

# Top 5 of 5: Getting ready for ole man winter

20/10/2012 by SLS



I don't think there is any doubt left that winter is right around the corner. Just this last week when in Philly, I was left scraping my window with a credit card as I hadn't put the scraper back in the car. As the seasons start to change, there are a few things you might want to double check to prevent any nasty surprises when the snow does start flying or finding out about after the snow melts...



Say goodbye to summer...

As winter will soon be here... Special thanks to John Poole for allowing us to use these great pictures of the [1750 Hawkins](#) house.



## Your vehicle:

- [Check your car or truck](#) and make sure that any small problems are taken care of.
- Create a winter emergency kit and put it in the trunk (snow chains, flares, water, high energy snacks, blankets, a flashlight with spare batteries, jumper cables, and a first aid kit)
- Check your antifreeze levels & condition – it isn't just help keep your engine from overheating
- Check your windshield wipers & washer levels – if fluid is needed use the version that will resist freezing not water
- Oh yeah & don't forget the ice scraper, your car might not always be parked in a garage

## Outside your House:

- [Take care of those pesky leaves](#) & take care of any shrubs or trees that are dead or maybe rubbing against your house
- Make sure all exposed water pipes are insulated or wrapped with heat tape. You will also want to drain & blow out faucets to [prevent frozen water lines](#)
- Before any big rains (or snow) & as the last of the leaves fall make sure you [clean your gutters](#)
- Clean any debris off your roof, especially in the valley area paying special attention for any missing or damaged areas on the roof – It is best to make the repairs now before the snow, water & ice make it worse
- [Close your foundation \(crawl space\) vents](#) & also check for cracks /or missing or damaged caulking / grout

## Landscaping & Gardening Implements

- It's time to disconnect, drain, roll, and store your hoses for next season
- Now is also a great time to wash out your garbage cans & disinfect them
- If you have a sprinkler system, it's time to shut it down & blow compressed air through it or you might be finding yourself playing the "find the break" game come spring
  - Having lived in Phoenix where numerous people seed their grasses with Rye for the winter, this is something you generally don't have to worry about – with that said if you see that it will be getting down to 25° it would be a good idea to drain them for those few nights
- Clean, sharpen, oil, and store tools and equipment in a dry location. This is generally a great time of year to get your equipment serviced as many people wait till spring & many places are slow
- Planters (especially terra cotta) should be cleaned, allowed to dry well, and stored unless you like your yard looking like an archeological dig site

## Inside the house:

- Consider a DIY energy audit or better yet hiring a professional to not only help make your home more comfortable and efficient but to also help prevent issues like ice dams. Please remember it actually takes acting on said audit results to get results like [air sealing & fixing weather stripping](#).
- If you do not have storm windows & it feels drafty around them, consider using interior storms which can either consist of special panels or [DIY plastic kits](#) which just require a blow dryer. For some other tips & tricks – John Poole did a piece on [window treatments for historic homes](#) & has a good discussion going on this subject at [Home Energy Pros](#)
- If you haven't checked your [smoke detectors](#) or [carbon monoxide detectors](#) like you should please do so now
- While you are switching over to wintertime sheets & the weather is still relatively warm, consider doing a "fall-cleaning" which will help eliminate one worry for those that have [family coming in for the holiday's](#)
- Time to get your main heating system serviced – you know what happens when you do not – the heat does not work and it seems that everyone else will have the same issue at the same time.

## Heating your Home:

- Time to check & replace your filters to not only help the units run more efficiently but prevent pre-mature failure
- Check to make sure all your heating vents are clear & if they are in the floor that there are not any toys or items in them. Along those lines remember that one should have a minimum 3' clear area around all heaters, fireplaces, etc...
- [Check all portable heaters](#) for proper UL listings & that there are no frayed cords or other issues – consider replacing any "vent free types" as they produce a ton of humidity & if not working properly, carbon monoxide
- Make sure you close the fireplace damper when it is not in use & your chimney is cleaned by a certified professional yearly – [www.ncsg.org](#), [www.csia.org](#) are two national organizations that certify chimney sweeps & try to only burn dry seasoned wood
- Whether you have a heat pump or just a regular AC unit, make sure you remove any leaves or debris that accumulate on the ground near the coils as [mice love these cozy little areas](#) and can make quite a mess of you system (and they make nice raiding camps as they try to infiltrate your home). While many cover outdoor AC units with a tarp or board to prevent issues with snow or ice falling on them, you will need to find another way if you have a heat pump.