



Fall Home Improvement

What you need to know, and where
you need to go to get your home
ready for the changing weather

Supplement to the Malone Telegram
September 2020

5 tips to prepare for window replacement

Metro

Winter is coming, and for millions of people who reside in areas of the country that see the mercury drop considerably between December and March, that means prioritizing staying warm. Inefficient or aging housing materials may compromise your ability to do just that.

Drafts from doors, poorly protected attics and basements and aging windows may force heating systems to work extra hard to maintain interior temperatures.

Replacing old windows can make a home quieter by blocking out exterior noises. Consumer Reports also notes that new windows are often easier to clean and maintain than older varieties.

Many homeowners are interested in replacing their windows, but may not know where to start. These guidelines can help the process along.

1. Get several estimates. Ask for recommendations from neighbors or other people in your area on which compa-



nies they used to install their replacement windows. When you interview the prospects, ask several questions about how they go about installing the windows. Questions can include:

- How long will the project take?
- Will I need to remain home during the process?
- Do you discard old debris?
- What is the protocol for

installation during inclement weather?

2. Research permits. Most home renovation projects need to be approved by the local municipality. Go to the permit office and find out the requirements. Some window contractors will include securing permits in the cost of the project. After the project is completed, an inspector will come by and ensure the work was done according to code.

3. Change up the appearance. Look at the type of hardware you have around the home and other fixtures. Choose windows that have locks or latches that can match those features for continuity of style. Think about choosing a different style or frame color of the window, or a different type of window to improve ef-

iciency and function.

4. Research top window manufacturers. It's tempting to purchase windows based on price alone, but replacement windows are often a decision that only has to be made once or twice for the life of the home. Invest in durable windows that will have staying power. Consumer Reports offers unbiased reviews on various window brands and can help homeowners make sound decisions.

5. Prepare for installation. Clear pathways, remove window treatments and disconnect window alarm systems. Plan for one to two days of installation, advises Andersen Windows and Doors. Keep pets and children away from work areas.

Replacement windows can be a smart investment. New windows can improve the look of a home, reduce heating costs and can keep interior spaces comfortable.

Did you know?

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Outdoor living is wildly popular, as more and more homeowners are bringing elements once reserved for home interiors into their backyards. When designing outdoor living spaces, homeowners may learn about biophilic design, an architectural concept that aims to incorporate natural elements into outdoor living spaces. Proponents of biophilic design say it satisfies an innate human need to affiliate with nature, thereby helping to reduce stress that

people may experience after being stuck indoors for much of their days. Biophilic design is often part of a home interior design, but many homeowners also embrace it when designing their outdoor living spaces. For example, surrounding outdoor living areas with noninvasive plants, flowers and trees and using natural materials like wood and stone when building such spaces are great ways to embrace biophilic design and create a tension-free ambiance in outdoor living spaces.

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Home improvement projects provide homeowners with a chance to put their own stamp on their homes. In addition, many such projects make homes safer and, in some instances, more eco-friendly.

The opportunity to make a home more comfortable, safer and/or more eco-friendly entices many homeowners to open their wallets. In fact, the Home Improvement Research Institute estimates that the home improvement products market will grow by more than 5 percent in 2018.

Homeowners might experience some sticker shock when researching home improvement projects or receiving estimates from contractors. But there are ways for budget-conscious homeowners to transform their homes and still make the most of their home improvement dollars.

■ Do your homework. Each year, Remodeling magazine publishes its 'Cost vs. Value Report,' a comprehensive study of 21 popular remodeling projects in 149 United States markets. The report

notes the value each project retains at resale in 100 markets across the country. Homeowners who want to get the strongest return on investment can access the 'Cost vs. Value Report' (www.remodeling.how.net) to see which home improvement projects are best suited for them.

■ Do some of the labor

yourself. Homeowners willing to swing a hammer also can stretch their home improvement dollars. For example, the home improvement resource 'This Old House' notes that homeowners willing to do their own demolition before the contractors arrive can save substantial amounts of money. A professional contractor may charge \$1,000 to demo a 200-square-foot deck, but 'This Old House' estimates that homeowners who demo their own decks may spend only \$450 (for the dumpster rental and parking permit).

