

# THE HELPFUL HOME *NEWSLETTER*

Issue #31

\*FALL EDITION\*

Fall 2010

## ***About this newsletter:***

Here is your Fall issue of the Helpful Home newsletter, from



**STONEHOLLOW, Inc. FINE HOME INSPECTIONS.** Well, it seems that I was just typing out the Summer Newsletter, complaining about hot & sticky weather, when low and behold, the evenings are getting darker earlier. There's that brisk weather blowing that can only signal pumpkins, Thanksgiving and football. As I write this October has ended and the Baseball season has wound down. In the news are elections across the state and the economy is still dragging its feet. Home sales brightened but are still not great, short sales and foreclosures are still reflecting the bad situation in the marketplace. Around the house it's time for the "fall honey-do list" and I'm spending my weekends organizing the garage, the basement and the shed. I moved the pool stuff up higher in the shed and winter toys, snow shovels and Fall sporting goods within easier reach. I've freed up the leaf blower and rakes and shortly we'll all be picking up tons of leaves and debris and mulching or gathering the stuff for pick-up. Have I mentioned lately that Fall is totally my favorite season? Really it is, and I'm not even into football. I just like sweater weather, cool nights and starry skies. What about you? Which season pumps you up? Even though there's more to do in Fall around the house, I still look forward to the change in weather. Last week we got rid of the window air conditioners in the apartment. We bagged all the hardware and labeled the small parts, pieces of weatherstripping, and taped up the loose hardware. This year we are trying to store the units out of the way. We are trying to remember where each one goes with labels. We are putting them away with a plan for an easier start-up next year. And so, we are

cleaning the filters and protecting vulnerable surfaces. Yes the pool is closed and all the equipment was cleaned, dried and stored away. Even above ground pools require quite a procedure for rinsing off and packing up all the little pieces from the pumps and filter equipment. As we clean and organize the shed I am lubricating all the garden shears, pruning tools and making sure those we are done with are prepared for a few months of dormancy.

## ***Double your listening pleasure!***

BIG Changes are here with the Radio Show...we have expanded the show to two hours! Double the fun and double the time to discuss important household projects and fewer commercials. Why not try tuning us in on Saturday mornings on the radio or the internet. We'll try to jumpstart your day with fun discussions and useful information on **Around the House with Steve Gladstone** from 7-9 Am. It's fun! And you know Fall is all about having fun. Steve Gladstone

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Let us help you find the real condition of your home...  
for peace of mind... call us.

## ***Fall Helpful Home Check List:***

### ***Exterior Stuff:***

**Rooftop & Gutters:** Get rid of the leaves and debris. Starting this month nature will shed the leaves and we for some unknown reason will feel compelled to pick up every last one and fill the leaf bags and blow the debris like Lemmings jumping off a cliff. I don't know why we do it and sometimes I think we obsess far too much over what's on the ground that will naturally degrade and

compost. But we must keep those gutters clean. We need them to route the rain away from the foundation and if we don't, the basement will fill and seepage and flooding will drive us nuts. Ah the smell of mildew... "not in my house you say..." Maybe it's time to check the sump pump if you have one, or purchase a water sensor to put on the cellar floor. These little sensors are inexpensive and beep like a smoke alarm when the floor gets wet. Being alert to the problem may save your possessions from getting ruined.



These sell for about \$12-20 bucks and can save you quite a headache!

**Hose bibs, spigots, faucets:** October/November it's time to gather up the hoses and watering equipment before the water ices up. Drain the hoses, reel them up and place them in an out of the way storage for next year. Find the inside valves for the hose connections and turn them off. Go outside again and open the hose bibs to make sure they are open just enough to allow what little water is trapped in them to drain. If you open the outside and water keeps flowing you either turned off the wrong valve or you need a plumber to fix or replace the interior valve.

**Irrigation:** By now, if you have irrigation equipment, you should have had the service company come by to blow out the lines before winter. Forgetting to do this will probably destroy every part of the system that is buried.

**Pools:** If you have a pool make sure you properly cover the pool and remove or lock above ground pool ladders in the up position. Disconnect the pump and bring it into the garage for winter. Make sure heaters and filters are fully drained of water. Consider adding camphor and

mouse prevention in the heaters to avoid over wintering visitors. Make sure ends of pipes are covered to keep rodents out of the lines.

**Interior Things:**

**Filters:** Fall reminder, dust dirt, animal fur and dander all get caught in your heating system filters. Change those filters regularly to help reduce those fine particulates from floating around your home and getting you sick.

