

CHOOSING THE BEST MATERIALS WHEN ROOFING YOUR HOME

Replacing a home's roofing is an experience shared by many Canadians. Damp spots on attic insulation and crumbling shingles are indicators that roofing needs attention. Broken roof tiles must be replaced to prevent water damage. There are many types of roofing from which to choose, and this article will help you select the best type for your house and pocketbook.

The earliest known roof tiles (from China and the Middle East) date back to about 10,000 B.C. These tiles were made of clay, and their use subsequently spread throughout Asia and to Europe. The buildings of the ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans were roofed with clay tiles. Europeans brought clay tiles to the New World in the latter 1500's. Massive fires in London in 1666 and Boston in 1679 resulted in municipal requirements for clay tiles because of their fireproof quality.

Wood shingles were often used outside of cities. Compared to clay roof tiles, wood shingles were less expensive, and because of their lighter weight, they required less roof framing. In many countries during the 19th century, slate, copper, iron, tin-plate, zinc, or galvanized iron were used. Most metal roofing weighed a fraction of clay tile and costs significantly less to install. Many homeowners today choose wood shingles or metal roofing for the same reasons.

When your roofing needs to be replaced, there are a number of factors to keep in mind, including budget, location, type of roof, framing, and style and colour. Let's take a closer look at each of these factors:

Budget

You may love the Spanish look of clay roof tiles, but their cost may be beyond your budget. The expense of roofing is comprised of two elements: installation cost and lifetime cost. The installation cost of composition (i.e. asphalt) shingles tends to be the least of all types of roofing, but they last only 10 to 30 years, depending on the grade/quality. Clay tiles cost much more to install, but have minimal lifetime costs since they last for 50 years or more. Obtaining quotes from roofing contractors will give you a good idea of what different types of roofing cost. Establish a budget that works for you.

Location

The roof of a house in Vancouver will be exposed to much more rain and less snow than a home in Calgary, Toronto, Montreal, etc. You need to consider the type of weather to which your roof is subjected when selecting roofing. For example, clay

and slate tiles can be damaged by hail; metal roofing works well for many vacation homes in ski country. Talk with a contractor to find out the types of roofing that would be appropriate for your house, given its location and the climate in your area.

Type of roof

House roofs are either flat or pitched. Materials for flat roofs include tar and gravel, EPDM rubber roofing, metal, modified bitumen roofing, roll roofing, and PVC membrane. For pitched roofs, there are composition and dimensional shingles, cedar shakes, tile, metal, slate, and synthetic materials. Each type of roofing is guaranteed for a certain number of years. Roofing contractors can provide you with warranty information for the different types of roofing, as well as their installation work.

Framing

Not only is the cost of installing slate roof tiles significant, but so is the framing required to support them. A house with asphalt shingles probably does not have the framing required to sustain the weight of clay or slate tiles over several years. If you're thinking of installing a heavier type of shingle, shake, or tile, first check with a house architect or roofing contractor to confirm that your home's framing is adequate for the greater weight. If you really want clay tiles, for example, you may need to reinforce the framing, at least in the roof.

Style and colour

A house with a roof covered with cedar shakes has a significantly different look than the same type of house with an asphalt shingle roof. Before re-covering your roof, think about the look that you want, and consider different colours. If you have a digital camera and graphics software such as Adobe Photoshop, you can take a picture of your home, download it to your computer, and re-colour your roof. Some roofing contractors offer this "virtual renovation" service, which gives homeowners an idea of what their house will look like before making a final colour selection.

When it comes time to re-cover their roof, most homeowners in Canada choose composition shingles, which are made from fiberglass/asphalt or polyester/asphalt and covered with a granular substance. There are different grades of composition shingles, which come in a wide variety of colours. Shingles are rated by how long they are designed to last; increased longevity equals greater cost.

Cedar shakes give a home a high standard of appearance and offer an environmentally-friendly roofing option. Good-quality cedar shakes will last up to

30 years if they are properly installed. Because of the fire hazard, many municipalities require cedar shakes to be pressure-treated with fire retardant. Contact your town or city hall for more information.

Other types of roofing include dimensional shingles, metal roofing, clay tiles, and slate tiles. Dimensional shingles are similar to asphalt shingles, but are thicker and give a more textured look. They cost about twice as much and last up to 40 years. Metal roofing is lightweight, fairly easy to install, lasts 20 to 50 years, costs up to ten times more than asphalt shingles, and comes in a variety of colors. Clay tiles are usually half-tube-shaped and terra cotta in color. Newer ones contain synthetic materials, making them lighter. While installing clay tiles is expensive, slate roofing costs the most, up to thirty times more than asphalt shingles. Despite their cost and weight, slate tiles are elegant and last more than a century.

