

Preparing your Home for Winter



Walking around my home on October 9th, I would have never thought that winter was around the bend. The temperature had reached 53 degrees and it felt like it was a perfect spring day. If the trees weren't showing their magnificent colors, I would be considering buying a new swim suit. That is,

until October 12th, when the bottom fell out and fall officially fell! Thankfully I wasn't fooled and had already begun my home winterizing checklist.

If you haven't done so, let me encourage you to jump at it. I have a sneaky feeling that this will be a wild and wooly winter. Ever since Shari jumped ship from Ohio to Florida I have been miserable in two ways, of course missing her daily and the fact the winters just seems colder and longer.

Here is my top ten list (plus one) of things to do.

OUTDOORS

1. Check gutters and downspouts.

I usually clean mine out by hand using a really neat scooper I found at my home center store. I remove all debris and give the gutters and downspouts a good rinse, checking for leaks as I rinse. I usually check my gutters a couple of times during the fall. Clogged drains can form an ice dam in which water backs up, freezes and causes water to seep into the house. Been there done that, not again thank you!





2. Cover outdoor faucets. I also cover my exterior faucets with insulated covers after I have shut off the faucet and drained. I know where my main water shut off is in the house, but I always check to make sure that it is tagged and is not obstructed for easy access. Just in case my neighbors have to shut it off for me in my absence. I lost a

bathroom once because we ran around like the stooges looking for the darn thing.

3. Clean and store garden equipment.

I always clean all my garden equipment and clean all my shovels. I learned this next trick from Paul James on Gardening by the Yard. Use a five gallon plastic pail filled with play sand and two cups of motor oil. Remove any dirt from a shovel using a soft brush, then shove the shovel into the bucket and let the sand and oil bring the shovel back to life and lube it for its long winter nap.



I also sharpen any tools that need a new edge.



I use this handy tool sharpener that I got at one of our sponsors website www.creativesales.com.



This is also a great time to drain all my garden hoses and store away for the winter. Use your air compressor with the blower nozzle attached and just shoot the water through, then use plastic zip strips to keep them corralled for the season.

4. Touch up paint on trim and siding. Before the temperature dips below 55 degrees, I check all my trim and siding for any bare wood and touch up with a spot primer followed by a coat of exterior paint. Do this in the early hours so that the paint has time to dry before the temps dip in the evening. This will prevent the paint from flashing.



5. Check the fireplace. Inspect the chimney cap/screen and replace if damaged. Have you ever had a raccoon crawl down your chimney? I have and my cat has never been the same! If the chimney hasn't been inspected and cleaned for a while, call a chimney sweep to remove soot and creosote and inspect the inside of the chimney. Check the fireplace damper for proper opening and closing. This is a huge heat loss area; make sure that you have a cover over the opening to keep air from escaping up the chimney.

INDOORS

6. Search out air leaks in your home. I walk around the interior of my home with a lit incense stick or candle checking around door frames window and electrical outlets. Just hold the stick up to the windows or outlets and if the smoke drifts out at any spot, there is an air leak. If I do find any leaks I try to fill them as best as possible.



For doors I purchase and install new door sweeps.



If you discover a gap in any window, caulk using a paint grade silicone latex caulking. If I have a window or door (sliding glass door) that I know I won't be using until spring, I seal it using a seal and peel caulking. The caulk seals any gaps but can easily be peeled and removed in the spring.



There are gaskets available to cover exterior wall outlets and switches; it is amazing how much cold air can gush through those things!



7. Wrap hot water pipes and put a blanket on the hot water heater. Hot water pipes should be insulated with pre-molded foam rubber sleeves that can be purchased at a home center store. Search crawl spaces, garages and basement and wrap any exposed pipe that you can reach. Purchase a water heater blanket and save tons of money off your hot water bill. It takes seconds to install.

8. Inspect smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. When the clocks change, check and test smoke detectors. Use a little smoke (every time I make toast I inspect mine, even if I don't plan to) and don't just rely on the pressing test. If you don't have a carbon monoxide detector install at least one in your home.



Also make sure that you have a fire extinguisher that is working and can be easily reached.

9. Furnace inspection, call an HVAC (Heating, Vent and Air Conditioning) professional to inspect your furnace and clean ducts. Purchase extra furnace filters and change them monthly, mark you calendar and stick to it. I just switched to a programmable thermostat that I can set my furnace to run more efficiently. Check to make sure that all vents are unobstructed and ready to go. My cat is the biggest heat sucker; I'm constantly moving him off my floor registers.





10. Reverse your fans. As you look up the blades should be turning clockwise. The fan will push warm air down forcing the air to recirculate and make the room more comfortable.

11. Keep pizza delivery numbers within reach. This, along with the remote control are the only things that make a below 32 degree night bearable, sleep tight Shari you lucky Floridian.

Enjoy the fall; while you can....I think I just saw a flake.

Matt

mattandshari

© 2009. mattandshari.com, all rights reserved.