



September 2016
A Special Supplement to
The Oneida Dispatch

Fall HOME & Garden

*Preparing your
fireplace*
or stove for
the season

*Home improvement
projects*
for your fall
to-do list

Simplify
fall leaf cleanup

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the Oneida Daily Dispatch

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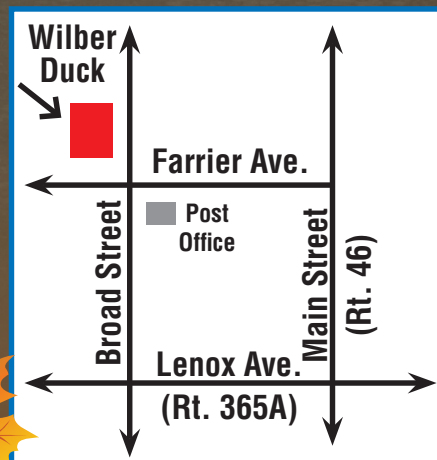
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Preparing your fireplace or stove for the season



Prepare fireplaces, chimneys and heating stoves for another season of regular use.

Fireplaces and wood-burning stoves not only can be beautiful focal points within a home, but they also provide an additional source of heat and can be used to keep rooms or entire homes comfortable without the need for additional and potentially costly heating sources.

Just like more modern home heating systems, stoves and fireplaces need to be maintained, and that maintenance includes readying them before winter when they are used more heavily. Ensuring a fireplace or stove is in good working order helps to guarantee efficiency of use and safety during the winter months.

Open-flame heating sources carry with them certain risks. The National Fire Protection Association states that, between 2009-2013, American fire departments responded to 56,000 home structure fires that involved heating equipment. The NFPA notes that the leading factor contributing to home-heating fires is a failure to keep things clean, principally from solid-fueled heating equipment. The following are a handful of ways to stay safe as you get ready for another cozy season around the fire.

Start with the chimney. Begin by having your chimney thoroughly cleaned and inspected. Creosote can build up inside of the chimney. Creosote is highly flammable and becomes more difficult and expensive to clean the longer it builds up inside your flue lining. In addition, animals may have created nest inside of the chimney since the last time the fireplace was used. A professional chimney sweep should be hired in this situation. He or she will be able to effectively clean the chimney in a manner that is the least messy and disruptive to residents.

Install or check smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Operational alarms are essential to preventing injury or death resulting from smoke or carbon monoxide inhalation. Such detectors are inexpensive safeguards that should be installed on every floor of the house. Batteries should be replaced every six months, and the alarms themselves should be changed every five to 10 years.

Inspect the chimney from outdoors as well. Inspect the mortar around any bricks in the chimney and surrounding areas for cracks. If left unaddressed, these can cause dangerous fires. If

there are serious cracks, a professional may need to make repairs or the chimney may need to be replaced. You also can have the chimney capped with a screen to keep animals and debris from entering.

Inspect the damper. A damper is a valve or plate that stops or regulates the flow of air inside a chimney. It should be checked prior to the first use of a stove or fireplace so homeowners can be certain it opens and closes smoothly.

Clear out flammable items. Move flammable items away from the front of a fireplace or stove. Be sure curtains or other home furnishings are far enough away that they will not catch fire from any errant sparks or flames.

Order wood now. Be sure there is plenty of wood for the season. Ask a wood supplier to estimate just how much will be needed, and double-check that the wood will arrive in time for the start of the season.



Home improvement projects for your fall to-do list

Homeowners know that maintaining a home can be a year-round job. No home is immune to wear and tear, and homeowners who want to protect their real estate investments should try to stay two steps ahead to ensure their homes do not succumb to the elements or become outdated and unappealing to prospective buyers. Fall has become a season that's synonymous with home improvement, but homeowners need not wait until the leaves begin changing colors to start planning their next projects. The following are a few items homeowners can add to their fall home improvement to-do lists.

