

Spring Maintenance for your Home

By Rick Bunzel

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With warmer weather approaching, most people start thinking about their lawn and garden. However, your home should warrant equal attention. Here are 5 areas that should be add to your spring task list:

- **Roof** – Ice, snow and the wind takes its toll on your home's roof over the winter. This is a good time to inspect it. The best way is to take a ladder and walk on it. However many roofs are too steep or you may not be comfortable with the height, in that case, pull out your binoculars and walk around the house looking for missing or raised shingles, loose flashing or signs of water damage. This is also a good time to look at any trees that may be in contact with the roof. A tree branch in high wind can remove a lot of shingles in a short time!
- **Gutters and downspouts** - Clean out; inspect and repair weaknesses; check for proper drainage.
- **Caulking** - Cold weather causes everything on a house to expand and contract. By May, the snow is generally gone for good so this is the month to visually inspect the caulk that seals the gaps between your home's windows and exterior doors, and the siding. Caulking is important because it not only keeps cold air out of your home, but water as well. A cold winter can cause even new caulk to separate from the building. Make sure yours adheres properly.
- **Foundation** - Check foundation walls, floors, concrete, and masonry for cracking, heaving, or deterioration. If you find new cracks larger than 1/4", you may want to consult an expert, as this would indicate that some major shifting of the foundation is occurring.
- **Repairing Cracks**- Concrete always cracks, but that doesn't mean you have to live with it that way. Large cracks or small, repair is necessary because water that finds its way into cracks will soften the ground underneath and cause more cracking. The situation worsens if the water freezes. For most cracks less than 1/4", applying concrete caulk is a good way to make repairs. Just clean the crack out with a high-pressure hose nozzle, let it dry and then apply the caulk into the crack. For larger cracks, substitute concrete patch for caulk.

- **Sticky Windows and Doors** -With winter precipitation wooden windows and doors can't help but swell and stick. To repair a sticky door or window, first mark where it is sticking. Next, remove the door or window by taking out its hinge pins, prop it up securely and with a hand plane, carefully remove any excess material. Power planes will work, too, but there is a tendency to remove too much. When the wood shrinks back during the drier, warmer days of summer, the gap will be too wide.

For sliding windows, often the trim around them is the culprit and must be removed and reinstalled to allow for more movement. To do this, carefully remove the trim with a flat bar and pull the nails out backwards that is, grasp the nail point with pliers and pull. If the trim was installed properly with finishing nails, you should be able to do this without damaging the wood. When reinstalling, keep the fit snug but not as tight as it was. If you reinstall the trim too loosely, the windows will rattle when the wood shrinks again.

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. But don't paint the channels where windows need to slide. Instead, use a light coat of linseed oil as a sealer.

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