



## Roofing: Wood Roof Material Selection

### **Wood Roof Material Selection**

The first approach is always to replace the wood shingle roof “in-kind” by matching extant materials and details. The roofing system and appearance of the roof is part of the overall interpretation of the site and part of the historic record with respect to material changes over time. It is sometimes

### **Guidelines for Species Choice**

- Historically, roofs in the area covered by Historic New England would most likely have had eastern white pine or white cedar shingles, although the use of white oak in the region has been observed. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, railroad transportation made western red cedar shingles readily available in the Northeast.
- Shingle species should be selected for longevity and appearance. In recent years Alaskan yellow cedar has been used in certain applications in place of red or white cedar. Because of shorter growing seasons, Alaskan yellow cedar has many of the characteristics of old growth lumber, thus it is expected to provide superior performance over time compared to other available species. Its availability is projected to continue for several generations.

### **Technical Information for Material Selection (Wood Roofs)**

- The installation of a wood shingle roof should begin with the proper selection of materials.
- Shingle thickness varies slightly from shingle to shingle. Thickness is thus measured across shingles. A 5/2 rating indicates that the butt thickness across five shingles in 2” (approximately 7/16” per shingle). Thicker shingles – often marketed as “shakes” but dressed in the same way as shingles and not left rough and “rustic” – are nominally 5/8” thick.
  - A shingle with a 5/8” thick butt which is slightly greater than that of the standard roofing or sidewall shingle (3/8”) should provide greater additional wear and stability.
  - Roofing with 5/8” thick butt shingles can result in a significant build up in depth that will manifest itself as a detail change where the roof intersects with other roof planes and building side walls (dormers, additions, chimneys, etc.).
- Clear, vertical-grain, heartwood shingles (No. 1 Blue Label, Perfection 18”) are the preferred material. Other grades would allow for flat sawn, defects/knots and sapwood shingles which would not provide the same longevity as the Blue Label option. Grading standards are determined by the Cedar Shake & Shingle Bureau of North America.
- Installed shingle widths should range from 3” to 7”. Anything more than 7” is more prone to coping and breakage; anything less than 3” would result in less than the required 1-1/2” side overlap.