

NAILS

Down to the last nail...helping heritage preservation last



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Canada's
Historic Places

Lieux patrimoniaux
du Canada

Type of Nails:

When you invest good money and time in a heritage preservation project, you expect it to last. If you have used the right kind of nails, you are more likely to have this positive result. However, ugly, dark rust stains caused by low grade galvanized or steel common nails can ruin the appearance of a project within just a few months.

Nails should be 2 1/2 inch stainless steel. Ideally, use stainless steel nails with the smaller head for proper countersinking, but these may be more difficult to find. Stainless steel nails should be used in all exterior heritage projects, except roofing, where nails are exposed to the elements to prevent rust discoloration and leakage. All other construction, not exposed, may use regular galvanized nails.

Stainless steel nails will not rust and ruin the appearance of the project. They are non-corrosive, making them ideal for a variety of marine projects. It has also been argued that stainless steel nails can hold tighter and last longer than a common nail.

Setting nails:

Exposed nail heads should ideally be countersunk, spot primed, and the holes filled with a high quality wood filler or putty.

Nails for roofs:

Roofing nails should be used in the installation of felt and rubberoid. Zinc-coated roofing nails are your best bet for wood shingle roofs. When replacing a shingle on an existing wooden shingle roof, place the zinc-coated roofing nails at a slight angle towards the course, then tap the shingle in line with existing course to cover nails. Should moss or fungi be known to exist with an existing roof, use zinc flashing in valleys and around chimneys as well as zinc nails. The chemical reaction of the zinc will deter the return of moss or fungi.

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Removing Rust Stains from Clapboard:

Nails and moisture make an ugly duo. The result can be rusty nail stains all along your exterior wood siding and indoors too. Don't just paint over the problem. Fix it so the stains don't magically reappear. Nail heads can rust and create spots on any painted surface. This problem is caused by using galvanized nails that are of poor quality or have had the protective coating damaged when nailing, or uncoated steel nails where excessive moisture exists under the paint. The uncoated steel nails cannot always be removed, but you can correct the moisture problem. When stains are caused by rusting of the heads of nails, the metal objects themselves should be hand sanded and coated with a rust-inhibitive primer followed by two finish coats.

Step 1: Go to the Source: Try to locate the source of excessive moisture. Check for leakage from the eaves, evaporation from nearby plumbing pipes, sweating caused by heat from a bathroom or kitchen. If you can locate the source of moisture, try eliminating the problem by shutting off the condensation that causes the moisture.

Step 2: Remove Rust: Remove any stained paint around all nail heads by sanding the area or using a wire brush. Sand clear down to the nail head, then sand the nail head itself to remove the built-up rust.

Step 3: Punch It! Use a nail punch to countersink all nail heads approximately 1/8" below the wood surface.

Step 4: The Cover Up: Apply one even layer of undercoat over the countersunk nail and the area around it. After the area is primed, fill the countersunk hole with a good grade of putty. Allow the putty to dry, then apply one coat of a good grade of outside house paint. After adequate drying time, apply a second coat. Use these steps to correct the problem.