■ Hire a consultant. The DIY movement is incredibly popular, no doubt thanks to television channels such as HGTV and the DIY Network. Homeowners with DIY experience may be able to complete projects on their own with little consultation from professional contractors. Some contractors may not offer consulting services, however. The consultation route, which typically requires paying licensed contractors hourly fees to offer guidance, should only be considered by homeowners with legitimate DIY skills, for whom this option can be a great way to save money.

■ Schedule renovations during homeowner-friendly times of year. Summer and fall tend to be contractors' busy seasons, and homeowners will likely pay more for projects during this time of year. If possible, delay starting projects until right after

the new year, when contractors aren't so busy and might be more flexible with pricing.

Budget-conscious homeowners can employ various strategies to make the most of their home improvement dollars without sacrificing quality.

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How to protect wood floors from inclement weather

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Wood floors are a worthwhile investment that can improve the beauty and function of just about any room in a home. Even though wood floors are durable, and new protective treatments help seal out many of the things that may have damaged floors in the past, homeowners still need to prioritize protecting their hardwood floors.

Certain seasons of the year can be more harsh on wood floors than others. For example, seasons characterized by moisture and precipitation, particularly the early spring, winter and fall, can be hard on wood floors. The experts at ServiceMaster Clean say that cold, snowy days can damage wood floors, and Lumber Liquidators agrees that winter weather can be harsh on flooring.

Homeowners need not give up on hardwood if they live in an area that sees all four seasons. They just need to take a few steps to keep floors looking beautiful.

■ Clean up the salt. Salt that keeps sidewalks and streets clear of snow and ice inadvertently gets tracked inside a home. Hard chunks of salt can scratch wood floors, and, if left to sit, that salt



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can eventually cause white marks and other stains. Routinely vacuuming and sweeping up salt is necessary to protect wood floors.

■ Invest in shoe storage. Wet or snowy boots can create puddles around the house. Have a special mat or tray by the front door where wet shoes can

be kept. A nice bench in the entryway makes it easy for residents and guests to remove their shoes until it's time to go back outside.

■ Use water-wicking mats. Homeowners will probably need a few extra mats around to tame errant drips and wipe shoes. Any entrance that might be

used by people or pets should be protected. Try to avoid petroleum-based, rubber-backed mats, as they could discolor the wood floor.

■ Control humidity indoors. Cold, dry air in a home can be problematic because the moisture in the wood can eventually evaporate into the air. The heat will suck that moisture from the flooring, causing it to shrink, creak and splinter and become more brittle. Think about investing in an in-line humidifier for the home's HVAC system that can keep a moderate amount of humidity in the home. Hardwood floorboards are installed to accommodate minor temperature and humidity fluctuations. This is typically a range of between 60 and 80 degrees F with a relative humidity range of 35 to 55 percent, advises ServiceMaster.

■ Use the right cleaning products. Avoid excessive water to clean wood floors, and select soaps that are specially designed for wood flooring. Consult with the flooring manufacturer for a list of detergents that are safe to use.

With proper care, hardwood flooring can survive rain, snow and cold weather.

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Types of home insulation and where to install them

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When thinking about renovating their homes, homeowners may imagine changing wall colors, expanding room sizes or upgrading appliances and fixtures. However, unless people take inventory of the less glamorous components of the home, such as structure, plumbing, heating and cooling, and insulation, other improvements may be for naught.

A home insulation project certainly doesn't offer the wow factor of a kitchen remodel, but insulation serves a vital function in the house that helps keep people comfortable and reduces energy consumption. Insulation is typically placed in areas where air escapes, such as between the stud cavities inside the walls and in the attic, and serves to slow and reduce heat transfer.

The U.S. Department of Energy says between 50 and 70 percent of the energy used in homes is for heating and cooling. By improving home insulation, homeowners can make their homes more comfortable, consistent and efficient. In fact, the ENERGY STAR program overseen by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency says homeowners stand to save an average of 15 percent on heating and cooling costs by adding proper insulation. To do so, homeowners can take a crash course in home insulation and find the products that fit their needs.

