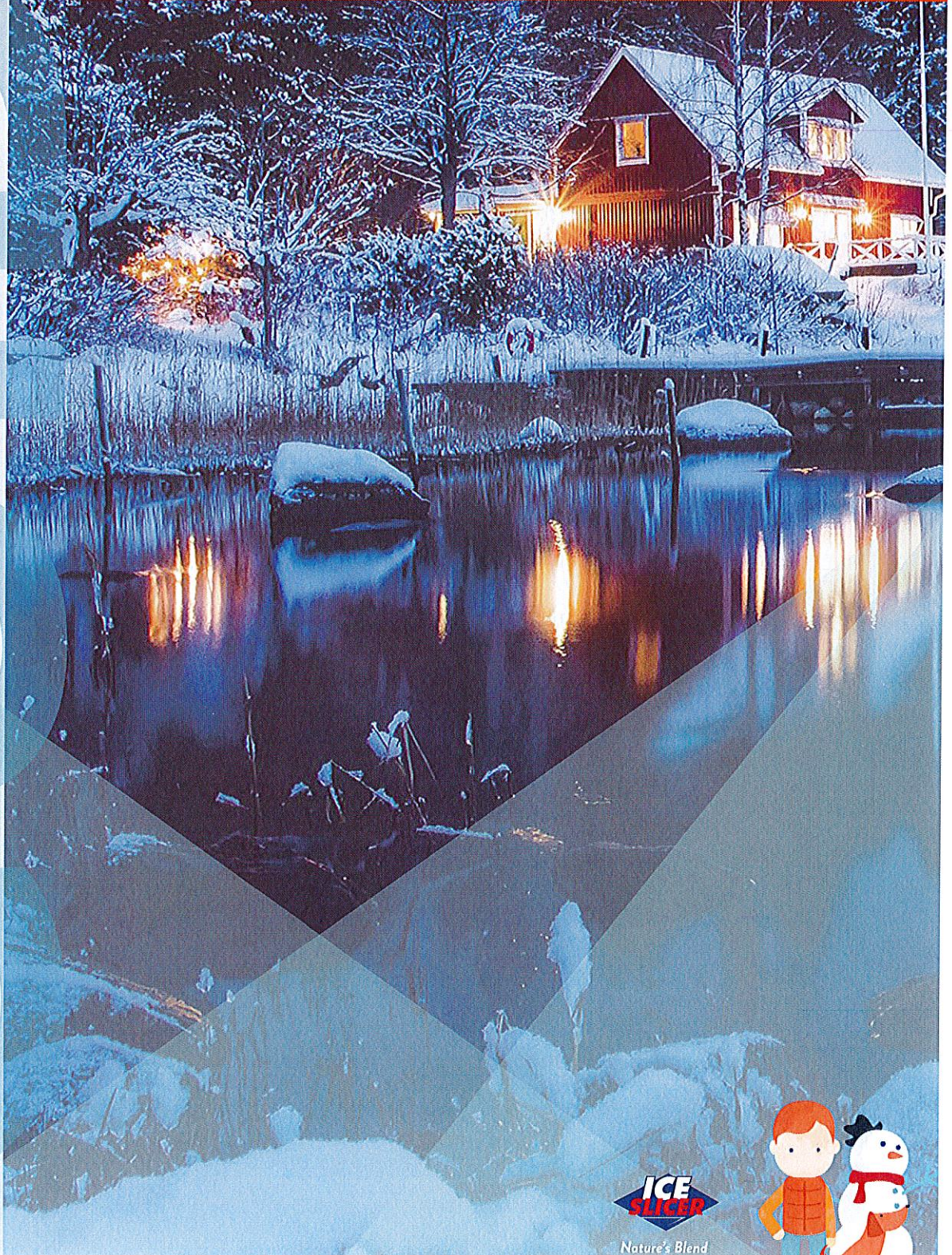


Winter Safety:

Home Edition




**ICE
SLICER**
Nature's Blend





STARTING POINT

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As the leaves begin to change, it is natural to get swept up in the embrace of cozy layers, delicious food, and seasonal activities. The bite to the air is a welcome respite from the heat of the summer, and sometimes the last thing we want to do is cobble together a winter preparation checklist.

Unfortunately Mother Nature does not always grant us a leisurely autumn in which the cares of future frost are out of sight and out of mind. Just last year (2020), [Denver, Colorado](#) won the unenviable award of fastest descent from 100° F to snowfall! Over Labor Day weekend, their world changed from swimsuits to snowsuits, leaving little to no time for sub-freezing preparations.

