction of seeing them grow, even after they leave your home into becoming a doctor, a lawyer, a diplomat, artist, teacher...the list goes on. And you contributed to that success! And the best part of it all, is you gain another family member for life. We need people like you to give these kids a chance.

STS Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization whose mission is to place exchange students in our area. If you are interest in hosting, please contact me at 832-455-7881 or at vicki.stsfoundation@yahoo.com. I'll be happy to answer any question you might have and get you started on hosting your very own student!

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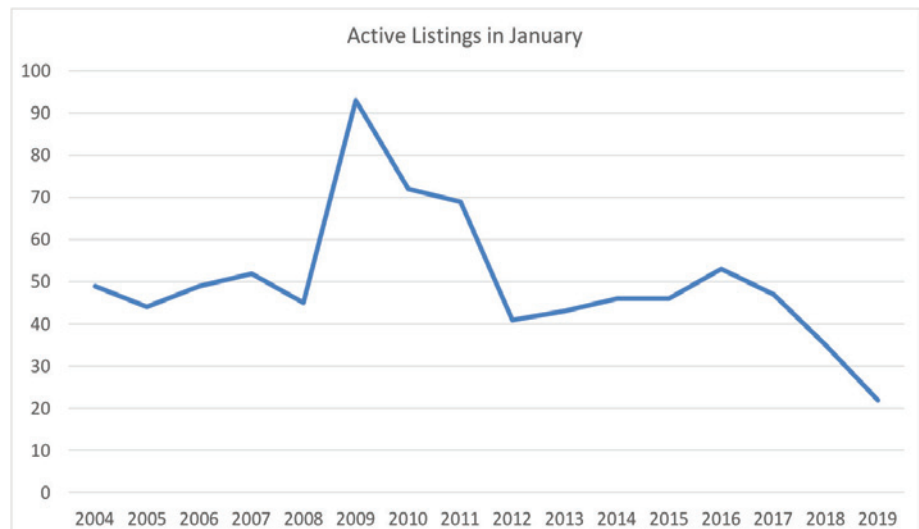
TARRYTOWN REAL ESTATE market report update

March
2019

by **Trey McWhorter**

A year ago I wrote about the record low number of active Tarrytown listings in MLS to kick off 2018. Last year in January there were 34 active listings, which was the lowest number of active listings in any month going back to 2004. Remarkably, in January of 2019 we set a new record low with only 22 active listings in MLS.

What is even more striking is the number of transactions. In the first 6 weeks of 2019, there were 18! The previous post-recession record was 13 (in 2012), so we are nearly 40% ahead of that pace. For a little more context, both 2002 and 2004 had 19 transactions, and 2005 had 26. So the level of activity is not unprecedented, but it has been a while.



Single Family Homes	Year to Date - Tarrytown	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015
SOLD	Single Family Homes Sold	18	7	8	9	10
List Price	Avg List Price	\$ 1,531,167	\$ 1,727,429	\$ 1,261,250	\$ 1,150,722	\$ 1,027,500
	Median List Price	\$ 1,397,000	\$ 1,598,000	\$ 1,350,000	\$ 995,000	\$ 1,027,500
Sold Price	Average Net Sold Price	\$ 1,431,491	\$ 1,630,714	\$ 1,239,961	\$ 1,104,944	\$ 976,170
	Median Net Sold Price	\$ 1,211,791	\$ 1,598,000	\$ 1,370,000	\$ 975,000	\$ 1,022,500
List Price \$ / Sq Ft	Average List Price / Sq Ft	\$ 569	\$ 427	\$ 402	\$ 404	\$ 369
	Median List Price / Sq Ft	\$ 498	\$ 423	\$ 435	\$ 424	\$ 389
Sold Price \$ / Sq Ft	Average Net Sold Price / Sq Ft	\$ 521	\$ 404	\$ 395	\$ 387	\$ 348
	Median Net Sold Price / Sq Ft	\$ 466	\$ 422	\$ 427	\$ 413	\$ 353
Days on Market	Average Days on Market	84	228	85	89	80
	Median Days on Market	66	238	58	78	45

If you want to make sense of what's going on in the market, or would like a better understanding of what your own home is worth, please contact me and I'd be happy to help you. You can also find additional analysis and updates to this article on treymcwhorter.com.

