

Fall Home



Autumn Prep, Effortless Style

*Prep for Winter with
Fall Maintenance
Checklist*

October 16, 2025

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Fall maintenance checklist for winter



It's time to prepare your home to withstand winter weather. Follow this fall checklist for must-do repairs and seasonal maintenance tips.

As the season begins to change, it's time to prep your home for falling leaves, cooler weather, and, eventually, winter storms. Tackling a few fall home maintenance tasks now can ward off issues later

in the season, so you can enjoy everything you love about autumn worry-free. Most of the tasks listed below are well within the average homeowner's ability, but if you'd rather hire a professional to handle them, it can be well worth the expense. You'll save money in the long run by preventing costly (and potentially dangerous) damage to your home.

1. **Clean your gutters.** Your roof's drainage system annually diverts thousands of gallons of water from your home's exterior and foundation walls—so it's vital to keep this system flowing smoothly. Clogged gutters can lead to damaged exterior surfaces and water in your basement. Gutters are also more prone to rust and corrosion when clogged. Before the leaves fly this fall, clean your gutters, then cover them with mesh gutter guards to keep debris from returning.

2. **Seal up air leaks.** A home with air leaks around windows and doors is like a coat left unbuttoned. Gaps in caulk and weatherstripping let cold air into your warm home, and sealing up a drafty house can save up to 20 percent on your heating bills, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. In addition to inspecting weatherstripping, check for missing or damaged caulk around windows, doors, and entry points for electrical, cable, phone, and gas. Seal any gaps with a suitable caulk. If drafts around windows persist, consider getting your windows replaced.

3. **Inspect your roof.** Few homeowner problems are more vexing than a leaky roof. Once the dripping starts, finding the source of the problem can be time-consuming. Stop problems this fall before ice and winter winds turn them from annoyances into disasters. Start by inspecting your roof from top to bottom, using binoculars if necessary. Check ridge shingles for cracks and wind damage. Look for damage to metal flashing in valleys and around vents and chimneys. Scan the entire roof for missing, curled, or damaged shingles. Look in your gutters for large accumulations of granules, a sign that your roof is losing its coating, which can portend larger problems. Finally, make sure your gutters are flowing freely.

4. **Protect faucets from freezing temperatures.** If you live in an area with freezing weather, take steps so that outside faucets and in-ground irrigation systems don't freeze and burst. First, close any shut-off valves serving outside faucets, then open the outside faucet to drain the line. If you don't have shut-off valves, and your faucets are not "freeze-proof" types, you might benefit from styrofoam faucet covers, which are sold at many home centers.

5. **Freshen your furnace filter.** Furnace filters trap dust that would otherwise be distributed throughout your home. Clogged filters make it harder to keep your home at a comfortable temperature, thus increasing your utility bills. Simple monthly cleaning is all it takes to keep these filters free of debris. Disposable filters can be vacuumed once before replacement. Foam filters can also be vacuumed, but they don't need to be

replaced unless they're damaged. Use a soft brush on a vacuum cleaner. If the filter is metal or electrostatic, remove and wash it with a firm water spray.

6. **Give your furnace a checkup.** Once a year, it's a good idea to have your heating system inspected by a professional. To avoid the last-minute rush, consider scheduling this task in early fall, before the heating season begins. Here are signs that you should have an inspection performed sooner:

- **Noisy belts:** Unusual screeches or whines could be a signal that belts connected to the blower motor are worn or damaged.

- **Poor performance:** A heating system that doesn't seem to work as well as it once did could be a sign of various problems. Your heating ducts might be blocked, the burners might be misadjusted, or the blower motor could be on its last legs. The first step, however, is to make sure your furnace filter is clean.

- **Erratic behavior:** This could be caused by a faulty thermostat or a misadjusted furnace.

7. **Ready your fireplace.** Even if you only occasionally use your fireplace, you should check it annually for damage and hazards. First, inspect the flue for creosote, a flammable by-product of burning wood. Too much accumulation in a flue or chimney can result in a devastating fire. Get your chimney inspected annually for creosote buildup. If you use a fireplace or wood stove frequently, have the flue inspected after each cord of wood burned.