So how do we balance the task of preparing our homes for winter and still enjoy the blessings of fall? Can we have our apple pie and eat it too? Looking at a giant to-do list is overwhelming. In order to take some of the cares off your plate (so there's more room for pie), we have broken down these tasks into manageable categories that you can tackle a little bit at a time.

Let's walk through what we all can do to prepare our homes before the winter storm, keep our homes safe during the storm, and maintain our homes after the storm.





BEFORE THE STORM

Just like a car, every home needs a regular tune up, and staying on top of tune ups can help ward off catastrophe. First things first, assemble your home team so you can divide up tasks. If you live alone, consider partnering up with a neighbor to provide assistance for multi-person jobs. Your home team will be your first line of defense in the event of a winter emergency. As you prepare, discuss different scenarios and plans of action. It is much easier to plan clearly before you enter the stresses of an actual emergency. The adage 'many hands make light work' can help you lessen the load. Let's get started!

HVAC CHECKUP



Your heater becomes the literal lifeblood of your home during the winter time. Book an HVAC checkup as early as possible in the fall. When the weather turns cold, HVAC professionals' schedules fill up very quickly with emergency calls and it becomes more difficult to secure an appointment. Write down the number and point of contact of your HVAC service provider on your heater so you can find it easily in case of an emergency.

Cold and flu season can trigger a host of respiratory illnesses, so changing your air filters helps your winter start off fresh.

If your home has a hot water radiator, bleed the

valves and release any air that may be trapped inside. Fluids are a much better heat transfer medium than air, so your radiator will work more efficiently without air pockets.

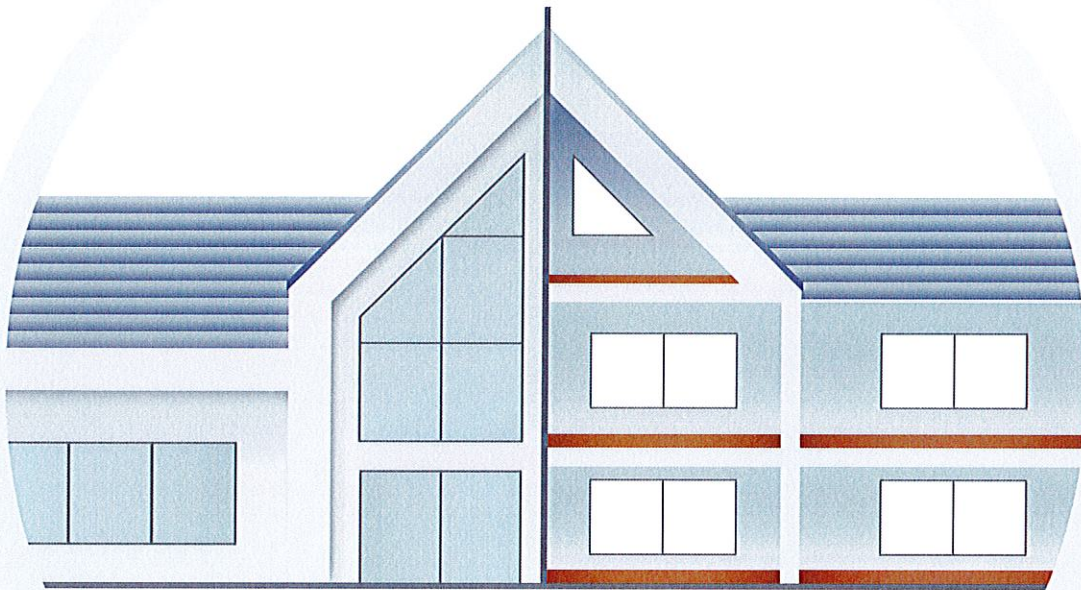
Next, take a look at your thermostat. If yours is on the old-fashioned side, consider upgrading to a programmable thermostat. Taking control of your heater's schedule will prevent it from running unnecessarily and help you save immensely on energy costs. If you already have a programmable thermostat, make sure your heating schedules and temperature ranges match your current needs and lifestyle.



SEAL DRAFTS AND LEAKS



A functioning heater is only part of the cozy home equation. Inspecting for drafts and leaks will seal out winter's chill and save your heater from over-work. Start by walking around your home and perform an external visual inspection from roof to foundation.



Exterior Inspection (Look For):

- Shingles that are cracked, warped, or missing
- Moss or lichen on your roof (not just simple weathering discoloration, but masses that have pushed or dislodged roofing materials)
- Damaged or missing flashing around chimneys
- Damaged or missing weather stripping around doors and windows
- Cracked windows

Interior Inspection (Look and Feel For):

- Signs of water leakage in your attic or crawl space
- Gaps around doors and windows through which you can see light or feel airflow
- Drafts around outlet boxes or interior vents

After your inspection, replace and repair materials as your skill sets allow. Your roof should be top priority, so budget for roof repairs before anything else. If roof repairs are needed, schedule an appointment as early as possible before contractors are impeded by the weather. For drafty gaps around windows and outlet boxes, a can of spray foam insulation can provide a quick and simple fix. [Weather stripping](#) is also an easy material to apply around drafty doors and windows.

