



HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION
of Dayton

Protect Your Investment This Fall with a Few Home Chores Between Touchdowns

By Jenny Diorio, 2008 President,
Home Builders Association of Dayton

The leaves that remain on the trees after the wind storm three weeks ago are beginning to change and will be rapidly falling to the ground, creating the time-honored chore, raking, and providing hours of leaf fort entertainment for children in neighborhoods across the country. While many families would prefer to spend the weekends cheering on their favorite football teams, there are a few important maintenance tasks that should make their way onto every homeowner's Saturday "to do" list.

October brings the first crisp days of fall with the first frost fast approaching. A little effort paid to home maintenance now, may save you time, money and headaches during the long winter months ahead.

Our late summer heavy wind storm may have caused weak **trees** or branches to break and damage your home, car or power lines, in some cases it will occur in the weeks after the damaging weather has passed. Scan the wooded areas of your lot for large, dead branches, detached branches that are suspended in trees, cavities or rotten wood along trunks or split tree trunks. If you see anything that looks hazardous, contact a professional tree service.

Because of the storm, most of us have already done this but, from the ground, inspect your **roof** carefully to head off other costly emergency repairs that may be needed during the winter. Keep an eye out for damaged or loose shingles, gaps in the flashing and mortar damage around the chimney. If you see or suspect any damage, contact a professional roofer to evaluate and repair the damage. Also, keep your gutters clear. It's important to remove all debris so that water can properly drain, minimizing standing water and stalling the freeze and thaw expansion process that often occurs during colder months. If your lot is extremely wooded or you've had a problem in the past, consider installing gutter guards that

prevent leaves and branches from entering your gutters and direct the flow of water away from the house and into the ground.

Take this opportunity to check out your **exterior doors** to determine if they are leaking cold air. While outside, survey your home's exterior walls and look for weather-related cracks or crumbling mortar. Wood trim and siding also can suffer from weatherworn paint and may have become loose, as can windowsills.

Fall is a great time for new grass seed to take root, so consider reseeding in selected areas of your **lawn**. Reseeding also helps keep weeds from growing in the spring. Fertilize your lawn with a high-nitrogen fertilizer to encourage root growth. Look for a lawn fertilizer labeled "winterizing." **Aerate** your lawn. Over time your lawn can become compacted, which hinders grass growth. Aerating — or breaking up the soil surface by poking holes into the ground — reduces thatch, loosens up compacted soils and paves the way for water and nutrients to reach the roots of your grass. If you have an in-ground **lawn irrigation system**, contact a professional company about servicing the system for the winter to avoid costly repairs due to burst pipes.

Last but not least of your exterior fall home maintenance chores, don't ignore your **hose bibs** and learn the location of your pipes as well as how to shut off the water. If your pipes end up freezing, you'll have a better chance of preventing a burst if you can quickly shut water off. It's also a good idea to check **weather stripping and caulking** around windows and doors, helping keep your home better insulated against the elements.

While you may be tempted catch the score of the game and end your fall home maintenance check outside, a couple simple interior checks also are warranted this time of year.

Before the cold weather strikes, take a look at your **heating system** to be sure it is in working order or have the unit serviced before the busy winter season. Check and replace appropriate filters and the batteries in **smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors** as well.

Do a quick check of **insulation** in your attic, to prevent the cycle of water freezing and melting on your roof, a potential cause of roof damage, and basement and crawl spaces to ensure your space is well insulated and to prevent freezing pipes. Finally, clean out any dust that has accumulated in vents to reduce exposure to indoor pollutants and cut down on winter colds.

After you complete this list of chores, flip on the TV and kick back on the couch and root on your favorite team.