**Curtis:** Hey, everyone. Welcome back. We are going to pick back up where we left off last episode talking about home maintenance. That last episode was running a bit long, so we decided to divide this into two separate segments. Last time we covered spring and summer checklists. And today we're going to talk about fall winter checklists and the cost associated with your all your annual home maintenance.

Be sure and go back and watch that last episode to get caught up on where we are.

**(Intro)**

**Curtis:** Let's talk about the items on the FALL plan list.

**Erich:** Okay. So I have first on the list to drain the sediment from your water heater are flush tankless water heaters again, that this does not matter if you do it in the fall, just need to do it once a year with hard water like we have down here in Houston. This is very, very important to do because it will expand the life lifespan of your water heater. If you have a tank heater, it's a pretty simple process where you hook a hose up to it, you open up the spout, you hit a couple valves and flush the water out and stir up all of the stuff that's built up in the bottom of the tank. And particularly it cleans out everything that's around the element that is actually heating it. So by keeping that clean, that will allow your water heater to last twice as long.

**Curtis:** Yeah. And the older the house is, especially again, if the house has galvanized pipes, a ton of sediment is going to build up in that water heater. And the older the water heater is, the more sediment that you're going to have and as a person who unfortunately has had to lug a water heater in and out of an attic several times on different properties, it's amazing how much sediment will build up and how much heavier that water heater is when it's full of sediment. You know, I can manhandle a tank water heater into an attic myself when it's brand new. But trying to take one out when it's when it's 15 years old and full of junk, I can't do it. But the two-man job every time.

**Erich:** Absolutely. It certainly is. And if you have not done this in your water heater is over seven or eight years old, don't do it. It will almost certainly break it. I would say four out of five times when we are asked to do it, even after recommending to homeowners to not flush it at this time. If you do completely clean that out and it's had a whole lot of sediment sitting down there for a long time, it will agitate some things on the inside, and we've had bad experiences doing that. So that's just one of those just let it ride and it might last another year. It might last another seven years. So and that my sister and brother in law's house, their thing is 18 years old and never been flushed. So we're just not touching. And I told them to be prepared to replace both of them. But we just don't touch it. And so sometimes you get lucky, sometimes you don't. So and a little more difficult than flushing the tank heaters is the tankless. This requires a solution requires you to go out and buy a recirculating pump, couple hoses. But all in all, it's a pretty simple process. And if you do it once a year, what you're effectively doing is the tankless heaters. They heat the water up instantly by going through a series of very, very small pipes, that water rushing through those small pipes. The small pipes tend to get clogged up with the sediment as it builds up on the inside. So we use a you know, it's an acidic solution or even a really, really strong vinegar. If you do it frequently enough, will go in there and clean all that out and just keep the heater working for much, much longer than tankless that has never been maintained. We're seeing 7 to 10 years maximum lifespan and now ones that have been maintained are going much, much further past that. And this is something that typically you get a plumber to go out there to do. So kind of a retail cost is going to be $200 to $400 per unit, just depending on the plumber that you call.

**Curtis:** So the next one is another plumbing item which people in Houston have had to deal with a lot over the last couple of years. We learned the dangers of not doing this, and that's winterizing your exposed pipes.

**Erich:** Yes, and that's just as everyone up north is laughing at us right now. But put some insulation on the pipes. We, down south, we've for years and years, decades, in fact, we got away with not really doing this. We never really had too many hard freezes. Our sprinkler systems didn't explode, our hose beds never froze up. But just a little bit of prevention on this, as simple as some Styrofoam or even if, you know, a freeze is coming in, wrapping some towels around certain pipes will save you tens of thousands of dollars of plumbing repair and possible flood damage by doing this.

**Curtis:** Yeah, exactly.

**Erich:** And, you know, this is I mean, get your handyman to do it. You can get anyone you want to come out there and do it. It's going to take them an hour, hour and a half max.

**Curtis:** I made either a video or a social media post about this last year because I saw this happening. A lot of people were wrapping their pipes with towels, which if it's not raining and it's a short term thing, it's fine.