REPAIR SIDING



Take a walk around your home, and inspect your exterior siding. Look for any siding that is peeling, rotting, or compromised in any way. No matter what medium (wood, stone, stucco, metal, brick etc.), if your siding is damaged, then the integrity of your home is compromised.

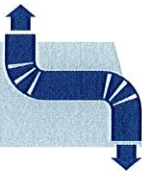
Any water penetrating a breach in the siding will expand once it freezes and exacerbate damage. Repair, replace, and reseal any siding materials that look like a weak link in your home's armor against the weather. If repairing siding is outside of your skill set, consider hiring a professional before cold weather sets in.

PATCH CONCRETE



Because water expands as it freezes, it is also important to inspect your home, paths, and driveway for cracks in any concrete or mortared surfaces. [Patch](#), or fill in any cracks you find and reseal them so they do not fill with water and worsen upon frozen expansion.

VENTS AND DUCTS



Everyone loves a warm blanket straight from the dryer when it's frigid outside. However, those comfy dryer loads can create a buildup of combustible lint in your vents. According to the [US Fire Administration](#), clothes dryers fires cause a reported \$35 million in property loss each year. Most of these accidents occur during the fall and winter. Clean out your dryer lint traps and exhaust ducts so you can have peace of mind all winter long.

Another set of ducts that deserve a good clean is your air ducts. Air ducts can be simple to spot clean yourself, however if it has been awhile, consider hiring a professional for a deeper clean. If you decide to do this yourself, be sure to cover other vents in the house you are not working on so you do not force dust and debris into the rest of the rooms. Visit the [EPA's](#) site to learn more about duct cleaning and how or when to get help.



CHIMNEY & FIREPLACE



Crackling fires are one of the upsides of those long winter nights. So get your chimney and fireplace up and running with a checkup to ensure they are working safely. Make sure the flue damper opens and closes correctly. Have your chimney and cap cleaned of combustible buildup, animal nests, leaf deposits, etc. Test gas fireplaces to make sure they are working before it gets cold.

If you have a wood burning fireplace, stock up on firewood and remove old ash deposits. Store firewood in a dry and easy to access location, however avoid storing it inside your home (wood piles can become insect hotels). Make sure fire extinguishers are not expired and that household members know their location and how to use them. Here are some [additional tips](#) on how to spruce up your fireplace before winter.

DETECTORS



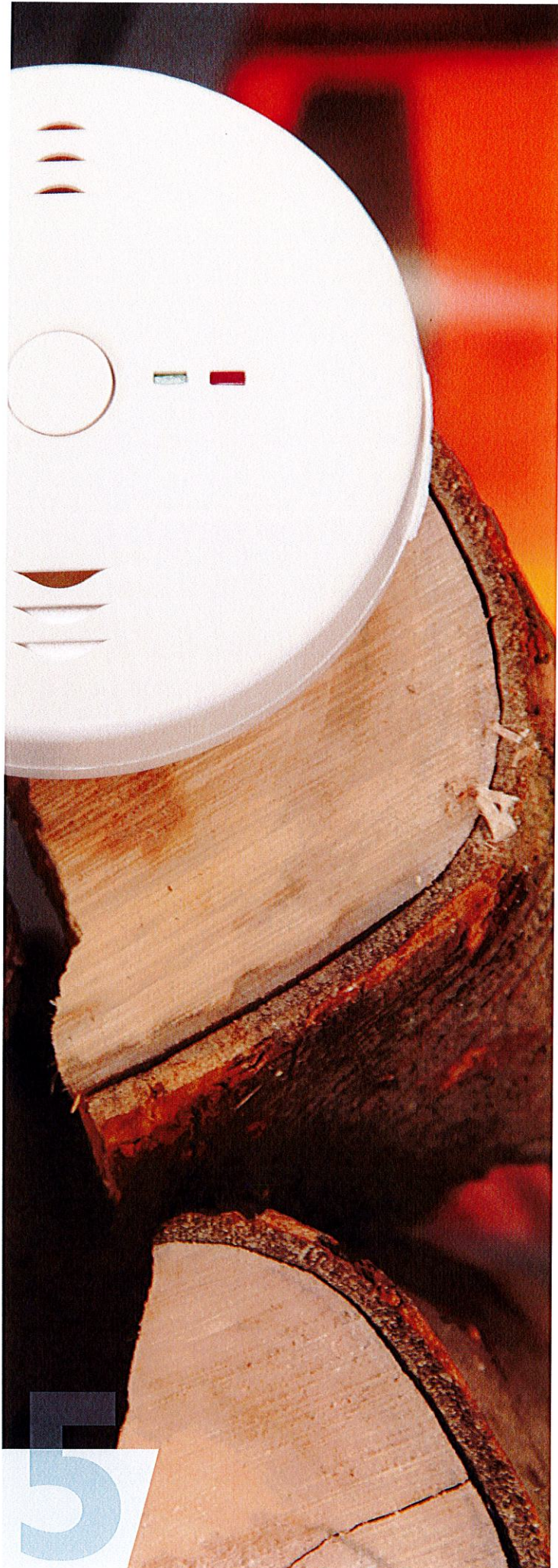
During cold weather, we seal our homes up to keep the heat in and save on energy costs. Then, as we run fireplaces and furnaces, our risk of carbon monoxide buildup and fires increases. Replace the batteries in both your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors then push and hold the test button to make sure they are working.

