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Home & Garden Living & Well-Being

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Get Your Home Ready for Winter



By [Gemma Alexander](#)

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[cold](#), [home](#), [planning](#), [Seasonal](#), [snow](#), [warm](#), [Winter](#), [winterize](#)

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Some seasonal chores are over-rated – you don't really need to [rake leaves](#) off your lawn and [put the garden to bed](#) in the autumn. But "winterizing" – preparing your house for winter weather – can make your home more comfortable, save you money, and shrink your carbon footprint. If you haven't winterized yet, take this as your fall checklist.

Energy Efficiency

Start by [cutting carbon](#) from your home heating. If you haven't done it already, installing a [smart thermostat](#) can heat your home more efficiently without further effort on your part. But your thermostat won't take care of manual tasks that can slash your heating bill. If you're due for it, schedule a furnace tune-up and have your ducts cleaned. Set a calendar reminder to check and clean your furnace filters monthly through the winter. Blocked filters make the furnace run harder. Closed vents also impact furnace efficiency. Make sure all of your vents are open and rearrange the furniture so that it doesn't block vents or radiators.

If you have a [wood stove](#) or [fireplace](#), learn how to [make the most of it](#). Stock up and stack your wood now if you haven't already. Choose wood with a [good heat value](#) and learn [how to store it](#) properly to keep it dry and avoid bringing pests

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into the home. Have your chimney swept and inspected. [Learn how](#) to build an efficient fire and safe wood-burning practices before you light the first fire of the season. Consider making the change to a more efficient stove or cleaner fuel in the future.

Bundle Up

Bundling up in extra layers works for both houses and people. You might not want to take on a major insulation project right now. But you can [cut your winter energy bills](#) and warm up by [adding layers](#) where your home loses heat. Use breeze blockers (or “[draft dodgers](#)”) around doors and hang [insulating curtains](#) at the same time you install [storm windows](#). Especially if you’re renting, [plastic film](#) and [weatherstripping](#) may be a lower cost option. While you’re sealing up air leaks, check for water leaks to [prevent mold](#) growth that could not only damage insulation and drywall but reduce [indoor air quality](#) as forced air furnaces spread the spores throughout the house.

Learn from the Japanese approach of [warming yourself](#) before warming your space. If you’re feeling chilly, put on socks or [slippers](#) and a sweater before turning up the thermostat. Similarly, add extra blankets to your bed and keep throw-blankets on the couch to stay cozy without burning extra fuel. Choose ecofriendly [bedding](#) and [fabrics](#) whenever possible. If you have wood or tile floors, put down area rugs in winter, both to warm your feet and avoid heat loss through your floors.

Prepare the Yard for Storms

Before your [first frost date](#), use [season extenders](#) or upcycle [old sheets](#) to protect your more tender plants that are vulnerable to freezing. Tender potted plants should be brought indoors. Buy an [ecofriendly de-icer](#) for your sidewalks. Clean your gutters. If you do it yourself you can add the debris to your [winter compost](#) pile. If you live somewhere that gets very cold, install snow guards to prevent ice dams. Protect your pipes with pipe wrap and insulation fittings and turn off sprinkler systems. Bring outdoor furniture, grills, and any other garden items that could rust in the rain, become a winter home for critters, or be blown around in a windstorm indoors. This is also a good time to do any maintenance on your garden tools or take advantage of end-of-season sales to replace [gas-powered mowers](#) and other equipment with cleaner electric models for use next year.

Take care of any [needed roofing](#) repairs. Leaks and loose tiles make roofs vulnerable to extreme weather that can result in much more expensive repairs next spring. Winter storms can cause power outages and block roads. Be prepared for [winter storm emergencies](#) by stocking up with at least three days’ worth of food and [potable water](#); make sure you have flashlights and charged [batteries](#) ready. Learn about the dangers of [carbon monoxide poisoning](#) and make a safe plan to stay warm when the power is out.

When you’ve done all this, think about ways you can welcome [winter wildlife](#) into your garden or relax in your warm, cozy winterized home with [a good winter-themed book](#) while the storms rage outside.



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[Four Foods, Tons of Water](#)



Gemma Alexander has an M.S. in urban horticulture and a backyard filled with native plants. After working in a genetics laboratory and at a landfill, she now writes about the environment, the arts and family. See more of her writing [here](#).

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