**Erich:** Right? Right.

**Curtis:** Wrapping your pipes with towels is a bad long term thing. And if it's raining, that's it's a really bad thing because. Because those towels will get wet and then that'll freeze. And now you have a big ice block on your hose bib. So, you know, use. Yeah. The last freeze that we had, it actually didn't rain. It just froze and some friends of mine were asking me about that. I said, Yeah, as long as long as we're not getting rain, go ahead and put the towels around it. That's fine. But take those off as soon as soon as we're done. So you're not trapping that moisture there. Use the right pipe insulation. Use the right tape. Yes, seal it up. They also make some nice covers that you can just buy. Just a slip over there. It's a Styrofoam cover. And you can even buy some heated items. There's a. So if you have an exterior mounted tankless water heater, they make an electric, um, basically insulated wire that you can put around your water heater pipes on the outside, plug it in, and it provides a constant source of heat to your pipes to protect those pipes from freezing. So that's a nice solution if you have an outdoor water heater.

**Erich:** Yeah, that is correct. We certainly have found that we were not prepared for this down in Houston over the last three years. But lots of builders and lots and particularly in remodels, we've put the tankless water heaters on the exterior of the homes and putting a box around them, putting a making sure it's fireproof on the inside and putting a 60 watt light bulb inside of it and turning that on when the cold weather is really cold weather is coming through, that will keep it from freezing. So lots of tricks out there just to keep it keep the water flowing. Yep.

**Curtis:** So next we have another winter item, your **furnace inspection.**

**Erich:** Get an HPC professional out there to take a look at it. Make sure it's someone that you trust to go out there. You'll find a lot of providers out there that just want to get into your home and sell you some other stuff. But to come out, take a look. Take a look at the circuit board, take a look at the blower motor, making sure everything is working well on the furnace, making sure that the gas is all turned on. I mean, it's I've got too many homes where someone's accidentally turns the gas off to their furnace and just makes sure that it's up and running and things are going that it's going to kick on when it actually does get cold.

**Curtis:** And also keeping the dust and debris cleaned off of the furnace and your handler. So your every house has an air handler in the attic. Or if you're another climate, may be under the house in the crawlspace of the basement but you have an air handler and then the furnace and the AC, you both share an air handler, their handlers with actually pushing the air out. So if that air handler gets or you're your filters, your ducts, whatever, get dirty from your AC running and then your furnace turns on, often you'll smell a burning smell the first time.

**Erich:** Right?

**Curtis:** You run your furnace for the year and it's that dust and debris that gets built up. It's kind of burning off right at first. So it's a part of that. Furnace inspection is also cleaning out that area to prevent biohazards.

**Erich:** And that's right. And again, do this in the fall. Much easier to get your furnace fixed in October than in December. Yeah.

**Curtis:** Or if you're in certain parts of the country, maybe you do that in August.

**Erich:** That's right. That's exactly it. Exactly. At next kind of event, really to get that done anywhere from 50 to 150 bucks per unit is the typical market rate for someone to come out and take care of that for you. If your furnace does break down, you sure want to make sure your chimneys and your fireplaces are working. So again, you want to do this before the holiday rush. We get I don't know how many phone calls we get about December 15th that my fireplace won't light up or I need someone to come out and take a look at it. My filter's rusted shot or something else is going on. Do this early in the fall, have someone come out and take care of it. If you have a wood burning masonry fireplace, you need to get this inspected regularly. Make sure that all of the borders are in good shape. Make sure that the flu is opening and closing properly. Make sure you know how to open up the flu. So these are items that are super easy to do early in the season on a lot of the newer homes or even retrofitted into older homes are the fireplace accessories, the gas logs. If it doesn't kick right on, lots of times there's a part that needs to be replaced or you need to actually go into the owner's manual and figure out, oh, gosh, my husband turned off the pilot light. How do I get the pilot light back on? Do this early in the season, get it up and running and make sure that it's there for you when you're having your holiday events and you're ready to.

**Curtis:** Go and most of those fireplace items are also safety issues. Again, a lot of the stuff on this list is health and safety issues. Yes. So you don't want carbon monoxide backing up in your home because the flu is closed. You don't want a fire hazard in your chimney because there's some kind of debris. Yes. So very important. In fact, a lot of these winter lists, especially or very important for health and safety.

**Erich:** Absolutely. And I'll tell you one thing, kind of side note, we have run into it a bunch over the last three years, particularly in the warmer climates. Turn your air conditioner off when you're running your fireplace. Know that sounds absolutely crazy, but we have a lot of homes where there's multiple, multiple HVAC units that will be running when they turn their fireplace on, and they get negative pressure, and they suck the smoke into their home. And it is an absolute health and safety hazard. Yeah, if that happens.

