

Home Maintenance Control Journal



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Dear Friends,

Our homes are our greatest asset. They shelter us from the stress of our every day jobs and protect us from the storms of life. We have taken our homes for granted, knowing that they will always be here for us. In order for our homes to protect us, we have to be their eyes, ears and hands. Our homes cannot maintain themselves; it is up to us to protect them from the wear and tear of the weather, time and our families.

For years the only time we would take care of our homes was when we were cleaning. That cleaning didn't happen until the mess was so bad that we could not stand it any longer. When we were in our crisis cleaning mode, we couldn't take the time to do the little things to keep our homes from falling into disrepair. The same is true for the general repairs of our home.

The only time we even think about fixing anything is when the rain is pouring through our ceilings. My grandmother used to tell us about a stitch in time saves nine and a penny saved is a penny earned. A little maintenance done each week will save more than a penny and add value to your greatest asset.

In the past, the only time we would ever spend any money or time on our home was when it was time to move and we needed to sell our home in order to buy another one. At this point, it was evident that the work we would put into our home could make a significant difference in how much money we could receive for our investment. Wouldn't it be nice to be able to put your home on the market without having to spend much time getting it ready to sell?

This Home Maintenance Control Journal is going to take the mystery out of what to do, when to do it, and how to maintain your home. For some people home maintenance comes naturally; just as it does for people who know how to clean house without giving it any thought. These people don't understand why we can't just do it. For us, it is not that we can't do it; we just need an instruction manual to walk us through the process one babystep at a time.

Many of these things are not hard, but in our perfectionism we think they will take longer and be more difficult than they actually are. We may also need to learn what we can do and what we have to delegate or hire done.

When it comes down to a stitch in time with our homes, it can be as simple as a turn of a screwdriver or a drop of oil. The secret is to not ignore it when you see something that needs doing; just use the "Do it now" Principle to get it done and not sidetrack you.

Our number one tool is our routines. When we include home maintenance into our daily, weekly and monthly schedules, we will succeed at finding the time to take care of our homes and then our homes will take care of us.

So what are you waiting for? Your home is not going to maintain itself all by its lonesome; it needs you to bless it. This Home Maintenance Control Journal is going to help remind you what to do and when to do it. It is your instruction manual to bless your home.

Are you ready to FLY with this Home Maintenance Control Journal as your guide to blessing your home?

FlyLady

Pretend to be a Realtor

In everything we do, we need to find a way to have fun. We are going to do the same thing with our Home Maintenance Control Journal. In the past, the only time we would ever think about sprucing up our homes was when company was coming or we needed to move. Let's use this scenario to help us get started blessing our home with the tender loving care that it blesses us with.

Now put on your pretend Realtor hat and get out your clipboard and pencil. We are going to take a walk through and around your home. Don't get overwhelmed by this; it is not going to take long. Just pretend that you have another appointment in a few minutes and get started. We are going to take it room by room and then we are going to walk outside.

Let's work clockwise around your home starting at the front door. After we have been through every room in your home, we will walk around the outside of your home and down the driveway. Look at what can be cleaned. What needs to be fixed or painted? What needs to be replaced? What needs to be decluttered? These questions will help you to prioritize your final list.

After you have taken your initial look at your home through a Realtor's eyes, you can then start to do some of the things that this list is telling you needs to be done. Your home did not get in this shape overnight and it is not going to get spruced up in a day. Take BabySteps and you will find this process as rewarding as the tender loving care is to your home's value.

Just getting this information down on paper is a great start. You can use this list as a check list to implement some of the repairs that you see need to be done. You can't do everything at once. This is why we pick the easily doable things first; like declutter and clean. You will be surprised at how much better an area can look when the clutter is no longer there.

Each month pull out your original list and see what has gotten done and what items are left for blessing your home. You will be elated at how your list will dwindle each month when you focus on BabySteps.

Pretend to be a Realtor Walk Through Sheet

_____ (Name of area)

(use one sheet per area; make as many copies as you need)

What needs repairing, replacing or painting? Need to hire professional Yes/No

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Having our Tools Accessible

When we are so overwhelmed by the CHAOS (Can't Have Anyone Over Syndrome) that it is hard for us to find a screwdriver when we need to tighten a simple screw, we tend to procrastinate when something needs doing. It is just too hard to find a good screwdriver, pair of pliers or a hammer when we need one. We find ourselves getting sidetracked just by looking for the tool we need; then we beat ourselves up over such little things. This is why I want you to put together your very own Home Maintenance Toolbox.

Here is what you will need for your toolbox.

