

Need a New Roof? Weigh the Options

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Homeowners needing to re-roof want low-cost, attractive options that will last the best part of a lifetime.

There are several reasonably priced and attractive options in the roofing industry today. By choosing the right roof, having it installed properly, and doing a little regular maintenance, most homeowners can look forward to a worry-free twenty years or more.

Composition shingles - Versatile and easy to install, composition shingles offer a clean look at the most affordable price. Higher quality options made of asphalt or fiberglass are easy to install, may be laid over an existing roof, and offer Class A fire protection. They may be walked upon without damage. On the negative side, shingles may be blown off in high winds, and they do not have the dimensional look of tile or wood shake.

Wood shake - Wood shake roofs offer lots of natural character because of variances in the cut and thickness of the wood, generally cedar. They are energy-efficient, insulating the attic and allowing the house to 'breathe.' But they are more expensive and will not last as long as fiberglass or tile because they are subject to damage by mold, rot, and insects. Today's pressure-treated shakes are impregnated with fire-retardant that meet national fire standards, but they require regular maintenance.

Clay tile - A good choice for houses of Southwestern or Mediterranean design, clay tile roofs are attractive, won't rot or burn, and comes in many colors and styles. They will last a long time, but they can be very heavy and may require extra roof support to hold the weight. Proper installation is important, and maintenance is minimal, but tiles are fragile and could break if walked upon.

Slate - An expensive choice selected for upscale homes, slate roofs provide a natural look in a variety of patterns. They offer a very long lifespan, good fire protection, and low maintenance, and are not vulnerable to rot or insects. Like tile, slate can be very heavy, sometimes requiring expensive extra support. It is also breakable enough that walking on it is difficult for a non-professional, complicating such tasks as maintenance and gutter cleaning.