



An Extended Guide · No. 1559

Maintenance and Easy Access

The little upkeep a ground array
needs — and how easy it is to reach

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! Read this first — two honest truths about ground-mount solar

Two honest truths before we start, because they surprise a lot of good folks. First, a ground-mounted solar array is a professional job. It takes a licensed installer, real foundation work in your yard, building and electrical permits, and your utility's approval to connect (that approval is called interconnection). This guide is here to help you understand, plan for, and evaluate a ground mount; it is not a do-it-yourself project, and I never want you digging footings, wiring an array, or opening an electrical panel. Second, a plain grid-tied solar system — roof or ground, without a battery — shuts itself off during a power outage, even in bright sunshine. That is a required safety feature, so the system cannot put electricity onto the lines while the crews are repairing them. If keeping the lights on during an outage matters to you, you will need a battery, and we will talk about that plainly. For a ground array, most upkeep is a simple, from-the-ground once-over you can do yourself — and anything electrical is the one part you always leave to a licensed pro.

The little upkeep a ground array needs

Here's some good news to start with: solar panels ask very little of you. And when they stand on a frame in your yard rather than up on a roof, the small amount of care they do need is about as easy as home upkeep gets.

I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. In 30-plus years of helping folks with the gear in their homes, I've learned that the systems people love best are the ones that don't fuss at them. A ground-mounted solar array is one of those — once it's in, it mostly just works.

In this guide I'll walk you through the whole rhythm of looking after one: the occasional once-over, a gentle cleaning now and then, keeping the area around it tidy, and knowing the one line you never cross — anything electrical belongs to a professional. None of it is hard, and most of it you can do with both feet planted on the ground.

★ Not sure what needs doing?

If you'd like, I'll come look at your array with you and help you set up a simple, no-worry routine you're comfortable with. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

Looking after your array, on one page

If you read nothing else, read this. Here's the heart of ground-array upkeep in a handful of plain points.

- ❑ Solar needs very little care — nothing to fuel, oil, or wind up.
- ❑ A ground mount lets you check and clean it from the ground, no ladders.
- ❑ A few times a year, walk out and give it a calm visual once-over.
- ❑ Rinse the glass gently when it's dusty; our Ohio rain does most of it.
- ❑ Keep grass, weeds, and critters from crowding the panels.
- ❑ Let the monitoring app be your early-warning system.
- ❑ Anything electrical — always, always a pro's job. No exceptions.

✓ Little and often beats big and rare

A slow walk around the array a few times a year catches most small things while they're still small. It takes a few minutes and saves a lot of worry.

How little maintenance solar really needs

People are often surprised by this, so let me say it plainly: a solar array has almost nothing that wears out on its own.

There's no engine, no moving parts on a simple fixed mount, nothing to lubricate, and no filters to swap. The panels sit there quietly turning sunlight into electricity, and the electronics do their work without any help from you. For the most part, a well-installed system just runs.

What little care it does want is mostly about keeping it clean, keeping it clear, and keeping an eye on it — catching the rare loose bolt or bit of new shade before it becomes anything. That's the spirit of everything in this guide: gentle attention, not hard labor.

✓ The best kind of machine

I always tell folks the finest home systems are the ones you almost forget about. Solar earns that reputation — give it a little attention and it'll give you decades of quiet service.

Why a ground mount is so easy to tend

This is the ground mount's quiet superpower. Just about everything you might ever need to do, you can do standing on the grass.

On a roof array, even a simple look-over means a ladder and a pro, because nobody should be climbing around up there. On a ground mount, the panels are right in front of you. You can see the glass, read the little indicator lights, check that the frame looks straight, and rinse off the dust — all with both feet firmly on the ground.

That matters more as we get older. Ladders and rooftops lose their charm, and they should. A ground array lets you stay involved in your own system safely, for as long as you like, without ever leaving solid footing.

! Stay on the ground — that's the whole point

The beauty of a ground mount is that you never need a ladder for it. If something ever seems to call for climbing or reaching up high, that's your signal to stop and call a professional instead.

A simple rhythm through the year

You don't need a strict schedule — a loose, seasonal rhythm is plenty, and it fits the way we already think about the year here in Ohio.

- Spring: after the thaw, look for any frost heave and clear off pollen and debris.
- Summer: trim back grass and weeds so they don't shade the low edge of the panels.
- Fall: rinse away dust and fallen leaves, and tidy the area before the cold sets in.
- Before winter: clear your access path and check that nothing has worked loose.

That's really the whole calendar. Four easy walks around the array, spaced through the year, will keep you well ahead of anything that needs attention.