1. A box to put your tools in or a drawer. You may have to clean one out.
2. A #1 Phillips screwdriver
3. A #2 Phillips screwdriver
4. A large flat head screwdriver
5. A thinner bladed flat head screwdriver
6. A pair of pliers
7. A pair of vise-grip pliers
8. A pair of needle-nosed pliers
9. A small hammer
10. A 10 foot tape measure
11. A small level
12. A pencil
13. A box cutter or utility knife
14. A small box of assorted nails, screws
15. A roll of duct tape

These are your tools. When you have your very own tools, you do not have to borrow from anyone else. The guys usually can tell when we have used one of their tools. This will keep peace in your home. Don't say that home repair is a man's job. You both live in this house and when you see the need, you can address it right away instead of putting it on a "Honey Do" List. You are going to feel so good about what you can do. If the item is something that you need more help with then be sure to ask for help and don't nag.

It is so nice to have your own tools and be savvy enough to use them!

Taking Care of our Homes

We get overwhelmed so easily by just the thought of what needs done to keep our homes maintained. This is because no one has ever broken it down for us into manageable BabySteps. I am not a professional plumber, carpenter, electrician, heating and air conditioning repairman or a painter. What I am is a person who takes pride in her home and uses a little common sense to see what needs done. This is not rocket science and yes even you can do these things.

The reason we have never looked at maintaining our home is because we have been so overwhelmed with just cleaning that we couldn't even think or didn't have time to look at these other little things that needed to be done to keep our home in good shape. The only time we did address an issue was when the toilet was about to fall through the floor or the bathroom was flooding. Here we go putting out fires again. I am going to teach you to keep these things from happening by doing routine checks. (Did you catch that?) Routines will save the day again.

We have already looked at our home through the eyes of a Realtor. Before we have finished our Home Maintenance Control Journal, we will be putting on many other professional hats. There is no perfect place to begin. Let's just jump in and get started.

Putting on a Plumber's Hat

We are going to check the faucets inside your home for constant drips and leaks seeping around the mountings. When we do the outside survey of our home we will look at those faucets for now lets work inside. A steady drip can drive us crazy as well as make our water bills higher than they need to be. These jobs are not hard, but you will need to read another one of those instruction manuals or look it up online. If you are afraid to tackle this, then have your plumber's phone number handy in your Control Journal. You may want to put it in your Home Maintenance Control Journal too.

While you are checking the sink faucets, also check the toilets to see if they are running all the time and the shower faucets. Be sure to look underneath the sink for water stains or wetness. If you find some, this could mean that there is a drain that is leaking or a water connection that is not tight or a pin hole in a pipe or the sink itself. Run some water in the sink and then feel the drain pipe, supply lines and the bottom of the sink to find where the water is coming from. Put one of those unused flat plastic tubs under it to catch this water. A constant leak like this can cause your floor and sub floor to rot as well as the bottom of the cabinet. Sometimes the problem is very simple to fix with just a twist of a connector by hand. It doesn't take a lot of muscle to turn these connections. Over time they will loosen with swelling and shrinking due to hot and cold water. Checking these seasonally will avert any potential problems. In fact, each time I open the cabinet door I just run my hand over the drain to check for wetness. Another good thing about decluttering in these areas is that you can see when there is water puddling up.

Another place that can get a leak is the supply lines to the toilet. They become loose from sitting down on the toilet and being wiggled when we clean. When you are doing your "Swish and Swipe" each morning you can look for water leaks and feel for drips. One time after we remodeled, the hot and cold lines got mixed up and we were filling the toilet with hot water. The tank was sweating; we knew something was wrong because water was on the floor. We had checked the supply lines, the tank where it attached to the bowl, and to make sure the toilet was securely

fastened to the floor. If this had not been the problem our next fix would have been to check the wax ring that the toilet sits on. This is another one of those seals that keeps water from going where we don't want it to go. They can become damaged when the toilet is put back in position. It is best to replace this ring each time you remove the toilet. If you have replaced a floor then you may have to get a taller wax ring.

