

CLEAR YOUR GUTTERS

About this time of year I get a few calls from people saying that they have trees growing out of their gutters. Cleaning of the gutters is often the most overlooked maintenance issue on a home.

Why? Well it's pretty simple really. Most of the time when it's raining people are rushing into the home to keep from getting wet and are not really scoping out the functionality of their gutters. When it's not raining, if there is nothing growing out of them, how would one know if they were plugged? They Wouldn't. Simply put however, if your gutters are full of debris they are not going to work and they could actually cause more harm than good to your home and family.

Let's examine the reasons for cleaning.

1. First there is the most obvious reason. If the gutters are full and the drains are plugged they defeat the purpose of having gutters in the first place. Water will just overflow and cause damage to your landscaping and to the gutter system itself. The weight of the water in the gutter will cause it to pull away from the home and eventually fall off.
2. Wood rot: If the drains are plugged, water could sit in the gutters for weeks. If you have wooden gutters or fascia, these areas will rot first. Secondly, wherever your gutters are overflowing, the splashback effect will cause doorways, garage doors, low to the ground siding and decks to rot.
3. Mosquito infestation. Mosquitoes love stagnant water. If your gutters are plugged they can be an oasis for mosquito larvae to grow and hatch. This can be detrimental to the health and well being of your family and pets as mosquitoes are known carriers of many diseases.

Icedams: Lastly, If your gutters are plugged up when winter sets in, you could be risking thousands of dollars of damage to your home. Ice will fill up the gutters first and then begin to creep up your roof. Once it gets past the ice shield beneath your roof (assuming you have one) the ice will begin to melt from the rising heat in your home. Once it begins to melt it will come through your ceilings and walls and it will destroy any finishings you may have on them. If left un-attended this water could destroy your floors and cause considerable mold within the home.

When should you clean your gutters?The average home should be cleaned at least twice a year. Most people like to wait until every last leaf falls before they clean their gutters and this could spell trouble if you should get a sudden cold snap or snowstorm. wait until the leaves are about 80% down and then clean unless prolonged warmer weather is expected. If you live in the southern states however you may want to clean your gutters up to four or five times a year. Pine trees shed year round and can be a particular nuisance when it comes to keeping your gutters clean. I recommend keeping them away from your home if at all possible.