



# Strengthen Your Gutters



A working gutter system with properly placed downspouts and drains will direct rainfall away from your home's foundation to prevent flooding, erosion, and water buildup. However, your gutters will only perform if they are well-maintained and free of leaves and debris. An annual gutter inspection to look for holes, rust spots, or broken supports and routine cleaning will ensure that your gutters are ready when heavy rains come.

*What you will need for this project:*

- Eye protection
- Waterproof Gloves
- Garden hose
- Specialty hose nozzle
- Rags or paper towels
- Gutter scoop
- Bucket with metal hook
- Ladder

## **Keep These Important Considerations in Mind**

- Safety is the #1 concern when working on your gutters. Do not attempt to clean or repair your gutters from on top of your roof. Only try this DIY project if you live in a one-story house. Do not attempt it at all if you have a two-story home.
- Clean your gutters while standing firmly on a sturdy stepladder. Always use a tall enough ladder that gets you high enough to reach your gutters without standing on the top two steps. Work with a partner to hold your ladder.
- Inspect your gutters as you clean. Look for corrosion, holes, leaking joints, or loose, missing, or bent hangers. Mark problem areas with masking tape so you can find those spots quickly.
- Dry, loose leaves and small twigs can be removed with a handheld blower. Some blowers have attachments, especially for that purpose, but removing them manually works too.
- Inspect and clean your gutters twice a year in the spring and fall. If you can only do it annually, plan for after leaves finish dropping in the fall.

## Instructions for Cleaning and Repairing Your Gutters

1. Wear eye protection and sturdy, waterproof gloves to protect yourself from debris and scratches. Place a gutter scoop, garden trowel, small hand broom, and rags in a bucket with a metal hook that can attach to your ladder with a wire hook.
2. Start cleaning a stretch of gutter at the downspout area. This is where debris usually collects, blocking the water's path to the downspout. Work your way along the length of the gutter, putting the collected debris into a bucket.
3. After cleaning, flush your gutters with a garden hose. The water flow will tell you how well the gutters are draining and reveal any areas holding water. Standing water in gutters, downspouts, or near drains keeps them from draining, so consider placing sand, pebbles, or rocks in compact soil areas that won't drain. Call a professional for an estimate if you cannot fix the problem.
4. Consider installing protective gutter guards or screens to decrease the amount of debris that collects in your gutters, downspouts, and drains.