

Seasonal Maintenance Planner

Preserve your home's value and avoid major repairs by performing regular maintenance tasks each season. Keep a season-by-season schedule posted in the garage or basement for handy reference.

SPRING



Spring is the time to get your landscape ready to bloom and ready yourself for outdoor home improvement projects.

Repair winter damage—Look for sagging gutters, loose window frames or siding, deteriorating concrete or brickwork, missing roof shingles, or water damage under eaves or soffits. Schedule repairs promptly.

Yard work—Clear away fallen branches and leaves. Use a mulching mower to spread clippings evenly over the lawn and fertilize naturally. Loosen the soil around perennials; plant annuals or a vegetable garden. Prune shrubs and trees.

Patch and paint—Check exterior walls for holes or cracks; patch and paint as necessary.

Fans and air conditioners—Clean fan blades using mild soapy water. Check the central air-conditioning unit for debris and obstructions; vacuum the main condenser coil on top of the unit. Check the operating condition of window air-conditioning units; remove and wash filters in mild soapy water.

Turn on outdoor water supply—Hook up the garden hose and inspect it for cracks or leaks. Replace old washers.

Clean windows—Wash windows, screens, and windowsills; repair any winter damage.

Check exhaust fans and vents—Make sure all exhaust fans and vents are clean and clear. Remove lint buildup from the clothes dryer vent.

Remove winter ashes—Sweep ashes into your fireplace's ash pit or into a dustpan. Clean and lightly oil fireplace tools. Remove ashes from wood-burning stoves and inspect all moving parts and gaskets to make sure they seal tightly.

Condition your deck—Hammer in any loose nails, or replace them with galvanized deck screws. Replace any broken boards or rails. Rent a power washer to clean dirt and mildew from the wood, and then apply an all-weather sealer or stain. Set up patio furniture.

Check fences and pool—Repair any broken fence boards and paint or seal them as needed. Clean the pool if it has been covered all winter.

Spring cleaning—Dust walls and ceilings to remove cobwebs and wash any grimy areas. Dust or wash registers. Wash window curtains or remove drapes for dry cleaning. Clean rugs and carpeting. Dust and polish wood or laminate floors. Polish woodwork. Clean the garage and bring out the garden tools and lawn mower.

SUMMER



This is the season for undertaking major home improvement projects and tending your ever-changing landscape.

Maintain lawn and garden tools—Sharpen blades, change oil, and replace filters on the lawn mower. Make sure weed trimmers are in good condition. Oil garden tools and sharpen blades.

Inspect locks on doors and windows—Make sure your home is safe and secure. Oil any testy locks and install a home security system if desired. Consider installing outdoor lighting to increase security.

Inspect for termites and other pests—Inspect the basement or crawl space, eaves, and attic for termites, carpenter ants, and other wood pests. If you see signs of wood damage, call a professional exterminator. Look under the eaves for wasp or hornet nests. Handle wasp or hornet nests with care and call in a professional if necessary.

Primp patios and porches—Clean the barbecue and hose down brick or concrete patio surfaces. Replace any broken bricks; patch concrete cracks. Wash outdoor or screened-in porch floors. Plant annuals in pots, or replant existing planters. Oil patio doors. Bring out patio or porch furniture.

Complete painting projects—If you're painting your house yourself, rent a power washer and wash your house first. Scrape off crumbling paint, smooth rough areas with sandpaper, and fill in damaged areas with wood putty. Choose the best paint you can afford. Schedule interior painting projects, too; warm temperatures allow for ventilation and quick drying times.

Build or repair fences—Repair any damaged areas of existing fencing and refinish as necessary. If you're building a new fence, get at least three bids and look carefully at the increasing variety of fencing materials. Make sure your fence abides by local codes and doesn't encroach on neighboring properties.

Inspect siding—Check siding and trim around windows and doors for holes, dents, and gaps. Repair with wood filler or according to manufacturer's instructions. If your home's siding needs to be replaced entirely, summer is the best time for this one- to two-week project.

Replace your roof—If you need a new roof, have it installed during summer's warm, dry weather. Consider fire-resistant roof material if you live in an area prone to wildfire and your current roof is not fireproof.

