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## Homeowner Tips for a Safer, Shadier, and Shinier July

by [homewarranty.com](http://homewarranty.com)

Most of us already have "swim, eat, and play" on our July to-do list, but here are a few chores you may not have considered tackling during this wonderful, warm, mid-summer month.

**Check your carbon monoxide detectors.** Carbon monoxide detectors should be installed on every floor of your home, either inside - or just outside - of every bedroom. Don't forget your garage and basement as well. Test the detectors monthly and replace batteries once a year, even if you don't hear the "low-battery" alarm. Regardless of how diligent you are about replacing the device's batteries, carbon monoxide detectors do have a lifespan and should be replaced every 5-7 years.

**Clean windows inside and out.** Keep that summer sunshine streaming in by giving windows a quick rinse with glass cleaner or a vinegar solution, then squeegee them dry or wipe them with a clean microfiber cloth. Clean your windows during a time of the day when the sun is not hitting the windows directly to keep the cleaning solution from drying out too quickly and remember to dust away loose dirt and cobwebs before you begin. DIY option: make your own window cleaning solution using a mixture of equal parts white vinegar and hot water.

**Be pool safe.** If you're fortunate to have a pool in your backyard, remember its very presence brings with it great responsibility. Keep it securely fenced with a self-closing, self-latching gate at least 4 feet high to prevent children from wandering near. The American Red Cross recommends installing a pool alarm that sounds when anyone enters the pool. And if you have children, it's important to make sure they all learn to swim well, whether or not you have a pool of your own.

**Add shade to the yard.** Don't have a couple of decades to wait for that shade tree to grow? Create your own shade today and make your backyard more comfortable with umbrellas or shade sails. With ample shady spots to sit, you'll likely find yourself wanting to spend more time in your outdoor space — and shade is a must for summer backyard parties. Shade sails are available in so many shapes and colors you might have a tough time deciding how you want to spice up your backyard gatherings.

**Unfurl a flag for the 4th.** Get in the Independence Day spirit by displaying an American flag on your porch in time to celebrate the Fourth of July. Opt for an all-weather flag which may be displayed in inclement weather. You can learn all about the American flag and how to properly display it at [usa.gov/flag](http://usa.gov/flag), including how to properly dispose of the flag once it is worn out.

## July Calendar

July 4 - Independence Day

July 3 - August 15 - Air Conditioning Appreciation Days

July is National Grilling Month

## Homeowner Tip



### Seal Summer Window Air Leaks

Just because it's summer doesn't mean you shouldn't think about your drafty windows. True, you might notice them more in the winter, but those same gaps letting cold air in during the winter, are leaking out your air-conditioned air all summer. Seal any leaks around windows and doors using weather stripping, caulk, or spray foam insulation.

## Three Benefits of Having a Home Warranty

The unexpected failure of an appliance or your home's major systems, like plumbing or HVAC, can wreak havoc on your budget. Having a home warranty comes with a lot of benefits — here are three.

**Yes, a home warranty is affordable.** Most home warranties cost between \$300-\$700 each year and cover the repair or replacement of appliances, plumbing, electrical work, etc. Compare that to replacing a large system that can cost you thousands of dollars without a home warranty.

**A home warranty covers what your home**

**insurance won't.** A home warranty covers the repair or replacement of your home's major systems and appliances due to normal wear and tear. These are systems most of us rely on every day, like plumbing and electrical, as well as appliances like your oven and dishwasher. Your homeowner's insurance may cover the home's structure and contents in the case of theft or damage.

**A home warranty is customizable.** Each home warranty has a variety of coverage options to fit your needs. Choose which plan benefits your home the most and tailor it to fit your family's budget and lifestyle.



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## Celebrate July with Red, White, and Blueberry Muffins

July 11 is National Blueberry Muffin Day, and here's a patriotic twist for July 4. This recipe yields 12 muffins.

### Ingredients:

- 2 cups flour
- 1/2 cup + 1 TB sugar
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 egg beaten
- 2/3 cup milk
- 1/3 cup oil
- 1/2 cup dried cranberries
- 1/2 cup white chocolate chips
- 3/4 cup blueberries frozen or fresh

### Topping:

- 2 Tablespoons sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon butter softened

### Directions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees and line pans with cupcake liners or souffle cups as pictured here.

In a large bowl, sift flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt together.

In a small bowl, combine egg, milk, and oil.

Pour egg mixture, cranberries, and white chocolate chips into dry ingredients and stir with a wooden spoon just until combined. Gently fold in blueberries.

Topping: Mix sugar and cinnamon together. Cut in butter and mix well.

Fill liners 3/4 full, sprinkle with topping and bake for 16-20 minutes or until an inserted knife/toothpick comes out clean.



*Photo and recipe courtesy of: [www.yourcupofcake.com](http://www.yourcupofcake.com)*