Whether you live in a modest house or a castle, proper roofing is essential to a comfortable home life. When it comes time to replace your roofing, explore your options, speak with the experts, and enjoy having a quality roof overhead for many years.

THE "HOME HUNTERS"

Grant & Steve Hunter

CLOSING UP YOUR HOME FOR A HOLIDAY

Vacations should be golden opportunities to relax and leave our worries behind. Unfortunately, vacations are also the time when our homes are most vulnerable. Damage that would be minor when we are at home can turn into larger and more expensive problems when we are away. Theft is another threat. People return home to discover that their computers, jewellery, electronics and other belongings have been damaged or stolen. Whether you are leaving for a weekend getaway or an extended vacation around the world, it pays to prepare.

Security

The best burglar deterrent is to create the illusion that someone is at home. Consider these tips:

1. Install indoor and outdoor motion sensors. Indoor motion sensors emit a laser beam, which when broken, will cause a loud alarm to sound for a few minutes. This may be enough to frighten some burglars, particularly if you have placed the motion sensor out of sight. Outdoor motion sensors also emit a laser beam, which when broken, will turn on a light. This is an economical way to provide outdoor security lighting.
2. Park a car in your driveway. This gives the immediate impression that someone is home. However, if you are taking a vacation during the winter, the car may become covered with snow, which will send a message that no one is home.
3. Lock all windows and doors. You may wish to install metal security bars on your windows, particularly those located in the basement. Choose security bars that have quick-release safety latches for easy escape from inside the home in case of emergency.
4. Don't leave a message on your answering machine letting people know you are on vacation. A message such as, "Hi you've reached the Smiths. We're off to Florida!

See you in three weeks!" would seem like an open invitation to a burglar.

5. Keep the blinds and curtains closed.
6. Use a timer to turn lights on and off around your home. New digital timers allow you to program multiple on/off times. It is also a good idea to plug a radio into a digital timer and tune into a talk radio station at normal volume.
7. Ask a friend or trusted neighbour to pick up your mail. A pile of mail in your mailbox is an indication to burglars that no one is home. Alternately, arrange to have your mail held for you at the post office.
8. Never hide a house key outdoors in fairly obvious places such as under flowerpots, on the ledge above the door or even inside fake rocks. If you cannot think of a safe hiding place, you may wish to leave a key with a trusted friend or neighbour in case of emergencies.
9. Hide your valuables in unlikely places such as in shoeboxes at the back of the closet or in the freezer. Just be sure to remember your hiding places!
10. If you are planning to take an extended trip, consider hiring a home security company to install an alarm system.

Damage

Fire and water are two common causes of property damage. The following precautions may help you avoid unwelcome homecoming surprises:

1. Unplug all appliances and electronics including televisions, computers, coffee makers, toaster ovens and stereos. A lightning strike or a power surge can send an electrical charge through your home's wiring which in turn may damage your electronics and possibly cause a fire. The only appliances that you should leave plugged in are lamps and radios set on timers as burglary prevention.

2. Turn off the water supply. If you have an irrigation system and you are taking a vacation during the summer, leave the main water valve open but close the valves to toilets, faucets, icemakers, and hoses. This will allow your irrigation system to operate normally while preventing the possibility of floods occurring inside your home. If you do not have an irrigation system, you may wish to turn off the main water supply.
3. Clean out the refrigerator. Anything that will be inedible by the time you return should be consumed, put in the freezer (if appropriate), or thrown out. Some of the most creative meals happen just before a vacation!

Seasonal Tips

Winter

1. Hire someone to shovel your walkway. This gives the appearance that someone is home and also makes it possible for a delivery person to deliver your mail. Remember, if you plan to be gone for more than a few days, it is a good idea to put a hold on your mail or have a friend collect your mail regularly.
2. As mentioned above, turn off the water supply to prevent water from freezing and bursting the pipes particularly those that run through outer walls and the garage.
3. Normally, irrigation systems are flushed and shut down in the fall. If you forgot to do this in the fall, it may be too late to flush the lines but it is wise to turn off the water supply.
4. Turn down the heat to no lower than 55 °F (13 °C).

