

# The Perfect Gutter Cover

I have yet to find a perfect product, whether it be a car, electronics, or software. There is always some sort of weakness. The same goes for **gutter protection**. Many companies make promises that are unrealistic, and consequently convey false expectations to the homeowner. All gutter protection products have some limitations. If you want proof, look at the warranties before you purchase. Gutter protectors can be limited in effectiveness by many situations. You can find a great gutter guard, but you have to consider the cumulative effect of several components of each system.

**Design:** Many of the designs do not work properly or very well under medium to heavy debris conditions. The ones that do work may still have issues. Gutter covers commonly have problems with the roof valleys (sections of the roof that come together). Valleys are like a funnel which channels large volumes of rainwater at high velocity. Flyover is very common here. Debris is also funneled through the valleys as well. Sometimes the debris breaks down into slurry and clogs the gutters in the valley. Most gutter protections incorporate a diverter to channel the high velocity water to either side of the valley. These diverters cause more harm than good because debris will collect behind these systems and then overflow in slurry and clog the gutters.

Pine needles are another issue. They are thin enough that they will become encapsulated in the water and flow into the trough of the gutter guard system. Many gutter covers fail because there is not enough room to allow the pine needles to get into the gutters and get flushed out.

In the rainforest section of the northwest, the trees shed an incredible amount of debris. The almost daily rain keeps the debris moist and wet, and consequently, it never get blown off by the wind. The amount of debris over a year sitting up on a roof will make it impossible for the gutter leaf guard to work properly.

In the northern climates, there is no guarantee that the gutters will be free flowing. Why? Because frozen water doesn't flow. The gutters will be clogged with ice and other debris during the winter.

**Solution:** Look for a product that has been available for several years. Most likely the bugs have been worked out in the design and in the installation methods for the various conditions across the country.

There are some companies that acquire a seal of approval on their product as a marketing strategy. This is no guarantee of an effectively designed gutter cover. The seal of approval is awarded by the gutter protection manufacturer paying several thousands dollars every year to the approving company.

Only products that can disperse the heat effectively across the panel and are hard wired into the home will prevent ice build up in the gutters. Products that don't have an effective heating system will not stop ice build up. For more information on heated gutter systems go to [heatercap](#).

**Skill of Installation:** The more effective gutter caps require installation training to properly mount the system to the gutters and roof. Most contractors won't even look at training manuals. Their training is done on your home. Some contractors do onsite training and they may learn a few basic techniques on simple roof styles. Unfortunately, there are several different roof styles on homes. If a contractor hasn't ever installed your roof scenario, they are learning on your roof. You can purchase an effective gutter cover only to have the effectiveness negated by an improper installation.

**Solution:** There are products that are installed by true factory certified installers. True factory certification involves installers traveling to a formal training facility and practicing gutter guard installation on various roof scenarios. The installation learning curve is greatly diminished or eliminated.

**After Installation Service:** Even with the best product and installing company, there still may be adjustments that have to be made to fine tune the effectiveness of the gutter cap. Sometimes, there may be excessive oil on the panel (lubrication applied during roll forming of product) that needs to be cleaned off.

Oil and water don't mix, so excessive oil can cause the rain water to cascade over the gutter protector panel. Usually this problem is reconciled after a few rains, or is cleaned off by the contractor.

Rain water fly off may be an issue. Sometimes adjustments have to be made to the valley system to control the volume of water flowing over the gutter leaf guard. In areas where there is a down spout from an upper run of gutters to the lower section of roof, water may fly over the gutter protection due to the volume and velocity. Commonly, the upper down spouts need to be directly tied into the lower gutter.

**Solution:** Get it in writing that the contractor, not the manufacturer, will take care of service issues related to performance and labor. A reputable contractor will have a company guarantee directly on the contract. Talk to recent customers about their after installation experiences.

**Accountability and Integrity of Contractor:** There are many contractors that do a great job of installing gutter covers very quickly, but then promptly ignore the customer afterwards. Typically, the product was priced so low that they can't afford to service their work. They hope that the homeowner will stop calling and give up. Or they tell the homeowner, "You get what you pay for. You knew it was a cheap product."

**Solution:** Research the gutter guard contractor on the internet. Use search engines and input the contractor's name. If there are consumer complaints, sometimes they will turn up. The Better Business Bureau is a great source as well. Avoid other contractor service listings, as they may be biased, especially if the contractor is paying to be on their listing.

**Financial Health of Contractor:** Contractors can promise you the world, but if they are out of business, so are their guarantees. Low cost contractors go out of business several times and reopen under new names. Their commitments disappear along with their past business name.

**Solution:** Look to see how long they have been in business. Have they had other companies or been in business under different names. Search engines are a great source, along with the Better Business Bureau.

**Warranty:** Warranties are more likely to protect the manufacturer or contractor instead of the consumer. Fine print, complicated sentence structure, and big words should be viewed as a big commitment eraser. On top of it, warranties are usually given out after the job has been paid for, and it is too late. Many an unwary homeowner has found out that all promises given during the presentation were taken away in the warranty. The contractor is a key component of the warranty. A manufacturer producing a great product does not have direct control in the manner in which it is installed. Verbal promises are nothing! You should always have guarantees in writing!

**Solution:** Read the copy of the warranty up front. A contractor should be able to supply you with one to read before you purchase the product. If you have apprehensions call former customers to see how the warranty service was handled. Find out what their policy is with warranty issues. Contractors that prefer you call them before the manufacturer are more likely to give you quicker and better service. Also, ensure that after installation you receive a warranty, send in the warranty registration, and hang on to your copy. Keep copies of work orders and paid receipts in case your warranty registration was lost in the mail.

## **Additional Resources**

[The Hazards of Ice in Your Gutters](#)

[What is Important in a Water Management System](#)