

Fall Home Renovation Projects

After summer holidays are over and the heat and humidity subsides, it's a good time to start home renovation and preparation projects before the cold weather sets in. Flower beds can be cut down, lawns fertilized for the last time and windows washed. Here are five projects that are perfect for cool fall days.

Winterize the Deck

Decks get a lot of use during long summer days. By the time fall comes around, they can look worn out and old. Once the deck is cleaned off and all summer chairs and tables are stored away, power-wash the deck with a high-velocity pressure washer. This will dislodge any dirt that is stuck in the wood grain and will take away the gray color that decks fade to over time. Fall is also a good time to reseal the deck if you use a sealant or stain. Choose a warm day that has no chance of rain and start the process in the morning so that the deck has several hours of drying time before nightfall.

Insulate Exposed Plumbing

Uninsulated plumbing lines in unheated spaces are a major cause of power use, as the water heater must work extra hard to heat water. It can also cause pipes to freeze and burst if you live in an area that dips below the freezing mark in the winter. Check all of your plumbing lines to identify those that are outside or underneath the house, or are in an unheated basement or attic. Foam wrap can be purchased at any home improvement store. Wrap all exposed pipes to save on energy when the days start getting colder.

Roof Work

Once all the autumn leaves have fallen, cleaning out the roof gutters will save you from building up ice dams that can damage the roof in the winter. Blow out the gutters with a leaf blower or wash them out with a hose. Check for any holes or other damage to the gutters and repair them before heavy snow makes them worse. It's also a good time to take a look at the roof itself and fix any shingles that are curling or any flashing around chimneys that has come loose. If your roof is in bad shape, bring in a roofing contractor to assess whether the roof needs to be replaced before winter or can wait until the spring.

Upgrade Doors and Windows

If you have old, single-pane windows, you will lose a significant amount of heat in the wintertime. Replacing old windows with energy-efficient, double-paned upgrades can pay for itself quickly in heat savings. Check all exterior doors to ensure that they are insulated and that there are no gaps or cracks between the doors and the frames that could let heat out. If you have weatherstripping around doors, make sure it is intact and in good shape. If it's not in good shape, replace it before the cold weather sets in.

Interior Painting

Warm fall days are perfect for indoor painting. Summer is often too humid for paint to dry properly and that can cause walls to look splotchy. In winter, the lack of ventilation can make paint fumes hang around and can lengthen drying times. Open up windows to ensure there is a breeze that will both reduce the paint smell and dry it quickly.

The Bottom Line

Fall is an important transition season for home improvement projects. With the cold of winter coming, getting the house and yard prepared will save you money in the long run.

By: Angie Mohr, Yahoo! Finance - Financially Fit