

HOUSECALLS



TIM MCBRAYER www.TheTrianglesBroker.com 919-247-4667 Tim@TheTrianglesBroker.com

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New Options Shake Up TV Viewing



Some cable customers are wondering if they should continue paying \$100 or more a month for cable and movie channels, if they could quit cable entirely, or if they should go for just basic service.

New devices make it easy for homes with broadband networks to get content from the Internet, including Hollywood movies and

shows. These devices include game consoles, Blu-ray players and DVR.

This could be the year when more people watch Web TV content from sources like Netflix, iTunes, YouTube, Amazon, Vudu, Hulu Plus and Crackle. They could decide to trim or quit their monthly service for cable, satellite or phone company TV service.

Low Interest Rates and Long Terms Soon Will Be History !

You are going to be hearing a lot about restructuring the mortgage industry in the next months and years. But the bottom line for home buyers is buy now and get financing in place by as early as May. The great terms of recent years will soon be gone, and probably gone forever.

Experts say you will probably never again see down payments in the 5 percent range (even now becoming harder to find) or 30-year fixed rates under 5 percent.

The median down payment in nine major U.S. cities rose to 22 percent late last year. This was the highest requirement since 1997 on properties purchased through conventional mortgages, according to a Wall Street Journal report.

In many areas, however, a down payment of only 10 percent of the mortgage amount could be available for people with high credit scores.

The lowest down payments are still offered by the Federal Housing Administration, FHA. They will finance a home with a 3.5 percent down payment.

But a recent Obama Administration white paper on the mortgage industry hints that this very low down payment might change as the federal footprint in the mortgage market shrinks.



According to CNN Money, Congress will be considering raising FHA down payment requirements, approving higher insurance fees for FHA mortgages, and changing rules for 'qualified' mortgages. This could mean higher interest rates for consumers and higher down payments, perhaps up to 30 percent.

With its low down payment requirements, low interest rates, and

lower credit score requirements, FHA now has a 30 percent market share in the mortgage arena but plans are to reduce its activity to just 10 percent.

Administration officials say the planned process could take some time, but it might include phasing out federal backing of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Since the mortgage crisis began, the government has bailed out the federally backed entities to the tune of \$150 billion.

How to Qualify

If you are interested in buying a home with an FHA mortgage, it's important to determine whether you have a favorable mortgage expense to income ratio. Here's how to calculate whether you would qualify for the maximum ratio of 29 percent.

Say the total monthly payment on the home would be \$750, including hazard insurance, mortgage insurance, homeowners dues, etc.

Then, say the borrower's gross monthly income, including spouse income if married, comes to \$2,850.

Divide the house payment by the monthly income.

In this case, it would produce an expense to income ratio of 26.32 percent or well below the 29 percent maximum.



ASK THE EXPERT

Q. We are getting ready to buy a home and wonder if having a home warranty would be a good idea. What do you think? Is it expensive?

A. I do recommend home warranty insurance, and I could help you determine which company offers the best coverage for the home you have in mind.

The home warranty insurance is fairly inexpensive, typically ranging from \$250 to \$400 a year, depending on the coverage you want. When a repair or replacement is necessary, the homeowner pays a trade fee, which is usually less than \$100.

It pays all or part of the cost to repair or replace an item in your newly purchased home. Usually, the item will be replaced if the contractor hired by the company has determined that it's not repairable.

Because the last thing you want to worry about after closing on a home is what could break or malfunction, the insurance is a good idea. There are several warranty plans to choose from. Before choosing, it's important to make a list of each appliance and system that

you want covered.

The National Home Service Contract Association, a nonprofit industry organization, says the best way to ensure a positive experience is for the company to provide the customer with clearly defined expectations of what a contract will cover.

For a quick reference remember the word PEACH: Plumbing, Electrical, Appliances, Cooling and Heating. Basic coverage does not include such things as the roof, windows, termite damage, or pre-existing conditions.