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FOUNDATION FACTOR

The house is fifteen years old, with an asking price a little below market value. The exterior walls and roof are in good shape, the landscaping is attractive, and the driveway is free of defects. Inside, the rooms and kitchen are in good condition, with plumbing that doesn't leak, good insulation, and a furnace and central air conditioner that function well. A prospective buyer carefully looks around the house, and concludes that it is a terrific buy. Or is it? What this shopper doesn't know is that the house's foundation was poured in freezing temperatures and the concrete was not adequately heated, resulting in improper drying. Two-inch cracks in the foundation, which the potential buyer saw but didn't give a second thought to, indicate a foundation problem that is potentially serious and expensive to rectify.

The foundation tends to be one of the most overlooked aspects of a house because it's mostly underground—out of sight, out of mind. A foundation inspection is prudent because problems can be identified before buying a home, saving you (potentially) thousands of dollars in repair costs. If you are a homeowner preparing to sell your house, confirming that your foundation is in good condition (by a certified home inspector) and providing written proof will help your house sell. If a foundation problem does exist, at least you will know what it is before your house goes on the market, and you can take action to have it fixed.

How can you determine if a house has a foundation problem? The following are some signs:

- Signs of rot or insect infestation close to the foundation.
- Inconsistent soil compaction around the foundation. Problems can occur when soil has not been compacted properly, resulting in an uneven settling of the house over time.
- Improper soil around and underneath the foundation. This has been a problem mostly with newer homes (five years or younger). To save money, some builders have used poorer quality soil, which can sink (compress) or shift when the soil becomes wet. If you are building a home, ensure that your builder uses good quality soil around and underneath the foundation.
- Foundation cracks. Check the exposed concrete outside (above the ground),

and inside the house on the walls and floor. Depending on the size and number of cracks, there may be a foundation problem.

- Significant cracks in brick and mortar, and leaks and cracks around the fireplace.
- Cracks in interior walls near corners of doors or windows. Where walls meet walls, ceilings or doors, are they pulling away from each other?
- Nails coming out of drywall surfaces and/or corner frames.
- Separating or curling wallpaper.
- Caulking that is separating from exterior surfaces.
- Doorsills that are separating from their frames.
- Windows and doors that don't move easily. Open and close all windows and doors in each room. Do they fit without sticking or binding?

While most houses have a foundation made of poured concrete, some foundations have been made from block, and even stone. A poured concrete foundation is best because there tends to be fewer moisture problems than with a block or stone foundation. Be sure to find out what type of foundation is supporting the rest of the house. Check for good drainage away from the house around its perimeter. Do the downspouts take water away from the home? Surface drainage next to the foundation should slope away about a quarter inch per foot. Also, ask about the underground drainage pipe (also known as weeping tile). When was the last time it was inspected?

For many older homes, the underground drainage pipe was made of cement and over the years, rain and melting snow leached the cement's chemicals, weakening the pipe. The water table would rise when it rained or snow melted, and water from the downspouts would go into the pipe. Eventually, the drainage pipe would not be able to adequately take the water away from the house and the water table would rise beneath the foundation floor. A large crack in a foundation floor is a sign of this type of hydraulic pressure, and evidence that the drainage pipe around the house probably needs to be replaced.

If you're looking at a home and see cracks in a foundation wall, be aware that cracks are not always an indication of a problem. Often basement wall and floor cracks are nothing more than hairline fractures caused by shrinkage during the curing process. Such cracks are usually insignificant. However, if

they leak water or appear to widen as time passes, it can be an indication that a problem is developing. If this is the case with your home, consult with a foundation repair specialist. If you're shopping for a house, be sure to have an inspection done by a certified home inspector who, for about \$300, will examine the foundation (and the rest of the home) to determine if there are any problems.

If you do have a foundation problem, do not postpone getting it fixed for too long. The longer you wait, the more costly the repair will be. A foundation problem will decrease your property value, make your house difficult or impossible to sell, and can cause health problems due to mold resulting from excess moisture. Taking action to ensure that your home's foundation is in good condition will not only give you peace of mind, but will maintain the value of your investment.

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GUIDELINES FOR GENERAL CARPET MAINTENANCE

Residential

- Use mats placed at all entrances to keep soil from being tracked into the house. Change or clean these mats as they become soiled.
- Remove spills on your carpet promptly. Spilled material can permanently stain or discolour your carpet when left unattended for very long. Blot liquids. DO NOT SCRUB THE AREA!
- The most important maintenance step is proper and regular vacuuming. You cannot over vacuum. In fact, high traffic areas should be vacuumed at least once a week. It is best to use a vacuum with a beater bar and brush on cut pile carpet. A suction only vacuum may be required to prevent fuzzing on wool loop pile carpet.
- Help to reduce airborne pollutants by changing your furnace filters regularly and cleaning your furnace and vents annually.
- Have carpets hot water extracted every 12 to 18 months for high traffic areas, and 18 to 24 months for other areas.