**Attics:** Don't close up the attic vents. Leave it cold in the attic to reduce the potential for mold. Add more insulation and if possible do it before the year ends to take advantage of the Energy tax incentives.

**Dryers:** Clean out excessive lint from the dryer vent lines and flapper to avoid a fire and to help the dryer get clothing done more efficiently.

**Cooler weather... working outside, dress in layers, wear gloves and good eye protection.**

1. Last issue we reminded you to take a few moments to stretch. Dr. Brian Nathanson recommends at least 5-10 minutes warming up before you begin the job, and I recommend two anti inflammatory pills when you're done... In between this, be careful. Don't take on too big a job or use unsafe techniques ...get help to "foot" the ladder or recruit additional manpower for the heavy jobs. In Fall we tend to do too much either because the job is too massive, or because the leaf pick-up dates are looming. Regardless, don't bite off too much. Pace yourself or you'll hurt tomorrow.
2. Good gloves do make a difference. They can cut down on blisters and reduce the chance of poison ivy oils getting on your skin. Use care not to wipe your brow or touch your skin after gardening or lawn clean-up. Washing quickly and carefully can stop the rash and itching.
3. Put away swings, play area toys, lawn furniture and gardening equipment. After the last mowing consider winterizing the mower. To do this you can add engine stabilizer or you can drain it down and really give it a proper cleaning and servicing. If you choose the latter

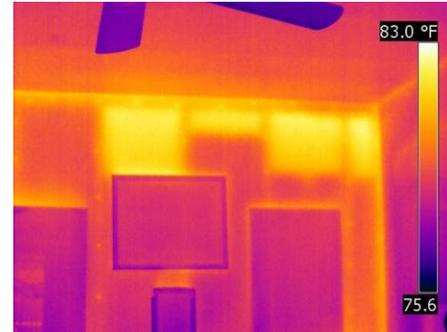
our suggestions are as follows: drain the gasoline. Remove the spark plug. Turn the unit on its side and take off the blade. While the blade is off use a wire brush and a small putty knife and clean off all the old grass and debris. When it is clean lightly spray the metal with some machine oil. Check the blade for damage and make sure it is sharp and balanced. Reinstall the blade. Dump old oil and replace with new and then clean the air filter. If it's a paper type replace it. If its foam, clean it well then add a few drops of motor oil and wring it out. Re-install and put the mower where it will be out of your way for the winter.



**Help Your Friends:**

Know someone looking to buy a home? Let them know we'd be happy to help them get the best home inspection services. People ask us why you are different from other inspectors. Why are our prices different...? Well you do indeed get what you pay for... We work only for you. We are not there to sell you a home but help you to feel comfortable that the home is the right one for you. We go on **every** roof that is safe to climb, we inspect **all the appliances**, we test **as many outlets and windows** as we can... not just one in each room. We include **termite inspections** (and have a Supervisory license for Pests). We make a commitment to thoroughness. We get in the **attics** and **crawlspaces** whenever possible, & our **reports** are relevant, clear and useful to you as an owner's manual for your home. We give you a **checklist for your closing inspection** and a **home improvement –maintenance book** to help you stay smart about your home. We never cut corners, nor do we leave the inspection unless you are 100% satisfied. **And we provide free telephone consultation forever.** We promise to help your friends with the most important purchase of their lives!

**Contact us for questions, referrals of good contractors and advice. Call: 203-327-6824 for Steve**



**Areas missing insulation are commonly found during an infrared scan. That's money leaving your home!**

**Energy Audits:** Home heating losses from openings, voids or areas missing insulation can cost hundreds, an infrared comprehensive audit can save you \$\$\$\$

Call us for an energy audit to suggest ways to save money, or if water is leaking into your home we can often find it. Thermal imaging can find the leak, or point to areas that are poorly insulated. This winter we are offering you an opportunity to find the leaks before you the waste money through another season. Thermal spectrum analysis can digitally display an image for a snapshot of your home. If you would like a thermal scan of your home performed call us.

**More Fall Tips:**

Hoses do have a memory... reel them up trying to untwist them as much as possible. Hang them in the garage or shed so they are dry and warm for next season.

Check your wheeled goods (tractors, mowers, carts and wheelbarrows for low pressure tires. Inflate them to proper levels and they will roll easier.

Lawn mowers and tractors annually hurt thousands of distracted drivers and kids in the yard. Never place your hands on hot motor or exhaust parts when the unit is

running or hot, nor place hands in areas where there are moving or sharp blades. Always keep the kids and pets away from the units. And do not allow young children to ride on or steer themselves on motorized power equipment.



Oops...

