

# Garage door maintenance tips

Is checking the garage door at the top of your "honey do" list this fall? If so, keep in mind you might have to help.

A good way to begin your inspection is to simply open and close your garage door. Does it move easily and smoothly? If it's a manual door, does it open and close with only a tug, or does it stop on its own about three feet from the ground or go up on its own after you've pulled it down most of the way? The following maintenance tips will help you solve these problems and more.

Check the rollers that are attached to the sides of the door. If they are dry, use a few drops of light household oil or spray silicone on the spindles. Next check the hinges to which the rollers are attached. Make sure that they are tightly fastened to the door panels. You may need to tighten or replace some screws. If the screw holes have increased in size, just replace the existing screws using a screw with a larger diameter. Also look for the proper alignment of the hinges. The roller spindles should be parallel to the horizontal seams in the door panels. Inspect the rollers very carefully. Metal rollers are likely to be fine, but nylon rollers may need to be replaced. Replace these rollers by unscrewing the hinges from the door panel. Then pivot each roller until you can get it off. Replacement rollers are available at your local hardware store.

If the door hesitates or sticks while opening or closing, check the tracks for proper alignment. Use a builder's level to check for vertical alignment. To measure overhead alignment, look for equal distances between the tracks. Should you need to adjust the tracks, loosen the bolts

that hold the tracks, tap the track lightly with a hammer until you've reached the desired measurement and then tighten the bolts. Repair any bent track areas and lubricate with grease or silicone lubricant.

You should also inspect door lock handles for ease in movement. If the bars don't slide in and out of the slots, loosen the screws at the sides of the door, lock the door, move the guides so that the bars move easily and retighten the screws.

The metal cables are next. If you discover a frayed cable, it should be replaced. For this job, you will need a helper. Raise the garage door all the way and have your helper hold it in place. If your garage door has two coil springs, one at either side of the door, unhook the frayed cable from the top bracket, unthread it from the pulleys and unfasten from the bracket at the bottom, or base, of the door. If you have torsion spring (single horizontal spring) at the top of the doorway, unfasten the cable at the door first. To replace the cable, do the opposite of your removal procedure and don't forget to lubricate the new cable.

To adjust a garage door connected to a torsion spring, you will need to consult a professional. To adjust one connected to coil springs, you will need your helper again. Do not adjust the door until all previously mentioned tips have been attempted. If the door is still stiff or does not open or close properly, try adjusting the coil springs. Make sure your helper holds the door open to provide plenty of slack, and then rehook the top end of the cables backward or forward, depending on which way relieves the tension on the door. If you still have problems, consult a professional.

—By Kathy Scott, special

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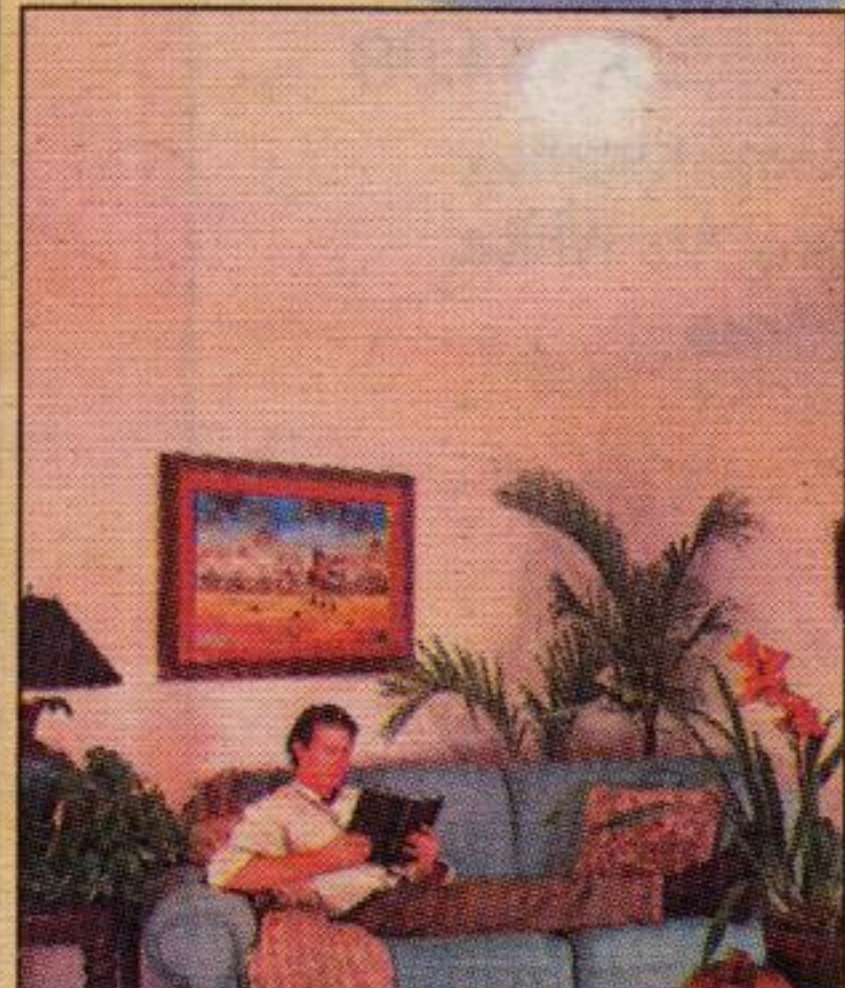
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