Commercial

Soil Control:

- Maintenance of entry walkways - regular sweeping and/or cleaning of hard surface areas that lead into a building.
- Use walk off/entry mats - entry mats should be placed at most locations and changed regularly.
- Restriction of food services to designated areas will help reduce soiling throughout the office area.

- Chair pads - under desk pads prevent damage to carpet and prevent casters from grinding in dirt.

Interim Maintenance:

- A vacuuming schedule is the single most important part of any maintenance program. All carpet in high traffic areas should be vacuumed daily.
- Train a staff member to clean spots as they occur.
- Have carpets restoratively cleaned on an as needed basis or to keep a consistent high appearance level. Have a carpet maintenance program put in place as recommended by most major fibre producers and carpet mills.

Soil Filtration Lines

The most commonly asked question when carpet cleaning inspections are being performed is "Can you get rid of the black lines on my carpet along the walls?"

The movement of air across or through the carpet causes these filtration lines. Air carries particles of various pollutants such as dirt, soot, smoke and dust. The carpet pile yarns act as a filter trapping these particles as the air passes through them. These particles are microscopic and can penetrate deep into yarns.

The degree of removal of these particles depends on factors such as type of soil, amount of airflow, length of time soil has built up, colour of carpet and type of fibre yarn. Special cleaning techniques, used by a professional carpet cleaner, can usually remove these lines from synthetic carpet. However, on light-coloured carpets some traces of soiling may remain.

It should be noted that these lines are difficult to completely remove from wool or olefin carpeting.

THE "HOME HUNTERS" - Grant & Steve Hunter

ORGANIZE YOUR HOME

Tips for Organizing Your Home

Consider all that is brought into a home on a regular basis: groceries, mail, advertising flyers, clothes, videos, CDs, sports equipment, newspapers, books, etc. Now consider how much easier it is to keep things rather than getting rid of them. Before we know it, we have far more belongings than space to store it all. It can be a daunting task to organize a home and even harder to change our habits. The following tips can help even the most organizationally challenged among us.

The One Location Rule

The average person spends 20 minutes a day or more looking for various belongings. Over the course of a lifetime (for example 70 years), that can add up to over 8,517 hours - almost an entire year spent searching! The one location rule can help and it goes like this: if you store an item in one place and return it to that spot after using it, you'll always be able to find it. It sounds simple enough but it can take some practice. If you tend to drop things wherever it's convenient, the following are some suggestions for incorporating the one location rule into your daily routine.

- Keep hats, gloves, umbrellas, coats and keys in a closet next to the front door. When you come home, make a habit of placing these items in the closet rather than laying them down elsewhere. In the morning rush you'll know exactly where to find these items.
- If you have children, ask them to always enter the house from the same door and take off their shoes. This way they'll always know where their shoes are not to mention they won't track dirt into the house.
- Keep a notebook by the phone with a pencil or pen attached by a string. Everyday, write the date at the top of a new page. Use the book for phone messages, reminders or even inspirational quotes for yourself and your family. By using a single book kept in one location, you need never worry about losing messages scribbled on post-it notes or scraps of paper.
- A chalkboard is another way to keep track of schedules and phone messages. Hang the chalkboard near the phone in the kitchen or living area.
- Use a corkboard to pin up important notes such as lists of borrowed library items, contact information, upcoming events and community

centre schedules. Remember that even a corkboard can become cluttered! Review and remove outdated items as needed.

Consolidate

Another basic step in becoming organized is keeping similar items grouped together. It can save time and frustration. Here are a few easy-to-implement consolidation projects:

