

# Fall Home Improvement

A Special Supplement to **Siuslaw News**

## PREPARE Your Home for WINTER

It's easy to remember to update your exterior paint job, refinish your deck or prepare your garden for the winter season. That's because we see those parts of our homes and yards on a daily basis. Not so for our hidden basements and crawlspaces.

Making some winter preparation updates to these under-appreciated portions of your home before cold weather hits can be one of the smartest moves you make this fall.

### Why Prep?

It's easy to overlook your basement and crawlspace, but doing so can put some of the most vital parts of your home's infrastructure at risk. Even if your basement is unfinished, it deserves your attention this fall to make sure everything is up to speed for the cold air that will soon be trying to infiltrate your home through any cracks in the foundation or drafty airways in your crawlspace.

### Vulnerable Systems

Basements and crawlspaces contain parts of the plumbing, electrical, heating and drainage systems. These systems are the life force of your home, and lack of proper maintenance could make for a miserable winter season.

All of them are vulnerable to winter's wrath, so giving them some preventive attention could pay off in the long run. Cold and moisture can cause havoc in your heating systems. Moisture can wreck the integrity of

electrical wires and cords.

Your plumbing pipes should be wrapped to prevent freezing, and any outside pipes should be drained of water and shut off for the winter. Hopefully, the walls of your basement are insulated. Caulk and seal your basement windows and doors for added pipe protection.

### DIY Tips & Expert Help

Once a season, it's a good idea to survey your crawlspace for any leaks or compromised sections. Look at the small window airways to make sure they are closed and ready to take on the blustery winds of winter. Fix any leaking pipes to avoid them freezing in the cold.

Of course, it's always a good idea to get your local experts involved in preparing your home for the winter. Sign up for your local heating and air company's inspection program to get your systems checked at reduced costs. Your local professional can inspect, clean and replace any problem elements in your heating system, leaving you feeling warm and toasty as winter approaches.



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## Preparing Flower Beds for Winter

Spring brings warmth and an abundance of beautiful flowers, but this gorgeous transformation doesn't happen on its own.

The preparation for that season really starts in the fall, as we protect our flower beds from winter.

Many of our flowers don't die but go into a dormancy period. The promise of life and beauty still remains unseen. All the while, those plants are growing new roots and absorbing nutrients and moisture from the soil.

While the plants do their jobs, it's up to us to prepare the environment around them to make sure everything blooms beautifully in the spring.

### Basic Steps

The most basic tasks for preparing a flower bed for winter are cleaning up and covering the soil. Depending on the size of your area, this can be a simple task. For those of us with supersized flower beds, this can be quite the challenge.

Sometimes the professionals need to make an appearance. Your local lawn and garden care specialist will be able to help you plan your preparation activities as you work together to protect your hard-earned landscape beauty.

They also will be able to guide you through various techniques and treatments

that can help your plants come back even stronger next year.

### Clean up

When taking on your flower bed preparations yourself, the first step is to clear out dead foliage. Put on your gardening gloves and remove any weeds or dead flowers. These materials can be composted and re-used as fertilizer for next year's plants. Removing this foliage also can keep pesky bugs and eggs from setting up camp this fall.

Always make sure you know which plants are perennials (your flowers that come back year after year). Pulling them is a mistake that can lead to sparse spots in next year's bed.

### Cover up

After cleaning up your area, it's time to cover the soil. Use mulch or even cover crops to achieve this goal. Leaves can make for great mulch, so collect them and add them to your compost pile.

There are lots of plants that can be used as cover crops; just ask your local home improvement store or nursery for the best options for your area.

