

Fall touch-up tips

With fall fast upon us and winter nipping at its heels, families should make sure their homes are ready for the changing weather conditions ahead. A house needs to be well-maintained both inside and out to withstand the elements.

“When the kids head back to school and the nights start to get cooler, it’s time to get the house, lawn and garden in top shape before the wetter, colder season. I’ve seen how a little elbow grease pays off after the thaw,” says home and garden expert, Susie Coelho, host of HGTV’s makeover show “Outer Spaces.” “After all, who wants to spend the first glorious days of next spring cleaning up winter damage?”

Coelho says homeowners should address garden and home maintenance now to avoid a year’s worth of work next spring. She recommends starting with these quick and easy tasks:

- To save on electric bills, check all external doors and windows to make sure they close tightly and are in good shape. If needed, recaulk around windows and doors, install weather-stripping and replace thresholds if doors aren’t snug. Doing so can save on energy costs and prevent costly repairs that can result from moisture and wind damage.

- As it gets cooler, plan to enjoy the view of the outdoors from the inside, but first make sure the windows are in the right condition to bring in the beauty. Although it can be a pain, cleaning windows from the outside is critical, as grime, bugs and allergens can build up

during the summer months. Tackle the chore quickly and easily with an inexpensive solution that gets a streak-free shine in half the time, such as the Windex Outdoor All-in-One Glass Cleaning Tool (www.windexoutdoor.com).

- After your fall harvest, put the garden to bed! Pruning, weeding and fertilizing are important in order to get the lawn and garden ready for next spring and summer. Reseed and fix the lawn’s bare spots. Remove plants and flowers that are not doing well. Weed flower beds to keep weeds from reappearing next spring, and prune trees back so the elements don’t cause damage to your house or property during the colder months.

- Touch up exterior paint. Start by using a wire brush to remove flaking paint from the home’s trim, railings and deck surfaces. Prime bare wood before applying new paint, and sand and prime your paint before touch-ups if you have oil-based trims, as oil based paints and stains are no longer available in most states. If possible, bring an actual chip from the wall or trim into a paint company and ask them to match the color. Many home improvement stores and fine paint stores have a machine that will read the paint chip and match it to 99 percent.

A little effort will help homeowners save time and money on more significant future maintenance and repairs. Preparing your home now will leave more time later for all the backyard fun and seasonal entertaining that’s on the horizon.



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