

IN DEPTH



Siding

BY CRAIG A. SHUTT

As homeowners balance aesthetics and performance, some are looking to new—and old—materials and mixing and matching styles to personalize their project.

Personalization has become the key to homeowners' buying choices, and that extends to significant investments such as siding. Customized curb appeal dominates the decision to the extent that consumers are mixing and matching more colors and styles. They're also considering products that require some maintenance to provide the exact appearance they want.

"Homeowners are trying very hard to differentiate their homes," says Brian Kirn, senior marketing manager for the Siding Products Group at CertainTeed. "That's the most important factor in the siding decision. They don't want to look outlandish for their neighborhood, but they do want to stand out. They want a personal touch."

That has led to more variety, even on the same home, says Jonathan Wierengo, vice president of marketing for The Tapco Group. "We're seeing more products used overall on the home's exterior," he explains. "It used to be one or two types, but now it's not uncommon to see four styles. They're using gable accents and other decorations, and that's really accelerated in the last year. It's gotten to the point that homeowners will use something highly decorative on the front of the home and then do something different on the sides and back."

LEFT: Allura fiber-cement siding from Plycem USA, a division of the Elementia Group, combines beauty and strength to provide a woodgrain appearance with a variety of color options. The line includes lap siding, shakes, vertical siding, porch ceiling, soffits and trim. The lap siding features a grain appearance achieved with an advanced first-transfer system using real cedar boards.



Mark Nowotarski, vice president of marketing at Style Crest, agrees the options are expanding. "As the market rebounds, people are willing to spend more on a personalized, unique look."

Products that require more maintenance aren't dissuading them as they once did, adds Tom Zimmerman, director of sales and marketing for Boral North America. "Appearance and low maintenance are the two keys, and homeowners want to find the best balance between them."

Market Rebounds

The market is definitely rebounding, according to research by Principia. The company forecasts the siding market to grow by more than 40% between 2011 (\$6.3 billion) and 2015 (\$8.9 billion), with all types of materials rising with the tide (see the chart on page 44).

Some of that across-the-board growth comes from some homeowners shifting the balance in the appearance-versus-maintenance equation toward the former. "We're seeing a movement back toward natural materials and away from all the substitutes," says Paul Mackie, western area manager for the Western Red Cedar Lumber Association. "Vinyl siding is king, and we recognize that—western red cedar couldn't handle 20% of the market even if we could get it,

because there isn't enough capacity. But there is a return to wanting an authentic material. Real wood adds value to a home, which is a consideration if the homeowner intends to sell soon."

ABOVE: Boral has introduced TruExterior Siding, made with recycled polymers and highly refined, recovered coal-combustion products (fly ash) endorsed by the U.S. Green Building Council. Its V-Rustic profile is said to recreate the look and feel of traditional wood siding while performing better. It comes in 16-foot lengths, accepts any paint and has a 20-year limited warranty.

Mike Maddern, segment manager for LP Building Products, agrees. "Customers are really looking closer at styles today. The variations continue to grow. Homeowners are coming back to warmer wood tones now and real wood, but they're also wary of wood's maintenance needs."

Adds Mike Pidlisecky, vice president of sales and marketing at Woodtone, "There's been resurgence in cedar and radiata pine, as well as all types of import products. Builders are going back to the tried-and-true basics of western red cedar."

That means dealers have to adjust their stock to meet changing needs. "Few contractors sell only one product today," says Jason Culpepper, vice president of sales at Progressive Foam Technologies. ▶

Foundry vinyl siding from The Tapco Group offers a variety of options to mix and match styles and create a personal look. The line includes the Shake collection, with Split Shake and Staggered Shake; the classic Shingle collection, in Fish Scale and Round designs; the Shapes collection; and the Brick, Stacked Stone and Limestone collections.



“Those who sell vinyl almost always will offer other materials. Homeowners are demanding more options at least to look at. They often go back to vinyl due to its cost and features, but they like having choices. They are willing to consider other materials.”

One material often considered is fiber-cement siding. “Fiber-cement siding is a growing market, driven especially by interest from architects,” says Chris Feldt, western regional sales man-

ager for Allura, a brand by Plycem USA. “Architects like the modern look it provides, the durability and that it’s easy to install.” Allura is owned by Elementia.