Another plumbing problem we can have is with our disposals. They can become clogged with fibrous veggies. This is not fun especially when you are trying to fix a holiday dinner for 10 people. If you do not run enough water while the disposal is working then you may find your drain all backed up. The best remedy is not to put these things down your disposal; green beans, asparagus and potato peelings. I have had to take the drain all the way apart in order to dig this mess out of the pipe with a coat hanger. I didn't have a plumber's snake; which is a marvelous tool to have in emergencies; the cost will pay for itself in one plumber's visit on a holiday. Another thing that happens to our disposals is they get stinky. This is because the food residue cakes up on the sides because we are not running enough water to fully flush the organic residue down the drain. We are going to need to scrape it off and never do that again. Once we get it clean, we can keep it that way by using the disposal to clean itself. Fill the sink with hot soapy water after you run the disposal then release the water as the disposal is running. One of our readers has a toilet bowl brush just for her disposal and as part of her kitchen clean up routine she give her disposal a swish to remove the residue before it dries and hardens.

Another plumbing problem we have is with the caulk around our tubs, showers and sinks. This caulk provides a seal to keep water from leaking onto the wood floor underneath our tubs. If the caulk is cracked or missing, it will allow this water to seep into the unreachable places and cause the floor and sub floor to rot. To keep this from happening, we need to visually inspect this caulk when we are in the tub or at least when we are in this room with our zones. If the caulk needs to be replaced, it is not hard to pull out or dig out the old and squeeze in the new and rub it in with your finger tip. You have to be generous in order to fill up all the cracks. Missing grout can also cause the water to leak underneath the tub.

Now here is a problem that doesn't happen often but it will take an experienced plumber to fix; your shower pan will get a leak in it or your tub will develop a crack. The tub crack you can usually see easily. The pan leak is much harder to detect. Your first sign could be a water mark on the ceiling of the room below the shower. It could even be the next room because the water can follow a floor joist or a pipe until gravity causes it to drip.

Other plumbing problem signs could be slow drains. These can be as simple as taking the cover off the shower drain and removing the hair build up or it could be the main sewer drain from the house to the street or septic tank. It may need to be snaked out if you are on a city sewer. If you have a septic tank, when was the last time you had it pumped out? We do ours every five years, but we only have two people in our household. We also give our septic tank a dose of bacteria twice a year. This keeps the bacteria replenished that break down the sewage. With your septic tank you also have field drain lines coming off of the tank. If the tank becomes filled over the years with the inorganic sludge that is not eaten by the aerobic activity, this sludge will begin to flow into your field lines clogging them and keeping the water from dispersing. Another thing that can happen is these field lines can become clogged by tree roots. The roots search out the water and over a period of years will clog up the drain system. If you are experiencing these problems you may need a plumber to check this out. Do not wait thinking it is going to get better. According to the size of your family and the size of your septic tank, it may need to be pumped once a year to prevent damage to septic field drain lines. This annual maintenance could save you thousands of dollars.

If you have a basement, then there are a couple of things that can go wrong. If the basement is below street level, then the waste will have to be pumped up to the street. These are called slurry pumps and if the power is off they may not work causing the toilet to overflow. Also in the basement there is usually a sump pump to drain water out. Have you seen that drain hole in the basement floor? You can check this to see if it works just by pouring a bucket of water down the hole. While you are in the basement putting around, check the walls to see if water is seeping in. This is not a plumbing problem but a drainage problem around the

foundation of your home. You may need to install gutters or fill in holes. This moisture will help mildew and mold to grow causing your home to stink. If you can't find the problem you may have to get a professional to come out can look at it for you.

Another potential plumbing problem is your hot water heater. This is an appliance with an owner's manual. It is important to read this manual and know how your hot water heater operates. It could be gas or electric. There is nothing worse than waking up to a morning without hot water. Keep the area around the hot water heater clear of clutter. It will hide any tank leakage and could cause a fire if the heater is a gas unit. When we had our last hot water heater installed, we put a two-dollar aluminum pan under it to collect any water in the event of a leak. It is always a good idea to look on the floor around your water heater for puddles. Mine is out in the open and I have to go past it to do laundry. If yours is in a closet, you may need to remind yourself to check it occasionally.

Your outside faucets need to be winterized. This can be as easy as turning off the water to them inside of the house and draining or wrapping them with insulation and taping them to keep them from freezing. Do not leave water hoses hooked up to faucets in the winter. Next time you need to replace this faucet put in one that will not freeze.

Put on an Electrician's Hat

This is foreign territory to most of us unless we are changing light bulbs. In fourth grade I learned about electrical safety. I was taught to not plug in too many appliances in one outlet. They told me about worn out extension cords and appliance power cords. This is common sense safety information. You were taught this too in elementary school.

Write Yes or No in the margin of this check list.

