

SustainAbility

A joint publication from Audubon Lifestyles and The International Sustainability Council

Fall Yard Cleanup

Cleaning up garden and flower beds in the fall is an effective way to control various insect pests. Many insects survive the winter buried in the soil (5-25 cm) or on its surface. Debris left on the soil surface will in fact help the insects to survive.

In winter, the temperature of the soil is higher than the air temperature. Various components in the soil buffer it against severe freezing temperatures. For this reason, insects are able to survive in the soil, protected from the winter cold. Debris left on the soil surface further protects the soil, thus making it more hospitable for overwintering insects and increasing their chances of survival. If you remove the debris, the soil will freeze to a greater depth and more insects will likely die during the winter.

When and How to Remove the Debris

The best time to remove the debris is in early October, after the insects have buried themselves in for the winter. You can remove the debris earlier or later, still with effective results in terms of controlling insects. When removing the debris, it is wise to till the garden and flower beds. Tilling will bring the insects up the soil surface, where they are more susceptible to killing temperatures.

Drenching the soil in the fall with an insecticide to control insect pests is not recommended. In order for an insecticide to be effective, the insect must be active. Insect larvae, pupae and adults overwintering in the soil are not active, and therefore pesticide control at this time of year is ineffective.

Garden Cleanup

Insects that overwinter on the soil surface under garden debris or buried in the soil include the beet leaf miner, cabbage maggot, Colorado potato beetle, flea beetle, imported cabbage worm, onion maggot and spinach carrion beetle. Incorporating organic matter in the fall is recommended, but it should be well tilled into the soil; if left on the soil surface, the organic matter will help protect insects over the winter.

Flower Beds and Shrubbery

In flower beds and shrubbery, a number of insects overwinter successfully under debris or in the soil near the base of ornamentals. Such insects include the currant fruit fly, imported currant worm, pear slugs, rose curculio and spring cankerworm. Removal of the leaf litter and a shallow tillage under ornamentals will help control many of these insects.



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Fast Facts

- The energy we save when we recycle one glass bottle is enough to light a traditional light bulb for four hours
- Recycled paper requires 64% less energy than making paper from virgin wood pulp, and can save many trees



Do it yourself Attic Insulation

Most homes have sheets or fluffy balls of fiberglass or cellulose insulation in their attics. If you live in the Northern US or Canada, you should have about 15 inches of this insulation. Unless you have a newer more energy efficient home, you probably only have about half of this. For a few hundred dollars, you should be able to buy more sheets of insulation, layer them across most of your attic, and save about 10% on heating costs. Applying insulation in a crawlspace or unfinished basement can also be an investment that quickly pays for itself.

Preparing your home for winter

1

Furnace Inspection

- Call an HVAC professional to inspect your furnace and clean ducts.
- Stock up on furnace filters and change them monthly.
- Consider switching out your thermostat for a programmable thermostat.
- If your home is heated by a hot-water radiator, bleed the valves by opening them slightly and when water appears, close them.
- Remove all flammable material from the area surrounding your furnace.

2

Get the Fireplace Ready

- Cap or screen the top of the chimney to keep out rodents and birds.
- If the chimney hasn't been cleaned for a while, call a chimney sweep to remove soot and creosote.
- Buy firewood or chop wood. Store it in a dry place away from the exterior of your home.
- Inspect the fireplace damper for proper opening and closing.
- Check the mortar between bricks and tuckpoint, if necessary.

3

Check the Exterior, Doors and Windows

- Inspect exterior for crevice cracks and exposed entry points around pipes; seal them.
- Use weatherstripping around doors to prevent cold air from entering the home and caulk windows.
- Replace cracked glass in windows and, if you end up replacing the entire window, prime and paint exposed wood.
- If your home has a basement, consider protecting its window wells by covering them with plastic shields.
- Switch out summer screens with glass replacements from storage. If you have storm windows, install them.

4

Inspect Roof, Gutters & Downspouts

- If your weather temperature will fall below 32 degrees in the winter, adding extra insulation to the attic will prevent warm air from creeping to your roof and causing ice dams.
- Check flashing to ensure water cannot enter the home.
- Replace worn roof shingles or tiles.
- Clean out the gutters and use a hose to spray water down the downspouts to clear away debris.
- Consider installing leaf guards on the gutters or extensions on the downspouts to direct water away from the home.

5

Service Weather-Specific Equipment

- Drain gas from lawnmowers.
- Service or tune-up snow blowers.
- Replace worn rakes and snow shovels.
- Clean, dry and store summer gardening equipment.
- Sharpen ice choppers and buy bags of ice-melt / sand.

