



Painting Hardboard Siding

Hardboard siding is specified today because of increased pressure to lower building costs. It is manufactured by compressing wood fibers or pulp under heat and pressure into dense panels which are held together by the wood's own natural binder (called lignin) and additives such as glues and waxes. Because of the way it is made and its composition, hardboard siding requires special consideration when painting.

What are the Two Main Problems Associated with Hardboard Siding?

1) Hardboard Swelling and Warping - If hardboard siding is not adequately protected from moisture its wood fibers tend to swell in an effort to expand to their original size before compression. The "factory primers" commonly used on hardboard are generally very low quality, amounting to little more than a color coat. They provide very little moisture resistance, thus little protection against swelling and warping. Cut ends, nail holes, etc., are easy paths for moisture ingress and are usually the first failure points.

2) Hardboard Staining - Another problem associated with hardboard siding is staining of the painted surface caused by wax bleeding. Hardboard manufacturers use wax in hardboard in an effort to provide some moisture protection. This wax tends to bleed through to the surface and discolors the paint finish, especially when the siding is exposed to hot summer sun and moisture. Wax bleed can be detected by sprinkling water on the painted hardboard. If the water beads up in the stained area, then wax bleeding has occurred and must be removed before repainting by detergent cleaning or, in severe cases, by wiping with clean rags saturated with mineral spirits or paint thinner.

What is the Best Recommendation for Painting Hardboard?

New Hardboard - All hardboard siding, whether "factory primed" or not, must be tightly sealed with a quality alkyd or acrylic primer to protect against moisture ingress. Prime all surfaces including drip edges, cut ends and edges, and nail holes. Caulk all joints. Back priming is also recommended for best results. The primed hardboard should then be finished with one or preferably two coats of a quality acrylic latex paint.

Previously Painted Hardboard - The surface must be cleaned thoroughly, removing all loose paint, dirt, chalk, mildew and other foreign matter. If the surface is in sound condition and there is no evidence of wax staining, then finishing with one or preferably two coats of quality **GLIDDEN PROFESSIONAL™** acrylic latex house paint is recommended. If wax bleeding is evident and/or extra moisture protection against swelling and warping is desired, priming with an alkyd primer followed by one or preferably two coats of acrylic latex house paint is recommended.

Following these recommendations will provide the best protection and can significantly prolong the life span of hardboard siding.