



**May 2010**

## **Spring Cleaning**

After a long, Michigan winter we welcome spring with open arms. April showers give way to sunshine and longer days; it's time for renewal and an re-awakening of our senses.

It's also the season for that tried-and-true household tradition: Spring cleaning. I don't know about you, but I tend to really notice the winter's accumulation of clutter, dust and grime when there's more natural light pouring into my home! That means it's time to stock up on cleaning products, buy a new mop and a pull on a fresh pair of rubber gloves.

Years ago, spring cleaning meant days of dusting, mopping, wiping and scouring; a job that usually landed on the shoulders of the lady of the house (with assistance from the rest of the family). It meant a complete top-to-bottom cleaning of every square inch of the home and often included removing, cleaning, and replacing an extensive list of household items to create that spring-fresh feeling. Who has time for a project like that in today's busy world?

But let's be honest; nothing feels better than a home that looks and smells clean, fresh and uncluttered, and this is the perfect time of year to make that happen. (And if you're planning on putting your home on the market, it's not an option...it's a MUST!)

It's also a great time to add a few easy, inexpensive (but high-impact) improvements. Whether you're selling your house or simply enjoying living in it, this short list of "must-do" Spring chores and a few quick spruce-up tips will help make your house look as beautiful as the season. --Darla

### **1. Storing Seasonal Clothing**

Unless you're blessed with multiple, spacious closets, there's a good chance you perform the annual "changing of the clothes" ritual. Packing away your winter sweaters, coats and other cold weather clothing properly will save unnecessary damage to your wardrobe. Selecting the proper storage items is important. Encase hanging items in plastic garment bags and use large plastic bins with tight-fitting lids for sweaters and other foldable items. If you're reusing bags or containers, wipe

them out thoroughly with a damp cloth and allow to dry completely before use. And always store your clothing in a cool, dark, dry area.

Be sure the clothing you store has been laundered or dry cleaned; moths are attracted to the smell of humans. Moth balls can be dangerous and most people find the lingering aroma unpleasant. Some natural alternatives include sachets of bay leaves, cinnamon or lavender. These scents not only repel moths but leave your clothing with a lovely scent to look forward to when you unpack in the fall.

**TIP:** Make a simple, inexpensive sachet using some of those unmatched socks you have lying around the house (you know you have a bag full of them). Simply put a handful of bay leaves, cinnamon sticks or lavender in a clean sock and tie it closed with a rubber band or string.

## **2. Check Appliances**

Spring is the perfect time to inspect your major appliances for wear and tear. The coils of the refrigerator should be vacuumed, and the drain pan should be cleaned out. Accumulated lint needs to be cleaned from the dryer vents. A dirty vent not only makes your dryer operate less efficiently, it is also a fire hazard. You can hire a service for this task, but it's actually simple to [clean your dryer vent](#) on your own.

Clean out accumulated gunk from your oven and refrigerator. Clean dishwashers, disposals, and washing machines. This is a good time for a professional inspection of your heating and cooling units, or at the very least, a great time to change/clean your HVAC filter. And don't forget to check or change the battery in your smoke detectors.

## **3. Clutter Control**

Try the "four- container clutter method" to help figure out items that need to be kept, sold, given away, or trashed. If paper clutter is one of a problem, this is a great time to invest in a small filing cabinet that can be stashed away in a closet to keep bills, mail and other paperwork organized and out of site. And remember; the best way to reduce paper clutter is to avoid it in the first place: unsubscribe to unwanted catalogs or mailings and use electronic billing and statements for household bills.

Remember, if your home is on the market, de-cluttering may be the single most important thing you do to make your home look spacious, clean and cared-for.

## **4. Closets, Cabinets and Cubbies**

While you're switching your summer and winter clothing is a good time to vacuum out drawers, replace paper liners, vacuum closets and dust shelving. Don't forget the linen closet; you can pack away the heavy blankets and flannel sheets along with your winter clothing and give those shelves a thorough wipe-down, as well. In the bathroom, clean out medicine cabinets and under vanities and discard old or expired cosmetics and medications. (Be sure to dispose of medications properly, where children or animals cannot access them. Most pills and liquid medicines can be flushed.)

**Tip for home sellers:** potential buyers WILL open your cabinets and closets. Make sure you're putting your home's best foot forward even behind closed doors.

## **5. Garage Storage**

Spring is garage sale season, and all this spring cleaning is likely to leave you with a few unwanted items that are too good to throw away. What a great time to tackle that garage and get ready for your neighborhood garage sale. If you have an active family, chances are your garage looks like a sporting goods store. There are some great organizers made especially for this purpose. Consider shoe racks for various sports footwear, and special hangers for golf clubs and other equipment. You can even hang bikes from inexpensive coated ceiling hooks. Getting bikes off the floor prevents damage to your cars and your bikes, and makes them harder to steal if the garage is accidentally left open.

Some metal shelving and plastic storage bins or wire baskets create a simple solution for keeping small items like garden tools, toys and other clutter out of sight. Store garden chemicals in bins on the top shelves and get them out of the reach of children and critters. This is also a great time to replace those cracked or broken trash bins.

## **6. Exterior and Outdoor Living Areas**

Don't forget your outdoor living areas. Clean your outdoor furniture according to the manufacturer's instructions and replace cushions that are worn or faded.

This is a good time to inspect shrubs and trees for winter damage and prepare beds for planting. A fresh dressing of mulch will make your gardens look cleaner and more manicured even with nothing in bloom. For a quick burst of color before the last frost, try planting some inexpensive, cold-tolerant pansies in pots and high visibility areas.

Inspect exterior doors and windows of the home. Why not consider a fresh coat of paint in a fun color for your front door; a quick, easy trick that can transform the look of your home. Check patios and decks for loose pavers or boards, and think about adding low-voltage or solar lighting to emphasize your summer plantings. It's easy to install, affordable, and creates wonderful impact. Invest in some inexpensive, colorful lanterns and planters and you'll be ready for your first party of the season.

## **7. Window Treatments and Decor**

Spring is a great time to inspect and clean window treatments. Whether you need to wash blinds, send drapes to the dry cleaners, or throw curtains into the washing machine, getting your window treatments clean after a long winter can brighten an entire room. Be sure to dust down the window casing, wash window sills, and clean and polish window hardware while you are at it.

Spring is also a good time to consider a lighter look on your windows. A seasonal switch from heavy fabrics to lighter organza or even bare windows can create a light, casual look. Consider switching your throw pillows, as well, from tapestries to silk and cotton, or switch dark accent colors for light. Easy-to-sew slip-covers are a great way to change the look of your pillows.

Although this list may seem daunting, tackling a project or two a weekend and enlisting help from family members will make it easier to handle...and you might even have some fun in the process. Don't hesitate to hire some of it out; neighborhood teens are always happy to make a few extra dollars and can make some of the heavy work a little easier for you.

And when you've completed your list, treat yourself to a big bouquet of seasonal flowers. There's no better way to bring spring indoors!

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