

Alston

Building Maintenance Calendar

a month by month guide to looking after your home.

January

- ▶ Have your electricity system checked by a qualified person every 5 years.
- ▶ Smoke alarms should be regularly tested and cleaned. Remember to replace the batteries too.
- ▶ Check the condition and safety of any ladders, personal protective equipment or other kit used as part of regular maintenance.



February

- ▶ If your property has valley gutters they will need to be cleared of snow to prevent melt water rising above them and causing damp internally. Extra caution is needed in icy conditions.
- ▶ Gullies beneath downpipes and around drains should be cleared out regularly.
- ▶ If appropriate check that roofs and windows are bird proof before nesting starts. Do not disturb bats.



March

- ▶ Check that gutters and downpipes have not been damaged during frost or heavy snow.
- ▶ Make sure that gutters and downpipes are running freely in heavy rain. Look for cracks or leaks, note and if possible repair damaged sections.
- ▶ Inspect lead flashings and mortar fillets at chimneys and roof-wall abutments for signs of decay. Problems include holes or splits in the leadwork and cracked or missing mortar fillets.

TOP TIP:

Use a hand mirror to look behind rainwater pipes as splits and cracks in old cast iron and aluminium often occur here and are not easily noticed.

April

- ▶ Check roof for storm or wind damage. Debris on the ground from broken slates and tiles can indicate a problem.
- ▶ Make sure gutters and rainwater pipes are clear of leaves and other debris. Regular attention may be needed if there are trees in blossom or coming into leaf.
- ▶ Look out for cast iron gutters and downpipes that may also require re-painting.

TOP TIP:

Fit bird/leaf guards to the tops of soil-pipes and downpipes and over gulleys to the base of downpipes to prevent blockages.



May

- ▶ Drains should be cleaned and rodded out if they overflow during wet weather. Remove silt and debris to ensure water discharges freely.
- ▶ Make sure that windows open easily and that vents are working so that the building can be ventilated on dry days during the summer months. Lubricate door and window fittings and check security locks.
- ▶ Shut down the heating system and have the boiler serviced. Bleed radiators and ensure that the frost thermostat is operational.
- ▶ Clear away plant growth from drains, drainage channels and around gulleys and the base of the walls generally.

TOP TIP:

Have gutters adjusted or re-fixed if they are discharging water onto the wall – look for staining to the walls.

June

- ▶ Check the masonry or render for signs of damage. Seek expert advice on deeply eroded or missing mortar joints, cracks or signs of movement.
- ▶ Check timberwork for signs of rot including less accessible areas such as floor and roof voids and under stairs. Don't forget to check in and behind your cupboards.
- ▶ Check for vermin from roof and floor voids.



July

- Look at timber windows, doors, fascia boards and bargeboards. Check for cracked and rotten wood. Repair and re-decoration may be required.
- Clear away any plant growth from around the base of the walls and in particular around gullies and drains.
- If the building has a lightning protection system have it serviced every five years.

TOP TIP:

Regular painting of cast iron is essential to prevent rust and keeps your property looking good.



Take a break in August!

September

- If your roof space has safe access and is boarded, check for evidence of leaks or damage to the roof covering during or after heavy rain. You might spot light coming through gaps left by missing or slipped slates.
- Check that any air bricks or grilles for under-floor ventilation are clear of obstruction.
- Make sure that any water tanks and exposed pipes are protected from frost.

Regular checks are a vital part of building maintenance. Check as frequently as you can, it will save you a lot of time and money in the long run!

The best time to look at gutters and rainwater goods is during or just after the rain as this will help you to spot any leaking sections.

October

- Check that the heating system is working properly.
- Clear leaves and debris from gutters and rainwater pipes regularly. Frequent attention may be needed if the building is surrounded by trees or perched on by birds.
- Check for loose downpipes. Tighten or replace any broken or missing bolts and clips.



November

- Inspect the roof for damage after storms or heavy rain. Look out for broken or missing slates that may allow water to get in.
- On larger buildings check that any snow boards or access walkways on the roof are in a good state of repair.
- Remove any dead plant growth from drainage channels and around gullies and the base of the walls generally.



December

- If you have them, clear valley or parapet gutters to prevent water rising above the leadwork and causing damp internally. Take extra care if it is wet or icy under foot.
- Gullies beneath downpipes and around drains should be cleared out regularly. Drains should be rodded out if they overflow during wet weather. Remove silt and debris to ensure water discharges freely.
- Make sure that any fire safety equipment has been serviced.



Safety

Ensure you maintain your building safely. Ladders, lofts and roofs present particular hazards. It is best not to work alone, but do think of the safety of helpers and others beneath.

Safety equipment is needed for some jobs such as gloves, ideally with long cuffs, for the clearance of drains or removal of bird droppings from gutters. Hard hats should also be worn at high level.

Do not touch gas or electrical supplies unless you are qualified.

If you are in any doubt about safe access, particularly on roofs and attics, use a reputable, competent builder for inspection of work. Binoculars, mirrors and selfie-sticks can be useful tools to help you inspect roofs and other high level items.

Don't undertake routine maintenance work at high level unless you are accompanied and have suitable equipment. If in doubt always seek help from a professional.

For further advice contact the Health and Safety Executive. www.hse.gov.uk.



With thanks to the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings for use of the idea for this calendar.

Regular maintenance can save you time and money.

For more information on looking after old buildings see

www.spab.org.uk

Published (2020) by Alston Moor Partnership

through the Alston Townscape Heritage Scheme funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Design: Crosby Granger Architects and Mary Hayward

Illustrations: James Innerdale

Printed at Robson Print, Hexham