

Phoenix Desert Home Seasonal Maintenance Checklist

A local handyman's season-by-season guide for Valley homes and the Desert Southwest

Written for the Phoenix area · also a fit for Tucson, Las Vegas, and Palm Springs homes

Spring

Feb – Apr
Prep before heat

Summer

May – Jun
Beat the heat

Monsoon

Jul – Sep
Storm ready

Fall & Winter

Oct – Jan
Project season

- Four desert-season checklists with real checkboxes, grouped by area
- Handyman tips, a “When to call a pro” guide, and a Home Notes page

By Dan Gagnon

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Why Desert Homes Need Their Own Calendar

I've been running my handyman business in the greater Phoenix area for seven years, and one thing is clear: the usual spring-summer-fall-winter checklist doesn't fit the way we live out here. Our hard season is summer, not winter. The sun is tough on roofs, caulk, paint, and hoses. Monsoon storms bring dust, wind, and a lot of water in a hurry. And our “winter” is the best time of year to work outside.

So I built this checklist around the Valley's real seasons. Spring is for getting the AC and the house ready before the heat. Early summer is about keeping things cool and protected. Monsoon is storm prep and cleanup. Fall and winter are project season, with a little prep for those rare freeze nights.

Most of these tasks take a few minutes and basic tools. Small problems like a cracked bead of caulk, a clogged scupper, or a dirty AC filter are a lot easier to deal with before they turn into big ones. Work through each season at your own pace, check things off, and keep notes as you go. And if something feels beyond your comfort zone, that's what the pros are for.

— *Dan Gagnon*

How to use this checklist

1. Print the season you're in (or the whole thing) and keep it on the fridge or in a binder.
2. Work through the items over a few weekends. In summer, do outdoor jobs early in the morning.
3. Skip anything that doesn't apply to your home (no pool or evaporative cooler? no problem).
4. Write filter sizes, softener settings, and irrigation zones on the **My Home Notes** page.
5. Check the **When to Call a Pro** page before tackling anything involving gas, AC refrigerant, electrical, roofs, or structure.
6. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for your equipment, and your city's, HOA's, and water provider's rules.

Spring

Prep the house now, while it's comfortable, before the heat shows up.

ROOF & EXTERIOR

- ☐ From the ground, check tile roofs for cracked, slipped, or missing tiles; call a roofer if underlayment shows
- ☐ Flat or foam roof: from a safe spot, look for blisters, cracks, bare spots in the coating, and debris at scuppers and roof drains
- ☐ Walk the stucco and block walls; mark hairline cracks to watch and note any that are wide, growing, or leaning
- ☐ Check window and door caulk and weatherstripping for sun-baked cracks and gaps
- ☐ Trim shrubs and branches back from the roof, walls, and AC unit

COOLING

- ☐ Schedule an AC or heat pump tune-up before the first really hot stretch
- ☐ Clear plants and debris from around the condenser; with the power off, gently hose the coil fins (no pressure washer)
- ☐ Replace the AC filter (write the size on your Home Notes page)
- ☐ Evaporative cooler (if you have one): new pads, check the float, pump, belt, and water line before startup

WATER & IRRIGATION

- ☐ Switch the irrigation timer to its spring schedule; walk each zone for leaks, clogged emitters, and broken heads
- ☐ Check water softener salt; soak faucet aerators and showerheads to clear hard water scale
- ☐ Look under sinks and around the water heater for drips or white mineral crust at fittings

PESTS & SAFETY

- ☐ Seal gaps at door sweeps, weep screeds, and pipe and wire entry points where scorpions get in
- ☐ Look for mud tubes on stem walls, block walls, and garage slab edges (a sign of termites)
- ☐ Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms; replace batteries as needed

Handyman Tip

Spring is the time to get your AC looked at. Book the tune-up in March or April, before the first heat wave, when it seems like everybody in the Valley needs an HVAC tech on the same day.

When you rinse the condenser, shut the power off at the disconnect box first and use a gentle spray from a garden hose. A pressure washer will flatten those thin fins in a hurry.

Completed on: _____ Year: _____

Summer

Keep the AC running, protect the house from the sun, and do outdoor work at first light.