Roof inspection

Less precipitation tends to fall during the warmer months than during the late fall and winter. As a result, homeowners may not be aware of leaky roofs until autumn has come and gone. But waiting until winter to inspect the roof can prove disastrous, as weather conditions will not be conducive to inspection and increased precipitation may result in potentially costly damage. Leaky roofs can be easily identified by looking for water stains on interior

ceilings. Once you see a stain, you can climb onto the roof to identify the location of the leak and fix it before winter rains and snowfall turn the problem into something much larger. Inspect your ceilings for signs of leaking after a strong rainfall, and then address any leaks immediately.

Gutter cleaning

While some homeowners prefer to delay their gutter cleaning projects until late fall, those whose homes are surrounded by trees may need to schedule two such projects. Gutters clogged with leaves and other debris can cause serious roof damage, and that damage can extend all the way inside a home. In addition, clogged gutters make great nesting areas for insects or critters. Always stand on a ladder when cleaning gutters, wearing gloves to remove items by hand and dropping leaves and debris into a trash can below. Standing on the roof and leaning over gutters greatly increases your risk of injury. If the gutters are clear when you first examine them in early fall, you can wait until later in the season to give them a complete and thorough cleaning. Once you have finished clearing the gutters, you can use a hose to run water through them and



Autumn is a great time to inspect patios that might have endured some wear and tear during the heavy usage seasons of spring and summer.

the downspouts to confirm everything is functioning properly.

Window and doorway inspection

Before temperatures start dropping once again, homeowners will want to inspect their windows and doorways for leaks. Over time, cracks can develop around windows and doorways, and while such cracks are rarely noticeable when the weather outside is warm, they can be quite obvious and very costly if they remain

unsealed come the start of winter. Cold air can enter a home through cracks around windows and doorways, and many homeowners who don't suspect leaks may respond by turning up the thermostats in their homes. That can prove quite expensive over a full winter. Choose a windy autumn day to place a hand by windows and external doorways in your home to see if you can feel drafts. If you can, seal these cracks as soon as possible.

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What to look for during roof inspections



Inspect a roof each fall to get an idea of the potential damage and any necessary repairs that may be needed before nasty weather sets in.

Cold weather can be tough on a home, and perhaps no part of a home is more vulnerable to harsh winter weather than its roof. Fallen snow can equate to several pounds of pressure placed on a residential roof. Roofs do not often collapse under heavy snowfall. But adverse winter weather conditions can compromise roofs in other ways. Water leakage and damage to the roof's interior are just two of the potentially problematic issues that can arise when roofs are battered by cold, blustery weather. That's why many home improvement specialists

advise homeowners to conduct roof inspections prior to the start of winter. Many homeowners can conduct their own cursory roof inspections, but they may not know exactly what to look for. The National Roofing Contractors Association says that there are certain key areas to inspect that may reveal some telltale signs of roof damage.

Curled, cracked or missing shingles may prove troublesome. Inclement weather can test the strength of even the most durable

roofs. Even though many roofs are designed to last up to 30 years, some may need to be replaced early, particularly when they have been exposed to harsh weather over a period of years. Individual shingles can be replaced as spot treatments, but if the damage is widespread, a new roof may be necessary.

Attic leaks or water elsewhere might signal issues with the roof. Figure out if water inside the home is coming from the roof. Water stains do not always indicate problems with the roofing, but it's better to be safe than sorry.

Look for protective granules wearing off. If gutters are filled with the sandy granular material that coats roofing shingles, that may be a sign of an aging or damaged roof.

Inspect flashing. Professional roofers can recognize properly installed flashing, the material that connects the roof to other parts of the house that adjoin the roof, like skylights or a chimneys. Poorly installed flashing can cause leaks. Stains that appear below chimneys or near attic windows may indicate new flashing, and not new shingles, is needed.

Gutters and downspouts should be in good condition. A roof is the sum of its parts, and that includes downspouts and gutters. If the gutters are clogged or damaged, they cannot direct water away from the house properly. Snow, leaves and other

debris needs to be cleared from gutters to help them function at optimal capacity.

Animals and insects can cause damage, too. It's not just poor weather that homeowners need to consider with regard to roof damage. Boring insects and animals may cause problems with roofs as well. A roof inspection may shed light on potential pest problems. Holes or nesting materials may indicate that an animal or animals are using the attic as a shelter from the elements. Get to the root of issues with your home's roof before they become bigger problems once winter arrives.



