

HOME & GARDEN

6 WAYS TO PREPARE YOUR PATIO AND POOL FOR A HURRICANE

Protect your outdoor oasis from storms



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As August carries on, **the worst of the Atlantic hurricane season approaches**, with 95% of the tropical storm activity for this year still to come. Before the season ends in November, it's expected that 8 more hurricanes will form. Furthermore, the hurricanes that are to come may be particularly strong, as the unusually warm ocean temperatures we've been seeing this year could lead to more powerful storms than usual.

If you're preparing for a storm, it's important to not only **stock up on supplies** to use as you shelter in place, but to also secure your property. Outdoor patio and deck items can become severely damaged or even lost during a storm. Worse yet, thanks to the intense winds, they can also become dangerous projectiles that can damage your home or injure others.

Before the next storm hits, there's plenty you can do to clean up and secure your patio space, your pool and more. Here are six things to do to **prepare the outside of your home** for the next hurricane or tropical storm.

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1. Secure your patio furniture and other loose items

During a hurricane, nearly anything can become a projectile when winds pick up, becoming a potential hazard to life and property. Before the hurricane hits, **the CDC recommends** bringing all of your patio furniture indoors, along with your trash cans,

bikes, and even stray wood pieces or bricks. It's important to note that **Ready.gov, a national public service campaign**, says that items like gas grills and propane tanks, should not be brought indoors—rather, they should be anchored outdoors.

If you've been through a few hurricanes, you may be aware of the "trick" of tossing your patio furniture into the pool to anchor it down when strong winds strike. Unless you absolutely do not have room to store your furniture inside your home, in your garage or a shed, **pool service experts recommend against this**—your furniture can easily rust and damage the bottom of your pool.

2. Make room in your garage or shed before the storm



Credit: Gladiator

Make smart use of your garage space with overhead storage

You might be asking yourself, "How am I supposed to fit everything inside?" This is a fair question, and why preparing ahead of the hurricane is crucial. Before a hurricane is even forecasted, work on organizing your **garage** or **shed** to ensure that you'll have plenty of space to store all of your patio furniture and other miscellaneous items.

Reviewed's home editor, Rachel Murphy, **recommends taking a proactive approach** by organizing your garage now. She planned to add **overhead storage racks** and **adjustable shelving** to her 250-square-foot-garage, helping her to avoid a game of patio-furniture Tetris before a hurricane rolls through.

If you don't have a garage or enough space, it's fine to bring patio furniture into your house.

3. Trim trees well ahead of time

Weaker tree limbs can break with heavy winds or rain, making them potential projectiles that can damage your property or injure someone. **Ready.gov recommends** trimming trees and shrubs—try using **a lopper** to create precision cuts on tree limbs or a **pole saw** for tall, hard-to-reach pieces.

While you can **prune your trees yourself**, it's best to **call an arborist** if the job is beyond your experience level, such as when it's too extensive or dangerous to handle by yourself. Don't wait until the last minute to trim your trees—if a storm is approaching landfall, focus on ensuring that you and your family are safe and secure.

4. Protect your plants and backyard garden

Hurricanes and tropical storms are notorious for bringing both heavy rainfall and gusty winds, which can both damage your landscaping and garden. To protect your plants—especially young seedlings—Farmers' Almanac recommends covering them with a

fabric layer that's secured at the edges. This **top-rated plant cover** is a solid barrier to protect your plants from wind, sleet, frost and snow, making it a go-to product for cold snaps as well.

Excessive rainfall **can also damage your soil**, potentially promoting the growth of plant diseases. You can also add a thin layer of mulch, such as **bark chips** or **straw**, that can help soak up excess water and protect your soil from prolonged rainfall or flooding.

5. Clear your gutters and downspouts

Clogged gutters can be problematic for the home, regardless of the weather. Gutters filled with debris like leaves, twigs and other buildup can block rainwater, forcing it to overflow and seep into a home's foundation and the walls of your basement. When a major storm rolls through you could have major flooding on your hands.

That's why it's important to deep clean your gutters and downspouts every six months or so—or right before hurricane season. **FEMA recommends** cleaning gutters and downspouts as part of your preparation. Reviewed has **a guide on how to properly (and safely) clean your gutters** with what tools you'll need to get started and how to keep your gutters protected from future debris. You can also cut back on the amount of cleaning that your gutters need by **buying a gutter guard**.

6. Adjust your pool's water level, but don't drain it

If you haven't noticed already, flooding can wreak havoc on multiple parts of your property. If you own a swimming pool or hot tub, you may think a pool cover can help ward off flooding, but **pool service experts don't recommend this** because the cover becomes another heavy, unsecured object. Furthermore, **it's not recommended that you completely drain the pool, either**, as doing so opens it to structural damage.

Instead, **The National Weather Service** recommends lowering your pool's water level by one foot—you may need to use a **drain pump** to remove the water. If you're not sure how to approach this, **consult a pool service** ahead of time.

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