

# The Building Inspector

Newsletter



[www.Moirhomeinspections.com](http://www.Moirhomeinspections.com)



## Think Spring!

It may be hard to believe, but it is *Spring!* We hope everyone had a *Happy Easter!*

In this issue we have some simple maintenance and repair tips to get started on while waiting for that warmer weather to come.



### FUN WITH BTU'S

A British thermal unit is the heat required to raise the temperature of 1 pound of water 1 degree Fahrenheit.

It's the amount of heat stored in half a birthday candle.

A ton of coal will release 25 million BTU's.

A gallon of fuel oil will produce 140,000 BTU's.

A 1000 watt light bulb will use 3,400 BTU's hourly.

A one mile walk will work off about 300 BTU's

A one mile bike ride will require 200 BTU's

A warmed up car uses 8,000 BTU's per mile

1 kw. Hour = 3,413 BTU's

It's been estimated that you or I consume, expend, store up, and transfer about 500 million BTU's in every year of our lives.

Source: [www.iccsafe.org](http://www.iccsafe.org)

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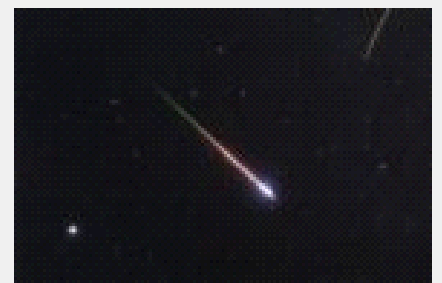
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### Moonlit Meteors

The oldest known meteor shower -- the Lyrids -- peaks this year on the morning of April 22 just four days after the Full Moon.



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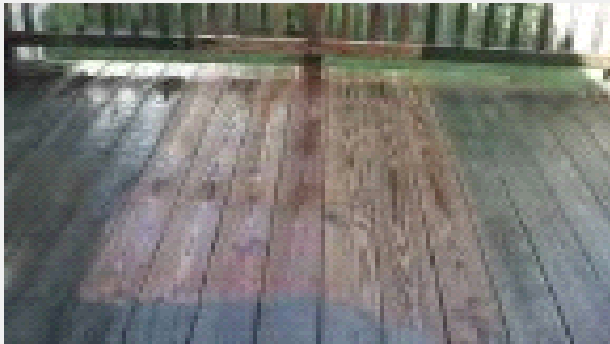
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Moir Home Inspection Service, LLC

(740) 585-2911

## Deck Cleaning

Before the you have that first week-end get together with your friends and neighbors on your back deck; you may need to clean it. Here is a very simple home made recipe for all around cleaning that works great on decks.

This simple recipe is TSP or trisodium phosphate (TSP can be purchased at your local hardware store) and warm water with a little bleach. The TSP comes is a white powder that is a little course; mixing with warm water will help to it dissolve. Bleach is use to destroy micro-organisms such as mildew and algae. The generic cleaning composition is 1 to 1 1/2 cups TSP to two (2) gallons of warm water. If there is a lot of mold I would add 1/2 cup of household bleach (do not use commercial bleach which is stronger). I generally make my recipe on the lighter side first; I can always make it stronger (stronger means 1 1/2 cups of TSP) or wash the area twice. Hose down the deck with water to get the pores of the wood to open up; this makes it easier to clean. With a scrub brush attached to a pole start to applied the cleaning solution on the deck, working a small section at a time. When you are satisfied with the results, rinse off the cleaner. If the mold has been on the deck for a long time you might not get it all off on the first try. Do not try to make a stronger recipe by adding more TSP or bleach! It may be necessary to clean the deck a second time. Never use bleach on a cedar deck as this will strip away its natural colors. If you are cleaning mildew and algae off of a cedar deck ask your local hardware or paint store what product they recommend. My personal preference is to just use a pressure washer with cold water. Make sure you are careful when pressure washing cedar because it is such a soft wood. Take your time and remember preparation is the key for a successful job!



## Clean windows and screens.

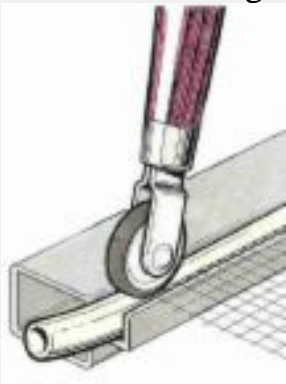
Lay the window screen flat on a picnic table or a pair of sawhorses and scrub them with a soft bristle brush and a mild detergent solution. Rinse with a garden hose and allow to dry thoroughly.

