

Clean gutters can ease winter woes

Many homeowners are winterizing their homes to ensure they won't incur any problems from the harsh winter weather. Yet, among the most overlooked areas of home maintenance are the gutters.

According to Tom Hutchins, owner of HandyPro Handyman Service in Southfield, proper gutter maintenance in the fall can eliminate many potential problems homeowners can face during the winter months.

Most people spend a lot of time putting away lawn furniture, changing their furnace filters or making sure their windows are sealed with weather-stripping, but they neglect to clean and check the gutters, Hutchins said.

If the home's gutters are full of leaves and debris, aren't properly aligned or have leaks in the seams, it could cause problems when the winter snows melt in the spring.

To ensure gutters are ready for the winter, Hutchins suggests the following tips:

- Clean leaves and other debris from the inside of the gutters, and make sure the holes going to the downspouts are clear to allow water to run freely.
- Check the seams in the gutters and downspouts for leaks. If the seams are leaking, clean the seam with a wire brush to remove old caulk or adhesive, and recaulk with a silicone caulk.
- Make sure the downspouts drain far enough away from the home to avoid puddles in the grass. Buy downspout extensions to help the water drain farther from the home if necessary.
- Check the gutters to ensure they are aligned properly to allow water to flow to the downspouts. If they aren't aligned properly, reposition them to increase the water flow toward the downspouts.

Properly working gutters allow water to drain quickly and away from the house, which helps alleviate the potential for ice dams building up and causing roof leaks, Hutchins said.

Water from leaky gutters can also drip on a porch or sidewalk, which could then freeze and cause someone to slip and fall, he said.

While some gutter maintenance is fairly simple, others could be more complicated for the average homeowner, especially if people don't like to be on top of their roof, he said.

The company has its corporate location in Plymouth, and has franchise locations in Farmington Hills and Ann Arbor. For more information, call (800) 9-HANDY-4.

Put people in your landscapes

Most landscape photographers, myself included, attempt to produce as strong an image as possible using the techniques of proper center of interest, framing, directional lead-in lines, etc. But rarely do we include people in the picture.

There may be times, however, when a landscape isn't strong enough on its own and the inclusion of a person can be an important addition to the composition.

For example, a person can add scale to a photograph to get the feel of the height of a waterfall or the size of a mountain. An isolated person can be an effective way of showing the desolation or lonely aspect of a region.

I remember once photographing a pagoda in a remote area of China. After composing the shot, I concluded that the silhouette of a person was needed to make the picture really strong. I waited three hours for someone to arrive, but the wait paid off.

The picture shown here is another example. I was photographing in the Swiss Alps trying to capture the grandeur of these great mountains. Many of the pictures came out spectacular, but I thought I could add another dimension by having a person in the picture. My thought became real when a woman and her dog out for a hike appeared in my viewfinder.

Adding a person is also a very good means to illustrate a particular activity in a certain area.

For instance, if photographing an overall of the country in Ireland, including a sheepherder,

FOCUS ON PHOTOGRAPHY

MONTE NAGLER

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adds that special touch. If shooting the canals in Venice, wait for the gondolier to appear in the scene.

Study your landscape before you shoot and ask yourself if the inclusion of a person would help. Remember, there may be times when you can use a friend or traveling companion as the perfect model.

Monte Nagler is a fine art photographer based in Farmington Hills. You can leave him a message by dialing (734) 953-2047 on a touch-tone phone. His fax number is (248) 644-1314.

Swiss mist: The grandeur of the Swiss Alps is brought into scale by adding the woman and her dog into the composition. Photo by Monte Nagler.

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