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Are You Working All Summer only to Get to Fall ?

Summer Home Checklist and Jason's Blog

Tales from the Money Pit (Steve's house)

Where's the radio show?

Do you know what this plant is? I find it at almost everyone's home... yes, it's poison ivy !



Issue
38

Your Monthly Insight into Preventative Home Maintenance

The Helpful Home

newsletter

Summer Edition

This summer edition of the Helpful Home Newsletter issue not only has a handy *Summer Checklist* to remind you to check various items around the house, but also includes some survival suggestions. We've included some explanations about our expanding services. There's also some tales of the Money Pit (read this as things that happen around Steve's old house...) And of course what would this newsletter be without some suggestions to help you save money! We hope you enjoy this edition & will pass your copy on to others when you are done. Recycling saves paper & ink. We hope you are having a happy Summer! Best Wishes, Steve, Matt, Jason, Danny & Naoki in the field and Sandi & Jaime in the office.

Have you properly anchored your window A/C unit. Would it fall if the window was accidentally opened?



"My Dad never seems to relax. He's always working !"

Summertime is a time for enjoying the deck, going to the beach and having a summer party on the new patio. It's the time of the year where lying out on a hammock, sipping a cold drink and basically kicking back is allowed. The kids will want a dip in the pool or a run through the sprinkler and somewhere in the afternoon heat, the smell of steaks grilling and the sound of some ice cream vender and a lawn mower roaring are just a reflection of the neighborhood atmosphere. And yet the type "A" personalities like myself look at our homes and we see...WORK... yes summertime is the best time to unclog the gutters, clean the skylights, & sweep the deck. My family members who want to avoid the work run away. But I attack the day measuring how much I can accomplish before the dusk brings the mosquitos & it gets too dark to find my tools

As I go from task to task. Truth be told, I am one of those who feel a day lying around is a day wasted... summertime for me is the time to catch up. A time to untwist the garden hose and splice new ends on it. A chance to set the ladder and change out the bulbs on the outdoor spots that blew out months ago, a chance to finish clearing a project that was put off in winter or too complicated or too cold for then. Ah summer, the feeling of accomplishment as I organize the garden shed, or find the parts to the broken tractor... yes, let's go for a ride... but can we stop at Costco and pick

Are you working to catch up? And your home is letting you know... you never will?

up some things and then Home Depot for some screws and a mailbox? On the way to the beach can we go to Sears and get a bulb and a blade for the lawn mower? While you play tennis I'm gonna rest while I rebuild a broken gate and set up a new light in the shop... What's wrong with me they ask. Why can't I rest, take a snooze, stop this obsessive compulsive behavior... because it's Summer I say. Fall is coming, and by God I've gotta be ready to put away the lawn chairs, add stabilizer in the mower, clean the gutters, blow the leaves, prune the trees, organize the shed, wash the...

Protecting yourself and your family from shocks and electrocution has never been easier with circuit breaker Ground Fault Protectors (pictured to the top right) and local GFCI protected outlets (right ,below) . These devices simply and quite effectively monitor the electricity going through them and when they sense an imbalance, they trip before you can be seriously hurt. They are required by the building code for all damp locations including bathrooms, kitchens, bar sinks, outside your home and in the garage. Pools & spa equipment must also have GFCI protection. Breakers & outlets should be tested regularly to make sure they are functioning properly. Home inspectors typically test these during an inspection but homeowners are recommended to test them monthly for safety. An inexpensive GFCI tester will also tell you if the device was wired properly. Breakers sell for apprx. \$35, outlets about \$10.



Tales From the Money Pit...

My house is in the midst of our new best renovation. A new patio in the rear yard. For those of you who have been reading this newsletter over past issues, you know this is a long time coming. We interviewed 9 masons... got a range of prices from some that were scary expensive and a few that just made us nervous. We hired Bertrum Hibbert, owner of Rock Stone Inc. and I have to tell you the workmanship is spectacular. The care and professionalism of these artisans is first rate. The preparation began with lots of measuring and establishing the borders of the patio. Flags were placed and then discussions about color, textures, walls around the gardens, elevations and drainage. We visited Gault Stone in Westport and O and G's yard in Stamford, then Sammarco Stone in New Rochelle, New York to view different brands and materials. We picked edging and materials from O and G and the pavers and edging from Sammarco. It was important to actually view the material, as the catalogs each company puts out often show the material in a glossy "wet" look and we found that the actual material looks different when installed. Choose carefully. We picked a five piece pattern rather than one with less variety. It made for a more interesting design and even with a random pattern it really changes the look if you have a good variety of sizes. The excavation was the next step. Grass was removed and soil carefully leveled to allow room for a sub-base of gravel and then stone dust mixed with cement. Lines were run to maximize drainage and we placed additional drain piping to catch any underground sub deck water close to the house. Next footings were poured for the walls around the garden beds. This was to limit shifting and heaving caused by water in Winter and to give a good base for the walls. We used thick granite stones and agreed to have the beds lined. We left 3 inches of the granite exposed as a border, see middle picture below. (more p. 5)



