

## **7 ways to ready home for spring**

Furnace, windows, soil need close attention

As the seasons change and things start to warm up again, it's time to start thinking about what's outside. Here's my annual spring checklist of chores you want to be considering in order to clean up after winter's wrath and start getting ready for an enjoyable summer.

### **Roof ventilation**

I hate to be the one to remind you, but remember that ice dam on the roof you wrestled with all winter? And remember how hot the attic was last summer when you went up there to store some boxes? Spring is the ideal time to take care of both of those problems by adding some additional attic ventilation while it's not too hot or too cold to work up there.

Attic ventilation should equal approximately 1 square foot of vent area for every 300 square feet of attic, so first figure out roughly how many square feet your attic is, then divide by 300. The total vent area should be roughly split between high and low vents, so now divide that number by two.

Take some measurements to see if you have an adequate amount of vent area both low in the eaves or soffits, and high on the roof at the ridge or in the gable ends. If not, add more as needed. While you're at it, repair any vent screens and flashings.

### **Spring cleaning**

Now's the time to get the yard cleaned up from all the debris that's blown down. Rake up loose leaves and needles. Remove debris from roofs and gutters. Haul off limbs and other debris. Remove, clean and store your storm windows. Use a broom or water spray to remove cobwebs and dirt from under eaves, as well as on siding and exterior doors. Pressure-wash patios and walkways (pressure washers can be purchased or rented).

### **Check windows and screens**

Do a thorough inspection of all your windows and window screens. Remove and wash all the screens. Look for small holes in the screens that are going to let those pesky insects in this summer, and repair or rescreen them. Clean all the windows inside and out. Clean the window tracks. Clean and lubricate window locks and sliding mechanisms as needed. For added security this summer, consider installing additional locks that allow you to latch the windows in a partially open position for secure ventilation.

### **Check and adjust grade**

Soil is very susceptible to being washed away or redistributed by heavy winter rains and melting snow. That movement can change grade levels and slopes, causing water to run back against your foundation, into your basement or crawlspace, or onto your neighbor's property.

Look for areas where soil seems too high or too low in relation to your home, as well as for marks on your siding, foundation, walkways, and other areas that might indicate that soil or water is in a place it shouldn't be. A 4-foot builder's level placed on a long, straight board can

help you check grade and slope. If needed, redistribute and regrade the soil so that for every foot extending horizontally out from the house the soil drops at least 1/4 inch vertically.

### **Condition yard tools**

Dust off all your yard tools and get them ready for the coming season. Replace broken or damaged handles, and clean and condition metal parts. Tighten fittings and fasteners, sharpen cutting tools and mower blades, and service engines and belts in lawn mowers and other power equipment.

### **Change furnace filters**

Now is the time to replace furnace filters that have become choked with dust from the winter heating season. This is especially important if you have central air conditioning, or if you utilize your heating system's fan to circulate air during the summer.

### **Check smoke detectors**

Daylight saving time came around early this year, and that's usually the semi-annual reminder to check your smoke alarms. So if you haven't already done it, now's the time. Replace the batteries, clean the covers, and test the detector's operation before it's too late.

If you have gas-fired appliances in the house, including a water heater, now is also a great time to consider adding a carbon monoxide detector. These detectors are inexpensive and easy to install, and are available at most home centers and other retailers of electrical parts and supplies.

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