1. Do you have any receptacles that are overloaded?
2. Are your lamps in good working order?
3. Do you have switches that sparks fly from when you turn them on?
4. Do you have to reset a breaker often when it flips off?
5. Do your lights dim when the air conditioner or water pump kick on?
6. Do you have extension cords under rugs?
7. Is your breaker box labeled?
8. Do you have switch plates that are loose or broken?
9. Have you checked inside your dryer and the vent for built up lint?
10. Do you run your dryer or dishwasher when you leave the house?
11. Do you leave the small appliances plugged in all the time?
12. Do you have a fire extinguisher for electrical fires?
13. Do you store things in your oven?
14. Do you have smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors?
15. Are the batteries changed in your detectors when the time changes?
16. Is your clutter going to be fuel for the fire and the cause of it?

The most important purpose of keeping your home maintained is to keep you and your family safe. If you are procrastinating about fixing any of these things or changing your behavior then you could be in danger. Do you have an evacuation plan for your family if there is a fire in the middle of the night?

Now let's talk about all of those appliance owners' manuals you have all over the house. It is time to gather them all up and put them in a file, an office in a bag or make them part of your Home Maintenance Control Journal. You could have too many of them, then you will need an accordion file to keep them in. Each time you get a new appliance, read the owner's

manual and put it in the file. This way when you need it, you can find it. Owners' manuals usually have trouble shooting tips and phone numbers to help you when something breaks. It is also good to staple the receipt on the inside of the manual. This will have your date of purchase and how much you paid for the appliance. I know we never look at owner's manuals. We just expect to intuitively know how something is supposed to work. We even complain when it is not as easy as we want it to be. It can be easy if we will just take 15 minutes when we get a new appliance and read the manual. It is not going to hurt us. Having knowledge is never a bad thing. It can keep us from making mistakes. This goes for your car too. If I had not read my owners manual the other day I would have ruined the rain sensor on the windshield wipers if I had gone through a car wash. I didn't even know it had one when the wipers came on all by themselves. When you get something new, study the manual so you will know its limitations and what it can really do!

Put on Repairperson Hat Drafty Homes

Our homes protect us from the cold of winter and the heat of summer. We can lose heat and also allow cold air to creep into our living spaces. This happens because our door seals are worn out and the caulking around our window frames has become old and cracked. This allows that cold air to make our utility bills higher. How do you know there is a crack or a problem with the seals?

This is very simple. In fact, this is the only time I have ever lit a cigarette. A candle will work too but it does not have the smoke to help you see the actual air flow. All you have to do is hold it up to the door or window to see if the smoke or flame moves. If it does, you have a crack in the caulk or a defective door seal. Also check your receptacles and switch plates on your walls; they can allow cold air to seep in too. Another place for air conditioned and heated air to leak is in the duct work itself. If you have access to it in a basement or attic, you can see the actual ducts and visually inspect the joints to see if the tape is loose or if the joints have come apart. If this happens you will be heating and cooling unused areas of your home. This can cost you lots of wasted money with the increased expense of your utility bills. You can also call your electric company or your gas company; they can recommend someone to come out and give you an energy survey. They will also check to see if you have the proper insulation for your climate. Over the years, your homes insulation packs down and does not have the air spaces that provide the insulating properties. This is well worth the money that it takes. This survey will pay for itself during a season of heating and air conditioning bills.

Structural Survey

Let's take another walk around the outside of our home and look for air leaks and other potential problems with the structure of your home. It is time to look up. Look at the roof of your home. Do you see any shingles that are lifted up? Rain can blow under these shingles during a storm. Now look at the flashing. This is the metal that is around anything that goes through a roof: a chimney, plumbing vent pipes and ventilator fans. Look for a separation between the top of the metal and the item it is around. Another clue that there could be a problem is a circle on your ceiling or a wet place. The leak may not be right where the circle is in the ceiling. When the water seeps through the roof, it will follow gravity until it drops off.

As you are looking up, take note of the trees that are around your home. Are they leaning toward your home? Are there dead limbs that need to be cut? Are any limbs or bushes actually touching your home? Pruning these limbs once a year and being aware of the potential threat to your home during a storm will save you many sleepless nights or a surprise wake up call when a big limb comes through your roof. Put this on a list of things that need to be done. You can do the little stuff close to the ground such as the bushes but you may have to hire reputable tree cutters to get rid of big problems.

While we are still looking up, check your gutters for debris. If the gutters are filled with leaves and twigs they will not drain the water away from your foundation. Do this every autumn after the leaves fall. If you don't have trees, then you will not have this problem. Make sure your gutters are draining away from the house. You can get simple links of pipe to help the water disperse away from your foundation.

