

6 ESSENTIAL FALL MAINTENANCE TIPS

There are many great activities in fall—like picking apples, eating pumpkin bread, and enjoying fall foliage. We recommend adding one more: prepping your home for winter.

Taking steps to prepare your home may not be fun, but it can potentially save you a lot of stress, frustration, and money. Here are six tips to help ensure a hassle-free winter.

1 PRUNE PLANTS AND TRIM TREES.

Cut back plants and tree branches near your home. This helps plants grow back healthier in spring and helps prevent damage to your home. Make sure you [do a little research](#) beforehand.

Keep limbs and branches at least 3 feet from your house to prevent moisture from dripping onto roofing and siding. And cut back any dead branches that might fall in icy or windy weather.

2 WINTERIZE YOUR LAWN MOWER.

Don't leave untreated gas in your mower over the fall and winter months. As the gas degrades, it can damage internal engine parts and lead to a defunct mower.

[Add a fuel stabilizer](#) to your mower to prevent gum and varnish buildup within your engine's fuel system. You can also add it to your gasoline can to keep gas in good condition over the winter.

3 CLEAN YOUR GUTTERS.

Though fall leaves are beautiful, they can clog your gutters and downspouts... then rainwater and melting snow may not drain properly, which can lead to water damage.

This can also cause water to pool around your home's foundation, which can crack your foundation as the water expands and freezes in the cold. So, make [cleaning your gutters](#) a priority to prevent costly projects down the road.

4 DISCONNECT YARD HOSES.

Storing your garden hose properly not only extends its life, but also helps protect your home's plumbing. If you leave the hose attached to your outdoor spigot, water lodged in the pipe can quickly freeze, which can crack or burst your pipes... which can be costly to repair.

PRO TIP: Experts recommend closing the inside shut-off valves and draining the spigot before the first frost.

5 TUNE YOUR FURNACE.

There's nothing worse than your furnace not working once cold weather hits. Get ahead of potential issues by scheduling an appointment with a heating and cooling professional. They can help ensure your system is functioning properly and give it a proper tune-up.

Though this may be an extra expense, it can save you money by catching and fixing small problems before they turn into big ones. Plus, a pro can warn you if your furnace is nearing the end of its lifespan, so you have time to get a new one.

6 CHECK FOR DRAFTS.

If you'd like to save money on your heating bill, walk through your home and [check for drafts](#). After you've determined where unwanted cold air is leaking in, you can [seal the leak](#) with caulk, spray foam, or a draft stopper. Filling these cracks is relatively simple and inexpensive, and you'll be thankful when that first heating bill arrives.

Common problem areas include electrical outlets, switch plates, baseboards, fireplace dampers, as well as door and window frames. According to the [U.S. Department of Energy](#), heat loss through windows is responsible for 25-30% of heating energy use.

By tackling these six essential home maintenance projects this fall, you'll be set for a warmer, safer winter.

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