Blanket batts and rolls

Blanket batts and rolls typically are constructed with fiberglass, so proper



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safety gear, such as a mask and gloves, is needed when handling them. Installing this type of insulation is relatively easy since the materials are designed to fit the standard width between studs, rafters and floor joists.

Loose fill

Loose fill is usually made of fiberglass or cellulose (recycled paper fiber). It is blown or sprayed into place with pneumatic equipment, according to The Home Depot. Loose fill can be ideal for hard-to-reach areas in attics or inside wall cavities. It's good for adding insulation to irregularly shaped areas. Since it requires special equipment, this is a job best left to professionals.

Sprayed foam

Sprayed foam is just as the name im-

plies, a foam made from polyurethane, polyisocyanurate, cementitious, or other materials that are applied by a spray container. DIYers who need only small applications can use canned products. Large quantities are pressure-sprayed by professionals.

Foam board/rigid foam panels

Ideal for unfinished walls, such as basement or foundation walls, floors and ceilings, these are boards of polyurethane or polystyrene. Foam boards tend to reduce energy consumption more effectively than other types of insulation.

Homeowners considering upgrading their insulation or amending existing insulation should do their homework on the type of insulation that will be most effective for their homes.

Understanding R-Values

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Insulation recommendations are based on certain factors that coordinate with regional climate zones to increase energy efficiency. These factors are known as R-values. The R in R-value stands for 'resistance,' and refers to how certain products resist the flow of heat through walls, floors and ceilings. Products should reduce heat escape so heat is kept on the right side of the wall. In summer this means outdoors, in winter it means indoors. R-values relate not only to insulation, but also to walls, windows and other barriers. R-values also coordinate to the type, thickness and density of the material being used. The higher the R-value, the more resistant to heat the product is. The U.S. Department of Energy coordinates R-value to climate zones 1 through 7 (1: Tip of Florida; 7: Canadian border). A higher R-value is needed in Zone 7 and a lower R-value is necessary in Zone 1. Those embarking on home improvement projects that involve choosing between R-values are urged to speak with a professional or to visit the Department of Energy website (www.energy.gov) to determine which R-Value is ideal for their homes.

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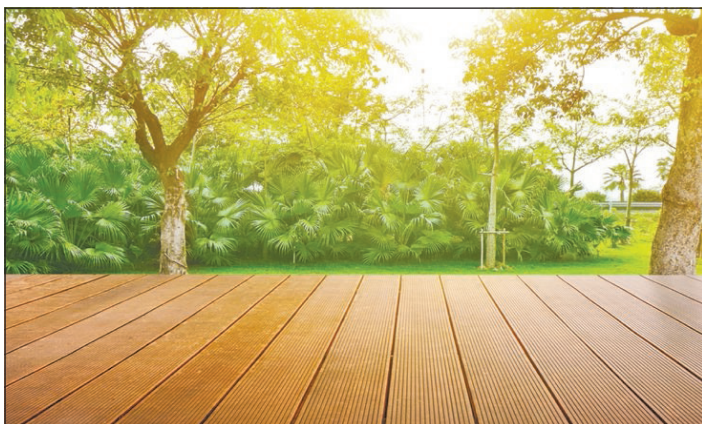
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Prepare your deck for **WINTER**



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Homeowners often take steps to winterize the interior of their homes in the weeks before winter's arrival, but such efforts should extend to the outside of a home as well.

Decks make for great gathering places when the weather permits. Decks are where many people spend their free time and eat their meals come spring and summer, when the temperatures climb and the sun sets well into the evening. But as summer turns to fall, homeowners must take measures to protect their decks from potentially harsh winter weather.

■ Inspect the deck for problems. Decks tend to be used more often in summer than any other time of year. That makes fall and early winter an ideal time to inspect for wear and tear and any additional issues that may have cropped up throughout the summer. Damaged boards and loose handrails should be fixed before winter arrives, especially for homeowners who plan to use their decks in winter. Fixing such issues in winter and even into spring may be difficult thanks to harsh conditions, so make good use of the relatively calm autumn weather to fix any issues on the deck.

■ Clear the deck of potted plants. Even homeowners who intend to use their decks in winter should remove potted plants from the deck in the fall. The home improvement experts at HGTV note that moisture can get trapped between deck boards and plastic, wood or ceramic containers in cold weather, and that can contribute to mildew, discoloration or decay.

