

What is the best material to use to re-roof my house?

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Our camera caught Burns at the hardware store -- he is going to redo his roof and wanted to know what is the best material to use to re-roof.

That that's a wide open question. And of course, there are a lot of "good" materials.

Start by deciding on the "look" you want, then check that against your budget. There are constantly new roofing materials showing up with some especially interesting ones in the recycled materials field made of metal or plastic, but many of the interesting ones don't manage to sell enough to stay in business a long time. If you really like a new product and want to be one of their first roofs, make sure you get some extra material for future repairs just in case the company isn't around any more at that point. Some of these are great roofs, it is just that they couldn't develop the volume they needed to stay in business.

On the more traditional front, there is an interesting story to tell about asphalt shingles in Canada. The standard roofing material in Canada has long been the organic felt-based asphalt shingle. For years roofers tried to import much less expensive fiberglass based asphalt shingles from the southern states, but these shingles just couldn't hold up to our cold temperatures. Several years ago, the concept of using fiberglass as a base for asphalt shingles was given new life with much thicker re-engineered shingles that do hold up to our cold climate. How do you tell the warm climate ones from the cold climate ones? Look for CSA certification. The Canadian CSA shingle standard is much tougher than the American shingle standard. Unfortunately, CSA certification for shingles is only required in new construction -- so the entire re-roofing market has no official standards and a lot of shingles do get installed that don't do well in snow country. This is even more important as by 2010 most organic based asphalt shingles will have been phased out as the less expensive fiberglass based shingles are taking over the market.

If you want to change an asphalt shingled roof to a metal roof, keep in mind that the snow will not stay on the roof as it did before. Many a homeowner has discovered that their walkway (which ran alongside the house parallel to the eaves) is now totally covered in snow all winter long. Walkways and entrances need to be organized differently for asphalt shingled houses than for metal roofed houses. In terms of look, metal roofs go far beyond the standard "barn" style -- even imitating well the Mexican adobe tile (which would never survive our winters if it was real adobe). Our steel "tiles" were made by VicWest.

We also showed a very interesting "plastic" slate, made out of the same polymers as they use for car bodies -- and those polymer car bodies certainly do hold up to our climate. We got our sample from Crowe Building Products in Hamilton, Ontario.

Keywords:

Plastic, Asphalt, Tiles, Metal, Shingle, Roof