

WHAT DO WE CLEAN FROM A ROOF?

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When you pull up to a house one of the first things you notice is how stained or discolored a roof is. Some people will want their [roofs cleaned](#) merely for aesthetic reasons while others are looking to extend the life of their roof. As we stated earlier, as much as 50% of all roof replacements have been done because of the appearance of the roof and not actually because of its functionality.



How much is spent on a roof? \$5,000, \$10,000, \$20,000, or even more? Whatever your reason for roof cleaning that is a huge investment to protect. If you can extend the life of a roof, you delay the cost of roof replacement.

Cleaning residential and commercial roofing has become one of the best profit centers of the exterior cleaning business over the last decade. This is due to two factors: the fast spread of the contributing algae problem from warm, humid climates in the southeast to the north and west; and secondly due to the touch-less cleaning techniques that came out of Florida over the last couple of decades.

We will be discussing causation and the wide array of solutions and techniques used to combat the problem. Just as in every other element of cleaning, there is no single way to achieve acceptable results – there are many ways to get the job done.

No matter how you end up cleaning roofs, there are basic things you should understand about roofs before you ever decide to tackle a job. If you are going to walk on a roof, for example, you had better know how that roof is constructed and where you can put your feet and still be safe. If a roof is close to failing due to age or abuse, you should be aware of that before you commit to do the work.

We will begin with discussing what is causing all of the problems and then move on to the most popular and profitable techniques used today. When cleaning a roof it is important to identify what we are cleaning and removing as well as how to perform these jobs.. Before we do let's discuss just what is on the roof!

Cyanobacteria or Cyan Bacteria – One of the most common items is a type of over 20,000 types of algae that is not related to other algal groups, Cyanobacteria or Cyan Bacteria. Despite the name, Cyanobacteria does not have decomposing properties. It actually contains chlorophyll which traps the energy from the sunlight allowing it to grow anywhere. Cyanobacteria are capable of surviving in extreme conditions and have been found in deserts as well as Antarctica. Cyanobacteria have been found on polar bears and can give off a green hue to the polar bear's coat.

Gloeocapsa Magma – a bacteria that appears on many roof tops that appears often as black or

greenish streaks. It thrives on limestone and calcium carbonate that is a structural part of shingles. Moisture is critical, so this bacteria forms a hard surface that retains moisture. This is why these streaks are usually prevalent on the north side of the roof more shielded from the sun or areas under trees. It degrades the shingles over time. Slowing or stopping the deterioration will extend the longevity of the roof.

Lichens – Lichens are not single organisms the way most other living things are, but rather it is a combination of two organisms which live together. Most of the lichen is composed of a fungus, but living among the filaments are algal cells, usually from a green algae or a cyanobacterium. In many cases the fungus and the algae which together make the lichen may each be found living in nature without its partner, but many other lichens include a fungus which cannot survive on its own — it has become dependent on its algal partner for survival.

Moss – Mosses are very small green plants. Typically they consist of a stem not much thicker than a thick hair, densely covered with leaves maybe 1/16th or 1/8th of an inch long. Often moss stems branch and rebranch. Usually many mosses grow together forming a thick green carpet. Sometimes this carpet is no larger than a dime, but other times it may cover areas several feet in diameter. They commonly grow close together in clumps or mats in damp or shady locations. They do not have flowers or seeds, and their simple leaves cover the thin wiry stems.

WHY CLEAN ANY ROOF?

There are many reasons for cleaning roof. Some of the most important ones are listed below:

- 1) Left untreated, the roof will begin to fail within a few years.
- 2) Left untreated, the roof will absorb excessive heat, taxing A/C systems and raising utility costs.
- 3) You can help them get the maximum life expectancy of the roof, without damaging it.
- 4) You can clean the roof at a fraction of the cost of replacing the roof.
- 5) You can drastically improve the curb appeal of their home. This is especially important if the property owner is planning on selling their home!

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