8. **Keep the humidifier humming.** Dry winter air can be tough on your skin and airways, but did you know it can also make fine wood more prone to cracking? You and your home will feel more comfortable if you keep your central humidifier in tip-top shape during the months it's running. First, inspect the plates or pads, and if necessary, clean them in a strong laundry detergent solution. Rinse and scrape off mineral deposits with a wire brush or steel wool.

9. **Ward off gas problems.** Keeping a gas heater in good shape is both a safety and a cost issue. An improperly maintained heater can spew toxic gases into the air of your home, or it could simply be costing you more to operate. Have a professional check these devices annually. There are also some maintenance items you should address. First, shut off the heater. Then check the air-shutter openings and exhaust vents for dirt and dust. If they're dirty, vacuum the air passages to the burner and clean the burner of lint and dirt. Follow the manufacturer's advice for any other needed maintenance.

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Peripheral Neuropathy WARNING!

Butler, PA – The most common method your doctor will recommend to treat your neuropathy is prescription drugs that may temporarily reduce your symptoms. These drugs have names such as Gabapentin, Lyrica, Cymbalta, and Neurontin, and they're primarily antidepressant or anti-seizure drugs. These drugs may cause you to feel uncomfortable and have a variety of harmful side effects.

Peripheral neuropathy is a result of damage to the nerves. It most often causes weakness, pain, numbness, tingling, and the most debilitating balance problems. This damage is commonly caused by a lack of blood flow to the nerves in the hands and feet which causes the nerves to begin to degenerate due to lack of nutrient flow.

As you can see in Figure 2, as the blood vessels that surround the nerves become diseased they shrivel up, which caused the nerves to not get the nutrients to continue to survive. When these nerves begin to "die", they cause balance problems, pain, numbness, tingling, burning, and many additional symptoms.



Figure 2: When these very small blood vessel become diseased they begin to shrivel up and the nerves begin to degenerate.

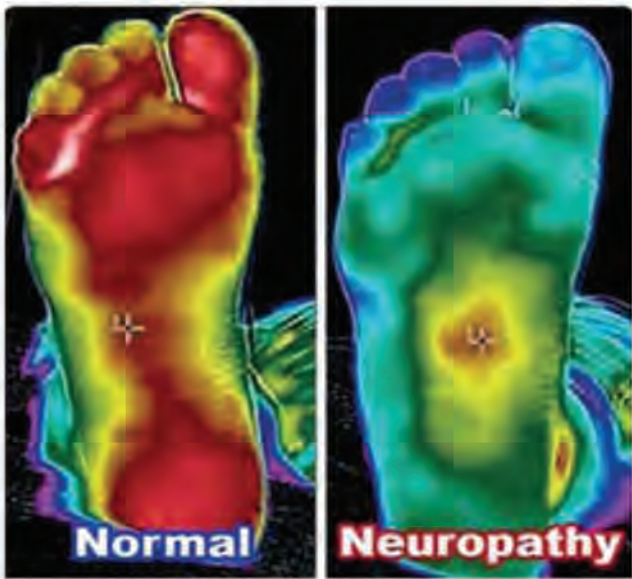


Figure 1: Showing temperature changes for neuropathy foot verses normal foot. Causing cold and numb feet.

The main problem is that your doctor has told you to just live with the problem or try the drugs which you don't like taking because they make you feel uncomfortable.

There is now a facility right here in Butler that offers you hope without your taking those endless drugs with serious side effects. (See the special neuropathy severity examination at the end of this article.)

In order to effectively treat your neuropathy three factors must be determined:

- 1) What is the underlying cause?
- 2) How much nerve damage has been sustained?
- 3) How much treatment will your condition require?

NOTE: Once you have sustained 85% nerve loss, there is likely nothing that we can do for you.

The treatment that is provided at Discover Wellness Center has three main goals:

- 1) Increase blood flow
- 2) Stimulate small fiber nerves
- 3) Decrease brain-based pain

An infrared test will be done to see if you have decreased blood flow in your feet that could cause your neuropathy. See Figure 1.