Note: All data comes from the Austin Board of Realtors' MLS report, reflecting activity through February 15, 2018.

Xeriscape

www.gardenstylesanantonio.com

Before you nix the xeriscape, know this: it doesn't mean you have to convert your lawn to a rock garden. Nor do you have to go cold turkey on turfgrass. But you do have to keep seven principles in mind.

Coined in 1981 by Denver Water, xeriscape (xeris is Greek for dry) refers to the principles of matching low maintenance landscape with low water usage.

Xeriscape is not just rocks, cactus, agaves, synthetic turf, decomposed granite and rain barrels, although these could all be components of a xeriscape. A xeriscape in its simplest form is minimal lawn, native flowering perennials and shrubs with no more than two inches of mulch, and pervious patios or decks.

There are seven principles of xeriscape. They include:

1. Planning and design
2. Soil amendment
3. Efficient irrigation
4. Appropriate plant selection
5. Mulch
6. Limited turf areas
7. Appropriate maintenance

Now let's look at what these principles really mean.

Planning and design

Always begin with a plan. Consider aspect, shade, slope, soil, and existing and desired species. Always have in the back of your mind the goal of one third lawn, one third beds and one third pervious patio or deck.

Soil amendments

Soil holds moisture. The more soil, the less supplemental water

needed. One way to increase water holding capacity is compost. Add one inch of compost to the soil. Expanded shale, while not organic, is excellent for heavy clay soils.

Efficient irrigation

Of course, the most efficient irrigation is rain. But the second best is a hose. Let this sink in — an in-ground irrigation system will use 50 percent more water (70 percent in the summer) than a hose-end sprinkler or hand held hose. Which do you think does a better job of conserving water?

Appropriate plant selection

Pick a good shade tree or two. Enjoy some native plants or ones well-adapted to our area. An extensive list of options is available at GardenStyleSA.com.

Mulch

Two inches of mulch, whether organic like woodchips or river rock, is sufficient. Xeric plants prefer limited mulch.

Limited turf

It's really simple. Lawns use an excessive amount of water. Therefore, reduce the size of lawns. The recommendation of weekly mowing suddenly becomes much easier.

Appropriate maintenance

Excessive pruning and fertilization does more harm than good. Just keep it simple — mow weekly, prune perennials no more than three times a year, prune trees once every five years and fertilize once a year or use compost in spring and fall.



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Just Add Water

It's hard not to think about water. Just how much water are you using? Is it more or less than your neighbors?

In our community, water usage varies greatly by season. In the hotter, summer months more people are running their sprinklers and filling their swimming pools.

Did you know the typical 14 X 28 ft. pool holds 16,000 – 18,000 gallons? Larger pools

can hold double that amount. Don't forget about that irrigation system. Watering your

½ acre lot four times a week can use 45,000 gallons a month, or more.

Inside your home, your typical family of four uses 240-320 gallons per day! According to Texas A&M, the largest water users are the shower, clothes washer and toilets, accounting for about two-thirds of the water used in an average household. Toilets use up to 27% of the household water supply while clothes washers use 20.9% and showers account for 17.3%. Faucets account for about 15.3% and leaks account for

13.8% of a family's water use. Dishwashers, baths, and other account for the remaining water use. Assuming you have a new water saving showerhead, a four-minute shower uses about 8 gallons of water; older showerheads run at 5 gallons or more per minute. Washing machines can use anywhere from 20-57 gallons per load. Front-loaders tend to use less water and some new high efficiency machines use not only 40-50%

less water but less electricity too. Do you know how much water your machine uses per load?

Let's talk about toilets. Older toilets can use 3-7 gallons per flush; newer models are less than half of that. No matter what the model, if its leaking, it's costing you money. A moderate toilet leak will generally waste 6,000 gallons of water a month – that's \$50-

\$70 depending on rates! If it's just a flapper or floater that needs replacing, it will cost you around \$3 at your nearest home improvement store. A simple and quick way to determine if your toilet is leaking is to insert a couple drops of food coloring into the tank and don't flush your toilet for 20-30 minutes. Then, check to see if there is color in the toilet bowl. If there is, then you have a running toilet leak. More serious problems should be addressed by a licensed plumber.