Adds Todd Kandel, a partner at Holmes Manufacturing, “Fiber cement has a better appearance than it had in the past, but it requires maintenance. But that doesn’t seem to be stopping homeowners from using it. More contractors are offering it as a choice, because they need to have specialty products to show the customer. They need masonry or stone accents, fiber-cement siding, insulation and other options to ensure customers they’re seeing the full range of possibilities.”

Vinyl siding continues to dominate the market. “Low maintenance for vinyl siding is still key,” says Jerome Zenoby, brand manager for Heartland Siding and Heritage Stone at ProVia. “It’s not just a pitch, it’s a legitimate benefit that vinyl siding offers over other home-exterior cladding products.”

But low maintenance isn’t enough to make the sale in all cases. “Keeping maintenance low doesn’t seem to be the driving factor that it once was,” Holmes’ Kandel says. “The emotional decision at times outweighs the possible drawbacks.”

Aesthetics Rule

Manufacturers are hoping to sway that emotional decision with more variety in both colors and textures. “Color is a huge factor in the sales decision,” Allura’s Feldt says. “Prefinishing is of growing importance for fiber-cement siding. Painters aren’t part of the process, especially in the Midwest or Northeast.”

Prefinished options tend to focus on earthtones, he notes. “Earthtones are strong now, especially as neutrals that can be accented with brighter colors. There’s a growing trend in which homeowners want vivid colors that make their homes stand out more. They’re trying to show that they’re not using vinyl siding by using colors that vinyl siding doesn’t offer. They want a unique color.” ➤

North American Residential Siding

(in millions of dollars)

Material	2011	2013	2015 projected
Vinyl	1,700	1,900	2,200
Brick	900	1,200	1,600
Wood	1,000	1,100	1,200
Fiber cement	800	900	1,100
Engineered wood	400	500	600
Other*	1,500	1,800	2,200
Total	6,300	7,400	8,900

Source: Principia, 2014

*Other includes stucco, masonry veneer, aluminum and polymer shakes.

The siding market has rebounded from the recession and is posting stronger numbers every year. All types of materials are expected to see growth through next year.

“Color is the first factor for homeowners,” Style Crest’s Nowotarski states. “Its choice impacts everything else around the outside of the house.”

Style Crest expanded the colors in one of its lines last year and added to

two other lines this year. “We see a lot of earthtones being used,” adds Deborah Meek, product manager at Style Crest. “But they’re darker and richer than in the past. They’re not washed-out or neutral colors any more.”

Adds Tapco’s Wierengo, “Color options are growing, but they’re very regional. We look at them frequently—probably too often. We review our options every quarter to ensure we have the right mix.”

Style Crest’s Meek agrees that keeping current is critical. “We take out our bottom-selling colors each year as well as those that have a dated look to make room for new ones. Some customers are disappointed to see a color disappear, but over the long term they’re happy with the updated replacement.”

Rustic styles are gaining popularity. “Knotty cedar is an affordable option and growing in interest, particularly where a rustic look is desired. The textured face has gained appeal,” WRCLA’s Mackie says.

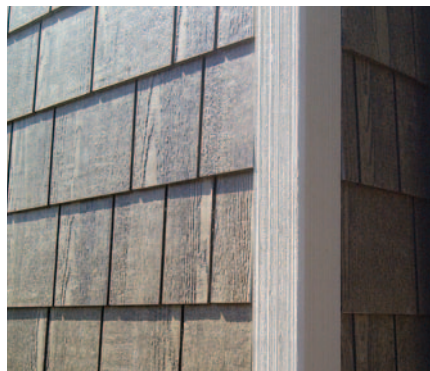
Warmer wood tones are more popular, LP’s Maddern concurs. “Wood tones are definitely regaining popularity. Solid colors are not as popular. Walnut is starting to pop. If they don’t get that as a prefinished color, they have to stain the wood to achieve that look, which does not provide as durable of a coating as a factory-applied finish.”

Woodtone’s Pidlisecky agrees. “Our rustic, wood-tone product is popular in the West. Customers like a rustic, natural-wood appearance with a smooth finish. The rustic category has grown significantly recently.”

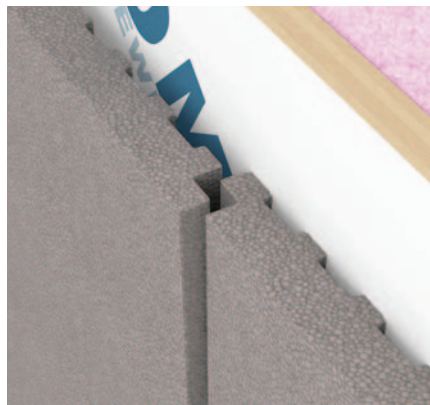
Boral North America has introduced several profiles to its new siding line keyed to Western designs that replicate redwood. “But we’re seeing interest in the products nationwide,” Zimmerman says.