- Group clothes by colour to save time spent rummaging through dozens of items. Hang clothes of common colour together so it's easy to find what you need. Another option is to divide clothes into light and dark.
- Insufficient storage space can make any home look cluttered. Without enough dressers, filing cabinets and shelves it is nearly impossible to keep things organized. A closet organizer is one of the best ways to store items out of sight. Today you can choose from custom-designed wooden shelves all the way to inexpensive coated wire shelves that can be configured to meet your specific needs.
- Place an in-out tray, such as those used in offices, to sort your mail. When mail arrives, place bills and any other correspondence in the inbox slot. Establish a time each day or each week when you tackle the inbox. Place letters ready to be mailed or paid in the outbox and take care of them once a week.
- If you receive a lot of junk mail, keep a recycle bin (or cardboard box) handy near the mailbox or doorway. By not bringing junk mail into your home, you avoid the clutter.
- If the floor in your child's room is knee-deep in toys, here's a simple solution. Find (or cut to size) cardboard boxes low enough to slide under the bed. Cut out images from a toy catalogue of the items, which should go in the box and paste them to the front of the box. The images serve as a visual reminder of where things belong. They are also a great help to young children who haven't yet learned to read.
- In small bathrooms, even minimal toiletry items can look like clutter. Attractive baskets are a simple and inexpensive way to keep belongings in one place. Use baskets with lids for use inside cabinets; the lids will allow them to be piled one on top of another. Label the baskets to make it easier to find items.

Technology to the Rescue

The benefits of new technologies often far outweigh the time spent learning how to use them. Today's technology can make many tasks faster and easier such as household bill payments and coordinating schedules and shopping trips.

- Automated bill payment can be a great time-saver and prevent overdue charges. Check with your bank regarding details and fees for your type of account. Often the price of automated bill payment is no greater than the cost of paying a bill through an ATM.
- Online banking is another convenient option for paying bills. Check with your bank for details and fee structures.
- Internet-based calendars can help you coordinate schedules with family and friends. Free calendars, such as those provided by Hotmail and Yahoo, allow you to create a calendar and invite other people to join in and view it. You can decide on the level of permission i.e. read only or edit capability. These calendars will save time on phone calls and e-mails too.
- How often have you gone grocery shopping only to walk out with more than you intended to buy or having forgotten something? Being organized on your grocery trips saves time and money. Personal Data Assistants (PDAs) are handheld computers, which among other things are great for organizing grocery lists. You can input items, quantities, even aisle number then check items off as you shop. Once you've created the grocery list template, you can reuse it over and over again. (PDAs are also a great way to keep track of family schedules such as dates and times for soccer practices and doctor appointments.)
- If you aren't quite ready to invest in a PDA, try this new approach to the traditional shopping list. Create a list of all the food items you normally buy in a two-week period along with the quantity. Leave space at the bottom of the list for irregular items. Make a dozen photocopies (or print extras) and post one per week on your refrigerator along with a pencil. As the week progresses you can add any irregular items as needed.

THE "HOME HUNTERS"

Grant & Steve Hunter

OUTDOOR LIGHTS

There is something magical about a home aglow with lights. Long winter nights give homeowners an opportunity to decorate with light: radiant icicles dangling from awnings, tiny lights twinkling from hedges, bright bulbs crisscrossed up lamp posts, and shimmering edges around walkways and archways. Outdoor lights aren't just for the holiday season anymore! Turning your home into a winter wonderland can be safe and relatively cost-efficient by keeping the following tips in mind.

Some of us may remember the large lights commonly used up until the 1970s; each bulb was a 5- or 10-watt bulb about the size of a modern nightlight bulb. These bulbs have become less popular mainly because they use a lot of power: a strand of fifty 5-watt bulbs consumes 250 watts! These bulbs also generate a great deal of heat, which is an inefficient use of electricity and a fire hazard. Mini-lights are far more common today; they tend to be less expensive and use less energy.

Each bulb in a strand of mini-lights typically operates at 2.5 volts. The power used by a strand is typically 120 volts, which is equal to 48 lamps multiplied by 2.5 volts each. The power consumption for such a strand is only 25 watts - one tenth of that used by old-fashioned large lights.

Mini-lights offer great cost savings, however, loose or missing bulbs can wreck havoc on your displays. Most mini-light strands operate on a closed circuit; if any bulbs are removed or loose, the circuit is broken and the set will not illuminate. Plug in each strand and check for unlit bulbs. If you find any unlit bulbs, unplug the strand from the outlet, then replace the bulbs. If a bulb is not functioning due to a cracked socket, discard the strand as it poses a fire hazard. Ensure all bulbs are firmly screwed or pushed, as applicable, into their sockets.

Occasionally, bulbs will come loose during the process of hanging the strand. You may find you've spent an hour decorating, only to turn on the power and find nothing happens! In that case, one of the easiest ways to find the problem is to buy a tester. Testers work by detecting the alternating electromagnetic waves given off by any wire carrying power. Simply plug in the strand of lights and point the end of the tester at each bulb. If the bulb is getting power, the tester will indicate that it is working. If the bulb is not getting power - because a bulb upstream is loose - then the tester will indicate a malfunction. Testers are available at hardware and home decorating stores.

