

## **Spring Cleaning Is In The Air**

*By J. Lennox Scott*

Spring is in the air—and with it comes sunnier weather, longer days, and a desire by many to “spring clean” their homes. If you’re overwhelmed by the chores you’ve been putting off all winter and you’re not sure where to begin, here are some suggestions to help you get started.

The winter season can reap havoc on your floors, so now is a good time to have your carpets shampooed, wash area rugs, and wash/wax hardwood floors. Carpet cleaning professionals tell us that the most effective method of keeping carpeting clean, and making it last a long time, is to vacuum regularly. They also recommend having your carpets cleaned every 3-6 months, especially if you have children and/or pets.

Spring is also the perfect time to clean your fireplace. Leave the actual chimney cleaning to an expert, but it’s simple enough to maintain the brick face and hearth yourself. Oils and soot make an otherwise attractive brick fireplace face look tired and tattered. To reduce the effect of oils and soot, regularly vacuum a brick face and hearth and periodically wipe them down with a damp sponge. And don’t forget fireplace doors and screens—both should be cleaned of soot and oils. Glass doors can be cleaned with window cleaner and screens should be vacuumed and wiped down with a wet cloth. Oven cleaner also works well for cleaning smoke-covered glass doors. Make sure to wear rubber gloves, eye protection, have plenty of ventilation, and follow manufacturer’s directions.

Of course spring is also a good time of year to give your windows a thorough washing—both inside and out. Before setting upon this task, it’s suggested that you first take down window treatments for cleaning. Use a mild cleaner on windows, dry with a squeegee and then follow with a dry rag for optimum streak-free windows. If your windows have screens you should also check them for dirt. Dirty screens prevent light from making its way into your home. Furthermore, a gust of wind can blow dust from a screen straight into your home, aggravating allergies, among other things. To clean your screens, lay them flat on a smooth, cloth-covered surface, such as an old sheet on a picnic table. Scrub them gently with a soft nylon brush, rinse with a hose, and shake off excess water.

While spring cleaning, take some time to do a safety check-up in your home. Start by checking the batteries in smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors, and flashlights—batteries should be replaced every six months, regardless of whether or not they’re working. You should also inspect pressure gauges on fire extinguishers to ensure that they are in working order. Make sure that flammable materials, such as drapes and furniture, are not located anywhere near high heat sources like stoves, space heaters, and fireplaces. And survey your home for other potential fire hazards, such as faulty electronic equipment, malfunctioning appliances, frayed electrical cords, flickering lights, or blown fuses.

One final thing to watch out for when spring-cleaning your home is mold. Detecting mold in the early stages makes it much easier to remedy. If you do discover signs of mold, be sure to clean, disinfect and dry the spots where molding has occurred to help avoid spreading. Avoid direct contact with mold; use gloves, goggles and a facemask to limit your exposure. If not treated properly, the existence of mold in your home can cause long-term problems. If mold is consuming a space greater than 10 square feet in your home, you should contact a professional for help.

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