

Take the Quiz on Fall Maintenance

Lisa Turner

I've assembled some of the questions readers send in and made a quiz. See how you do!

1. The most important thing you can do to get your home ready for winter is to do a thorough walk-around inspection outside. Yes or No?
2. In the fall, the most common injury is getting bitten by a spider. Yes or No?
3. Batteries should be replaced in all smoke alarms inside the home in the fall. Yes or No?
4. Radon gas levels are always lower in the winter inside your home. Yes or No?
5. Outside decks will last as long as the home. Yes or No?
6. In the fall, you should burn the leaves that fall in your yard. Yes or No?

ANSWERS:

1. YES. A thorough walk-around inspection will reveal problems that you can take care of now before winter weather makes it unpleasant. Talk a perimeter walk around your home looking for tiny entrances where mice and bugs can get in. Seal them now. Then look at the siding, windows, and roof using binoculars looking for anything amiss. Look at the rubber boots around plumbing vents – a common place for leaks.
2. NO. The most common injury in the fall is slipping off a ladder. This happens when gutters are being cleaned, and roofs are being cleared of leaves. Check your ladder before climbing on it, and make sure it has a solid grip on the ground and the roofline. Have someone else spot you – hold the ladder and watch for problems. Better yet, get someone else to clean the gutters!
3. NO. You should CHECK your smoke alarms at every season change, but modern alkaline batteries will last for years. Modern smoke detectors will alert you when the battery gets low.
4. NO. Radon gas actually reads higher in homes that are closed up for the winter weather. Radon gas comes out of the earth and is the result of the natural breakdown (radioactive decay) of uranium. It is usually found in igneous rock and soil, which we have here in the mountains in abundance. Extended radon exposure causes lung cancer and if you have not had your home tested, find a home inspector or go to your favorite home store for a test kit. Radon levels can be brought down to safe levels in most homes using a venting system.
5. NO. Decks typically last for 15-20 years at the most. Homes, on the other hand, can stay solid for 100 years or more, depending on the materials and structure.
6. NO. Burning yard debris creates a number of toxins, including carbon monoxide, dioxins, ozone-forming chemicals, nitrogen oxide, and dust. Some people experience asthma attacks or other respiratory issues as a result of exposure to the smoke, which is particularly harmful to the elderly, the very young, and people with conditions such as emphysema or bronchitis. What to do? Make a compost pile. Gradually it will turn to garden friendly mulch.

How did you do? If you got at least two right, you are in the majority. Three to four right and you are well versed about home maintenance and construction. If you got them all right, pat yourself on the back, you're an expert!