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Protect pipes from freezing this cold-weather season

Freezing pipes are a concern for homeowners who live in cold climates. When temperatures dip below freezing, the risk that pipes will freeze rises. Should a pipe burst, the damage that results can be extensive and costly.

Any pipe can freeze, but those that are directly exposed to the cold are the most vulnerable. These include pipes that feed outdoor hoses, swimming pool supply lines, pipes in unheated indoor rooms (i.e., basements or garages), and any pipes that run close to the outdoors through uninsulated walls. Water expands as it freezes, and that expansion can place pressure on whatever is trying to contain it — including pipes.

To avoid serious damage, homeowners need to prepare for the arrival of colder weather and be smart about how they protect pipes.

Drain water from swimming pools and water sprinkler supply lines prior to the onset of cold weather.

Drain water before freezing temperatures arrive, and don't forget to drain outdoor garden hoses and store them inside after watering season has come and gone.

Close indoor water valves that feed outdoor spigots/bibs. Open the spigot outside to allow water to drain out. Keep the outside valve open so that any water that has accumulated will continue to drain and expand outward without damaging the pipe. An insulated bib dome also can help prevent frozen pipes.

Open cabinet doors to allow heat to reach pipes inside of cabinets. Keep the doors open to spaces that may not be heated or insulated as well as other areas of the home so that heat can find its way inside. Consider wrapping these pipes with an insulating material as well, such as heat tape or pipe sleeves.

Maintain a consistent thermostat temperature. Ensure the



temperature inside your home does not drop below 55 F; otherwise, problems can arise. Use a programmable thermostat to keep the house comfortable even when you are not home. Individuals who are traveling should set the thermostat so that it will keep the home at the recommended temperature to avoid frozen pipes.

Open one faucet. When it is very cold outside, particularly at night, let water slowly drip from one faucet to prevent freezing. Choose the sink that is furthest from where water

enters the house so water is flowing through all of the pipes to reach that faucet.

Increase insulation around where pipes enter the house. Use insulating foam to seal any drafts where pipes enter the house from the outdoors.


Frozen pipes cannot always be avoided. Therefore, it is important that everyone in the household knows how to shut off the main water valve in the event a pipe bursts. This can prevent expensive damage to a home.

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Air leaks around doorways can waste energy and cost homeowners substantial amounts of money.

Address **air leaks** to save energy and money

Rising energy costs coupled with the continued adoption of eco-friendly lifestyles are two factors driving homeowners to seek ways to reduce energy consumption in their homes. Reducing energy consumption is reason enough for many homeowners to make changes around the house, but saving energy sometimes means saving substantial amounts of money as well. Energy-efficient appliances and eco-friendly building materials can help homeowners reduce energy consumption. But homeowners looking for additional ways to cut cooling and heating costs can address air leaks around the house to make their homes more energy efficient.

Identify air leaks around windows and doorways. Autumn is a great time of year to identify air leaks. Fall, and particularly late fall, tends to be characterized by cold air that makes

it easy to detect air leaks. Feel for leaks around windows and doorways, ideally conducting such tests on cold, windy days when you can quickly detect if air is flowing in from the outside. Leaks around windows and doors waste energy because the interior of the home is either colder (in the winter) or warmer (in the summer) than it needs to be, prompting homeowners to turn up their thermostats or rely more heavily on air conditioning units.

Look for leaks elsewhere around the house. While windows and doorways are where many leaks are found, leaks also may be found around plumbing, electrical fixtures and dryer vents. Inspect such areas by feeling for drafts or looking for signs that insects and critters might be entering.

Look up and down. Evidence of air leaks may be noticeable on both the floor and the ceiling. Dirty spots on

carpeting and the ceiling may be indicative of air leaks at interior wall/ceiling joints and wall/floor joists. Fixing such leaks may be as simple as applying some caulk.

