

**“WENCH WITH A WRENCH” By Gail Wagner**

 **Fall 2013**

**WINTER STORAGE TIPS**

Yes, sadly, it’s time to prepare our Miata’s for their long winter’s nap. Below are some tried-and-true pointers I have found valuable to keep our Miata’s in good condition over the long, cold NY winter and ready for spring reawakening. Warning: I am obsessive-compulsive about maintenance.

 **Change the oil and filter** to remove acids and other waste products that can corrode your motor. I recommend using the OEM Mazda genuine filter with anti-drain back value in it. Our Mazda dealer Club sponsors give us parts discounts. Use a good quality motor oil too. I use Castrol GTX. It’s your choice to use synthetic oil or real petroleum-based oil but do not mix both together. Don’t try this at home, Kids (unless you’re a die-hard, motorhead\masochist like me ). Buy your own oil and Mazda filter and take it to a trusted mechanic to change for you.

 **Wash, wax and thoroughly clean the interior of your car**. This includes washing underneath especially the wheel wells to remove dirt. Vacuum thoroughly to remove food crumbs that entice small creatures to picnic on leftover Doritos or the like in your vehicle. Critters can be unbelievably destructive not to mention their indiscriminate excretory habits. Consider taking your removable carpets indoors to prevent becoming musty. Place a couple of scented dryer sheets inside to discourage critters. DO NOT use mothballs. It takes all summer to remove the nasty naphthalene fumes which are toxic stuff not healthy to breathe.

 **Check all fluid levels** before storage especially the coolant/antifreeze level. Buy a little hydrometer at an auto parts store and check the freeze point or have it checked and coolant flushed/replaced if necessary before winter. This ain’t California, ya’ know. Old coolant can corrode the engine, cooling system and heater core.

 **Fill the gas tank** completely to prevent condensation that may contaminate your gasoline and corrode the fuel system. Some suggest premium gas without ethanol (which contains water). **IMPORTANT**: add a gasoline stabilizer additive such as “Sta-bil” and run the engine to mix it in to prevent the gasoline from becoming “gummy” that may clog injectors from sitting over time.

 **Check your tire pressure**. Some suggest a slight tire over-inflation may prevent flat spots on your tires if you are not putting the vehicle up on jack stands. More on jack stands later.

 **Consider placing a sheet of heavy plastic polyethylene sheeting** under the entire vehicle to prevent vapor buildup plus it’s easy to spot any fluid leaks (I hope not!).

 **Remove the battery** to a warm, dry place (and charge once a month, if possible) or leave it in the vehicle and consider plugging in a trickle battery charger if you have access to an electrical outlet. It’s a popular myth that the battery will discharge if stored on a concrete floor. It won’t, but if you’re a non-believer (like my husband) set it on a piece of wood.

 **Wrap the wipers in plastic wrap** to prevent the rubber from sticking to the windshield or remove completely and store indoors. I told you I was O-C.

 **Jack Stands**: If considering putting your vehicle up on jack stands to prevent flat spots on your tires, don’t put the jack stands under the frame as it will stress the rubber bushings in the suspension if the suspension “droops”. Try to keep the weight as it is now… that is, put the jack stands under the outer ball joints to approximate it sitting on the ground.

 **Release the parking break**. If left on, the brake pads may stick to the rotors and we can’t have that, can we?

 **Exhaust & air intake:** Remove the air filter, wrap it in aluminum foil and replace and cover the end of the exhaust pipe with aluminum foil to prevent warm, fuzzy critters from nesting in both areas and causing havoc. Again, do not use toxic moth balls.

 **IMPORTANT:** leave yourself a little note taped to the steering wheel to remind yourself to move the aluminum foil from the intake air filter and exhaust pipe or the car won’t start and you’ll be wondering why J and note any maintenance issues you might want to address in the spring so you don’t forget.

 **Car Cover:** Consider a good, ventilated, breathable car cover if you don’t have one to allow water vapor to leave the vehicle and keep dust and dirt off the finish.

 **Lock the doors**, give ‘er a little pat on the fender and say, “See you in April”.

 Gail

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