




ASK THE EXPERT:
Spring Maintenance



There's something irresistible about spring cleaning. The idea of giving our homes a new lease on life inspires us to tackle even the most mundane projects with gusto. As the weather warms up, sprucing up exterior wood should be at the top of your priority list. After all, decks and cabins take a beating during the winter months. We asked Jeff Brooks, category expert from ZAR®, makers of [ZAR® Platinum PRO Translucent Urethane Finish](#), to share his expert advice on best spring maintenance practices:

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What type of wood damage should homeowners check for each spring?

Seasonal inspections take time and aren't all that fun, but a little pain now will save you a lot of pain—and money—later. Look for cracked and peeling stain; chinking or sealant that has pulled away from the wood or split; upward-facing checks in the ends of logs; and insect bore holes or signs of rodents (such as nesting materials or droppings). Also check for any signs of wood rot in areas where water tends to gather or drip.

Look for spots on the wood surface or gaps around joints, doors and windows to determine if any areas need resealing or stain touch-ups. Any type of peeling, cracking or fading is a sign that some care is needed.

Should cabins and decks be washed down each spring?

If you left your favorite chair outside all winter, you'd surely want to scrub it before using it. The same principle applies to your home. Log walls and decks take a beating during the winter months, and spring is the perfect time to revitalize these surfaces. Washing wood with a quality wood cleaner will remove contamination like dirt, pollen, fungus, mold and mildew.



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Before washing, be sure to clear away vegetation and debris that may have piled up. A power washer on a lower setting may be used, or simple, old-fashioned elbow grease can accomplish the job.

What type of wood cleaners work well for decks and cabins?

When it comes to cleaning wood, the market has no shortage of products. Some use bleach, some use bleach alternatives, some have preservatives and some have special ingredients designed to remove mold, mildew and other stains. Whichever wood cleaner you choose, be sure to follow the directions carefully. After applying

cleaner, be sure to thoroughly wash down your wood.

What can homeowners do to repair damaged wood?

Winter can be unforgiving when it comes to exterior wood. If you see noticeable peeling, cracking or fading of the coating, you can lightly sand and restain these areas. If you discover gaps or cracks in the wood or around doors or windows of your cabin, it's important to fill them with a quality, flexible gap filler. Carefully examine wood for upward facing checks, and consider having them filled and sealed to prevent water intrusion. If there is significant rot damage, it may be time to consult a professional log home

restoration specialist. Cracks and gaps in logs can be a frequent occurrence, and it is extremely important those areas are addressed before finishing or refinishing the logs. Water intrusion getting in behind the finish or stain is a common occurrence that wreaks havoc on a coating.

Is it necessary to refinish exterior wood each spring?

For log homes, a quality wood stain, such as [ZAR® Platinum PRO Translucent Exterior Urethane Finish](#), is designed to last for many seasons on vertical surfaces and should not require extensive refinishing on a regular basis. Still, it's important to thoroughly examine your exterior wood. Horizontal surfaces, such as decks, see more traffic and thus may need to be refinished more often. Evaluate your wood surfaces carefully to determine if refinishing is truly necessary. [ZAR® products](#) offer excellent protection and durability while enhancing the look of natural wood.

What role do gutters play in overall maintenance?

Let's face it—you need a good gutter system. Without it, water will simply run down the roof and fall into the foundation. Most water damage caused by rain will start around the roof structure, fascia, soffit and foundation. A properly installed rain gutter system is designed to move rainwater away from these areas and away from your home. If your gutters are not functioning for any reason [perhaps due to clogs or downspouts that aren't properly connected], not only are they not protecting your home, they may actually exacerbate the problem. Regular gutter maintenance and inspections should be a part of your seasonal maintenance program.



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