
Fall Maintenance Checklist for Your Home

Before the weather grows colder it's important to prepare for the winter months to prevent costly damage. Here are fall preventative home maintenance steps that every homeowner should follow. I've collected tips from several resources:

Gutters and Downspouts

- ◇ Clean gutters and downspouts frequently throughout fall to prevent build up of leaves and other debris. Neglected gutters can lead to wood rot problems and pest infestations, not to mention ruined gutters.
- ◇ Be sure water is not coming down behind gutters and that all support brackets are securely in place.
- ◇ Ensure that water drains properly and doesn't pool. Pooling can cause damage to foundations, driveways, and walkways.

Windows, Doors & Exterior

- ◇ Change summer screens to cool weather storm windows and doors.
- ◇ Inspect and repair any loose or damaged window or door frames.
- ◇ Install weather stripping or caulking around windows and doors to prevent drafts and to lower heating bills.
- ◇ Grab a couple of tubes of color-matched exterior caulk (\$5 for a 12-ounce tube) and make a journey around your home's exterior, sealing up cracks between trim and siding, around window and door frames, and where pipes and wires enter your house.

Heating Systems

- ◇ Replace the filter in your furnace.
- ◇ Consider having a heating professional check your heating system to ensure optimal performance and discover minor problems before they turn into costly major repairs.
- ◇ Clean your ducts to better your heating system's efficiency as well as to reduce household dust and to provide relief to those with respiratory problems.

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Plumbing

- ◇ To prevent pipes freezing and bursting, ensure that the pipes are well insulated.
- ◇ Know how to locate and turn off the water shut-off valve in case pipes do freeze.

Chimney and Fireplace

- ◇ Call a professional in to inspect and clean your chimney. Fireplaces that are regularly used during the season should have an annual cleaning to prevent dangerous chimney fires.
- ◇ Test your fireplace flue for a tight seal when closed.

Attic ventilation

- ◇ Be sure attic insulation doesn't cover vents in the eaves to prevent winter ice dams on the roof.
- ◇ Be sure ridge vents and vents at eaves are free of plants and debris.
- ◇ Check bird and rodent screens for attic vents to prevent any unwanted guests.

Landscape and Yardwork

- ◇ Although grass appears to stop growing in the fall, the roots are actually growing deeper to prepare for winter. Now is the best time to fertilize and reseed your lawn.
- ◇ Prune your trees and shrubs after the leaves turn to encourage healthy growth.
- ◇ Trim any tree limbs that are dangerously close to power lines or the roof of your house. Heavy snow and ice can cause damage in the winter.
- ◇ Remove garden hoses from outdoor faucets, drain the hoses and cover/insulate the faucets.
- ◇ Drain your irrigation system to winterize it (or have your professional irrigation specialist do it).