CHECK DRAINAGE



Late fall, winter, and early spring create multiple freeze/thaw cycles that test any home's drainage capability. Water must be diverted away from your home as much as possible. Inspect gutters and downspouts to ensure none of them are sagging, or have broken away from your roof line. Remove leaf litter and debris from your gutters to prevent ice dams (destructive icy blockages) that can build up against your home.

If the trees around your home make this a bothersome chore every year, consider installing [gutter covers](#) once they are cleaned out. If you are home on a rainy day, look at your downspouts and make sure water is not pooling against your house but immediately running away from it. Also on a rainy day, pay attention to any places in your yard where water is pooling, as these can become miniature ice rinks during the winter.



PREPARE ANIMALS



Some animals are naturally equipped for over-wintering, and some are not. For those that can live outside during sub-freezing temperatures, there are things we must do to make sure they stay healthy and safe in the months ahead.



Indoor Pets:

- Provide indoor sleeping areas for pets that may have been enjoying outside time during the spring, summer, and fall. They can still visit the great outdoors during the winter, but their living quarters should move inside with the rest of the family.
- If you have been storing food and other pet supplies outdoors for convenience, move your stockpile some where it will be easier to access once snow starts to fall.
- If pets do come outside, protect their sensitive paws from the cold and sharp ice.

PRO TIP!

PURCHASE SOME PET BOOTIES & PAW BALM TO PROTECT PETS' PAWS DURING THE WINTER.

Outdoor animals and livestock:

- Outdoor animals and livestock should be provided with sheltered locations appropriate for their size so they can escape from winds and precipitation. These shelters can include coops, hutches, lean-tos, and 3 sided sheds depending on the animal.
- Acquire ample sand and gravel to spread for increased traction around food and water sources during the winter. Animals tend to congregate for warmth and can create trodden down bogs that fill with slippery ice and snow.
- Make sure you have a plan, and purchase supplies to give your outdoor animals access to unfrozen water every single day. Depending upon your local climate, it may be worthwhile to invest in a tank heater to help your animals get through lengthy freezes.
- Store food sources in a dry and easy to access location to make winter restocking easier.

EXTERIOR WATER



One winter benefit is the break from typical yard work. Just as your plants will enter hibernation mode, it is time to put your exterior water sources to bed. Before it gets too cold, give your landscaping a nice drink before turning off exterior water. Remove and store garden hoses to prevent cracks and protect their shape.

[Drain or blow out](#) water from sprinklers and exterior valves before shutting off your landscape's water supply. If you have any outside water sources that must stay on during the winter time, thoroughly insulate or consider purchasing pipe heaters as needed to keep your pipes from freezing and bursting.

PEST PREVENTION



Unwelcome critters want to enjoy the warm, safe space you have created in your home. Rodents, insects, birds, and even bats will try and find a way in to escape from the weather. Thoroughly check screens, window and door seals, exterior vents, soffits, fascia, gables, and window wells for potential pest entrances.

Remember they can fit in remarkably small spaces! If you have plants or trees that drop nuts or other food sources, vigilantly remove them from the ground so your home doesn't become their winter stockpile.

