



## Good-Looking, Time-Saving Products for your Home

What's behind the trend toward low-maintenance products for the home? *Her Home* went one-on-one with home buyers and builders to discover the perceptions and values behind the surge. The insights just might surprise you!

With warm weather settling in, Cindy's thoughts turned to her spacious backyard deck where she and her family love to spend time. Every couple of years, she and her husband face the hassle of power washing and re-sealing their wood deck.

Cindy says a low-maintenance alternative would be mentally freeing. "Installing a **low-maintenance deck** would bring the freedom of knowing you are completed with the project. I would never have to do anything with it again. I could sit and enjoy my deck without constantly thinking about the work it needs. It would bring closure to an otherwise ongoing project."

Like Cindy, most of the women we talked with described maintenance as emotionally burdensome. Some felt guilty about not getting everything done. Others worried that bigger problems might arise if they didn't get little upkeep projects done in time. The tasks intimidated some who feared they couldn't do the job properly or that they would hire the wrong contractor and get "taken." And, of course, most were concerned that their homes appeared well kept.

CertainTeed offers the gamut of low-maintenance vinyl siding choices, from value-priced options to simulated shakes.

# CAREFREE EXTERIORS

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# TIME

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Recently widowed, Delores provided a unique, new perspective on low maintenance that will likely only grow in importance. “When Steve (her husband) was around, we shared the maintenance issues. Now all of the home maintenance has fallen on me. There’s so much to be done; I don’t have time to do the things I would really like to do.”

Other women concurred, dismissing the notion that exterior maintenance and upkeep is primarily the man’s responsibility.

Sharon loves her new **vinyl siding**, saying it made her home look like new. “Now I get satisfaction every time I drive by my home,” she remarked. “We have an older home and my husband doesn’t paint. That meant every few years I had to paint the outside, which took time away from my garden and fish ponds. And I don’t like heights. The only way to reach one part of my home when painting was to climb up on the roof. I just didn’t feel safe.”

Whoever said “time is money” could have been thinking about home maintenance. In *Just Ask A Woman*, author Mary Lou Quinlon answers the question, “What do most women

feel they *deserve*, particularly women with families and job responsibilities? TIME.” It has also been said that time is the new currency directly competing with dollars for our attention.

Still, dollars spent for maintenance are a significant issue. Arloene lives in the same house she and her husband built 43 years ago. She is on her fifth roof. “Living in the Midwest,” according to Arloene, “means living with thunderstorms, high winds and hail.

“After a hailstorm four years ago, I called my insurance agent. He sent an adjuster out and, even though the roof did not need to be replaced, the company raised my insurance rates. Just because they had sent an adjuster out! When I did replace the shingles last year, I chose **top quality shingles** that will withstand hail and wind. They cost a little more, but I shouldn’t ever have to replace the roof again.”

Julie recently replaced her old windows with low-maintenance **windows that tilt-in for easy cleaning**. “I like having things clean and I can clean the new windows four times a year, whereas the older windows only got cleaned in the spring and fall. And I still have more

time to get other maintenance tasks done that otherwise wouldn’t get done at all.”

Next on Julie’s list: **gutter covers**. “We have a two-story home. The gutters overflow if we don’t clean the leaves and gunk out of them. But it’s such a hard job, especially in late fall when the trees shed their leaves and temperatures drop into the 30’s and 40’s!”

Unexpectedly, most of the people we talked with concentrated on their home’s exterior. Yet, for Jane Davis, owner of Village Builders, a custom homebuilder in Michigan, low-maintenance exteriors have been a selling point for years. “People are very busy and don’t have a lot of time for maintenance and upkeep. Buyers are looking for low or no-maintenance products within their budget.

RIGHT : With its deep, authentic wood grain pattern, CertainTeed’s WeatherBoards siding is fiber-cement composite backed by a 50-year warranty. Unlike wood, it will not rot and is impervious to wood-boring insects.

OPPOSITE TOP: EverNew® vinyl decking cuts and handles like wood. It offers concealed fasteners and comes in three colors: tan, white and gray.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: CertainTeed’s Boardwalk, a composite decking made from PVC, recycled Maple hardwood flour and additives, won’t shrink, warp or splinter. And it never needs to be painted or stained. A hidden fastener system is available to hide unsightly screws.





“With our weather changes here in Michigan, buyers want to eliminate exterior painting. Hence, the popularity of **brick, stone, vinyl siding and aluminum soffits**. No maintenance exteriors helped set our company apart from other area builders years ago. We offer insulated steel exterior doors, clad windows and 30-year dimensional shingles – with fifty-year shingles as an upgrade.”

Fox Homes, of Gig Harbor, Washington, builds 50 to 75 homes per year averaging \$130,000 on their customers’ lots. For their buyers, practicality and price dictate low maintenance solutions. According to company spokesman Brian Cochran, “**Fiber-cement siding** is standard because painting wood siding every five years is a nuisance and expensive. We also use a good, continuous ridge, roof venting system that helps attics breathe and reduces heat build up, extending the life of our homes.”

Cochran went on to say that in his area, moss is a real problem for wood porches. Fox Homes’ standard approach is to pour concrete porch slabs that require almost no maintenance. “**Composite decking** is great for our customers who can afford it,” he adds. **Zero-maintenance, vinyl windows, fiberglass doors and steel garage doors** round out Fox Homes’ surprisingly affordable low-maintenance approach.

The combination of aesthetics, performance and practicality have helped make low-maintenance products an easy decision for buyers and builders alike. Whether the appeal is “easy to clean” or “lifetime warranty,” is it any wonder so many homes are being touted as low maintenance? ■■