■ Store unnecessary furniture. Homeowners who like to sit on their decks in winter will no doubt want to leave some furniture out over the winter. But those with lots of furniture for entertaining guests can likely move the majority of that furniture into a garage or shed for the winter. HGTV notes that doing so will prevent the potential formation of blemishes on the deck that can result from inconsistent weathering.

■ Remove snow, but do so carefully. Prolonged contact with snow and ice can damage a deck. As a result, homeowners should clear snow from their decks when accumula-

tion is significant. HGTV recommends using a snow blower on the deck to avoid scarring. If a shovel must be used, push snow with the planks to reduce the risk of damaging the deck.

Homeowners who take steps to protect their decks throughout the winter months can ensure these popular areas are ready once entertaining season returns in the spring.

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Options abound when shopping for home siding

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Home improvement projects run the gamut from minor repairs to complete overhauls. Replacing exterior siding is one of the most significant home improvement projects homeowners can undertake. Such a project can give homes a completely new look, which is why choice of siding is such an important decision.

Homeowners have many siding options to choose from, and the following guide can help them make the best choice for their homes.

Vinyl siding

Vinyl siding is easily maintained and among the more budget-friendly siding options. According to the home improvement resource HomeAdvisor, vinyl siding is made from a PVC plastic that does not rot or flake. Siding professionals note that the technology used to create vinyl siding has changed considerably in recent years, making this option more diverse than traditional vinyl siding. So homeowners turned off by the potentially plastic look of vinyl siding might be surprised at how different modern vinyl siding looks compared to the vinyl siding of yesteryear.

Fiber-cement siding

The home improvement



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television network HGTV notes that fiber-cement siding has grown in popularity among homeowners in recent years. This material does not require much maintenance and it's non-flammable and resistant to termites. HomeAdvisor notes that fiber-cement siding can create the look of wood, stucco or masonry, making it a versatile option capable of creating various looks. In addition, fiber-cement siding is known for its durability, with some products coming with warranties lasting as long as 50 years.

Wood siding

Homeowners have many

choices if they prefer wood siding on their homes. Cedar, cypress, fir, pine, and spruce are just a handful of the many wood

siding options homeowners can choose from. HomeAdvisor notes that cedar shingle siding offers a natural look that blends

well in wooded and waterfront landscapes. Wood clapboard siding is another popular option, though it tends to require more maintenance than cedar shingle siding. Homeowners who want wood siding should discuss their options with an experienced siding professional, as many factors, including the choice of wood, must be considered before making a final decision.

Stone and stone-veneer siding

Many homeowners fall in love with the natural appeal of stone, but the price tag, which tends to be costly, may not be as awe-inspiring. HGTV notes that stone can be difficult to add to an existing home, and doing

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Fall lawn care tips

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Spring and summer may be the seasons most often associated with landscaping and lawn care, but tending to lawns and gardens is a year-round job. If lawn and garden responsibilities dip considerably in winter, then fall is the last significant chance before the new year that homeowners will have to address the landscaping around their homes.

Fall lawn care differs from spring and summer lawn care, even if the warm temperatures of summer linger into autumn. Homeowners who want their lawns to thrive year-round can take advantage of the welcoming weather of fall to address any existing or potential issues.

■ Keep mowing, but adjust how you mow. It's important that homeowners continue to mow their lawns so long as grass is growing. But as fall transitions into winter, lower the blades so the grass is cut shorter while remaining mindful that no blade of grass should ever be trimmed by more than one-third. Low-

ering the blades will allow more sunlight to reach the grass in the months ahead.

■ Remove leaves as they fall. Much like apple-picking and foliage, raking leaves is synonymous with fall. Some homeowners may wait to pick up a rake until all of the trees on their properties are bare. However, allowing fallen leaves to sit on the ground for extended periods of time can have an adverse effect on grass. Leaves left to sit on the lawn may ultimately suffocate the grass by forming an impenetrable wall that deprives the lawn of sunlight and oxygen. The result is dead grass and possibly even fungal disease. Leaves may not need to be raked every day, but homeowners should periodically rake and remove leaves from their grass, even if there are plenty left to fall still hanging on the trees.

