

What does your yard say about you?

I'm a newcomer.

My career brought me and my family here, and now we must settle in.

That's going to be the idea behind this column, which will

THE NEWCOMER



JASON FOSTER

appear occasionally over the next year in the North Raleigh News and Midtown Raleigh News and detail the adventures, foibles and frustrations of relocating

your life.

Today's question: Do they sell lawnmowers in North Raleigh?

(Warning: This falls under the frustration category.)

As I roam the northern part of the city looking for a place for my family to live, I keep coming across middle-class neighborhoods that are, shall we say, lawn work challenged.

That's not to say the overgrowth has reached jungle-like

proportions, but it's enough to make me wonder whether mowing the grass and lawn care in general have fallen out of fashion. And it's not just one or two houses per neighborhood. It's row after row of suspect lawns, and it gives me pause.

It's frustrating to see a great house listing, then drive to the neighborhood and be greeted with a first impression that says, "You don't want to live here."

Full disclosure: I dread mowing the lawn as much as anyone. It might actually be the thing in life I enjoy the least.

But there comes a point when the uncut grass, weeds growing in all directions, the kids' toys strewn about send the message that the owners just don't care anymore. Maybe some really don't care. But if that's the case, I have no desire to live in your neighborhood.

To be fair, there are well-manicured lawns in each neighborhood I've visited. It's obvious these people want their yards to have a pleasant

appearance. I applaud them.

But for you folks who are strangers to the mower, what's the deal?

Is it apathy? Are you on vacation all summer? Are you just too busy? Is it just not that big a deal to your homeowners' association?

Here's my thinking, and I'd guess the thinking of others looking to buy: If someone doesn't care about the appearance of his yard, then he probably isn't giving his house the attention it deserves. That attitude spreads throughout the neighborhood and a "why bother?" feeling gains a foothold. Over time, that doesn't bode well for property values and resale potential.

I'm not saying everybody needs elaborate landscaping, or should hire a lawn service or spend large amounts of money to make the yard look nice. Just do your part to keep things presentable. Appearances do matter.

jason.foster@newsobserver.com
or 919-829-4635