Wash windows, inside and out, using a solution made from three tablespoons of non-sudsy ammonia to 1 gallon of water. Don't work in the direct sun -- the solution will dry too fast and streak. To clean windows with real (not removable) grills, use a hacksaw to cut a squeegee so it fits the windowpanes exactly.



## Repairing A Screen

1. Start by taking your screen right out of the window and find a clear flat space to work. Lay the screen down flat and remove the rubber spline that is holding the screen in place. Do this by checking the corners of the screen - one end of the spline is probably just pushed down into the groove. Use your screwdriver to pry up the end and then pull out the spline all around the screen. The spline is just held in place; there is no glue to worry about. Once you have the spline off, the old screen will just lift off the frame and can be thrown away.
2. Lay the new screening squarely onto the frame and use your scissors to trim it all around the window opening about an inch larger than the opening. Make sure the screen is still square and centered on the frame before you begin attaching it.
3. Starting at a corner, run the spline along the groove at the edge of the frame on top of the screening. Tilt the spline roller to the outside of the frame and roll it slowly along the groove pushing the new spline and the screening down into the groove. Work your way along one side of the window and when you come to a corner, use the tip of your screwdriver to (carefully) push the spline down into the right angle at the corner.
4. After you've worked your way around the corner, use the spline roller to install the screening and spline on the next side. Continue this process all around the window.
5. When you get back to your starting point, use your scissors to cut the spline so it overlaps the corner by about an inch and press it in firmly with your screwdriver. Trim off the excess screening all around the frame. Use your utility knife and hold it so the knife edge is facing away from the new screen.



That's it. The new screen is ready to go back into the window where it can do its job of keeping those hungry spring bugs outside where they belong.

## In The Yard -

Keep this in mind while pruning. Fruit usually grows on the horizontal branches, rather than the vertical ones. Vertical branches may be trained to become horizontal by



weighting them down for a few weeks. This may also be done in the summer

## Tip...

Have central air-conditioning unit checked according to the recommendations of the unit's manufacturer. Replace the filter in the forced-air system. Clean debris from condenser or heat pump located outside.



## Gutter/Downspout Cleaning and Maintenance

Proper maintenance and cleaning of your home's gutters and downspouts is about more than simply keeping the exterior of your home looking nice. It may prevent damage to your home's interior due to flooding through the foundation and walls or leaks in the roof due to seepage of water.

Gutters and downspouts should be cleaned and checked for signs of necessary repairs at least twice a year. Typically, the best times to do this are late spring and late fall. If you suspect a problem or live in an extremely rainy climate, then perhaps, you should check them more frequently.

The corners of the home are good starting locations since this is where the downspouts are typically located. It's best to start near the downspout and work away from it to avoid pushing additional debris into it.

Use the garden trowel or hand spade to scoop out the debris. Place it into the bucket or trash bag. If any pieces resist being scooped up, remove them carefully by hand.

Once you have removed all of the larger debris, get the garden hose. Rinse the gutter in the direction of the downspout using the spraying attachment on the hose. Spray the gutter until no signs of debris remain.

If the downspout is clogged, you will need to clear it. Three options are available to you. Simply try each one until you find one that works. It's probably easiest to begin by using the spray attachment on the hose to direct water into the downspout from the bottom end. This may force any clogs loose. Additionally, you can use the spray attachment on the hose to direct water into the downspout from the upper end. This may also knock the clog loose. If that does not work, then you need to work a plumber's snake into the downspout to loosen the debris and draw the debris out.

Look for holes, dents, or cracks. If you discover any signs of damage, repair them as soon as possible.



### Blueberry Muffins

2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
1/4 teaspoon fine salt  
1/2 cup unsalted butter, softened  
1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest  
2/3 cup sugar, plus 1 tablespoon for the top of the muffins  
2 large eggs, at room temperature  
1/2 cup whole milk  
1 1/2 cups fresh blueberries, rinsed and dried

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Place liners in a 12-muffin tin. Sift the flour, baking powder, and salt into a medium bowl and set aside.

Cream the butter, zest, and 2/3 cup of the sugar until light and fluffy, about 2 minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl with a rubber spatula. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition.

Using a rubber spatula, fold the flour in 3 parts into the butter mixture, alternating with the milk in 2 parts, until just combined. Fold in the blueberries. Take care not to over mix the batter.

Divide the batter evenly into the muffin tin and sprinkle the tops with sugar. Bake until golden brown, about 25 minutes. Cool muffins in the pan on a rack.