■ Repair bald spots. Summer exacts a toll on lawns in various ways, and even homeowners with green thumbs may end up with a lawn filled with bald spots come September. Autumn is a great time to repair these bald spots. Lawn re-

pair mixes like Scotts' PatchMaster contain mulch, seed and fertilizer to repair bald spots, which can begin to recover in as little as seven days. Before applying such products, remove dead grass and loosen the top few inches of soil. Follow any additional manufacturer instructions as well.

■ Aerate the turf. Aerating reduces soil compacting, facilitating the delivery of fertilizer and water to a lawn's roots. While many homeowners, and particularly those who take pride in tending to their own lawns, can successfully aerate their own turf, it's best to first have soil tested so you know which amendments to add after the ground has been aerated. Gardening centers and home improvement stores sell soil testing kits that measure the pH of soil, but homeowners who want to test for nutrients or heavy metals in their soil may need to send their samples to a lab for further testing.

Fall lawn care provides a great reason to spend some time in the yard before the arrival of winter.



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Photo spreads in home design magazines can be awe-inspiring. Quite often homeowners wish they could lift the looks right off the pages of magazines and transform their own homes into picture-perfect retreats.

It takes an eye for design to pull a room together — even with inspiration — and make it both functional and attractive. While hiring an interior designer is one way to go, homeowners can use some of the tricks and techniques the designers employ to do a remarkably good job of improving the interiors of their homes without such help.

Embrace texture

The colors used in a home can add impact, but designers often utilize various textures to create aesthetic appeal. A single color scheme can be enhanced by various fabrics. Consider a leather sofa made more cozy with chenille pillows next to a rustic side table. Figure out ways to incorporate a few different textures to add depth to the room.

Be careful with color

Also, many designers work in shades of three for room colors. There may be one main color for walls, another color for larger accents, such as couches and chairs, and then a third color that pops in accessories such as flowers, pillows and collectibles. These can be any colors, but the most muted tends to be the more abundant shade.

Add a bit of bling

Glittery items and metallics can add a touch of luxury feel to any space. A shiny table lamp, mirrors, a sparkling chandelier, and the like are easy ways to produce a high-end feel. Reflective surfaces also will cast light around the room, giving the illusion of a larger space.

Choose a big statement piece

Many homeowners make the mistake of filling a room with several small pieces of furniture that only contribute to clutter. Instead, look for a statement piece, which can be a cabinet, armoire or chaise. Mix and match large and small elements for a sense of balance.

Accessorize

Finish the room with accessories and flowers. When placing and hanging

knickknacks and wall art, odd-numbered groupings often look the most cohesive and interesting. Experiment with different scales and heights for even more dimension.

sion.

When inspiration hits, take some cues from interior design pros to make spaces look like they belong on the pages of your favorite magazines.

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Many high-end homes showcase neutral shades that are enhanced by pops of color. If you like a rich, royal purple, leave room for other colors as well. Add touches of purple in vases, throw pillows and other accessories.

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Easy ways to clean up leaves

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Autumn is marked by colorful foliage and plummeting temperatures. Once those leaves reach peak color, they fall from the branches and collect on lawns, necessitating cleanup projects. For homeowners with big yards, such a project can be tiring and time-consuming. However, there are ways to make leaf cleanup easier.

One of the easiest ways to clean up leaves is to reach for a lawn mower rather than a rake. The mower will cut leaves down to smaller sizes, creating an effective mulch that can add nutrients back into the lawn. Davey, a lawn and landscape solutions service, says that mowed leaves also can be collected in a mower bag and added to garden beds or compost piles.

For those who prefer manual raking, select a rake with tines that will not skewer the leaves in the process. Big rakes also can make faster work of gathering leaves into piles.

The home improvement re-

source The Family Handyman advocates for the use of a lawn sweeper. This is a manual device that has a rotating sweeping brush that gathers up lawn debris and leaves into an attached hopper bag. Like mowed leaves, the bag can be emptied into a compost pile or distributed where needed.

