

## Recipe for Washing Mildewed House Surfaces

Mildew is a black or dark grey fungus that frequently discolors or stains walls, ceilings, awnings and trim of houses. Roofs are often stained by a combination of mildew and algae. These can be removed and controlled with periodic cleaning.

### Cleaning Exterior Walls and Surfaces:

Scrub mildewed surfaces with a brush and a solution of:

- 1 quart liquid chlorine bleach\*
- 1/2 cup powdered all-purpose detergent or household cleaner (check to make sure the cleaner is compatible with chlorine bleach)
- 3 quarts warm water

Rinse well with clean water.

A garden sprayer works well for applying the solution. A long handled brush is helpful for scrubbing. Use clean water in a garden sprayer or from a garden hose to rinse.

This cleaning solution is strong. Shrubs and grass should be covered with plastic sheets or thoroughly rinsed to avoid damage from overspray and splashing. Wear rubber gloves to prevent skin irritation and avoid splashing the solution in your eyes.

When repainting, all traces of mildew should be removed. Clean surfaces with the described solution. Rinse well with clean water and allow to dry thoroughly. Paint as soon as possible.

\*Do not mix ammonia with the chlorine bleach as harmful fumes result.

### Cleaning Asphalt Shingles:

Discolored asphalt roofs can be cleaned with a **STRONG** bleach solution:

- 3 quarts liquid chlorine bleach
- 1 quart water

Spray the solution on the roof at the rate of 1 gallon per 30-50 square feet of roof surface. Do not scrub or rinse. Work in strips, starting at the peak and working towards the eaves.

Treated roofs are slippery, so a ladder, safety rope, and possibly other means of support on the roof are needed. Any shrubs or plants below the eaves should be covered with plastic to prevent contact with the solution. Any solution that does drip off the roof should be diluted thoroughly. Run water from a hose into gutters during treatment to dilute any runoff. Do not spray on windy days.



Figure 1. Mildew on side of house.

Caution: This is a very strong solution. Wear rubber gloves and old clothes and avoid skin contact. Depending on the type of sprayer used, a dust mask and safety glasses may be necessary. Also, the roof will be VERY slippery.

Usually only part of the roof will be discolored. If you spray only part of the roof, be careful near the peak so that you don't get any solution on the side you don't intend to clean. Otherwise you could create

some streaks and will end up cleaning that side too.

To keep roofs clean, spray annually with a 10% chlorine bleach solution (1 pint bleach to 1 gallon water), beginning the third year after initial cleaning.

For more information about cleaning mildew on other items in and around the house, see "How to Prevent and Remove Mildew" Leaflet HE 73, available at your local county Extension office.



Prepared by Craig A. DeWitt, Ph.D, P.E., Extension Housing Engineer

The publication was reviewed by Joyce Christenbury and Carolyn Harris (Clemson University Extension), with input from the National Paint and Coatings Association, Inc., Washington, DC and the USDA Forest Service, Southern Forest Experiment Station, Gulfport, MS.

Figure 2. Mildew and algae on shingled roof.