

How to Clean Gutters and Downspouts

By Susan M. Keenan

Proper maintenance and cleaning of your home's gutters and downspouts is about more than simply keeping the exterior of your home looking nice. It may prevent damage to your home's interior due to flooding through the foundation and walls or leaks in the roof due to seepage of water.



Gutters and downspouts should be cleaned and checked for signs of necessary repairs at least twice a year. Typically, the best times to do this are late spring and late fall. If you suspect a problem or live in an extremely rainy climate, then perhaps, you should check them more frequently.

Gathering Gutter Cleaning Supplies

If you don't have the proper supplies and you are thinking about letting it go or simply rinsing the gutters with a hose, you might want to reconsider. Avoiding the task completely might result in unnecessary damage to your home. Using a garden hose in an attempt to rinse away the accumulated debris might lead to a bigger mess than you started with in the first place.

Therefore, if you are going to clean the gutters and downspouts, plan for it and purchase the right tools for the job. First, make a list of the tools that you need for the job that you do not already own. Purchase or borrow the items. The following is a list of the optimal tools to have for this task: an extension ladder, work gloves, narrow garden trowel or hand spade, trash bags or bucket and s-hook, plumber's snake, and a garden hose of the correct length with a sprayer attachment.

Cleaning the Gutters and Downspouts Step by Step

- **Collect the tools to a location near your starting place.** The corners of the home are good starting locations since this is where the downspouts are typically located. It's best to start near the downspout and work away from it to avoid pushing additional debris into it.
- **Set the extension ladder on a level place.** If you are using a bucket attached to the ladder with the s-hook for collecting the debris, attach it now. Otherwise, secure a plastic trash bag to collect the debris. This set up minimizes clean up later.
- **Put work gloves on to protect your hands from any sharp objects in the gutters and downspouts.** The gloves will also help to keep your hands clean.
- **Begin at the part of the gutter closest to the downspout.** Use the garden trowel or hand spade to scoop out the debris. Place it into the bucket or trash bag. If any pieces resist being scooped up, remove them carefully by hand. If you are planning of disposing of the debris into your compost pile, then you need to have a separate trash receptacle for metal objects such as roofing nails.

- **Once you have removed all of the larger debris, get the garden hose.** Rinse the gutter in the direction of the downspout using the spraying attachment on the hose. Spray the gutter until no signs of debris remain.

- **If the downspout is clogged, you will need to clear it.** Three options are available to you. Simply try each one until you find one that works. It's probably easiest to begin by using the spray attachment on the hose to direct water into the downspout from the bottom end. This may force any clogs loose. Additionally, you can use the spray attachment on the hose to direct water into the downspout from the upper end. This may also knock the clog loose. If that does not work, then you need to work a plumber's snake into the downspout to loosen the debris and draw the debris out.

- **Follow this procedure for all of the gutters and downspouts on your home.**

- **Inspect the gutters and downspouts now for any signs of damage.** Look for holes, dents, or cracks.

- **If you discover any signs of damage, repair them as soon as possible.**

- **Dispose of the debris by placing it in your compost pile or in the trash.**

Many places sell accessories for your gutters and downspouts that can effectively lessen the time needed to complete the task of cleaning the gutters and downspouts. A variety of protectors are on the market that will deflect the leaves and other debris from the gutters. If you do decide to install one, be sure that you purchase a model that can easily be removed to allow for your biannual cleaning chore.

(from doityourself.com)