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Winter Home Maintenance Makeover

TIPS FROM A PRO

by Gary Jurkovich



Who doesn't enjoy the welcoming ambiance upon entering a sparkling clean house where everything is in place? Whether it be a newly built home or an older

home, organization, cleanliness, and comfort add to the enjoyment of everyday living.

Many homeowners enjoy becoming couch potatoes during the winter months, watching their favorite home-makeover TV programs and ogling over the before and after shots.

The basis of the makeovers is de-cluttering and organizing, cleaning and assuring safety and comfort. How? With a maintenance makeover.

ORGANIZATION

Start the process by de-cluttering. It's difficult to clean if all of the surfaces are cluttered. Create a place for everything – this is a great time to consider installing closet organizers and drawer organizers. Some of my favorites for the do-it-yourselfer are: Easy Track – a Michigan-made product with an online 3D design tool – and a locally invented product, Drawer Décor. If you have more stuff than storage allows, donate what you haven't used in years and keep those items that are only used a few times a year stored neatly in the basement or garage, but kept to a minimum.

CLEANING

Now that your home is de-cluttered and organized, let the cleaning begin.

Let's start at that entry door where we want to make that first impression.

Wipe down the front door and frame with an all-purpose product like Awesome to remove dust and dirt, and don't forget to scrub the threshold. If your threshold is a metal strip, use a product like Flitz Polish; for a wood threshold, use a natural product like De-Solv-it.

This is a good time to check the doorbell for proper functioning – doorbells are quite simple to maintain: Remove the doorbell cover and clean all parts with a cotton swab dipped in rubbing alcohol, and tighten any loose parts or wiring. Or, consider replacing your 'analog' doorbell with a cool digital model that allows you to change ring tones or play your favorite tune.

Now, onto the kitchen and bathrooms – the most used rooms in the house. Wipe down cabinets – if cabinets are wood, use a gentle wood product like the time-tested Murphy's Oil Soap to clean, shine and protect, or for extra help, try Simple Green. While we're on the topic of cabinets – if yours slam when you close them, purchase some adhesive-backed rubber or felt pads to stop that annoying noise – it's one of those simple maintenance items that will add calm to your home and emit that 'I'm well maintained' atmosphere.

In the kitchen, a prime area that needs – but often lacks attention – are kitchen countertops. Many homeowners have invested in granite and aren't

aware that keeping your granite safe from water or oil spots requires annual resealing – I like BulletProof Stone Sealer as it seals well and is relatively odorless compared to other sealers. Be sure to avoid products containing lemon, vinegar, bleach and other acids. Most other countertop materials such as laminate or corian can be treated with Gel-Gloss as it cleans, restores luster and protects the surface. And, don't forget to clean and polish the faucets with products like Gel-Gloss or Peek, which is especially effective at removing hard water stains.

Make dusting and removing debris from under and behind your refrigerator an annual routine at a minimum as it will not only add to that deep-cleaned feeling, but it will also add to the efficiency of your appliance, prolonging its life.

Unplug the refrigerator before you begin. Remove the bottom cover from the front of the refrigerator, and with the crevice tool attached to your vacuum hose remove the dust from underneath. If you have a drip tray, this is a good time to remove and clean it.

Next, pull the refrigerator away from the wall and remove the backing, then carefully clean the back and underside

ment until the water runs clear, closing the drain valve, turning the power-supply to the water back on after the tank has refilled with water, and finally, testing the pressure-relief valve. Don't be intimidated by the number of steps – you can do it!

COMFORT

The third aspect of creating a well-maintained home is insuring that your home is comfortable, and in our northern winter climate that translates to a draft-free, warm home. Where there is an obvious draft, seal the leak with caulk and/or adhesive-backed weather stripping for a temporary fix. Of course, properly installed insulation is key. It is a good idea to have a thermographic inspection – or infrared scan – conducted by a certified thermographer who can accurately detect thermal insulation defects in your home. Once the defects are identified, you can determine the proper method of correcting any defects.

By now, before your furnace was turned on for the season, you should have had your annual furnace inspection to insure its safe operation.

Typically, the inspector changed your

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– Gary Jurkovich, Pathway Homes

area before putting the refrigerator back in place. It's a good idea to clean under and around all of your appliances throughout the house.

Another often neglected but necessary maintenance project is draining and flushing your hot water tank; unless, of course, you have a tankless hot water heater. A sediment-free tank is an efficient tank. You will be surprised at how much sediment accumulates in the bottom of your tank over a one-year period especially in our area where the water has a high mineral content.

Check your owner's manual for the proper procedure for draining your tank, but basically it is a matter of turning off the power and water supply, draining the hot water by using a garden hose attached to the drain valve, flushing out the remaining sedi-

furnace filter but for most furnaces the filter needs to be changed or cleaned every few months at a minimum – a task that you can easily accomplish. Consult your manual for manufacturer's recommendation. Changing the filter is essential to reducing dust and dirt thereby increasing the efficiency of your furnace and keeping the air in your home fresh.

Now, breathe! Ahhh! Now that you've completed the winter home maintenance, nestle back onto that sofa and relax in your inspirational home ... at least until it's time to tackle the spring maintenance.

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