



SEASONAL HOMEOWNER GUIDE • SUMMER

SUMMER MAINTENANCE GUIDE

Summer is the only stretch of the year when exterior work is reliably possible up here, and it is also when humidity peaks. **Treat the season as a two-part job:** get every outdoor repair done inside the short work window, and keep indoor moisture under control while the air is heavy off the lakes.

NORTHERN MICHIGAN NOTE

Reliable exterior work runs roughly late May through September — paint, roofing, masonry, and concrete all need temperatures our shoulder seasons don't hold. Contractors book out fast in a short season, so schedule summer projects in early spring rather than waiting until you need them.

01 COOLING & INDOOR HUMIDITY

- ☐ **Hold indoor relative humidity between 30% and 50%.** Buy a \$15 hygrometer and put one in the basement — it's the cheapest mold insurance there is.
- ☐ **Run a basement dehumidifier** and plumb it to a drain so nobody has to remember the bucket.
- ☐ **Change AC filters monthly** during heavy use.
- ☐ **Keep the outdoor condenser clear** by two feet on all sides and rinse the fins.
- ☐ **Check the condensate drain** for clogs and confirm the overflow pan is dry.
- ☐ **Don't open the basement windows on humid days** — warm, wet air hitting cool masonry condenses and feeds mold.
- ☐ **Run bath fans 20 minutes after showers** and use the kitchen hood when cooking.
- ☐ **Watch crawl spaces for condensation** on ducts, framing, and the vapor barrier.

02 ROOF, SIDING & THE SHORT WORK WINDOW

- ☐ **Repair the roof now, not in October.** Shingles seal properly in warm weather and roofers have availability.
- ☐ **Wash siding and check for chalking, cracks, or failed caulk** at seams and penetrations.
- ☐ **Scrape and repaint exposed wood trim** — south and west faces weather fastest.
- ☐ **Reseal or restain decks** when boards are dry, ideally on a stretch of clear days.
- ☐ **Tuckpoint masonry and repair the chimney crown** before another freeze-thaw season.
- ☐ **Seal driveway and walkway cracks** so water can't get under the slab and lift it.
- ☐ **Clean gutters after the spring seed and pollen drop** and check that seams aren't leaking.
- ☐ **Inspect attic on a hot day** — if it's brutally hot or smells musty, ventilation is inadequate.

THE ATTIC TELLS YOU ABOUT NEXT WINTER

A properly vented attic is close to outdoor temperature. If yours is stifling in July, the same trapped-air problem will melt roof snow unevenly in January and build ice dams. Summer is the right time to add soffit baffles, ridge venting, and insulation — the work is cheaper and far more comfortable now.

03 WATER, WELL & SEPTIC UNDER PEAK LOAD

- ☐ **Test well water annually for bacteria and nitrates**, and any time the taste, smell, or clarity changes.
- ☐ **Spread laundry and dishes across the week** when the house is full. Hydraulic overload is the fastest way to push a drainfield into failure.
- ☐ **Keep the drainfield clear** of vehicles, trailers, fire pits, and above-ground pools.
- ☐ **Direct irrigation and downspouts away from the drainfield** — saturated soil can't absorb effluent.
- ☐ **Check the pressure tank and pump cycling** during heavy summer demand.
- ☐ **Inspect for leaks** at hose bibs, irrigation valves, and the water heater.
- ☐ **Flush the water heater** to clear sediment, which builds fast on well water.
- ☐ **Service the water softener** and check salt levels.

04 DECKS, DOCKS & SHORELINE

- ☐ **Re-probe deck framing and posts for rot** at ground contact and at the ledger board.
- ☐ **Confirm railing height and baluster spacing** meet code — a common finding on older cottage decks.
- ☐ **Check dock hardware, cribs, and hoists** now that they're in service.
- ☐ **Inspect seawalls and shoreline** for undermining and erosion after high water.
- ☐ **Look for wasp and hornet nests** in soffits, deck framing, and grills.
- ☐ **Check for carpenter ants and powderpost beetles** in damp framing, sills, and outbuildings.
- ☐ **Keep vegetation trimmed back** a foot from siding to let walls dry.
- ☐ **Clear brush and dead limbs** from around the structure and driveway.

05 STORMS, POWER & SEASONAL RENTALS

- ☐ **Test the generator and transfer switch.** Summer wind and thunderstorms drop rural power as reliably as winter ice.
- ☐ **Trim limbs over service drops** and the driveway.
- ☐ **Confirm sump pump and battery backup work** before heavy rain, not during it.
- ☐ **Review the insurance policy** for wind, water backup, and short-term rental coverage.
- ☐ **Between rental turnovers, run the dehumidifier** and don't shut the AC off entirely — a closed, unconditioned house grows mold fast.
- ☐ **Check that guests haven't overloaded the septic** or flushed wipes, which is a top cause of summer backups.
- ☐ **Verify smoke and CO alarms** in every rental sleeping area.
- ☐ **Photograph the property mid-season** for insurance and listing files.

FOR AGENTS: SUMMER IS THE BEST INSPECTION WINDOW WE GET

Everything is testable. The AC will run, the well and septic are under real load, the roof is walkable, the crawl space is accessible, and the shoreline is visible. A summer inspection produces a far more complete report than the same house in February — worth mentioning to sellers deciding when to list.

LISTING THIS SUMMER? BOOK WHILE THE SCHEDULE IS OPEN.

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