Next let's look at the foundation of your home. Start by checking the vents that are around the perimeter. These vents allow the moisture to dry under your home during the summer time. If you have a basement you probably do not have vents. In the winter time these vents need to be closed so that the cold wind does not freeze your water pipes or make it harder to heat your home. These vents should close tightly to restrict

the air flow in the winter. After winter is over you will want to open them back up until the next fall.

While you are walking around the outside of your house, look for areas where your critters may have started to dig a hole. These holes will allow rain water to puddle and run into your crawl space or your basement. Fill up these holes and put rocks there to deter them from digging. Check your outside dryer vent to make sure it is opening and closing properly when the dryer is running. Mice love to use this as their doggy door. Check the seal around the vent to make sure it is not cracked. Also check the area where the heating and air conditioning system comes into the house. A crack in the caulking here can allow critters to come into your home too. Don't ask me how I know. It is not fun to find a black snake in your house.

If you have a brick house, look for places between the brick for mortar joints that have cracked or are missing. If your home has siding, check to see if there are boards or panels that do not seem to be securely fastened. This can allow air to penetrate your walls. This is just a simple visual inspection. If you find a problem area, it can be fixed. Also check around the windows for cracks in the caulking. This could be the reason you have a drafty house. Caulking is very simple to use. Caulk can be obtained at any hardware store. The directions for using the caulk are on the tube and you can find them on the internet too.

As you are walking around the perimeter of your home, keep your eyes open for ant beds. If you have problems with ants, they have found a path into your home. It is up to you find their ant highway and stop them. They will follow water pipes and cracks in caulking. One time I was having an ant problem in my bathroom. I went outside to find an ant bed up against the house right by my bathroom. I got rid of the ant bed and my problem went away. I went to the hardware store and got these little spikes you stick in the ground. In one week the ants were gone. Check with your hardware store for what works on the type of ants you have in your area.

In the autumn if you have lots of trees and falling leaves you will need to keep the leaves from building up around your house. This can be a big fire

danger. Rake or blow the leaves away from your home. A little raking now could keep you safe in the event of a brush fire. This will give you a buffer.

As you are walking around the outside of your home check the faucets for leaks, the electrical outlets for cracked covers and your outside lighting. Are there any bulbs that need to be replaced? Don't put this off. We are the queen of procrastinators. You feeling safe is important! If you don't take care of this, your home will not be able to protect you. Are there any lights that do not work?

Now let's look at the surface of your house: under the overhang and the outside walls. Does it need to be swept or washed? Can you see any rotten wood? Is the paint peeling or faded? When was the last time your house was painted? If you have siding, does it need washed? When was the last time you washed your windows? I know this seems like a huge job, but any task can be broken down into BabySteps to make it more manageable.

Next let's look at your porches and decks. Are there cracks or rotting wood? When was the last time you pressure washed and sealed the wood? Are the handrails attached securely and are the steps rotten or unstable? Think safety here; could someone stumble and fall because of your negligence. Our homes need to be safe for us, but they also need to protect our visitors.

Does your garage door work properly? Have you changed the batteries in the opener? Have you ever read your instruction manual to know what needs to be done to keep it running smoothly? This is a good place to start. If you can't find yours, look online for its manual or generic instructions for the safe operation of automatic garage doors or regular garage doors. All you have to do is put the make and model number of your door opener into Google and it will find the manual for you. Is there trash in your garage that could catch fire? Get rid of the piles of papers and magazines that you have stashed there. They can catch fire by spontaneous combustion or by critters building nests in your debris.

Do you have holiday lights that have been up for a year or more? They need to go away. They are not made for year round exposure to rain and

sun. These need to be taken down and thrown in the trash. Holiday lights are only made for a few weeks of exposure.

Other things to check when you are doing your survey are the driveway, your mailbox, water hoses and any other outdoor faucets you have not checked. Do they need any repair? Are they leaking? Are the hoses cracked? Do they need to be replaced?

You have completed an outside look at your home. Most things can be done without a lot of knowledge of construction or repair. If you don't know how to fix something, do not procrastinate about getting it done. Ask someone, do an Internet search or go to your local "do it yourself" store. We love those places anyway. They have people there to help you. Ask a friend who may know someone you can hire.

Heating and Air Conditioning

Our heating and air conditioner unit is probably the most expensive appliance we have in our home. It keeps us warm and cool, but it can't do this if we expect it to take care of itself. We have to keep it serviced. This means changing the filters once a month and scheduling annual service. These units need to be cleaned. They get lots of debris on the grill outside. We have to read the manual on this unit to know what it needs. If you don't have one then find the model number and the brand and look it up online. Every few years we have our ducts cleaned out. Some people don't think this is necessary but after we remodeled our home they were filled with debris.

