

Welcome to our new Newsletter format! We hope that this new design will make our monthly maintenance advice easier and more interesting for you to read.

April Air Conditioning Care

If you only do one maintenance job this month, then this is the job to do (if you have central air). Warmer weather is just around the corner, and you will want your air conditioning system to be ready to go. The **four** maintenance tasks that we describe below will help save you energy (especially at today's sky-high energy costs), operate safely, and avoid costly repairs and inconveniences.

1. Clean water drain. If you want to avoid the fun of filling out insurance forms for water damage, then checking your air conditioner's water drain once a year is a good idea.

In addition to cooling the air in your home, in doing so it also de-humidifies the air. In other words, it also takes water (humidity) out of the air. So where does this water go? Well if everything is working correctly, then around the blower unit inside your house, there will be condensate piping, or there will be a drain that when it fills up, a pump comes on and it pumps the water to where it can get out of your house.

But if the piping or drain is plugged, or if the drain hose is out of place, then this water will start pouring out. So if the unit is in your attic, here comes that water through your ceiling. Or if its in your basement, then whatever you have stored down there can now start saying hello to Mr. Mold.

So during April, its worth taking a minute to inspect your condensate drain and hoses, and make sure everything is in place and clear.

2. Replacing (or washing) your filters. Here's a task that can save you energy, make your home air safer to breathe, and reduce your allergies. If you haven't done it before, just look at the unit inside your home, and find the slot where about a one-inch

thick filter could slide in. Then take this filter to your local hardware store, and say "give me five of these" (one per month for the upcoming cooling season).

3. Cleaning outside unit. Now let's move outside. The big box with the fan inside it is called the "condenser" unit. This is where the warmth from the inside of your house is blown to the outside. If this unit is blocked, then it can't do its job very well, which guess what, it means the warmth doesn't get out of your house as well as it could . . . which costs you more in energy.



So its worth taking a minute to inspect your condenser unit and clearing away the leaves, dirt, bushes, etc that could be blocking the grills around it. NOTE: if you need to clean inside the unit, then be absolutely sure to cut off the power to it first.

4. Checking air distribution registers. If your air registers are only used for air conditioning (not heating), and you have closed them for the winter to reduce heat losses, then now is a good time to open them back up.

For additional information, you can go to the Air Conditioning Maintenance webpage of our online library at:

<http://www.home-wizard.com/maintenance/airconditioning.asp>

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Early Spring Lawn Care

For some of you, lawn care is a hobby and a source of joy, while for others it is just another household chore that has to be done. Either way, its Springtime, so ladies and gentlemen . . . start your pull cords!

There are two important maintenance tasks to do for your lawn during the month of April, that will help to keep your lawn healthy and looking nice:

Spring Cleanup. Spring cleanup involves raking up and removing the leaves and debris that has accumulated on your lawn over the Winter. Also, you should add mulch around the bases of your trees and shrubs, which will help keep moisture for them.

Early Spring Fertilizer and Crabgrass Control. Your lawn will look nicer for the season if you put down the appropriate fertilizer and crabgrass control during April, before the weather starts getting too warm.



For additional information, you can go to the Lawn Maintenance webpage of our online library at: <http://www.home-wizard.com/maintenance/lawncare.asp>

Garage Care

A garage typically had a very heavy door, and since it has your car going in and out of it, your garage tends to accumulate a significant amount of dirt and road salt, especially over the Winter. There are two maintenance tasks that you should do for your garage in April.



Lubricate and inspect garage door. Lack of lubrication puts additional strain on the garage door, leading to premature failure. For attached garages, poor weather-stripping or leaky windows cause heat losses which increase energy

costs. Therefore you should:

1. Clean the tracks, rollers and hinges. Since oiled tracks collect dirt, clean the tracks, rollers, and hinges with a rag dampened in paint thinner.
2. With the door in the down position, apply penetrating oil to the tracks, rollers and hinges. Wipe away any excess oil with a paper towel or rag.
3. Inspect bolts and screw to ensure all are properly tightened and secured.

4. Check the mechanical components (chains, pulleys, rollers, hinges, etc.) for signs of excessive wear.
5. Check for loose putty around windows.
6. Inspect weather-stripping at the bottom of the door to ensure it makes a tight seal when the door is closed.

Sweep dirt and salt from floor. Dirt from the garage is easily tracked inside, leading to carpet wear, airborne dust, etc. And in areas where road salt is used to melt ice, garage floors may begin to flake as the salt seeps into the concrete.



Using a broom, garden hose or power washer, sweep out dirt and accumulated road salt from the floor of the garage. Be careful though that you don't wash the road salt onto areas of grass or shrubbery, otherwise, the road salt can damage these areas.

Springtime is also a time that you should think about your garage door springs. Garage door springs are very powerful, since they have to lift a very heavy door. If you do not already have safety cables installed for them, you should consider adding them.

You can find out more about garage maintenance at: <http://www.home-wizard.com/maintenance/garage.asp>

Basement Window Well Cleaning

Pests love dirty basement window wells. If you have a basement (and 63% of you who have signed up for automatic maintenance reminders say that you do), then you likely have window wells that can fill up with debris over the winter. When they collect dirt and debris, this is a great place to begin to see leaks form, nests for insects, window frame corrosion, etc.



It only takes a minute to walk around your house and pull out the gunk that is in and around your basement window wells. While you are at it, also look to see if there is any dirt or debris against any of the wood on the outside of your house, as this is a great path for insects and moisture to find its way into your home.

You can find out more at:

<http://www.home-wizard.com/maintenance/basement.asp>