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Spring Maintenance Planning

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Now that springtime temperatures are finally giving winter the long-awaited boot, it's time to lend our thoughts toward making those repairs needed as a result of winter's wrath. Even a mild winter can claim its share of victims and make its mark on a home's exterior; a harsh season can cause extensive damage. Both demand a post-winter inspection.

The best way to proceed with a "spring planning maintenance program" will be to take a walk around the exterior of your home and recall those few snows and cold days we did have. Start with the roof. Check the chimney flashing. See if thermal shock caused the metal to pop and pull up, causing cracked seals and/or interior leakage.

While up there, check to see if those north winds blowing against the antenna loosened the tripod bolts or blew off any shingles. Then work your way down, checking to see if any gutter seams failed from the expanding and wrenching ice. You may also recall if any icicles formed behind the gutter or through the soffit vents. If so, this would be a good indication that the roof/gutter joint had failed and lent its way to ice-damming.

On the way down, also run your hand across the back seam of the downspouts. If they are bulging, you can be assured they dammed up one cold night and the expanding ice broke the seam open. This may also account for increasing mildew or mold showing up in the basement near where the downspouts are located. A broken seam will allow otherwise diverted water to leak along the foundation instead of away from the house.

You may also wish to check the caulking and sealing around the door and window frames. For those of you using plastic or visqueen shields over the windows during the winter, you should recall where the condensation formed in your windows.

If the condensation formed on the inside of the inner prime window, it may indicate the plastic wasn't needed because the prime windows were tight enough not to let the trapped indoor moist air pass by them. If the inside of the storm window was condensed and the inner window clear, this would indicate that the inner prime window leaks, and the storm window has done its job by stopping the escaping moist air at that point. If the plastic on the outside was wet, facing the interior, then both the prime and storm windows leak. This may indicate that it's time to consider new windows or replacement windows. The same process will hold true with your door openings.

If your spring maintenance planning also includes some sprucing up and painting, you may wish to examine what's going on before you make a potentially futile investment on paint and time. Check the

blistering paint. Notice how deep the blisters go. If they go down to the original paint or to raw wood, this would indicate that interior, trapped moisture had tried to get out and it pushed the paint along as it passed through the walls.

Merely repainting, without addressing the source of the problem will only cause a repeat of the same situation, waste the paint and your valuable time. You may also wish to take a close look at those black spots on the paint. If you think they are just dirt, look closer. They could be mildew or mold spores, also from trapped interior moisture trying to escape.

Repainting without removing and killing those spores will just be futile, and they will appear again on the new paint. They may also cause a poor bond between new and old paint, again causing single layer blistering or flaking.

These thoughts may aggravate you into considering covering the exterior with aluminum, vinyl or other types of siding and trim. If the source of the moisture is not found and relieved, exterior wall coverings will only serve to incubate and multiply this moisture problem. The key to resolving any moisture related item is proper ventilation. Proper venting of your home comes into play no matter what you do, be it painting interior or exterior, window repairs, roof work, or insulation. All affect the release or entrapment of interior moisture.

So when planning your spring maintenance calendar, make sure you take that "extra step" to find the source of any problems the winter brought out. Don't just cover them up. You will find that if you plan and proceed with the spring fix-up chores properly, they won't need to be repeated in the summer, when your mind turns to more important things - like golf, fishing and barbecues. Have a great spring!

We hope this information has been helpful to you! If you have any further questions, please visit our website at www.aroundyourhouse.net, or contact Jim at Around Your House.

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