



The Crisis Planner

Are You Winter Wise?

10 things to do around the house this Fall

Fall is my favorite time of year. I love the Fall, it energizes me. I don't know if it is the change in the weather from oppressive summer heat and humidity to the cool nights, clear skies and the spectacular show Mother Nature puts on. Something motivates and ignites me in the fall season like no other.

I sometimes feel like one of the busy squirrels I see in the neighborhood gathering acorns.

I feel the same urgency to get ready for what's coming next. **WINTER!**

Last winter we lucked out here on Long Island with only two light dustings of snow and milder temperatures than normal. But that is something we can't always count on. They are talking of "La Nina" this year which usually means more snow in the Northeast.



There are 10 things that I make sure to do before Winter sets in. I take care of each task in turn, checking it off my list. I live alone and all of these tasks are my responsibility. If I miss even one of them it could spell trouble in the Winter months to come.

Only when these 10 items are completed do I feel prepared. I want you to be prepared too. Your list may be slightly different from mine. The important thing is to make a list, check off the tasks and sleep soundly knowing that you did everything necessary to be prepared.

Winter Checklist:

- 1. Winterize and close the pool – I need help with this so I have my pool closed by a professional. It is usually one of the first things on my list as I have a Maple tree that drops it's leaves early and after Labor Day I rarely use the pool.**
- 2. Winterize the sprinkler system and turn off and drain exterior water – The sprinkler system is something I leave to the professionals. The lines need to be blown out to prevent damage from freezing water.**

My exterior water line in the back runs under the deck and is very vulnerable to freezing. I have learned the hard way how important it is to turn off the valve and drain the line having had a frozen fountain when the line has burst in the past.

3. Test generator and purchase fuel as necessary – The danger of losing power during a winter storm cannot be underestimated. I always test my generator to make sure it is able to work when and if I need it. I also make sure to have enough fuel on hand so that I do not end up on an endless gas line. Put together the extension cords you will need so that everything is in one place. If you live in an area that loses power regularly you can have electrical work done that will allow you to designate what circuits you will want to run on the generator.

Recently I replaced my gas generator with a solar one. Again it is important to test the level of charge before it is needed.

4. Remove awning and canvas gazebos and store – I have an awning over my deck that is taken down by professionals and stored for the winter. Make sure to store in a place that is free of rodents as they may nest and chew holes in your awning if you are not careful.

I also have a canvas gazebo over the bar. Remove the canvas before any snowfall to prevent the destruction of your gazebo structure. A couple of years ago I made the mistake of waiting too long and it resulted in total disaster.



5. Check smoke detector and Carbon Monoxide detectors, replace batteries, check fire extinguishers – Fire is at an increased risk in the fall and winter. It seems like there are many house and apartment fires when the weather gets colder.



It is recommended that you change your smoke detector batteries two times a year when the clocks change. Make sure that everyone knows what the smoke detector sounds like especially small children. Do a fire drill in your home so that everyone knows how to get out and where to meet.

Carbon Monoxide is a colorless, odorless gas that is a common by-product of combustion from heating systems, fireplaces, kerosene heaters, automobiles. When our homes are closed up so tightly for the winter it is easy for carbon monoxide to build up to dangerous levels. Be especially careful if warming up your car in a garage that is under bedrooms in your home, always make sure the garage door is open allowing for adequate ventilation.

Install and inspect your fire extinguishers. I have one under the sink in the kitchen, in the den near the wood stove, in the basement, and in the garage. Some have expiration dates, If the plastic lock is broken or missing it means that the extinguisher should be replaced. You should only use an extinguisher if the fire is no bigger than a waste paper basket and once you use it it should be replaced.

