



# BACK TO THE COTTAGE

## Preparations for a Great Summer

By Lorraine Payette

Now that the warm weather is here, it's time to get back to the cottage with all that wonderful fresh air, fun with the family on and in the water, playing outside, sleeping with the windows open and listening to the sounds of nature.

Getting back means checking all those maintenance chores that need doing before moving out for weekends or weeks at a time. Like our homes, our cottages require care, and doing the right things now can lead to months of enjoyment throughout the season.

Winter storms and inclement weather can wreak havoc on the cottage when you're away. Before heading out to stay, be sure to go down and check:

**Plumbing:** Check for any broken or cracked pipes and fittings, and take care of them right away. Check your pump if you're on a well and make sure it runs properly. If you used anti-freeze in the fall, make sure to have the pipes drained and flushed before using the water. Have the water checked for e.coli, and make sure any purifiers are working properly. Make sure you have a good plumber available to help out if trouble arises. Check the septic

system and get it cleaned if necessary.

**Wiring:** Look for downed lines outside and call your hydro company if you see any wiring that needs repairing. Rodents love chewing through wires, and cold weather can also crack insulation, creating hazards. Go over your wiring for any damage, and check to see if light fixtures and other electrical items are working properly. Replace any damaged units, and don't be afraid to call in a qualified electrician if there are problems. The cost is far less to keep it properly maintained than it would be to replace everything in the event of a fire.

**Roofing:** Go inside and look at the ceilings for signs of leaks. Then check outside as well for missing shingles, anything that flaps and weak for areas. Fix everything now to avoid problems later. Check your rain gutters and replace any leaking or damaged parts. Make sure downspouts are all in order and water drains away from your foundation.

**Decks & Docks:** If you have a deck or dock, make sure it is sound and that nothing has rotted. Replace any worn out materials, and clean it thoroughly with an approved anti-fungal cleaner. Try spraying it with a good

wood preservative if local by-laws allow, making sure to get into all the joints. This will help it to last longer and keep it safe for all to use.

**Windows:** Check the windows and make sure they are secure. Whether broken glass from falling tree limbs, or holes in the screens, these all need to be tight and in proper repair. Screens can be easily patched or replaced with kits at any local hardware store, and a good glazier can make sure the glass is in good shape. These are essential to keeping out weather and unwanted pests, so make them a priority.

**Cleaning:** Get out your bucket, mops and sponges, and clean everything. Dust and dirt will work their way into every crevice that has been allowed to sit, so a good scrub is definitely in order. Put fresh batteries in the smoke and CO alarms, and check them to make sure they're working properly. Clean out the fridge, the cupboards and the stove, make sure the dishes are clean. Your cottage is your home away from home, and needs to be looked after in the same way.

Once everything is done, get ready to move back in and spend a fantastic summer. The good life with friends and family awaits. **LH**

