

# SPRING Home & Garden



# Garage Door Maintenance

Winter weather can quickly degrade important components on your garage door, causing them to rust or seize.

Since it's such an important part of your home that provides convenience and security, it must operate efficiently.

While general maintenance is straightforward, you can hire an expert overhead door technician if the job is too intimidating. During an inspection, they will highlight signs of deterioration and show you what to look for in the future. If you decide to tackle the chore on your own, consider these tips from the International Door Association.

## LUBRICATE

Overhead doors require many moving parts to perform smooth and efficiently. A way to maintain their integrity is by lubricating each component. This should include the rollers, hinges, bearings, springs and chains. The IDA suggests using a drop of engine oil on each roller, which will then distribute the lube to a door's bearings.

By lightly greasing the hinges and springs, you lessen the risks of the door becoming



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jammed and unusable. While engine oil is usually a suitable lubricant, check with the overhead unit's manufacturer to find out if there is a different fluid they recommend. Some may insist on a silicone lubricant or one made specifically for garage door components.

## TEST FOR BALANCE

You will likely notice obvi-

ous signs when an overhead door is unbalanced. Problems, like jamming, strange noises and delayed or disrupted operation are common. Even if you don't notice any warning signs, use these easy steps to test for balance as a part of regular maintenance.

- Close the garage door like normal.
- Find and engage the

release handle to access manual operation.

- Lift the door three to four feet above the ground. If it doesn't remain open, there is an imbalance that must be addressed.

While testing can be completed by any homeowner, the process of rebalancing should be handled by a professional. It requires adjusting and coor-

dinating the system of springs and can be dangerous if done improperly.

## CLEAN THE TRACKS

Ensuring your overhead door has a clean track to roll on is imperative to its optimal performance. You can keep them in peak condition by wiping the system with a rag or vacuuming out loose debris.

# Spring Cleaning the Greenhouse

As the warmer weather begins its arrival, your greenhouse should be prepped and cleaned for the bountiful harvesting season around the corner.

Whether you have a house constructed with plastic sheeting or a commercially installed building, ensuring its cleanliness provides big benefits for the plants inside.

The first step of any greenhouse cleaning project should be a visual inspection. Check the interior corners and rafters for signs of pest intrusion like hornet or wasp nests. Of course, you should eradicate these with care if you believe the hives are active.

Then, look at the integrity of cover materials that make up the walls. It's common for more inexpensive plastic to show wear and require replacement after the brutal cold of winter. It's crucial to repair the damage immediately, as the walls are important to preventing condensation by blocking sunlight and inhibiting moisture to drip onto your plants which invites mildew.

## ADDRESS ISSUES FROM LAST SEASON

Consider the pain points you experienced during a previous harvest and correct it for a more successful year. For instance, if you noticed a cer-



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tain portion of your greenhouse that didn't receive the sunlight it needed, consider rearranging the footprint of your planting structures before they are filled with seed.

If you had recurring issues with insects and pests, ask a local exterminator about a plant-friendly treatment that can limit their intrusion

throughout the year. It will be easier for a professional to spread their protective remedy before your greenhouse is full and thriving.

## DISINFECT YOUR SPACE

Give your plants a fresh start by eliminating debris or depleted soil from last season. Use an eco-friendly garden cleaner to thoroughly clean

out pots and planters before filling them with new stock. Keep a large container on hand and allow seriously contaminated holders to soak before cleaning as scrubbing too hard may lead to damage. Don't forget to completely rinse and dry these important companions in your greenhouse before attempting to replant.

## GET ORGANIZED

The upcoming planting season will require numerous tools if you want it to be successful. Analyze the condition of your existing equipment while planning for this year's harvest. If you notice cracks in shovels or dull pruning shears, you should consider replacing them with updated options.

# Sprinkler Maintenance

Many Americans who appreciate a luscious, full lawn throughout the spring and summer turn to sprinkler or irrigation systems. To perform at peak performance, they will require attention before being open for the year.

If you don't have one but are considering adding it to your yard, professional installation is the most practical option. An expert will prepare trenches while ensuring utility lines aren't compromised and correctly install needed components like piping, controllers and valves.

When the ice and frost are gone, here are some ways to prepare your sprinkler or irrigation system for its busy season.



