Cedar shake roof: A roofing masterpiece

Are you looking for a bespoke roofing choice for your new building, or are you interested in transforming your present roof to a more sophisticated option? Then cedar shake roofs are a great option to consider. Cedar shake roofs are simply roofs made from premium quality wood, mostly cedar.

They provide a rustic, earthy finesse to your home and can last for several decades if properly installed. There is a lot to learn about cedar shake roofs, and therefore, in this article, we will be diving into all the essential details to be informed about before you opt for a cedar shake roof.

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Types of Cedar shake roofs

As stated earlier, cedar shake roofs are roofs made from wood. Traditionally, cedar shakes are split from woodblocks using axes and mallets, while shingles, on the other hand, are sawn from trees. Therefore, shakes are rough cuts and are thicker than shingles. There are different types of cedar shake roofs, and they can be classified based on the cedar type and the cedar shake type.

Classification according to Cedarwood

Generally, two types of Cedarwood are used for roofing: Red Cedarwood and White Cedarwood.

Red Cedarwood roofing materials are commonly used for cedar shake roofs due to their appealing outlook. Red cedar is the pricier of the two due to its superior quality and gorgeous appearance. Aside from its quality and appearance, red Cedarwood or western red Cedarwood, as it is also referred to, is very lightweight and highly

durable.



Naturally, it can resist insects and other rotting agents. It contains tannic acid, a natural preservative that makes it immune to constant variation in ambient climatic conditions such as temperature, humidity, and sunlight exposure.

Furthermore, the production of red cedar wood requires little energy, which makes this roofing option durable and sustainable. Compared to other roofing materials such as metal and asphalt, red Cedarwood is an environmentally friendly option.

White Cedarwood shake roofs are also known as eastern white Cedarwood roofs. They are a cheaper option than red Cedarwood, and they change with time to reveal an attractive silver-grey color. White cedar shakes are also pleasant and durable, and they contain tannins that protect them from rot and pest attack such as termites and powder post beetles.



White Cedarwood has good overall working characteristics making it easy to work with using hand and machine tools. However, the wood is soft and weak, giving it poor screw-holding capabilities. In its

finishing, White cedar glues and finishes nicely and is unlike any other material in its structural appearance. It appears pale brown or tan, while the narrow sapwood is nearly white. It features numerous tiny knots in the wood.

Classification according to Cedar shakes

Two main types of cedar shakes are split from wood blocks: tapersawn cedar shake; and handsplit & resawn cedar shake—however, there is another which is not as popular, tapersplit shake.

Tapersawn Cedar shakes



Tapersawn cedar shakes are split from the Cedarwood on opposite sides of the wood for a rougher, semi-textured look. They are more distinguished and tailored because they are sawn on both sides, similar to a cedar shingles; however, they have a more prominent shadowline than a wood shingle and retain their rugged, earthy looks.

Typically, they are perfect for use in luxury homes, cabins, and cottages for both sidewall and roofing applications. Tapersawn cedar shakes are prominent for their uniform look, providing a quality and attractive roof. They are hybrid products as they combine shingles and shakes qualities into one. They are attractively smooth and afford a rustic charm with their distinguished texture.

They are recommended for use on roof pitches of 4:12 and steeper to allow sufficient water drainage. All tapersawn Cedarwood shakes are sawn from heartwood without defects on either side, similar to a Cedarwood shingle but thicker, especially at the butt end.

They are the most commonly found wooden roofs available in homes today. Different sizes are available depending on the thickness, such as 1/2″, 3/4″, and 5/4″. Various lengths are also available such as 18, 20, and 24 inches, with widths of three to 8 inches.

Handsplit & Resawn Cedar shakes



Handsplit Cedar shakes have been widely used as the roofing material of choice in many parts of the world for several decades. They are produced by cutting cedar logs and then splitting the block to create two shakes. To make two tapered shakes, they are naturally hand-split using axes and mallets before the shakes are cut diagonally with a bandsaw. Each shake is then resawn to provide a rustic appearance and a flat smooth surface to beautify the roofing project.

