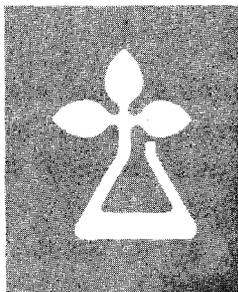


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WOOD FINISHING:
**DISCOLORATION OF HOUSE
PAINT BY BLUE STAIN**

By

Forest Products Laboratory, Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

The Problem of Blue Stain

Blue stain is a blue-black discoloration of wood that may discolor paint applied over it. Blue stain is caused by certain fungi (small forms of plant life) that grow in sapwood and use parts of the sapwood for their food. It is not decay, although the conditions that favor growth of blue stain fungi very often lead to infection by decay-producing fungi. Fungi need moisture to live. Although wood normally contains some moisture, tests have shown that blue stain fungi can live in wood only if it contains at least 26 percent moisture.

Wood in service with proper design and maintained correctly will not normally reach a moisture content of 20 percent. If the wood surfaces are exposed to water constantly, such as rain, dew, or water vapor condensation, moisture content may become high enough to support blue stain fungi. The same may be true if wood is in contact with the ground.

Prevention and Cure

1. If lumber contains blue stain, but in use its moisture content will not exceed 20 percent, it can be painted without danger of further staining. If moisture content exceeds 20 percent, blue stain may resume growth and discolor new paint.
2. Keep moisture out of wood. Treat unpainted wood with a water-repellent preservative (WW).
3. In building, provide for adequate roof overhang, eave troughs, and downspouts. In the already built house, check eave troughs and downspouts for leaks, and repair or replace if needed.
4. Prevent condensation by providing a vapor barrier on the interior side of exterior walls.
5. Remove paint from the joints on wood siding or window sash that have blue stain. Treat the wood at the joints with a WRP before repainting.
6. Treat with a 5 percent sodium hypochlorite solution (ordinary household bleach). While this may remove the discoloration of the blue stain fungi, it is not a permanent cure.
7. Blue stain can be removed by sanding if the stain does not penetrate too deeply into the wood.

