



Types of Roofing Materials to Consider for Your Garage Project

Without a doubt, roofing will end up being one of the most important parts of your garage. It protects the inside of the garage from the elements, such as snow and rain, and it also helps protect against the invasion of insects and other critters. There are many different types of roofing materials to choose from, and it is important to evaluate which one will work best for your garage project.

- Asphalt Shingles

Asphalt shingles are the most common residential roofing material in the US today. They come in a variety of colors, and are typically lighter than some roofing materials, which can greatly reduce the weight (and excess strain) that is put on your roof. Due to their low water absorptive qualities, asphalt shingles are also safe from damage caused by frost. On average, asphalt shingles have a functional life of 15-20 years. This may sound like a long time, but there are other roofing options that can last 50 years, and some that can last over 100 years. One big disadvantage is the fact that they absorb large amounts of heat, which can increase the temperature in your garage (along with your electric bill if you are using air conditioning to control the temperature). Excessive heat can also damage the shingles (especially if they are walked on in high-heat situations) and reduce their lifespan. Selecting lighter colored asphalt shingles for your garage project can help to keep the temperature rise to a lower amount. The tradeoff is that in the winter time you might just be looking for a little natural warmth in the garage.

- Wood shakes or shingles

Wood shakes are a good choice if you are looking for something a little different with a lot of character. Wood also has energy benefits if you are trying to build a green garage. It helps with insulation and it allows air to circulate between the openings underneath the felt rows on which it is laid. When properly maintained these roofs can last as long as 50 years – the key words being “properly maintained.” You must be sure to protect a wood shake roof against mold, rot, and insects, otherwise it may not last as long as it should. Another thing to consider is that wood shakes are more flammable than other roofing materials. Some shakes are treated with a wipe or spray-on fire retardant that may only be viable for a few years, and

offers minimal protection. It is probably a better idea to purchase wood shakes that have been pressure-treated and impregnated with a fire retardant to meet national fire safety standards. Be sure to check your local building codes before making any final decisions, as your local jurisdiction will likely have some stipulations. The installation of wood shakes on your garage is more complicated than that of asphalt shingles, so be sure to hire someone with a good track record for this particular roofing material.

- Slate

Slate is a roofing option that shows up in many upscale residential neighborhoods. The beautiful, natural look of slate adds to its appeal, and it comes in a wide variety of shapes, sizes, and naturally occurring colors that would look great on your garage. It has an incredibly long life span (it will likely outlive the materials upon which it is laid) and offers good protection against fire. In addition, it is easily maintained and resists rot and insects. There are, however, a few (expensive) things to consider. First, slate is more expensive than traditional asphalt shingles. Second, an entire roof covered in slate can be very heavy, and will most likely require extra support, therefore adding an additional expense. Be sure to check with your contractor or architect before using slate for your garage project. Third, slate is breakable, so it is recommended that no one but a professional walk on it, which can make simple tasks, like cleaning the gutters or painting, a bit more difficult.

- Clay tile

Clay tile is most often found on southwestern, Italian, or Spanish style buildings, but it is by no means limited to these types of homes or garages. It has the same advantages as slate tiles – it has an extremely long life span, it won't rot, catch fire, or be harmed by insects, and it requires little maintenance. But, like slate, it can be very heavy, requiring additional structural support. The tiles themselves can be expensive, and the extra support will add to the cost. Since the tiles are fragile, they can break when walked on, so maintenance, such as cleaning the gutters or painting the garage, can be more difficult.

- Concrete Tile

Concrete tiles are one of the newer roofing alternatives you could use on your garage. Advantages of concrete tiles include long lifespan, little maintenance, and resistance to rot, fire, and insects. They can be manufactured to mimic other roofing materials, with some advantages that the real-deal may not offer. For instance, concrete tiles that are made to look like wood shakes are more durable than real shakes, and are also more fire-resistant. Concrete tiles can also be manufactured to look similar to slate or clay tiles, and since the concrete tiles are lighter, it can alleviate some of the structural issues that arise from the weight of slate or clay. The main disadvantage to concrete tiles is that they can be more expensive than other roofing materials. Since

concrete tiles are newer to the market, be sure to choose a concrete tile that has a proven track record for being a strong, reliable roofing material before you use it on your garage building project.

- **Metal Roofing**

In the 18th century, metal was the most popular roofing material, and these days it is staging a comeback. The most popular type of metal roof is called a standing seam steel roof. The name comes from the upturned edge that connects the metal panels together and creates a distinct vertical line on the roof. Aluminum or coated steel can also be shaped into individual tiles or long sheets that resemble wood shakes or clay tiles. Some advantages to a metal roof include the fact that it is very strong, fire retardant, and also requires little maintenance. Since metal reflects heat, and does not absorb as much into the attic, metal roofs are also energy efficient and can save you money on your energy bills. Steel roofs also have some environmental advantages for those of you trying to build a green garage. Steel is readily recyclable, and as such, nearly all steel products contain recycled content. Another benefit of metal roofing is that it is very lightweight, which means it shouldn't require additional support. Check with the General Contractor or architect of your garage project to find out. You can even lay the metal tiles on top of an existing roof, which means that your old roof does not have to end up in a landfill. The major disadvantage to metal roofs is their expense. But do your homework – the amount of money you save on your energy bill may be more than the added initial cost!

Listed above are the most popular roofing materials available to you for your garage project, but they certainly do not constitute all of the materials from which you can choose. When it does come time to choose the material you will use for your garage, be sure to evaluate all of your options. Some of the materials may have a higher initial cost associated with them, but they could save you money over the lifetime of the building due to lower maintenance costs and a longer lifespan. As always, it is important to do your homework and make an educated decision based on your needs and your garage building budget.