Handsplit & Resawn Cedar shake roofs are apposite for achieving that rustic look thanks to their roughly textured surface. There are two prominent types of handsplit and resawn Cedar shakes, and they are:

Heavy-split and resawn: They are sawn on the backside, while the face is split with the wood's natural grain, giving it a highly textured surface with an earthy look on the exposed face. Typically, they are heavier than other types of Cedarwood shakes. They are provided in thicknesses of 3/4″, 7/8″, 1″ and 5/4″.

Medium-split and resawn: Medium-split and resawn are similar to the heavy split and resawn shake but lighter and thinner. They are available in a regular and uniform texture with thicknesses of 1/2″, 3/4″, and 5/8″. They give the roof a buoyant, countryside outlook.

Tapersplit Cedar shakes

Since these shakes are split by hand, they are no longer common. They are primarily used for traditional and historical projects requiring the perfect countryside appearance and luxury homes.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Cedar shake roofs

Cedar shake roofs are one of the most popular roofing materials, and just like other roofing materials, they have their pros and cons. Deciding on whether a cedar shake roof, a metal roof, an asphalt roof, or any other type of roof requires a careful

examination of the advantages over the disadvantages. Below, they are adequately highlighted and discussed to assist you in making an informed choice.

Advantages

For several reasons, cedar shake roofs have been used as one of the leading roofing options over the decades. Some of the most important ones include.

Aesthetics

Cedar shake roofs offer fresh, rustic looks unlike any other roof available today. Natural wood is much more appealing than metal roofs or asphalt shingles. Additionally, as they age, these roofs tend to reveal a different dark brown hue leaving a calm architectural feel. A single look at them is guaranteed to leave you wowed and highly impressed with their rugged looks as each piece looks different from the rest.

Durability

While it may not look like it, cedar shakes are one of the most durable roofing materials. Their durability is primarily due to their parent wood's thickness, roughness, and strength. Cedar shakes will last longer than asphalt shingles if correctly installed and maintained, and they can last for up to 50 years, which is also longer than the average cedar shingle lifespan.

Due to the weathering resistance and its natural preservative, cedar shakes can resist attacks and rot, making them a great natural roofing material. They can also withstand strong wind, hail, hurricanes, snowstorms, and heavy rains.

Energy Efficiency

Cedarwood roofs are also very energy efficient and save on the cost of air conditioning. They provide natural insulation, which helps cut down on home heating and cooling costs, thus reducing the amount of energy and electricity bills.

Cedar shakes are a good investment in the long run since they adapt to needs due to climatic changes, meaning you won't be required to make any changes due to the prevalent weather conditions in the summer and winter.

Similarly, their production requires little energy, and they can be split with simple devices before being sawn adequately. This is less energy demand than metallic roofing materials that need to be heated to very high temperatures before forming.

Eco Friendly

Trees are a renewable resource that can be replaced as they are fallen. Additionally, worn-out roofs can be recycled for other uses such as animal beddings, etc. This is a huge plus if you seek a roofing option that will not negatively affect the environment. Cedarwood shakes are better than most other roof types in sustainability and renewability.

Likewise, the production of Cedarwood shakes trim waste materials. All the by-products can be put to other uses without contributing to wastage. These savings are significant when evaluating the impact of prospective roofing material on the environment.

Disadvantages

Cedar shake roofs are not entirely devoid of their demerits, however, the advantages are enormous, as listed above. It is also essential to be informed of the disadvantages before opting for cedar shake roofs.

Flammability

Wood, by its nature, is a highly combustible material. In the event of a fire outbreak, wood will burn and serve as fuel, thus increasing the fire. Therefore, some building codes in regions with a high risk of fire have restricted or even totally outlawed the use of Cedarwood shakes.

