



What's new in roofing materials

We've come a long way from the thatched roofs that many of our ancestors used to cover the shelters they called home. Traditional and new roofing materials are better than ever and available in many varieties and price ranges. Regardless of the material used, a new roof will add curb appeal to a home and increase its resale value.

When buying a home, one important feature to consider is the condition of the roof. Generally, if the roof is more than 15 years old, chances are you'll have to replace it soon. This cost should be factored into the purchase price of a home.

Whether you are purchasing a home or concerned about the condition of the roof on your existing home, spring is by far the best time to do an inspection. This is when winter damage is fresh and the dryer weather ahead will provide the conditions needed to replace, patch or re-roof.

Depending on the roofing materials used, look for obvious damage — cracked tiles, missing shingles, warped or gapping wood shakes. With asphalt roofs, look for thin, weather-worn shingles. On a warm day, gently bend a few shingles back. If they're not flexible, or if they crumble, consider re-roofing.

Before re-roofing with asphalt shingles, lift a few shingles that are located away from the edge to see if there's another layer of shingles below. If there is, you'll need to have all the layers of old shingles removed before re-roofing. However, if the roofing material is less than 15 years old and there are only a few bad spots, you may only have to patch these up. Asphalt shingle repair is simple and inexpensive. This is a job you may want to do yourself.

Roofs can be deceiving. Sometimes you can't spot the damage from the outside. If you suspect a problem, inspect the roof from the attic or crawl space. Check for dampness and dark water stains.

What's up in roofing materials

When it comes to roofing materials, *asphalt shingles* still offer the greatest versatility and continue to be popular among homeowners. Available in a vast array of colours and textures, asphalt shingles can conform to any roof shape. Compared to some roofing materials, they are inexpensive, easy to install and repair.

As a roofing material, *wood shingles and shakes* are less popular these days. While many homeowners prefer the bold, traditional, sculptured look wood shingles and shakes give a home, concerns have been raised about how well they can resist fire.

Also popular, especially in warmer climates, are both *cement and clay tile* which comes in a variety of colours, shapes and textures. However, these can be both expensive and heavy and not the best choice for many homes.

Some companies now offer high-tech alternatives to traditional roofing materials. These combine versatility, light weight and durability with high fire, weather, insect and mold resistance properties.

Lightweight aluminum roof shakes, for example, also help lower energy costs by keeping your home warm in winter and cool in summer. Other high-tech roofs use fibre-reinforced cement that weighs about the same as wood or premium shingles and comes in slate, shingle or wood shake forms.

Some use earth stone granules and acrylic resins bonded to aluminum or galvanized steel bases to capture the pleasing look of tiles or the rich textures and strong lines of wood shingles.

These new roofing materials often come in a variety of colours, shapes, textures and sizes. They are generally more expensive than traditional asphalt shingles. But, in most cases, the extra cost is well worth it. Some are backed by a 50 year guarantee. Most will look as good 20 years and more from now as the day they were installed.