Repair and seal driveways—Renew the surface of asphalt driveways with sealer. Repair damage to concrete driveways as soon as possible (this project may require a professional).

FALL



Especially in cold-winter areas of the country, fall is the time to prepare your house for extreme temperature changes and heavy precipitation.

Inspect the roof—Hire a licensed roofer to replace missing or broken shingles, shake pieces, or tiles. Make sure the flashing around vent pipes, skylights, and the chimney is secure.

Clean the chimney and fireplace—Hire a chimney sweep to remove build-up of combustible creosote from the chimney, hearth, and firebox. If you don't use your fireplace more than a few times a year, do this every couple of years instead of annually.

Unclog the gutters—Clean the gutter channels, and clear downspouts of debris. Make sure that the downspouts funnel water away from the foundation. Replace broken or deteriorating gutters or downspouts.

Inspect the foundation—Look for signs of water damage. Make sure that dirt around the house is graded to drain water away from the foundation. If you have an underground drainage system or sump pump, make sure it operates properly.

Check the heating system—Change filters and check registers and ducts for blockages. Hire a professional to have your furnace inspected for leaks and burner efficiency. Regularly dust registers and intake grills using your vacuum's crevice tool.

Insulate—Replace or add caulk or weather stripping around doors or windows, between the foundation and siding, and wherever bricks and wood make contact. Both of these flexible sealants degrade over time. Make sure you have sufficient attic insulation: Most areas require at least six inches of insulation material.

Shut off the outdoor water supply after the first freeze—In areas where temperatures drop below freezing in the winter, shut off the outdoor water supply or sprinkler system. Store garden hoses indoors.

Winterize your windows—If you have window units or doors with combination screen/storm windows, remove screens, wash and store, and install storm windows. Remove window air-conditioning units.

Prepare your yard—Rake leaves and add them to the compost heap. Prune trees and shrubs. Mow and fertilize the lawn. Store patio furniture, summer sports equipment, and garden tools. Plant spring bulbs and divide and replant perennials.

Lubricate hinges—Apply oil to door and window hinges. Don't forget garage doors.

Tidy the garage—Move indoors anything that might freeze, such as paint, caulk, and adhesives. Discard hazardous materials (such as paints and solvents) according to local rules; call your local waste-disposal department for information.

WINTER



Finish preparations for winter's extreme temperatures in cold-weather parts of the country, and tackle some indoor maintenance.

Install extra insulation—Install plastic sheets on windows requiring extra protection from the wind (kits are widely available at hardware stores or home centers). Add weather stripping around doors if necessary.

Prepare for snow—In snowy areas of the country, make sure your shovel or snow blower is in good condition. If necessary, use a rock salt-sand mixture to de-ice the driveway.

Patch and paint—Inspect interior walls and ceilings for holes or cracks. Patch and paint as necessary. Watch for bubbling or cracking, which could indicate water damage.

Check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors—Test each unit, and replace batteries if needed.

Repair indoor woodwork—Fill any holes or damaged areas with wood putty, then sand and refinish the surface.

Maintain appliances—Unplug the refrigerator and clean it thoroughly with soap and hot water. Vacuum the condenser coil in the back or bottom of the refrigerator for better energy efficiency. If the drain pan is removable, clean it in soapy water. Clean the inside of the dishwasher, the stove exhaust fan, the inside of the oven, and the microwave.

Inspect bathroom caulking—Remove and replace crumbling caulk around the bathtub, sink, or toilet. Make sure no moisture is leaking under the bathtub or shower stall.

Protect pipes from freezing—Insulate any water pipes that are exposed to extreme cold (check pipes on the north side of house particularly). Cover outdoor water faucets.

Plan home improvement projects—Plan and budget major home improvement projects, such as painting the exterior of the house, building a patio, or making landscape changes. Check with your local building department to see if your projects require permits. In late winter, call contractors to submit bids.

Clean and organize the basement—Sweep the floor and clear out cobwebs. Check stored items for moisture damage. Build or purchase storage shelves. Tidy up work areas. Start flower and vegetable seeds in seed trays under lights.