✓ Let the seasons remind you

Tie your once-overs to chores you already do, like spring cleanup or putting the garden to bed. Then you'll never have to remember a date.

The once-over: what to look at

When you walk out to your array, here's a gentle checklist of what to run your eyes over. It takes just a few minutes.

- The glass: clean and unbroken, with no cracks, chips, or heavy soiling.
- The frame and posts: standing straight, nothing bent, leaning, or wobbly.
- The hardware: bolts and clamps in place, no rust streaks or missing pieces.
- Underneath: no signs of critters nesting or wiring hanging loose.
- The ground: flat and firm around the footings, no new dips or heaving.
- The indicator lights: showing their normal, healthy status.

You're not inspecting it like an engineer — you're just noticing anything that looks different from last time. If something catches your eye, make a note and, when in doubt, ask a pro.

✓ Trust your eyes

You know what your array looked like when it went in. If something looks off — a lean, a streak of rust, a panel that's suddenly shaded — that instinct is worth acting on.

Cleaning the glass, gently

Panels work best when they're clean, but they rarely need much — and gentle is always the rule.

Most of the year, our Ohio rain rinses the panels for you. When they do get dusty, pollen-coated, or streaked from the birds, a rinse with plain water and a soft brush or squeegee on a long handle is all it takes. Do it early or late in the day when the glass is cool, and work from the ground.

Skip the harsh stuff. No pressure washers, no scouring pads, no strong detergents, and never cold water on hot glass. The panel surface is tough, but it's still glass, and gentle care keeps it clear for decades.

! Easy does it on the glass

A pressure washer or an abrasive pad can scratch or even crack a panel. Plain water and a soft touch are all you need — if a stain won't rinse off gently, leave it and ask your installer.

Hardware, rust, and staying tight

An array lives outdoors through every season, so once in a while it's worth a glance at the nuts and bolts that hold it together.

Good racking is built from weather-resistant metal and put together with hardware meant to last, but sun, wind, and years of freeze-and-thaw are real. On your once-over, look for any bolt that seems to be backing out, any clamp that looks loose, or any spot where rust is streaking down the frame.

Here's the important part: look, but don't start wrenching on it yourself, especially anywhere near the wiring. Note what you see and let your installer handle any tightening or replacing during a service visit. They'll know the right tension and the right parts.

✓ A photo is worth a thousand words

If you spot something questionable, snap a picture on your phone. It makes describing it to your installer easy, and it gives you a record of when you first noticed it.

Two kinds of homes, two sets of needs

Upkeep looks a little different for a tidy array behind a town house than for a bigger spread out on the acreage — but the easy, from-the-ground spirit is exactly the same either way.

If you live in town or the suburbs

In town or the suburbs, an array is usually smaller and close at hand, so a quick look-over is genuinely quick. Your main jobs are keeping it tidy for the neighbors and clearing the little bits of yard debris that blow in.

- A small array means a short, easy once-over — just a few minutes.
- Keep it neat and clean; a tidy array keeps the neighbors happy.
- Watch for chipmunks, squirrels, and birds nesting underneath.
- Rinse off the dust and pollen that settle in a closer-in yard.

If you are out in the country on a well

Out in the country, arrays are often larger and may sit a good walk from the house, so it's worth being a bit more deliberate — and a bit more self-reliant, since help is farther away. A steady seasonal routine pays off.

- A bigger array takes a longer walk-around, so give yourself time.
- Keep pasture grass, tall weeds, and brush trimmed well back.
- Watch for livestock rubbing on posts and rodents chewing wiring.
- Keep a clear path so you can reach it easily in snow or mud.

★ Want a routine that fits your place?

Town lot or back forty, I'll help you set up an upkeep rhythm that suits your array and your comfort level. Call (330) 200-8042.

Signs of heave or settling

One thing worth understanding is how the ground itself can shift under an array over the years, and what that looks like.

Footings are set deep for a reason — to stay put through our freeze-and-thaw winters. But soil moves, and now and then a post can heave up slightly in winter or settle after a very wet spell. Caught early, it's a straightforward fix; left for years, it can slowly rack the frame out of true.

On your once-overs, look at whether the whole array still stands square and level, and whether the ground around each footing is flat and firm. A new lean, a gap opening around a post, or one corner sitting higher than it used to are all worth a call to your installer.

✓ Our foundations guide goes deeper

If you'd like to understand what's holding the array to the earth and why frost matters so much, our foundations guide and our frost-and-soil guide walk through it in plain English.