COOLING

- ☐ Check the AC filter monthly while the system runs hard; replace it when it looks dirty
- ☐ Make sure the condensate line is dripping where it should and the drain pan isn't full or clogged
- ☐ Keep the condenser clear; watch for pack rat nests, chewed wiring, or debris inside the unit
- ☐ See ice on the refrigerant lines or warm air from the vents? Turn the system off and call an HVAC pro

ATTIC & WINDOWS

- ☐ Early in the morning only: check that attic insulation is evenly spread and vents aren't blocked
- ☐ Look for foggy or hazy dual-pane windows (failed seals) and note them for future repair
- ☐ Add sun screens or shades on west- and south-facing windows to cut heat gain
- ☐ Close blinds and curtains on the sunny sides of the house during the hottest part of the day

EXTERIOR

- ☐ Replace cracked, sun-rotted garden hoses and worn hose washers
- ☐ Check the garage door bottom seal and weatherstripping; replace if brittle or cracked
- ☐ Look for peeling paint and split caulk on the sunny sides of the house

WATER & POOL

- ☐ Switch the irrigation timer to its summer schedule (follow your water provider's guidelines)
- ☐ Pool: empty skimmer and pump baskets, clean or backwash the filter per the manual, and keep the water level up

SAFETY

- ☐ Test GFCI outlets at the kitchen, baths, garage, patio, and pool equipment
- ☐ Store paint, aerosols, and pool chemicals out of direct sun and follow the label for storage temperatures
- ☐ Working outside? Go early, keep water with you, take shade breaks, and stop if you feel unwell

Handyman Tip

If you have to get on a ladder or into the attic this time of year, go at first light and be done by mid-morning. Attics here can get dangerously hot. Bring water, tell someone where you are, and quit right away if you feel dizzy or sick.

To spot a failed window seal, look at the glass when the sun hits it at an angle. A cloudy haze or streaks between the panes that won't wipe off means the seal is gone. Not an emergency, but worth writing down.

Completed on: _____ Year: _____

Monsoon

Get ready for dust storms, high wind, sudden downpours, and power outages.

BEFORE THE STORMS

- ☐ Clear roof drains, scuppers, gutters, and downspouts so flat roofs and parapet walls can drain
- ☐ Make sure grading, yard drains, and splash blocks move water away from the house; clear drain grates
- ☐ Secure or store patio furniture, umbrellas, trampolines, and trash cans
- ☐ Have a tree service thin trees and trim dead palm fronds and weak limbs before the wind does

POWER & SAFETY

- ☐ Stock flashlights, batteries, phone power banks, and drinking water for outages
- ☐ Learn how to release your garage door opener so you can open the door by hand
- ☐ Never run a generator indoors, in the garage, or near open windows
- ☐ Never drive or walk into flooded streets or washes
- ☐ Sign up for outage alerts from your electric utility so you know when power is expected back

AFTER A BIG STORM

- ☐ From the ground, check the roof for slipped tiles, lifted flashing, and debris; look inside for ceiling stains
- ☐ Replace the AC filter after a dust storm; with the power off, gently rinse dust from the condenser
- ☐ Look for new stucco cracks and water stains around windows, doors, and block walls
- ☐ Turn irrigation off for a few days after a good soaking rain
- ☐ Evaporative cooler: clean dust out of the pan and pads; it cools less on humid days, so the AC may work better then

PESTS

- ☐ Watch for bees in walls, meter boxes, and irrigation valve boxes; don't disturb them, call a removal pro
- ☐ Watch for termite swarms and fresh mud tubes after rains

Handyman Tip

If you have a flat roof with parapet walls, the scuppers and roof drains are the only way out for the water. A wad of leaves or a lost ball can turn a downpour into a pond on your roof. Check them in early July and again after every big blow.

When the power starts flickering during a storm, I like to turn the thermostat off until the power is steady again, then turn it back on. Check your equipment manual for any restart guidance.

Completed on: _____ Year: _____

Fall & Winter

The Valley's best season for outdoor projects, plus quick prep for our short winter.

OUTDOOR PROJECTS

- ☐ Patch and paint stucco cracks and re-caulk joints the sun opened up over the summer
- ☐ Flat or foam roof: schedule recoating on your roofer's timeline; older tile roofs: have the underlayment checked
- ☐ Repair block wall cracks, loose cap blocks, and sagging gate hinges and latches
- ☐ Paint or seal exterior wood trim, fascia, and doors while it's mild
- ☐ Replace sun-damaged weatherstripping, door sweeps, and the garage door bottom seal

HEATING & COOLING

- ☐ Have the heat pump or gas furnace checked before the first cool nights; replace the filter
- ☐ Evaporative cooler: drain it, disconnect the water line, and close or cover it for the winter
- ☐ Gas fireplace or patio heater: have it checked, then test the ignition and look for blocked vents

WATER & IRRIGATION

- ☐ Flush the water heater to remove scale and sediment per the manufacturer's instructions
- ☐ Switch the irrigation timer to its fall/winter schedule; check the backflow preventer for leaks

FREEZE NIGHTS (DEC - JAN)

- ☐ On forecast freeze nights, cover exposed pipes, hose bibs, and the backflow preventer; disconnect hoses
- ☐ Cover frost-tender plants like citrus with frost cloth or old sheets (not plastic on the leaves)
- ☐ Pool: confirm the equipment's freeze protection is working, or run the pump overnight

PESTS & SAFETY

- ☐ Check under car hoods, in the condenser, and around pool equipment for pack rat nests and chewed wires
- ☐ Test smoke and CO alarms before you fire up the furnace or fireplace; check fire extinguisher gauges

Handyman Tip

If you've been putting off an outdoor project, this is the time. Most paints, caulks, and sealants list a temperature range on the label, and our mild months land right in it. Nobody's fighting the heat, and the work goes faster.