Older models of mini-lights also fail to light up when a single bulb burns out. These strands lack the shunting devices available in newer models. A shunting device is a wire inside the bulb, which completes the circuit when the filament burns out. The shunt allows the current to continue running through the bulb so that the rest of the strand stays lit. When buying new lights, read the fine print to be sure each bulb has a shunting device. Replace burnt-out bulbs to prolong the life of the other bulbs. Check the manufacturer's instructions or the cord itself to ensure you are using bulbs of the correct wattage. Replacing a low-wattage bulb with a higher-wattage one increases the risk of sparks.

When buying lights also look for the CSA symbol and ensure that they are labeled for outdoor use. Indoor lights should never be used outdoors.

Securing Outdoor Lights

There are two hazards when hanging outdoor lights: contact with water and damage to the cord.

Most people hang their outdoor lights on fair-weather days. As a result, they may not realize they are placing lights in areas that collect rainwater or melted snow. When securing strands of lights to your home, keep the strand clear of roof gutters, indentations in the earth below trees (tree wells), or any other recessed area. If the strand rests in a pool of water there is a significant risk of a short circuit and sparks, which may result in a fire.

Decorating the outside of a home usually requires two or three strands of lights connected to make one long strand. The point at which one strand connects to another is vulnerable to water penetration. Try to position plug connections in dry areas such as underneath roof awnings. In areas where your home does not offer protection from the elements, you can weatherproof the connections by wrapping them with plastic bags, then sealing with all-weather tape.

When securing lights to your home, use plastic or rubber clips to keep the wires from touching metal objects. These clips are very inexpensive and reusable. Insulated staples are another option, however, it's important to ensure the staples do not pierce the cord.

Regardless of how you attach a strand, make sure the bulbs are facing down so precipitation won't get into the sockets.

Maintenance

Check over the strand of lights carefully for signs of wear. Outdoor lights are designed to withstand rain, snow, and cold temperatures. However, over time, cords may become cracked or worn. Outdoor light strands have an outer plastic layer surrounding the insulated wires. If the cord has any worn patches or cracks in the outer casing, the result could be a short circuit or sparks. Rather than trying to repair the strand, it is safer to simply replace it.

Following these tips will help to protect your home by ensuring that your outdoor lights are safe, giving you peace of mind and pleasure to all who see them.

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WATER DAMAGE TO CARPET

Leaking washers, overflowing sinks, floods and spills are a few of the common ways that carpets become damaged. These mishaps can cause a number of unsightly and potentially unhealthy results. The following are some helpful tips to help minimize the damage through proper drying and cleaning.

The first several hours after water damage occurs are important not only for your carpet and underlay but also for your other possessions. Excess moisture in the air may cause wooden furniture as well as photography and artwork to warp. If the moisture is not removed as soon as possible, mold and fungus may begin to grow in corners, under couches and chairs and in the drapery. Some types of mold can cause respiratory problems. Water from the carpet may also seep up drywall leaving yellowish stains near the floor. If the carpet is multicoloured, the colours may begin to bleed into each other so drying the carpet is the first priority.

- Dry the carpet with towels or a wet/dry vacuum.
- To increase air circulation and evaporation, open the windows or turn on the air conditioner or dehumidifier.
- Move furniture to a dry area. If it is not possible to move certain pieces of furniture, plastic can help prevent water damage. Lift the bottom edges of the furniture and dry them as best as possible then slide white plastic bags or plastic coasters underneath.
- Remove area rugs from the floor and hang to dry.
- Don't leave anything on the floor that may stain the carpet such as magazines.

Remember that water poses a threat of electrocution. If you use a wet/dry vacuum, try to keep the cord off the floor. If you need to remove lamps and other electronic devices from a room with a wet carpet, turn off the power at the circuit breaker first. Never turn on electrical devices while standing on a wet floor.

Water damage from floods, leaks, spills and other sources is often comprised of more than merely water. For example, floods often bring mud into the home. Leaks from pipes may leave rust stains particularly when the water is hard (mineral-rich). Chances are you will need to do a thorough cleaning and remove some stains.

Cleaning Machines

There are four main types of cleaning machines: large canister extractors, upright extractors (these are the types you typically find for rent at grocery stores), small canister extractors and scrubbers. Large canister extractors are powerful steam machines often used by professional cleaning companies. Upright extractors are not as powerful as large canister types and can leave excess water in the carpet and underlay.

