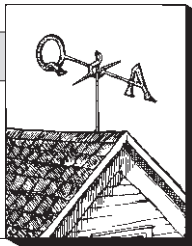


Preserving Seaside Shakes

by Henry Spies



Q. *What is the best finish for the cedar shakes on a coastal home that is exposed to strong sun and lots of fine salt spray? Should the finish be sprayed, dipped, or brushed for best results?*

A. Much depends upon the desired look. If you want a weathered gray look that is common in coastal areas, a clear water-repellent preservative can be used as a natural finish. It reduces warping, prevents water staining at the edges and ends, and helps control mildew growth. However, it does not, and cannot, maintain the new look of the cedar.

If you want the gray look immediately, a preservative stain is the answer. Semitransparent stains contain inorganic pigments, water repellents, and preservatives (mildewcides and fungicides). A semitransparent stain is more durable than a clear water-repellent preservative because the pigment absorbs some of the ultraviolet light, which deteriorates the wood fibers. Solvent-based (oil-based) stains are preferable to latex stains because they penetrate the wood surface and aren't as likely to blister or peel. Latex-based stains and solid-color stains (whether latex- or oil-based) form a thicker surface film. While this film will guard against ultraviolet light, it may also peel or flake.

Dipping the shakes will provide the best coverage and will seal their cut ends, sides, and backs, reducing warping. Dip the shingles to slightly more than double the exposure, so the wood exposed in the cracks between the shakes will also be treated.

Painting Asphalt Shingles

Q. *Our clients are unhappy with the color of their roof now that the house has been painted. The asphalt shingles are less than two years old and are in very good condition. Is there any way to change the color of the shingles without replacing them?*

A. Several products on the market can be used to change the color of asphalt shingles, but the color choice is limited. There are both acrylic and elastomeric coatings, but they are usually restricted to black, white, and gray in color. White can be tinted

to a pastel color by adding pigments, but no other dark colors are available. Elastomeric coatings are available from Kool-Seal (1499 Enterprise Pkwy., Twinsburg, OH 44087; 800/321-0572) or Macklanburg-Duncan (M-D, 4041 N. Santa Fe, Oklahoma City, OK 73118; 800/654-8454). M-D also makes acrylic roof coatings that might be used. Whatever you choose, check first to see whether or not the coatings will void the manufacturer's warranty on the shingles.

Exhaust Ventilation in the Attic

Q. *Why should the small amount of moisture from a bath fan be a problem in a large, well-ventilated attic? I find bath fans vented into the attic more often than I find wall or roof caps, and, in most cases, there is no problem.*

A. The key words here are "large, well-ventilated." Most attics today are not as large as in the past, and many are not well-ventilated. Rather than trying to establish standards for those conditions, it is easier to require that all fans be vented to the outdoors.

I always recommend venting exhaust fans to the outside. If you must vent into the attic, however, fan discharge should never blow directly into the insulation, nor should it blow against the roof sheathing. If the discharge is brought a foot or two above the insulation and blown horizontally toward the middle of the attic so the moisture can diffuse into the air before it hits a cold surface, problems might be avoided. Most of the fans I know of have no ducting at all and blow directly into the insulation. While the amount of moisture from a bathroom fan may be considered small, it can be the "straw that breaks the camel's back" in an attic with marginal ventilation and numerous vapor leaks. ■

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