Keeping the area clear

A lot of easy upkeep is simply about what grows and lives around the array. Keep the space open and clean, and you head off most problems.

- Trim grass and weeds so nothing grows up to shade the lowest row of panels.
- Keep the area free of leaves, brush, and blown-in debris.
- Discourage rodents, birds, and wasps from nesting in the shade underneath.
- Watch for anything — a growing shrub, a new tree — that will shade it later.

We keep two whole guides on this because it matters: our mowing-and-vegetation guide covers keeping growth down without flinging debris at the glass, and our animals-and-critters guide covers keeping the wildlife from making a home in your wiring.

! Mind the string trimmer

A stone or stick thrown by a string trimmer or mower can crack a panel in an instant. Trim carefully around the posts, and aim any discharge away from the glass.

Letting monitoring do the watching

Most modern systems come with monitoring — an app or a website that shows how your array is doing. It's like having a helper that never sleeps.

Monitoring quietly tracks how much your system is producing and flags it when something's not right. A panel that's suddenly shaded, an electrical fault, or a piece that's stopped pulling its weight will often show up there before you'd ever notice it standing in the yard.

You don't have to stare at it. Just glance at it now and then, and pay attention if it sends you an alert. If the numbers take an unexplained dive, that's your cue to look the array over and, if needed, call your installer.

✓ Ask for monitoring you can actually read

When you're choosing a system, ask to see the monitoring app. You want one that's simple and clear — if you can tell at a glance that things are healthy, that's exactly what you want.

What you can do, and what's a pro's job

Here's the single most important page in this guide. Knowing where your job ends and a professional's begins keeps you safe.

Task	Who handles it
Visual once-over	You — from the ground
Gentle rinse of the glass	You — plain water
Trimming grass and weeds	You — carefully
Checking the monitoring	You
Tightening or replacing hardware	A professional
Anything with wiring or panels	A pro — always
Fixing a fault or dead panel	A professional

The rule is simple and it never changes: if a job involves the wiring, the electrical connections, the inverter, or opening anything up, it belongs to a licensed professional. Your role is to notice and report, not to repair.

! Never open the electrical gear

The disconnects, the inverter, the wiring — these carry serious electricity even on a sunny day with the grid down. Never open or poke at them. Looking is free and safe; touching is for the pros.

A simple logbook helps

You don't need anything fancy, but a few notes over the years turn out to be surprisingly handy.

Keep a plain notebook or a folder with your solar papers, and jot down when the system went in, when you did a once-over, anything you noticed, and any service visits. Add a photo now and then. It costs you nothing and it builds a little history.

Why bother? Because when something does need attention, being able to say 'this started last spring' or 'the installer tightened that in the fall' helps enormously. It also keeps your warranty paperwork and monitoring logins all in one place you can find.

✓ Keep it with your home papers

Tuck your solar notebook in the same drawer as your appliance manuals and warranties. When you need it, you'll know right where it is.

The few tools that make it easy

You need very little to look after a ground array, and nothing that costs much or takes strength to use.

- A soft-bristled brush or squeegee on a long, telescoping handle.
- A garden hose with plain water — no special cleaners needed.
- A soft broom or a foam roof rake for brushing off light snow.
- Your phone, for photos and for checking the monitoring app.

That's honestly about it. Everything on that list is gentle, inexpensive, and made to be used from the ground. If a job ever seems to need a ladder, power tools, or anything electrical, that's the moment to set it down and call a pro.

✓ Long handles are your friend

A good telescoping handle lets you reach the top of the panels without stretching or climbing. It saves your back and your shoulders — well worth the small cost.

When something seems off

Every so often you'll notice something that isn't quite right. Here's how to think about it without any alarm.

Maybe production dipped on the monitoring, or a panel looks shaded that never used to be, or you spot a rust streak or a post that's leaning. None of these are emergencies. They're just signals — the array telling you it could use a look.

Make a note, take a photo, and if it's anything beyond dust or a stray weed, call your installer. Our common-problems guide walks through the usual warning signs and what each one tends to mean, so you can tell a big deal from a small one.

✓ When in doubt, ask

There's never any harm in a phone call. A good installer would far rather answer a quick question than have a small thing grow into a big one. You're not being a bother — you're being sensible.

Warranties and service visits

Part of easy upkeep is knowing that you're not on your own — your system comes with backing, and pros are a call away.

Solar equipment typically carries long warranties on the panels and the electronics, and your installer can come out for periodic service or whenever something needs a professional hand. Keep your warranty papers and your installer's number somewhere handy, right alongside that little logbook.