Scrubbers are usually handheld devices which are good for cleaning up small stains. The best choices for cleaning large areas are the large canister and upright extractors.

If you are not able to rent a large canister extractor, you may wish to hire a professional cleaning company. If you prefer to rent an upright extractor, it is important to remove as much water as possible from the carpet so that the underlay will not rot. After the normal shampooing and suctioning, turn the machine to vacuum (or suction) and run it over the carpet several times. Open the windows or turn on the air conditioner or dehumidifier to increase evaporation.

Stains

Despite the best cleaning machines, some stains are tenacious. Cleaning becomes a fine balance between removing a stain and damaging the carpet itself. Before applying any of the following cleaners to a stained area, it is highly recommended that you test them out first on a hidden or low-traffic area in case any discolouration occurs.

Oxygen Bleach Nylon and acrylic rugs are fairly easy to clean, however, natural fibres such as wool are more challenging. An effective way to clean wool is to add powdered oxygen bleach (a gentle, natural alternative to chlorine bleach) to water in an extractor. Be careful not to mix in too much oxygen bleach - use approximately 10ml in 18 litres of water.

Vinegar A mixture of 1 part white vinegar to 10 parts water is an effective cleaner particularly for coffee and tea stains.

Oil For any oil-based stain, the quicker you get to it, the easier it will be to remove. If the spill consists of only a drop or two, pour a small amount of rubbing alcohol onto a white cloth or paper towel and blot - do not rub - the oil from the outside of the stain toward the centre. If you have a larger spill, use a dry-cleaning solvent. Pour it onto a paper towel and blot, also from the outside of the stain toward the centre.

To remove all of the oil, you may have to repeat the cleaning process several times. If the spill is large, the oil will probably soak into the padding beneath the carpet; in that case, you may need to call a professional.

Toothpaste You may not think the same way about toothpaste again! White toothpaste (one which doesn't contain a whitening formula) is an effective carpet cleaner.

Hydrogen Peroxide Hydrogen peroxide is used to clean contact lenses and scrapes but it also helps to remove and lighten stains. Slightly dampen the area with water. Dab on a white cloth dipped in 3 percent hydrogen peroxide; let dry.

Last Resorts

Last resorts If the stain remains despite your best efforts, you may wish to contact a professional carpet maintenance company to have it re-dyed to the original colour. As a

last resort, you can insert a new piece of carpet. Make an insert. Cut out stained carpet with a utility knife; attach a new piece (from a remnant) with carpet adhesive.

These tips along with some elbow grease and persistence can go a long way to restoring the original condition of your carpet!

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Grant & Steve Hunter

ROOF MAINTENANCE

The roof is often the most overlooked aspect of the home mainly because it's outside of our normal field of vision. This is one case in which 'out of sight and out of mind' can have expensive consequences. When the roof begins to leak, becomes weakened by snow and debris, or starts to grow moss and even grass, people not only take notice, they may also be in for some very expensive repair bills. Regular roof maintenance can improve energy efficiency, increase curb appeal and help to prevent costly repairs.

Moisture

The roof and the exterior walls protect your home from the elements: wind, rain and snow. Even a small leak in the roof that goes unnoticed for weeks or months can weaken the walls and cause damage to furniture, flooring and other belongings. Excess moisture can also lead to the growth of toxic mold on inner walls, insulation and interior surfaces such as carpets and draperies. Safely removing the mold can be an expensive and difficult task. Consult a professional home renovation company; the cleaning process may release mold spores which can be inhaled and may cause severe allergic reactions in some people.

Regular roof maintenance is the best way to prevent leaks. Most roofs are covered with wood or asphalt shingles and both are susceptible to damage from the sun, wind and precipitation. The sun can dry and crack shingles; expansion and contraction with varying temperatures can cause cracks; moisture can allow moss and fungus to grow which may also split the shingles. As a result of any or all of these factors, moisture may begin to seep through the shingles into your home. Maintenance involves cleaning, checking for leaks, repairing worn or damaged shingles and in the case of wood shingles, applying preservative.

Cleaning Your Roof

Ideally, a homeowner should remove debris such as fallen leaves, twigs, etc., from the roof and rain gutters twice a year. This debris can add unnecessary weight to your roof and gutters and create a breeding ground for mold and fungus. Clogged gutters will become even heavier during a rainfall if the water cannot drain out.