Summer Home Check List

P. 3



Summer is a time for reading in a hammock, mowing lawns & maybe a few trips to fun places like museums, ballparks or the beach. As the hot weather peaks remember the shades, sunblock and stay hydrated whether you are working or playing. How's the patio or deck doing? Is the home showing some wear and tear? Now is the time to prep and powerwash your home and get it ready for touch-ups. And getting quotes from contractors before cold weather sets in, should be done now. Planning a project? Getting plans drawn, securing written quotes and interviewing contractors takes time. Get out of the hammock & get going!

Summer Tips for the Exterior:

Rooftops: As always make sure gutter system is clean and leaders are directing water away from the home. Do not climb on roofs when the temperatures soar as you can ruin many roofs when the material is very hot.

While tree work is best when the leaves have dropped have someone look at the health of your trees during the summer and develop a plan for fall trimming. Tree work is dangerous and pre-planning is critical. Make sure you hire only licensed and insured people. Walk around your home and look for any prep work that should be done while the weather is warm. Sanding, scraping and wood repairs before painting should be done properly and in colder or damp weather this step may cost more or be skipped. Remember with the new lead laws contractors that work on older homes (pre- 1978) MUST have taken a lead safe course and must carry a Lead Certificate showing they have been trained. Fines are substantial and the wrong contractor can end up making your family or the neighbors sick. Ask to see their certificate. Check your hoses, hose reels and gaskets to make sure you are not wasting water.



Safety items: Check batteries on Smoke, Heat & Carbon Monoxide detectors. Make sure extinguishers are charged, and hang them in plain sight. Are your batteries fresh? Or are you waiting for the chirping at 2am. Do it now!

Interior Things:

Summer cleaning time... look for those rodent droppings in the corners of the basement, on top of the foundation walls and vacuum them up. Be careful not to breathe the dust. Wear a face mask and wash-up afterwards. Rodents are a minor annoyance but they pee and poop everywhere, so bait stations on the exterior of your home and closing up as many holes into the home is needed. Stop feeding the birds and squirrels and you'll also cut down on the nocturnal visits of mice and rats.. Remember that your warm air furnace doubles as an air conditioner in summer. Change those filters regularly. Make sure the filter is the correct size and that the cover or duct sealing tape is closed around the filter to keep out hot attic air or basement contaminants. Check GFCI safety outlets and breakers. They all have test buttons for a reason, and should be tested monthly to assure safe operation. If you are still using an older whole house cooling fan at night make sure the fan is working properly & that attic items are not too close to the fan. Open bedroom windows a crack to allow cool nighttime air in & install timers to turn off the fan as the home will become uncomfortably cool in the early morning hours waking you up to turn it off unless you have a timer. Newer room fans should be turned off when no one is using the room.

Surprising things to know about Stonehollow and our inspections:



On every inspection with oil heating equipment, a service technician from Standard Oil Co. checks out those pieces of equipment as a free service for our clients. Pictured: Ed Webb from Standard. All full Home Inspections receive a certified Pest & Wood Destroying Insect Inspection from Steve who has a State of CT Supervisory Pest Control License.