Go with gaskets. The United States Department of Energy recommends installing foam gaskets behind outlet and switch plates on walls. Outlets and switch boxes on exterior walls provide another place for air to leak into a home and drive up energy costs. Properly installed gaskets can cut back on air infiltration, providing an inexpensive way to save energy and money.

Cover the kitchen exhaust fans when you are not cooking. Kitchen exhaust fans can help prevent fires and unfavorable indoor air conditions when preparing meals at home. But such fans provide opportunities for air to enter a home, so make sure they are tightly closed or covered when no one is cooking in the kitchen.

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3 potential trouble signs for driveways



Surface cracks in a driveway may indicate a problem that requires immediate attention.

Though they are often easy to overlook, driveways are durable parts of a home that can greatly impact a home's curb appeal. Driveways endure quite a bit of wear and tear over their lifespans, and homeowners who have not given their driveways much thought may want to start looking for potential trouble signs that indicate a need for some driveway maintenance. According to the online home improvement resource HomeAdvisor.com, the average cost of a driveway installation in 2015 was just under \$3,700. Those costs are influenced by a host of factors, including the size of the driveway and the material it's made of. Damaged driveways do not necessarily need to be replaced, as some may just need minor repairs. But homeowners who see any of the following trouble signs in their driveways may want to consult a professional contractor to determine what their next steps should be.

1. Potholes

Potholes might be most often associated with heavily trafficked roadways, but even driveways are susceptible to potholes. As the ground beneath the driveway expands and contracts, the pavement above that ground weakens and becomes more susceptible to damage. That damage may ultimately lead to large chunks of the driveway breaking down, creating holes as a result. Homeowners who live in areas that experience heavy snowfall may see their driveways develop potholes after they are shoveled or plowed. Potholes that are not fixed may damage vehicles that drive on the pavement, and potholes may even expand over time.

2. Accumulation of water

Puddles that form during a rainstorm may not be indicative of anything other than a rainy day. But water that pools or runs down the middle of the driveway may indicate drainage problems. Such problems may be the result of structural problems with the slope of the driveway, which can cause bigger issues down the road. When water is not absorbed into the ground or directed away from your home, it can then flow into the house, potentially making your garage or home susceptible to water damage.

3. Cracks

Cracking is one of the more noticeable issues that can plague driveways. Many driveways experience cracking as materials inevitably succumb to the elements. Driveway cracks may develop for various reasons, including poor initial installation. Tree roots that grow beneath the driveway surface may also contribute to cracking as the driveways ultimately succumb to the pressure created by the growing roots. Some cracks may prove less problematic than others, but homeowners should still speak with a contractor if they notice their driveway is starting to succumb to cracks.

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Finding the right fencing fit



Bamboo

Bamboo is a less traditional fencing option that may appeal to homeowners who want to do something that's both different and eco-friendly. Bamboo grows naturally, which should appeal to homeowners who want their homes to have as little negative impact on the environment as possible. Bamboo provides ample privacy and comes in various styles. Homeowners should consult with a fencing specialist before choosing a style so they can be certain they choose the most climate-appropriate option.

Chain-link

Chain-link fences may not add the aesthetic appeal homeowners are looking for, but they are relatively inexpensive, durable and functional. Chain-link fences are low maintenance, though homeowners looking for fences to provide some privacy may need to get creative if they install chain-link fencing. Planting flowers, shrubbery or trees near chain-link fences can add some aesthetic appeal and a little privacy.

Vinyl

Among the more expensive fencing options, vinyl can make up for that initial sticker shock thanks to its durability. In addition, vinyl fences require little maintenance, saving homeowners the expense of paying for upkeep such as repainting. Vinyl fencing comes in various styles, and homeowners can choose the style that best suits their priorities with regard to aesthetic appeal and privacy.

Wood

Of course, no discussion of fencing would be complete without mentioning wood fencing. Many homeowners love wood fencing because of its versatility with regard to design and color. The options are endless when it comes to crafting wood fencing, which also can be stained in any color homeowners prefer. Wood fencing can be designed not only for homeowners who prioritize privacy, but it also can be crafted for homeowners for whom privacy is not a significant concern.

