

Which is better - vinyl or metal siding?

Last Updated: Saturday, November 24th, 2001, Created: Saturday, November 24th, 2001

Better is a big word. Each siding on the market has its advantages and disadvantages. Both vinyl and aluminium siding are generally available as imitation wood siding, whereas some steel siding admits to not being wood. That comes simply from the fact that people like the "look" of wood siding but don't like the high maintenance required of wood siding. So vinyl and metal siding are sold as "maintenance free" siding, you could almost say "maintenance free imitation wood".

When vinyl siding first came out in Canada it was the cheapest on the market and did not stand up very well to the combination of very cold temperatures and kids. It tended to crack badly. Since then the vinyl has improved greatly, although the cheap stuff is still available.

In both vinyl and aluminium there is a whole range of quality, primarily identified by the thickness of the material. The thicker the material, the better it will withstand mechanical abuse. Cheap aluminium siding will be referred to as 40 gauge, standard is 44 gauge and the better products will be 53 gauge. Vinyl is measured in mils: cheap is 40 mil, standard is 44 mil and quality vinyl siding will be 48 mil in thickness. Actually, gauge and mil are the same thing: thousands of an inch. The vinyl siding in the photo is from Mitten Vinyl and the metal siding from Gentek.

When vinyl is struck it will generally rebound without any marks, until you hit it hard enough to crack it. It is actually difficult to crack the top of the line vinyl today. When aluminium and steel is struck it will immediately dent, although it requires a sharp edge to cut into it, aluminium being softer than steel.

When vinyl is scratched it will not show much because the colour is all the way through. When aluminium and steel is scratched, you immediately see the metal below. The aluminium will show through but not rust, the steel will begin to rust through a scratch and must be immediately touched up with paint.

So in general the metal is less likely to open up and let the water in, but it is more easily disfigured. Because mechanical abuse is the weakest link with both of these materials, many homes will put brick or stucco on the lower portions of the house, and vinyl or metal siding on the second floor where it won't get hit. Although some people don't like the look, it is an interesting mix of cost and features.

Keywords:

Aluminum, Siding, Steel, Vinyl