Last-minute summer projects

There’s always a sense of urgency to get outdoor chores completed when the calendar turns to fall.

These are tasks that could have been done anytime earlier in the summer but since I am a natural procrastinator they get delayed. But when October stares you in the face and some of the chores are weather dependent, I go from loosening in the bullpen to trying to save the season.

The first task of sealing cracks and sealcoating a driveway was certainly weather dependent as warm and dry weather is necessary to finish the job. The driveway had not been done for years and part of it looked like the baked-out bottom of a dried up muddy lake. It was a case of now or never, because it could easily turn into chunks after another winter.

I purchased two gallons of crack sealing compound, which were gone in minutes. I realized that I would need to either invest in a pallet of the stuff or focus on the larger cracks. I ended up buying four more gallons and did the best with the crevices and not the cracks.

After letting that cure for a day, I checked the weather forecast to see if it would allow me enough drying time to apply the sealcoating. The forecast said it would be 80 degrees, with a chance of rain overnight.

That was enough of a window to take the chance, so I went to the store and bought six 4.5 gallon pails. It should be noted that even though I am a cheapskate, I opted for the best product instead of the mix that isn’t as thick as my late grandma’s percolator coffee.

The application went smoothly, but I underestimated how much the old asphalt would soak up and had to drive back to the store to buy another four pails, of which only two were required. But I was able to finish up by late morning and counted on the heat of the day to cure the coating.

As I was cleaning up, I thought of a story told by one of our bed and breakfast guests years ago. She said there was a bit of a kerfuffle at her church when one of the parishioners who pored over the annual report questioned why the church had to buy such an expensive seal coat for the pastor’s wife. Turns out that expensive sealcoat was for the parking lot.

As predicted,  my reliance on the forecast was about as effective as when I used it to determine when I could cut and dry hay. Two hours after I had finished, the heavens opened up and it poured. A few hours later, it rained just as much.

I waited until daylight to check the damage and was surprised to see that most of the coating held up, aside from a few places where it had washed away. I waited a few days for some additional sunshine and warmth and applied the remaining two pails to the thin areas.

My other fall project was doing some erosion control. During heavy rains the water overflows the gutter on one of our buildings and sends it over and under the sidewalk. There was a cavern forming under the sidewalk and I was worried about it collapsing.

I’ve “fixed” this before with some rocks and sand, but the sand keeps washing away. I even put in a drainage container and hose and concreted that in, but the water just flowed around it.

I broke up the concrete around the drainage container. I discovered that the back lid of the container had blown out, sending the water flowing under the sidewalk.

Instead of the endless cycle of replacing sand with more sand, I ordered some gravel. It took about 25 trips with my wheelbarrow from the gravel pile to the sidewalk before I had the hole filled and packed. I  replaced the drainage container and mixed up four bags of cement to hold it in.

I should mention that I did all of this after I tweaked my back. But a few more trips to the chiropractor, and I should be fixed up.

It remains to be seen if the projects or my back hold up.

So far it’s 50/50 either way.