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Yes, you can outwit leaky roof syndrome

Roof leaks are one of the worst emergency home repairs. While repairs need to be done outside, leaks are generally only noticed during bad weather.

One course of action is to use pots, pans, buckets, etc., to catch the water and then wait for the weather to improve. That, however, is not the best approach. You need to locate the source of the leak while it's still raining. If you wait until everything has dried up, you might look forever for the source of that drip.

If possible, look on the underside of the roof (from the attic, for example) for the spot where the water is going through the ceiling. This point of entry is rarely directly over the dripping, but mark the spot so you have a starting point later.

Follow the drip (or wetness) to what appears to be its source. Look for water stains on rafters and, in the daylight, for pinpricks of light in the roof. Take a very careful look around anything that goes through the roof (chimney stack or vent pipe). Areas where two roof slopes meet, such as valleys, dormers and ridges, deserve special attention. When you think you have found the source, mark it.

At this point, all you may be able to do is find the source. If the problem is so bad it needs immediate attention, staple, tack or nail a sheet of plastic or building paper over the damage. Weigh the risk of venturing onto a wet and possibly windy roof against the potential water damage very carefully.

Once the weather has improved, get on the roof and look for the source of the

problem. The way to locate it on the outside is by driving a thin nail up through the roof from the spot you marked inside.

The most likely places for leaks to develop occur where asphalt or wood shingles appear cracked or worn, or where slate and tile is broken or even missing. Take a careful look at all places where there is flashing (the metal seams around objects protruding through the roof), such as chimneys. Also examine areas where different roof slopes meet or where skylights exist.

Small leaks often found around flashed areas can be fixed with a liberal application of roofing tar or sometimes more neatly with caulk squeezed from a caulking gun.

Shingles that are torn, cracked or missing can often be made leakproof by sliding a piece of flashing up underneath, nailing it in place and then covering the nail holes and edges of the flashing with roofing tar. Force the flashing up with a block of wood. You may need to do this on several adjacent courses.

Repairs that involve more than applications of roofing tar can become complicated and are probably best left to professionals. The same is true for repairs in which the shingles are excessively worn, cracked, lacking their gravel coating or, if wooden, covered in moss or split. Asphalt and wood shingles do not last forever. Their deterioration and replacement is eventually unavoidable. Although slate and tile are considerably more expensive, they will last much longer.

Everyday items aid clean-up

By SUE BUCK
Staff Writer

You've poured Worcestershire sauce on your favorite steak many times; now dribble some sauce on a much-loved piece of brass to polish it.

Hidden within our shelves and cupboards, lurking in our refrigerators, everyday kitchen items can find other uses throughout every room in the house.

It didn't take Chef Larry Jones, an Oh-server & Eccentric food columnist, long recently to research additional uses for many items.

Begin with that grungy ceramic tile. It will sparkle with a simple recipe: one-quarter cup baking soda, one-half cup white vinegar and one cup ammonia.

"But it's not a keeper," Jones said. "It can't be stored. You need to use it soon."

Don't throw out that old, flat cola drink. Pour a cup into the toilet and let it soak for one-half hour to clean it. The bowl will even impress the Tidy Bowl man.

Have your kids gone sticker crazy? The popular childhood hobby often results in stickers stuck in the wrong place — like

wood tables and doors. "Vegetable oil will remove paper stickers stuck on tables," Jones said.

Leftover liquid tea also is good for cleaning varnished furniture, Jones said. Ice cubes, put in place and allowed to melt, will remove the indentation that furniture makes on the carpet, he said.

Ooops, did you drop a raw egg while you were putting the groceries away? Don't fret. "Cover the egg with salt and let it sit for 15 minutes," Jones said. "You'll be able to sweep it up."

Still another Jones recipe keeps drains running free: mix one cup baking soda, one cup table salt and one-quarter cup cream of tartar.

"Store this in a clean jar marked 'Cleaner'," Jones said. "To use, pour one-quarter cup in the drain and add one cup boiling water."

And don't forget septic tanks. To keep them running freely, mix two envelopes of dry yeast, one pound of brown sugar and four cups of warm (not hot) water. "Allow to rest until foamy, then flush down the toilet," Jones said.

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