Homeowners choose to erect fences on their properties for various reasons. Parents may find fences provide peace of mind during those times when their youngsters are playing in the yard, while other homeowners prefer fences for the privacy they can provide.

Whatever compels homeowners to consider fencing for their properties, those that have decided to install fencing will soon realize they have numerous options. Finding the right fencing material for your property requires considering a host of factors, including budget and personal style.

Aluminum

Aluminum fencing is ideal for those looking for something that's both ornamental and functional. Aluminum fencing may not appeal to those homeowners whose biggest priority is privacy, as aluminum fences are not solid walls. But aluminum fences are typically low maintenance, and they can be effective at keeping both kids and pets in the yard. Aluminum fences painted with a rust-inhibiting primer may require even less maintenance than aluminum fences painted without primer.



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How to recognize water damage in a home



Plumbing problems may ultimately result in costly water damage.

Homes are potentially susceptible to a host of problems. While unforeseen problems can prove costly, homeowners who keep attentive eyes on their homes can oftentimes discover small problems before they escalate. Water damage is a potentially costly problem that can afflict any home. Old homes tend to be most susceptible to water damage, and that damage can manifest itself in various ways. The following are some telltale signs of water damage that should give prospective home buyers pause and compel current homeowners to seek professional assistance as soon as possible.

Stains

Many prospective home buyers have been disappointed by the sight of water stains during an open house or home inspection. Water stains tend to be on ceilings and/or walls.

Stains on ceilings tend to be round, while wall stains are straight lines down the wall that may or may not have forced paint to peel. Water stains are not necessarily indicative of a major problem, but homeowners should have the stains examined by a professional while potential buyers should direct their home inspector's attention to the stains.

Deteriorating wood

Wood around windows or doors that is deteriorating may indicate water problems. The wood might be deteriorating because water is infiltrating the wood during storms. Baseboards and molding that is dilapidated or beginning to deteriorate may also indicate water damage.

Buckled drywall or wood

Drywall or wood that is buckled or beginning to buckle is another potential indicator of water damage. Drywall buckles when it gets wet, and that is often a sign that there is a leak behind the drywall. Severely buckled drywall will feel as if it has ridges. Wood also buckles when it is exposed to excess moisture, and this can usually be felt when walking on the wood barefoot or in socks.

Odor

Sometimes water damage is best detected by the smell test. Homeowners who notice the smell of mold or mildew in rooms that previously never emanated such odors might have homes that are in the early stages of water problems. The water damage might be behind the walls, where mold is beginning to form thanks to water damage. Older homes tend to be musty, but call in a professional if you notice that mustiness if more pungent than usual.

Water damage is a potentially costly problem, especially if it goes unnoticed for months or even years. Homeowners and prospective home buyers should be on the lookout for signs of water damage before problems escalate and require expensive repairs.



Simplify fall leaf cleanup

Apple pie, pumpkins and blooming chrysanthemums are symbols of autumn. But nothing signals the arrival of fall more than the millions of leaves that begin to cascade from the trees as the temperatures dip. Many people feel nothing is more beautiful than the yellow, red, purple, and orange leaves that coat neighborhoods and countryside each fall. But in spite of their beauty, leaves might be a nuisance to homeowners tasked with removing the growing piles of them from their lawns. Those with large oak and maple trees in front of their homes understand the seemingly endless work of leaf removal. As the days begin to grow shorter and colder, these changes trigger a hormone release in trees, prompting them to drop their leaves. This chemical message causes the formation of abscission cells where the leaf stem meets the branch, say botanists at the Missouri Botanical Garden. So rather than merely dropping off of trees when the wind blows, the leaves actually fall off deliberately. Left untouched, fallen leaves can contribute to lawn problems such as poor aeration, mold growth and moisture issues. Leaves also can cause staining on driveways and walkways. Prompt removal can help prevent any problems. To make faster and easier work of leaf removal, keep these tips in mind.

Mow over thin leaf coverage. If only a few leaves have fallen, use a mulching mower to shred the leaves

until they are small enough that they won't suffocate the lawn. The small pieces will decompose in the lawn, reintroducing nutrients as a result.