1. Take a few moments to hydrate... no not the beer... water. Excessive activity makes for perspiration (which is a good thing for natural cooling...) but keep refilling your tank or you'll get sick. Heatstroke is no fun.
 2. Wear a hat, that sun as lovely as it is, can give you cancer... put on good gloves and eye protection before you start a project. Think paint mask or respirator if you are going to raise dust.
 3. Clean & sharpen your tools. Throw away broken ones. A moment sharpening a blade might save you half the effort of doing the job. Dull tools can make a job much more dangerous. Where's the First aid kit?
 4. Dump out containers that catch rain or hold water. Mosquitos can spread West Nile Virus and water sources are perfect places for them to lay eggs and create more baby mosquitos.
 5. When working in the garden, don't touch your face with your gloves. That's one way I often spread poison ivy onto my forehead.
 6. Take a little time and detergent and clean the garbage cans and recycle bins. Deodorizing will make them more pleasant in hot weather.
 7. Organize your shed and garage shelves to allow easy access to garden needs and special tools.
 8. Clean the gutters and make sure the leader drains are clear. Unfortunately this is a job that needs to be done regularly to make sure they are flowing and draining easily.
 9. Test the auto reverse and the photo eyes on your garage door. Photo eyes should be no higher than 6" off the floor. We frequently find these missing or mounted too high.
 10. Bent or missing rake tines ? Don't be a cheap skate , you've had the same rake for ten years! Go to Karp's Hardware and buy a new one. They've moved things around recently... ask for the garden section.
 11. Having fresh gasoline in the mowers, blowers and weed-whackers can make them start quicker and run so much better. Air filters can often be cleaned and re-used... so clean them.
 12. No one likes having rodents in the home... have a pest company add bait stations staked down under your shrubs outside, this will attract vermin before they get in. Do not leave poisons where kids or pets will be attracted to them. Dogs acting sluggish & slow— Beware... Teens being slow & fatigued— Normal !
 13. If you use any herbicides, pesticides or strong chemicals be sure to frequently wash your hands and make sure you get plenty of ventilation. This goes for pool chemicals as well.
 14. Don't let hoses run and leak all day. Fix gaskets and any small leaks, or buy a new hose.
 15. If you have a pool, remember there are new statutes on anti drain entrapment to avoid drownings caused by swimmers unable to pull away from drain suction forces. Make sure your pool is set up in such a way as to balance or shut down if there is an entrapment situation. Watch those kids !
 16. Check canine fences weekly to assure continuity as pets will wander off when they don't hear the fence tone. and having identification on their collars may save you hours of searching for them.
- For more tips and solid advice on home preventative maintenance visit our web site or give us a call.

Questions? Call us if you have a home issue or concern. We are happy to help!

Please call our Client Hotline:

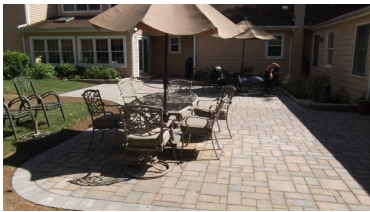
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Finally a Patio !

P.5

Pre-Planning for Your Patio is key...

(Continued from Page 2) Once the garden edging and the walls were complete they began laying the gray 6 by 9 paver edging. These were to define the actual shape and to lock in the pavers that would ultimately fill in the center.



Everyday the patio gained in size and the excitement of moving tables and chairs onto the space was hard to put off. Sure we ordered too much of the stone... and I have a ton of stone dust left over but we couldn't be happier with the end result. A wonderful place to have coffee in the morning or enjoy a Summer dinner al fresco.

So what's happening with the radio show?

Sadly with the sale of WSTC and WNLK local based radio in Stamford and Norwalk has disappeared. Sold to Fairfield University the stations signed off the air and came back on as National Public Radio and the likes of Around the House, The Garden Show and John Roman's News faded into the sunset. We are looking at new opportunities but it is hard to find what WSTC/WNLK offered in commercial radio venues. Many have suggested we do something on the internet and we are still looking into some form of local programming that is affordable. For now this newsletter and some blogging will have to do. If you know someone who cares about Local Talk Radio and has some ideas have them call me directly.



Insulate above those Pull Down Attic Stairs:

We are often stymied why people think having a big un-insulated opening in the center of their home is a good idea... Yes... The pull down stairs is what we are talking about. Sure, having an easy access to store items in the attic is good but an uninsulated one loses heat in the winter and takes away from the effectiveness of your a/c unit in the warmer months. Create a simple insulated covering box in the attic out of bead board insulation (polystyrene or styrofoam) as most of us know it. Installing these insulated boxes can truly save you many hundreds annually... and it's easy.

Stonehollow Expands to Sandy Hook...

Jason Horn is now marketing an expanded area from Ridgefield, Danbury, Newtown, Brookfield and areas that are closer to his home than the Stamford to Fairfield base we have marketed to over the last 30 years. Jason is visiting local realty offices and open houses introducing himself to Realtor's and agents hoping they will experience the difference and quality of customer care that we offer our clients. If you know someone who is buying a home, selling a home or just living in a home and wondering whether it is deteriorating around them...we offer the most intensive, careful and helpful inspections and consultations available. Our clients love our thoroughness and eye for detail. But the report, photos of deficiencies and the completeness of our site inspections blows them away. Jason and the Stonehollow Team will provide you free telephone consultation forever. There is a difference between home inspectors and home inspection companies. And we believe when it comes to your home you owe it to yourself not to compromise or cut corners. Make sure your inspectors are members of ASHI. That they are fully insured and licensed. Certified to do radon and water testing. Offer licensed pest inspections and climb roofs, inspect appliances and test every window. Don't shop price... shop service. We guarantee you will be pleased or the inspection is free.