The treatment to increase blood flow utilizes a specialized low-level light therapy (not to be confused with laser therapy) using light emitting diode technology. This technology was originally developed by NASA to assist in increasing blood flow.

The low-level light therapy is like watering a plant. The light therapy will allow the blood vessels to grow back around the peripheral nerves and provide them with the proper nutrients to heal and repair. It's like adding water to a plant and seeing the roots grow deeper and deeper.

The amount of treatment needed to allow the nerves to fully recover varies from person to person and can only be determined after a detailed neurological and vascular evaluation. As long as you have not sustained at least 85% nerve damage there is hope!

Dr. Ram Parikh, D.C. at Discover Wellness Center will do a neuropathy severity examination to determine the extent of the nerve damage for only \$45. (The normal cost of such an exam is \$257.) This neuropathy severity examination will consist of a detailed sensory evaluation, extensive peripheral vascular testing, and a detailed analysis of the findings of your neuropathy.

Dr. Ram is offering this neuropathy severity examination now through **Saturday, October 25th.**

Call 724-602-0290 to make an appointment with Dr. Ram to determine if your peripheral neuropathy can be treated.

Discover Wellness Center
227 S. Chestnut St.
Butler, PA 16001
724-602-0290

► Checklist

Continued from Page 2

10. Keep wood fires burning brightly. Wood-burning stoves add cozy ambiance and warmth to your home, but regular inspections are needed to ensure that these devices don't become a safety hazard. Follow these steps to check your wood-burning stove:

- **Inspect the stovepipes:** Cracks in stovepipes attached to wood-burning stoves can release toxic fumes into your home. Throughout the heating season, you should check for corrosion, holes, or loose joints. Clean the stovepipe, and then look for signs of deterioration or looseness. Replace a stovepipe if necessary.

- **Look for corrosion and cracks:** Check for signs of rust or cracking in the stove's body or legs.

- **Check safety features:** Check that any required wall protection is installed according to the manufacturer's specifications and that the unit sits on an approved floor material. If you have young children, be sure to fence off the stove when it's in operation.

11. Repair walkways. Damaged walkways, drives, and steps are a hazard year-round, but their dangers are compounded when the weather turns icy.

Fixing issues in the fall is also critical to preventing little cracks from becoming expensive headaches. Look for cracks more than 1/8-inch wide, uneven sections, and loose railings on steps. Check for disintegration of asphalt or washed-out materials on loose-fill paths. Most small jobs are well within the ability of a DIYer, but save major repairs for experienced hands.

12. Review safety features. At least once a year, do a top-to-bottom review of your home's safety features. This is also a good time to get the family together for a review of your fire evacuation plan. Use these steps to complete a home safety check:

13. Smoke and carbon monoxide detectors: Replace the batteries in each smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) detector, then vacuum them with a soft brush attachment. Test the detectors by pressing the test button or holding a smoke source (like a blown-out candle) near the unit. If you haven't already, install a smoke detector on every floor of your home, including the basement.

- **Fire extinguishers:** Every home should have at least one fire extinguisher rated for all fire types (look for an A-B-C rating on the label). At a minimum, keep one near the kitchen; having one per floor isn't a bad idea. Annually, check the indicator on the pressure gauge to make sure the extinguisher is

charged. Make certain that the lock pin is intact and firmly in place, and check that the discharge nozzle is not clogged. Clean the extinguisher and check it for dents, scratches, and corrosion. Replace if the damage seems severe. **Note:** Fire extinguishers that are more than six years old should be replaced. Mark the date of purchase on the new unit with a permanent marker.

- **Fire escape plans:** Every bedroom, including basement bedrooms, should have two exit paths. Make sure windows aren't blocked by furniture or other items. Ideally, each upper-floor bedroom should have a rope ladder near the window for emergency exits. Review what to do in case of fire, and arrange a safe meeting place for everyone away from the house.