Some folks like to have their installer do a professional check-up every few years — a thorough look at the electrical connections and hardware that goes beyond your own visual once-over. It's a reasonable thing to ask about when you're choosing who to work with.

✓ Ask who answers the phone in five years

A warranty is only as good as the company standing behind it. When you're picking an installer, ask how service works down the road and who you'll call. Our [choosing-an-installer](#) guide covers what to look for.

Upkeep that stays easy as you age

I write these guides with my older neighbors in mind, so let me speak to something that matters: this is a system you can keep tending safely for a very long time.

Because everything happens from the ground, there's no point where looking after a ground array demands the strength or balance it once might have. No ladders, no roofs, no heavy lifting. A slow walk-around and a gentle rinse are within reach for most of us for many years.

And when a season comes that you'd rather not do even that, it's an easy thing to hand off — to family, to a neighbor, or to me. The system doesn't ask much, so passing along its care is simple too.

! Never let anyone talk you onto a roof or a ladder

No part of caring for a ground array requires climbing. If a task ever seems to, it's a pro's job — full stop. Your safety is worth infinitely more than a clean panel.

A gentle yearly checklist

Here's the whole year of upkeep, boiled down to a list you can tear out and tack up in the garage.

- ☐ Walk out and look the array over a few times a year.
- ☐ Rinse the glass gently when it's dusty — plain water, from the ground.
- ☐ Keep grass, weeds, and brush trimmed back from the panels.
- ☐ Glance at your monitoring, and heed any alerts.
- ☐ Check that the frame stands square and the footings sit firm.
- ☐ Look for loose hardware or rust, and note anything odd.
- ☐ Call your installer for anything electrical — always.

✓ Print it and forget it

Pin this list where you keep your garden tools. Then you can stop trying to remember any of it and just glance up when the seasons turn.

Questions to ask your installer

Bring these to an installer as you plan, so you know exactly what your system will need and who to call.

Q: What upkeep will this array need, and how much can I safely do myself?

A good installer will happily walk you through the simple, from-the-ground tasks and be crystal clear about what must be left to a professional. Vague answers here are a bad sign.

Q: How does the monitoring work, and how will I know if something's wrong?

You want to see the app or website, understand how to read it, and know how you'll be alerted. Simple and clear beats fancy every time.

Q: Do you offer service visits or check-ups, and how does that work?

Find out whether they'll come out for periodic professional checks and how to reach them for a problem. Knowing service is there is a real comfort.

✓ Their answers tell you a lot

An installer who explains upkeep patiently and honestly — including where to stop and call a pro — is showing you the kind of company they'll be for years to come.

Common Questions

The questions I hear most about looking after a ground-mounted array.

Q: How often do I really need to clean the panels?

Less than you'd think. Rain does most of the work here in Ohio. A gentle rinse when they're visibly dusty or pollen-coated is usually plenty — there's no need to fuss over them.

Q: Do I need to clear snow off in winter?

Often you can just let it slide off on its own — smooth, tilted panels shed snow well. If you like, brush light snow off gently from the ground with a soft tool. Never force packed ice, and never climb. Our snow-and-winter guide has the full picture.

Q: Is there anything I should be servicing or replacing regularly?

Not on your end. There are no filters or fluids. The electronics may need professional attention over the decades, but that's the installer's job, not routine homeowner maintenance.

Q: What if I notice something but I'm not sure it's a problem?

Make a note, take a photo, and call your installer. There's no such thing as a silly question, and catching a small thing early is always cheaper and easier than waiting.

★ Rather have a hand with it?

Looking after an array is easy, but if you'd like someone to set up a routine with you or take a look at something that's puzzling you, that's just the sort of thing I do. Call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made keeping a ground-mounted solar array in good shape feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything.

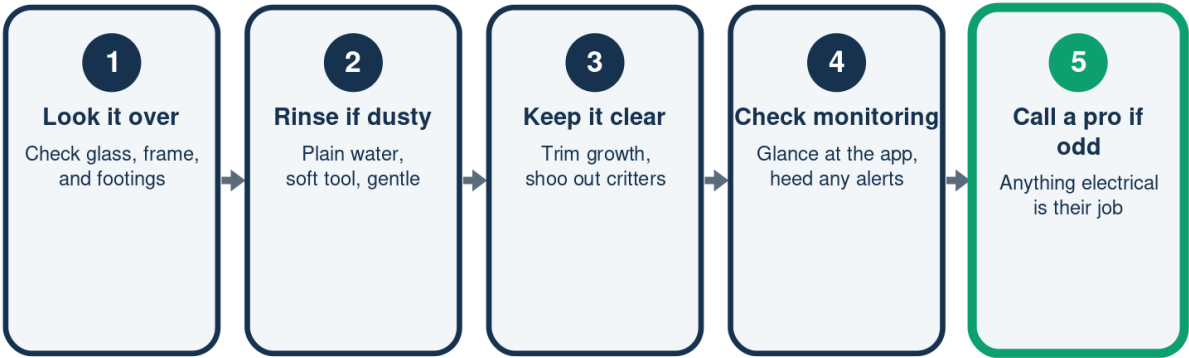
When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I don't sell solar and I don't do the licensed electrical work or the install itself — I help you understand it all, ask the right questions, and line up a trustworthy local solar installer, so you never feel talked into anything.

★ Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home

Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

A Yearly Once-Over

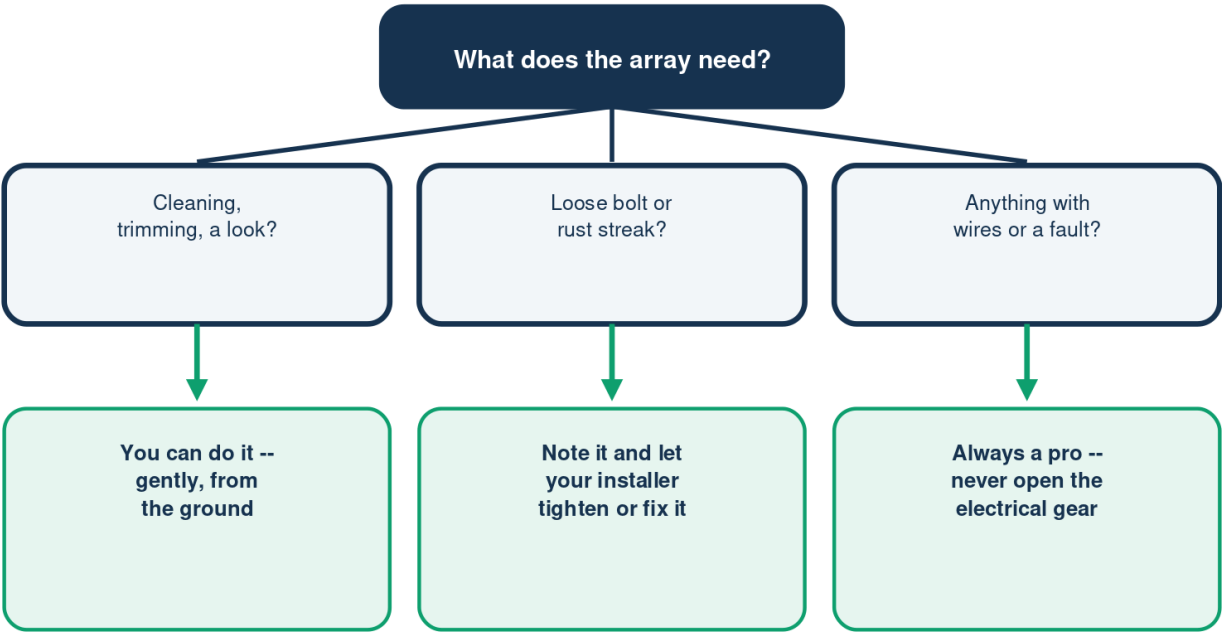
The simple rhythm of looking after a ground array



Little and often, all from the ground -- no ladders, no worry.

Can I Handle It, or Call a Pro?

When to tend it yourself, and when to pick up the phone



Anything electrical is a pro's job -- looking is safe, touching is not.

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.

You, or a Pro?

What you can safely do, and what to leave to the experts

	You	A pro
Visual look-over	Yes	Not needed
Gentle rinse	Yes	Not needed
Trim growth	Yes	Not needed
Tighten hardware	Best not	Yes
Wiring or panels	Never	Always
Fix a fault	Never	Always

The rule never changes: anything electrical belongs to a licensed pro.

What to Check, and Why

A quick look tells you more than you'd think

	What to look for	Why it matters
Glass	Cracks or grime	Keeps output up
Frame	Leaning or bent	Catches heave
Hardware	Loose or rusty	Stays anchored
Underneath	Nests or wires	Stops critters
Footings	Firm, flat soil	No frost heave
Lights/app	Normal status	Early warning

Notice, note, and report -- that's your whole job, and it's plenty.



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A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill.

I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that comes from using these guides. Thanks for reading, and stay safe out there.

— *Bill*



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