Don't Forget! >>>

Energy Audits are all the rage, but watch out! With limited training and little conscience more and more companies are offering to check your home for energy consumption. While the government is sponsoring and sometimes subsidizing these evaluations, buyers should beware many of these contractors who will test a home then sell you new windows, doors, insulation or whatever, may be ripping you off. Right now your best bet is to use the energy audit offered by CL&P as you are being assessed for the audits and customers receive them at about \$75.00 each. As the economy is weak and energy costs keep climbing, don't become another consumer who is ripped off or overspends buying smoke and mirrors. Call us for advice or for an audit with no strings attached. If you are not sure if the company is legit, give me a call. Steve

Please visit our website for lots more good information and useful safety and maintenance tips for your home.

www.stonehollow.com





Jason's Blog:

By Jason Horn

coming soon >>>

In The Next Issue:

Fall Home Checklist , Info about Termites

P.6

Readying you home for cooler weather

One of the many things on my Summer to do list is to check over my walkways and stone walls. The winter can wreak havoc on these normally solid structures. Whether your walkways are stone or pavers the water from thawing snow and ice may have worked its way through the cracks. What commonly happens is water will seep in between the stones and freeze. As the water freezes it expands and applies outward pressure on the surrounding material. If the walkway was installed over good drainage material, usually gravel and sand, the water keeps seeping lower and no harm is done. Unfortunately in many instances the water freezes closer to the surface. This can have a few different results. In some cases the expansion will create void by pushing materials out of the way. This causes the stone or paver to sink and create a low spot in your walkway. These same forces can also push upward. This causes the stones to heave up and create uneven surfaces in the walk. Both of these situations can lead to trip hazard and overall deterioration. When it comes to repairing these issues, it really depends on the type of walkway that you have. Pavers will need to be leveled. This usually involves lifting the pieces in questions and either adding or removing material. The use of stone dust or sand is a common way to make these repairs. There are some walkway sands that are available that when combined with polymer beads that will expand with water. These help to lock stones in place. Repairs of concrete and stone walks tend to be more complicated. Many times it involves breaking joints to free stones and reapply material to level and secure the stones. These types of repairs are usually left to qualified contractors. Be sure to use a contractor that has experience and the qualification to do the work. Other issues that I commonly see are walkways with deteriorated mortar in the seams between the stones. Mortar is a term that we commonly use but stone walkways are usually set in a concrete of some form, but that is another article. It is very common to use rock salt to thaw the ice in the wintertime. Common rock salt is made of sodium chloride. It works great at melting the ice; unfortunately it is also very corrosive to concrete. It is important to use a salt that will melt the ice and not damage the binding materials in the walkway. Be sure to read the information on the melting salts that you use next winter. As a home inspector, it is my job to provide information to help people make an educated and informed decision. I hope that you find these opinions useful and informative. If you have any questions or are in need of a home inspection I hope that you will call me at Stonehollow.

Stonehollow Home Inspection &

Environmental Testing Since 1983. Protecting our Clients for almost 30 years. Home Inspections, Maintenance Inspections, Contractor Supervision, Thermal Imaging, Environmental Testing of Water & Air, and Consulting.

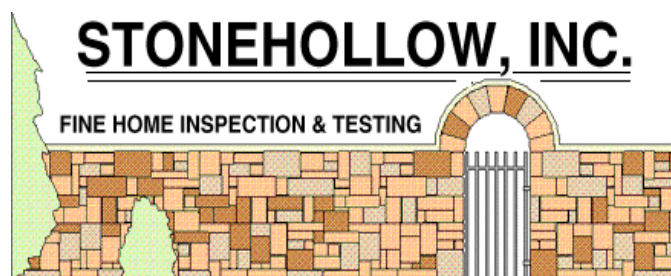
Why I don't like "whole house fans" - they are old technology that can cause a negative pressure in the home drawing in outside contaminants like pollen, dirt and radon gas. Also it can blow out pilot lights and suck exhaust down chimneys and fireplaces and raise carbon monoxide levels... have you installed a CO alarm yet?



Watch and Listen!

Archived Shows of "Around the House" with Steve Gladstone! On our web site

www.stonehollow.com , or check out our Facebook Page...



Contact us at **800-356-9611** www.stonehollow.com

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