Use an ergonomic leaf rake. Ergonomic rakes can prevent back and arm pain, much in the way that ergonomic shovels do when shoveling snow.

Invest in a quality leaf blower. Using a rake is good exercise, but homeowners with large properties might want to use a leaf blower. These machines can dislodge leaves from bushes and hard-to-reach crevices, and they work faster than rakes.

Use a tarp. Rake or blow leaves onto a tarp and then drag the tarp to the curbside or to the back of a truck for proper disposal. Special leaf scoopers enable you to grab more leaves if they need to be picked up and transported. Otherwise, you can use the covers from two garbage pails to achieve a similar effect.

Work with the wind. Rake in the direction the wind is blowing and downhill if your property slopes. This way it will be easier on you, and you won't be working against Mother Nature.

Spread out the job. Do not attempt to remove all fallen leaves in a single day. Schedule a few cleaning days during the season to make lighter work of the job than if you tried to do it all at once. Keep in mind that leaves will continue to fall throughout the season and you may need to spend a few days removing leaves from your yard.

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Transform spaces into cozy retreats

Cool weather often drives people to spend more hours indoors than they do during the warmer months. Autumn is a time to winterize gardens, put away lawn furniture and prepare for the holiday season. Autumn also provides the perfect opportunity to begin home interior projects.

Many people decide to redecorate their homes to reflect each season. When temperatures change, it's time to transition from the light colors and breezy fabrics symbolic of summer to thicker, darker materials that evoke coziness.

With some inspiration and a little know-how, any homeowner or apartment dweller can cozy up a space in time for fall and winter.

Invest in area rugs. While wood floors can look beautiful and work well with many different design styles, wood can feel chilly underfoot. Thick area rugs add warmth to a room and can help it look more lived-in. Area rugs also help a room appear more cohesive, coordinating with other colors in a space and providing a visual border.

Practice layering in rooms. An affordable and relatively easy way to make a room seem more cozy is to layer fabrics and other accents. Layers can include throws and blankets. Remove place mats from the dining room table and use them on accent tables or an ottoman in the



living room. Table runners also can add a splash of color to the top of bedroom dressers.

Play with texture. Look for fabrics that boast texture and can add a tactile feel to spaces. When used on throw pillows or small accents, faux fur can create that cozy cabin feel. Draperies made from nubby fabrics or those with grooves and ridges can add dimension to a room as well. Even a lampshade made of an unusual fabric, such as a waffle-patterned material, can add a little depth and warmth to a space.

Reevaluate your lighting. Lighting a space is more than just flipping on a



switch. Finding the right balance of lighting fixtures can instantly transform the feel of a room. Create more warmth and a cozy feel by switching out bulbs from cooler shades to warmer ones — those that give off yellow and pink hues rather than cool blues. Accent lighting helps establish a comfortable space for curling up and reading a good book. Spot lighting, such as fixtures that are trained on artwork or inside of a curio or china cabinet, also can set a more welcoming mood.

Books evoke the hallowed halls of schools and quiet nooks in the library. Fill shelves with books interspersed with additional design accents, and you will instantly make a room feel more inviting.

Choose dark paint. Do not feel nervous about incorporating deeper shades in rooms. Dark colors give rooms a more enclosed feel than lighter colors, and that can create a warm and cozy feeling. This works particularly well in larger spaces that feel vast and empty. If you're scared to paint all of your walls, try a darker shade below a chair rail or just paint one accent wall.

Add architectural elements. Think about adding rich moldings to crown the ceilings or to frame doorways. If you have the space for a nook, create a window seat beneath a picture window or add a bench and cushions in a corner for a nice escape spot.

Install a bookshelf and start a book collection. Piles and stacked books can add warmth to any space.



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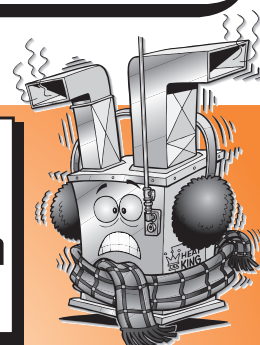
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