

Fall Home Maintenance Checklist

Fall is the season of pumpkin spice lattes, changing foliage and Halloween preparations. Winter is on the way and you'll need more than spooky yard decorations to prepare. Follow our fall home maintenance checklist to ensure your home is ready for the seasonal festivities to come:

Outdoors:

1. **Rake the leaves in your yard**

Leaves look beautiful blanketing the ground and are super fun to romp through. However, letting them coat your lawn throughout the winter may inhibit spring grass growth, and nobody wants that! Choose a lightweight rake, wear gloves and use handheld leaf scoops to bag leaves quickly.

2. **Once most of the leaves have fallen, you can clean out the gutters and downspouts yourself or hire help to assist with the cleaning.**

Insulate water pipes in areas exposed to freezing temperatures. Check gutters for damage and confirm they're securely attached to the house. A plumber's snake is a great tool for pulling clumps of wet leaves out of clogged downspouts. It's a lot of work, but you'll be glad you did it when that first deep freeze comes. This is, without a doubt, one of the most important fall home maintenance tasks.

3. **Seal gaps where critters might enter**

Mice and other diminutive invaders need only a tiny gap to be able to sneak into and wreak havoc in your house. Fill small holes and cover any larger gaps securely with heavy-duty hardware cloth to keep uninvited guests out

4. **Aerate the soil and tend to your lawn**

Aerating simply means making holes in the ground by either removing plugs of soil or poking holes in the ground to relieve compaction caused by foot traffic. Aerating the lawn creates extra pore space in the soil, allowing air, nutrients and water to enter, which helps roots to thrive. Fertilizing in the fall provides energy and nutrients for the grass roots as they multiply in cooler weather before the grass goes dormant.

5. **Clean your chimney**

How often you need to have your chimney cleaned depends on the moisture content of the wood you burn. If you burn mostly green (wet) logs, have your chimney cleaned or inspected every 50 burns. On the other hand, dry hardwoods, such as oak and birch, burn hotter and cleaner. With these dry hardwoods, have your chimney cleaned or inspected every 70 burns.

Indoors:

1. **Weather stripping applied around the frames of windows and doors helps boost winter warmth and cut energy costs.**

2. **Inspect smoke detectors**

Make sure you have a smoke detector in each bedroom or sleeping area, in the hallway outside each sleeping area, and at least one smoke detector on each floor of your home (including your basement). Test them all monthly, and change the battery annually or as needed.

3. **Change the rotation of your ceiling fans**

During fall and winter, ceiling fans should rotate clockwise to pull air up towards the ceiling, forcing the warm air back to the ground and walls, thus avoiding the wind chill effect. To change the direction of your ceiling fan, turn the fan off and allow the blades to stop, then flip the small switch located on the fan housing.

4. **Check your fire extinguishers**

Check your fire extinguishers regularly to make sure they're easily accessible and in good working order. For dry chemical extinguishers, check the pressure gauge to make sure it's in the green zone (CO2 extinguishers have to be weighed to check the pressure).

5. **Check bathtub caulk**

Cracked or missing caulk around a bathtub can cause water to leak behind the tub, leading to mold growth and water damage to the framing.