**Curtis:** And just a word on that for those who may not understand what Erich's talking about how if you have, especially if you have multiple air conditioning units and you've got that return air that's sucking that air out of a space, that's a drawing, that air, it's going to also draw air from your fireplace. So whereas the, you know, the smoke and the heat and the carbon dioxide should go up through your chimney, now you've created that pressure that's going to pull that back in toward the house, and this is actually one of the big dangers with installing a wood burning fireplace especially, but really a gas fireplace, too, in a title, we built a spray foam insulated home. We strongly recommend NOT installing a wood burning fireplace in a spray foam insulated house and really even an open combustion gas fireplace. Two sealed gas units are better, still not ideal, but just a quick word of caution. If you're if you're doing a new construction, you're spray foaming it don't put a wood burning fireplace. That's a bad idea.

**Erich:** Yes, absolutely. And again, that's 175 to 375 bucks. Probably going rate to have someone come out there and take care of it, depending on what type of fireplace and the complexity of your setup. Yep. And next, same is same as before. Clean your gutters again. This is one of those twice a year ones, so fall is a good time to do it before winter comes around. You don't want water to be sitting in your gutters and have it freeze up and break the gutters or back up again, up underneath the shingles.

**Curtis:** In the fall and then the fall is one of those times when you're going to have a lot of leaves building up.

**Erich:** Correct. I've got on here again, inspect, caulking the windows at the doors. Yeah. This is one up particularly further north. You really want to check this in in the fall because you have the cold, cold air pushing in. But after that hot, dry summers, you will get caulk shrinkage. And it's always good to get some eyes on that to take a look at it before going into any of the extreme seasons. So to kind of get someone out there again to inspect it. Small repairs cost you a couple hundred bucks, 250 bucks if you got a record. All doors and windows expect to spend, you know, somewhere between two and $3,000 because it's a big job. Yep. Like I say, every quarter, replace HPC filters and clean return air vents. Just do it again. Double check them, triple check them. And again, the chemical flush of the drains. This is a do it twice a year and you will have very, very few problems.

**Curtis:** All right. Well, that wraps up. Our fall is kind of our last checklist we're going to put up there on the screen for you is the winter maintenance items. And again, regionally, this is going to be different. But for our area. Here is Eric's list for kind of some basic tasks for our winter home maintenance.

**Erich:** So in the winter, requests to have your electrician come out really quick once over of your house test GFCI is in vaults. I like doing this in the winter because typically the electricians tend to be a little less busy. You get a little better price to do it. They're not out there in their main summer grind building 12 hours a day. So is really important to go test your GFCI which are ground fault circuit interrupters. These are areas in any wet area of your home kitchen bathrooms really help prevent exteriors and exteriors Exactly Anywhere where there's water you should have these. And now with new building codes, they're putting them in a lot of other spots as well. So they are going to key when it comes compared to a normal outlet that's on your wall. So it's always good to test them and make sure that they're working, working properly. And along with that, your art vaults, which are designed a little bit better than me, but I just call them kind of the middle of the road in between a GFCI and a normal and a normal breaker that's out there where it's servicing a larger area of your home but has the exact same function. That's where it's, it's a safety feature that if there is an interruption or a correction of the current that is incorrect, they will turn off electric flow.

**Curtis:** The code now is to have those installed on the whole house, every room.

**Erich:** Right.

**Curtis:** And they, they can be a bit of a pain in the butt but yeah. So it's a new house is they're going to have those everywhere and usually that's built into the breaker where whereas the GFCI at least typical GFCI is at the location you'll see that the two buttons on it test and reset. Although now we're transitioning to GFCI breakers instead of the buttons at the location. So your house may have a different setup depending on what you know when it's built or updated.

**Erich:** Absolutely. And this is one of those will take an electrician hour, hour and a half to go out there and kind of do a quick run longer. If you're living in a 6000 square foot house for sure. But you know, your retail costs for an electrician are going to be anywhere from 150 bucks an hour to kind of $250 an hour, depending on depending on who you're using. Yeah, we clean the dryer vents again in the winter. Is what we suggest. So again, this doesn't necessarily have to be in the winter. Just hit it twice a year. You will see the results in not having any major breakdowns with your units, with your dryer units. If you do this, **check all plumbing fixtures for leaks**. This is another one, not specifically winter specific, but go around, look everywhere that you're using water, look at the hoses behind your washing machine. Look under every turn the water on, look underneath every single sink. If you have a guest room that you don't use very often, turn the shower on in there. If it's on the second floor, go underneath, make sure that there's no water leaking underneath there. Anywhere that you use water, turn it on, let it run, make sure that there's no leakage. So yep.