Our freezes don't come often, but when the forecast calls for one, cover pipes and the backflow preventer before sunset and pull the plant covers off in the morning once it warms up.

Completed on: _____ Year: _____

When to Call a Pro

Plenty of home maintenance is very DIY-friendly. But some jobs carry real risk to you, your family, or your house, and many require a license, certification, or permit. If a job falls into one of these areas, call a licensed professional.

Gas

Any smell of gas, gas line work, or installing/moving gas appliances, fireplaces, or patio heaters. If you smell gas, leave the house first, then call your gas utility or 911 from outside.

Major electrical

Panel work, new circuits, breakers that keep tripping, outlets or switches that are warm, buzzing, or scorched, and pool or spa wiring.

AC & refrigerant

Refrigerant, frozen lines, compressors, capacitors, and anything beyond filters and rinsing the condenser. Refrigerant work requires a certified technician.

Roof work & heat

Tile, foam, and flat roof repairs or coatings, and anything that means working off a tall ladder. In summer, roofs and attics can be dangerously hot, so leave it to a pro.

Structural issues

Wide or growing stucco or foundation cracks, leaning or cracked block walls, sagging ceilings, or doors and windows that suddenly stick out of square.

Major plumbing

Slab leaks, sewer backups, main line problems, water heater or softener installation, or a leak you can't stop at a fixture shutoff.

Irrigation & backflow

Backflow preventer repair, and testing where your city or water provider requires it by a certified tester. Main line leaks and controller wiring, too.

Scorpions, termites & bees

Termite inspection and treatment, ongoing scorpion problems, and any bee swarm or hive. Never try to remove bees yourself.

Trees, palms & power lines

Tall palm trimming, large limb or tree removal, and anything near power lines. Call your utility for lines and a tree service for the rest.

Mold, asbestos & lead

Large areas of mold (check after monsoon leaks), or disturbing old flooring, ceiling texture, or paint. Homes built before 1978 may have lead paint.

My rule of thumb: if you're not sure what you're looking at, if the job needs a permit, or if a mistake could cause a fire, flood, or fall, stop and call someone. And in our summer heat, no job is worth heat exhaustion. Getting a pro to take a look is a lot cheaper than fixing a DIY job gone wrong.

My Home Notes

FILTERS & EQUIPMENT

AC filter size: _____ Water heater (type / age): _____

AC / heat pump model: _____ Water softener settings: _____

Evap cooler pad size: _____ Softener salt type: _____

Fridge water filter: _____ Smoke / CO alarm battery: _____

POOL & IRRIGATION

Pool pump / filter model: _____ Irrigation controller: _____

Filter cartridge size: _____ Backflow test date: _____

IRRIGATION TIMER ZONES (RUN TIMES)

Zone	Area / plants	Spring	Summer	Fall / Winter

SHUTOFF LOCATIONS

Main water shutoff: _____ Electrical panel: _____

Gas shutoff: _____ Irrigation shutoff: _____

PAINT & STUCCO COLORS

Room / Area	Brand	Color name / code	Finish

SERVICE DATES

Date	Service / Repair	Who did it	Next due

Here's to a Well-Kept Desert Home

Thanks for picking up this checklist. Desert living is great, but the sun, the heat, the hard water, and monsoon storms all take a toll on a house. A home that's looked after season by season stays cooler, safer, and a lot less stressful to own. Print a fresh copy each year and keep your notes going. Over time it becomes a great record of your home's care.

If you run into a project you'd rather hand off, don't hesitate to call a trusted local pro.

— *Dan Gagnon*

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Every month, all year

- ☐ Check the AC filter; replace it when dirty
- ☐ Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- ☐ Look under sinks and around the water heater
- ☐ Check water softener salt
- ☐ Walk the yard for irrigation leaks or soggy spots
- ☐ Clean the dryer lint trap after every load

Disclaimer

This checklist provides general home maintenance guidance for homes in the Phoenix area and similar desert climates, for informational purposes only. Every home, system, and appliance is different, and weather varies from year to year. Always follow the manufacturer's instructions for your equipment and comply with local building codes, HOA rules, and your city's and water provider's requirements. Use proper safety equipment and precautions, and avoid roof, attic, and other strenuous outdoor work during extreme heat. If you are unsure about any task, or if a job involves gas, electrical systems, refrigerant, structural elements, pest treatment, or working at height, contact a licensed professional. The author assumes no liability for damage or injury resulting from the use of this information.

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