Along with that rustic look is an interest in textures and depth regardless of material. “We’re seeing a real uptick in interest in different textures,” Tapco’s Wierengo says. “We have a variety of profiles, and in the past six to nine months, we’ve seen a move to heavier textures overall.” ➤

RIGHT: The RusticSeries by Woodtone, shown on a fiber-cement 16- by 48-inch shake panel, provides the look of wood on fiber-cement or composite siding. A proprietary two-coat system is said to enhance aesthetics while providing strong protection, supplemented by a 15-year coating warranty. The siding comes prefinished and ready to install in any of the 12 designer colors.



MIDDLE: HalfbackH20 siding insulation from Progressive Foam Technologies provides drainage grooves that help manage moisture that may accumulate on the sheathing surface. The management system makes it a good choice for multi-story buildings that require uninterrupted drainage, older-home retrofits with unknown components and other projects where moisture is a concern.



BELOW: The Restoration Classic line of vinyl siding from CertainTeed offers a premium thickness in five popular styles: three profiles in a Select Cedar finish with a natural wood-grain appearance, and two in a smooth style. All are architecturally accurate profiles designed in the tradition of 17th century American craftsmanship to replicate wood. It’s available in 28 low-gloss colors.



ProVia's Zenoby agrees. The firm introduced two weathered-shake products this year. "They provide a rough-sawn cut look that is growing in popularity," he says. "They've received a really good reception. They add to our exterior profile, which is expanding the options for products with a weathered look."

"Shakes and other shapes are gaining popularity, with staggered and square-edged designs providing more variety," Woodtone's Pidlisecky says. "Architects are continuing to look for new options to create a unique style for their customers. We're seeing more architects mix products today. They don't stay with one type

of product. They're being more creative and mixing in metals and stone as well."

This variety of products opens new opportunities but creates concerns. "Color can be a tough decision for homeowners," CertainTeed's Kirn says. "It's a big expense, so they look carefully and are concerned about making a mistake. What looks good in a small amount may not look as good on the entire home. We offer visualization tools to help overcome that fear."

More manufacturers are including design tools and visualization options on their websites to help overcome fears. Royal Building Products, for instance,

offers an online tool to let homeowners and contractors design the home's exterior, using templates or photo uploads to generate a custom exterior. The company is also working on a project-estimator app that allows contractors to store data on each siding product and create accurate estimates on the spot.

"Homeowners are doing more research on the Web," Progressive Foam's Culpepper says. "It's become a major communication tool for us. Technology of all types is growing, but sample boards and literature are still necessary. Homeowners like to see demonstrations and feel something tangible when they buy."

ProVia has introduced a printed tool, the Designer Collections Look Book, which groups products and colors into suggested combinations. "Homeowners are very creative, but they need some assurances about being creative with such a large investment," Zenoby says. "The goal with our Look Book is to give homeowners the feeling that they are designers and that they don't have to be afraid of colors beyond white and sand."

The book can be used even if ProVia products aren't selected, he adds. "We want to get homeowners thinking outside the box and trying different combinations. The book has gotten a great reception."

RIGHT: Portsmouth Shakes and Shingles vinyl siding from Royal Building Products features the look of cedar siding while offering protection against rotting, crack, splitting and degrading. The siding comes in six styles: Cedar, Cedar V-Pro, Hand-Split Shake, Perfection, Staggered Edge and Half-Round. Each offers a variety of colors to choose among.

BELOW: Sandy High School in Sandy, Ore., designed by Dull Olson Weekes Architects, features a western red cedar exterior that provides beauty and durability. The Western Red Cedar Lumber Association notes that cedar is naturally resistant to rot, decay and insect attack. It also is pitch and resin-free, allowing it to accept and hold a wide range of finishes and stains.



Key Ingredient: Performance

Performance provides the other factor in the equation, and homeowners must balance it with aesthetics. But "performance" can mean many things, including low maintenance, impact resistance, appearance longevity and even energy efficiency.

