

Beware of Fungus

Wood Decay Wood decays through the action of fungi that develop in living or dead wood. Fungi that develop in the surface are termed mould fungi, whereas sapstaining fungi penetrates the wood. Fungi produce spores which are distributed by wind, water or insects.

Wood-decay can be placed in one of the three major groups:

- brown rot
- white rot (bleached effect)
- soft rot (attacks wet lumber)

The activities of wood-destroying fungi are dependent on four principal factors of which the removal of one or more of these factors will prevent decay:

- adequate moisture - spores need 20 per cent moisture content
- adequate oxygen - fungi cannot live in water
- favourable temperature - growth impeded below 1 degree and above 37 degrees
- food source - the wood itself

The following is good practice.

- prevent wood contacting soil by using concrete piers for support
- Allow at least 50 cm clearance between wood and soil in crawl spaces. Enclosed crawl spaces need a 4-6 mil polyethylene soil cover and proper ventilation (100 square centimetre vent for each 15 square metres of floor space)
- do not allow flower pots and planters to drain near foundations
- slope roof drainage pipes away from the structure to ensure fast water runoff
- ensure roof overhang is sufficient to prevent excessive weathering
- repair peeling paint to avoid trapping water behind paint chips
- provide proper attic ventilation and ensure all chimneys and vent stacks are properly maintained and flashing is watertight
- ensure attic is properly insulated to prevent ice dam buildup
- ensure roof shingles, flashing, fascia and eaves are maintained
- slope soil grade away from the structure
- prevent outside water faucets dripping so that the exterior foundation is not constantly wet.

Keep the interior plumbing in good condition, and wrap the pipe to reduce sweating in humid weather.

Information from the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources