

FALL HOME IMPROVEMENT

The benefits of autumn pool and hot tub installation

For most people, autumn and swimming pools have little in common. As the temperature falls, the excitement of planning a backyard pool paradise declines as well, but the autumn season is actually an ideal time to install a swimming pool or hot tub.

A fall installation gives homeowners a spring and summer season to plan their project while aquatic enjoyment is fresh on everyone's mind. Homeowners can visit friends' and neighbours' pools for first hand design ideas they can incorporate into their own plan. They can also visit the operational job sites of contractors in their area to gauge their skills and organization throughout the project.

Installing a pool in cooler temperatures means construction time takes place while family yard usage is lowest. As winter approaches, there is also an increase in the availability of contractors as their busiest

season draws to a close. Some builders, if properly prepared, can even work through the winter, affording a comfortable buffer for revisions and repairs.

Autumn is also a perfect time to begin planting the larger trees and shrubs that will complete a backyard aquatic paradise. Planting in the fall can reduce initial shock on plants as they prepare to enter their dormant cycle. Once the pool is completed, homeowners have the entire winter to review landscaping plans and choose eye-catching accessories with the added benefit of a completed pool to facilitate the decision making process.

Homeowners can also use the winter months to enroll in safety and maintenance courses, getting the essential information to ensure a safe and well-maintained pool come spring. The Pool & Hot Tub Council of Canada offers a variety of courses for the

homeowner as well as a directory of qualified pool builders across Canada. More information is available online at

www.poolcouncil.ca, or by calling (800) 897-7066.

- News Canada



Fall home maintenance checklist

Colder weather, shorter days and falling leaves mean it's time to get your home ready for the winter months. Fall home maintenance involves more than raking leaves and storing garden furniture. It requires attention to your roof and gutters, your foundation, faucets and windows, and even your ceiling fans.

"Winter can be hard on a house, so we recommend a number of steps to prepare your home for the increased cold and moisture," said Colin Smyth, AmeriSpec of Canada. "There are things that most homeowners don't even think of that can make a huge difference."

The following are some tips from AmeriSpec to make sure you're ready for the winter months:

• **Protect the outside faucets**

For those who do not have freeze-proof faucets, it is important to shut off the indoor water valve and make sure the outside faucet is completely drained.

• **Clean and reverse the ceiling fans**

Turn the fan off, clean and oil the motor,

clean and dry the blades and reverse the air flow direction to push warm air down.

• **Replace batteries in the smoke detectors and test the smoke alarms**

Batteries should be replaced twice a year

and all smoke alarms should be tested weekly.

• **Apply weather-stripping to windows and doors**

Even insulated windows and doors

require additional reinforcement for winter. Weather-stripping reduces drafts and saves on heating bills.

• **Caulk around window and door casings** to keep out air and water. If your house has wood siding with window frames that stand out from the siding, caulk the top and sides of the frame. Don't caulk under the sill - that space should be left open to allow moisture inside the wall to escape. If your house is brick or stone, with window frames that are set into the finish material, caulk all four edges of each frame - where the brick mold meets the masonry.

• **Fix up your gutters**

Ensure there are no leaves or other debris in your gutters in order to prevent overflow and leakage during heavy snow or rain.

AmeriSpec home inspectors offer great tips on home maintenance and improvements. More information on common home maintenance subjects and professional home inspections can be found at www.amerispec.ca.

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