



Fall/Winter and Spring/Summer Cleaning & Maintenance Suggestions

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Here in Western Washington we only have to seasons: Fall/Winter and Spring/Summer. Here are some suggestions to help you prepare for both.

Fall Cleaning & Maintenance Suggestions

Tools and Supplies

Getting ready for the fall and winter means preparing for potential problems. Each house should have a snow shovel, extra heavy-duty tarps, bungee cords, rolls of clear vinyl, staple guns, staples, a stable step-ladder, flashlights with extra batteries, pliers, wire hangers, and a hammer. If you own a propane barbecue, you might want to make sure you have a full tank. This little grouping of tools with a little imagination can save you from many emergencies.



Patio Furniture - Clean and Store

Outdoor furniture is weatherproof and durable and should last you for a few years. However, cleaning and covering or storing your furniture protects it against our wet and windy and sometimes cold Pacific Northwest winters, which makes them last even longer. Wind, snow, ice and rain take their toll

on your home, but there is no reason why you should let premature wear-and tear affect your furniture. Mostly what you need is a damp, soft cloth to wipe away any dust and dirt. When completely dry, place the cushions in plastic bags, sealing them to



protect them from vermin, dirt, dust and mold. If space is a concern you might opt for the vacuum sealed bags that reduce the size by compressing the cushions. Store your cushions and furniture in the garage or shed. If you don't have any storage room indoors you can keep them outdoors. Cover them with weatherproof tarps. Bungee cords work really well in securing the tarps from wind. If you can, put them under an eave or on the sheltered side of your home.

Exterior Water Values - Turn Off & Cover

Turn off all outdoor water valves and cover with Styrofoam protectors or even old wool socks to fend off the wind chill factor.

Garden Hoses - Drain and Store



Drain all the water out of garden hoses at the end of the October. Water left inside hoses may freeze and damage your hoses. Store hoses indoors in a coiled position, or use a dedicated hose hanger. This helps drain any last water inside and prevents kinks. The new expandable hoses are quickly replacing old stiff, vinyl/rubber hoses. These are less prone to rupture because they empty out the water as they shrink. These hoses take up less room, but still should be protected from the weather.

Gutters & Downspouts - Clean

Clean gutters improve the appearance of your home or office. Free running gutters and downspouts also help prevent potential water damage. When leaves and pine or fir needles along with their cone collect inside gutters, water gets dammed up, which can lead to siding damage, rotting eaves, basement floods and further gutter corrosion. Free running gutters also help prevent the build-up of ice and snow on your roof. Make sure downspouts carry water away from the house's foundation. Here in the Pacific Northwest frequent winter rains can easily cause flooding and ground saturation.



Trees & Bushes

When trees lose their leaves it's a good time to see where the branches reach. Some municipalities trim trees and bushes that could interfere with power lines, but reduced tax revenues have forced many cities to cut back on this preventative maintenance plan. You may need to cut back your own branches. Besides power lines you also should check to see what your trees and shrubs are doing or could do to your home siding, roof, and gutters. Be sure to look at trees that have dead limbs or trunks, which could come down during a wind, rain, ice or snow storm.



Windows & Doors - Air Leaks

To save heating costs it's best to keep cold air out of the home. Look for leaks around windows and doors. There are two great ways of checking for air intrusion. One is to use a lighted candle. Look for flickering as you move

it around windows, doors, and lighting receptacles. The flicker may indicate air coming into the house. The other trick is a two person job. One person shines a bright light around door edges. A person within should not be able to see the light. If you can see light, again this is a signal that air has a place to enter your home. Sealing leaks with caulk, spray foam, or weather stripping can improve your comfort while reducing your heating bill.

Storm Doors and Windows

Most screen doors or storm doors have glass panels that lift up and slide down. By October it's time to slide the glass panels over the screen portions. If you still use separate storm windows, now is the time to take them from the basement and install them on your windows for winter.



Chimneys

Many homeowners only use their fireplaces occasionally. Some have them sealed against cold weather. Although fireplaces give the impression they could warm your house in an emergency, don't bet on it. Unless you have plenty of wood laid aside, you have two



chances of having your fireplace keeping you warm . . . slim and none. However, if you use your fireplace every now and then, you should have your chimney cleaned every year or two if you are a sometime burn person and every year if you use your fireplace a lot. This helps eliminate the risk of fire in your home. A

professional chimney sweep ensures your chimney is free of creosote, which builds up on the chimney's inner walls and may cause fires along with soot and other debris. If you never use your chimney then you should have a screen topping it off so critters don't make it a home for themselves.

Furnaces

As soon as fall hits here in the Greater Puget Sound area, you should make sure your furnace is operational. Have a professional come and inspect the furnace, and perform any required maintenance. Check and replace filters as needed. Make sure your furnace is working properly before the winter hits.

Be sure to inspect your duct work also for leaks and cold air returns to let your furnace operate at its full capacity.



Spring Cleaning & Maintenance Tips



1. Have your HVAC system professionally serviced.

2. Change HVAC filters.

3. Clear away any leaves, limbs and other debris from around the outside air conditioner vents

and remove the cover if needed.

4. Inspect windows and doors to make sure they function properly. Take down the storm windows, and lower the glass panels in screen and storm doors.

5. Check the caulk around the windows and weather stripping around windows and doors. Replace any if needed. If you noted any cold air coming in during the winter, this is a good time to take care of the problem.



6. Clean exterior windows and window/door screens. Replace or repair if needed.

7. Check locks, latches, and hinges on your doors and windows. A squirt of oil or WD-40 can work wonders.

8. Prune trees and shrubs as needed.

9. Check your foundation walls for any settling or earthquake cracks and repair as needed.



10. Pressure wash your home's exterior and deck to remove mold and mildew. Apply touch up paint or stain if needed.

11. Remove leaves, small branches, pine and fir needles as well as cones from gutters and downspouts. Make sure gutters are all free flowing. Correct any down-spout extensions to make sure rain water properly drains away from your home. If downspouts have been damaged then replace them.

12. Make sure your gutters are connected and secure. Look for any siding or eave damage.

13. Inspect your basement and crawl space for dampness and vermin.

14. Remove water valve covers and turn on water to outdoor faucets. Check your irrigation system, set times if needed, and check sprinkler heads for repairs.



15. Clean the screens on dryer vents, roof vents and louvers.

16. Examine floor tiles for cracks and loss of caulking around sinks, tubs and showers. Reapply if needed.

17. Look for signs of bird and insect nests along eaves, ledges and gutters.



18. Examine any wooden areas at or near ground level for signs of termites and other wood boring insects.

19. Pressure wash your driveway, sidewalks, and patios to remove slippery mildew. Look for cracks that need repairing.

20. Wash all glass railings.

21. Wash interior windows.

22. Clean kitchen and bathroom fans.



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