Material manufacturers are fighting the notion that any of their products require significant maintenance. "The 'heavy-maintenance' concept is a myth with cedar, especially in markets where painted cedar is prevalent," WRCLA's Mackie says. "Customers traditionally use cedar clapboards for their durability and paint them. As a result of that trend, we're seeing more interest in factory-primed products." ➤

Prefinishing is a growing trend, LP's Maddern says. "Remodelers don't want to have to mess with painting siding, so they prefer prefinished styles."

"The expectation for all of the products is that they will offer low maintenance, durability and color fastness," Style Crest's Meek says. Technology is helping manufacturers of every material meet those expectations. "The technology used in cap-stock products has allowed for better color offerings in darker colors."

Technology definitely has enhanced and expanded options, ProVia's Zenoby says. "Darker colors can be a challenge to provide in PVCs, because of the need to maintain stringent VSI [Vinyl Siding

Institute] performance standards. We work closely with the sales and marketing teams to consider new product colors that will be popular, and we monitor color trends in exterior paint manufacturing. But we don't want to produce colors that might not perform over the long term just to add new colors."

Tapco's Wierengo agrees. "Color weathering has become less of a factor today, but we have to educate customers to ensure they know that advancements have been made," he says.

Impact resistance also has become a key factor. "Impact resistance is important, especially in remodeling projects at the higher end," CertainTeed's Kirn says. "Most products do a good job in that

regard, but customers are interested in exactly what performance they will get."

ProVia's Zenoby concurs. "Impact resistance is part of the story we take to market," he says. "Homeowners don't think about impact resistance at first, but once you put that idea in their head, they consider it and like it."

Adds LP's Maddern, "Impact resistance is a key factor in storm areas, where homeowners are concerned about wind-borne debris and hail. Homeowners are starting to realize that if the siding gets damaged, it may be difficult to color-match. As a result, our product's impact resistance has become a very desirable feature."

Durability also plays a role when selecting wood products, with most promoting their inherent resistance to mold or insects or the added protection the products receive. "Our siding provides the look of wood with the protection of a treated product, eliminating many of the concerns of using real wood," LP's Maddern says.

"Durability is a significant piece of the pie for fiber-cement siding," Allura's Feldt says. "Homeowners all over are worried about things like hailstorms and stones kicked up by the lawn mower, and they like that fiber-cement siding provides durability to resist those hazards."

Warranties have gained prominence as a key indicator of a product's durability. "Durability is enhanced by longer warranties that protect against manufacturer defects during the product's lifetime," Style Crest's Meek says. "'Durability' isn't always understood. It has to be translated into specific benefits for customers to know what it means."

Energy efficiency impacts every product category today, including siding. "Insulated siding is gaining ground, especially in northern regions," ProVia's Zenoby reports. "This winter helped people realize they need more insulation on their homes. I wouldn't be shocked to see insulated siding jump in sales over the next six to nine months as homeowners respond to the cold winter we just experienced." ➤

RIGHT: Holmes Manufacturing offers a variety of decorative PVC window trim pieces as well as PVC pilasters to dress up a new siding installation. Nine white, paintable window headers are offered in the line.



BELOW: LP SmartSide engineered-wood siding from LP Building Products is positioned as an upgrade choice from vinyl for both new-home builders and remodelers. LP's proprietary SmartGuard process adds strength and helps the siding resist moisture, termites and fungal decay. The company has expanded capacity at several plants to handle growing demand.



As it did with many product categories, the economic downturn slowed insulated-siding's growth, Progressive Foam's Culpepper notes. "Consumers don't always think about insulation when they consider a siding project. But when it's brought up to them and explained, they're interested. We're seeing a spike in interest as the economy improves, and that's a good sign."

Adds CertainTeed's Kirn, "Insulated siding is less about energy efficiency and more about durability. It also can provide better aesthetics by providing support so a wider face can be used. The insulation provides other benefits that add up to creating a good investment."

The added cost means insulated siding has to be sold on its benefits. "There's been more interest in insulation for siding," Tapco's Wierengo agrees. "But the question for dealers and contractors is, will homeowners think it's important enough to pay for it?"

RIGHT: The Super Polymer formulation used on Heartland Siding from ProVia is said to provide strength for the vinyl siding while creating the look and texture of wood. Three categories (insulated, traditional and decorative) of siding are offered. Shown is Hearttech siding, which features a Double Ply Windload Nailing Hem, in Willow, one of 22 available colors.

BELOW: Timbermill Simulated Cedar Siding from Style Crest, shown in the rustic Log Cabin style, incorporates authentic-looking knots and veining to create a wood-grain appearance. The patented log-cabin boards feature insulating foam backing that provides resistance to impacts, moisture and wood-boring insects. It is available in two no-fade stains.

