

Now is the time to prepare the winter ahead

Autumn is quite possibly my favorite of the seasons. We have beautiful days with blue skies and a chill in the air. The bay is warm and the sailing is great. There is dramatic color everywhere – from the rainbow of tree leaves painted by Jack Frost’s brush to the orange pumpkins and the red apples.

This is also the time of year when I like to assess my home for the long winter ahead. What do I need to do to prepare for the cold and snow? What chores have I put off? Most of these homestead duties are best accomplished when the weather is pleasant. Freezing temperatures and falling snow not a good time to clean leaves out of the gutters.

So here’s my list of things to check around the house:

- Windows and doors. Look for any cracks or gaps. Keep the heat indoors. You can save a lot of money on your heating bill by investing in some time and caulking. If you need to replace broken glass, do so before it gets cold outside.

- Inspect the chimney. Look for cracks in the mortar or broken bricks. Now is the time, before you light your first fire, to clean your fireplace chimney – whether you do it yourself or hire a professional. If you are using a wood or coal stove, inspect the fittings to see if any gaskets should be replaced.

- Stack the firewood and shelter it from the weather. Find a place to store your firewood so that it will be dry when you are ready to light a fire. Seasoned, dry firewood burns much

more efficiently.

- Have the furnace cleaned and serviced by a professional. I always have this done once a year. A clean furnace is more efficient and saves you money in the long run. This is also a good time to inspect your heating oil storage tank.

- Clean and organize the garage so that all of the tools needed for winter are easily accessible. That includes the snow shovels and a bucket of ice melt.

- Clean your gutters. If there are lots of falling leaves, you might have to do this more than once – or install a gutter guard. See the article in this magazine for more information.

- Inspect your home’s roof. Use a pair of binoculars and look for problem areas around flashings. Are there any broken shingles? Fix those issues now before ice and snow cause serious damage to your home.

- Outdoor lighting. Replace any broken or burned out bulbs. Remember that it won’t be long before it will be dark by 5 p.m. You’ll want to make sure that walkways and entrances to your home are well lighted.

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— Jeff McDonough



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