

Common Roofing Materials - A Comparison

Introduction

When choosing a new roof most homeowners desire a roof that is not too expensive, requires no maintenance and lasts forever. Should be simple, right? Not necessarily. With all of the roofing options out there the process can get complicated.

An average roof is replaced or repaired in as little as 8 to 10 years. Choosing the correct roofing material for your home from the start is critical in order to minimize the long-term costs, as well as the environmental damage caused by having made the wrong choice and needing to re-roof over in a few years.

Now that you know you need a new roof, it is the perfect time to make some changes that could benefit you in the long run. Choosing the correct material to roof your home can lower your energy costs, while increasing your homes curb appeal.

Also don't forget that your roof is your first line of defense against the weather. So, choose ahead of time a roof that is durable and won't fail in extreme weather conditions, just when you need it most.

Following below are the benefits and drawbacks of some common roofing materials. Composition Shingles, Clay Tile and Slate, Wood Shingle and Shakes and Metal.

Asphalt Composition Shingle Roofs

Composition shingles are the most common roofing material in North America. They are commonly made of either fiberglass or recycled paper based products mixed with asphalt, which is then covered with coloured mineral granules.

While they have a low installation cost, composition shingles will usually protect your home for about 10-15 years. Some composition roofs require maintenance or repair in as little as 8 years.

This material can be easily damaged by high winds, causing the shingles to blow off. High heat, heavy rains and other weather factors can cause curling, cracking and streaking of the shingles, which deteriorates your roof's appearance and effectiveness. An average home with composition shingles will have to be re-roofed many times over its lifetime, creating waste that will need to be disposed of in the environment.



Clay Tile and Slate Roofs

Clay tile and slate is commonly chosen for its appearance. Tile is often chosen for the ability to provide homes with a southwestern, Italian or Spanish Mission look, and slate is often seen on more upscale homes. They are natural substances that won't burn or be as affected by the elements or insects as would organic material. However, they are extremely heavy and cause significant stress on your home's structure. This puts your home at risk in the event of seismic activity or weakness caused by fire.



Installing clay tile or slate on an average home can be very expensive due to the complicated nature of the installation and the cost of the material itself. One common finding when installing clay tile or slate is that extra roof support systems are needed due to the extremely high weight of these materials. Even with the added support the weight of these materials can contribute to total building collapse in the event of structural fire or earthquake. It should also be noted that both tile and slate are very fragile, as they can crack and break if walked on. This can make regular maintenance such as cleaning out gutters or painting difficult. If the tiles loosen in high wind situations, they may blow loose and cause damage to other structures. Colours can fade significantly over time and there is a high cost associated with replacing them.

Wood Shingles and Shake Roofs

Wood shingles and shakes provide a natural look to your home. They are commonly made out of cedar, red wood or cypress.

Installing wood shingles or shakes is complicated and should only be undertaken by a professional. These materials are generally chosen for looks and not durability. Unlike 25 years ago, modern wood products are typically being manufactured from second growth wood, which means the wood can become brittle, and shrink, causing the roof to be compromised. This is due to the fact that the growth ring count in second growth trees is significantly less than old growth trees, causing reduced strength.



There is also a high level of maintenance to monitor as mold, rot; insects and rodents can be a problem leading to costly repairs. Finally many wood roofing materials are unrated by fire safety codes.

Metal Roofing

Today's metal roofing can provide you with any style or colour that would complement your home perfectly. Aluminum can be shaped to look like Tile, Slate, Shingle or Shake.

While the initial cost of a metal roof is higher than some other roofing materials, it can save you money in the long run. In some areas due to the high impact resistance to hail for example, a metal roof can lower your homeowners insurance.

Metal will also not be affected by other extreme weather the way other organic roofing materials will, as aluminum won't deteriorate. With the lightweight benefits of metal your roof won't need a heavy-duty truss or structure system for installing.



Metal roofing can decrease the chances of roof collapse, during earthquake or fire damage. Metal roofing products protect your home from sparks due to flying embers should fire threaten.

Conclusion

Composition shingles are an inexpensive option for your home in the short term. However the need to re-roof over time can make this an expensive option over time.

Clay tile and slate looks beautiful and can provide your home with a traditional and classic appearance, but the initial expense and fragility of this product can make this choice more expensive than just the initial investment. The heavy weight of this material adds some concern of structural safety in the event of an earthquake or fire.

Wood shingle and shake will give your home a natural appearance. In some areas wood is no longer allowed due to the danger of wildfires spreading among neighborhoods. With the product being produced today out of second growth wood, it is more susceptible to becoming brittle and shrinking than the wood shingles and shakes of years ago.

Metal roofing can provide your home with the look of any other common roofing material. The initial expense of installing this product on your home is quickly realized as a solid investment, as this product eliminates the need for future re-roofing and maintenance. And, modern metal roofing systems retain their appearance and color for decades.

Aluminum Metal roofing is an environmentally sound choice, since it reduces the homeowners' environmental footprint. This is due to the fact that aluminum roofing is made from recycled products, and can be totally recycled again and again, causing no further environmental waste. Landfills are therefore spared the huge waste that comes with the disposal of temporary roofing materials.

Now that you have the pros and cons of common roofing materials, you will be able to make an informed decision when it comes to protecting your home for years to come.

Questions?

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