

Steve's Timely Tune-up Tips for Homeowners:

➤ **Start the New Year out right by owning your "stuff."**

Don't let your "stuff" own you! Start the process of getting rid of things you don't really need. It has taken my wife and I several years to pare things down, and we're still not done. Gradually, one drawer or closet at a time, determine the things you need and get rid of the rest. I have seen way too many people leave this task to their children after they are gone. Don't do that to your kids! Even if you are only 30 years old, it's never too early to take control of your "stuff"!

➤ **Considering a remodeling project that involves tiling (bath, kitchen, backsplash, etc.)?** Always remember to buy and save extra tiles for each application! Inevitably, one or more of the tiles will crack over time and they will be almost impossible to match exactly. If you are lucky and none ever crack, you still may want them so you can take them to a decorating store to match paint, wallpaper, etc. when you do a partial remodel of the same room. And subsequent owners of your home will be deeply grateful for the extras!

➤ **Building permits that don't get FINALED by your local building department are sure to cause you future problems.** Whenever you hire a contractor to work on your property and the work requires a building permit, be sure that the contractor gets the permit closed (or FINALED) by the building department BEFORE you make your final payment to the contractor. Failure to get permits FINALED is becoming an epidemic! I've had to get 10 year old permits FINALED before a closing. It can be a real problem and could delay a closing.

➤ **Here are a couple of yearly tasks that can easily be forgotten.** Right after you have filed your tax return, change all of the batteries in your smoke detectors. Also, attach a hose to the bottom of your water heater and drain off several gallons of water. There will be a lot of sediment in the bottom of the tank that will drain out when doing this. The sediment can shorten the life of your water heater by several years if left untouched. **Careful!! The water will be hot.**

➤ **Before you start your gardening projects for the year, remember one of the most important ones!** Be sure the grade slopes away from your foundation to keep water

out of your basement. And don't plant anything near the foundation. Plants need water; your basement doesn't! It is generally best to create the positive grade, then tack down some heavy plastic for the 2' to 3' nearest your foundation, then cover the plastic with rocks or some kind of mulch. This procedure will help to insure dry basements and easy lawn mowing.

➤ **Thinking of installing a privacy fence around the back yard in June?** Remember all the snow last winter when you start planning the location of the fence near the driveway or alley. Where will you put all the snow if the new fence is right by the driveway and / or alley? Set the fence a few feet back from the alley or away from the driveway if you can, and you will forever be thankful you did. You may lose a few square feet of yard space, but you will gain an enormous amount of convenience when the snow starts to fall.

➤ **If you have storm windows (or screens) separate from your interior windows, you may notice some small holes, or a small gap, between the sill of the window and the storm (screen) window.** DO NOT CAULK THAT SHUT! The purpose of these "weep holes" is to let water that accumulates during a rain storm to drain out from between the interior window and the storm window. If you caulk the weep holes shut to prevent drafts, you may end up rotting out your sills because the water has nowhere to go.

➤ **Take some great photos of your home when everything is in full bloom, or call me and I'll take the photos for you.** You never know when you are going to need to, or want to sell. Summer photos, taken while everything is lush and green, can be VERY valuable if you decide to sell your home when the market is generally at its best in March or early April, well before the foliage even begins to bloom. Digital photos cost nothing to take, are easy to save and can be the key to a quick sale, whether that happens next year or even years in the future. **Call me!**

Steve and Chris are on
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Steve's Timely Tune-up Tips (continued)...

➤ **Is the heating season is coming?!** Get your furnace or boiler cleaned and tuned while prices are low and the heating guys aren't very busy. And save the paperwork! If you need to sell sometime during the next year, buyers will want to know that the heating system is in good working order. Also, the "clean and tune" will make your heating system much more efficient. Finally, you may find out that the system needs replacement. Better to do that in September than in the middle of a deep freeze in January!

➤ **Are the holidays approaching?** Enjoy a beautiful fall day by taking care of some of the inevitable pre-winter tasks such as hanging your holiday lights outside, getting your gutters cleaned (be careful!!) and cleaning your dryer vent. Also, give your trees and shrubs a REALLY good soaking before putting the hose away so they don't go into winter stressed. These all have to be done, and if you plan ahead, you can save yourself some frostbite when the weather gets more winter-like. There are plenty of other things to do in November and December anyway.

➤ **With no offense to my friends and clients in the retail business, consider an alternative to the hassle of holiday shopping.** Instead of exchanging presents for Christmas, birthdays, etc. our family members take the money they would have spent on gifts and contribute the money to our Family Travel Fund savings account. Three years ago, we had accumulated enough to take the whole family to Hawaii for two weeks. It took 5 years to save up enough, but the memories from the trip far outweigh the value of the "stuff" we would have exchanged.

➤ **Buying new appliances, a new furnace, a snow blower or any other "big ticket" items?** Once you get it home (or installed), take out your magic marker and date the item. It is amazing how easily we forget what year the water heater, furnace, etc. was installed, and it is such a hassle to look back through years and years of receipts or credit card statements to determine how old the item is. Buyers always want to know the age of these kinds of things, so make it easy for them, and save yourself a lot of research.

➤ **Remember how frustrating it can be** to try to shovel your deck when there are screws or nails that have loosened up over time and stop your snow shovel dead in its tracks! The screws or nails prevent your shovel from smoothly gliding over the surface. Mark your calendar for spring, summer or next fall to take care of the little task of driving those loose nails or screws in tight. It will make shoveling next winter so much easier!

➤ **Are you thinking of building** a set of cubbies in your back hallway for winter boots? Consider building the cubbies in such a way that the wet or snowy boots can be stored on their sides rather than upright. When stored on their sides, the bottoms of the boots will dry out much more quickly than if you store them upright because more air can get to the wet surfaces, and gravity will take care of the run-off.

➤ **Your dishwasher has a filter!** I have had a dishwasher for 25 years or more and never knew there was a filter at the bottom of the dishwashing compartment. I checked some manufacturer's recommendations and found that the filter on many models should be cleaned about once a month. Who knew? Be sure to check your dishwasher's owner's manual for scheduled cleaning intervals and the method to clean the filter. My dishwasher now performs like it was brand new!

➤ **Icy sidewalks and driveways?** It is certainly a safety measure, and even a common courtesy to be sure your icy sidewalks and driveways are sanded (and perhaps salted) so they are not so slippery. However, be careful what product you use! Remember that you may be using a snow blower at some later time to clean the snow off the sidewalks and driveway. If you have used a type of sand that is commonly referred to as "grit" (a larger type of sand that is actually more like little pebbles), your snow blower may end up throwing those little pebbles through a neighbor's window.

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