

## **FIX IT UP!**

*Bruce Turner*

### Up on the Roof

The stormy winter we just survived was probably pretty tough on your roof. If you had leak problems, doing the repairs yourself is a tricky business – the leak may not be coming from where you think it is, and it may take a professional eye to trace the water intrusion. You might want to consider a roofer.

But if you haven't had any leaks, there's some preventive maintenance you can do yourself – if you don't mind heights. Pull out that ladder and do an inspection.

Start with the flashings, the metal stripping that covers the transitions to vent pipes, skylights, chimneys and other vertical surfaces. They tend to rust and corrode, especially in our salt air. I've seen cases where rusted-out flashings leaked so much that the roof had to be replaced, even though the shingles had another ten years of life left in them. Most flashings are made of galvanized steel, and they're not hard to replace. For extra durability, go with copper – it's more expensive, but it won't rust, and it'll last as long as your roof does.

Now check out your shingles or clay tiles. Look for shingles that are partially missing, cracked, split or frayed. If repairs are needed, pull off one of the damaged shingles or tiles and take it to your local roof supply store, so you can match the color, type and manufacturer. Nothing looks funnier than a roof patched with mismatched materials.

Most shingles today are laminate composite shingles made of fiberglass, asphalt and tar (plus those little rocks in the surface) that are inexpensive, attractive and easy to install. Composite shingles generally carry warranties of 20, 25, 30 or 40 years. Keep in mind that a shingle's life span will be impacted by where it's installed – the side of the roof that gets the most sun, wind and rain exposure is going to wear more quickly.

You can also do repairs on traditional wood shake or shingles, such as cedar or redwood, which in heavier grades can last 50 years. Modern fire regulations require all roof shingles to have a fire rating, so the wood products on the market today are all treated with fire retardants. Unfortunately, the treatment pulls the natural oils from the wood, and while they look like the traditional wood shake or shingles, they won't be nearly as durable.

Use only roofing nails, the galvanized kind with the wide head that resist rust. We usually use a nail gun with galvanized staples, but if you're good with a hammer, good old-fashioned nails will get the job done.

Any mold or fungus on the roof should be power washed away, because it can accelerate the deterioration of whatever surface it's on, but if you do the cleaning yourself, be careful. If the spray is too powerful, you can drive water up under the shingles where it would never normally go, and you can actually cause the water damage you're trying to prevent.

Make sure your gutters are firmly attached and corrosion-free, and keep your downspouts clear so they won't back up. This is the perfect time to apply some paint to any of the flashings, gutters or downspouts that show signs of rust.

And, last but not least, step lightly up there. Walking on certain roof surfaces, particularly wood and tile, can cause damage you won't even know about – until the next winter rains. So walk softly.

*Bruce Turner is president of TurnerBuilt, Inc. He can be reached at [bturner@turnerbuilt.com](mailto:bturner@turnerbuilt.com).*