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## WELCOME SPRING

Before you can begin using your sprinkler system this spring, it's important to ensure the winter weather is gone and temperatures will remain steady. According to the group Direct Energy, attempting to allow water to run while the ground is still frozen could result in busted pipes during the startup process, or hours later. You can test the condition of the ground below by digging at least a foot into the soil in an

area away from the underground tubing. If you strike frozen dirt, plan to delay the de-winterizing project.

## ANALYZE THE CONTROL PANEL

The brains behind your irrigation system are typically installed outdoors. Make sure you follow the directions explained by the installer and confirm settings are accurate for time, date and zones. You

should also check the integrity of backup batteries if your sprinklers rely on them. If you are concerned about their performance or age, visit a battery specialist in your area and have them tested to determine how much life they have left.

## CLEAN SPRINKLER HEADS

Depending on the number of sprinkler heads you have, this may prove to be the most

time-consuming portion of the entire process. Analyze each component for signs of damage and replace the parts before attempting to engage the system. Use an old toothbrush to effectively clean each nozzle to ensure they distribute water evenly to their designated zones. Make sure valves are closed after cleaning, except the nozzle farthest from the main water source, it should remain open to allow air to

escape during startup.

## OPENING THE MAIN VALVE

With the pre-maintenance performed, slowly open the main valve until you can hear water begin to flow. Allow this to steadily fill into the main line before slightly opening the valve every few minutes. Doing this too quickly can lead to expensive errors like busted pipes or valves.

# Prepare Wildlife Attractions

An exciting aspect of spring is the return of wildlife to your backyard. Flocks of birds and hungry squirrels will likely find a new place to call home throughout the neighborhood.

Welcome their friendly chatter by rewarding them with a favorite meal or bird-bath to ensure they continue to make an appearance.

If your goal is to create a homestead that invites animals to feel safe and find a bite to eat, keep in mind that wildlife is to be respected. Make sure to remind children that wild animals are not obedient like their favorite pets and may become dangerous if they feel threatened. Watching and learning about these animals from a distance is a wholesome way to spend spring with your family.

Building a safe and attractive haven for animals to flock may not happen overnight, but by following these tips, your backyard will become an entertaining place for beautiful wildlife.

## WATER SOURCES

One of the most popular water sources we can offer animals is an attractive bird-bath. Follow these tips from Cornell University to discover how to place it for the most



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impact.

Birds prefer baths that are low to the ground and located near shady areas.

Use stones or branches to line edges of the water so birds have a place to stand while drinking.

Water should be no deeper than one inch at the edges and two inches in the middle.

For a more enticing atmosphere, include dripping water to attract more wildlife.

Don't forget to regularly clean the birdbath as its occupants will likely leave behind seeds, droppings and feathers.

## FEEDERS

When considering which types of feeders to install,

think of the wildlife you are trying to attract. If a colorful variety of birds is your intention, try to use several boxes that offer them different ways to eat. Some animals prefer to dine while perching, so a hanging feeder with posts will be more attractive. Other less-picky eaters will be fine with eating from a platform or suet

style option.

Try to incorporate different types of seeds throughout your yard to learn what your local species are most interested in. Don't be surprised to find animals like squirrels or deer visiting your yard to finish up the food that was knocked to the ground by hungry birds.

# Spring into Safety

Within the home, you and your family rely on many components to maintain your safety. This spring make time to inspect these important systems to ensure they are working efficiently.

