

TOTAL HOME

Your roof will appreciate the gutters being cleaned

By KATHY SCOTT

Gutters protect your roof from water damage.

The longer you can put off the expense of a new roof, the better. If your gutters are clogged with leaves and gunk, they are not much use to your roof.

If you choose to do gutter maintenance only once a year, late fall is the best time to do it.

Pick a dry day when the trees are fairly bare. Grab your ladder, a bucket, a garden hose, paper towels and a whiskbroom. Get ready to some hard, but definitely worthwhile labour! (Note: There are also many companies in York Region that will perform this necessary but hard task for you! Check the Service Directory in your newspaper).

It is always safer to use a ladder when cleaning gutters, rather than trying to kneel on your roof. It may be somewhat time-con-

suming to climb up and down to move the ladder, but it is, most assuredly, better than falling off the roof.

You should lean your ladder against a securely anchored area of the gutter. The top of the ladder should extend about 12 inches above the gutter. The foot of the ladder should be set away from the house a distance equal to one-fourth the length of the ladder.

For instance, if the ladder is 12 feet high, the base of the ladder should be three feet away from the house.

After you have your ladder in place, you can begin cleaning the gutter. You should probably plan on working about three feet of the gutter at a time. First put your tools in your bucket and make sure that you have a hook on your bucket so you can hang it onto the ladder.

Then start cleaning at a cor-

ner near a downspout. Plug the downspout with some paper towels so that the leaves and dirt don't run down the spout. Scrape away from the downspout and put the debris into the bucket. Place your tools on the roof, climb down the ladder, empty the bucket, move the ladder over and repeat the process until you have an entire section of gutter cleaned. Then unplug the downspout and rinse out the gutter with your garden hose. If your downspout is clogged, use a plumber's snake or drain auger to clear it. Start from the ground end of the downspout and go up. If your downspout goes underground, start from the top and go down.

Before you put away the ladder, inspect the slope of the gutter. The gutter should slope downward about 1/4 of an inch for every 10 feet. Reattach any fallen gutter sections and replace bro-

ken hangers.

Next install leaf guards. Metal mesh guards are often used, but they are more likely to trap leaves and debris. You can try aluminum or plastic strips if you wish. They should curl down about 1/4 of an inch away from the outer edge of the gutter. Water will flow off the curled edge, while leaves and twigs will fall to the ground.

Repair to the gutters is essential and can be easily managed during the cool days of late fall. Joints that are loose should be caulked. If you can take the joints apart, caulk and reassemble. If you cannot take them apart, just clean them, caulk and smooth out the caulk so the edges don't channel water back into the damaged joint.

Use mineral spirits to keep your finger or putty knife from sticking to the caulk. Be sure that you don't seal the expansion

joints that are usually found at the corners of the guttering.

Metal gutters can be repaired fairly easily. First clean the area with a metal brush. Then smooth on a layer of roofing cement inside the gutter. Add a layer of heavy-duty foil, then another layer of roofing cement, a layer of the foil and finally, a layer of roofing cement.

Wooden gutters should be kept clean and painted every five years or so. Sand the troughs; apply wood preservative, sealer or roofing cement thinned with turpentine. Put on a second coat a couple of days later. You will then be ready to sand and paint the outer part of the gutter with two coats of exterior house paint.

Your gutters will soon be ready for winter. You can rest assured that your roof, and your pocketbook, will appreciate the hard work you've done.

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