

## 10 Home-Maintenance Tips for Spring

A certified home inspector shares 10 home-maintenance tips for spring.

By Dwight Barnett, Scripps Howard News Service

After a long, dark winter, spring's bright sun and warm winds are, well, a breath of fresh air. The only downside? All that sunshine spotlights your leaf-filled gutters, cracked sidewalks and the dead plants in last year's flower beds. Dwight Barnett, a certified master inspector with the American Society of Home Inspectors, shared this checklist to help you target the areas that need maintenance so you can get your chores done quickly, leaving you time to go outside and play in the sunshine.

- Check for loose or leaky gutters. Improper drainage can lead to water in the basement or crawl space. Make sure downspouts drain away from the foundation and are clear and free of debris.
- Low areas in the yard or next to the foundation should be filled with compacted soil. Spring rains can cause yard flooding, which can lead to foundation flooding and damage. Also, when water pools in these low areas in summer, it creates a breeding ground for insects.
- Use a screwdriver to probe the wood trim around windows, doors, railings and decks. Make repairs now before the spring rains do more damage to the exposed wood.
- From the ground, examine roof shingles to see if any were lost or damaged during winter. If your home has an older roof covering, you may want to start a budget for replacement. The summer sun can really damage roof shingles. Shingles that are cracked, buckled or loose or are missing granules need to be replaced. Flashing around plumbing vents, skylights and chimneys need to be checked and repaired by a qualified roofer.
- Examine the exterior of the chimney for signs of damage. Have the flue cleaned and inspected by a certified chimney sweep.
- Inspect concrete slabs for signs of cracks or movement. All exterior slabs except pool decks should drain away from the home's foundation. Fill cracks with a concrete crack filler or silicone caulk. When weather permits, power-wash and then seal the concrete.
- Remove firewood stored near the home. Firewood should be stored at least 18 inches off the ground at least 2 feet from the structure.
- Check outside hose faucets for freeze damage. Turn the water on and place your thumb or finger over the opening. If you can stop the flow of water, it is likely the pipe inside the home is damaged and will need to be replaced. While you're at it, check the garden hose for dry rot.
- Have a qualified heating and cooling contractor clean and service the outside unit of the air conditioning system. Clean coils operate more efficiently, and an annual service call will keep the system working at peak performance levels. Change interior filters on a regular basis.
- Check your gas- and battery-powered lawn equipment to make sure it is ready for summer use. Clean equipment and sharp cutting blades will make yard work easier.



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