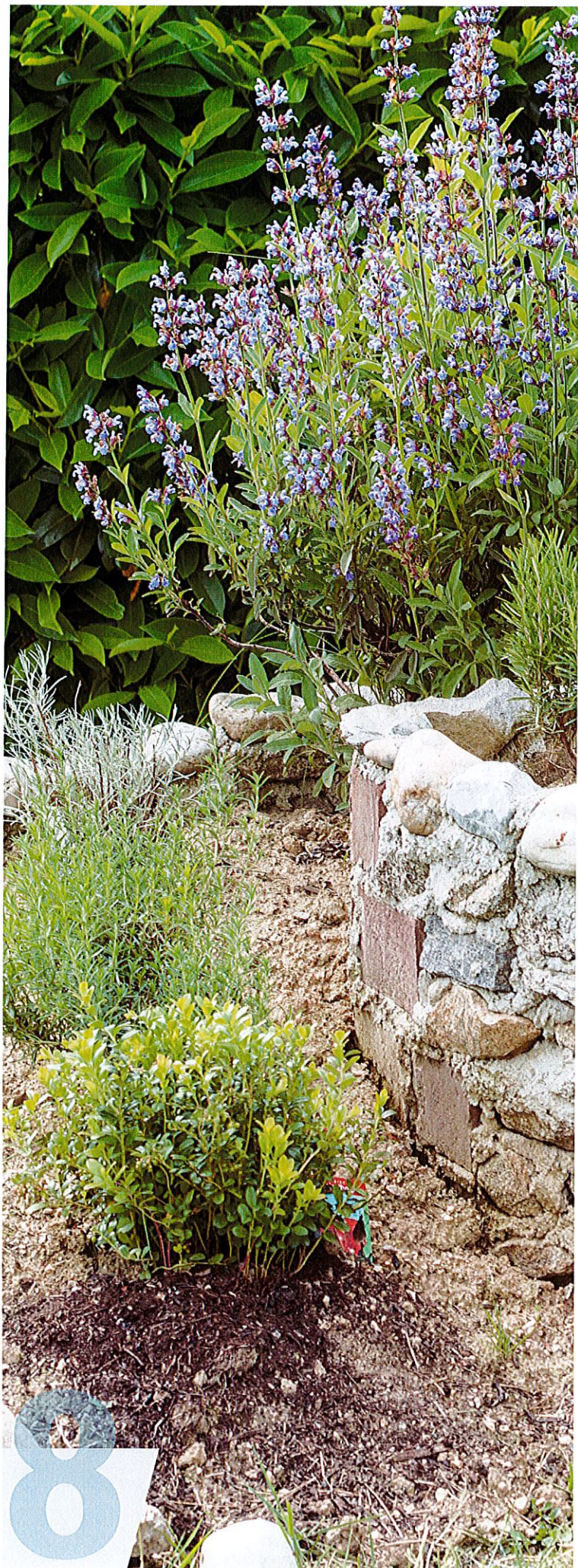
FURNITURE & LIGHTING



Clean and dry outdoor furniture before covering them or bringing them inside. Be careful to not trap any moisture under furniture covers so you can avoid mildew growth. Clean and cover any outdoor grills or smokers and keep them outside. Never bring a grill or smoker to use in the house during the winter as they should always be used in a well ventilated area.

As the days get shorter, and darkness creeps earlier and earlier, take a good look at your outdoor lighting. Ensure your walkways have reliable illumination, especially those that lead to doors, gates, and outdoor storage. Replace bulbs as needed, and test light sources that you may not have used during the bright summer months.





LANDSCAPING



It's time to take another walk around the outside of your home, but this time look for branches that overhang electrical lines, vehicle parking, or are touching your home. Remove branches that, if they broke under the weight of snowfall, would damage structures or electrical lines below. Be considerate to your neighbors and avoid liability by tending to problem branches from your trees that could damage their property or structures. In addition, remove dead or damaged growth from trees because they will be the first to go during a storm.

If some of your plants require a winter fertilizer feed, apply as directed by the product packaging. Trim back your plants and mulch and cover according to their wintering needs.

Move temperature sensitive plants, bulbs, and pots (especially ceramic pots) to a sheltered location until spring. Mow over a portion of the leaf litter on your lawn so they can decompose and feed your grass during the winter. Don't leave large leaf piles around because they can cause rotting.

GARDEN EQUIPMENT



Fall represents a great shift in the landscape tools we use on our properties. Bring all of your warm season tools inside (shovels, rakes, etc.) and treat metal components with rust prevention products. Reorganize your storage so that winter equipment is easier to access. Siphon leftover fuel from mechanized equipment (mowers, weed whackers, off road vehicles, etc.). You can either store it in approved containers or switch fuels over to vehicles or corresponding winter equipment. Be sure to use the correct fuel for the correct piece of equipment.

Depending on your equipment, additional [pre-winter maintenance](#) may be needed such as running antifreeze, changing oil, cleaning, etc. Follow your manufacturer's guidelines for winterizing your equipment. Run a pre-winter test on snow blowers to make sure everything is functioning correctly before the snow arrives.

PRO TIP!

