



Prepare for fall

The end of summer, a time to get out and enjoy those precious moments of fun in the sun we have left. The summer months have wound down, vacations are but a memory and the kids are starting an exciting new school year. It's been a great three months of putting home projects on the back burner, but it's time to get back to work, beginning with preparing your house for the fall months. But while you work in that

last trip to the beach, it's important to remember to set aside time for repair projects around the house! If you don't get to them now, you could end up regretting it when the chill of the winter sets in. The following tasks should definitely go on your fall to-do list.

Step1

Climb your ladder to see what's in your gutters. Check your gutters for leaves and debris that have collected over the past few months. You should do this job periodically throughout the fall season, since now is the time when all your beautiful trees are shedding their leaves.

Step2

Replace your screens. With the weather becoming cooler, you need to remove your screens from all windows and doors and replace them with storm windows. By taking the time to do this simple job, you cut your heating costs significantly by preventing cool breezes and cold drafts from entering your home.

Step3

Call out the heating professionals. It may not seem necessary to you because your heating system is working well, but every year, a heating professional should check your furnace. By taking this preventative measure and making minor fixes now, you can avoid expensive repair jobs in the future.

Step4

Change the furnace filter. This very important job helps maximize the efficiency with which your furnace runs. You can do this periodically throughout the year as well.

Step5

Schedule an appointment with the chimney sweep. If you're in the habit of taking advantage of cozy fires during the winter, you need to have your chimney cleaned by a certified professional every year. Not having your chimney clean before winter use increases the chance of chimney fires due to the buildup of creosote and soot.

Step6

Add weather stripping where necessary. After you install all of your storm windows, do your own inspection of all windows and doors to check for problem areas. Repair any damage and apply weather stripping or caulk to seal up any gaps.

Why do leaves change color?

We all enjoy the colors of autumn leaves. Did you ever wonder how and why a fall leaf changes color? Why a maple leaf turns bright red? Where do the yellows and oranges come from? To answer those questions, we first have to understand what leaves are and what they do.

Leaves are nature's food factories. Plants take water from the ground through their roots. They take a gas called carbon dioxide from the air. Plants use sunlight to turn water and carbon dioxide into glucose. Glucose is a kind of sugar. Plants use glucose as food for energy and as a building block for growing. The way plants turn water and carbon dioxide into sugar is called photosynthesis. That means "putting together with light." A chemical called chlorophyll helps make photosynthesis happen. Chlorophyll is what gives plants their green color.

As summer ends and autumn comes, the days get shorter and shorter. This is how the trees "know" to begin getting ready for winter.

During winter, there is not enough light or water for photosynthesis. The trees will rest, and live off the food they stored during the summer. They begin to shut down their food-making factories. The green chlorophyll disappears from the leaves. As the bright green fades away, we begin to see yellow and orange colors. Small amounts of these colors have been in the leaves all along. We just can't see them in the summer, because they are covered up by the green chlorophyll.

The bright reds and purples we see in leaves are made mostly in the fall. In some trees, like maples, glucose is trapped in the leaves after photosynthesis stops. Sunlight and the cool nights of autumn cause the leaves turn this glucose into a red color. The brown color of trees like oaks is made from wastes left in the leaves.

It is the combination of all these things that make the beautiful colors we enjoy in the fall.

Checking In Olympic Village

Three guys were trying to sneak into the Olympic Village to scoop souvenirs and autographs. The first says, "Let's watch the registration table to see if there's a crack in the security system that we can utilize to scam our way in."

Immediately, a burly athlete walks up to the table and states, "Angus MacPherson. Scotland. Shot-put." He opens his gym bag to display a shot-put to the registration attendant.

The attendant says, "Very good, Mr. MacPherson. Here is your packet of registration materials, complete with hotel keys, passes to all Olympic events, meal tickets, and other information."

The first guy gets inspired and grabs a small tree sapling, strips off the limbs and roots, walks up the registration table and states: "Chuck Wagon. Canada. Javelin."

The attendant says, "Very good, Mr. Wagon. Here is your packet of registration materials, hotel keys, passes, meal tickets, and so forth. Good luck!"

The second guy grabs a street utility manhole cover, walks up to the registration table and states: "Dusty Rhodes. Australia. Discus."

The attendant says, "Terrific, Mr. Rhodes. Here is your packet of registration materials, hotel keys, a full set of passes, and meal tickets. Enjoy yourself."

They scamper in, but suddenly realize the third guy is missing. They groan, because he's a simpleton from the hills of Vermont. They forgot to make sure he doesn't do something stupid and blow their cover stories.

Just then he walks proudly up to the table with a roll of barbed wire under his arm and states: "Foster Bean. Hardwick, Vermont. Fencing."