

3RD ROCK PLUMBING

Spring Plumbing Checklist

A post-winter inspection guide for Hickory-area homeowners

Winter stress often hides in places you cannot see in daily use. Use this checklist each spring to catch developing problems before warmer weather and higher water use turn them into emergencies. Check each box as you complete the inspection.

OUTDOOR PLUMBING

- Turn the interior shut-off valve back on for each outdoor hose bib and open the spigot — check for consistent flow and no dripping from the handle, wall escutcheon, or pipe connection behind the bib.
- Disconnect and inspect garden hoses stored over winter for cracking or fitting damage.
- Check frost-free hose bibs for proper shut-off — no drip after closing indicates the seat is sealing correctly.
- Run each irrigation zone briefly and walk the yard — look for heads that are not rising, uneven spray patterns, soft wet areas in the lawn, and standing water in valve boxes.
- Inspect all exterior plumbing connections at detached structures, outdoor kitchens, pool equipment, or hot tubs.

Note: Any water appearing inside the wall near a hose bib or running sound inside the wall indicates a possible freeze crack — call a plumber before regular use resumes.

CRAWL SPACE

- Physically enter and inspect the crawl space — look for any visible dripping, water staining, or moisture on pipes, fittings, and the ground beneath pipe runs.
- Check pipe insulation condition — look for insulation that is wet, compressed, missing, or visibly damaged and replace as needed before next winter.
- Inspect frost-free hose bib supply lines in the crawl space for corrosion or mineral deposits at connections.
- Open foundation vents for the warm season to allow proper ventilation and moisture control.
- Look for standing water or unusually damp soil that does not have an obvious surface water explanation.
- Check wood structural elements near pipes for any signs of moisture damage or mold beginning to develop.

Note: Any active dripping in the crawl space warrants a professional evaluation — crawl space leaks are frequently more significant than they appear on initial visual inspection.

WATER HEATER

- Test the temperature and pressure (T&P;) relief valve — briefly lift the test lever and confirm water flows and stops cleanly when released. A valve that drips continuously after testing needs replacement.
- Listen for rumbling, popping, or crackling sounds during heating cycles — these indicate sediment accumulation that warrants a tank flush.
- Check the area around the unit for moisture, rust staining on the floor, or dripping at fittings and connections.
- Check the T&P; valve discharge pipe — rust staining below the discharge outlet can indicate the valve has been releasing, which warrants evaluation.
- Note the age of the unit. If it is approaching or past 10 years, schedule a professional assessment before summer peak demand season.

Note: Annual flushing removes sediment that accumulates during winter high-demand periods and restores efficiency. See Post 18 of the Homeowner Education Series for full instructions.

INTERIOR PLUMBING — UNDER EVERY SINK

- Open the cabinet under every sink in the home and check for moisture, water staining, or visible mold on the cabinet floor or back wall.
- Inspect supply line connections and the P-trap for dripping or mineral deposit buildup.
- Check the cabinet floor material for soft spots — particleboard absorbs moisture and softens before visible staining appears on the surface.
- Confirm drain stopper mechanisms are operating correctly and drain flow is unobstructed.

INTERIOR PLUMBING — TOILETS

- Listen after the tank refills — any running water sound indicates a flapper or fill valve issue that is wasting water continuously.
- Check the floor around each toilet base for any moisture or soft flooring that could indicate a wax ring seal failure.
- Check that the toilet does not rock or shift when pressure is applied — loose floor bolts allow the wax ring to break down.
- Look for staining or mineral deposits on the exterior of the tank or bowl that may indicate a slow external leak at a fitting.
- Add a few drops of food coloring to the tank and wait 15 minutes without flushing — color appearing in the bowl confirms a flapper leak.

INTERIOR PLUMBING — FAUCETS AND SHOWERHEADS

- Turn on every faucet and showerhead and observe flow rate — reduced flow may indicate a partially clogged aerator or developing pressure issue.
- Check for dripping after each fixture is turned off — dripping after shut-off indicates worn internal components.
- Clean aerators on kitchen and bathroom faucets — mineral deposits from winter hard water use commonly clog aerator screens.
- Note any changes in water temperature response time from the water heater — longer-than-usual wait times may indicate developing efficiency issues.

FLOOR DRAINS AND INFREQUENTLY USED FIXTURES

- Pour a cup of water into every floor drain, utility sink drain, and basement fixture that sees limited use — this replenishes the P-trap water seal that may have evaporated during winter.
- Check guest bathroom fixtures that may have gone unused during winter — run water, flush toilets, and confirm all fixtures are operational.

Note: A dry P-trap allows sewer gas to enter the home. It is a simple and completely preventable issue that a cup of water resolves immediately.

SEWER AND DRAIN SYSTEM

- Note whether any drains are consistently slower in spring than they were in fall — multiple slow drains may indicate a main sewer line concern.
- Listen for gurgling sounds from toilets or drains when other fixtures are in use — cross-fixture gurgling is a sewer line warning sign.
- Check for any sewer odors that appeared during or after the cold season.
- Walk the yard above known sewer line paths after spring thaw — look for soft, wet, or unusually lush areas that could indicate an underground leak.

Note: Freeze-thaw ground movement can shift pipe joints and disturb existing root intrusion. Spring is the ideal time for a camera inspection if any drainage symptoms have appeared.

EXTERIOR AND STRUCTURAL

- Walk the full perimeter of the home and look for new cracks in the foundation that were not present last fall.
- Look for efflorescence (white mineral deposits) on basement or crawl space walls — this indicates water movement through foundation material.
- Check soil settlement near the foundation perimeter — soft or shifted soil near plumbing penetrations can indicate underground water movement.

- Confirm all downspout discharge points are directing water away from the foundation.
- Check utility penetrations where water, drain, and gas lines enter through the foundation or exterior wall — look for gaps or deteriorated sealant.

INSPECTION NOTES

Did your spring inspection reveal something that needs a professional look?

3rd Rock Plumbing | Hickory, NC | Call or Text: 828-324-0500 | 3drockplumbing.com

Part of the free Homeowner Education Series at 3drockplumbing.com/homeowner-education-series



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The graphic features a blue wavy banner at the top with white text. Below it, the company name '3rd ROCK PLUMBING' is displayed in green and blue, with a globe icon inside the 'O' of 'ROCK'. The tagline 'Make Life Better' is in blue. To the right is a silver U-shaped pipe with water dripping from its end. At the bottom, a green banner contains the phone number and website in white. A BBB Accredited Business logo is on the right side of the green banner.