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"Never regret anything that made you smile."

— Mark Twain

20 Things to Remember When Prepping Your Home for Winter This Year

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Whether you live in an area where snow and freezing temperatures are the norm or an area where a cold front is a rarity, as the winter season approaches, you'll want to take steps to protect your home, prepare for emergencies, and maximize your home's energy efficiency.

Here are 20 things to remember when preparing your home for winter this year:

1. Mow the lawn and aerate. Apply fall fertilizer. Rake and remove or mow and spread leaves.
2. Bring in tender plants and bulbs and place any fall plantings.
3. Provide cover in garden and flower beds. Leave dead stems and leaves over winter, add leaves as mulch, cover with frost blanket, or plant cover crops in bare areas.
4. Store and cover your outdoor furniture, grill, and garden decorations.
5. Trim bushes around the house, and prune trees after the leaves have fallen.
6. Inspect the exterior for cracks and holes and caulk or patch.
7. Inspect the roof for damaged or missing shingles and repair.
8. To deter pests, remove wasp nests from eaves and overhangs, and keep stacks of firewood away from the house.
9. Set mouse traps or other deterrents and check regularly as the temperatures begin to drop.
10. Clear gutters & downspouts.
11. Drain and winterize exterior plumbing, including hoses and in-ground sprinkler systems.
12. Clean windows, screens, and doors. Use storm windows, weather stripping, or window insulation kits to reduce drafts and heat loss. Add cozy, insulating curtains to further reduce heat loss.
13. Schedule inspections for your furnace, thermostat, fireplace, generators, etc.
14. Change furnace filters and set ceiling fans to clockwise.
15. Stock up on fuel and wood for heating, generators, and snowblowers.
16. Add insulation for crawl spaces, attics, drafty areas, and water pipes.
17. Prepare for snow removal – snowblower, shovel, ice melt, salt, and sand. Add a heating cable to the roof to prevent ice dams.
18. Test and replace batteries in carbon monoxide detectors, smoke detectors, flashlights, and radios.
19. Restock and update the emergency and first aid kits for the home and review emergency plans.
20. Restock and update your car's emergency kits and make sure there are extra clothes or blankets just in case.

Apple Pie Cupcakes

tasteofhome.com

Ingredients

- 1 package yellow cake mix (regular size)
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 4 medium tart apples, peeled and finely chopped
- 3/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon water

Frosting:

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 3 cups confectioners' sugar
- 2 tablespoons heavy whipping cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1-1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- Thinly sliced apples (optional)

Directions

1. Prepare and bake cake mix according to package directions for 24 cupcakes; cool cupcakes completely.
2. In a large skillet, heat butter over medium heat. Add apples and brown sugar; cook and stir until apples are tender, 10-12 minutes. In a small bowl, mix cornstarch and water until smooth; stir into pan. Bring to a boil; cook and stir until thickened, 1-2 minutes. Remove from heat; cool completely.
3. Using a paring knife, cut a 1-in.-wide cone-shaped piece from the top of each cupcake; discard removed portion. Fill cavity with apple mixture.
4. In a large bowl, combine the 5 frosting ingredients; beat until smooth. Frost the cupcakes. If desired, top with apple slices to serve.

Bring Nature Indoors This Fall for a Warm and Inviting Home

With vibrantly colored leaves, crisp morning air, migrating birds, cozy sweaters, hayrides, apple orchards, and pumpkin spice treats, it's no wonder Autumn tops the list of favorite seasons. Let nature inspire you and bring those wonderful fall feelings into your home just in time for the start of the holiday season!

Here are 5 ideas to get you started:

Appreciate the Harvest

The autumn harvest is full of beautiful shapes and colors that evoke visions of comforting meals and deliciously sweet treats. Decorating with pumpkins, squashes, gourds, ornamental corn, wheat shafts, apples, grapes, cranberries, and herbs will remind you that life is abundant and full of joys and treats.

Give Color to Your Home

Autumn is awash with warm, earthy colors that will bring your home a warm, earthy glow. Think rugs, curtains, table runners, flower arrangements, candles, artwork, blankets, pillows, and tabletop décor. Look for vibrant reds, cheery yellows, rusty oranges, deep greens, rich browns, and creamy tans.

Mix Patterns and Textures

Create coziness in your home with inspiration from your favorite cozy fall outfits. Mix plaids, flannels, cabled knits, rich leathers, faux fur, felted wool, and burlap to create layers of interest and warmth.

Create Ambiance

Pull it all together with an air of a cozy life lived inside. Drape a throw blanket over the corner of a chair, light delightfully scented candles, bake fall treats, and use warm-colored lighting. Place inviting picture albums on the coffee table and a little snack on the kitchen countertop. And lastly, take a break, and relax in your warm, inviting fall home.

Bring Nature Indoors

Not only will collecting bits of nature be a wonderful activity, but displaying those items in your home will remind you of your wonderful outing every time you see them. Pressed leaves and flowers, pinecones, fallen fir branches, interesting sticks, acorns, nuts, bittersweet branches, rosehips, feathers, driftwood, snail shells, rocks, and wildflower seed heads all make beautiful arrangements.

It's best to take items that have fallen naturally to the ground and avoid collecting in areas where you shouldn't (like nature preserves or parks where it's not allowed.)



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