

By the time autumn hits full swing, many trees will have shed their leaves for the season, and the last vestiges of red, yellow and orange magic will have faded to brown. Raking, blowing and collecting leaves becomes the

primary chores of lawn and yard maintenance, and presents most homeowners with large piles of gathered leaves to tend to. It is impossible to count just how many leaves fall to the ground each year, or just

how many pounds of leaves get collected curbside, but the numbers are substantial. Cleaning up leaves is considerable work, but not all of those leaves need to be carted away. In fact, there are several different uses of leaves that can be beneficial.

1. Spread leaves as a protective mulch to cover tender perennials or root crops/bulbs in the ground. The leaves will form a natural insulating cover that keeps the soil and the plants within a bit warmer over winter.
 2. Create a pile of leaves that will break down and form a crumbly, compost-like material called leaf mold. Even though leaf mold may sound like a blight, it's actually a good amendment to garden soil, improving its structure and ability to hold water. Leaf mold also attracts beneficial organisms that are vital in healthy soil.
 3. Brown leaves can be added to green materials in compost piles to improve the health of the compost being formed. According to the healthy living resource Care2, the ideal ratio is 75 percent brown to 25 percent green materials in compost. Turn compost piles regularly to aerate them.
 4. Store dried, mulched leaves in a dry spot so they can be used in the spring as a weed barrier for spring plantings. They will keep weeds at bay and help retain soil moisture to ensure small sprouts have the resources to grow.
 5. Use shredded leaves as a lawn supplement. Pass a lawn mower over leaves left on the lawn to break them down into pieces too small to rake. This will help keep the lawn healthy throughout the winter without blocking out needed sunlight.
 6. Bag dried leaves and pack them tightly together in cold areas of the home, such as basements or garages. They can act as added insulation. Bags of leaves also can be placed around planting containers to protect them from frost.
 7. Gather a few of the best-looking leaves and preserve them. Use an iron on a low setting and press leaves between two pieces of waxed paper until the waxed paper seals together. Or use clear contact paper to achieve the same effect.
- Fallen leaves can be used in many different ways throughout the year. TF18A402

Safeguard roofs against snow damage



Snow on a roof may look idyllic, but too much weight can cause structural damage.

Snow may delight young children itching for a day off from school. But for many homeowners, the sight of snow means their time will soon be spent clearing paths and plowing driveways rather than building snowmen and sledding with friends. The sight of falling snow also may inspire some homeowners to think about the roofs of their homes. The Insurance Institute for Business & Home Safety warns that it is important to understand the risk of roof collapse due to the weight of snow on the roof. Roof structures that are in good condition can support roughly 20 pounds per square foot. IIBHS says this equates to around four feet of new snow before a roof will become stressed. Total snowfall is not the only factor to consider. Homeowners also must check the type of snow that has fallen. According to House Logic, six inches of wet snow is equal to the weight of about 38 inches of dry snow. That

means it may take much less sodden snow to weigh down a roof. Roof condition and the shape of the roof bear consideration as well. Popular Mechanics says the ideal pitched roof is smooth and steep so that the snow slides off. Closely spaced rafters improve the strength of the roof. A flat or slightly pitched roof may accumulate snow more readily. Homeowners are urged to inspect roof rafters to see if they are cracked from previous snowstorms or damaged from insects or rot. Snapping or popping sounds while snow is on the roof is not a good sign. House Logic also says that homeowners can tell if the snow load on the roof is too much by paying attention to interior doors. If such doors begin to stick, that may be a signal that there's enough weight on the center of the house to distort the door frames. Houses that had improper renovations or homes in which load-bearing walls

were removed may be more susceptible to this problem. Removing snow from a roof is not an easy job – and may be a task best left to professionals. The safest way to remove snow from the roof is to use a snow rake with an extension arm that enables users to push and pull off the snow while standing on the ground. One should not climb onto a snowy or icy roof to remove snow. Shovels, which can damage roof shingles, should never be used. IIBHS says that hiring a professional roof contractor is one way to safely remove snow from the roof. Licensed and insured contractors will have the experience to get the job done correctly and safely. Homeowners can expect to pay between \$250 and \$500 for this job. Roof snow removal is a priority for those who live in mountainous or extremely snowy areas. If unsafe amounts of snow are left on rooftops, leaks, damage and collapse may result. TF17C578

Weatherization myths – Debunked!

(StatePoint) Weatherizing your home for each season can make it more comfortable – but how to do it can be confusing. Here are four common weatherizing myths – busted! – to help get your home ready for cooler weather to come. **Myth 1:** It doesn't matter where your thermostat is placed. Truth: Location, location, location! You may be spending more on heating and cooling than you need to be if your thermostat is in the wrong place. Placed in direct sunlight, you run the risk of getting false readings, as it can "think" the room is warmer than it actually feels, causing your air conditioner to turn on when it isn't needed. Similarly, a thermostat placed near the kitchen often reads that the home is far warmer than it truly is due to the stove and oven. The best location is on an interior wall, centrally located and near areas where you spend the most time, ensuring these rooms are the most comfortable.



Myth 2: Closed curtains and blinds in cold weather prevent heat escape. Truth: According to the Department of Energy, shades and drapes can reduce heat loss from a warm room by up to 10 percent. However, opening curtains and blinds during the day when direct sunlight hits can also allow for a warming effect. In winter, draperies should be closed at dusk but opened at dawn. In addition, heat escape through windows can be prevented with window insulation products such as Duck Brand Roll-On Window Kits, which create a barrier between outdoor air and a home's interior, helping block drafts and air leaks. And, it's also a myth that these are hard to install: A pre-taped edge makes for easy roll-on application, requiring no measuring, while fitting snugly to indoor window frames to provide an airtight, crystal-clear seal. **Myth 3:** It's expensive to draft-proof your home. Truth: Homeowners can actually save hundreds of dollars annually on heating and cooling costs with proper weatherization early in the season. How do you do it? There are many inexpensive, weatherization products that are easy on

the wallet and easy to install, requiring minimal – if any – tools. Windows and doors are the two largest draft sources in any home and should be top priorities for homeowners. Duck brand MAX Strength Silicone Weatherstrip Seals are quick to install and seal various size gaps around windows and doors that may be allowing air to escape. **Myth 4:** It's cheaper to keep your home at a constant temperature. Truth: A common misconception is that it's better to keep your home at a constant temperature, even when you're not home. However, if the system runs less during the day, it uses less energy. According to Energy.gov, you can save as much as 10 percent a year on heating and cooling by turning your thermostat back 7-10 degrees from its normal setting for eight hours a day. Still need more help? For additional tips and information, text "Weather" to 84444 to access Duck brand's Project Selector, an online resource for project guides, instructional videos and more, or visit DuckBrand.com. Don't let common myths scare you. Weatherizing can be an affordable, easy do-it-yourself project – especially if you plan ahead.

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