**Curtis:** We actually had this two or three weeks ago in my house in my daughter's bathroom. She pulled out some toiletries from under her saying she said, Dad, there's some water on my in this basket. And I went down there and sure enough, her boss said that that's only four years old, was dripping slowly. Yeah. In her cabinet. So, you know, had had she not noticed that, you know, honestly, I probably wouldn't have gone under there and checked. Right. Are the faucets only five years old? That's it. So yeah. Checking even on newer homes, checking every once in a while, just to make sure those faucets aren't leaking, can save you a lot of money and damage.

**Erich:** That's right underneath your kitchen sink. You're probably opening it more. But if you if it sits down there too long, you're all of a sudden, you're replacing cabinets and God forbid you have to repaint the cabinet or repainting the whole kitchen.

**Curtis:** I'm glad she noticed that. Yes, that. Yeah, that would have been a $2,000 fix instead of a just buy a faucet.

**Erich:** That's it. That's exactly it. Let's get it on the list and check it off. You'll sleep better in the long run. Yep. And a plumber, 175 bucks to $300 will come out and do an inspection for you. But this is really something. It's a really good do it yourself item. Just look for water anywhere that possibly.

**Curtis:** Open the cabinet. Look for water. It's really simple.

**Erich:** That is it. That is it.

**Curtis:** Oh, yeah. So we got HVAC filters on here again. Again, this is a once a quarter or a twice a year item. So change those filters in or they return events. Um, and then the last couple items that you have on here, the last item that you have on here is cleaning and sanitizing a dishwasher.

**Erich:** That's right. And then also your washing machine. So this is something with particularly the newer units that are out there, washing machines, a lot of people don't know in their front loaders that there's a filter that they need to clean out at the bottom. Yeah. And they're wondering why they're out there. Washing machine smells musky and it's not cleaning the way.

**Curtis:** And there's a seal around the door. Around the door also.

**Erich:** Exactly. Exactly. And so it really a little vinegar and water around the seal on the inside will typically take everything out of those front loading units, get it freshened up and some vinegar baking soda thrown into the washing machine, run it on the sanitize cycle will do wonders, absolute wonders for freshening up the machine and then cleaning out the filter regularly. First time I did it, I had half of a little league field of sand came out of the thing, so just stay on top of that and do that. Once a year. And same thing with the dishwasher, dishwasher. You can actually do it a little bit more often. They actually sell tablets that are special that you run without anything in there or if you YouTube it. There are a couple of again, adding vinegar into the cycle, running it and then then making sure the filters cleaned on the bottom of the unit. So they're really easy. Those are definitely a do it yourself type items, but there are companies or maintenance programs that will come out and take care of that for you expect to spend, you know, 400 to $200 a unit if you just want to totally outsource turnkey the whole situation.

**Curtis:** That kind of gets us all through all of our seasons. On the maintenance plan. I was just doing some rough math in my head as we were going through here and kind of adding some of this stuff up. The winter was kind of the cheapest category on here, and I actually want to mention that I like having the winter is like the simpler checklist anyway, because a lot of these items should be done in the fall in preparation for the winter, and also you're going to be busier in the winter with holiday stuff going on. So having fewer checklist items to do to do during that time is good. But again, I was going through and adding up some of this and I was coming up with and we can pop an exact number on the screen maybe when we when we put this on YouTube. But 20 $500 per quarter except for the winter, which is cheaper. So this is probably seven or $8,000 worth of items if you were to pay retail for all of this. Right. And again, some of this is stuff that you can do yourself, but if you're not doing it yourself and you're paying somebody to do all these tasks individually, you could spend five, six, seven, $8,000 a year depending on the size of your house to do all this stuff right?

**Erich:** That's correct. And kind of that number is $5000 -$10000. And really, it's that all of the stats say 2% of your home value, prepare to spend that every single year. Now, that will get you to a pretty high number. So that also takes into consideration replacing your roof every 15 or 20 years. Yeah. So, you know, if at that $5000, $6000, that that is right. Right about where it is to spend every single year on your home. Yeah. And really if you think about caulking your windows, you miss caulking your windows for three years, all of a sudden, you've got four grand replacing two or three windows in your house, depending on what kind of windows that you might have. So it is certainly the money you spend on the maintenance and not deferring it off is going to pay for itself in spades. So, yeah.

**Curtis:** And so now let's talk about briefly kind of what somebody would expect to spend if they were hiring a company like Good Smith to do this stuff for them. So you're looking at 5 to 10 grand a year if you're kind of doing this on your own or paying somebody individually to do these tasks. So what would somebody expect to spend if they had a, you know, a membership with you all and kind of what those additional costs would be to knock out, you know, most of this list for a typical year.

