

Eco-Friendly Roofing Options for Your Home

Sustainable or green building practices are those that use methods or materials that have a minimal impact on the environment and human health.

Traditional roofing is not sustainable, as most shingles are made from asphalt. Asphalt is not long lasting, cannot be reused, and has a negative impact on the environment. Runoff water from asphalt shingles is not fit for drinking, yet we don't think twice about the affect on the soil it runs into. Fortunately, there are some eco-friendly options for sustainable roofing. If your roof is getting to the point where you will soon be thinking about replacing it, why not consider some of these greener roofing options.

Cedar Shakes

Cedar shake roofing, made from nontoxic untreated cedar wood, is an environmentally friendly option since it doesn't rot like other woods and can outlast asphalt. Unfortunately, production of cedar shakes requires tree harvesting, but that can be offset with responsible replanting processes.

Ceramic Tiles

An attractive Southwest tradition, ceramic tile roofing is also long lasting and nontoxic. Individual tiles might require occasional replacing, but the roof as a whole is very durable. These properties make tiles an eco-friendly roofing option. However, they are costly, very heavy, and require vast amounts of energy for kilning in the manufacturing process.

Metal Roofing

Metal roofing can be labeled sustainable due to the fact that it is so long lasting that it almost never wears out and is recyclable when removed. Enameled metal roofing is also an eco-friendly choice because it is non-contaminating, making rainwater collection safe. However, like ceramic tiles, metal roofing requires a great deal of energy in the production process, which is not environmentally favorable. A green alternative could be to use recycled metal for roofing, but that might not be feasible. Because metal roofing is heavier than traditional asphalt shingles, the building needs to be able to support the weight.

The Living Roof

A living roof is literally a green roof. Sounding like something from a fairy tale, it contains a soil layer (or soil substitute) so that plants can grow right off of it. They are aesthetically pleasing, and increase the home's insulative value, ensuring decreased energy bills. They also can help recycle displaced topsoil from a home's construction.

The green benefits of living roofs don't stop there. They provide an attractive outdoor space to enjoy and can grow native plants or herbs. In urban areas, they reduce storm water runoff on the ground and street and help remove air and water pollutants. They also attract and sustain local wildlife. Because of all of these advantages, many large cities are offering incentives for placing living roofing on buildings.

There is one caveat for acquiring a living roof, however. It must be painstakingly and adequately designed, as a building needs sufficient infrastructure to hold the weight. Without proper planning, they could leak or result in unwanted visitors when animals are able to colonize the home.

All of these options are green, sustainable ways to replace a traditional roof. With the benefits to the environment and your family's health, as well as possible government incentives or decreased energy bills, you can't afford not to research these possibilities for your next roof replacement.