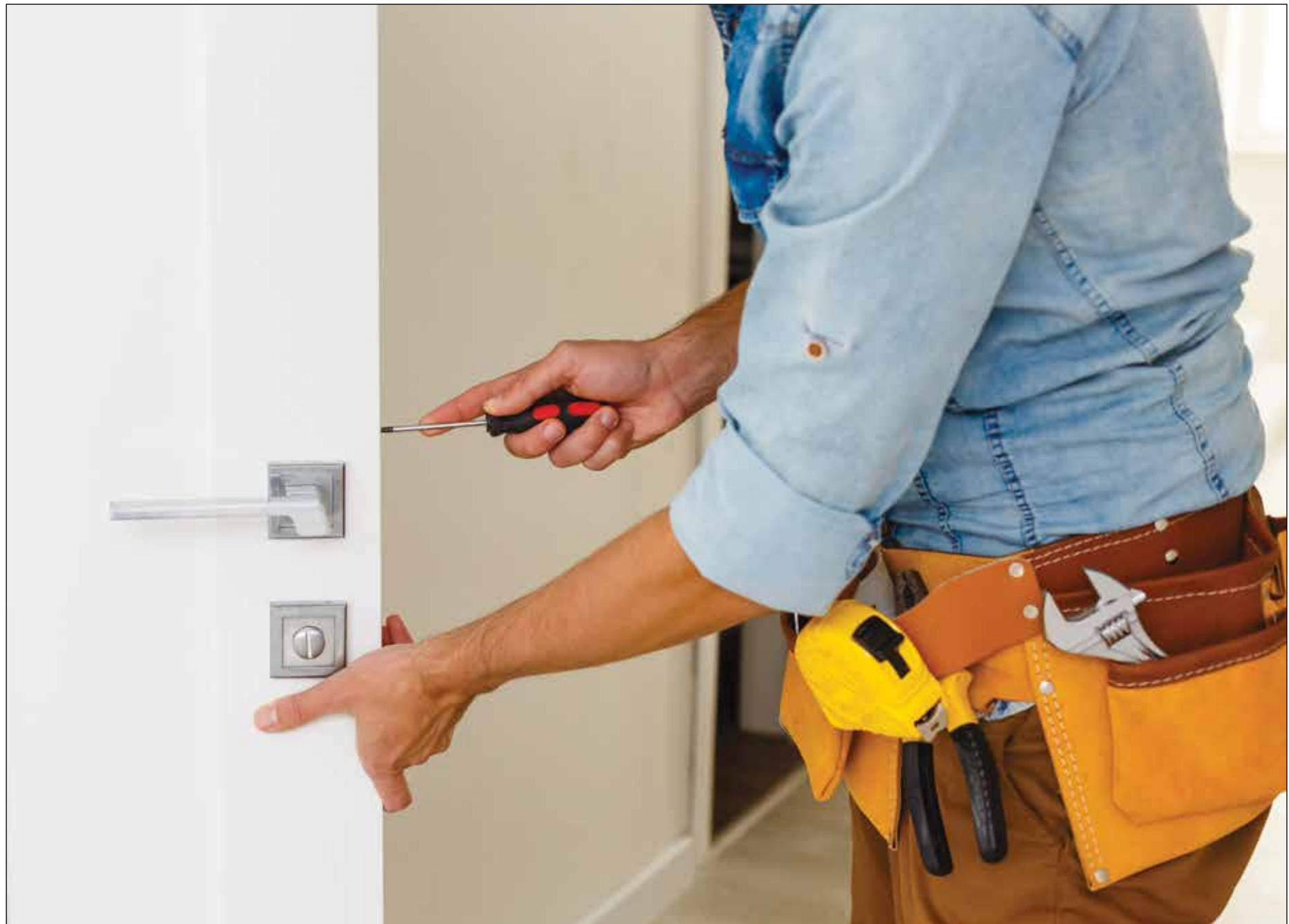
It can be easy to overlook household items that aren't always used, so be sure to analyze this sometimes-life-saving equipment.

## **SMOKE DETECTORS**

According to the United States Fire Administration, you should replace your smoke alarms every ten years. It's easy to find the date it was manufactured by looking on the back of the detector. Ensure they are installed in every bedroom, outside each sleeping area and on every level of the home. You should also test the alarms at least once a month by engaging an easily identifiable button and change the batteries at least annually. If you are due for an upgrade, consider investing in smart detectors that alert synced alarms throughout the home at the first sign of smoke.

## **FIRE EXTINGUISHER**

Another important safety device to keep in optimal condition is a fire extinguisher. The National Fire



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Protection Association suggests making them clearly visible and easily accessible in the home. You should also periodically investigate the pressure gauge near its lever. Upon further inspection, analyze it for obvious signs of damage or wear. Most quality extinguishers are rated for five to 15 years of use but can vary by manufacturer, so reg-

ular inspections are important.

## **LOCKS**

If the locks on your doors are degrading in integrity, you may be at risk of losing your valuables and risking the safety of your family. Go throughout your home and test each lock on every exterior door. If they are difficult to operate or

the door can be budged open while they are engaged, a replacement is necessary.

