

Spring has Sprung! Home & Garden maintenance tips for the Spring Season

As we enjoy more beautiful weather, here are a few tips to keep your home happy:

1. Be aware of the soil level around your foundation as you plant and maintain your garden. Your soil level should start below the top of your foundation and slope away from your house. This will help drain water away from your home during the next rainy season. Ideally, soil should be six inches below the mudsill (the wood member that sits on top of the concrete foundation). If you have a very old and shallow foundation, then having the soil about three to four inches below is preferred.
2. Check your home's exterior for cracks and gaps where water could intrude. Calk, patch and paint as necessary to keep the exterior of your home sealed from the elements.
3. To care for wood window frames, wash away any mold that may have developed during the damp weather. Make sure all wood surfaces are well primed, painted and/or sealed.
4. About every five years it's smart to order a Wood Destroying Pests and Organisms Inspection Report. Commonly called a pest report, this process should catch any moisture loving wood fungus or wood munching pests that could be damaging your home in areas where you don't over look. The report normally costs around \$200 and could save money in the long run by detecting problems early. Call me and I can recommend several reputable companies in the area from which to choose.
5. The rains may be over soon, and then it's back to irrigating your garden. If you have a drip system, check each zone to be sure there are no line breaks or missing emitters.
6. Now reward yourself for doing the less-than-fun stuff by planting some veggies! I've become a real fan of heirloom tomatoes. These celebrity tomatoes really are special and tend to produce even in our cool summers. I've had great luck with Brandywine, Cherokee Purple, and Green Zebra. They give a variety of colors and flavors and one plant each keeps me in tomatoes for the summer and well in the autumn. Berkeley Horticultural Nursery usually carries these and other varieties.
7. Japanese food fans: have you tried growing your own shiso? There are both red (purple) and green varieties, and just a leaf or two adds a wonderful punch to sushi or a salad. It grows easily, but bolts easily too, and the snails love it as much as I do! Small plants should be available soon at one of my favorite places in Berkeley: Tokyo Fish Market on San Pablo near Gilman. Cubby and his crew do a great job of providing us all wonderful fresh fish and sea food, as well as advice on preparation. There's a separate case for items that can safely be eaten raw, and they even carry fresh ankimo, for all of us monkfish liver fans!