

Fall Greening Checklist

Remember that in the Mid-Atlantic we spend 3 times more to heat our spaces in the Winter than we do to cool in the summer. So it's worth it to gear up for the upcoming winter season—there's lots of money, energy, pollution, and comfort to save.

Energy Cleaning

- Use the sun's free heat!** Open the drapes/shades on south and west-facing windows during the day to let the sun's free heat in. Close those drapes/shades at night to help keep the interior heat from escaping.
- Seal your windows.** There are several options, including simple shrink-fit plastic that will last the season, reusable plastic/frame kits, and modular storm windows which last many years. Wrap as many windows as possible, but especially on the north side—which is where the wind usually howls. Replacing windows, even if leaky, is usually NOT economical—it's low on the To Do list.
- Insulate exterior door frames.** Fill gaps with rope caulk or gaskets; cover the bottom of the door with a door sweep.
- Make sure any cracks and gaps in walls, corners, floors, and window sills are filled to prevent air leaks. **Straw foam, rope caulk, and low-VOC Titebond Weathermaster caulk** are extremely useful tools.
- Insulate your chimney with a **Chimney Balloon**. The balloon's red tag will remind you to remove it when you open the flue.
- Insulate outlets and wall switches with 20¢ **draft stopper gaskets**. A "hole" in your wall insulation from a wall switch costs 30% of the entire wall's insulating effectiveness.
- Make sure your attic & walls are adequately insulated **AND** air sealed. Insulate the **attic access** with an insulating hatch or box.
- Set your **ceiling fans to the warm setting**—so the blades go counter-clockwise. This will help cycle warmer air down from the ceiling and around the room. But—like lights—you don't need to keep fans on in empty rooms; they do the job almost immediately.
- A **humidifier** will add important vapor into the dry air. It makes you feel warmer without running the furnace, will help keep your skin healthy, and protect floors and furniture. If you have a whole-house humidifier, change the filter and clean it. Need to find out the humidity? A **Hygro-Thermometer** will track the room's temperature and relative humidity—knowledge is power.
- Reprogram your thermostat** for winter settings. Optimally, set it to 68-73°F when people are home (early morning, evening) and bump it down 2-4°F when you're asleep and when the house is usually empty. The average house will save 2% for every degree you can lower the temp—that adds up. While on vacation set it even lower (62-65°F).
- Replace your **HVAC's air filter**. You should change the filter at least every 3 months. If the furnace gets heavy use, change it monthly. And look for a high-quality filter, minimum **MERV 8**, to better filter more allergens, dust, and dirt.
- Get your furnace its annual tune-up.
- Replace your showerhead** with a great low-flow version. We love the Hansgrohe Croma 1.6GPM—excellent performance, comfort, huge water and energy savings versus 2.5-3 GPM models, and made nearby in Georgia. Easy install, big difference.
- Wrap your water heater** with an insulating blanket.
- Clean your fridge's coils** and your clothes **dryer vent**. A **LintEaster** is a useful tool for these tasks.
- Install a PowerCost Monitor** to track how much electricity your entire home is using and money you're spending moment-by-moment. Team it with a **Kill-A-Watt meter**, which tracks how much electricity individual plug-in items are consuming when they're turned on and turned off. You'll be surprised at what you find. Armed with this information, **make adjustments** to turn things off, make new habits, and bask in the savings. You can save 20% on your energy bills!!
- Check the batteries on your **smoke detectors** and **Power Cost Monitor**.
- Kill your vampire loads:** keep charging cords (for cell phones, video games, toothbrushes, etc.) unplugged whenever not in use. Use **Smart Strip** power strips to automatically turn off electronics (TV, cable, DVD, VCR, games, PC, monitor, etc.) when not on.
- Still haven't **installed CFL or LED lights** around the entire house? Now is a great time.
- There are no really efficient room heaters. However, targeted heaters may keep you warm without wasting heat on other areas.

Outdoors

- Feed your composter with some of your leaves and fall vegetable scraps.
- Enjoy the fruits of your **compost bin**: spread that fertile soil and compost tea to prep your garden for the Spring.
- Just before the freeze season: **Disconnect your rainbarrel** and empty it. Switch your diverter to send water through the diverted downspout or reconnect the gutter to the downspout. If water freezes inside it will expand and can crack the barrel.
- Trim your garden, but leave any perennials' seed pods/heads exposed to feed the wildlife.

Cleaners

- Clean out your pantry of "old conventional" cleaners and replace with all-natural, healthy "green" options for your all-purpose cleaning, kitchen, bath, glass, dusting spray, laundry, etc. And, yes, many of them really do work!
- Check your stock of **rechargeable batteries and chargers** for the games, gifts, and car trips. Ditch disposable alkaline batteries as much as possible.
- If you've collected old burned-out CFLs or rechargeable batteries, don't throw them out. **Recycle them at Amicus.**