Are the taped joints of your duct work secure? You can lose heated and cooled air through these joints. Your unit will be heating and cooling unused areas of your home causing your fuel bills to go up.

Are your return air vents blocked by clutter and are they open? Have you closed off too many vents in your home? Just walking over them sometimes closes them. This can cause your unit to overheat and damage the heating chamber. This will also keep your air conditioner from cooling your home properly.

Is your thermostat working correctly? You may need to put a thermometer next to it to see if the unit kicks in at the right time. Have you closed off too many doors to the rooms in your house so that the air does not flow past the thermostat correctly?

Now this does not have anything to do with your heating and air conditioning unit, but if you have a fireplace you need to have the chimney checked for cracks and the flue checked for creosote build up. This can cause a chimney fire and create a lot of damage to your home. You also lose a lot of heat and air conditioning up your chimney. Do you close your damper when you are not using your fireplace? Do you have fireplace doors if you don't have a damper?

Lawn Equipment

Our lawn mowers, weed eaters and other motorized equipment also need to be taken care of before cold weather sets in and before spring time comes and we need to crank them up and take care of our yards.

Lawn mowers will need to be serviced at least once a year. Please read your owner's manual for more information on when and how to do this. The gas will need to be treated over the winter to keep it from getting gummy. Getting into the habit of putting your equipment away after you clean it up will help to keep it from deteriorating. If you will take good care of them, they will help you take care of your lawn.

Now for our Lawns

I almost forgot about our lawns and gardens. There really wasn't a good place to insert this. Here is as good a place as any, right after our lawn equipment maintenance section. I don't have any grass in my yard; I just have a flower garden and mulch. Justin will have to help me with this section. I do know from watching him that he has a set time each week to mow and trim his yard. He also does weeding and feeding of his lawn with bags of fertilizer. His lawn always looks great.

Here are some of the things that Justin does to make his lawn look great all the time. He has a simple routine for this just like we teach.

Lawn Mowing

1. I mow once a week usually on Saturday. I check the forecast to see if I need to adjust the day to Friday or Sunday.
2. Grass shouldn't be cut too short. The soil will dry out and it will stress the plants. A height of around 3 inches works for most grass types.

3. Cut the grass in a different direction each week. This will keep the grass from leaning over and growing long. When this happens you will have less grass. I call this the Lawn Comb Over.

4. If you are finished mowing and you see clumps of cut grass on your lawn, raise your mower deck one notch and mow over the clumps. This will enable the blades to only work on the grass clumps. Try it; you will like it.

5. If you trim and edge before you mow, most of the clippings will be bagged or mulched and the lawn will look better.

Seeding

Once a year in fall, it is good to over seed your lawn. This is just sowing seeds in the grass to encourage new growth. This is the best time for seed growth. I use a rotary spreader to evenly spread the seed. I do this before I do my fall fertilizing.

For bare spots till or rake the area 1 inch deep. Add top soil if necessary and evenly spread seed. You then should fertilize and keep moist. Water twice a day until it starts coming in nicely.

Aerating and Thatching

Thatch is the dead grass clippings that accumulate at the base of the grass blades. Having $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch of thatch is beneficial to the lawn. It buffers the soil and protects the grass roots. More than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch is a problem because it will repel water much like a thatch roof. Aerating is a way to break up the thatch to allow the oxygen and nutrients into the soil. It takes a heavy duty rake or a piece of equipment you pull behind your mover. Aerating will usually keep the thatch under control. I aerate my lawn once a year in the fall before the fall fertilizing. Grass that is in high traffic areas will also need to be aerated due to the compacted soil. Thatching should only be done when the thatch is over $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. This actually harms the grass blades, so it should be done every 2 years at the most.

As you can see from Justin's lawn routine, he takes great pride in his yard. Thanks Justin for helping us learn how to do this.

With most things in our life, we see all or nothing. Just looking at our homes and yards, we don't think that there is enough time to do it all. Well there is, if you will learn to break these areas into zones and smaller bites. Trying to do it all in one day is going to overwhelm you and take the joy from it. Oh yes, there is joy in yard work.

Let me tell you about our yard. We do not mow. We live in the woods and have no grass, but I know about mowing! It is like washing dishes; you never get finished, because as soon as you do, the grass decides to grow again.

For those of you that don't know about our basic weekly plan, just think of it as a day for everything. When we look at our homes, we have things that we do daily, every other day, weekly, biweekly, and monthly. This also works for our yards and gardens.