- **General cleanup:** Rid your home of accumulations of old newspapers and leftover hazardous household chemicals. (Check with your state or local Environmental Protection Agency about the proper way to discard dangerous chemicals.) Store flammable materials and poisons in approved, clearly labeled containers. Keep a clear space around heaters, furnaces, and other heat-producing appliances.

14. Prep your lawn for winter. To protect your lawn's health and beauty come spring, there are several important yard work projects to complete in

the fall. Raking leaves and aerating will prevent your lawn and garden beds from suffocating. Fertilizing and winterizing grass, trees, and shrubs will allow your greenery to enter its winter slumber comfortably and properly nourished. Professional lawn care services will make quick work of these projects, freeing up your time for family, friends, and football.

15. Touch up exterior paint. Fall offers plenty of days that are warm enough to work with exterior paint, and a touch-up can help prolong the life of your siding and trim. A fresh coat of paint or sealer on any surface that potentially will be covered with snow, such as porch stairs or wood floors, also is a wise idea. Sooner is better for contacting a local painter or attempting the project yourself, as many paint applications aren't recommended on days when the temperature will dip below 45° to 50°F.

16. Clean your carpets. Fall is an ideal time to clean your carpets. The humid days of summer have passed, but the below-freezing days of winter have yet to arrive. It's the best time to open windows for ventilation, which should speed the drying process. If you're not comfortable operating a carpet cleaning machine, let a professional wrangle the bulky cleaning equipment. With a house full of damp carpet, you'll want to get outdoors and enjoy the lingering warm days.

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Staying safe while decking the halls

Decorating the exterior of a home for the holiday season is a beloved tradition in countless households. In the movie “National Lampoon’s Christmas Vacation,” Clark Griswold had “250 strands of imported Italian twinkle lights,” each with 100 bulbs per strand. His grand total of 25,000 lights caused a temporary blackout. While driving around to take in holiday lighting displays, many people may see some that emulate Clark Griswold’s vision and be inspired to create their own designs.

Lights are just one type of home decoration. Wreaths, inflatables, metal or wooden structures, and much more are part of holiday displays as well. While decorating can be fun and festive, it’s also important to ensure that it is done safely. The following tips, courtesy of Travelers Risk Consultants and Meyer Landscaping & Design, can keep family and friends safe during this wonderful time of year.

Plan ahead. Determine how many electrical outlets you have and plan the display around the accessibility of those outlets. Be sure to calculate the maximum amount of wattage allowed so you do not overload the electrical system. Never exceed the maximum number of strings or devices that may be linked together. Lighting packaging should provide such information. Also, plug all outdoor lights and decorations into ground-fault circuit interrupters to reduce the risk of electric shock.

Test the lights. Only purchase lights that have been tested for safety. Look for a certification mark from UL, ETL, CSA, or another nationally recognized laboratory.

Go with LED. Light emitting diode string lights run cooler, last longer and use less energy than incandescent lights.

Inspect decorations. Make sure all the lights, electrical cords, lighted holiday décor, and inflatables are in good condition before use. Dispose of anything that has frayed wiring or is broken.

Use only outdoor-rated products. Be sure the extension cords and any other products are rated for the outdoors. Electrical connections should be kept clean and dry before plugging things in, and an extra step of wrapping plug connections with electrical tape can further reduce moisture.

Practice ladder safety. Ladders are often utilized when adding lights or other décor to homes. Always be safe on and around ladders. It’s essential to maintain three points of contact while on the ladder. Don’t risk leaning too hard to one side while on the ladder, and always have a spotter. Use wooden or fiberglass ladders when stringing electrical décor and lights, as metal ladders conduct electricity.

Identify where power lines are located. Be mindful of power lines when decorating outdoors. Keep oneself and decorations at least 10 feet away from power lines.

Skip staples and nails. Nails and staples should not be used when decorating. Nails and staples can puncture the protective layers of a home, allowing moisture to get in and break down the structure of the home. A nail or staple also may accidentally puncture an electrical cord, increasing the risk of electrocution. Use hooks and other attachment devices specially designed for holiday décor.

