



Spring Tune-up Guide

Every now and then we take cars in for an oil change, have the tires rotated, the brakes checked or maybe a general tune-up. Our homes are machines too—shelter machines. They deserve and will benefit from periodic service as much as our hardworking cars. Our shelter machine is more complex than most of us realize. We tend to look at homes from a viewpoint of aesthetic or social considerations. Beneath the painted and ornamented surface are hard working systems willing to work for years, harnessed and regimented, without complaint. But there always comes a day where these loyal friends need our help. Lets see how we can look into their needs now, and on a semi-annual basis, so the possible crisis may be headed off. Let there be harmony and good cheer in our homes!

Component	Tune-up Items	
Site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Wait until the last frost to set out seedlings. <input type="checkbox"/> Prune away any winter-kill; remove plantings if they have died. <input type="checkbox"/> Tune up the lawn mower. <input type="checkbox"/> Fill in any site erosion and re-seed. <input type="checkbox"/> Be sure all surface water drains away from your house. <input type="checkbox"/> Trim back unruly landscaping. <input type="checkbox"/> Check your mailbox, fencing, walkways, patios, arbors, etc. for needed maintenance. <input type="checkbox"/> Does your deck need to be cleaned and sealed? Are the handrails sound? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Check the health of your big trees, if there are any dying or diseased, have them removed now. It will be dangerous to go up onto a thoroughly dead tree and you may not find anyone willing to do it. The time to do it is when their branches can still be relied on to support a man. <input type="checkbox"/> Have your asphalt driveway sealed. <input type="checkbox"/> Replace worn or missing fibrous expansion strips between your concrete driveway and garage floor. <input type="checkbox"/> Is it time to resurface your concrete driveway or walkway? Winter freeze-thaw cycles may have left these surfaces pitted, chipped, or cracked.
Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Check that crawlspace, what's going on under there? Do you have standing water? Mold or fungus? Put a vapor barrier down if you do not already have one and use a mildewcide or fungicide now. Be sure your crawlspace is getting fresh air. Have any critters taken up residence? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify any basement leaks. <input type="checkbox"/> Do your basement walls have any cracks that need sealing? If any cracks are 3/16" or wider, or if you have any long horizontal cracks, better consult an expert now. <input type="checkbox"/> Is your basement or crawlspace insulated?
Framing/Exterior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Look for signs of insect activity, especially in crawlspace framing and around the floor-framing perimeter. <input type="checkbox"/> Look for cracked joists or rafters. <input type="checkbox"/> Look for sagging headers or tilting walls; then get expert advice. <input type="checkbox"/> Is your brickwork in need of mortar repointing? Are there damaged bricks that need to be replaced? <input type="checkbox"/> How long has it been since your brick work was water sealed? Resealing is usually done every 5 to 8 years. <input type="checkbox"/> Secure any loose sections of vinyl or aluminum siding; replace damaged sections. <input type="checkbox"/> Caulk around windows, doors, utility line entrances, and vents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Does your siding or trim need repainting? It is easier to do it regularly than have to replace rotted or damaged sections later, when you finally get around to it, or to discover that the continued water entry has begun to rot the underlying framing. <input type="checkbox"/> Replace cracked or broken windows. <input type="checkbox"/> Upgrade to modern low-E insulated windows. <input type="checkbox"/> Put in your storm windows before cold weather. <input type="checkbox"/> Look into the possibility of retrofitting insulation into sidewalls of your wonderful old house. Add insulation to floor of your unfinished attic. <input type="checkbox"/> Repair damaged stucco.

Roof	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Clean gutters and downspouts. <input type="checkbox"/> Be sure gutters and downspouts are securely attached. The weight of winter ice often pulls gutters and downspouts loose. <input type="checkbox"/> Be sure the roof is water tight-are shingles missing or cracked? Is any flashing rusted through? <input type="checkbox"/> Check under the roof; are there any signs of leaking there? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Look at your chimney or flu stack; any visible damage? <input type="checkbox"/> Are any trees rubbing against your roof? <input type="checkbox"/> Be sure your bath vents, kitchen vents and dryer vents go all the way outside, not just into your attic. The bath vents should be insulated to prevent condensation in cold weather.
Electrical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Check your outdoor receptacles to make sure they are watertight; if you have painted over them the gaskets will be stiff and cannot be counted on to be watertight. <input type="checkbox"/> Put bulbs in any open outdoor light sockets; replace burned-out bulbs. Check to see that they have a weather-protective globe or surround if that is their design. <input type="checkbox"/> Take those pennies out from behind your fuses! It's time for a wiring upgrade. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> If you are constantly blowing fuses or tripping circuit breakers, or your lights occasionally flicker or dim, have your system checked by a licensed electrician. <input type="checkbox"/> Install GFCI receptacles by your sinks and lavatories, in the garage, and at outdoor receptacles. Inexpensive and relatively easy, it can be done even on older two-prong ungrounded systems. Have an electrician do it if you are unsure how. You deserve this modern protection.
Plumbing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Check your garden hose and repair leaks and damaged connectors. Replace old rubber gaskets. <input type="checkbox"/> Insulate your water supply lines-hot and cold; cold lines may sweat profusely in summer. <input type="checkbox"/> Test your water supply, not just for well owners; municipal supplies may be compromised too. An annual test is smart. <input type="checkbox"/> If you have a septic tank, have your septic system inspected and pumped out if necessary. Depending on your tank's size, field system, and use, the tank may need to be pumped very one to five years. <input type="checkbox"/> Have those slow drip leaks fixed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Insulate your water heater. <input type="checkbox"/> Be sure your sump pump works. A battery backup will run the pump even if a storm knocks the power out. <input type="checkbox"/> If your water heater does not have a temperature and pressure release valve, or a pipe running from this valve to near the floor, have one installed now, don't risk scalding or catastrophic tank rupture. <input type="checkbox"/> Fix any leaky valves and tighten any loose fixture attachments. If you smell sewer gas around your drains, tighten those loose seals or consult a plumber to find the cause.
Heating and Air	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Uncover your air conditioner after daytime temperatures are steadily in the 60s, then switch on the circuit breaker to the A/C unit. <input type="checkbox"/> Have a heating contractor inspect and ready your cooling system for the coming season. Be sure the system is fully charged with refrigerant. Straighten bent cooling fins. Follow the manufacturer's guidelines for filter maintenance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Be sure all ductwork seams are tightly sealed with foil tape. <input type="checkbox"/> Install smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors; be sure batteries are good in those you may already have.

We encourage you to care for your home and respect the initiative of do-it-yourselfers. We do not advocate that maintenance be performed by anyone who is not capable and comfortable doing so. If you are unsure of your ability to perform needed maintenance on your home, seek the services of professionals.