



HOME & GARDEN

Summer 2014

Care for Your Gutters



Summer is the perfect season to keep up with gutter care. Rain can absolutely batter your gutters during the spring, while the fall and winter bring falling leaves, ice and snow into the mix.

Protective homeowners use the summer season to give their gutters some TLC before and after the elements come into play. Doing so can help identify leaks, cracks or blocked downspouts that can lead to costly repairs once the weather turns.

So between vacations or trips to the beach, be sure to spend a Saturday afternoon checking in on one of the most important structural aspects to your home: The gutter system.

CLEANING SAFETY

A simple cleaning can go a long way to extending the life of your gutters. If you choose to undertake this project yourself, keep in mind some safety tips:

- Make sure you have a sturdy standalone ladder – one that you don't have to lean against the home or gutter system.
- Always take your time heading up and down a ladder, and make sure to let a family member know that you will be doing ladder work.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help in studying the ladder as you use it.
- Also, remember a durable pair of gloves and protective eyewear. The last thing you want to happen is to poke one of your eyes with a twig or small branch.

CHECK YOUR WORK

Once you clean out all of the leaves, sticks and other obstructions, check for leaks. Rinse the gutter downspout with a garden hose to remove all leftover items and check for smooth water flow. Crank the hose up a bit, allowing you to really test your gutters for leaks or blockages.

Obstructed downspouts can lead to water and, eventually, ice buildup once the weather turns colder. This can contribute to shingle damage and even interior leaks – both potentially costly issues that can be mitigated with some simple gutter care.

Get Checked for Mold

Mold growth inside or underneath your home can be a serious issue that most experts recommend treating immediately.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), molds produce potentially harmful allergens, irritants and potentially toxic substances. Inhaling or touching mold can cause allergic reactions in sensitive individuals, including sneezing, runny nose, red eyes and skin rash.

Molds can also cause asthma attacks for certain people, while also affecting the eyes, skin, nose, throat and lungs – even for people not allergic to mold.

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

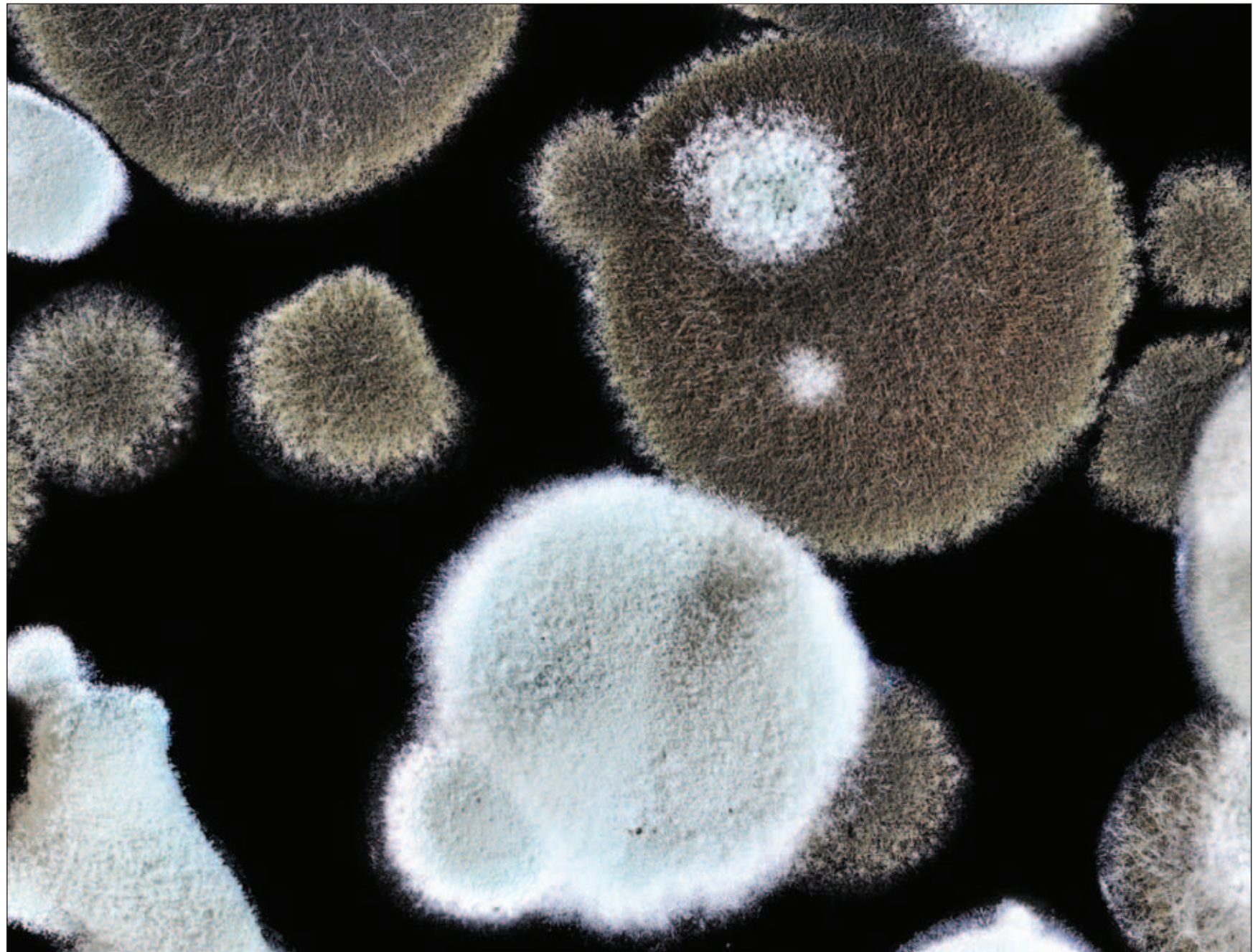
The cause of interior mold growth is almost always traced back to moisture. And while it is impossible to rid your home of all mold and mold spores, according to the EPA, most can be eliminated by controlling indoor moisture.

