

NAKAMOTO FORESTRY

Please read this before using our products

Finish Information and Surface Maintenance

Traditionally in Japan Suyaki- and Gendai-type yakisugi have usually been installed unfinished and left that way for the lifetime of the structure. Cryptomeria ("sugi" or Japanese cypress) is a highly rot-resistant wood species, and color change from weathering is expected and accepted. Generally only higher-grade residences or public properties applied finishes and were maintained. Today most yakisugi (the statistic is 80%) is prefinished due to availability and acceptance of finishes and desire to maintain color consistency for as long as possible. We generally recommend finishing of all our products when installed outdoors to slow down the weathering process and bond in surface soot, and when installed indoors to make cleaning easier. Note the typical weathering due to lack of finish or finish maintenance in photos in the historical gallery on our website's "What is Yakisugi" page. This is due to the lack of a repainting culture in Japan. Organic weathering is beautiful but most North American owners want the color to stay the same forever.

Weathering depends on finish spec, pigment content, and method of application, the nature of each individual plank, local exposure to weather, and maintenance. Sun-exposed surfaces will gradually turn burnt orange as the soot erodes over decades, moisture-exposed surfaces will gradually turn silver, and areas with protection from both will stay the original color. However, finishing with a UV-resistant oil and regular refinishing per manufacturer instructions will slow down the aging process and allow the siding to retain the specified color longer. This will also allow the maximum lifetime possible by preventing dimensional movement, checking, and UV degradation of the fibers. Basically yakisugi is similar to any other wood siding in terms of finishes and maintenance. The differences are that thermally treated wood will silver out more quickly and will rot much less quickly than untreated wood.

After initial installation and within several years depending on conditions, minute hairline cracks will open on the surface of exterior planks. Refinishing as soon as color begins to change will fill in these cracks and make a longer-wearing surface. Each maintenance coat of finish will generally last longer than previous coats did due to oil build up. All exterior finishes we spec will be breathable for best thermal performance and longevity. Another important point on the finishes we specify is that they erode gradually over time, which is different from paints that flake or peel.

Please consult with us for specific project requirements and our recommendation to match.

On Finishes...

- All prefinishes will bond the soot to the surface and prevent it from coming off when touched. After installation the wall can be wiped down with a wet cloth or washed down with water and there will not be a noticeable soot residue.
- For maximum longevity on exteriors, finish end cuts, rips, drilled holes, or notches during installation.
- Some people think that back-oiling wood will increase longevity on an exterior, but there are mixed opinions on this and the Japanese do not do it. We therefore only oil the back side by special order. There is no reason to back-finish wood for interior applications except to prevent soot getting on the installers' hands.
- Use a penetrating UV-resistant plant-derived finish for exterior. High pigment and trans-oxide load is the best UV-inhibitor available, much better than the expensive automotive-grade clear inhibitors available.
- Natural unmodified plant-derived penetrating oils will show the grain best but will need more regular maintenance to stay vibrant than hybrids with a pigmented UV-blocking surface residue. Wood finished with penetrating oils will fade gradually over several years. Hybrids will have more consistent color for the first several years, then wood grain will show through after the pigmented surface residue erodes.
- For maximum longevity on exteriors we recommend alkyd-oil hybrids with an unmodified oil component for flexibility. Alkyds are plant-derived oils (safflower, linseed, soy, etc) that have been chemically modified into a polymer. They offer maximum UV protection and erode over time instead of crazing and scaling off like paint.

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- For interior applications petroleum- or plant-derived polymers (such as polyurethanes) make a good-looking, washable surface.
- It is important to follow finish manufacturer's instructions and to test when reapplying.

Maintenance Guidelines

- Cypress has premium longevity over other species due to a high tannin content. Tannin may leach from the cypress within the first year or so and stain lighter colored surfaces below. These stains will generally wash away with rain exposure within the second year after installation. This is normal for all cypress or cedar species. See the photos on our FAQ page. If any tannin stains appear on the wood or lower surfaces and needs to be removed, they can be washed off with a mild oxalic acid product.
- Apply a maintenance coat of finish when the wood begins to change color. Generally the first maintenance coat will be within 2~10 years for straight natural oils, then additional maintenance coats will be needed further and further apart due to oil build-up. Hybrids normally last longer before maintenance is needed, and a general rule of thumb is 10~15 years.
- Before application of a maintenance coat, clean and prepare the surface as specified by the finish manufacturer. Wash with a soft brush or cloth, never with a stiff brush or power washer.
- A very weak TSP or soap solution, commercial no-wash neutral pH cleaner, or simply clean water, can be applied with a cloth and residue removed to clean off soil, dirt, dust, etc. It is best to use a product supplied by the finish manufacturer if any cleaning agent is used.
- Always clean and refinish a hidden test area before attempting the entire wall surface.
- Touch up of damage, such as scratches or dings, or local uneven weathering, can be done easily with the specified finish maintenance product. Suyaki or Gendai damage can be touched up with a black or dark brown stain, or the original prefinish. A small nick can be carefully dabbed with stain, bleaching can be lightly blended with stain and a rag, or for interior even a magic marker or grease pencil can be used for quick cosmetic touch-up.
- Scratches to our Suyaki with an interior urethane finish can be touched up with a polyurethane solution, but make sure you match water-based or oil-based according to your project spec.

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