### ***For Your Protection:***

Hire only an inspector who has **experience, technical knowledge**, attends annual training & seminars and is a **Certified Member of ASHI**. Like all drivers in CT, NY and MA all inspectors must be State licensed, even the bad ones. Look for more than a license. **Steve & Matt are both Certified Members of the American Society of Home Inspectors** Steve was ASHI's National President in 2004. Be aware many companies will cut corners to lower pricing... every cut corner could cost you money. If this house is important to you, you owe it to yourself to hire a great inspection team.

### ***The Great House Project...***



*The girls were carving for two days...*



Leaf pick up time once again... this year we are doing more composting... picking up the leaves with the leaf vac and grinding them up... next year we should have some fine organic compost to add to the beds and around the shrubbery. The less raking the better!

### ***Home Fire Safety:***

With The “falling back” of the clocks we will be once again reminding you to change batteries in the smoke alarms and changing out Carbon monoxide alarms that are older than 5 years. Please check your Fire Extinguishers... if they are older than 12 years it's time to demonstrate how they work to a child before you throw them away. Most small fire extinguishers are disposable now and not refillable. Older mechanisms may have lost their charge or become un-usable. We are hopeful that should you ever need to use an extinguisher you will know where they are, and how to work it.

Remember **call 911** first, get everyone out then and only should you even consider fighting a small fire. Remember... **P.A.S.S.** **P**ull the pin, **A**im at the base of the fire, **S**queeze the trigger, **S**weep from side to side. If you have already purchased a new fire extinguisher and are ready to dispose of the old one... use the old one to allow someone who has never shot one off to try it. Aim it into a garbage can and teach them how to safely operate one. Knowledge will keep you safer in a fire situation.

Visit us at [www.stonehollow.com](http://www.stonehollow.com),

E-mail us at: [steve@stonehollow.com](mailto:steve@stonehollow.com)

### **Home Safety 2010-11:**

We are promoting home safety & annual maintenance inspections. **Offering a special "Seniors" survey fee for homes less than 2000 sq ft. for \$350. (restrictions apply)**

When we speak to senior groups & homeowner's associations we point out the importance of checking your home regularly to avoid termites, environmental issues, leaks & mold. These check-ups can nip little problems in the bud before they become expensive issues. **Call us at 203-327-6824** for details.

### **Getting organized before the snow:**

Are you getting yourself ready for the inevitable? Are you one of those people who procrastinate until the last second. Will you be searching for a snow shovel and ice melt in empty aisles of a hardware store in the midst of the storm? How about thinking about your cold weather needs a few months before it really gets nasty out there? We are putting together a little list and checking it twice for Winter so we won't be cursing the weather or trying to find that one missing glove!

If you have a partner who will help, or kids that are just sitting around bored... maybe you can get them to help grow this list and start to gather the items before you need them.

Winter Necessities:

Good snow shovels, ice melt & driveway reflectors. Gloves & boots that fit, warm socks and a scarf. For the Car: A bucket or two of sand for traction, a tow rope, windshield washer antifreeze, and a scraper. Several good flashlights, a blanket and some non-perishable protein type bars for the glove compartment. Road flares or a lantern, a tarp to place on the snow if you have to change a flat tire, waterless hand cleaner. Wipes or towels. In the house: Anything you might need if the power, heat, or water was out. Lanterns and flashlights, bottled

water and canned goods, a good battery operated radio, Clean the flue and make sure you have dry seasoned wood and fire-starters to light the fire. A good fire extinguisher, add insulation in the attic, insulate above the hatch to the attic, leave the vents open. Get those draft snakes for the doors and window film for the back slider. Make sure the hoses are put away and the hose connections are turned off inside and open a drop to let the water that might be trapped inside to get out. Gasoline for the generator, a generator or battery back-up for the ump pump. Umbrellas and show wiping mats, plenty of tea and hot cocoa, plenty of batteries of every size, extra light bulbs, toilet paper and paper towels. Plastic utensils and paper plates, a gas stove and bottled gas or a hibachi or grill (outside only). A good first aid kit and spare meds for common ailments, prescription drugs and refill prescriptions. A list of emergency numbers and spare keys for everything. Extra filters for the furnace and fan belts for blowers openers and tools that have them. A good book to read and games for the family. We tried our best to list all we could... if you have some more send them to our e-mail at [steve@stonehollow.com](mailto:steve@stonehollow.com).

### **Photos from the field:**



The importance of turning off the water on outside hose bibs from Ron Cook, And a new use for an old dog bowl from Brenda Julian (from the ASHI reporter)

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