What needs to be done daily in our yards?

1. Weeding flowerbeds. This is one of those outside jobs that only take a few minutes at a time. Consistent daily plucking of weeds for only 5-15 minutes will keep this under control. This is something that we have never noticed until it was out of hand. I keep a pair of garden gloves, small rake/spade tool, and some snips in a basket by my front door, so when I walk outside in the cool of the evening or early morning, I can put on the gloves and do just a little. Another reason for wearing the gloves, besides keeping your hands from getting dirty, is to protect your hands from thorns.

2. Deadheading spent flowers is something that can be done daily as you walk around your garden. Snip, Snip, Snip!

3. Some plants need to be watered every day during the hot part of the summer. I make it easy to water, by having the water hose handy or a watering can filled at all times. I just refill it after I water, that way I can water without a lot of hassle.

You can incorporate these things into your daily routines. If you will spend 15 minutes a day doing these little things in your garden, you will never have to spend a whole day again.

Now what needs to be done on a weekly basis:

1. Mowing. For the most part, mowing takes from 1 hour to as many as 5-6 hours, if you have a big yard. You can also break your yard into zones and do it over a couple of days if you need too. This schedule will need to be flexible according to the weather. So set aside one day with an optional day if needed.
2. Some flowers or lawns may need to be watered weekly; I personally do not recommend heavy watering. The more you water early in the year, the more shallow the root system develops and if we have a lot of dry weather, the plants will not be hardy and will suffer and so will you. Use a little water when you plant them; then let them root hog or die, I always say. If I have to water them; I know me, I will not do it. So they had better learn to fend for themselves. I also like to plant a lot of sedums and drought tolerant plants. I like a pretty garden without a lot of work.
3. Some people like to fertilize their lawn and garden weekly. Fertilizer companies have made this easy for those of us who don't know about routines. They have made time release fertilizers.
4. Pruning of your perennials will stagger blooms and create less leggy plants. This is good to do early in the season. This also helps them be fuller plants.
5. Some of my flowers need to be staked so they don't spread out when the rain weighs them down. So I check on this about once a week. I also look at my vines to make sure that they are entwined in the trellis.

If you will spend 15 minutes a day enjoying your yard and garden by walking out there and looking for a few weeds and clipping what is calling out to you, you can turn work into a labor of love and beauty. Isn't that

exactly what we have done with your home; filled it with love! Fill your yard with the same love. It is only work, if you think of it that way.

I hope this Home Maintenance Control Journal will help you to not be afraid of home and car maintenance. I am also going to include a checklist for each season and a list to write down these important professionals' phone numbers. There are also some printable labels to use on your calendar.

Our Cars need a little Love too!

All most of us know how to do is get in our cars, adjust the seats, put gas in the tank, turn on the radio and drive our cars till they will not run any more. Our cars need just a little tender loving care too. After all, if we take care of them, they will take care of us.

The funny thing about car maintenance is that we (women) don't know much about it. It is not that we don't want to know; it is that we just do not even think about it. For us, putting gas in our cars is a major inconvenience. We wait till the last possible fume has been consumed before we stop for a fill-up. We have to practice filling up more often and when we do there are some things that we can do as the gas pump is putting the fuel into our vehicles.

As you get out of the car, gather up any trash that needs to be thrown away. This is a great habit to establish. While the gas is pumping take a visual inspection of your tires to see if any of them look low in air pressure. It is never fun to have a flat tire on a busy highway or run out of gas. Another thing to do as you fill up is wash your windshield to remove bugs and dirt that can obstruct your vision. When we were young, there were full service stations that would check your oil and other fluid levels when you filled up. That doesn't happen much these days except in New Jersey where you are not allowed to pump your own gas. Each week set a day to fill up your car and clean it out. While you are doing this, please check your children's car seats to make sure they are securely fastened.

Have you ever read your car's instruction manual? Most of us have not. These little books make for interesting reading. They tell us when scheduled maintenance should be done. They can also save us a ton of money. If we don't follow the recommended scheduled maintenance, we could be responsible for even warranted repairs. You can also learn a lot about how our cars work. I had to read mine to figure out how to put gas in the first time.

My Sweet Darling has a routine for reminding him to change the oil in his car. He does it every three months when the seasons change; March, June, September and December. When you get the oil changed, also check the transmission and brake fluid levels and the tire pressure. Also have the belts checked to see if they are worn or loose. Another thing to have checked is the coolant in the radiator and the windshield washer fluid. Windshield wipers need to be replaced once a year. We do this just before winter sets in.

