

# Tips To Keep Your Home in Tip-Top Shape

## Spring

*This is the season to get your yard in shape, fix winter damage, and tackle interior jobs that require good ventilation.*

### Foundation, Masonry and Exterior Surfaces

- Check foundation walls, floors, concrete and masonry for cracking, heaving or deterioration. Repair problems.
- Check chimney for loose, deteriorated or missing mortar. Repair problems.
- Check grading for proper slope away from foundation walls. Build up soil wherever needed.
- Check all wood surfaces--especially at the soil level--for weathering, peeling paint or dry rot. Fix now or this summer.
- Check deck, patio, porch, and exterior stairs and railings for deterioration or damage. Repair now or this summer.
- Remove debris from gutters and downspouts. Repair any leaks.

### Roof

- Check for any missing, loose or damaged shingles. Have these replaced.
- Check for open seams, blisters or bald areas on flat roofs. Have these fixed.
- Check flashing around all surface projections and sidewalls.
- Check antenna supports for possible leak sources.
- Check fascia and soffits for deterioration and damage.
- Check roof louvers for damage or plugging (birds nests, etc.)
- If ice dams were a problem last winter, have your attic properly insulated and ventilated.

### Lawn and Landscape

- Plant trees, shrubs, flowers and/or vegetables.
- Remove left-over fallen leaves, dead plants and lawn debris. Trim shrubs that brush against the house.
- Plant grass seed in bare patches.
- Apply pre-emergent weed preventer, if needed. Fertilize lawn, if needed.
- Unless trees are storm damaged, hold off tree trimming until autumn or winter when it's healthier to prune trees.

### Interior

- Repair or replace torn screens or broken windows. Replace broken sash ropes or hold-open devices.
- Check basement and crawl space for moisture or leaking water. Take care of all moisture problems.
- Check your home's cooling system before hot weather arrives.
- Open vents in crawl space and vent crawl spaces in basements.
- Once windows can be opened, do any interior painting, varnishing or other projects where odor can be a problem.
- Check your smoke detector when you change clocks ahead
- Take note of slow drains or back-ups. If needed, have sewer pipes cleaned before a really big back-up occurs.

## Summer

*This is the season to tackle big exterior projects such as painting, carpentry or cement repair.*

### Cooling System

- Change filter once a month, lubricate motors.

### Lawn and Landscape

- Move the lawn mower blade height up so that it cuts no more than the top one-third of the grass blade. Your lawn will be healthier, and you'll have fewer weeds if grass isn't mown shorter than 2 to 2 1/2 inches.
- If it doesn't rain, water lawn deeply once a week. (Deep watering is better than frequent, shallow watering.)
- Take inventory of your yard. Are there areas of grass that never do well? Consider replacing that grass with shrubs, perennials or ground covers. Take photos now for winter planning.

### Painting and Carpentry

- Take care of exterior projects: seal decks, paint siding and trim, etc.
- Repair fences and stair railings.

## Autumn

*This is the season to finish summer projects, and prepare your yard and home for winter.*

### Roof

- Repair damage to the roof and valleys.
- If you have a fireplace, have it cleaned by a professional.

### Foundation, Masonry and Exterior

- Seal driveway and sidewalk cracks.
- If you have a septic tank, it should be cleaned once every two years.

### Doors and Windows

- Replace loose or missing glazing putty.
- Replace deteriorated weather-stripping. Replace deteriorated caulking at all openings around doors and windows
- Check all door and window hardware. Replace as needed.

### Heating System

- Clean or change furnace filters every month or as recommended by the manufacturer.
- For forced air systems: check fan belt tension, and lubricate fan and motor bearings. For steam systems: check shut-off valve for leaks and drain low water cut-off per manufacturer's instructions. For hot water systems: top off water, bleed radiators and bring up to recommended pressure.
- Change your smoke detector battery when you set back clocks.
- Clear debris away from heating and cooling equipment.
- Have system serviced annually
- Check boiler pressure relief valve. Check pressure and temperature relief valve on water heater.

### Lawn and Landscape

- Trim back any tree limbs that hit your roof or house. If needed, arrange to have trees pruned this fall or winter.
- To ease raking, cut grass to a shorter length and try mowing over leaves. Use chopped leaves for mulch. Rake leaves off lawns and streets (especially leaves clogging storm sewer openings).
- Fertilize your lawn: once in mid-September and again in early October. Consider aerating your lawn.
- Deeply water trees and shrubs. Consider planting bulbs to enjoy next spring.
- Shut off and drain outside faucet(s).
- If you have an underground lawn sprinkler system, check for leaky valves, exposed lines and back-flow protection.

## Winter

*This is the season to take care of interior maintenance and decorating.*

### Interior

- Check ceiling at exterior edge and surfaces around windows for evidence of moisture (ice dam problems).
- Check all tile joints for adequate grout. RegROUT as needed.
- Check caulking, look for leaks around showers, bathtubs, sinks, faucets, toilet bases and supply valves. Repair as needed.
- Check ceiling beneath bathroom for leakage. Repair as needed.
- Check all stairs and railings for loose elements. Repair as needed.
- Test all smoke and safety alarms. If you don't have a smoke detector on each floor, buy and install them.
- Know the location of all gas shut-off valves and the main water shut-off. Label them.
- Take care of indoor decorating projects that don't require extensive ventilation.

### Electrical

- Check for exposed wiring and cable. Also check cords and plugs for damage and wear. Replace at first sign of wear or damage.
- Label circuits. Trip circuit breakers and ground fault interrupters to ensure proper function.
- If fuses blow, circuit breakers trip frequently or any appliance sparks or shorts out, contact a licensed electrician for repairs.

### Outdoors

- Shovel sidewalks and driveways before foot and car traffic makes snow hard to remove.
- Very carefully remove heavy snow from roofs to avoid ice dams. (Hire a professional if you're unsure how to do this.)
- If your home is near a fire hydrant, shovel snow away from the hydrant so firefighters can quickly access it.
- If your home is next to a storm sewer opening, shovel snow away from the sewer grate when temperatures begin rising.