INSTEAD OF PURCHASING MULCH,
USE FALLEN LEAVES TO USE AROUND
TEMPERATURE SENSITIVE PLANTS

SNOW & EMERGENCY SUPPLIES



If 2020 has taught us anything, it has shown us the importance of preparation. Acquire snow fighting and emergency storm supplies early so you have access to the best selection, and high inventory. Never wait until snow is on the Doppler, because that is when panic buying sets in, last minute shoppers clog retail lines, and inventories deplete. With that in mind, what should you stock up on?



Snow Fighting Supplies:

- Select the best snow shovel you can afford, as early as you can. Don't get stuck with flimsy leftovers that won't last the winter. Even if you have a snowblower, they can't do the whole job. Shovels get down to the paved surface and are better to use on porches and tight areas.
- Try to purchase a wide, durable (but lightweight) shovel with a tough edge and ergonomic handles.
- Carefully research your deicing options and choose a product that is safe for concrete, plants, kids and pets.
- Visit **PAGE 15** to learn more about choosing a safe deicer.
- Acquire plenty of [deicing product](#) to last you the whole winter and additional fall and spring storms. If you have leftovers from last winter, place old product to be used before the new.
- Store your snow fighting supplies in a dry, easy to access location.

PRO TIP!

JUST BEFORE SNOW FALLS, SPREAD
A LIGHT AMOUNT OF DEICER
TO HELP PREVENT ICE FROM
BONDING TO YOUR PAVEMENT


Emergency Supplies:

- Create a household emergency plan and print out a hard copy that is accessible to everyone. Review and practice this plan as you assemble your kit. This plan should have locations and instructions for shutting off water, gas, and circuit breakers during the event of an emergency. Your plan should also include evacuation points and meeting spots. Household members may not be together during an emergency so make sure everyone has current contact information.
- [Stock up](#) on a decent supply of nonperishable foods, and water for each household member. Remember winter power outages can last for days and that in most areas, 3-5 is a safe number to plan for.
- Pack an emergency supply kit including batteries, portable radio, first aid supplies, lanterns, flash lights, and external phone chargers.
- If your budget allows, consider purchasing a generator that can help during a lengthy power outage.
- If you have ice chests, keep them in an easily accessible area. During an outage you can use snow and ice to store perishable food outside if the weather is cold enough. Remember, anything above 40°F is in the ["danger zone."](#)



DURING THE STORM

Once a winter storm hits, enjoy the warm and safe space you have created. Keep an eye on the repairs and improvements you made during the fall to make sure they hold. Here are some helpful tips to keep your household safe during a winter storm.