Hire the help of a local locksmith to rekey your home with high-quality locks and deadbolts. To add a modern touch of innovation to the simple lock, ask about options that are operated by key fob or smartphone applications.

## **HOME SECURITY SYSTEM**

One of the most effective measures you can take toward your property's defense is investing in a home security system. Many companies offer 24/7 emergency contact and will alert you and the authorities when their alarms deem a threat is imminent. It offers great peace of mind whether you're home or way.

# Allergy-Proof Your Home

As we welcome spring's warmer weather, many Americans prepare for the uncomfortable and life-limiting months associated with seasonal allergies. According to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America, more than 50 million citizens suffer each year.

Spring is often to blame as pollen is released by trees in its early stages, then grass as the season advances. While there is no straightforward cure for seasonal allergies, there are many ways you can prepare your home to limit its effect. Here are some ways to spring clean your living space and enjoy the comfortable temperatures without irritation.

## **CLEAN UP THE CLUTTER**

When you begin your spring-cleaning chores, you can lessen the dust intrusion by eliminating clutter around the home. Make sure to eradicate areas with things like old rags, stacks of magazines and clothes you don't wear.

Once your home is free and clear, give your carpet a quality cleaning. You can usually rent a commercial shampooer



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from a local hardware store or hire a professional cleaning service to make your floor covering pristine. Many types of carpet can hold allergens and distribute them into the air once they're disrupted. After a deep cleaning, commit to vacuuming at least once a week to maintain its clean qualities.

## **BEDROOM CLEANING**

Since we spend so much

time in our bedrooms, it's important to ensure the area is clean and free of allergens. In addition to regular dusting, keep a few extra sets of bed sheets and pillowcases on hand.

They are notorious for holding dust mites or pollen that we bring home on our clothes or hair.

Try to wash them in hot water at least once a week and

rotate different coverings so you're not left without when life gets in the way of laundry.

## **CLEAN THE AIR**

Spring invites pollen and other allergens into the air and your home. However, there are measures you can take to keep your living space clean and fresh. Check with an expert to inspect your house's ventilation system

and ductwork. If there are compromised components, intrusion like moisture and dust are commonly introduced.

You should also invest in high-quality air filters in your heating and cooling appliances. When your HVAC expert arrives for their regular maintenance, ask them about more high-efficiency options to increase your home's defense.

# Prepare Soil for a Spring Garden

While growing fruits and vegetables is a rewarding experience, a blooming display in your backyard can give you a sense of pride each time you step outside. Achieving a beautiful garden requires proper preparation and sometimes a few seasons before it's fully established.

If you're unsure about which bulbs or seeds will thrive in your area, refer to the USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map to discover new and exciting options. You can also learn lessons by visiting your local nursery and speaking with their experts. It's likely their flowers and plants are region-specific to your area but check with them about special orders if you have another plant in mind.

## PREPARE SOIL FOR A NEW GARDEN

Once you have chosen the size and location of your ornamental garden, you should prepare the soil to promote your plants with nutritious benefits. Here are some tips from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to get you started.

- Conduct a soil test to determine existing texture,



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nutrients and pH levels. Check your local area for an expert who can decipher the results and create a solution to the problem.

- If you're tilling a new area of land, ensure the soil is dry as disrupting wet soil can destroy its structure.
- Include organic matter to improve soil drainage and texture.
- For best results, ensure the

soil is rich before introducing plants or bulbs.

## WAKE UP AN EXISTING GARDEN

Early spring planning will provide your gardens with bountiful blossoms and a stunning display of color. Start by spring cleaning the entire area of dead leaves and other debris left behind by fall and winter. If you pick up clumps

of soil and it easily crumbles, it's a good sign that freezing and ice threats are gone, and you are safe to add compost to your dirt without affecting dormant bulbs.

Gently loosen the top layer of soil to remove rocks and inspect for intrusions from things like roots or pests. During this stage, you should consider working in nutrient-dense materials like

manure, or pre-mixed options from your local nursery to the existing dirt.

You will also need to eradicate weeds as they will commonly become a nuisance once the weather warms. It's good practice to make sure your garden's edges are in good condition and effective at keeping grass from emerging into the your ornamental bed.