

Gutter Cleaning...

Everything you need to know about keeping your gutters clean & clear!

Keeping your gutters clean and free of debris is important for a whole lot of reasons. No one wants gutters that look like they have accumulated all the leaves and junk from every tree in the neighbourhood, but most importantly, a clogged gutter can be a major hazard to the safety and maintenance of your home. Blocked gutters and downpipes can cause serious damage to your home, especially during periods of strong wind and heavy rain, where the chance of internal leaks and water damage are high. With winter on the way and autumn winds in full swing, it is even more important to make sure your gutters are given some TLC. So, what do you need to know about gutter cleaning? Let's explore!

Safety First

Before we look at anything else, safety is the first thing you need to consider. Getting up on your roof is never a task to be taken lightly, so we always recommend calling a professional to undertake these home maintenance jobs. But, in the event that you do choose to give your gutters a quick clean yourself, let's start with some basic safety tips:

- Always let someone know that you are planning on using a ladder to access the gutters.
- Make sure the ladder is safe and sturdy, and have someone ensure the ladder is well-grounded at the base as you climb up.
- Follow the "three point rule" when climbing a ladder – try to have both legs and one hand firmly secure on the ladder at all times to assist with stability and balance while cleaning.
- If you do have to get up on the roof and walk on it, be sure to wear rubber shoes. This will help prevent slips and falls.
- Rooftops are moist in the mornings, so make sure you access your roof and gutters when they are dry.
- Wear gloves! Sometimes, the best way to clean gutters is by using your hands, and considering what you might find in there, gloves are a great idea. They can help prevent cuts and the spread of bacteria from droppings.

Now let's get cleaning!

So now that we have some basic safety issues sorted, we can start cleaning, clearing and uncluttering:

- Raking debris off the roof first is the best place to start. Failing to do this means that the next time it rains, your gutters will just get clogged up again and you will be back at square one.
- Next, remove any debris from the gutter. This may be in the form of leaves, twigs and mould build-up. You can do this by using a gutter scoop, or even a large domestic spoon.
- Next clean the gutters down. You can use the garden hose to clean gutters, but you might prefer to use a leaf blower. Only problem with this is that they tend to be a little cumbersome, especially when being used at the top of a ladder!
- While you are up on the roof poking around in the gutters, keep your eye out for any damage and repair it straight away if you can. Damage to the guttering system will stop them from performing their job properly, and this can lead to serious water damage and leaks in your home. No one wants that, so keep on top of your gutter condition regularly.
- Once the gutters are clear, you need to turn your attention to the downpipes. You can check if your downpipes need unblocking by running hose water down the pipe at full pressure. If the water starts to back up, you know you have a blockage.
- Unblocking downpipes can be as simple as forcing water up it by carefully placing a garden hose in the opening. If you find that after doing this the downpipe is still blocked then you might need to use a plumber's snake or a coat hanger to remove what's causing the blockage. If you still have problems at this point, it is a good idea to give a professional a call, because you don't want to be causing any more damage or making the situation worse!

Maintaining Gutters and Downpipes

It's incredibly important to consider the maintenance of your guttering system in the overall scheme of gutter cleaning. Doing this will mean fewer episodes of damage to the gutter and downpipes, which will dramatically extend the life of your guttering system. This in turn will save you money, which is a win for everyone!

Remember to inspect your gutter and downpipes at least twice a year, unless you have lots of trees nearby, in which case they should be inspected and cleaned more frequently. If you keep your gutters and downpipes clean and clear on a regular basis, you will avoid potential water leaks and water damage, which will save you money and drama in the long run!

Sources:

- *Tuluth News Tribune, "Gutter Cleaning Tips From a Pro"*.
- *Springcleaningtips.com – "How to Clean Gutters"*

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