



## TECHNICAL BULLETIN # 4



*Thuja plicata*  
**Western Red Cedar**

# Cedar Siding: Grades, Seasoning, Patterns & Textures

Wood siding is one of the most versatile of all materials that can be installed as exterior siding due in part to its ability to accept a variety of finishes. This opens the door to unlimited possibilities of color choices and appearances.

### Grades

One of the most popular species of wood siding is Western Red Cedar because it has dimensional stability, holds finishes extremely well and is naturally durable. Western Red Cedar grades can be generally categorized into clear grades and knotty grades.

Clear, premium grades have few adverse characteristics (knots, splits) etc. For bevel or clapboard siding, the highest grade available is *Clear VG Heart* (VG stands for vertical grain) followed by *A Bevel*. For all other patterns, cedar may be found in a variety of premium grades, including *Clear Heart*, *A Grade*, *B & Better Select* and *C & Better Select*. Because of

their superior quality and appearance, the clear grades are generally more expensive and less common than the knotty grades.

Knotty grades have larger, more frequent knots and other characteristics. *#2 Common*, *#3 Common*, *Select Knotty* and *Quality Knotty* are recognized agency grades that are available. The grade of cedar used may influence finish selection. Clear grades accept paint, stain or water repellents easily, while stains or water repellents are recommended for coating knotty grades.

### Seasoning

Cedar siding can be purchased as unseasoned (green), 19% maximum moisture content (S-dry), or 15% maximum moisture content (MC15). Typically, the clear grades are kiln dried to MC15 specifications, while knotty grades are normally sold as S-Dry or green. If unseasoned siding is purchased, it must be allowed to dry for 30 days prior to finishing and installation, while dry sidings should shrink less and can be finished immediately.

Moisture content should be below 15% prior to application of a finish, allowing it to penetrate and dry properly. Stains or water repellents do not form films like paints and are therefore preferred when siding must be finished prior to being allowed to dry completely.

### Patterns

Cedar siding is available in a variety of patterns with bevel or clapboard being the most common. *Channel rustic*, *shiplap* and *tongue & groove* patterns are also popular. Installation differs for each, and each has applications for which it is best suited. Bevel patterns can only be installed horizontally, but they are more forgiving when it comes to shrinkage. Channel rustic, tongue & groove and shiplap patterns can be installed either horizontally or vertically, but some require close attention to detail and seasoning. As a rule, the narrower and thicker the pattern, the better the performance.

### Textures

Siding is available in smooth, rough or saw-textured surfaces. When used with clear or semi-transparent finishes, a smooth surface will show the grain patterns and color variations in the wood more than other textures. These surfaces

(Continued on back)

## Cedar Siding (*Continued from front*)

also absorb less finish and typically require more maintenance than other textures. In contrast, rough and saw-textured surfaces can absorb about twice as much finish as smooth-textured surfaces and, when protected by stain- and water-repellent finishes, need to be recoated much less frequently.

Wood siding and wood finishes go hand in hand in providing consumers with virtually unlimited choices for appearance. By properly selecting the grade, seasoning, pattern and texture of the siding and by protecting it from moisture, sun and mold with a quality finish, wood siding can last for many decades.

### SIDING GRADES

General Categories Species, Grade, Species, Grade, Species, Grade	GRADES			Grade Rule Paragraph Numbers for Reference & Specifying		
	Western Species		Cedar	WWPA <sup>2</sup>	WCLIB <sup>3</sup>	NLGA <sup>4</sup>
	Selects <sup>1</sup>	Finish	Western & Canadian			
<b>ALL PATTERNS</b>	<b>PREMIUM GRADES</b>					
	C Select		<b>Clear Heart<sup>1</sup> A Grade<sup>1</sup></b>	2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017	102 103 104	2001 2002
	D Select	Common Premium Dressed Downdress	<b>Clear VG Heart<sup>1</sup> A Bevel<sup>1</sup></b> B Grade C Grade	2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017	102 103 104 105 106 107 108	2001 2002
<b>Additional Grades for Bevel Patterns</b>	<b>Premium</b>	Smooth Premium Dressed Downdress	<b>Select Knotty Quality Knotty</b>	2019		2001 2002
	Knotty					
<b>ALL PATTERNS</b>	<b>KNOTTY GRADES</b>					
	Common	Antique Knotty				
	#2 Common	Select Knotty				
	#3 Common	Common Knotty	<b>Select Knotty<sup>1</sup></b>	2012	103 104	2004
	#4 Common	Standard	<b>Quality Knotty<sup>1</sup></b>	4012 1014	103 104 105 106	2004

<sup>1</sup> Grade names under bold type are the most widely available grades. These are often called common or standard grades and include common, select, and premium in the grade name under CABOT® Cedar. © Cabot Stain Co. WWPA Grade 2001 Common, 2002 Premium.

<sup>2</sup> Western Wood Products Association's Western Lumber Grading Rules and Cabinet Grade Lumber Rules, Western Wood Products Association.

<sup>3</sup> National Lumber Manufacturers Association's Cabinet Grade Lumber Rules.

<sup>4</sup> National Lumber Manufacturers Association's Standard Building Rules for Residential Frame Construction.

Some of these grades may be used for Residential Building Frame Construction, as indicated by the bold type.

<sup>5</sup> Standard building codes may not accept some of these grades for residential frame construction.

<sup>6</sup> The #4 Common grade is also known as "S4S" (surfaced four sides) and is similar to Select Knotty and Quality Knotty, however SK is a premium designation and is not an AS/NZS classification.

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