

Cottages are great, but first, there's work to be done



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DECOR AND MORE

May "two-four" weekend is the unofficial start of cottage season — the start to escape, adventure and fun with friends and family.

The excitement and anticipation starts with packing the car and hitting the highway headed north.

You start to think about the woody smell, the tingling cold water as you take your first plunge into the cold lake, the starry campfire nights filled with s'mores, stories and laughter.

I have never been lucky enough to have my own cottage, but I have been invited to many great escapes some old fashioned log cabins, some small cozy bungalows and even lake mansion cottages.

These wonderful places close to nature are the perfect get away from the concrete jungle.

Recently a friend of mine inherited a charming wooden cabin just outside of Bancroft. When I offered to go with them to open it up and clean it out little did I know I was in for such a huge undertaking.

Here are a few tips I learned — some I wish I had known before our own escapade to the Bancroft cottage.

Plan ahead

To be honest, this is where we went wrong with our cottage adventure. We had made our checklist but forgot essentials like coffee (definitely a must for cold cottage mornings), bug spray (believe me, black flies

are not your friend) and toilet paper (needs no explanation). Besides these items, be sure to:

- Turn on the electricity;
- Put a tool kit together — don't forget the magical duct tape;
- put a cleaning kit together;
- clothes — lots of layers;
- water and food; and,
- batteries.

When you arrive

After the long journey and the bumpy ride on the well-treed dirt road, the sight of the cottage is heavenly. Your mind goes right to a cold drink, the lake and steak grilling on the BBQ — but none of that can happen until the clean-up is done.

First take a walk around the outside, check the windows, the doors, look for cracks, damage to power lines and for me the worst part — look for pests or damage they may have done.

Do the same walk around inspection inside, remember to have someone taking notes in case you need to make a trip into town for more supplies.

The clean up

Be ready to roll up your sleeves and work hard, espe-

cially after our cold wet winter. In our case, there was tons of dust and clutter as no one had been in the cottage for a couple years.

The one thing I had brought that helped was the safety masks as there was so much dust, oh, and the Febreze to help with the really bad smells.

Start with opening up the windows and letting in some fresh air. Then throw out everything that is not needed.

Next, a good dusting and wiping down with antibacterial — this is where a good cleaning kit is necessary. I always pack Mr. Clean, Magic Erasers and some good gloves.

For the kitchen, open up all the cupboards and drawers — there may be some critters hidden inside that need to escape and turn on the taps to let the water run and clear the pipes.

Don't forget to turn on the hot water heater or you will be having icy showers! Give everything a thorough wiping down. Don't forget the fridge — now you can unload the cooler and fill the fridge and cupboards.

You are not done yet! Time for back outside. If you are



After a long journey and a bumpy ride on a well-treed dirt road, the sight of a cottage can be heavenly.

lucky and have a few friends you can divide this up into shifts with one set indoors and the outdoors, so you can get to the good times sooner. If not you may need to leave this for the next day.

Clean your eaves troughs, rake the leaves and mow the grass if you have some. Clear away fallen branches and trim any bushes or shrubs. Your deck could use a good wash down as

could your patio furniture.

Once all that is done its time to kick back, relax — light up the BBQ, get some cold ones out of the fridge sit on your dock and watch the stars over the lake.

— *Natalie Deane is a lifestyle connoisseur who shares tips for everyday living through decor, entertaining and household trends.*

Are you curbing your home's enthusiasm?



JANE LOCKHART

DESIGN CONFIDENTIAL

Your home is your biggest investment and financial asset. A well-kept home on the inside is just half of what you need to pay attention to.

The exterior of your house is also an extension of you and your values and it's what you present to the world. It should be an inviting presence into your home.

Let's face it, first impressions are key. Here are some tips on how to protect your asset. Let's start at the top. Look up. Look way up at your roof. Worn or missing shingles are a huge sign of a home's neglect.

If your shingles are in bad repair, there may be roof dam-

age and that can lead to leaks and all kinds of issues. It's an expensive fix, but it's the first line of defense to protect your investment.

Keep your roof colour choice simple, stick with neutrals. Black is a classic, it's always in style. Some of my favourites are Driftwood, Weathered Wood and various versions of black because they go with almost every house exterior.

Poor colour choice

As a homeowner, you want your house to stand out — but for the right reasons. Colour can make the difference between a welcoming home and a clown palace.

To add balance and interest to your house, create contrast. Instead of standing out with bright colours, be bold with darker colours. Darker colours appear heavier to the eye which also help ground the structure, visually.

If you prefer a neutral colour for your home, save the bold look for your front door. My favourite exterior paint colour is Benjamin Moore's Willow CC542. It's a smoky, black-brown with traces of grey. What's great about this paint colour is that it looks rich on almost every house style.

Outdated fixtures

It's easy to stop seeing something you walk past every day. A good tip to see how your house measures up is by driving around your neighborhood or getting a fresh set of eyes to see what needs improvement.

Updating your exterior lights is a great way to improve curb appeal. While the lighting may only be appreciated at night, the fixtures themselves can add tremendous

style to a plain exterior.

Today's LED lightbulbs last a long time but make sure you don't get blinding white lights, try to find bulbs that mimic the soft, warm, incandescent light of candles.

Lazy landscaping

There are some houses that appear vacant because of the jungle of long weeds and plants that cover the front yard. Your lawn and garden are demanding, not something you can ignore.

It's a task that you must commit to on a regular basis, especially during growing season. Failure to properly care for your yard can lead to bylaw violations and disgruntled neighbors.

If you're like me and don't have the time to care for a large garden, consider adding planters. Flowers and foliage add colour, texture and make a lovely greeting to your home.

Garish garage

There's no need to add any more drama when your front door is center stage! Your garage door should blend in

and create balance, especially if positioned at the front of your house.

Benjamin Moore's Kingsport Grey HC 86 is a timeless colour that can be used in both traditional and contemporary spaces.

You only get one chance to make a great first impression, so why not get enthusiastic

and use these tips to make your curb appeal as great as the interior of your home.

— *Jane Lockhart is an award-winning designer and TV personality and is considered one of Canada's leading experts in the world of design. Visit her at www.janelockhart.com.*



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