If there is mold growth in your home and you choose to simply treat the mold without correcting the moisture issue, then you will likely continue to see mold issues within your home.

WHO SHOULD CLEAN MOLD?

If you or a mold inspector identified mold growing in your home, it is time to decide how to resolve the issue. Who should do the cleanup depends on a number of factors.

One consideration the EPA urges homeowners to weigh is the size of



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the mold problem. If the moldy areas is less than about 10 square feet, the EPA states that homeowners can probably take care of the problem themselves with proper cleaning solutions and care.

GOING PROFESSIONAL

If you choose to hire a contractor or professional service provider, it is up to you to perform your due diligence to ensure you hire a reputable, respected business.

Make sure the contractor has experience cleaning up mold. Ask for references or past customers and ask the contractor if he or she will be following EPA recommendations, which can easily be found on the EPA's website.

Exterior Painting Tips

Worn-down wood? Chipped siding? Rain-damaged panels? It may be time to invest in a little exterior painting to liven up your home's exterior.

Slapping on some new, bright color to the outside of your house can add immediate curb appeal and value, as well as protection from the rain, snow and other elements.

The project can be expensive if you choose to hire professionals, while it can be tedious, time-consuming and logistically difficult for the average homeowner to take on.

PREP THE PROJECT

If home's exterior has damage, such as rotting wood or deteriorated window trim, you should consider replacing it before the painting process begins. You may as well spend a little extra time and money completing prepping your home for its new paint job to get full value out of the improvement.

Also, if you're changing from siding to paint, you will have to either remove it yourself or be prepared to pay extra to have it taken care of professionally.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT COLOR

Your best bet in choosing color is picking one similar to your present exterior color. This will ensure the least amount of coats, therein saving you time and money in the process.

If you're thinking about pulling a complete 180, be sure to consider your existing landscaping, foundation

color and even neighborhood color scheme before settling on a final color.

If you plan on re-selling your home in the coming years, an earth-toned color may be your best bet in keeping things neutral for when your home hits the market.

SPRAY OR HAND-PAINTED?

The technique you decide to use can play a major factor in the final product looking good. Most paint companies you will find prefer to spray, which saves them time and money.

Check with prospective contractors to see how much they will charge for hand-painting. They may ask for more based on the added amount of time it would take to complete the project, but the final result may be worth it.



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Electronic Pet Fencing

Traffic, wild animals and stray dogs. There are countless distractions in your surrounding area that could cause your dog to run off of your property.

This can lead to potentially negative situations, including injuries, unhappy neighbors or even fatal car-dog collisions.

An electronic fence might be the answer to keeping your dog safe and sound in its own yard. Depending on how much space you have and how you decide to set up your boundaries, you could still allow your pet plenty of room to roam and explore.

WHAT IS ELECTRONIC PET FENCING?

An electronic fence typically consists of boundary wire, a transmitter and a receiver. The receiver is attached to your pet's collar while the boundary wire is buried around the perimeter of your property.

The transmitter sends a radio signal along the wire, which is picked up by your pet's collar and emits a warning sound when the boundary is approached. Multiple pets can usually be placed on the same system, but each pet needs its own programmed collar to work.

TRAIN YOUR PET

Many fencing companies offer tips for training – which can take two to three weeks to complete – as part of their installation package. Depending on the system you settle on, the correction your pet will feel when he gets too close to the



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boundary is generally comparable to a carpet-caused household shock.

There are different variances, so be sure to talk over your options with your pet fencing professionals to make sure are comfortable with the system and its warnings.

SYSTEM MAINTENANCE

In order for the system to run properly, you will need to check it regularly. Inspect the boundary wire to make sure it is still intact and has a working power supply. Also, test the

battery in your dog's collar to make sure it is functioning properly.