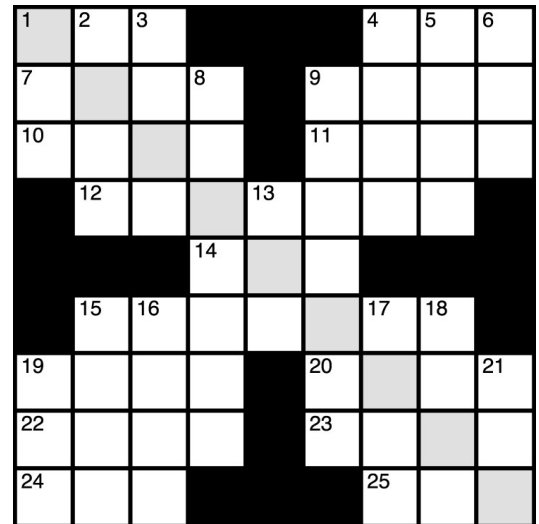
Tropical Fruit Crossword

Across

1. "Harper Valley ___"
4. Bleat
7. Clue
9. Unload, as stock
10. Animal shelters
11. Cord fiber
12. Fiends
14. Make lace
15. Worrywart
19. It may be struck
20. Stratford - ___ -Avon
22. Regrets
23. Raconteur's offering
24. "To ___ is human ..."
25. Author Harper

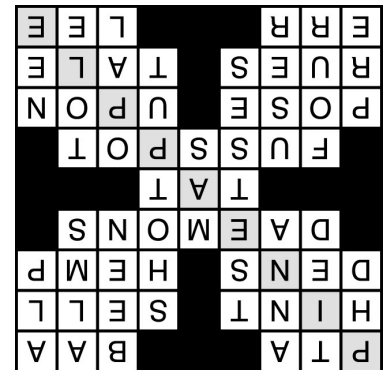
Down

1. High degree
2. 20-20, e.g.
3. "___ and the King of Siam"
4. "___ there, done that"
5. Charity
6. Matterhorn, e.g.
8. African pests
9. Olympic field event



13. More, in Madrid
15. Quartet
16. Computer operator
17. Birthstone after sapphire
18. Lacquered metalware
19. Season opener?
21. Born

Note: The title is a clue to the word in the shaded diagonal.



Sometimes the seller pays for the warranty coverage. It's to the seller's advantage to do so because it's a selling point. Further, the seller knows the new owner won't be calling after the closing if something breaks.

The policies are prepaid for a year in advance, at which time they expire or they can be renewed. Sometimes warranty companies compete with each other by offering discounted sales.



An Easter Tradition: Hot Cross Buns

Easter is a time of rebirth and rejoicing, a time to feast on symbolic and traditional food fare. What better than to accent a breakfast buffet or light Easter meal than a plate of steaming hot cross buns?

Hot Cross Buns with Dried Fruit

Dough

1/2 cup	warmed milk
1 package	yeast (7 gram)
1/4 cup	granulated sugar
2 cups	all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon	ground allspice
1/4 teaspoon	cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon	salt
1/2 teaspoon	granulated sugar
1 egg	
5 tablespoons	soft unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
2 - 4 tablespoons	dried cherry bits, citron, or raisins
2 tablespoons	lemon or orange zest

For the dough, stir together the milk, yeast and half teaspoon of granulated sugar. Set aside until foamy. In another large bowl, mix 2 cups of flour, remaining sugar and spices. Add half of this flour mixture to the milk

mixture. Beat until combined.

Add the butter and egg and stir until smooth. Add the remainder of the flour and mix until the dough forms. Knead the dough for 10 minutes. Cover the dough with plastic wrap and let stand in a warm place for 1 1/2 hours.

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.



On a floured bread board, knead in the zest and fruit bits. Roll the dough into a 12-inch log and cut into one-inch slices. Cover with plastic wrap and allow to stand 10 minutes.

Wash

1 egg white beaten
3 tablespoons granulated sugar

For the wash: In a small bowl, thoroughly beat the egg white and add 3 tablespoons of sugar. Brush on buns.

Place buns on the greased baking pan 1 1/2 inches apart. Allow to rise until double in size, about 45 minutes.

Bake at 400 degrees for about 12 minutes. Remove and cool for 10 minutes.

Icing

1 cup confectioner's sugar
2 tablespoons soft unsalted butter
1 tablespoon heavy cream
1 teaspoon vanilla extract

For the icing: Beat the confectioners sugar, 2 tablespoons butter, cream and vanilla until thick.

Place in a pastry bag and using a tip about an eighth inch apply the cross design to the tops.

