

## LET'S REMODEL

# Old house's cracks need more than paint

**Q:** We have an old home with peeling plaster and cracks on the walls and we are having trouble restoring the surfaces. Do you have suggestions for using textured paint or other methods to restore the walls? **A:** It is important to first determine the cause of the cracks. Moisture problems caused by faulty plumbing or roof leaks are a common cause of plaster damage. Start by locating the plumbing fixtures in the home. Is the problem located directly below a major plumbing fixture, such as a tub or toilet?

It might indicate that a fixture has developed a slow leak, or the caulking around the tub or toilet has failed, causing water to saturate the plaster around this area. Recaulking the bathroom is a fairly easy project, but you might consider contracting a professional to deal with the plumbing leak.

A thorough inspection of the roof would also be a good idea. Shingles that are overly brittle, having curled edges, with most of the stone surfaces worn off, are usually in need of repair or replacement. Also check all flashings on chimneys, pipes, and walls to ensure that no water can penetrate these areas: use a good quality roof mastic to seal around any problem areas. If water damage is the cause of the problem, you need to completely remove all of the damaged plaster before proceeding with patching the areas. Since there are numerous types of patching compounds, you should consult your local hardware or lumber yard for the product that is best for your application. Before painting, be sure to treat these areas with a stain killing primer.

Another common cause of plaster cracking is the movement of walls in an older home. Homes constructed using undersized floor joists, causing floors to sag due to overloading, are not uncommon. This would cause movement of the floor and ceilings, and could be the reason your plaster is cracking and peeling. The best solution to this problem would be to brace, or 'shore up' the structural members as to prevent further movement. Depending on your level of expertise, you should evaluate if this is a job that you can handle on your own. The best way to repair the plaster, as in the case of the water damage, would be to remove all areas of plaster that are cracked or peeling. Once removed, you can safely patch these areas with patching plaster or a number of other products that are available. If the area is quite large you might consider removing all the plaster from this wall and replacing with a combination of two layers of drywall to achieve the same thickness as the original plaster.

To conclude I would only recommend using textured paint if you are looking for a low cost or temporary solution to your problem.

Steve Ramackers, Mainstreet Restoration, 810-644-6330.



**Q:** We're thinking about installing a whirlpool in our home. The terms whirlpool, spa and hot tub are confusing. What are the differences?

**A:** Whirlpool bath tubs are designed for installation inside of the home. They come in many shapes and styles and colors to fit almost any home. They all offer therapy jets that are operated by a pump located on the base of the whirlpool. Options such as inline heaters, mood lights, and multispeed pumps are available. Unlike spas and hot tubs, whirlpool tubs must be filled up with water and drained each time you use it. Spas are available in either an acrylic or a combination of vinyl and Styrofoam materials in a wide choice of colors. The units are free-standing and can be installed indoors or outside. Installation of a spa is fairly simple because the plumbing is contained within the unit. The spa is filled with a garden hose, and the water can be circulated for three to four months. As with a swimming pool, this water must be treated with chemicals in order to keep it free of harmful bacteria. Special wiring is needed for the operation of the heating and filtering systems of most spas and it is recommended that a licensed electrician perform the necessary work. Similar to the spa, a hot tub is the original California-type recreational pool. The tub is made of vertical slats of redwood secured with metal bands. However, hot tubs do not have any therapy jets. All of these products have one thing in common; they are designed for soothing relaxation.

Jeff Moss, Advance Plumbing & Heating Supply Company, 810-669-7474.

If you have home improvement questions, call Gayle Walters at the Michigan Remodeling Association (MRA) at 810-335-3232, or send questions to "Let's Remodel," 2187 Orchard Lake Road, No. 103, Sylvan Lake, MI 48320. Answers are provided by members of the MRA, the local chapter of the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI). Members include professional contractors, manufacturers, wholesalers and lenders representing all facets of residential and light commercial remodeling. For more information or a free copy of our membership roster call 810-335-3232.



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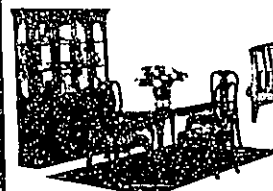
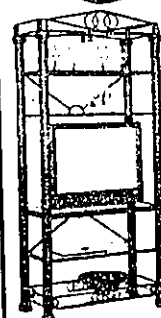
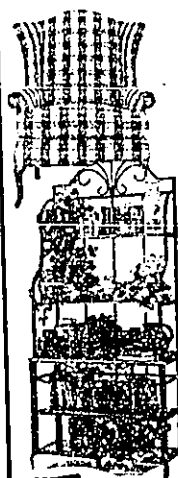
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