



March Newsletter

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Tip of the Month

Make sure the light bulbs in all your fixtures are the correct wattage.

The light fixture manufacturer recommends the correct wattage. If too high a wattage bulb is used in a light fixture, heat produced inside the fixture can lead to fire inside the fixture, ceiling or wall.

Tips on Keeping your House safe from Fire

Nothing is worse than reading about a tragic fire that has claimed the life of a child. Recently near my hometown a family was tragically lost due to a Christmas tree falling on an unattended candle. It was later revealed that the house had no smoke detectors installed. All I can do is shake my head and hope that out of this tragedy someone has learned to take their family safety into their own hands and make sure that their house has several smoke detectors installed.

Right about now, you're saying to yourself, why is Matt talking about this subject? Isn't he supposed to be writing about decorating? Well, let me just reply to that by saying that Shari and I consider ourselves teachers, and yes our show, "Room by Room," is primarily about decorating, but it is also about your home.

I was fortunate the other day to be tooling down an aisle at one of my favorite home center stores, something I seem to do almost daily. Coming toward me were two firefighters and I knew this because they had their

uniforms. We chatted about projects that they were working on in their own homes. Our talks turned to fire safety and since their job was emergency rescue, they both had a couple of suggestions for all of us to consider.

- Your house numbers. In an emergency, can a rescue company or fire truck find your address easily? They told me about the many homes that they are called to that don't have numbers, at all! And if they do they are usually small and worst yet covered by overgrown bushes. They suggested large numerals with contrasting colors. Too many of the address signs they see blend into the siding of the building. They stated that scripted numerals are very hard to see, especially at night.

- When I got home I checked out my own house. The only address marker I had was on my mailbox, and at night it was almost invisible. So I ran back out to the Home Center and purchased large reflective numbers to install on the box and ordered a yard marker that sits next to the house with a spotlight hitting it (if anything, pizza guys will be able to find me a lot easier.)

- The two firefighters, Lt. Scott Artko and Ron Prebis of the Olmsted, Ohio, Fire Department, told me that some communities require a green sign with large white reflective numbers on the sign. Sounds like a winner to me.
- Scott and Ron couldn't stress enough about using smoke detectors and making sure that the batteries are changed frequently. At my home, every time I turn the clocks forward or back, I replace the batteries. Also make sure that you have enough smoke detectors for your home. Every floor if not every room should have one. There are many on the market to choose from.
- One last item they told me about was a lock box for your door, the same type of box the real estate agents use. In this case though, only the local fire department and emergency medical services have the key. This way if an emergency occurs in your home and you're not at home or even unable to answer the door, they can gain access to your house without possibly doing damage to your front door.

How to Clean Gutters and Downspouts

Just do it! Clean the gutters and downspouts on your house twice a year and you'll be spared untold expense and aggravation in the future. This routine maintenance is easy to do and requires nothing but your time. Schedule the job in the spring and fall when an accumulation of leaves and debris can clog downspouts and gutters and prevent the flow of rainwater away from the house. If you put off the job, it's a sure bet you'll have water seepage problems in the basement, not to mention water damaged siding and trim.

Because you'll be working from a ladder, it's convenient to have a helper who can be the "go-fer" to run and fetch. This speeds up the job and prevents you from making countless trips up and down the ladder. You need two lightweight buckets, work or rubber gloves to protect your hands and a garden hose to flush out the gutters and downspouts

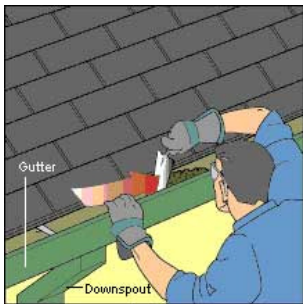


Fig. 1, Scooping Out Gutter

after they're cleaned. You can use your hands or a garden trowel to shovel out debris or buy a plastic

gutter scooping tool designed specifically for the job.

Carefully position your ladder against the house so you will avoid resting it directly on the front edge of the gutter. The direct weight of you and the ladder can crush or severely bend the gutter.

One easy solution to this problem is to purchase a ladder stabilizer which is a U shaped aluminum bar that bolts to the top of the ladder and holds it away from the building. It also helps prevent the ladder from twisting or sliding.



With or without the stabilizer bar, always place the ladder on firm level ground. Move the ladder often. Don't overstretch or reach out so far that you have to bend your body to the right or left when cleaning the gutters or downspouts.

Begin cleaning the gutters at a corner close to the downspout. Remove any debris that may be clogging the downspout. Then work your way along the gutter until the bucket is too heavy to handle or it's filled with leaves and debris. Pass the full bucket down to your helper to dispose of and continue filling up the empty one.



As you complete work along one stretch of gutter, check to see that it is firmly attached to the house. Straighten or replace any faulty gutter hangers. Move the ladder as you work your way around the house and clean the entire system of gutters and downspouts.

To check that water in the gutters and downspouts runs free and doesn't leak out, flush the system with your garden hose. Caulk any leaks with a good quality acrylic latex

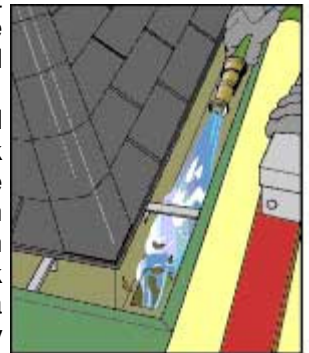


Fig. 2, Flushing Gutters

If the opening in the gutter leading to the downspouts constantly clogs, purchase a downspout guard which is a wire basket that prevents leaves from clogging the downspout. If you live in a heavily wooded area, consider adding gutter screens which help prevent debris from getting into the gutters.

Homeowner Tips: Replacing Furnace Filters.

Want to save money while you are inside keeping warm this winter? Change your furnace filters regularly!

The build-up of dust and dirt on the furnace filters slows airflow through the system, making the heating system less efficient, using more fuel, and costing you more.

Change your filters once a month to keep the system operating at peak efficiency. A simple way to keep track of filter changes is to put a piece of tape on the furnace by the filters and write the date on it when you change filters.

This will help you stay on schedule.

It is also important to keep your heat registers and cold air returns clean and clear to help your heating system working efficiently. Check periodically to make certain nothing is blocking any of the openings and vacuum them routinely, too.

Another effective way to cut energy costs is to set your thermostat to keep your house warm primarily when you are there. If you are gone during the

day, set your thermostat at 60 degrees and turn it up to 68 degrees when you return home. Turn your thermostat down to 60 degrees at night while you are sleeping to further reduce energy costs.