Your tire pressure can help you get better gas mileage and keep your car from pulling from one side to another. Running on correct tire pressure helps your tires to wear evenly. Every 5000 miles it is good to rotate your tires and balance them to help them wear evenly. Your family's lives depend upon having good tires on your car. Replace them when the tread is getting worn out.

Your car needs to be washed and vacuumed about once a month. I know the guys will say this should be done once a week, but let's face it, we are not going to do that. Remember this when we start a brand new month.

I hope you can see how car maintenance is just like the rest of our routines. When we get into the habit; they practically take care of themselves. Please take care of your cars. Little lives depend on them. Don't allow your cars to run on empty! A little TLC will go a long way when your car is called on to perform when you need it.

**In Case of Emergency
Contact Numbers**

Occupation	Name	Phone number
Car Mechanic	_____	_____
Carpenter	_____	_____
Chimney Sweep	_____	_____
Duct Cleaner	_____	_____
Electrician	_____	_____
Energy Surveyor	_____	_____
Gas Company	_____	_____
Heat and AC	_____	_____
Painter	_____	_____
Plumber	_____	_____
Septic Plumber	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____

Keeping these numbers handy will keep you calm!

Monthly Checklist

Do one item each day starting on the first of the month

Mark your calendars

Home

1. Replace filter in heating and air conditioning unit
2. Wash range hood filter in dishwasher
3. Wipe down washing machine, check hoses for leaks
4. Check the oil and other fluids, belts, hoses in car
5. Check faucets for leaks
6. Clean the seals of the refrigerator and freezer

Lawn

1. Check tools for rust and loose parts

Car

1. Check oil and fluids
2. Wash the car
3. Clean out car
4. Make sure children's car seats are secure.

Winter Checklist

Home

1. Tighten screws and lubricate door hinges
2. Remove drain covers and clean out hair
3. Check caulking in tub, shower and sinks; caulk
4. Check dryer vent and vacuum lint out of dryer
5. Replace water filters in refrigerator or faucets
6. Check handrails for loose connections
7. Check threshold and carpet for tripping seams

Lawn

1. Enjoy dreaming about your lawn and garden
2. Put down lime in February
3. Check drainage around the house and gutters

Car

1. Check tires for tread wear and rotate twice a year
2. Change oil and filters in car; check belts and hoses

Spring Checklist

Home

1. Check garage door; replace batteries; read manual
2. Check sump pump if you have one
3. Clean siding and check for peeling paint
4. Open outside faucets from winter; get out water hoses
5. Check roof shingles and flashing
6. Check handrails for loose connections
7. Check threshold and carpet for tripping seams
8. Change batteries in smoke detectors and vacuum
9. Vacuum refrigerator coils
10. Vacuum bathroom fan grill
11. Check outside of house for limbs touching house

Lawn

1. Make sure lawn equipment is ready for season
2. Clean up after winter
3. March: Crab Grass preventer
4. April: Turf Builder plus weed control
5. June: Turf Builder plus insect control
6. Mulch

Car

1. Get car inspected and renew license plate (mark your calendar and check your driver's license for expiration date)
2. Change oil and filters in car; check belts and hoses
3. Check car manual for scheduled maintenance
4. Check brakes

Summer Checklist

Home

1. Check chimney for cracks and have cleaned
2. Tighten screws on ceiling fan blades
3. Check fire extinguishers and replace if needed
4. Check drainage around the house and gutters
5. Check handrails for loose connections
6. Check threshold and carpet for tripping seams
7. Check humidity in basement; turn on de-humidifier

Lawn

1. Mow weekly
2. Trim

Car

1. Change oil and filters in car; check belts and hoses
2. Check tires for tread wear and rotate twice a year

Autumn Checklist

Home

1. Winterize outside faucets; put away hoses
2. Check windows; weather strip and caulk
4. Check doors for weather strip and air leaks
5. Cover window unit air conditioners
6. Check electrical cords for bad plugs and wires
7. Check handrails for loose connections
8. Check threshold and carpet for tripping seams
10. Change batteries in smoke detectors and vacuum
11. Vacuum refrigerator coils
12. Vacuum bathroom fan grill
13. Check humidity in basement; turn off de-humidifier

Lawn

1. Service lawn mower; sharpen blades, Sta-bil the gas
2. Check outside of house for limbs touching house
3. September: Turf Builder
4. September: Re-seed lawn or spot seed
5. November: Winterize; clean up and put away seasonal items

Car

1. Change oil and filters in car; check belts and hoses