Plan travel to make sure you get home and stay off the roads

Try to avoid driving until after snow fighting crews have cleared a safe route




Use a trusted weather app, or consult verified weather channels

Sign up for weather alerts to stay up to date on local conditions



Stay indoors and dress warmly

If you must go outside, wear layered clothing, and thoroughly cover extremities




Keep phones charged while you still have power

You never know when power may go out



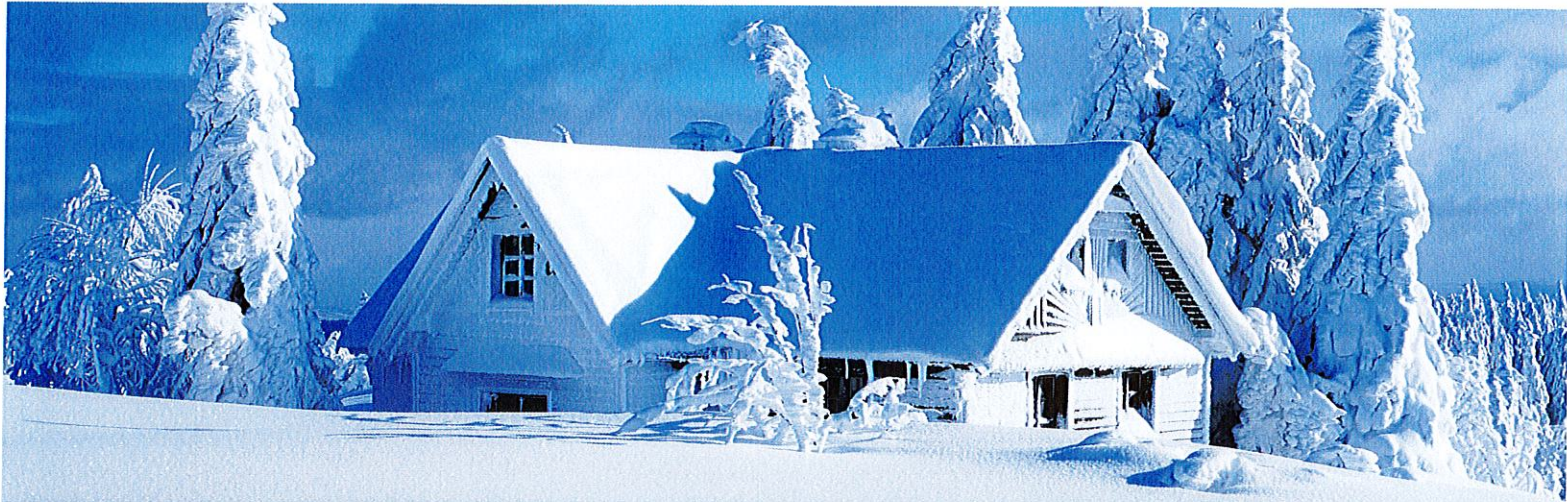
Drink plenty of water and eat regularly

Watch your supplies to keep track of quantities



If you have to go outside, keep dry and watch for hypothermia and frostbite

Change wet clothing right away



AFTER THE STORM

Now that the storm has passed, your hunkering down is coming to an end. Continue tuning in to local news and trusted apps to monitor weather and driving conditions before you venture out. Let's take a look at some steps to take once the storm begins to clear.

POST STORM INSPECTION



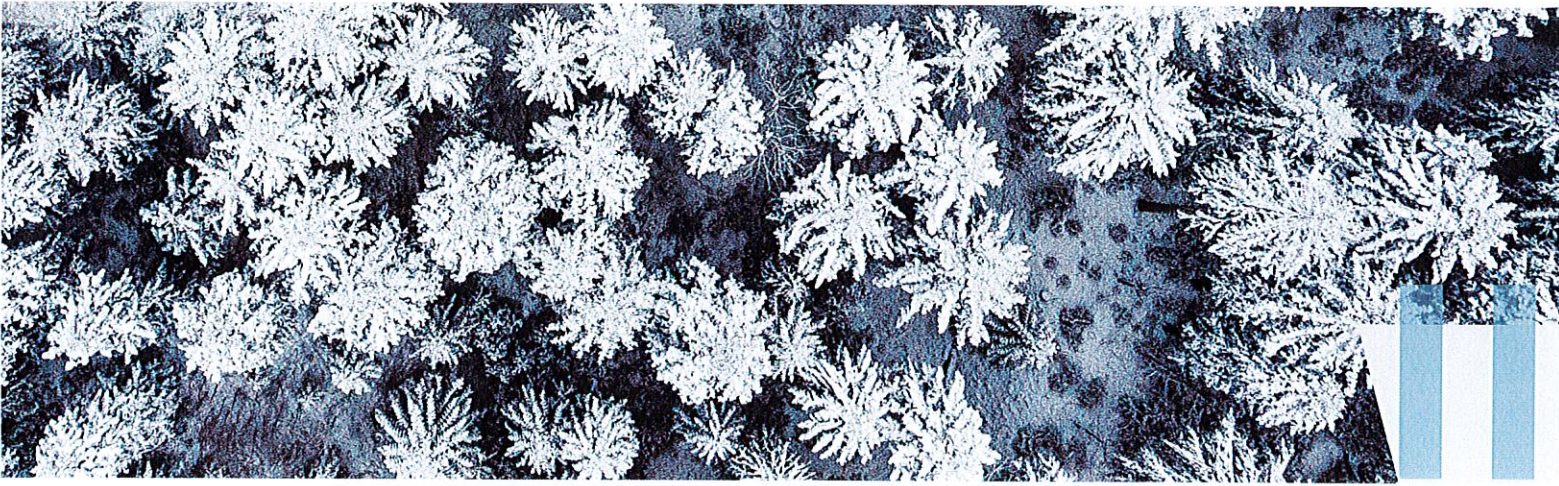
If you've lost power, use battery-powered flashlights and lanterns instead of candles and open flames. Call your local utility to inform them of your outage so you can get on their list of affected properties.

Walk through your home and look for evidence of broken pipes. If you find pipes that have frozen and burst, shut off your home's water supply and call a plumber right away to schedule an inspection. As you check the interior, keep an eye out for leaks in your ceiling and attic.

From your front door, look around your proper-

ty for fallen trees, branches, and downed power lines. If there are downed lines on your property, do not approach them. Keep children and pets away from the area until they are repaired by a professional. Live wires in wet snow present a huge electrocution risk. Call your power company immediately and wait for professional assistance.

If any trees have fallen on your home and caused structural damage, contact a neighbor so you have a safe place to stay. Trees limbs damaged during the storm may not fall right away, so watch for further breakage.



