

Now's time to check on "deciduous buildings"

"Hang spring-cleaning!" So said Mole in Kenneth Grahame's classic *The Wind in the Willows*. And, deserting his home, off he went in search of adventure "up above".

It's well past the middle of the year and, as the sap begins to rise, the thoughts of some members of the repair industry turn to what some call the "deciduous season".

Why?

Leaf with a thud

While most of us would consider buildings to be "evergreens", not susceptible to losing foliage, they often display a disturbing tendency, in the last three or four months of the year, to shed things rather heavier than leaves.

Presumably related to nothing more elaborate than simple changes in temperature and accompanying irresistible dimensional changes, this phenomenon seems to affect all sorts of building materials.

Flakier in spring

Concrete, render, adhesive-fixed stone and even glass that have managed to survive the winter and the August gales can find themselves dislodged by the effects of a the first few really warm days of spring.

And who wants to start the summer with a hoarding outside their premises and an emergency stabilisation contract?

So, if Mole was irresponsible in abandoning the upkeep of his home in the riverbank, what's the right thing for the rest of us to be doing in spring?

Health check

While a few building owners and managers undertake annual audits or health checks of their facades, a great many take a position at the other extreme, doing nothing until



WHEN SPRING CALLS, BUILDING SPALLS AND ITS "FOLIAGE" FALLS

a deciduous building catches them unawares.

Middle road

The most appropriate answer for most owners is, not surprisingly, somewhere between the extremes.

A thorough initial audit to gain a comprehensive picture of facade health would be a good start in most cases, probably followed by regular check-ups on any aspects found to be at risk.

Sure, the audit might pick up that repairs are needed and money has to be spent, but **how much better to be able to plan that expenditure rather than have it arrive completely unannounced?**

ACRAudit it all

And who better to identify, through an audit, such potential problems with concrete structures than those who devote their professional lives repairing those problems: ACRA members?

So, don't be a mole; take spring-cleaning seriously and get to the ACRA website to find out who can give you the best advice for your building or structure.

Once you've placed your problems in the hands of the experts, perhaps you can seek an adventure "up above" without worrying about the home or office. ■