Lastly, don't dismiss that pesky leaking faucet. One faucet leaking at a very typical rate of 10 drips per minute, is wasting close to a gallon of water per day. Got a fast drip going? A faucet or showerhead that drips 60 drips per minute wastes 5 gallons of water a day. That's 2,082 gallons per year.

No one wants to be seen as the neighbor who wastes water, especially when your water provider may issue voluntary and/or mandatory rules about water usage during the upcoming summer months. It's always nice to be as eco-friendly as possible, and understanding your water usage often results in savings on your home water bills.



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Prevent Oak Wilt – Don't Prune Oaks Feb 1st – June 30th

Information provided by Travis County Transportation & Natural Resources

Oak wilt has claimed the lives of thousands of trees in Central Texas and beyond. Majestic oaks play a large role in this region's beauty and identity; it would be hard to imagine the Hill Country without them. They are an iconic part of many local businesses and neighborhoods, providing shade, beauty, and higher property values. Following simple preventive measures can go a long way towards stopping the spread of this destructive disease.

From February through June, avoid all pruning or cutting of oaks – this is the high season for oak wilt transmission. Any wounds that occur from construction, vehicles, wind, etc., should be painted as soon as they're discovered – ideally within ½ hour of being cut – with commercial tree wound dressing or latex paint. That includes freshly cut stumps and surface roots.

Pruning is least risky during the coldest winter days and extended hot periods in mid to late summer. Any time you prune though, the Texas Forest Service recommends painting all wounds and sanitizing pruning equipment between trees using denatured methyl alcohol (shellac thinner), isopropyl alcohol, or a general purpose household disinfectant such as Lysol, Listerine or Pine-Sol. Household bleach is not recommended.

Red oaks, including Spanish (now Buckley) oak, Shumard oak and blackjack oak, are very susceptible to oak wilt and play a key role in the disease's transmission. Oak wilt is caused by the fungus *Ceratocystis fagacearum*, which spreads its spores from "fungal mats" that form under the tree's bark. These mats have a sweet, fruity smell that attracts insects,

especially the sap-sucking nitidulid beetle. After feeding and breeding on the fungal mats, these beetles fly away covered in fungal spores. As they visit other oaks, they spread the fungus through open wounds in the bark. The nitidulid beetle is only about the size of a pinhead, but is capable of flying as far as a mile away. While red oaks are the most susceptible to oak wilt, all oaks can become infected.

Fungal mats usually form on standing trees, but can also develop on logs, stumps and fresh firewood cut from infected oaks. Make sure to remove and either burn or bury infected oaks to prevent mats from forming, and never store unseasoned wood from infected trees near healthy oaks.

The second way oak wilt can be transmitted is through the roots. Live oaks tend to grow together in dense mottes with interconnected roots, so the fungus can be transmitted easily among them. Oak wilt is occasionally transmitted through red oak roots as well, but the movement is slower and occurs over shorter distances than with live oaks. Root transmission can be prevented by cutting trenches four feet deep between infected and healthy trees, but by far the best option is to prevent infection in the first place.

So make sure NOT to prune oaks between February 1 and July 1, and ALWAYS paint wounds on oaks no matter what time of year it is. For more information on preventing and treating oak wilt, please visit texasoakwilt.org, the website of The Oak Wilt Information Partnership, a project of the Texas A&M Forest Service, the Forest Health Protection branch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service and the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin.



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NATURE WATCH

TREE SERPENTS

by Jim and Lynne Weber

One of the most beautiful and harmless snakes in Texas is the aptly named Rough Greensnake (*Opheodrys aestivus*). Its genus is derived from the Greek ophios meaning 'serpent', and drys meaning 'tree.' It has a 22 to 32 inch long and slender bright green body, which fades to yellow or yellow-green on the sides near its abdomen. Common to the eastern two-thirds of Texas, this snake is also colloquially called grass snake, green tree snake, and vine snake, but it gets its most recognized common name from its dorsal or topside scales, which are rough or 'keeled', having a ridge down the center rather than being smooth.

