

## Maintenance Tips for New Homes by Elder Bee Homes

After recovering from the initial exhilaration of moving into a new house, homeowners can be overwhelmed suddenly by the enormous responsibility facing them -- care and maintenance of the largest investment of their lives. Yet, the responsibility of taking care of your home shouldn't put any homeowner into shock. Some common sense, routine checks, and basic how-to skills can go a long way in helping to keep a house in tip-top shape.

[Click here to download our quick reference maintenance checklist.](#)

Listed below are a few guidelines:

### Landscaping

Your grass and shrubs will flourish if properly watered and maintained. Regular fertilizing, watering, aerating, and over-seeding of your yard will give you the best results in establishing a mature lawn over a two-year period for seeded lawns. Sodded lawns initially need to be watered for 20 minutes twice every day for 3 weeks to establish the roots' system.

### Trees

Newly planted trees should be watered every 7 to 10 days throughout the first growing season. (Soil type and weather conditions determine the actual watering frequency.) Water trees slowly, but deeply. Since large trees take longer to become established in the landscape, it is often necessary to water large trees for 2 or 3 years.

To help conserve moisture, place 2 to 4 inches of mulch, such as wood chips or shredded bark, around trees. Mulches also help control weeds, moderate soil temperatures, and reduce the risk of mechanical injury to tree trunks from errant lawnmowers and string-trimmers.

### Concrete

The use of stains and sealers will help preserve your concrete and give it the color that you desire. If your concrete cracks, concrete caulk or patch can be used to seal the crack. All of these items may be purchased at your local home improvement store.

### Exterior

Exterior paint, caulk and stain is the homeowner's responsibility to maintain. Be sure to check all exterior paint and caulk on your home every six months and repair as needed.

### Crawl Spaces

Insure that no moisture or standing water builds in the crawl space. Check your HVAC lines as they can condensate and leave drip puddles. Also, insure that all water from downspouts is diverted away from the house to avoid excessive moisture. Remember to properly ventilate the crawl space using the foundation vents.

### Roof/Siding

Occasionally check that all siding and shingles are intact by looking for missing or loose pieces. Also, maintain any penetrations and/or seams with caulk or mortar patch.

### Building Material Expansion and Contraction

All building materials will expand and contract due to changes to temperature and humidity. Since materials expand and contract at different rates, you may notice small cracks in the drywall and paint, and possibly some small separations between materials. Even in the highest quality of construction, shrinkage is inevitable. This will be most evident during the first year following completion of the home. Generally, only a small cosmetic repair is required. All touch-up and cosmetic repairs as well as adjustments will be performed once, at the year end inspection. All such items will be the responsibility of the homeowner. A touch-up kit will be given to the homeowner at closing to help with minor touch-ups and repairs.

### Fiberglass Tubs/showers and Countertops

Use white silicone or latex caulk around your showers, tubs, and vanity tops. Kitchen countertops and backsplashes should be caulked when necessary. Natural stone should be sealed every year. All caulk and sealants are sold at your local home improvement store.

### Lubrication

Lubricate hinges and hardware periodically to prevent squeaking. 3 in 1 oil can be purchased at your local hardware store and is good to lubricate most hinges and hardware..

### Vinyl Flooring

Vinyl flooring can rip and tear, so it is imperative that care be taken when moving appliances or other items over the flooring. Mineral spirits may be used to remove black marks left from shoes.

#### Wood Flooring

Wood will expand and contract causing it to cup slightly. This is due to humidity levels in the home, and is normal. Excessive water from cleaning or spills on the flooring will cause significant cupping. A damp mop with water and vinegar or other wood floor cleaning agents should be used to clean the flooring. Never wet mop a wood floor!

#### Ceramic Flooring

Ceramic is very durable and will last a very long time if it is properly maintained. However, tile may crack with time, especially if a heavy item is dropped on the flooring. Also, the grout may get dirty and stain. Cleaners may be used to remove the dirt and stains from grout. For easier cleaning, grout can be sealed.

#### Plumbing

If your home is heated at a normal level, pipes should not freeze. Heat should not drop below 65 degrees in the winter months. Outside faucets and irrigation systems should be shut off and properly insulated during the winter months to prevent freezing. During extremely cold weather, leave indoor faucets, located on exterior walls, dripping. If a sewer or drain line becomes clogged, and you cannot unclog the line by use of a plunger, you should contact your plumber.

#### HVAC, Hot Water Tanks, Fireplaces, Light Fixtures

Pilot lights are on gas water heaters and fireplaces. Furnaces are automatically lit. Local gas companies and HVAC companies will light pilot lights for a fee. Breakers are normally located in the garage in a panel and are easy to switch into the on position. GFI circuits are outlets with a reset button and are normally located in the garage, baths, and kitchen. Push the reset button on the GFI circuit to reset them.

#### Pest Control

Termite protection is applied to your home during construction. This treatment does not cover other insects or rodents. In order to maintain your home, it is important to set up an inspection and maintenance program with a termite treatment and pest control company.