Avoid items that can contribute to roof damage. Heavy items on the roof can cause unnecessary stress to shingles and result in damage. Only use lightweight and appropriately anchored items on the roof.

Dress appropriately. Before hanging holiday decorations and lights, assess the conditions and wear the proper clothing for the weather. If the weather is especially rough, skip decorating for a safer day.

Decorating safety is of the utmost importance and should be a priority this holiday season.





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Protect your pets during holiday decorating

Decorating is one of the great joys of the holiday season. Stores adorn their front-facing windows with amazing displays and homeowners often deck out residences from top to bottom with all measures of holiday wonderment.

Approximately 94 million households in the United States feature a pet, according to the American Pet Products Association. Many of those households will be decorating for the holidays and must figure out ways to keep homes safe for all residents — including those covered in fur. These tips can ensure a pet-friendly season with lots of holiday décor.

Choose shatterproof decorations. Select shatterproof ornaments and other decorative items that are durable and non-toxic. Items made from felt, fabric or wood tend to be safer than items that can break.

Pick pet-friendly plants. Poinsettias and mistletoe may be traditional, but they can be toxic to pets. Additional options like Christmas cactus can be safer. Artificial plants are another alternative to consider.

Opt out of open flames. It is best to avoid traditional candles when pets are around. Instead, there are plenty of those powered by LED lights that even mimic



the flicker of real candles.

Avoid tinsel and ribbons. Digestive issues or blockages can affect pets who ingest tinsel or ribbons. Select pet-safe ribbons or garlands, and skip the tinsel entirely.

Avoid edible décor. Candy canes on trees or popcorn garlands are festive, but they may prove too tempting for pets to resist. Animals can get sick and may knock over the Christmas tree or other items to access the food.

Secure decorative items. Position the Christmas tree in an area that is not easily accessible. Avoid putting it near furniture that can be used as a jumping-off point. Make sure the tree stand is sturdy enough to prevent tipping, and consider using wire or string to tie the tree to a ceiling or wall anchor for further stability.

Mind the scents. Some fragrances can be overwhelming or irritating for pets, so use scented diffusers or plug-ins sparingly. A simmering pot of cloves, cinnamon sticks and orange rinds can create a welcoming, all-natural aroma.

Create a sanctuary. Try not to move too many of the pet’s creature comforts, such as favorite toys or bedding. If you must move these items out of the way, gradually introduce the pet to his or her new area, which can be set away from the hustle of the main entertaining area.

A pet-friendly holiday season involves being mindful of pets’ safety while decorating.

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Prepare your home for holiday guests

Millions of people host family and friends during the holiday season. According to a recent report from the travel and finance experts at Upgraded Points, 57 percent of adults surveyed planned to host a holiday gathering in 2024, while 70 percent of respondents indicated they planned to attend such celebrations.

Hosting is a significant responsibility, but it's also a fun way to catch up with loved ones in a laid back environment. Chances to catch up are even stronger when hosting overnight guests, whose comfort should be a priority as hosts ready their homes for holiday celebrations. Hosts preparing to welcome loved ones into their homes this holiday season can take various steps to make their homes as accommodating as possible for overnight guests.

Offer a secluded spot to sleep. The holiday season can be hectic, and it can be hard to keep things calm and quiet when returning home. That's especially true in homes with young children. Overnight guests who might be a little weary from traveling will undoubtedly appreciate a place away from the hustle and bustle to rest their heads. Though hosts



must make due with the space they have, make a concerted effort to ensure residents remain quiet around guest rooms or other areas where overnight guests will be sleeping. If possible, choose a secluded spot away from areas of the home that tend to be noisy, such as the kitchen and living room/game room.

Offer some in-room entertainment. Access to the internet and streaming ser-

vices is nonstop in the modern world, and it can be a nice gesture to ensure overnight guests can stream their favorite content and stay connected during their stay. Hosts can outfit guest rooms with a smart TV for as little as \$100 and load it up with popular streaming apps so guests can watch an episode or two of their favorite show in private before calling it a night.

