

Say Hello To Spring

with a little freshening up!

Are you tired of winter? Though there still may be snow outside your window right now, and though we may still have several weeks before spring is really here to stay, many of us are ready to say good-bye to winter and say hello to spring!

For many of us, that energy takes the form of an overwhelming urge to clean the "winter" out of our homes—spring cleaning! Spring is after all, a time of transition and an opportunity for refreshing our homes and our lives. You can check out the **Spring Home Maintenance Checklist** in due time, but cleaning really is the most basic form of home maintenance, so why not start there? And since some of us are still waiting for the snow to melt, it's a great time to organize and plan our spring cleaning.

A good way to make sure you get to everything your *particular* house requires, is by creating your own custom checklist ahead of time. A great approach is to walk around your home with a note pad, and jot down each task you'd like to do in each room (you can organize your plan of attack later).

Here are 12 great ideas you might want to include on your list!

1. Clean Ceiling Fans: So you don't turn them on and swirl dust all over the room. If over a bed, lay down a sheet to catch debris.

2. Launder or Vacuum Curtains: This is not only refreshing, but it will help to eliminate the dust, dander, pollen and other allergens that may have accumulated on the fabric over the long winter—which could exacerbate spring allergies.

3. Dust: Dust, dust, dust. Clean all the surfaces in the home.

4. Clean the Refrigerator: Clear out old food, wash removable shelves and drawers in the sink. Clean all jars, etc. before returning them to the clean refrigerator.

5. Lemon Fresh: Pick up a few packets of unsweetened lemonade powder and empty a packet into your dishwasher soap dispenser. Run the EMPTY dishwasher through a full cycle and you'll love the result—a clean, lemony scent! While you're at it, quarter up a few lemons, squeeze the juice into your ice-water, tea, or onto your fish then throw the quarters (peels and all) into the disposal. Run cold water and grind away. The smell is great and, the citric acid kills smells and maybe even a few germs.

6. Vacuum Furniture: Clean the surface of pet hair, dust and other dirt, and don't forget to lift the cushions and vacuum crevasses too.

7. Clean Pillows: We often change our pillowcases, but how often do we launder our actual pillows? Follow tag instructions to help eliminate mold and bacteria (and smells and stains too). Toss in some tennis balls to help dry your pillows faster—they'll take somewhere between 1 and 3 hours to dry completely (but it's worth the wait!)

8. Clean the Cobwebs: A dust buster or small vacuum is great for paying attention to all the corners and crevasses of your house and sucking away dust bunnies and cobwebs.

9. Clean the Oven: OK, this task stinks. But I saw a good video online for making it a little easier.

10. Clean the Windows: This not only makes your windows look nicer, but helps to let in more light.

11. Open windows: Leave those windows open to air out the house. It smells great and also helps to let stagnant air and indoor allergens escape.

12. Organize & Purge: Clean closets, organize drawers, and sort through the stacks—somewhere underneath the piles of mail, laundry and over-due library books is your house! This is also a great time to start a collection of old clothes or other items from each family member for local donation.