

Question: Our house is about 20 years old and still has the original stain on rough, vertical cedar siding. It's actually in very good condition in most areas but there a few spots exposed to a lot of sun that are faded and patchy. Is there something you could recommend that could cover evenly over this stain and hopefully last another 20 years?

Dan, Chelsea

Answer

: My personal preference for cedar is to let it go natural. Cedar if left alone has its own natural oils and preservatives that will last for many years virtually maintenance free (that is the part that I like). When left natural, however, it tends to turn grey in color and that is what turns most people off leaving it natural. Your favorite paint store will have products for staining with linseed oil base or latex base that will cover those faded areas. However; before applying any stain, you will have to clean off the area you want to re-stain with a biodegradable wood wash and a pressure sprayer. This should return the wood to its original color. It is possible that you may need to use a wood bleach product to lighten the wood before staining. After it is completely dry, you are ready for re-staining. Your most difficult challenge in all of this is matching the freshly stained area with the original area to keep a consistant color, multiple coats may be necessary.

Question: I have recently noticed what I believe to be a sewage smell occasionally coming from the floor drain in my basement. Directly beside the floor drain is a vented ejector pump pit. I am having a difficult time figuring out where and how these smells are getting into the system. Do you have any advice? Michael, Chelsea

Answer: Your problem is not uncommon. The first thing to check is that you have water in the P-trap of the floor drain. Adding a litre or two every month or so is a good idea . Sometimes an adjacent ejector pump will actually suck the water right out of the P-trap allowing the smells to migrate back into the house. Another place to check would be the length of the plumbing stack up on your roof. If it is too short, you

will be vulnerable to downdrafts, especially on windy or stormy days which could re-direct sewage gases back into the house. I personally like to see a plumbing stack at least 12 to 24 inches above the roof line. If yours is too short you can use a pipe (M-J) clamp to extend your existing pipe. I hope this helps.

Peter Weeks has been a Chelsea resident for 15 years. As a general contractor since 1988, he has been doing residential home inspections for about one year. He is an associate member of OAHI (Ontario Association of Home Inspectors), CAHPI (Canadian Association of Home & Property Inspectors) and a member of the BBB. Forward your question to , Peter at pwhi@sympatico.ca or by phone at 290.3697.