Raking leaves onto a large tarp is another option. Once it's full, the tarp can be taken to the curb where many towns will collect the leaves seasonally. Otherwise, the tarp can be used as a funnel to put leaves into a gardening bag or another appropriate receptacle.

Leaf blowers remain a fast option for cleaning up yards, but they require electricity or gas and can be noisy. Still, they are a popular choice for large landscapes or when quick work needs to be made of leaf clean-up.

Leaves will fall in autumn, but luckily homeowners have various methods at their disposal to tame the mess.

ural stone and also comes in an array of styles. As is the case with wood, stone siding options are so extensive that homeowners are urged to discuss each one with a siding professional before making their decisions.

These are just a handful of the many siding options homeowners can choose from. Siding can give homes a completely new look, making choice of siding a significant decision worthy of careful consideration.

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⁴ As rated by Kohler, all power levels are stated in gross horsepower at 3600 RPM per SAE J1940 as rated by engine manufacturer. As required by Kawasaki, horsepower tested in accordance with SAE J1995 and rated in accordance with SAE J2723 and certified by SAE International.

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Signs your gutters are in need of repair

Metro

Fall is a great time to tackle projects around the house. The weather each fall allows homeowners to make improvements to their homes' exteriors without worrying about extreme heat or cold, while interior projects like painting are made easier because homeowners can open the windows to allow for proper ventilation.

Fall also marks a great time to prepare for upcoming projects that can make winter work that much easier. For example, fall is a great time to take stock of your gutters so you can address any issues before leaves begin to fall or the first snowstorm touches down. Compromised gutters can contribute to water issues in basements and adversely affect a home's foundation if not addressed immediately, so it behooves homeowners to learn the signs that gutters are in need of repair or replacement.

■ Gutter hanging off the home: Gutters were once installed predominantly with spikes. However, many in-



METRO

dustrial professionals now install gutters with hanger brackets. Why the change? Spikes loosen over time, leading to the gutters hanging off the home. That can contribute to serious issues if left untreated. Gutters hanging off the home need not necessarily be replaced, but rather secured to the home, ideally

with hanger brackets instead of spikes. Brackets hook into the front of the gutter and are then screwed into the fascia of a home. A professional who specializes in gutter repair can perform this task relatively quickly, and it's an inexpensive yet highly effective solution.

■ Gutter separation: Gutters that are no longer fastened together can leak and contribute to issues that affect the home's foundation, siding and appearance. Clogs and the accumulation of debris can cause gutters to separate because they are not designed to hold too much weight. Replacement of separated gutters may or may not be necessary depending on how big the problem is and the condition of the existing gutters. If replacement is not necessary, separated gutters may be remedied by securing the joints, another relatively simple and inexpensive fix.

■ Peeling exterior paint: Paint that appears to be peeling off of your home may indicate that water is seeping over the edge of the gutter closest

to your home. When that happens, water is coming down the side of the house, causing the paint to peel. In such instances, replacing the gutters is often necessary.

■ Basement flooding: Not all signs of deteriorating gutters are outside a home. Many a homeowner has been flummoxed by flooding in their basements, and such

flooding can be caused by aging, ineffective gutters. That's because deteriorating gutters sometimes allow water to leak near the foundation of a home, contributing to basement flooding.

Fall is an ideal time to inspect gutters and have any issues fixed before leaves begin to fall or harsh winter weather arrives.



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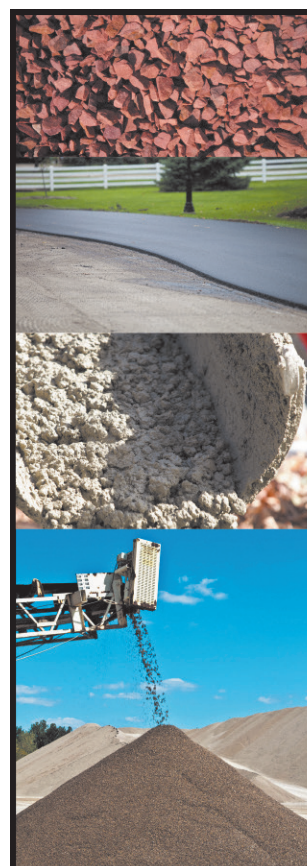
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