Many fencing models include warning lights or sounds to let you know if a battery is running low in any of the parts. Again, consult your electronic pet fencing expert on any system-related questions.

Garage Door Safety

A well-ventilated, large garage is a bonus on any house. The storage for tools, toys and, of course, cars can make life a little easier, but there are also garage-related safety concerns to keep in mind.

First of all, garage doors serve as another way for criminals to enter your home. Making sure they are properly locked and safeguarded is key to ensuring your family's safety.

Garage doors can also serve as a potential safety threat to small children and pets, who can be crushed under the weight of a heavy door that is accidentally closed.

COMMON SAFETY TIPS

In order to keep children safe from garage doors, it is best to keep remote controls and other control buttons away from them. Teach children never to play with them and to never to place their fingers between door sections.

In case of a crisis situation, it is good to know how to use the garage door's emergency release feature. This knowledge can be a major factor in avoiding injury during an accident.

GENERAL MAINTENANCE

You can stay ahead of potential garage door issues by visually inspecting the door every month. Take a close look at all of the door

parts, including the springs, cables and pulleys for signs of distress.

If you notice something amiss, it's probably best to call a trained repairman to make adjustments. Springs and pulleys that are improperly attached can fly

off during repair, sending a dangerous projectile in the air.

HOME SECURITY

Criminals may target homes if they know the owners are on vacation, and the

garage may be the place they start.

Many openers come equipped with rolling-code technology, which automatically changes the access code each time the opener is used. This helps prevent code-grabbing, a type of electronic

infiltration that thieves can utilize to freely enter garage doors.

It is up to you before a vacation to unplug the garage door unit or use a vacation lock that eliminates the chance of any opener working on your door.



Hardscaping Can Be Easy

Hardscaping doesn't have to be hard at all. In fact, with a little creativity and sweat equity, hardscaping can be an enjoyable experience that adds serious style points to your home's outdoor areas.

So what is hardscaping? It involves all of the design elements on your property that aren't plants, grass or flowers. This sector of your landscaping strategy includes retaining walls, fire pits, decks, fences, paved walkways and sculptures.

Many hardscaping-specific specialty stores and contractors have popped up in recent years, as the practice has become big business. And because so many projects involve factors that can effect yard slope, water drainage and electrical add-ons, it may be your best bet to hire an accredited professional to help safely and compliantly achieve your outdoor vision.

DO IT YOURSELF

If you're feeling handy and confident in handling certain projects, you can certainly save some money in your budget by doing the work yourself. If you do decide to go the DIY route, there are some things to remember as you prepare.

Research is key. Watch tutorials, talk with trained professionals, ask your hardware specialist – feeling comfortable scouting out a project will help you cover your bases before you jump in.

Also, check with your municipality to see if you need a permit and to ensure that you're complying with local bylaws.

CATER TO THE SPACE

Do you live in a country setting with ample space for outdoor



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additions? Or is your living situation more suburban with a limited yard? Either option can be greatly enhanced with strategically added touches.

Outdoor kitchens, family rooms, barbecue areas, fire pits and greenhouses can all be awe-inspiring additions, if space allows. Smaller quarters may require only a stone

walkway or outdoor sitting area to spruce things up.

Analyze your space to make an educated decision on your hardscaping plans.

PLANNING IS KEY

When adding outdoor elements, it isn't necessary to build everything at

once or incorporate all items at the same time.

As long as you have a plan for how the entire space will eventually be laid out, you can save yourself some time – and money – by waiting for great deals on certain items before purchasing them for your hardscaping purposes.

Summer Storm Fire Safety

As the temperature heats up, most people will identify tornadoes and hurricanes as the most dangerous aspects of the summer storm season. But what about the potential threat of fire that can occur both during and after a summer storm?

The U.S. Fire Administration encourages Americans to recognize the danger that exists by not preparing to protect themselves from such an incident. Preparedness, the organization says, is key to ensuring optimum safety. Here are a few tips from the group regarding various aspects of fire safety:

ELECTRICAL SAFETY

- Safely turn off the power to your home if it has sustained flood or water damage.
- Avoid touching any wires on the ground or floor – treat them all as live.
- Report downed or damaged power lines to the utility company or emergency services.
- Have a licensed electrician check your home for damage.

GAS SAFETY

- Smell and listen for leaky gas connections.
- If there are signs of a gas leak, immediately leave your home and leave the door open.
- Never strike a match, as any size flame can cause a deadly explosion.

OTHER TIPS

- Never use a candle for emergency lighting.
- Keep your smoke alarms furnished with charged batteries.
- Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, as well as inside and outside of sleeping areas.
- Keep any nearby fire hydrants clear of debris for easy access by the fire department.
- Lightning associated with thunderstorms can electrocute on contact, split trees and cause fires.

