



## Get Your House Prepped for Fall/Winter

Getting your home ready for fall and winding down on summer will obviously vary by your location and local climate. This checklist covers both warmer and colder climates across the country. As always, remember your limitations and consult a professional as needed.

**Get Fired Up:** Some people they use their fireplace more than their central heater in the fall and winter months. Get your fireplace ready by discarding old ashes and ensuring the damper is open to allow air to freely move through the chimney. Examine the damper handle and springs to ensure the flue is operating. Hire a professional chimney sweep if needed.

It's always better to bring in firewood from the outdoors earlier rather than later. If you're storing wood in the garage or on a porch, remove the existing pile and sweep the area. Check carefully for evidence of bugs (termites, carpenter ants, powder post beetles). Once the area is clean, restack your supply, putting the newer wood down first and the drier wood from last year on top. If you find insects in the wood, either burn it immediately or simply move the wood well away from the house and let it rot away. Don't bring insect-infested wood into the house and store it even for just a couple of days.

**Avoid the Draft:** Did you know that the majority of conditioned air in your home is lost through the windows and doors? Go through your home, open windows and check to ensure the seal and caulking around the window frame is in good condition. Consider adding heavier drapery around windows that are extra drafty, that may help block some air infiltration. Check for gaps around windows/doors (if gaps are bigger than width of a nickel, you may need to have exterior caulk reapplied).

**Those Pesky Pests:** These are just a few steps to help prevent pests from entering/infesting your home:

- ☛ Place mulch and landscaping at least 12 inches from the bottom of your foundation wall
- ☛ Know how large your shrubs will grow when you plant them next to your home – keeping them far enough away and pruning often will prevent them from harboring pests
- ☛ Seal cracks in your foundation or basement walls, attic, eaves, vents and window seals
- ☛ Keep wood sources (firewood, debris, mulch, etc.) away from your home as they tend to attract new termite activity
- ☛ Periodically inspect decks, storage buildings, porches and other wooden structures near your home for activity
- ☛ Check inside your home for bubbling/honey-combed wood that sounds hollow when knocked, or easily chips and breaks
- ☛ Consider a professional treatment

**Attack the HVAC:** Call for furnace/boiler tune-up (do it early—HVAC companies get booked up fast). Stock up on furnace filters and change them monthly. Clean ducts and remove any flammables from the area around your furnace.

Remove and store window air conditioners. To protect them from corrosion, be sure not to store near pool chlorine, fertilizer, de-icer or corrosive chemicals. Keep all mounting hardware in a plastic bag taped to the appliance.

### And Don't Forget ...

- Prep and close your pool. Pool suppliers sell winter pool-closing kits that include algaecide, PH stabilizer and chlorine or similar chemical for cleaner water over the winter and an easier opening next spring
- Walk your property before snow covers everything to make sure you take care of any repairs before weather is too cold
- Have any "summer" power garden tools serviced, run out the gas or add stabilizer
- Get "fall-winter" power tools tuned up and ready to go
- Don't wait for the rush – get rakes, snow shovels, ice-melt/sand now
- In cold climates, drain, disconnect and store garden hoses if you're done with them for the season
- Using binoculars, check out your roof and look for loose shingles, breaks around flashing seals, vent stacks and chimney, or damage that could lead to leaks in winter
- Switch out screens to storm windows
- Clean and store outdoor furniture/grills
- Test/install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors

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