

# Three ways to tackle spring cleaning projects in a single weekend

Spring cleaning is an annual rite of passage in many households. Because winter weather tends to encourage people to stay indoors more than they would during other times of the year, clutter can slowly but surely accumulate in a home over the course of a typical winter. That makes spring cleaning a necessity.

Few homeowners likely enjoy spring cleaning. The warm weather associated with the arrival of spring makes many

people who have spent the previous months indoors less than enthusiastic about spending a spring weekend indoors cleaning and clearing away a season's worth of clutter. But homeowners who organize their spring cleaning projects can ensure such efforts take just a weekend or less.

## 1. Enlist the whole family.

Chances are everyone who lives in the home can lay claim to some of the dirt, grime and clutter

that built up over the winter. So it only makes sense that everyone then pitches in to clean the home come springtime. Parents and heads of household can delegate tasks to everyone, incentivizing cooperation with the promise of rewards if the cleaning is completed in a single weekend.

## 2. Clear your schedule.

Another way for homeowners to ensure their spring cleaning projects are started and finished in a single

weekend is to clear their schedules for the entire weekend. Homeowners who expect to spend part of their day away from home and still finish their spring cleaning projects will likely find the job unfinished come Sunday night. When planning a spring cleaning weekend, schedule projects for a weekend when you have no prior commitments or plan far enough in advance that you can avoid making plans on a given weekend. While it might not make for the

most eventful weekend, it will greatly increase your chances of getting everything cleaned and cleared out in two days.

## 3. Do your homework.

Homeowners who want to complete their spring cleaning in a single weekend should do their homework with regard to finding local recycling centers or charitable organizations to whom they intend to donate items. Many charitable organizations will come to private homes to pick up donations, but such pickups often must be arranged in advance rather than on the morning of the

day homeowners want items to be taken away. In addition, if recycling will be a part of your spring cleaning efforts, familiarize yourself with the weekend hours of nearby recycling plants so you can drop items off on your cleaning weekend instead of leaving them lying around to be donated later.

Spring cleaning might not make for the most enjoyable way for homeowners to spend a weekend. But planning ahead and making efficient use of the time available to them can help homeowners tackle their spring cleaning projects in a single weekend.

# Make the year ahead clutter-free

Many people feel the dawn of a new year provides an opportunity to clean the slate and begin anew. That notion can be applied in various ways, including around the house.

Cleaning the slate at home may involve reducing clutter around the house. Clutter can gradually overtake a home's interior, turning a once pristine home into one overwhelmed with non-essential items. Clearing a home of clutter can seem like a monumental

task, but the following tips can help homeowners and apartment dwellers make the year ahead clutter-free.

- Scan important documents and save them on a computer. Some documents cannot be discarded, but that does not mean they have to be stored in bulky file cabinets or desk drawers. Scan important documents such as medical receipts or tax returns and save them on your computer where they won't take up any physi-

cal space. Purchase an external hard drive as a safety net where you can store backups of important documents in case a computer crashes and cannot be rebooted.

- Thin out DVD and CD libraries. Thanks to streaming services and digital music players, DVDs and compact discs have become somewhat obsolete. Discard or donate DVDs that you can just as easily stream through your television, and convert compact discs to digital files that

you can play on your computer and MP3 players, ultimately donating the discs and clearing space.

- Purchase furniture that doubles as storage. Storage ottomans and benches can help clear common areas and bedrooms of clutter such as blankets and bed linens that can make rooms feel more claustrophobic. Storage furniture might not get excess items out of the house, but such furnishings can create a more comfortable, welcoming environment.

- Switch to e-statements for bank documents and utility bills. Paper is a big contributor to household clutter. That's still the case even though many adults now pay the majority of their bills online. When given the chance to choose between paper or e-statements, opt for the latter so bills and bank statements don't pile up on your desk or throughout your home office. If you still want to keep important bills and bank statements, download them to your computer and keep them in a designated folder on your desktop.

- Adopt an "out with the old, in with the new" mantra. Resolve to discard old items after purchasing new ones or receiving birthday or holiday gifts. Hanging on to old items because they can still function and serve some utility is a recipe for a cluttered home. Anytime you or a family member brings a new item into your home, make sure the item it's replacing finds its way out the door.

Clearing clutter is a goal for many people at the dawn of a new year. As intimidating as clutter can seem, discarding it is easier than it may appear.

# Remedy landscape drainage problems

Homeowners understand that reaping the rewards of beautiful lawns and gardens requires hard work. But sometimes even hard work won't be enough to prevent problems in a lawn or garden.

Drought can be very harmful to lawns and gardens, but so, too, can excessive amounts of water and precipitation. Soggy properties can make it difficult for lawns and gardens to thrive. According to Lowes, in addition to killing lawn and other plants, standing water on a property can be a health hazard. That's because standing water makes a prime breeding ground for mosquito larvae and other pests.

While homeowners cannot control precipitation, they can affect the impact that rainwater has on their properties.

## Replace/repair downspouts

Gutters and downspouts are designed to move rainwater away from the home. Too often, however, gutters and downspouts become clogged or do not work effectively. Overflowing gutters will transfer rainwater down the side of a home, where it can puddle at the foundation. This water can ultimately suffocate a lawn, and it may cause interior damage to the home as well.

First, inspect and clean all gutters. Leaves, nests, sticks, and even dead animals can block the flow of water in a gutter. Test downspouts by running hose water from the top of the gutter.

Downspouts should be pointed away from the home and may need to be extended so they direct water away from the dwelling.

## Plant water-loving trees or shrubs

In some instances, whether it's a byproduct of poor property grade or sloping land, water can pool regardless of how well the gutter system is working. Determine where the problem is and speak with a landscaper to see if there are any plants that thrive in moist conditions. The roots of these plants can protect against soil erosion and may absorb enough water to guard against puddling. In addition, amending the soil with organic matter, pea gravel or another coarse aggregate can prevent water pooling.

## Consider a drainage system

When confronted with drainage issues that cannot be remedied by other methods, homeowners may need to install drainage systems. Such systems often employ French drains that are built through or around the perimeter of a property. French drains are typically a trench that contains perforated plastic pipe and is backfilled with gravel. Water runs into these channels and gets swept away by the piping. Do-it-yourselfers may want to try installing drainage systems themselves. However, because excavation is necessary,

it's often best to have the property inspected and marked for utilities, then have the drainage system installed by professionals.

Landscaping does not need to be derailed by drainage issues. Explore the remedies that can easily fix the problems.




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