6

Check Foundations

- Rake away all debris and edible vegetation from the foundation.
- Seal up entry points to keep small animals from crawling under the house.
- **Tuckpoint** or seal foundation cracks. Mice can slip through space as thin as a dime.
- Inspect sill plates for dry rot or pest infestation.
- Secure crawlspace entrances.



Most older homes have cracks around windows and doors that allow a significant amount of heat to seep out.

7

Install Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- Some cities require a smoke detector in every room.
- Buy extra smoke detector batteries and change them when daylight savings ends.
- Install a carbon monoxide detector near your furnace and / or water heater.
- Test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors to make sure they work.
- Buy a fire extinguisher or replace an extinguisher older than 10 years.

8

Prevent Plumbing Freezes

- Locate your water main in the event you need to shut it off in an emergency.
- Drain all garden hoses.
- Insulate exposed plumbing pipes.
- Drain air conditioner pipes and, if your AC has a water shut-off valve, turn it off.
- If you go on vacation, leave the heat on, set to at least 55 degrees.

9

Prepare Landscaping & Outdoor Surfaces

- Trim trees if branches hang too close to the house or electrical wires.
- Ask a gardener when your trees should be pruned to prevent winter injury.
- Plant spring flower bulbs and lift bulbs that cannot winter over such as dahlias in areas where the ground freezes.
- Seal driveways, brick patios and wood decks.
- Don't automatically remove dead vegetation from gardens as some provide attractive scenery in an otherwise dreary, snow-drenched yard.
- Move sensitive potted plants indoors or to a sheltered area.

10

Prepare an Emergency Kit

- Buy indoor candles and matches / lighter for use during a power shortage.
- Find the phone numbers for your utility companies and tape them near your phone or inside the phone book.
- Buy a battery back-up to protect your computer and sensitive electronic equipment.
- Store extra bottled water and non-perishable food supplies (including pet food, if you have a pet), blankets and a first-aid kit in a dry and easy-to-access location.
- Prepare an evacuation plan in the event of an emergency.

Get a Programmable Thermostat

If you leave your thermostat on while nobody's home during the day, and if you don't turn it down a few degrees every night before you go to bed, then you're probably paying too much for heating. A programmable thermostat (cost: under \$100) can automatically lower the temperature setting every weekday while you're at work and every night while you sleep. Having the temperature setting lowered to 55F for 8 hours every weekday (don't make it too cold while you're at work or the plumbing might freeze and other household items may be damaged by the cold) and 60F for 8 hours every night will lower your heating costs by about 15% if you previously ran your thermostat at 72F all the time.



Fast Facts

- Sealing these cracks with caulking and strips of foam can be an easier way to cut a 20 year old home's heating costs by around 10%.
- Some homes over 40 years old are very leaky and can save as much as 30% on heating by sealing cracks.

Recipes for SustainAbility

Pumpkin Risotto

There are many risottos that can be made sustainably. Use authentic risotto rice or basmati if you prefer. Try this easy pumpkin risotto and serve it with a green salad. Serves 4.

Fry 1 tsp chopped thyme, 1 clove garlic (peeled and chopped), 1 small onion (peeled and sliced) in a little olive oil. Add 500g pumpkin or squash (peeled and cubed into 1cm squares). Cook for 4-5 minutes. Add the rice. Ladle in stock a little at a time, every 2-3 minutes and stir often. Keep going until the rice is cooked (18-20 minutes for risotto rice). Shake parmesan over the top.

Always try and use organic or sustainably grown products!

Sustainable Communities

Sustainable community development embraces a wide array of opportunities and options. By working in rural and urban places with policies and programs we can recognize the diversity of communities across the United States and the need for community-based action.

Through existing authorities and resources we should seek to help communities work in partnership with farmers, landowners, and others in the private sector; increase education and technical skills; connect people to the natural resource base; protect lives and property; expand infrastructure, community facilities, and technology; and coordinate involvement of stakeholders.

By fostering sustainable approaches to community development we should help to strengthen the capacity of communities to take integrated action toward improving environmental, social, and economic conditions.

Audubon Lifestyles' Choice for Top Three Sustainable Community Programs

- #1 The Audubon International Sustainable Community Program
learn more at: www.auduboninternational.org
- #2 The Natural Step Framework
learn more at: www.naturalstep.org
- #3 EarthCraft Communities
learn more at: www.earthcrafthouse.com



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Additional Resources & Sources

- Audubon Lifestyles www.audubonlifestyles.com
- The International Sustainability Council www.thesustainabilitycouncil.org
- About.com www.homebuying.about.com
- Pioneer Thinking www.pioneerthinking.com
- Audubon International www.auduboninternational.org
- EarthCraft Homes www.earthcrafthouse.com
- The Natural Step www.naturalstep.org
- Animal Aid www.animalaid.org.uk
- Recipes For Sustainability www.veganrecipes.org.uk