Primarily arboreal, the Rough Greensnake is found in open deciduous forest, pastures, and suburban gardens, most frequently those adjoining a watercourse such as a creek, stream, lake, river, or upland ravine. It climbs into bushes, shrubs, and trees, favoring those with horizontal rather than vertical growth, both for protection and to forage for food. It hunts crickets, grasshoppers, and spiders, as well as caterpillars of butterflies and moths. Rough Greensnakes are diurnal, and they sleep at night coiled up on branches of vegetation. Active most months of the year except for December through February, they take refuge in the cooler months hiding under rocks, logs, or debris.

One of the most curious facts about this snake, and others in this genus, is that they turn blue shortly after death. Yellow pigment

combines with blue pigment to give the snake its vibrant green color during life, but when it dies, the yellow pigment breaks down quickly and only the blue pigment remains. Rough Greensnakes may be confused with Smooth Greensnakes (*O. vernalis*), but the latter, while similar in color, is shorter in length, has smooth dorsal scales, and occurs only as a relict population along the Gulf Coast of Texas.

While Rough Greensnakes become active as early as March, they mate in June and July, with females laying clutches of eggs in the second half of summer, typically in a depression under a flat rock. Incubation is short – only 4 to 24 days – since embryonic development begins while the eggs are still in the female's body. These snakes can be most active in August or September, when the young emerge and are foraging for food, often in grassy lawns. Be alert for these snakes when mowing grass at this time of year, as they are beautiful, harmless, and beneficial creatures!

Send your nature-related questions to naturewatch@austin.rr.com and we'll do our best to answer them. If you enjoy reading these articles, check out our books, *Nature Watch Austin*, *Nature Watch Big Bend*, and *Native Host Plants for Texas Butterflies* (all published by Texas A&M University Press), and our blog at naturewatchaustin.blogspot.com.



Rough Greensnake

TARRYTOWN

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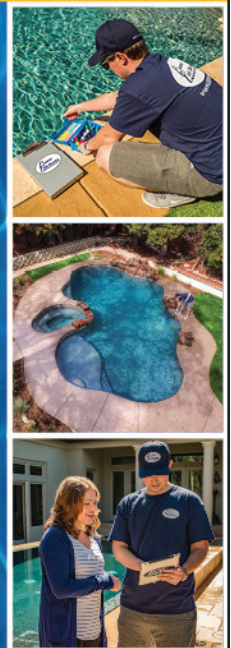
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A FEW DAYS IN THE LIFE OF A HOME HANDYMAN

by: Gordon R. Watson

DRIPPING FAUCETS

Vacationing at my mother-in-law's home always means doing some repair work. I like keeping busy, and there are generally some things needing attention. One of the recent issues there was a dripping kitchen faucet. Drips are really a thing of the past for most faucets. Happily, ceramic has replaced rubber as the seal, so most faucet manufacturers have a lifetime warranty of one sort or another. I gave her my standard verbal disclaimer (that her home's piping is old and something might break and require a real plumber). So far, I have never had to resort to calling one (knock on wood). I turned off the main water supply outside because her 1950's home doesn't have shut off valves (called stops in the trade) beneath the kitchen sink. Outside, after digging a hole in a flower planter to find the shut off valve, I gently advised her not to bury the main shut off valve because it wasn't designed to be buried, and it might be difficult to find quickly. In the kitchen again, fully expecting the old style rubber washers, I removed the kitchen faucet handle, protected the shiny chrome with masking tape, applied a wrench, and removed the faucet stem. To my surprise, the sink faucet did have new-style ceramic style seals. The problem, it turned out, was that debris, probably from her home's aging and rusting (50+ year old) galvanized pipes, had stuck in the ceramic cartridge, causing the seal to be incomplete. Fortunately, once I cleaned the debris out, the drip went away. I love it when I don't have to buy parts for a repair. The fact that the old piping is obviously corroding and slowly failing is another story for another time. Replacing that piping almost certainly will require a real plumber. Sometime I might mention to her that it might be a good idea to replace the old pipe on her schedule rather than the pipe's schedule.