Washing your roof at least once a year can help to keep it looking good and remove any unwanted hitchhikers such as moss or fungus. Mix together 250ml of chlorine bleach, 250 ml powdered laundry detergent and 4 litres of hot water in a large pail. Use a garden pump sprayer (or rent a pressure washer) to apply the mixture. Spray it on and allow it to sit for 15 minutes then sweep the surface with a strong bristled broom to remove any dirt. Rinse the area with fresh water. Remember to stand upstream of the water to reduce your chances of slipping on the shingles.

Checking For Leaks

Although most leaks should be repaired by a professional, it is helpful to be able to apply a patch until it can be repaired. Finding leaks requires patience! The most efficient method involves two people. One person stands on the roof and applies a gentle stream of water over the roof while another person with a flashlight goes into the attic or crawl space to look for signs of a leak. If a leak is discovered, the person inside the house should let the person on the roof know so that they can mark the spot. Use cell phones, walkie talkies or simply knock on the ceiling to communicate that a leak has been discovered.

Repairing Worn or Damaged Shingles

Your roof's worst enemy is undoubtedly the elements. Sun, wind and precipitation can dry, crack and buckle shingles. Wood shingles can lose most of their natural moisture and protective resins within 5 years. It is important to inspect your roof at least once a year and repair any damage.

To remove a damaged wood shingle, slide the blade of a hacksaw underneath the damaged shingle and cut the nails that were used to hold the shingle in place. If it does not slide out easily, slide the blade overtop of the shingle and cut the nails on top as well. Use the old shingle as guide to cut a new shingle. Slide in the new one and nail it in place.

Asphalt shingles are more flexible so you can lift up overlapping shingles and use a pry bar to remove the nails. Slide in the new shingle and nail it in place.

Preserving Wood Shingles

Wood shingles can be a beautiful feature of a home. To prevent fading, cracking and discolouration, regular applications of preservative are essential. Homeowners can choose from both oil-based and water-based preservatives. It is best to use whichever type was previously used on your home - although either type will work. Check the weather and choose a day with little wind so that you can avoid inadvertently spraying your neighbours' properties. Also check the forecast for signs of rain; preservative should dry and set for 24 hours before a rainfall or snowfall.

Apply preservative with a paint sprayer and remember to stand upstream of the spray to prevent slipping and falling. Read the manufacturer's instructions on the preservative to ensure that you are applying the right amount.

Safety

When inspecting and cleaning your roof, be sure to do so safely. A safety harness can be a lifesaver especially if you have never been on a roof before. Your ladder should be metal or have metal-supported wooden steps. If the ground around your home is soft, place a large piece of plywood beneath the ladder to prevent it from sinking into the ground. When positioning your ladder, place it at a point in your roof where the rungs of the ladder are parallel to the edge of the roof. Ask someone to hold the ladder when you are climbing up and down. If you are uncomfortable with heights or with walking across an angled surface, consider hiring a professional to maintain your roof.

Spending one or two afternoons every year maintaining your roof is time well spent. Regular upkeep can extend the life of your roof, improve its appearance and save your money in the long run.

THE "HOME HUNTERS"

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SPOTLESS WINDOWS

Washing windows is a tricky business. You think you've got them cleaned and then the sun starts shining through showing you all the streaky mess you've left. If this has happened to you, then you should read the following tips.

If you've ever hired professional window washers you may have noticed that they didn't pull out their Windex and paper towels to get the job done, and neither should you. The most effective window washing equipment is a squeegee with a 10 to 14 inch blade. They can be bought from a janitorial supply store. You will also need a sponge and a cloth. Rather than store bought glass cleaner, try the following solution: Dilute $\frac{1}{2}$ cup ammonia and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup white vinegar with a gallon of warm water. Once you've got the right equipment, a successful job is all in the technique. First, apply the solution to the window with the sponge, scrubbing where there is caked on dirt. Then, wipe the blade of the squeegee with a damp cloth as it will slide better on glass. Hold the squeegee at an angle and drag it across the glass, either side to side or from top to bottom. You should wipe the blade with the cloth after each swipe.

Once you have used the squeegee on the whole window, wipe the sill with the cloth to remove excess water. Do not wipe drops of water that may accumulate at the edge of the window. If you do, they will smear, if left alone, they will simply dry.

Here are some more helpful hints:

- Never wash windows in the bright sunlight. This will make them dry too fast and leave a residue that results in streaking
- To make windows shine, rub them with a clean blackboard eraser after cleaning.
- If you have large windows to clean sponge and the squeegee only half at a time, beginning with the top half.

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