Offer kid-friendly creature comforts. Adults may be accustomed to sleeping outside their own homes, but younger guests might not be as familiar or comfortable sleeping somewhere other than their own bedrooms. If young children will be staying overnight, hosts can consider putting them up in the same bedrooms as their own children, which can be especially fun when kids are roughly the same age. Additional kid-friendly creature comforts include a stuffed animal or two, an in-room night light and some storybooks on a bedside nightstand.

Include guests in fun traditions. Tradition is a big part of the appeal of the holiday season, and hosts can make guests feel more welcome by inviting them to participate in their own family traditions. Expand family baking sessions to include overnight guests, encourage willing loved ones to pitch in when preparing family meals and let guests pick their favorite holiday film for a family movie night.

Millions of people will host overnight guests this holiday season. Hosts can employ various strategies to ensure overnight guests feel welcome and comfortable during their stay.

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Winterize outdoor space

When the summer entertaining season draws to a close, homeowners need to ensure their outdoor living areas can handle weather that's right around the corner. Although outdoor furniture and other items tend to be durable, the impact snow, wind and ice can have on them may lead to damage over time. That is why many homeowners take steps to winterize their outdoor spaces and protect their belongings. Here's a look at how to prepare for the winter to come.

Furniture: Cover or store furniture to protect it from the elements. Covering it with weather-proof covers can be adequate if storing items indoors is not possible.

Deep clean: Items that will be covered or stored should be thoroughly cleaned prior to being removed from spaces for the season. Lingering dirt and moisture can cause damage.

Insulate and drain: Don't risk damage to pipes, which can freeze and crack in the cold. Shut off the water supply to exterior faucets and drain water lines to prevent pipes from freezing and bursting. Use foam pipe insulation to prevent freezing and cover any exposed pipes.

Apply mulch: After cleaning up gar-

den debris, think about applying mulch to garden beds and cover tender plants to protect them from the weather.

Check gutters: Be sure that gutters and downspouts are clear of leaves and any additional debris. If gutters and downspouts are not cleaned, ice dams may form on the roof and cause water damage.

Inspect and repair: Inspect walkways and driveways for any damage and make repairs now so water will not seep in and cause further issues with freeze-thaw cycles. Consider applying a sealant to protect surfaces from snow and ice.

Pools and spas: It's essential to follow the industry or manufacturer recommendations for closing down swimming pools and spas for the season. While covers may not be essential in all climates, covering can help prevent leaves and other debris from getting in the water. Water should be expelled from pipes and tubing to prevent freezing and bursting. If space allows, consider moving the pool pump indoors to prolong its longevity. Turn off the electricity to the outlet where the filter is plugged in.

There may be additional, region-specific steps to winterize a property, but these pointers are a good starting point to protect outdoor spaces.

A guide to fall lawn care for cool-season grasses

Spring is the season most often associated with lawn care, and for good reason. Grass starts growing in spring, and the season is a great time to fertilize many grasses in the hopes lawns can look their best and endure the hotter, dryer weather of summer.

Spring might mark the time when many homeowners begin tending to their lawns each year, but it's important to recognize the significance of fall lawn care as well. Grasses vary, and homeowners are urged to identify which type of grass is in their lawn so they can ensure it gets the care it needs before winter's first frost. Cool-season grasses like perennial ryegrass and Kentucky bluegrass are common in various regions, and the following strategies can help homeowners with these types of grasses tend to their lawns this fall.

Stick to your recommended fertilization schedule. Homeowners who have been fertilizing since spring are urged to continue doing so in fall at the recommended interval. It's easy to forget to fertilize in fall thanks to cooler temperatures that don't call lawn care to mind and busier schedules after school starts again and summer vacation season ends. But many fertilizer manufacturers advise users of their products to fertilize several times over the course of the year, including in fall. Stick to the intervals recommended on the packaging of the fertilizer you've been using, making sure not to forget to fertilize this fall.

Conduct a soil test. A soil test can determine if the soil is lacking any nutritive elements it needs to come back strong in spring. Certain amendments can restore pH balance if necessary and foster stronger growth when lawns come back in spring.

