

## ON THE HOUSE



## Prepping Your Home For Exterior Painting

By James Carey and Morris Carey

Summer is a good time to give the exterior of the old homestead a fresh coat of paint – provided temperatures are relatively mild.

Many folks think that a coat of paint should be applied only when a color change is desired. While color is a factor in the appearance and "curb appeal" of a home, a more important reason for painting is to safeguard the exterior from deterioration due to sun and rain. A fresh coat of paint will not only improve the home's appearance, it also will provide a protective shell to extend its lasting quality.

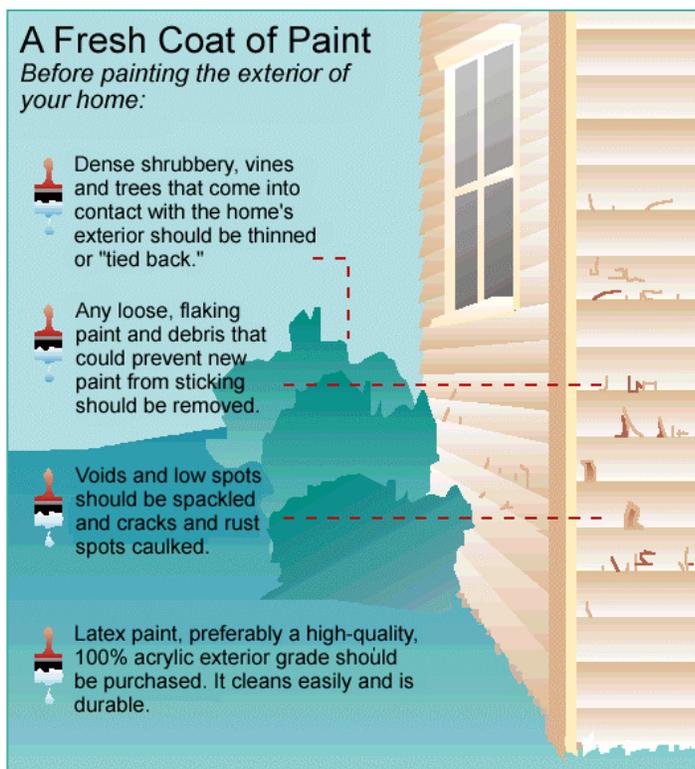
The most important element of painting is preparation. The balance is technique, paint quality and the tools used to apply the paint. Before the first drop of paint is applied, there are several steps that should be followed.

- Dense shrubbery, vines and trees that come into contact with the home's exterior should be thinned.

An alternative is to "tie back" the greenery drawing it away from the house, using **twine** and a couple of **stakes**. All shrubbery should be covered during the preparation and painting process to avoid damage. Use **light canvas** or **plastic drop cloths**. Never leave the drop cloths on the shrubbery overnight as this practice can inhibit "breathing," and result in damage.

- The next step is to remove any loose, flaking paint and surface oils and debris that could prevent the new paint from sticking. One of the most effective ways for a do-it-yourselfer to accomplish this is by use of a **power washer** or "**water blaster**." This is not the spray nozzle that you attach to your garden hose. It is a power tool that can produce between 1,300 and 2,500 pounds per square inch (psi). It's similar to the water pressure produced by the wand at the neighborhood do-it-yourself car wash.

A pressure washer can be rented from any tool rental stores or may be purchased at many True Value stores or online at [www.truevalue.com](http://www.truevalue.com). All you need to do is to connect your garden hose to the pressure washer. If mildew is a problem, some pressure washers have a suction port that allows you to mix chlorine bleach with the water.



*Continued... see reverse*

## *True Value July Project of the Month*

Be cautious when using a power washer. It can cut through wood siding like a saw blade. The right tip, the proper distance (10 to 12 inches) and constant movement are a must. **Safety goggles, gloves**, a ball cap and protective clothing help to prevent personal injury.

In addition to the power washer, professionals use heat guns, torches, sandblasters and chemical strippers to remove paint. We are reluctant to suggest these methods to the do-it-yourselfer due to the skill requirements.

For those living in older buildings that might be covered with paint that contains lead, we recommend that the building not be sanded. The dust created by sanding can create a health hazard. A professional using one of the alternative methods above (excluding sandblasting) is preferred. The chemical stripper is one of the safest and most effective products when lead is involved.

- Once the exterior has been washed, and all chipped and peeling paint is removed, it's time to spackle and caulk. Voids and low spots should be filled with a **high-quality exterior grade vinyl spackling compound**. The material is best applied with a **4-inch putty knife**. Once dry, it will require a light sanding followed by a second coat and a final sanding.

### Checklist:

- Twine
- Stakes
- Light canvas or plastic drop cloths
- Power washer or "water blaster"
- Safety goggles
- Gloves
- Sandpaper
- High-quality exterior grade vinyl spackling compound
- 4" putty knife
- Paintable latex caulk containing silicone
- Wire brush
- "Liquid metal"-type caulking
- Oil-based primer
- High-quality, 100% acrylic exterior grade latex paint

Cracks in siding, stucco and gaps in trim around windows and doors should be caulked with a **paintable latex caulk that contains silicone**.

Rust spots at gutters and downspouts should be scraped with a **wire brush**, wiped down with vinegar, caulked with a **"liquid metal"-type caulking** and primed with an **oil-base primer**. Bare wood and vinyl patch locations should also be primed with an oil-base primer.

One of the most user-friendly exterior house paints is latex. Latex paints are water base and can be cleaned with soap and water. What's more, a high quality, 100 percent acrylic exterior grade latex paint (such as WeatherAll brand) offers high abrasion resistance and superior lasting quality. WeatherAll paint has received the Good Housekeeping seal of approval and comes with a 20-year warranty.

*Morris and James Carey are nationally recognized experts on home building and renovation. They share their nearly half-century of experience as award-winning licensed contractors with millions of people nationwide through weekly radio programming and a syndicated newspaper column both titled "On The House."*

*Visit their web site at [www.onthehouse.com](http://www.onthehouse.com) for more home improvement tips and information.*