WELLNESS CHECKS



Check in on neighbors to ensure that everyone is safe. Reach out to households with elderly residents and young children first (as they are mostly likely to adversely affected by the cold). Find out if anyone needs supplies and find ways to share surpluses with each other.

Conduct a wellness check on your outdoor animals. Inspect fences and gates for damage so they don't get loose. Make sure their food and water supply was not affected by the storm and watch for fallen trees and downed power lines in their area.

CONSERVATION



Continue using water, food, and power responsibly after a storm. Depending on the severity of the weather, you may have to wait until it is safe to travel to replenish supplies. Even if you do make it to the store immediately, the store's delivery trucks may be delayed due to the weather.

If your local authorities have issued a boil water alert, heed those warnings and use stored water until the order is lifted. If your home lost power, use generators and grills responsibly, outdoors, and away from windows. While you wait for power to be restored, use your phones sparingly so you have battery life for important calls.

ENJOY THE SNOW SAFELY



Blankets of fresh snow are a fun diversion after being cooped up during the storm. When enjoying the snow outside, wear layers of appropriate clothing and take warm up breaks. Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia, especially on extremities.

Snow and ice can melt during the day and then refreeze at night when temperatures drop. Watch for ice slicks as you walk and play on your property.

Eat and drink regularly to replenish energy and fluids. Remember, your body uses more energy to stay warm during the winter and sub-freezing air is extremely dry.



ICE AND SNOW REMOVAL



Clearing paved surfaces of ice and snow can feel like a never ending chore during the winter. Here are a few snow fighting tips to help you accomplish this task safely and efficiently.



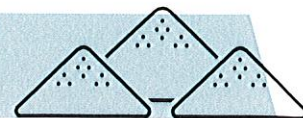
Snow Shoveling Tips

- Start early if possible. It is much easier on your body to shovel snow a couple inches at a time before it becomes dense and packed down.
- For really sticky snow, spray a light coating of cooking spray onto the scoop of your shovel for easier release.
- Distribute ice melt in small sections you have cleared, that way it can give you traction as you work.
- When shoveling a sloped surface (like a driveway), start at the top and work your way down to the bottom. As the deicer melts into a brine, it will gently move down the slope and can undercut ice before you even get there with the shovel.
- Push the snow as much as possible instead of lifting it.
- Avoid bending over and twisting your torso too much.
- Take regular hydration breaks for rest. Your body is working much harder in the colder temperatures than you think. Overexertion and heart attacks during snow shoveling are unfortunately a common problem every year.

How to Use Ice Melt

- Use leftover product from last winter before new product. If old product has clumped a little bit, break apart chunks so you can disperse evenly. Choosing a deicer without added liquid chlorides will reduce hardening while in storage.
- Have a plan of attack so you address the most important areas first. Focus on stairs and entry or exit points in front of doors and gates. Then you can move on to driveways and other paths.
- Disperse deicer in responsible amounts. Evenly sprinkle down a light handful about every other stride to start with.
- Aim for even coverage, not quantity.
- Avoid using deicing materials on new concrete (wait at least a year before exposing fresh concrete to deicers).

DEICER SAFETY



Deicing salts are extremely useful tools in our winter arsenal. However, it is important to remember that moderation is key if you want to use deicer safely.

Ice Melt, Children, and Pets

Most ice melt products contain harsh additives that can be harmful if ingested. With these products, supervision is required to avoid some mouth irritation and digestive upset. According to [Poison Control](#), the majority of ingestion incidents cause no problems at all and just require drinking extra fluids. Gently rinse and wipe sensitive soft tissue area (like paws) if salt causes some irritation.

Thankfully, Nature's Blend is an all natural deicing product without these harmful additives, that is safe to use around children and animals. Our OMRI certified organic blend has a proven track record of safety and has been used for decades by agricultural and animal health experts.

Ice Melt and Wildlife

Deicing salt can create a salt lick on your property and attract wildlife (especially grazing animals like deer). Watch out for increased wildlife activity around roads and driveways to avoid accidents.

Ice Melt and Plants

Use ice melt responsibly to protect the vegetation that borders your paved surfaces. Excess salt levels can affect plants' ability to intake water and nutrients and inhibit new growth. Remember that less is more when it comes to deicer application.

Be sure to use a deicer without added liquid chlorides and dyes. These compounds quickly leach out of the granules and are more destructive to vegetation.

For a powerful ice melt product that is safe on your plants and landscaping, use Nature's Blend deicer. Our all natural ice melt releases fewer chlorides into the environment and can actually help encourage plant growth when used in responsible concentrations.

DID YOU KNOW?

NATURE'S BLEND CONTAINS 14
(OUT OF 17) ESSENTIAL SOIL
HEALTH NUTRIENTS