CORROSION

Her home also has a clothesline (not all that common these days) which had all but fallen over. The old clothesline was the old style with two "crosses" each cross with a two-inch galvanized pipe stuck in concrete (with five ropes for holding the clothes). Over time, these pipes rusted away. The funny thing is that the pipes really only rusted in one place: about two inches above the ground and two inches below the ground. The remaining pipe was in near-perfect condition. Even the pipes buried twenty-four inches in the ground were near-perfect! My point in mentioning this is that this corrosion is caused by moisture and oxygen. While we will likely never have a clothesline, the principle applies to all materials such as iron and wood placed in the ground and prone to rust or wood rot. While there is little we can do about oxygen, to the degree



feasible, we should try to keep water away from anything placed in the ground. Better yet, when feasible, avoid putting anything which can rust or rot directly in the ground.

STUD FINDERS

Over the years, I have owned at least three electronic stud finders. These are the devices that are supposed to locate the wooden or metal studs behind the sheet rock. My history with them hasn't been trouble-free. My last one worked fairly well for a few years, but it recently proudly advised me that the closet wall I wanted to attach a shelf to, had no studs. I now have three "broken" stud finders in my tool box. I promise to properly dispose of them soon. Fortunately, while doing some work at my son and daughter-in-law's home, I found (in my son's tool chest) a non-electric, entirely rare earth magnet-type "stud finder" that works so well that I don't think I will ever go back to the electronic type. It is made by C.H. Hanson. Of course, it only indirectly finds the stud. It finds the nails or screws holding the sheet rock to the stud. At about \$10, it is a bargain. I just bought one for myself, and believe it may be the last I ever have to buy (unless I lose it, of course). Hint: Once a stud is found, you can apply painter's tape (masking tape (not too tight or you may strip away the paint) to the stud location, or you can place another magnet on the nail location as a marker.



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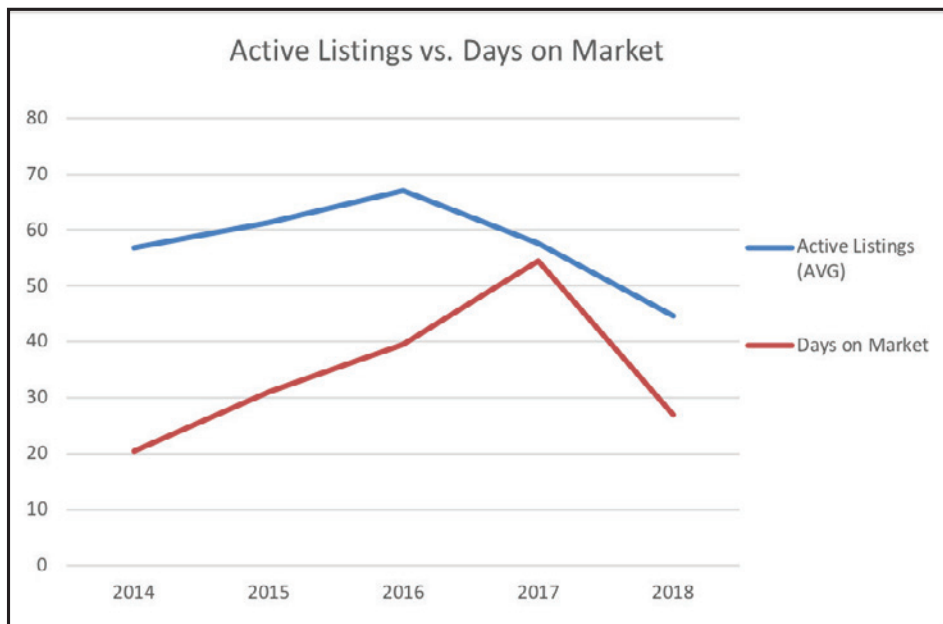
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