Aerate, if necessary. Soil can become compacted over time, and that can cause a range of problems for a lawn. Compacted soil can make it harder for water to reach the roots of grass, which



weakens grass and makes it more vulnerable to damage during adverse weather events like drought. Compacted soil also makes it harder for nutrients in fertilizer to get into the soil. Aerating is best left to professionals, particularly in larger lawns, as the job can foster strong root development when done properly.

Remove thatch where it's excessive. Thin layers of thatch can benefit lawns by delivering nutrients from grass clippings and leaves to a lawn. However, when thatch is excessive, it can block air, water and even fertilizer from reaching the soil. Thatch often can be removed with a rake, but lawns with especially thick layers of thatch may need to be scarified. Homeowners can take a DIY approach to scarifying or hire a landscaping professional to dethatch the lawn and remove the thatch from their properties.

Continue to water the lawn. A cool-season grass will continue to require water into the fall. Though the lawn won't need to be watered as frequently

in fall as in summer, various lawn care professionals note cool-season grasses still need roughly an inch of water each week in fall.

Remove leaves as they fall. Fallen leaves can affect a lawn in much the same way as excessive amounts of

thatch, blocking water and nutrients from reaching the soil. So it's best to remove fallen leaves, especially when they begin to fall in large quantities.

Fall is an opportune time to tend to a lawn to increase the chances grass grows back strong in spring.



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Protect your home with new gutters

Home improvement projects run the gamut from complex undertakings like room additions to simpler renovations like a new front door. Some home renovations excite homeowners more than others, but all improvements are a way to make a home safer, more comfortable and/or more functional.

A gutter replacement might not inspire the same level of excitement as a room addition or an overhaul of an outdoor living space, but new gutters can help to prevent roof damage and make properties safer by ensuring rain water is directed away from walkways. Homeowners who suspect it might be time for a gutter replacement can look for these signs of fading gutters.

Cracks or splits: Cracks or splits at the seams of the gutters where two pieces connect is a telltale sign they need to be replaced. Cracks or splits are can slowly lead to separation of gutter pieces, which will lead to leaks. But not all cracks or splits are found at the seams. In fact, some homes feature seamless gutters, which also can crack or split. Regardless of where they're found, cracks or splits are a warning signs of fading gutters.

Rust: Rust is rarely a good sign



whether you're looking at a vehicle or even garden tools. Rust also is a bad sign in relation to gutters. Gutters are painted, and not only for aesthetic purposes. Paint on gutter also serves to protect them from water. When paint begins to flake, gutters will begin to rust and may even pro-

duce noticeable rust flakes on the ground below. Rust on gutters and rust flakes beneath them are indicative of gutters that need to be replaced.

Gutters pulling away from the home: Gutters that appear to be pulling away from the home is a sign that

they need to be replaced. Gutters are fastened to a home during installation, which ensures they can withstand rain and water. Over time, those fasteners can wear down, ultimately leading to gutters that appear to be pulling away from the home. Though gutters can be refastened, eventually they will need to be replaced.

Pooling water: Pooling water in a gutter may just be a sign that gutters need to be cleaned. However, pooling water on the ground directly beneath gutters indicates they're not effectively directing water away from the home.

Water damage inside: A home's interior might not be the first place homeowners look when inspecting for damaged gutters, but a flooded basement or crawl space could indicate a gutter problem. Gutters and downspouts are designed to direct water away from a home when functioning properly. When that isn't happening, water can pool beneath the foundation, leading to pooling water and other water damage in basements and crawl spaces.

Gutter replacement projects may not be exciting, but new gutters can make a home safer and prolong the life of a roof and other features on a property.

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Remedies for creaky floors

Hardwood floors are coveted features in many homes. The National Wood Flooring Association says wood floors are the most environmentally friendly flooring options available. In the United States, the hardwood forests that provide flooring products are growing twice as fast as they are being harvested. Furthermore, wood floors can last for many generations and require fewer raw materials to produce than other flooring options. That means less waste may end up in landfills.

