

Spring Cleaning: Who You Gonna Call?

By Sharon McKee

I've never been a big fan of spring cleaning, or any type of housecleaning for that matter. But like death and taxes, it's inevitable. As I write this, it is hailing outside and another snowstorm is bearing down on the Northeast. So maybe I'll have a reprieve from spring cleaning after all? No such luck. As the snow melts, uncovering its bounty of fall leaves in the gutter and dead branches in the yard, I cannot procrastinate much longer. It's time to get the place in shape, inside and out. Warning: Because of the unusually-long winter, chances are that spring will be foreshortened and we'll move right into summer. So plan now to book cleaning professionals who can help. Help!

SPECIAL SECTION: HOUSE & HOME

Jocelyne Ranucci is just such a pro. As the owner of A Votre Service!, a full-service housecleaning company in Sag Harbor (631-725-2128), she knows that "a clean and organized home reflects peace of mind, lessens stress and allows more freedom to enjoy our time off." I'm all about that.

According to Kevin Ward, V.P. of Teresa's Family Cleaning in Rocky Point (631-744-4021), spring is when most people do their first really deep cleaning of the year. "They can throw open the windows and get a little bit of fresh air. To keep a home healthy, it really helps to air it out." Ward adds that most people have been walking through salt and de-icing agents for months and now is the time to address that issue. "All those chemicals that make it easier to walk outside end up getting tracked into the house where you're going to be walking barefoot in the coming months. Vacuuming will help," he says, "but to ensure you've gotten all of those chemicals out, a professional cleaning is a must."

Consider power washing, the traditional term for deep cleaning the exterior of your home to counteract mold and mildew. Bill Smith of Mildew Busters (631-495-6826) says power washing is really a misnomer. "When you say 'power washing,' people have concerns that someone will show up and damage their wood, shingles, paint or worse," he told me. His company, in operation on the East End since 1981, does "house washing" instead, using lower pressure machines and non-toxic, citrus-based products that kill mold spores. They wash decks, teak furniture, siding and roofs, as well.

Cleaning the chimney is a particularly odious task, one that should not be attempted by husbands or small children. And while spring is the obvious time to clean the chimney - after it has done yeoman's work all winter - many of Pete Vella's customers call him every fall as well. "It's really easy to overlook," says Vella, owner of Ace Chimney Cleaning in Ronkonkoma (631-648-7474). "People tend to forget the chimney pipes that connect to their oil or gas heating systems. Oil burner connections should be cleaned at least annually. And in the case of gas, if you were to get a blockage and didn't have a carbon monoxide detector, there could be serious trouble."

I don't know about your house, but our gutters are on overload; they're positively groaning from winter's buildup. When the weight of the snow and ice bring the leaves and gutters tumbling down, there are full-service gutter companies ready to help. Duda Quality Gutter in Water Mill (631-758-0812) has been around for 25 years. Owner Richard Duda says his company not only cleans gutters, it installs and repairs them as well. "We offer gutter covers," says Richard, speaking of a popular service. "Realistically, if you have pine needles falling on your house, you could be up there once a month and never catch up."

As we get ready to throw open those windows to let the sunshine in (have faith, it will happen), I am reminded of another service company aptly named We Do Windows (800-924-3332). This full-service company does window cleaning, air duct cleaning/indoor air care, power washing and gutter cleaning, carpet and upholstery cleaning, and much more.

ART BY LAWRENCE ROBERTS

Now, that's my idea of one-stop shopping...think I'll give them a call.