

Ten easy tips for summer home maintenance

By Erin K. Witt

Summer has arrived—and with its warm breezes come many maintenance concerns and seasonal chores for homeowners. In addition to the inevitable mowing, tree trimming, and other yard work, summer is also a great time to step up maintenance efforts around the home.

Despite the hassle and time scheduled repairs can take, quarterly home maintenance and preventative measures can keep all areas of the home in good condition for years to come. To help homeowners accomplish this goal, the Web site *Homestore.com* recommends the following summer maintenance tips.

Tip #1: Clean and seal decks. Ideally, three consecutive warm, sunny days will be needed. On the first day, dry out the deck. Apply deck cleaner and scrub the deck on the second day, and let it dry 24 hours. On the third day, apply deck sealer.

Tip #2: Have a certified chimney sweep inspect and clean chimneys. Taking care of this task in the summer—rather than in the peak autumn season—allows plenty of time for repairs before the next heating season. It's also easier to schedule a sweep than during the fall cleaning season, and sometimes, rates can be lower as a result of off-season discounts.

Tip #3: Wash the exterior of your house using ordinary garden hose pressure and a mild detergent. Pressure washers are not always the best idea—they are powerful enough to force water under the siding, where it can encourage mildew and rot. If power washing is truly in order, hire a professional.

Tip #4: Caulk exterior joints around all windows and doors. Caulking helps keep the house weather-tight and reduces energy bills. It can also help keep insects and vermin out of the house.

Tip #5: Clean lint from the entire clothes dryer vent system, from the dryer to the exterior vent cap. Because lint is incredibly flammable, this common build up can create a fire hazard. And if a gas clothes dryer is not properly vented, it can even force deadly carbon monoxide back into the home.

Tip #6: Check the operation and condition of attic fans and roof-mounted turbine vents. Attic fans run on little energy and can greatly reduce cooling costs—not to mention increasing comfort inside the home during a hot and humid Hoosier summer.

Tip #7: Repair cracks in concrete patios and driveways. For most cracks less than 1/4", applying concrete caulk is a good way to make repairs. Clean the crack out with a high-pressure hose nozzle, let it dry, and apply the caulk into the crack. For larger cracks, substitute concrete patch for caulk. Whether the cracks are large or small, repair is necessary because water that finds its way into cracks will soften the ground underneath and cause more cracking. Prevention is key to avoiding costly future repairs.

Tip #8: Clean and repair rain gutters. For clogged downspouts, try using barbecue tongs to reach in and remove leaves. To repair loose gutter nails, consider replacing them with extra-long lag screws. The lag screws are stronger, hold better, and can easily be installed with a cordless drill equipped with a nut driver bit.

Tip #9: The heat and humidity of an Indiana summer can cause wooden windows and doors to swell and stick. To repair a sticky door or window, first mark where it is sticking. Then, remove the door or window, and carefully remove any excess material with a hand plane. For sliding windows, the surrounding trim is often the culprit. Usually, it must be removed and reinstalled to allow for greater movement. To keep windows and doors from sticking in the first place, make sure that they are sealed with a good coat of paint, including the tops and bottoms. Be careful not to paint the channels where windows need to slide, though—instead, use a light coat of linseed oil as a sealer.

Tip #10: Paint and repair rusty fixtures. Paint additives are now available to help paint stick to rust, while also neutralizing the rust and stopping corrosion from continuing under the paint. If left untreated, rust will eventually cause fixtures to lock up. Prevent this from happening in your home by keeping fixtures well lubricated. One of the most common mistakes people make is trying to lubricate outdoor fixtures with light oil or silicon from spray cans. Because these oils are so light, they often evaporate and dilute existing lubrication, making the problem worse. For fixtures like gate hinges and latches, use heavy grease. It will not evaporate and its heavy viscosity is the best thing for heavy-duty parts.