

Yard Haunt Setup Countdown

Eight weeks out to the November 1 teardown. Tags source the step; where a guide gives no date, the week is our suggestion.

ALL OCTOBER

- ☐ Check the forecast every few days. Go by gusts, not the average: 19 to 31 mph, anchor inflatables properly; 32 to 38, deflate them and bring in flat props; 39 and up, take the display down. [WP](#)
- ☐ After any wind, walk the yard and reseat anything that has lifted. [GY](#)
- ☐ Wind Advisory from your NWS office: bring light props in and lay the giants down. [WP](#) [SK](#)
- ☐ Lights and sound on a timer: on at dusk, off at a fixed shutoff hour that suits the street. [LH](#) [NB](#)

8+ WEEKS Plan and Ask

- ☐ In an HOA? Read the CC&Rs, rules and architectural guidelines for "holiday," "seasonal," "decoration," "lighting" and "nuisance." [NB](#)
- ☐ Unclear rule, or a big, tall or loud display? Ask the board in writing, with dates, hours and a sketch. Keep the reply. [NB](#)
- ☐ Year one: one S-curve path of 60 to 80 feet and two scare zones is plenty. [YB](#)
- ☐ Map the path, scare zones, stone clusters and power runs in the Yard Planner. [YB](#) [GY](#)
- ☐ Pick your graveyard's century before you cut any foam. [GY](#)
- ☐ Look up your area's typical October wind gusts before you buy anything tall. [WP](#)
- ☐ Check whether your town sets official trick-or-treat hours. [OD](#)

6 WEEKS Test and Buy

- ☐ Map your circuits at the breaker panel. A 15-amp circuit handles 1,800 W: plan on no more than 12 amps (1,440 W) for an all-evening load. [YB](#) [WP](#)
- ☐ Add up the watts (a fog machine alone is 400 to 1,200) and add 20 percent headroom. [YB](#)
- ☐ Every outdoor outlet needs GFCI protection (Test and Reset buttons). If one lacks it, use a portable GFCI adapter. [WP](#) [LH](#)
- ☐ Outdoor cord only (SJTW on the jacket), 12-gauge for 50-foot runs. No daisy chains. [WP](#) [YB](#)
- ☐ Fog test run: fresh fluid, heat fully, a few bursts outdoors. Sputtering or weak? Repair or replace now. [FM](#)
- ☐ Read the fog machine's manual. Many, like Chauvet's Hurricane 1200, are indoor-only. [GY](#)
- ☐ Read each skeleton's box: an indoor-rated one goes on a covered porch, not the lawn. [SK](#)
- ☐ Read each animatronic's manual before it meets an extension cord. The Dead Water Pirate Ship's forbids one. [YB](#) [AN](#)
- ☐ Check every light strand for cracked sockets and frayed or bare wires. Discard damaged sets. [ST](#)
- ☐ Swap the thin stakes that ship with inflatables for real ground stakes. [WP](#)
- ☐ Stock fog fluid: about a quart per machine per 2 hours of moderate use. [FM](#)

4 WEEKS Carve and Set the Bones

- ☐ Buy XPS board (pink, blue or gray), not white EPS beadboard, and no faced or foil boards. [GY](#)
- ☐ Hot-knife outdoors or in an open garage with a fan, at the lowest heat that works. Never hot-wire polyurethane or polyiso. [GY](#)
- ☐ Laminate thick stones with solvent-free foam glue, the PVC post set in before the glue-up. Give it a few days to cure. [GY](#)
- ☐ Drylok base coat, tested on an offcut first (the maker says bare masonry only): above 50°F, two coats 2 to 3 hours apart, 24 hours before latex. [GY](#)
- ☐ Latex or acrylic on every face. No solvent spray paint or clear coat on bare foam. [GY](#)
- ☐ Weather it: dark wash, wipe off, drips from the lettering, greens and yellows low. [GY](#)
- ☐ Early October: put up the permanent layer, the stakes, cord runs, lighting and hard props. [WP](#)
- ☐ A note to the houses on each side and across the street: dates, hours, walkthrough night, your phone number. [NB](#) [OD](#)
- ☐ Starting late? Carve in a day, paint in a garage, skip the lamination. [GY](#)