However, it is good to note that cedarwood shakes are pressure-treated with fire retardants and chemical preservatives to reduce their flammability.

Maintenance costs and requirements

Cedar shake roofs require adequate maintenance to enable them last longer. Debris from leaves and branches must be cleaned from the roof to prevent moss, mold, and mildew, which grow when there is moisture from water or ice on the shakes.

Algae and mildew on the roof can be removed with an equal mix of mild liquid chlorine bleach and water sprayed with a low-pressure sprayer. The loosened moss can then be swept or blown away from the roof. Cleaning is best left to competent professionals as poorly handled power washers can cause damages to the roof.

Cedar shake roofs require regular cleaning of the gutters to allow water drainage to prevent moss growth and open ventilation to allow airflow around the shakes. Topical treatments can be applied as water repellents and ultraviolet inhibitors that can prevent graying of a roof.

Requires Professional installation

It is vital to engage the services of a competent roofing expert to enable cedar shake roofs to serve effectively over their lifespan and reduce the costs of subsequent maintenance.

An experienced roofing professional should be entrusted with carrying out the installation. It is crucial that the persons are adequately trained on the installation procedure and the appropriate tools and nails to fasten the roof members to one another.

Installation and Maintenance of Cedar shake roofs

As previously stated, professionals should install Cedarwood shakes to avoid damage. However, some manuals detail how to carry out cedar shake roof installation. Similarly, the maintenance of cedar shake roofs is also discussed below.

Installation

Perhaps the most critical factor to be considered for installation is the weather condition during the installation. It is better to install the roof on a dry day and not under the rain or during the snow. The weather should also not be too hot to avoid split and cracking of the shakes as they are being nailed together.

The cedar shake roof should have drip edges to prevent water from blowing up under the cedar shake during high winds. It should also have tar paper for ice and weather shielding. The tar paper serves as a breather material to prevent moisture from being trapped under the roof.

Ensure proper ventilation to allow the room to breathe sufficiently. These will enable the roof to trap air used for temperature and humidity control during extreme conditions. It is also essential to let the cedar shake roof breathe properly when wet. Also, ensure that any penetrations by nails are appropriately sealed.

In laying cedar shakes, allow for proper lap length to achieve a reveal of about 5 inches. Ensure the gutters are correctly connected to the downspout so that any excess water drains from the roof immediately to prevent rot.

Averagely, cedar shake roofs cost about $10 per square foot for professional installation.

Maintenance

Like any other roofing material, cedar shake roofs require maintenance to ensure they function optimally over their lifespan. Cedar shake roofs require routine and detailed maintenance compared to other roofs due to their nature. The primary sources of damage to cedar shake roofs are moisture and ultraviolet light from the sun because sunlight damages lignin at the surface of the wood.

While it is impossible to prevent sunlight from touching the roof, it is possible to apply treatments to minimize this damage. Also, as the roof is exposed to moisture, mold and algae grow on the wood. While they do not negatively affect the structural integrity of the wood, they leave the wood looking botched and are unpleasant aesthetically. It is vital to ensure water does not have any impediments to its smooth flow.

Likewise, routinely, the roof should be rid of debris from leaves and branches of trees to avoid severe damages to the roof to prevent them from sprouting up and growing on the roof, which can further cause damages.

Finally, the recommended cleaning for a cedar shake roof is using a brush and a mild cleaner to avoid damaging the wood. A mild bleach can also be applied using a pump sprayer and left for about 10 minutes before washing off with a garden hose. Be sure to keep the hose pointed downward to avoid forcing water up behind the shingles.

Conclusion

Choosing a roof is a personal choice. However, you should evaluate the merits, demerits, and requirements of each option before arriving at your choice. Ultimately, cedar shake roofs are some of the most attractive roofs today. There may have been a decline in their usage for cost and fire requirements, but if you are confident it is the right roof for you, you are assured of a shelter for the next couple of decades.