"Insulated siding is a tough sell due to the added expense," Style Crest's Meek adds. "But with building codes changing, builders have to either adjust their framing techniques if they've been using 2x4s or add insulation to the exterior."

Accessories Expand

Accessory products also are gaining attention due to the personalization they can provide. "We're seeing our specialty items become more popular," Holmes' Kandel says. "Customers are looking at using solid-PVC pieces to decorate their homes and to build wraps around windows or doors. It's being used for window and door brick mould and fluted-trim pieces. They're also using our aluminum accessories more often regardless of the type of siding."

Adds Boral's Zimmerman, "Starter strips are becoming more popular, as some types of siding have to stay well above contact with the ground. We're

also seeing more interest in thick trim pieces, such as 2-inch profiles."

LP's Maddern says, "Trim, fascia and soffit, both solid and vented, and shakes are growing in popularity. Those products are good complements when a lap-siding project is being done. They do very well for us."

WRCLA's Mackie also sees more variety in accessory pieces, especially finger-jointed cedar that is painted to accent the home. "The growth of fiber-cement siding is helping cedar trim, as it's being used more often as a natural accent."

Insulated siding is driving some of the choices, ProVia's Zenoby notes. "Contractors are using wider-faced J-channels and other products to accommodate insulated siding, and there are more colors available to them. These sales are not homeowner-driven so much as contractor-driven, and the interest is growing. We're taking a serious look at expanding our offerings."

As offerings of all types expand, manufacturers look to meet contractors' concerns for speeding up the installation process and ensuring their labor force can install products effectively.

"I definitely think there has been a lot of effort put into 'de-skilling' the labor process," Boral's Zimmerman says. "Simplifying the process is important today. There aren't as many skilled installers available, so contractors are looking at how they can work around this and hire labor that can do a skillful job."

"Installers need to be educated about the various products and their different needs, especially if they're panelized or new materials to them," Woodtone's Pidlisecky stresses. "Contractors are spending more time with their installers to ensure the products are installed correctly as more options are included."

Adds Allure's Feldt, "We're seeing more requests for our advanced installation-training classes. The calls we're getting make it clear that contractors understand how critical it is to have a proper installation, and they want to ensure their crews are doing everything they should." ➤



CertainTeed's Kirn agrees. "Our job is to make the contractors' job easier. We've introduced several tools that help with that." The Stud Finder consists of markings on the siding's nail hem that show where studs in the wall are located once the panel is aligned. The company's polymer-shake panels also have a built-in thermometer to ensure proper spacing based on the panels' current temperature.

As the economy rebounds, homeowners are looking to spruce up their homes after a long layoff. And many homes are ripe for residing. "Lifespans of products vary, and folks don't look to change their exterior very often," Tapco's Wierengo notes. "A lot of homeowners in homes built in the 1990s are now looking for an updated appearance." ■

Craig A. Shutt, senior contributing editor of *LBM Journal*, has more than 35 years of experience covering the LBM industry.

Internet Information

To learn more about these companies, visit their websites.

Companies in bold participated in this article.

Alside: www.alside.com

BlueLinX: www.bluelinxco.com

California Redwood Association: www.calredwood.org

Cedar Valley: www.cedar-valley.com

Allura: www.allurausa.com

Boral: www.boralna.com

CertainTeed: www.certainteed.com

Claymark: www.claymark.com

Edco Products: www.edcoproducts.com

GP: www.gpvinylsiding.com

Heartland Siding by ProVia: www.proviaproducts.com

Holmes Manufacturing: www.holmesmanufacturing.com

James Hardie: www.jameshardie.com

LifeSpan by Fletcher: www.fwsdirect.com

LP Building Products: www.lpcorp.com

Maxitile: www.maxitile.com

Nichiha: www.nichiha.com

Ply Gem: www.plygem.com

Premier Forest Products: www.premierforestproducts.com

Progressive Foam Technologies: www.progressivefoam.com

Rollex: www.rollex.com

Roseburg Forest Products: www.roseburg.com

Royal Building Products: www.royalbuildingproducts.com

Shakertown: www.shakertown.com

Style Crest: www.stylecrestinc.com

The Tapco Group: www.tapcoint.com

TruWood Siding & Trim: www.collinsco.com

Western Red Cedar Lumber Association: www.realcedar.com

Woodtone: www.woodtone.com



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