

Letters

Wood Shingle Roofing Tips

The article by Jim Airasian (“Weaving Hips and Valleys With Wood Shingles,” 4/12) featured some great work and some great pictures. I’d like to share a few tips I’ve picked up over 40 years of shingling with wood. I always nail $\frac{3}{4}$ inch to 1 inch from each side, and take care not to bang the nails through the fiber — a little proud is better. I like ring-shank nails because they won’t pull out.

Watch those annular rings: The arc faces up — otherwise the tails will cup up on the edges. Here in the Northeast, the gaps between shingles should be $\frac{1}{4}$ inch, to allow for expansion in warm, wet weather. While I sympathize with the author’s statement about the extra cost of installing shingles over wood slats, I wouldn’t do it any other way. I run verticals every 2 feet and cross with 4-inch “skippers”; I’ve been doing it this way for 40 years and have had no blow-offs or failures. The key to wood shingles is drying — air movement. Installing them directly over felt paper or Ice & Water Shield is a death sentence.

I use only copper flashing, though Kynar-coated metal might be good, too. I like to put a J-return on valley edges, so the rain doesn’t wash over them.

These roofs are works of art; they should never be put over a poor substrate. I drive by roofs that my grandfather and I installed in the late 1950s and can’t help but smile, remembering the jobs — and seeing that the roofs are still in place. And when the shingles do eventually fail, they’ll make great kindling for the fireplace. No dump fees — a true “eco” roof.

David Mills

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Epoxy Nozzle Extender

In the article “Replacing 18th-Century Windows” (5/12), Noah Woodruff mentions that he prefers Hilti-brand epoxy because it comes with longer mixing nozzles. A trick we use on the West Coast, where we are constantly epoxying bolts for seismic retrofits in hard-to-access places, is to

slip a short length of plastic tube over the end of the nozzle. This helps in cases where you’re lying on the crawl-space floor and have to guide the epoxy tube into a new bolt hole drilled into the top of the footing. The tube would work well for the kind of work Noah is doing, because you can bend it around obstacles as well.

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Beware the Scammers

During my 30-something years of work as a forensic architect, I’ve been retained many times by owners and insurance companies to investigate hail damage claims. In the past few years, our area has experienced a number of isolated hail storms, and I’ve noticed a pattern in the aftermath: A roofing company knocks on the door of either a home or a business and offers a free inspection for storm-related roof damage. The “inspector” reports to the owner that there is enough damage to require a new roof, claims to be a specialist in insurance work, and offers to help the owner report the loss. If damage is even remotely evident, it seems insurance companies are quick to settle. By accepting a settlement check, the owner may be giving up his or her right to make future claims for the same weather incident, and even for that roof in general. In the cases I’ve reviewed, the settlements are roughly half of what is really needed to replace the roof correctly. Yet these fly-by-night roofers — for that’s what they are — are willing to take the job regardless, cut corners as needed, and replace what is actually a reasonably good roof with one that doesn’t meet industry standards, though it looks okay.

Then — as I have learned when I am called to inspect the situation — if a future weather-related claim is made, such as a blow-off or a leak, the insurance company and manufacturer will deny the claim, because it’s easy to discover that the roof wasn’t installed according to the installation instructions or code. And just try and find the “roofer” that talked up such a good deal a few years earlier!

I’m writing simply to pass on my observations, so that builders are aware and can warn their clients not to be seduced by a “good deal.”

Harrison McCampbell

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KEEP 'EM COMING!

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