



Guidelines for hiring a paint contractor & preparing the paint surface for grant recipients

Getting a Quote:

Please obtain at least 3 quotes from painters on the list of approved painters. You may also submit a quote from a painter that is not on our list. However, they will need to contact us and provide references for us to consider their quote. Please ensure that any painters not on our list are willing to follow the guidelines below before asking them to provide a quote for your project. Quotes usually vary greatly in cost and detail. This variety is often due to how busy painters are and how much paint preparation they feel is necessary. **Make sure to ask painters for references** from homeowners they have recently worked for. They will be on your property for up to a few weeks or more and it is important to hear what other homeowners thought of their work ethic, style and timeliness. Paint used for the project should be Benjamin Moore to ensure accuracy of the colours from the Vancouver Heritage Foundation True Colours Palette, or a similarly high quality manufacturer that can do accurate colour matching. **Ask painters to specify in their quote what paint they plan to use.**

Surface Preparation:

To inform you on the importance of the proper surface preparation steps for painting the exterior of an old house, read the following article adapted from *The Old House Chronicle Magazine*: "Proper Siding Preparation" by Peter Hudy, 2000. **Important to note and communicate to the painters: Power washing is not an appropriate surface preparation method for old houses.**

The paint on the outside of a house is a sacrificial layer that is there to protect the more expensive siding and mouldings underneath. As such, it is designed to ensure that the sun's rays and the rain's wetness don't penetrate into the more delicate interior. In order to accomplish these goals, the paint must meet certain requirements: It must be solid to prevent moisture and rain from penetrating; it must be flexible to move with the movement of the boards underneath as they expand and contract with temperature changes; it must be strong to stick to wherever it is applied; and it should be beautiful, too. And it must do all of this at the same time. Amazingly, good quality paints can do all that and more.

The key step in the painting process is surface preparation. It is what will make or break the final result, either ensuring a durable paint job or guaranteeing one that will fail before you can blink your eyes. Yet it is also the one that appears to be the most laborious, expensive and the least rewarding.

In theory, we all know what needs to be done: scrape off the old, loose paint, wash off the dust left behind, and then we can get to the fun of watching our house be reborn under a layer of beautiful, fresh paint. We know that this is what should be done--but not all paint jobs prioritize this step. And there lies the problem. There are even some painters who don't bother scraping at all, figuring instead that the new paint will somehow stabilize the old, fill in all the cracks, and last for another 100 years. Unfortunately, this is wishful thinking.

Steps for Proper Surface Preparation:

1. **Manually scrape off the loose and flaky old paint. DON'T use a power washer because it will chew into the wood underneath and that damage will be virtually impossible to repair.** The best tools and techniques to use depend on nature and the magnitude of the job at hand. A good quality hand scraper with a blade that can be resharpened works well to loosen and remove paint.
2. Feather out the edges left at the margins of the old paint so that you have a smooth surface. Use medium-grit sandpaper on a sanding block and smooth the edges of the paint. What you are trying to achieve is a surface that does not have sharp edges or breaks where the paint meets exposed wood.
3. Wash with bleach to thoroughly clean the dust off the surface. Remember, if dust is left behind the new paint won't stick to the surface. Following the bleach wash, rinse the surface by hand with clean water. Change your water frequently so that the rinse water is clean. Take the time to let the surface dry, but don't wait too long or else airborne dust will settle on the siding and you will have to wash again. If the weather is sunny and it doesn't rain, one week will probably be enough. If you have sprayed your house with a hose to rinse it, you might have to wait much longer.
4. Prime with a high-quality primer (Remember: you get what you pay for). For old houses, oil-based primers may be better than latex because they will penetrate into the wood and condition it, replacing the wood's natural oils that have been lost over the years. Many painters, including me, prefer a brush for application of the paint because it covers uniformly and gets into every nook and cranny. The goal at this step is to uniformly cover the entire surface with the primer, leaving you ready for the next step.
5. Top with two coats of a high-quality paint. Again, you get what you pay for and materials end up being only a small portion of the total cost of the project. Modern latex paints may offer the best option for your topcoat. They allow you to apply a uniform paint layer directly over the oil-based primer. They weather well and offer an ease of application that is desirable. Again, a brush works well to uniformly spread the paint and ensure adequate coverage.
6. Conduct yearly maintenance: look for loose paint areas, spot scrape, sand, prime and finish them. This maintenance is to ensure that the outer layer of the house stays intact. If you skip this step, the inevitable small cracks and flakes in the paint layer will allow moisture and water to pass into the wood underneath and eventually the entire paint job might be ruined. Although it seems tedious, this is an important component of the whole process.

With some attention to detail, wood siding will continue to provide protection and elegance to your house for your lifetime and beyond.

From the Victoria Heritage Foundation's website, the recommended steps for paint preparation are as follows:

- Remove damaged or deteriorated paint before repainting to the next sound layer using the gentlest method possible (hand scraping and hand sanding).
- **No media (e.g. sand) blasting or power washing wood siding.**
- Washing is acceptable only by hand and garden hose.
- No stripping by torch.
- No grinding or heavy abrasive sanding that damages wood surface.
- Ensure a clean surface, free of grease, dirt, mildew, etc. by washing wall surfaces, overhangs, porch ceilings and eaves troughs, inside and out, by hand with environment-friendly cleaners. Rinse thoroughly.
- Crystalline deposits, which develop under eaves and protected areas, are a major cause of peeling; remove by washing and rinsing as above.
- Areas of heavy paint build-up, alligating, blistering, scaling and peeling, or areas which show a moderate to heavy chalk deposit must be thoroughly prepared to ensure paint adhesion. Remove to a sound substrate by scraping, sanding and wire brushing.
- On rough-sawn textured shingles, previously stained weathered surfaces must be thoroughly cleaned with a stiff fibre brush and a mild, biodegradable remover such as sodium hydroxide, to remove "dead" wood fibres.
- Glossy surfaces under eaves and protected areas that are not exposed to normal weathering should be dulled by sanding.
- Where bare wood is exposed, spot prime with a high quality oil-based primer.
- Loose or warped siding and shingles must be nailed flush with surface using appropriate nails.
- Fill all crevices, nail holes and cracks.
- All loose or split caulking on windows and doors is to be removed and replaced. Re-caulk with flexible, paintable caulking, and then prime.
- Loose and deteriorated window putty must be removed and replaced.
- House must dry between washing and painting, to ensure surface will not resist new paint. Wood moisture content should not exceed 12%; use a moisture meter.