Hardwood floors can endure for decades in a home, but over time those same floors may need some tender loving care to keep them looking good and working as they should. Squeaky floors are a common nuisance that homeowners may experience. Squeaking is often caused by movement and friction between floorboards.

Loose hardware

Squeaky floors may be due to the loosening of the hardware holding the floor in place, says The Home Depot. When nails or screws no longer are secured tightly, the boards can rub together. The noise heard is the sound produced by rubbing. Tightening or replacing the hardware can help reduce the squeaking.

Counter-snap kit method

This Old House says this kit method is a great way to fix squeaks without

damaging the floor. Once the source of the squeak is located, drill a 3/32-inch pilot hole through the hardwood flooring. Then insert a screw through the kit's depth-control fixture and into the pilot hole, and drive it until it automatically snaps off below the wood surface. Follow this up by filling the hole with wood putty that matches the floor color. Once the putty is dry, lightly sand the area to blend.

Use a shim or shims

Sometimes the floor may squeak because of a gap between the joists and the subfloor. Filling the gap with a small piece of wood called a shim can help alleviate the gap or gaps.

Drive up screws

If a squeak is just in one spot, The Home Depot says that you may be able to drive short screws from below into the subfloor.

Small gaps

For small gaps between boards, sprinkle talcum powder or powdered graphite between squeaky boards to reduce friction. Wood filler applied with a putty knife also may work. For larger gaps, use a liquid filler designed for wood floors.

Squeaky floors can be problematic, but noises can be banished with some repair work.

Refresh your home with new siding

The longer a person resides in a particular home, the greater the likelihood that various components of that residence will need to be replaced. Driveways, roofs, HVAC systems, and even appliances all have expiration dates.

Although siding on a home can be quite durable, there may be specific reasons why homeowners choose to or need to replace it at some point. Understanding what's to come of the job can help homeowners prepare. No two siding jobs are exactly the same, and each project will be dictated by a host of variables, including which type of siding homeowners choose. However, these general steps are commonplace during siding replacement projects.

Choose siding: Homeowners are urged to consult with various siding installation companies about which products are available and ask each for an estimate. Budget, climate and other factors will narrow down siding materials. The Home Depot says popular siding types include vinyl, wood, fiber cement, metal, and stone. Siding can have almost any color or texture as well.

Remove and relocate: Outdoor items close to the perimeter of the home will have to be moved out of the way so workers can access the siding. The job will require a dumpster to be dropped in front of the home or in the driveway to collect debris, so homeowners should be prepared to leave space for it.

Siding delivery: The new siding should be delivered prior to the installation start day. These materials will take up a lot of room and space should be made available so the installation team can access them without difficulty.

Interior décor: Siding installation will include hammering, which can disrupt items on interior walls. It is best to have all wall hangings taken down to prevent damage.

Old siding removal: On the first day



of installation, removal of the old siding will happen first, according to Smart Exteriors. Siding, insulation and trim will be removed. In the event that older, asbestos-based siding is on a home, contractors may safely remove and discard it, or go over that type of siding. Homeowners should inquire about this step during the company vetting process.

Home inspection: Once all old material is gone, the exterior sheathing will be inspected to ensure it is in good shape. Signs of rot or loose boards will be considered and repaired, if necessary.

New siding install: First workers will put on house wrap or some sort of insulation/water barrier product. Afterwards, siding boards are layered on in the design chosen. Nails or screws are used to attach the siding and seams will be caulked to prevent moisture penetration. If the homeowner has chosen to have gutters and downspouts installed during the siding job, those will be fitted and installed as well.

Clean up: The installation team will begin the process of thoroughly cleaning up the property. All tools will be removed and the property will be swept or blown to clean away debris. Crews typically use powerful magnets to grab stray nails and screws that have fallen into the lawn and

elsewhere. The dumpster will be taken away shortly after the work is completed.

Siding replacement is a big job but one that can offer immediate curb appeal once completed. It typically is not a do-it-yourself project since it requires specific skills to ensure durability.

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