**Erich:** So we will typically knock this down by 50 to 60%. You can take off that just for the fact that we have technicians and the people in the house that will come out and do all of these items on for visits or taking care of your sanitizing your dishwasher, your washing machine, cleaning a dryer than washing a water heater and filters and light bulbs and probably another task or two on one visit, you're not paying five different trip.

**Curtis:** All the trip charges.

**Erich:** You get somebody out there to take care of it. That is really where we provide value to our customers and it's always going to get done. We're Curtis, we're going to be there in two weeks. But you know, is still 8:30 a.m. on Tuesday the 15th. Is that still work for you? You're like, absolutely. That does. And so we're that reminder. We make sure that everything gets done and that the checklist is getting taken care of. And if we go into a home and we find that there is an unusual situation, if we're in the attic and we're looking for leaks in there, we're going to find that leak within the first. It's going to be at maximum 89 days since we've been there. So you're not going to have too much damage happening if that water leak started the day after we were there the last time. So any problems that do arise are on top of them before there is any structural or major cosmetic damage to the home. Yeah.

**Curtis:** And just to be clear, some of these items that you're doing are inspections to make sure there's not damage or there's that there's not an issue going on.

**Erich:** Correct.

**Curtis:** If you find an issue that's fixing is not necessarily included in this pricing, but the inspection and the preventative maintenance. But then if you do find an item that needs to be fixed, you guys can provide that service to do the repair and again, possibly cheaper than if they were to call somebody else out on a separate trip, right?

**Erich:** That's correct. Let's take exterior window caulking, for example. We're going to go around, we're going to take a look and make sure that everything is in good shape. If there's $4,000 worth of damage on your home, that needs to be taken care of. We are going to come out, we're going to give you an estimate on what it's going to take care of. And we are going to help facilitate the repair of that. That would not be included in that main number. Right. But again, it's doing it regularly. So we found those damages. We are going to make sure that particularly if you're in a newer home within the first five years, you're not going to have that much damage or you're not going to have that much wear and tear on the home already. So we can start doing those in 100 or $200 increments, not $2,000 increments.

**Curtis:** Yeah. So you're not getting big numbers thrown at you? That's right. All the time. Yeah. It's always easier to stomach a couple hundred dollars at a time instead of thousands of dollars at a time.

**Erich:** That's it. Our typical client that's living in a home that's about a decades old will come in and we get the honey do list. It's got 20 items on there, and we will price them all out if these are larger projects that need to get taken care of and we'll prioritize them for, say, these are items that need to be taken care of. This is a water leak. This is a level one. This needs to get done. This is your dog is chewed up the baseboard in the kitchen. You know, you don't really, that's not an emergency. We don't need to fix that immediately. So let's spend your dollars wisely here on the top three. And then when you're ready, let's knock down to the, you know, the bottom five that are on the list and or if you want to get them all just knocked out right now and get up and running, let's go. Go for it. But that's where it's really important to find a partner in your home, someone that is coming into your home on a regular basis that you trust, and they trust you so that you can get on a program. So when they tell you that you need a repair that's $500, you trust them and you know that they're doing the right thing for you, that it's not they're not in it for one check. They're in it to be there for you as a partner in your home over the next several decades. So that's the hard part.

**Curtis:** I think that's a great place to wrap up. I think it's been fantastic. It's we've covered some great territory. So, Eric, thanks for being back with us again. It's been great having you.

**Erich:** Well, I really appreciate it. This is a lot of fun. This is a lot of fun.

**Curtis:** Hopefully, this has been a good resource for people to understand the importance of having these tasks handled on a regular basis and with the advantages of having a company like Good Smith provide these services to maintain their home. So, folks, if you're in Houston and you want to connect with Eric and Good Smith, please reach out to him on their website is my good Smith dot com and their social media is at Michael Smith on Instagram and Facebook and all that good stuff. So please reach out to them. Their website also has some of these lists that we've shown, and Danielle is going to also include some links in our YouTube and podcast descriptions so that you can reach out to them. That does it for today's episode of the Your Project Shepherd Construction Podcast. I'm so happy that you are with us again. Be sure to join us again next time when we move outdoors and talk about landscaping and landscape design. But until then, remember that every successful construction project has four key part assets, which are symbolized by the simple child's drawing of the house. The foundation is proper planning. The left wall is your team. The right wall is communication, the roof is proper execution and for today, I'll be sure to point out that home maintenance is part of that long term proper execution. Having all these components in place in your project will succeed and your home will be healthy and happy. See you next time.