

Bonnie Krims  
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## manufacturers

**WOODSCAPES** Sherwin-Williams. 800-474-3794. sherwin-williams.com.  
**DECK & HOUSE STAIN** Thompson's WaterSeal. 800-367-6297. thompsonsonline.com.  
**MOORWOOD** Benjamin Moore & Co. 888-236-6867. benjaminmoore.com.  
**STORM STAIN** California Paints. 800-225-1141. californiapaints.com.  
**ZAR RAIN STAIN** UGL (United Gilsonite Laboratories). 800-845-5227. ugl.com.  
**O.V.T. SOLID COLOR STAIN and FINISH WITH TEFLON** Cabot. 800-877-8246. cabotstain.com.

## FINISHES

**CLEAR** Waterproofing only; adds no color.  
**TRANSLUCENT** Waterproofing with only a hint of pigmentation.  
**SEMITRANSSPARENT** Allows the grain and texture of the wood to show through. Available in water-based and oil-based formulas.  
**SEMISOLID** More heavily pigmented than semitransparent; allows some grain and all texture of the wood to show through.  
**SOLID COLOR** Conceals the grain of the wood while allowing its texture to show through. Available in water-based and oil-based formulas.  
(Technically, "clear" and "translucent" aren't stains; they are paint alternatives.)

require the use of stain on the exteriors of houses in certain neighborhoods. "We have always strongly encouraged the use of materials and colors that allow houses to blend into the environment," says KIARB's manager, Amanda Mole. "We require that stains be semitransparent or semisolid, because we want to be able to see the grain."

"Stain is the most powerful decorating tool one can use to achieve a natural look," says Bonnie Rosser Krims, author of *The Perfectly Painted House* (Rockport, 2001). "It can make the house feel almost like a part of nature itself." Both stain and paint work to protect wood siding or shingles by coating the wood. However, while paint creates a uniform surface, stain penetrates, so that the wood's natural color and texture show through to varying degrees.

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Although it is difficult to stain a house that has already been painted, stain is easy to apply to new wood. A professional will prepare the surface and should then apply two coats of stain to ensure an even result. When ready to restain, first clean the siding with a mild detergent and a power washer, then reapply the stain. Many homeowners believe that stain will last longer than paint, but this belief is more myth than fact, says Carl Minchew, director of technical services and environmental affairs for Benjamin Moore. Stain, which is usually a thinner material than paint, may actually offer slightly less protection in the long run. "Over time, stains gradually erode and disappear," says Minchew. "When paint fails, it peels off, which is noticeable right away." On a properly prepared surface, both paint and stain should last for between four and ten years.

For those who can't make up their mind, "there's no rule that you have to paint everything," says architect Victoria Baran of Robert A. M. Stern Architects. "It would be great to have the clapboard treated with either paint or stain, and the trim and other details with the other. Then you get tone on tone, which is very interesting."