2 WEEKS Place It

- ☐ Set PVC sleeves in dug or augered holes, tops flush with the grass. Call 811 before digging deep. [GY](#)
- ☐ Stones in family clusters of 3 to 5, footstones a body's length behind, a few leaning, lettering to the sidewalk. [GY](#)
- ☐ Build the PVC fence and paint it with latex or a paint that lists PVC. [GY](#)
- ☐ Light the stones low and in front. Path lights at ground level, every 3 to 4 feet. [GY](#) [LH](#)
- ☐ Cords behind the stones, never across the path or the sidewalk. Connections off the ground, with a drip loop and a cover. [GY](#) [WP](#) [NB](#)
- ☐ Mid October: add the weather-sensitive layer (fabric, webbing, cornstalks). Expect to refresh it once. [WP](#)
- ☐ Skeletons: zip ties at the elbows and shoulders, a landscape staple over the pelvis. [GY](#)
- ☐ Path 4 feet wide. Leave 4 feet clear on the public sidewalk too. [YB](#) [NB](#)
- ☐ Aim spotlights at your own facade, trees or ground. Look back from the neighbors' windows after dark. [NB](#)



THE LAST WEEK TO NOVEMBER 1

NIGHT OF Showtime

- ❑ Never leave the fog machine unattended. Switch it off when nobody is watching it. **GY**
- ❑ Timed fog bursts: about 15 seconds every 2 to 3 minutes. **FM**
- ❑ Fog rolling into the street? Shut it off. **NB**
- ❑ Jump scares and loud cues during trick-or-treat hours, ambient only after. **NB**
- ❑ Count the trick-or-treaters, so next year's candy starts from a real number. **GD**
- ❑ Lights off at the shutoff hour you set on the timer, and in any case before bed. **NB LH**

NOV 1 Teardown

- Plug in every animatronic and fire every trigger before it comes apart. SVI's free-parts window is 90 days from purchase, with exclusions: write faults down and call now. [ST](#)
- Per the 12-foot Skelly manual, lay giants down for disassembly, with three adults. [ST](#)
- Pull the sleeves the same day you pull the stones. [GY](#)
- Cut zip ties with flush cutters, not a knife held against the plastic. [SK](#)
- Dry everything fully before it goes in a box or tote. [ST](#)
- Batteries out of every prop and remote. [ST](#)
- Fog machine: cleaner, then distilled water, then store it empty. [ST](#)
- Damaged light strands don't go back in the bin. [ST](#)
- Foam stones flat or on edge in the garage or basement, not the attic. XPS is rated to 165°F. [GY](#)
- Props back in their original boxes, away from heat and moisture. [ST](#)
- Per Chauvet, test-run the fog machine monthly through the off-season, then run the cleaner and water flush again. [ST](#)

Notes

- Walk the display: re-stake, re-tension the guy lines, confirm every GFCI holds, replace wrecked webbing. **WP**
- Clear obstacles from the lawn, steps and porch. **NB**
- A fire extinguisher within 25 feet of any electrical or fog equipment. **YB**
- Fog machine on concrete or a paver under a roof, on GFCI power, 20 inches of clearance, foam and leaves off the nozzle. **GY**
- No candles in the yard. Battery or LED light only. **GY**

- WP** **Weatherproof decorations**
[decor/weatherproof-halloween-decorations/](#)
- SK** **Posing skeletons**
[decor/posing-life-size-skeletons/](#)
- FM** **Fog Mastery 3 to 5**
[learn/fog-mastery/](#)
- CD** **How much candy**
[party-planning/how-much-halloween-candy/](#)