

Over the Fence

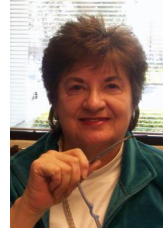
NEWS FROM YOUR REAL ESTATE PROFESSIONAL...

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The weather is warmer, the days are longer and the Memorial Day Weekend is around the corner. Celebrate Mother's Day and May with a bit of spring cleaning and baking. Read on for a few tips on both.

Top 10 Outdoor Spring-Cleaning Tips

10. Squeaky-Clean Windows: See article in the next column to get your windows just so.

9. Get Your Mind (and those leaves) Out of the Gutter: Take some time to clean out the gutters making them free of leaves and other winter left-over debris.

8. Sort It Out: Take time to sort through your garage, closets, and any other places where you've stored stuff. Now's the time to sort, organize and toss!

7. Identify Your Weak Spots: Check outside the home for rotten or weak spots in fences, decks, railings, etc.

6. De-leaf and De-clutter: Rake the dead leaves and cut away the dead foliage. Make space for spring to bloom.

5. Roll It On: Consider sprucing up the insides and outside with paint.

4. Wash Those Winter Blues Away: Pressure washers are a good way to clean patios, driveways and even siding. Borrow or rent one if you don't have one already. Certain types of siding or paint can't handle the hard pressure, so be sure to test a small area first.

3. Separate the Weeds from the Blooms: It's time to pull weeds and maybe add new topsoil and mulch to your flower beds and pots. Get a fresh start in your garden.

2. Get Down to the Nitty-Gritty: Don't forget to clear away the cobwebs, wipe down the front door and maybe even clean your outdoor light fixtures.

1. Rinse and Re-stain: Rinse off the patio furniture, wipe down the outdoor tables, wash the cushions and consider re-staining your deck after you've cleaned it. Consider re-staining your outdoor wooden furniture as well.

For full article visit: <http://tlc.discovery.com/guides/property/cleaning-guide/outdoor-tips/outdoor-tips.html>

By Katie Lambert, HowStuffWorks.com



Let Spring in with Clean Windows

Washing Window Tricks

Have you ever wondered how those professional window washers move so fast with the squeegee, and the windows turn out perfect?

• Invest in a good squeegee. They aren't expensive and they are worth every cent! Those \$1.99 ones just will not do. A professional squeegee has a very soft, rubber blade with no imperfections in it. You can also get extra rubber blades and simply replace that when it wears out.

• Do your windows on a cool or cloudy day. If you HAVE to do it in the sun, do it in the morning. What you want to avoid here is heat. Heat works against you.

• Get a bucket of lukewarm water (not hot), and add 2-3 tablespoons of plain ammonia. Use a sponge that has a white scrubber on the other side (don't use the green ones, they are too coarse).

• Scrub well. Wet your window with the sponge side. Then flip to the white scrub pad side, and scrub the window. You'll be able to "feel" when it's clean. If you feel rough patches, etc., then it's still not clean. This is a step at which most people fail. If the window simply isn't clean, it's going to look cloudy when done.

• You'll also need lots of clean, white cotton rags/towels/cleaning cloths. Diapers work great here. Dry by hand a 1 inch strip at the top of the window. The trick for no streaks with the squeegee is placing the dry rubber blade on a dry window.

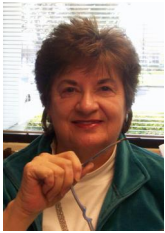
• Take the squeegee now and place it at the top of the window in that 1 inch dry strip. Pull down smoothly. Dry your squeegee blade between each sweep. Do one last sweep left to right at the bottom of the window.

• Take a dry, clean cloth and run with your finger down each window side and across the bottom to clean and dry the edges. They should look perfect! And you'll feel great having clean windows.

For more information on best techniques visit: <http://home.howstuffworks.com/how-to-clean-windows.htm>

Excerpted from an article by Valerie Garner, *Frugal Times*





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"If you are looking for a real estate broker who understands the importance of customer service, give me a call. I will make the process of buying or selling your home a pleasant one. And, if you know anyone needing real estate assistance, I would appreciate the referral." Thank you, Joanne (Cell: 510-589-4794)



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Mother's Day is Sunday May 9th.

Honor your mom with breakfast in bed or a special day planned just for her! Did you know that Mother's Day is considered the busiest restaurant day of the year? Make your reservations early.

May 15th is National Chocolate Chip Day

Why not celebrate by baking a cake? Take a look at the recipe to the right. It will make a perfect surprise for your mom or even a great dessert for your Memorial Day picnic.

Memorial Day is May 31st

A day to fly the American Flag to remember and honor those who have died serving our country. It is a day of family gatherings—and also marks the beginning of summer, picnic and grilling season. Celebrate!



CHOCOLATE CHIP CHOCOLATE CAKE



Ingredients

- 1 Package chocolate cake mix
- 3¾ Ounce package chocolate pudding mix (instant)
- 4 eggs
- 1/2 cup cooking oil
- 1-cup dairy sour cream
- 1/2 cup warm water
- 6-ounce package chocolate chips

Sour Cream Chocolate Icing

- 2 cups semi-sweet chocolate pieces or milk chocolate pieces (for sweeter icing)
- 1-cup sour cream
- 1/8-teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar
- 1-teaspoon vanilla extract

Directions

Combine all ingredients except chocolate chips. Mix for 3 minutes. Add chips and mix for 1 more minute.

Pour batter into greased and lightly floured bundt pan or a 9-by-13-inch pan. Bake in a 350-degree oven for 55 to 60 minutes, or until tester comes out clean.

Melt chocolate chips in top of double boiler over very hot water. Do not allow to boil. Blend in sour cream, salt and sugar with wooden spoon. Stir until smooth. Remove from heat. Add vanilla and spread icing on cake. Yields enough for sides and top of bundt or flat cake.

For very thick icing, double this recipe. Both cake and icing freeze well.