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Your Home's Fall Maintenance Checklist

Fall is a busy time of year for most of us. Cooler temps prompt us to get our homes "buttoned up" for winter.

Inspect Your Gutters and Roof

Once most of the trees in your yard have shed their leaves, inspect your gutters and downspouts. Remove sticks, leaves, and debris. Flush your gutters with water, and check joints and brackets. If possible, replace old, worn gutters with gutters that provide leaf guards.

Inspect your roof. Look for missing and loose shingles. Your roof is your home's first line of defense from all sorts of elements. It's imperative that your roof stays in tip-top shape, especially during winter months.

Note: if your home is 2-stories or more, consider hiring a professional to clear your gutters. Have a licensed, certified roofing professional inspect the condition of your roof.

Check Your Foundation

Inspect your home's foundation for cracks—caulk areas where pipes, wires, etc. enter the house. Also, caulk around windows and door frames to keep the cold air from getting into your house.

Check Your Safety Devices

Fall is a great time to check your home's safety devices. Test your smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors. Replace batteries if necessary. Take a look at your fire extinguisher and find its expiration date. Replace if needed.

Insulate Your Windows

Older windows need a little extra help keeping the cold air out and the warm air in. First, figure out where your home is losing heat by moving your hand around the window's frame to feel for drafts. Add weatherstripping and caulk where needed. "Proper sealing and insulation can save up to 20% on heating and cooling costs, or up to 10% on your total annual energy bill," says Katie Cody, spokeswoman for Lowe's.

Maintain Your Deck

Check handrails, stairs, and railings on your decks and porches. Look for loose railings—make sure they're steady and ready to support someone during wet weather.

Check for split or decaying wood, and inspect the flashing that directs the water away from sensitive areas like window sills and exterior doors.

Clean and cover your outdoor furniture and barbecue, or stow them away for the season in a covered area.

Inspect Your Heating System

Have your heating system inspected by a licensed heating contractor. Your heating system will run more efficiently, use less energy, and last longer if it is properly serviced.

Prepare Your Lawn and Garden

Clean your summer garden tools and store them away for the winter. Drain fuel from your gas-operated equipment like leaf blowers and lawnmowers. If you're in a snowy climate, make sure your snow equipment is operational.

October Calendar

October 16 - National Bosses Day

October 31 - Halloween

October is Health Literacy Month

Homeowner Tip:



Maintain Your Filters and Grates

Summer is a distant memory, and soon your heater will be working overtime. October is a great month to vacuum your radiator, heating grates, and baseboard heaters. Replace filters as needed. Help your heating system run more efficiently, and it will repay you all season with warmth, and better indoor air quality.

Spice Up Your Front Porch with Pretty Painted Pumpkins

We all love a beautiful display of pumpkins when fall rolls around. If carving a pumpkin isn't your idea of fun, try painting them instead. Here are some helpful tips from popsugar.com for creating your own decorative masterpieces.

1. Any size works! Choose a pumpkin with shallow ribbing to provide a smoother surface for paint, and make sure your pumpkin is free of rotten spots.
2. Prep your pumpkin before you paint to remove any dirt. Wash it with mild soap and water, and wipe it down with a cloth.

3. Choosing the right paint is important. Unless you're working with children, acrylic paint works best. Otherwise use a washable paint with younger artists.

4. Avoid stiff-bristle brushes, and instead opt for sponge brushes or other soft brushes that will not scratch or damage the skin of the pumpkin.

5. Have a general design idea before you get going. Trace your design onto your pumpkin with a pencil before you begin painting.

Place these beauties at your front door or inside your home to add surprising color anywhere.



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Escarole and White Bean Soup

Ingredients

1 tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil
1/2 onion, finely chopped
2 stalks celery, finely chopped
1 large leek, cleaned and thinly sliced (white and pale green parts only)
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 tsp. freshly chopped thyme
1/2 tsp. red pepper flakes (optional)
1 head escarole, roughly chopped
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
4 c. low-sodium vegetable or chicken broth
2 c. water
2 (15-oz.) cans cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
1 (1-oz.) piece of Parmesan

2 bay leaves
Juice of 1 lemon
Freshly grated Parmesan, for serving

Directions

In a large pot over medium heat, heat oil. Add onion, celery, and leek and cook until slightly soft, 5 minutes.

Add garlic, thyme, and red pepper flakes (if using) and cook until fragrant, 1 minute more. Add escarole and stir until wilted. Season with salt and pepper.

Add broth, water, beans, Parmesan, and bay leaves and bring to a simmer. Stir occasionally, mashing some beans (about 1/3 of them) in the pot to thicken soup.

Let simmer 15 minutes, then stir in lemon juice. Garnish with Parmesan before serving.



Photo & recipe courtesy of delish.com