

Shingles come in different materials, the choice is yours

(AP) - Q: The shingles on our roof are worn and we want to have the roof reshelled. We don't know whether to use asphalt or fiberglass shingles. What is your opinion?

A: Either type of shingle will work for you. Your choice depends on aesthetics, availability and your budget. Generally, the more expensive shingles come with a longer warranty, some of which can reach 20-25 years.

Many people, even roofers, confuse fiberglass and asphalt shingles. Fiberglass shingles are made with asphalt and should be referred to as fiberglass-asphalt shingles.

An asphalt shingle consists of felt base mat made from rags, paper and wood pulp. The mat is saturated and coated with asphalt then surfaced with mineral aggregates. Fiberglass-asphalt shingles have a glass fiber mat coated with asphalt and surfaced with mineral aggregates.

The difference between organic and fiberglass-based shingles is more of a concern to the roofer than the homeowner. Fiberglass-based shingles were developed because roofers found that asphalt shingles softened during hot weather installations, and were easily damaged. Fiberglass shingles are coated, not saturated, with asphalt and are not easily damaged during hot

weather.

However, in the northern United States, organic mat shingles are often used. Fiberglass shingles are difficult to work in very cold weather because they become brittle and can crack if flexed.

Fiberglass shingles have a better fire rating than organic shingles. Nevertheless, the latter is considered acceptable.

Q: I've noticed small holes and insects in some of the beams in my 150-year-old frame house. How can I tell if these are carpenter ants or termites, and how can I get rid of them?

A: Damage from carpenter

ants is often mistaken for termite infestation. However, ants tunnel only to construct nesting places. They remove excavated wood to the outside of their nests and keep the passageways clear. Termite galleries, on the other hand, are packed with sawdust-like material which is actually a woody excretion.

This difference in the appearance of infested areas is a positive means of identifying which pest is at work.

Carpenter ants may be seen entering and leaving wood. They vary widely in size but a common variety is approximately one-half-inch long, and either all black or mixed with brown. All members of the colony are fully formed except the larvae, which

are white and resemble grubs. Small, isolated colonies can be eradicated by injecting pesticide dust into the galleries or into holes drilled at intervals along infested timber. For best results, hire a licensed professional exterminator.

Q: I'm replacing some bad sections of copper water pipe. Can I use PVC pipe for the repairs?

A: Plastic water pipe can be joined to steel and copper pipe by means of plastic threaded adapters. Both male and female plastic adapters are available. One end of the plastic adapter is glued to the plastic pipe and the other threaded into a fitting or

onto a pipe. When joining plastic water pipe to existing metal piping, wrap the male threads with plastic pipe joint sealant tape. Because plastic female adapters can expand when threaded onto male threads, a better choice is to use a plastic male adapter threaded into an iron or copper female adapter or fitting.

To submit a question, write to Popular Mechanics, Reader Service Bureau, 224 W. 57th St., New York, N.Y. 10019. The most interesting questions will be answered in a future column.

By Popular Mechanics for AP Special Features

Your dream deck may be an easier project than you think

If the thought of building and maintaining a deck seems too overwhelming for you, read on. The following tips will make it easy for you to build your dream deck and maintain its beauty for years to come.

When planning your deck con-

sider what primary purposes you want the deck to serve - entertainment, seating, storage or a play area - then incorporate these purposes into the design. You can design the deck yourself, use a pre-cut deck kit or a pattern from a book or you can hire

a designer. When choosing the location of your deck, attached to your house or freestanding, consider the weather. Note the track of the sun and make sure that your location isn't too sunny or shady during the times you'll be using

the deck.

Choose wood that can withstand the effects of the weather such as pressure-treated lumber, redwood or cedar. To maintain the color and quality of your deck, pressure wash it with special deck cleaners annually and stain or seal it at least every other year.

When building your deck, always nail the boards bark side up to reduce cupping. Because installing decking can be very labor-intensive, con-

sider purchasing a nail gun, which can speed up the process and give your arms a rest.

To help prevent splitting when nailing the decking in place, use blunt-nosed nails.

Fit the decking boards together tightly. This will prevent gaps from forming between the boards when they dry out and shrink.

New decks should be coated with stain as soon as the wood will absorb it. "Failing to stain your deck is like going outside in a rainstorm without an umbrella - you'll definitely get wet and perhaps ill," said Guy Bowman, a paint department manager at Home

Depot. "While your deck won't catch cold, it will certainly warp and swell if moisture penetrates the wood."

Before staining, make sure the surface of the deck is free of water, oil, dirt and other foreign substances. Apply stain when the weather is between 60 and 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Avoid staining in direct sunlight or if rain is forecast within the next 24 hours.

"Maintaining your deck is as important as building it," says Bowman. "Damaged decking is both unsightly and dangerous. Wood rot, if untreated, can spread and affect good wood nearby."

How do you know if your deck is in healthy shape? Watch for signs of damage to the underlying structure. Examine support posts and joists for signs of rotting or infestation.

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