

FALL HOME

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SUPPLEMENT TO THE RECORD-EAGLE

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Facing fall cleanup and winter prep

BY ERIN ANDERSON

Special to the Record-Eagle

Although it may be hard to say good-bye to summer, some folks are more than ready to leave behind the constant upkeep of their lawn and gardens for a few months.

But before you put away the hoses and lock up your gardening tools, take advantage of autumn's ample opportunities for proper winter preparation.

Home exterior

It may not technically be part of your yard, but the appearance of your home exterior is often visitors' first impression. No matter how lovely your landscaping or flawless your fertilizing, dingy vinyl siding, scuffed stairs, or a deck in disrepair can overshadow your overall hard work.

Fall's a great time to take care of this kind of routine maintenance. Powerwash that deck, sand it down and apply a water-repellent finish to protect it from winter water damage. And power washing is a simple and effective way to rid your vinyl siding of dirt and debris.

One of the most dreaded fall routines is cleaning out clogged gutters. It's a taxing task for anyone, requiring long sessions of standing on a ladder, bent at awkward angles. And if you're older, it can be downright dangerous. But there is a way to complete this clean-up and still keep both feet firmly on the ground. Most hardware and lawn care stores sell a device that attaches to the end of your hand-held leaf blower and is a curved tube that reaches up and into your gutters, allowing you to blow out the leaves.



Record-Eagle/Douglas Tesner

To do fall cleanup and winter prep correctly, you need the right stuff — such as the tools and products pictured here at Pinehill Nursery in Traverse City.

Larkin Lawn & Garden in Traverse City sells a model made by Stihl that has a 12-foot long tube allowing almost anyone to operate it without setting foot on a ladder.

No time to tackle these tasks yourself? Many lawn and landscaping services, like Traverse City's Evergreen Landscaping & Irrigation, provide customers with typical "fall clean-up" service. But they'll also transplant and rearrange your perennials,

pull any dead annuals still lingering, winterize your irrigation system and—yes—even clean your gutters!

Lawn

If you have an irrigation system, Stacy and Tony Moller, owners of Evergreen, remind that these systems must have the water removed from their lines or it will freeze inside and cause cracking and even more costly, bursting.

Most irrigation services, such as Lautner Irrigation,

Inc. in Traverse City, will perform this service for you, regardless of whether or not you purchased your system from them. Lautner recommends trying to have your irrigation system winterized by Nov. 1 and they typically begin scheduling appointments about six weeks prior.

Plants

While most people know that fall is the best time to plant bulbs, less known is that autumn is actually an optimal time for a multitude

of planting.

"Fall is a good time to plant almost everything," said Jeanine Rubert, co-owner of Pine Hill Nurseries in Traverse City and Kewadin.

Rubert explained that the majority of a plant's root development occurs in the fall when the air is cool, but the soil temperature is still warm. Therefore, planting perennials, shrubs and most varieties of trees during this

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Kitchen cabinet makeovers 101 has multiple choices

BY MICHELLE ARNTZ

Special to the Record-Eagle

Opting to re-do kitchen cabinets over buying new ones calls for some decisions. Should you paint your cabinets? Or add a faux finish? Stencil around the existing cabinets? What color? What type of sheen? What theme?

Doing research via the Internet, library, watching home improvement programs or visiting local hardware stores can offer good ideas for the do-it-yourselfer.

Painting

Mark King, assistant manager of Gill-Roy's Hardware in Traverse City, tells his customers that preparation is everything when painting kitchen cabinets.

"The first step would be to wash them with something like TSP (Trisodium Phosphate) and then dry your cupboards. This will remove grease and waxy build-up," said King.

He added that TSP in the granulated form, diluted with warm water, is economical to use. A one-

pound container, at \$2.99 a pound, is the homeowner's first expense. Dish soap and water works, too.

King said that after you tape off or remove the doors' hardware, primer should be applied. This will allow the new paint to adhere and serve as a base coat on the wood or laminate.

When choosing paint, King advises his customers to read the labels on the can, which list the contents in order of volume.

"If titanium oxide is found at the bottom of the list, you might want to choose another brand," said King.

While paint containing more titanium oxide is more expensive, he assures that it will go farther and cover better. Gill-Roy's recommends Do-It-Best paints, which is actually a product of Sherwin-Williams, or something from the Behr line.

King also knows the importance of investing in a good brush. Running an inexpensive one along the side of his hand, he demonstrates how the bristle tops

scatter into the air.

"If you were to use this brush, those hairs would end up painted onto your cabinets," he said.

When using a latex paint, a synthetic bristle is best. For oils, King recommends a pure bristle for a smooth finish. Custom painters know that the 100 percent china bristle brush will allow the oil to soak into the brush, eliminating surface streaks for a clean finish.

Mineral spirits should be used to clean brushes used in oil-based paints, while soap and water will remove latex paint.

If you would rather use a roller for flat-surfaced cabinets, King suggested that removing the doors would be easier than cleaning off hardware that might get smudged. Using a sprayer to paint your kitchen cabinets is a third choice, although not recommended by King.

"The sprayers are not all that user-friendly. It is hard to get the correct consistency when watering down the paint," he said.

Faux finishes

Photo by Michelle Arntz

Mark King, assistant manager at Gill-Roy's Hardware in Traverse City, looks over paint selections with customer Don Kempa.

Painting your kitchen cabinets a new color is just one choice for do-it-yourselfers. Pickling, woodgraining, whitewashing, stressing, and marbling are just a few

techniques introduced to the design-on-a-dime generation of weekend-warrior decorators.

According to Carl Vincent, an associate in Home

Depot, these techniques are easy to learn, and with patience, quality results are possible.

"There is a definite trend

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