Home Alarm Systems Offer Security, Peace of Mind

Home security systems used to be thought of as just for high-end homes and high-income buyers. Today, improved technology and competitive pricing have made systems more affordable. There is a system for everyone.

Besides notifying the monitoring center of a potential break-in, the systems can include features such as monitored fire protection, carbon monoxide detection, water penetration and have sump pump failure alarms.

Home video systems allow users to monitor their home from a remote location. Users can make sure their kids are fine and keep an eye on their homes.

It's no longer necessary to have a

landline telephone to ensure a system operates without fail, and it's not necessary to have an Internet connection.

While statistics show a home without an alarm system is more likely to be burglarized, the added benefits of fire protection and other services are immeasurable. It's about peace of mind, according to Angie Hicks, founder of Angie's List, a nationwide provider of ratings in more than 500 categories (www.angieslist.com).

Ask a prospective provider to visit your home and recommend how best to protect it. A typical system can be installed for \$49 to \$350, depending on the features. Monthly monitoring fees usually start at around \$25.

Know the contract terms, which are



usually for multiple years, and learn about any fees that are not included in the installation and monthly costs.



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Kelly Fox
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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1 April Fool's Day	2
3 New Moon ●	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17 Palm Sunday 	18 Full Moon ○	19 Passover 	20	21	22 Earth Day  Good Friday	23
24  EASTER	25	26	27	28	29	30



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Just Listed In Garner \$139,900



Lovely Garner home close to shopping and I-40 with 1,435 SF. Has 3 Bedrooms 2 Baths On .22 acre lot with fenced back yard. 1st Floor Master with vaulted ceiling and updated Master Bath. 2 bedrooms upstairs with updated 2nd floor bath. New carpeting throughout, all new windows, large back deck. Perfect for the first time home buyer.



<<<< **My Listings as of March 25, 2011** >>>>

In Falls Landing off Mitchell Mill Rd in N Raleigh off Hwy 401N. 2,220 Sq. Ft, 4 BR, 2.5BAs. Large Family Rm with gas FP, kitchen has lots of cabinet space, w/ island. MBA is large with separate Tub/



\$200,000 REDUCED!
www.3222LandingFalls.com

4,700 SF 4 Bedrooms 3.5 Baths On .72 Acre Lot With 3 Car Garage Gourmet Kitchen, 2 Story Great Rm w/See Through Gas FP 2 Story Foyer Lrg Bonus Room 1st Floor MBR, Sun Room, Hearth Rm, Game Room, Formal DR,



\$475,000 REDUCED!
7704KensingtonManor.com

3,430 Sq. Ft. 4BR, 2.5 BAs in Historic Oakwood in downtown Raleigh. 3 Story, with bonus Rm and Guest BR and Full Bath on 3rd floor. Gourmet Kitchen w/ island. Family Rm w/ Gas FP, multi-level back



\$600,000 REDUCED!
www.403Edenton.com

North Raleigh Contemporary Ranch in Stone Ridge . 4,236 Sq. Ft. 4BRs, 3.5BAs . Updated Kitchen & Baths, Large Garden Rm, Formal LR and DR, Family Rm, Multi-Level Deck, Of- fice, on .92 acre lot.



\$525,000
www.813ThatcherWay.com

North Raleigh home in Wakefield. 4BRs, 3.5BAs, 2 Story Great Room, Sun Rm, Gourmet Kitchen w/island, breakfast nook. 1st floor Master Suite with W-I-C, Separate Tub/Shower, twin vanities, back deck, 2 car garage. Formal LR



\$369,900
www.11904PawleysMill.com

1,500 Sq. Ft. 2 Bed- room Garden Home with 2 full baths, living/dining area with gas FP. Garden rm with tiled flooring. Kitchen with eating area, & under cabinet lighting. Comes with refrigerator and washer/dryer. 2 Car



\$254,900
www.4602LudwellBranch.com

1,564 SF 3 Bedrooms 2 Baths On .29 Acre Lot w/ Fenced Back Yard Up- dated Kitchen and Baths Recently Updated Hard- wood Laminated Flooring, New Stacked Stone FP Hearth Large Laundry Room Large Deck



\$169,900
www.7709NuggetLane.com



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