



## Maintain Your Home's Drainage System

Every new home comes with a drainage system. The land surrounding your home is graded to slope away from your house. And your roof is equipped with downspouts and gutters essential for adequate drainage. If you maintain this system, you can protect your home from water damage and flooding.

Take all the steps necessary to preserve your home's drainage system, which regulates moisture content of the soil surrounding your home. You need to upkeep your home's drainage system so that it will continue to regulate the moisture content of soil surrounding your house.

The ground should be six inches from the house, not against it. Drainage swales or other discharge channels were sized and sloped to accommodate water runoff and should be kept clear of debris such as leaves, gravel and trash. Allow six inches of clearance between your grading and the wall siding; otherwise, water may enter the joint between the foundation and the wall material, or the wood may decay. Depressions may form as the soil around the house becomes compacted. Fill any depressions with dirt so that water will not form puddles or cause dampness.

In the first 10 feet of land surrounding your home, the grade should slope approximately 12 inches, tapering to a 2 percent angle. Maintain the soil around your home so that natural land erosion does not cause the slope to disappear. Fill in areas with soil as needed so that water continues to drain away from your home. Also, make certain that nothing obstructs the path of water that will trickle down the sloped land. Water that cannot slide away from your house might end up moving toward it and getting into your house.

Gutters and downspouts control the water that runs off your roof during a rainstorm, regulating the moisture content of soil surrounding your home and channeling water away from its foundation. Keep your gutters clean! If spouts get plugged, you may develop water problems. Debris often collects at the downspout area. Start cleaning there and work your way up. Try to empty your gutters once in the spring and once in the fall. But if you can only clean them once a year, do it in late autumn after the trees have shed their leaves. Make sure your splash blocks under downspouts direct water further away from your house.

Vinyl gutters never need to be painted. Paint is optional for aluminum gutters. Gutters made of most other metals will need a coat of rust-retardant paint whenever the rest of the house is painted (every four to six years).

If you have an older home, you might need to install new gutters and downspouts. Before doing so, check with your local building inspection department to see if you must comply with any regulations.

Finally, watch what you plant in the yard surrounding your home. Some types of grasses need more water than other types. The grass you plant can serve as a supplemental drainage system. If you have a home in a low, damp region, plant a grass that absorbs substantial quantities of water. Don't stress your drainage system by over watering your landscaping.

By taking these steps, you will keep your drainage system healthy and ready to do its job during the heaviest seasonal rains.