6. Have heating system serviced and fill oil tank as necessary – we depend on our heating systems to keep us safe and warm in the winter. I'm sure many of us have experienced waking up to an ice cold house because the system has failed or we have run out of heating oil. Now is the time to have your system inspected and serviced to avoid problems. Starting the season with a full tank of oil is also important. Oil prices are very low right now and you could save a lot of money by shopping around.
7. Protect and store outdoor furnishings and cushions – for many of us our outdoor living spaces have become beautiful sanctuaries. The furnishings and accessories represent a significant investment. Proper protection and storage of these furnishings and cushions will guarantee that you will have them in top condition for years to come.

Cover the furniture with tarps, custom covers or even shrink wrap. Store the cushions safely away from potential rodent infestations which can make nests in the cozy stuffing of your cushions.



8. Set up bird feeders and buy bird food – I love feeding the birds in the winter. Setting up the feeders where I can enjoy watching the birds and even the antics of the squirrel marauders that have defied my every effort to thwart them. Bring in a supply of wild bird food and store in metal containers to prevent rodents from stealing the food.

9. Have Chimney cleaned and purchase firewood and starters – I have a wood stove and love how it warms my home in the winter. I have the chimney cleaned annually to prevent a build up of creosote, the #1 cause of chimney fires. I buy enough wood to get me through the winter. In the old days my husband and I would pick up and split our own wood which can be a cost savings and when you do it that way will warm you twice.



Buy enough fire starters for the season. For some reason the hardware stores don't stock them throughout the season. They buy in big in the fall and do not reorder in the winter.



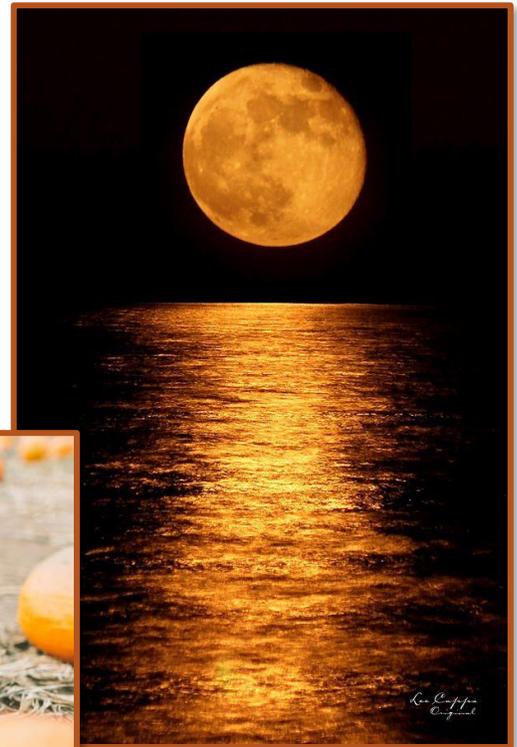
10. Have car serviced, replace wiper blades, fill washer fluid, check antifreeze levels, check tires and battery – nothing is worse than having a dead battery on a cold winter morning. I always take my car in for service before the winter sets in.

It is also a good time to put your snow brush, ice scraper, snow melt, blanket, gloves, hat, extra washer fluid, sand or kitty litter, shovel and complete emergency kit with food, water, lights, etc. to be totally prepared for whatever winter can bring when you are on the road.

These are the 10 things I do to be Winter Wise. Your list may be slightly different. The important thing is that you make a list and check things off so that you can maximize your safety and preparedness for the long dark winter ahead.

In the meantime, enjoy the glorious days of Fall. We have been stuck inside too long with this COVID thing. Get out there! Do something! Be safe and live a little!

The colors are spectacular this year, take the time to really see them. Take a drive. Walk the dog. Go apple or pumpkin picking with your children or grandchildren. Bundle up and walk on the beach with a friend. Listen to the ocean. Hike on a mountain trail. Take the boat out one last time. Snuggle up under a blanket in front of the firepit. Watch the leaves dance on the roadway. Marvel at the huge harvest moon as it rising in the sky. See a shooting star in the clear night sky. Fall is here. Feel her urgency and be prepared for the season to come.



Get off the Worry-Go-Round

With The Crisis Planner

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