

Preservation Points

Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS)

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Paint Maintenance; What the homeowner can do

Maintaining the paint on your home serves a dual purpose. Not only does paint define and accent architectural details and improve the appearance of your home, but also protects and preserves the exterior surface, which ultimately protects the underlying structural members.

One of the main causes of wood deterioration is moisture penetration. Paint acts as a film that helps prevent absorption of moisture through the wood. On wooden structures, it is not necessary to remove all the existing paint to ensure a good bond. Provided the existing paint is not showing signs of failure and is not more than 1/16" in thickness, (approximately 16-30 layers) you may paint over existing paint. If signs of paint failure are noticed, remove paint until you come to a stable layer.

Preservation Point: Paint acts as a protective coating on your wood or stucco siding

Alligatoring, checking, peeling, blistering and cracking are signs that it is time to repaint. Chalking is when the paint rubs off like powder and is quite normal. Excessive chalking can cause streaking of one color down to another. If the paint is dirty or faded, it still provides a protective seal and can be freshened up with a mild detergent.

Regular maintenance will help to prevent the costly process of completely repainting the entire structure. Cracked or peeling paint will allow water to seep under the paint causing the adhesive quality to fail. Water trapped under paint will promote deterioration of wood siding and accelerate the failure of the paint. Trim and other decorative architectural elements are more susceptible to weathering than the body of the house. Check for areas where water may accumulate and repair gutters and downspouts. Remove loose paint with a wire brush, scrapper or chemicals. (Note; the use of chemicals can create additional clean-up steps and environmental disposal processes). "Feather" the rough edges with a fine sanding. A light sanding of the smooth base coat will give the surface a "tooth" which will promote adhesion of the new paint. Nail any loose siding to ensure a tight bond to the structure. Putty or caulk any gaps in woodwork or cracks in stucco to prevent water seepage. Clean off all dirt and dust.

Power washing has become the paint preparation time saver of choice. However this process is not recommended on wood siding unless done by a professional painting contractor. If done improperly, the washing can severely damage wood siding and lead to expensive repairs. Using blowtorches to remove paint from wood siding and trim is very dangerous. Heat guns are more acceptable but caution should be used. In all scenarios of paint removal, eye and breathing protection should be used.

Preservation Point: Repairing areas showing signs of paint failure can prevent having to totally repaint.

These suggestions for paint maintenance are recommended for the small to moderate, yearly touch-up jobs on your structure. Due to California lead disposal requirements, extensive paint removal and disposal should be done by a professionally licensed paint contractor.

The Alameda Architectural Preservation Society is dedicated to the preservation of Alameda's historic structures and neighborhoods. For further information on AAPS, phone 510-986-9232; write P.O. Box 1677, Alameda Ca. 94501 or visit www.alameda-preservation.org.