

YOUR HOME

MAY 2007

TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

Working Order

Large-appliance maintenance is easier than you'd think.

At their best, large appliances — dishwashers, refrigerators and washing machines — fade into the background as they perform essential daily tasks. When they break, however, their repair can quickly come to dominate your life. Good thing some basic maintenance can save you a lot of headaches down the road.

With any major appliance, the key is keeping it clean. Those coils on the bottom and back of the fridge, when coated in grime, retard the machine's ability to get rid of heat. Sweep or vacuum around it to keep dust away.



Make sure the plastic coating on dishwasher racks hasn't chipped away; if it has, the metal beneath could rust, damaging the rack and leaving rust on plates. If you find rust, sand the area down before applying a new layer of material or sealant.

Also, mineral deposits can build up in your dishwasher's sprayer; soaking it for a few hours in white vinegar will loosen these deposits and allow the mechanism to be cleaned.

Also, make sure your appliances' seals and gaskets — the ones that keep fridge and dishwasher doors shut tightly — aren't hardened or twisted. Replace them if they're worn. Test your fridge's seal by waving your hand slowly around the edges to see if a cool breeze is escaping.

Check to see if the hoses connected to your washing machine are in good condition, and replace if necessary (be sure to turn the water off beforehand). Experts recommend using steel-mesh hoses, which will last longer than regular ones.

In the end, the major appliances in your house will work smoother and longer with a little maintenance, saving you precious time — just as they were designed to do in the first place.

Clean Slate

What good is a tidy home when the cleaners you're using are polluting the environment? Here are some ways to cut back on harmful and toxic cleaning.

- Do as much as you can with baking soda and water, which are safer, effective cleaners for your tub and shower.
- Pop a mildewed shower curtain into the washing machine after presoaking heavily mildewed areas in a bucket filled with 1/4 cup bleach per gallon of water (make sure it's safe for the fabric first). The solution can then be used on other bathroom surfaces. Hang the washed curtain back up in your bathroom to dry. Ventilate well when working with bleach.
- Vacuum floors, or dust-mop them with a microfiber dust mop; don't sweep them. Microfiber mops trap and hold fine dust and grime better than your broom does.
- Use a lambswool duster to remove cobwebs and dust from ceiling fixtures, exposed beams and corners.
- Freshen your fridge with baking soda. When thinned with water to a grainy consistency, it's the perfect weapon for attacking chilled-on food, grime and fridge gunk. Rub on with a white nylon sponge, let set a minute or two, and rinse clean with damp paper towels.



fast fact >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

Homes usually need to be painted every five to 10 years, depending on the content of the paint (its glossiness) and its exposure to moisture and traffic. Quality paints are expected to last upwards of 20 years.

Source: NAHB/Bank of America Home Equity Study of Life Expectancy of Home Components



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How Does Your Garden Grow?

Ah, the signs of spring: birds chirping, flowers blooming and a garden desperately needing your attention. Now's the time to get the area around your home in peak condition with a few simple steps.

1. Care for soil. If possible, avoid walking on soil in established gardens. Every step compacts the soil, and that makes it difficult for roots to grow. Create paths between rows or in beds, or place a board on the soil adjacent to

areas where you work to distribute your weight more evenly. Also avoid working the soil when it's wet — otherwise, once it dries, you'll wind up with big clumps of hard-packed soil. And finally, don't overwork the soil; good soil should have particles of varying sizes and shapes.

2. Mulch generously. Mulch suppresses weed growth, maintains soil moisture, stabilizes soil temperature and

more. Grab a nice big bag and mulch to your heart's content.

3. Water wisely. Don't water frequently for only brief periods of time. Doing so causes plant roots to hover near the soil surface. Instead, deep soak each time you water to encourage roots to grow deep into the soil. If possible, water early in the morning so plant leaves have a chance to dry during the day. That will help minimize fungal diseases.

4. Go native. According to experts, native plants tend to be easier to grow, have fewer pest and disease problems and require less supplemental watering. To learn more about native plants in your area, visit your favorite nursery or contact your local master gardeners' group.

5. Minimize maintenance. Cut back on fertilizers and prune only when necessary. Pruning and fertilizers cause plants to produce tender, succulent growth, which is what bugs prefer.

Source: HGTV.com

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DID YOU KNOW?

60 percent of Americans agree that spring is the best time to rid their homes of dirt and clutter, according to the 2006 Soap and Detergent Association Spring Cleaning Survey.



Do you know someone who is thinking about buying or selling a home? Please mention my name.

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