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# Custom Wood Homes

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## All Bark, No Bite

Custom Wood Homes asked Highland Craftsmen vice-president Chris Curry (the company is based in Spruce Pine, North Carolina) to clarify some points about bark siding (examples at left).

**Q** Your poplar bark is kiln-dried to what percentage?

**A** Highland Craftsmen Inc. Bark House Shingles are kiln-dried to 6-8% moisture content.

**Q** If someone wants to finish or seal your product, what do you recommend they use?

**A** For an exterior application, they may use a clear linseed oil based product with low wax content. For an interior application, we have found that a flat polyurethane will give a hard protective coating without betraying its natural appearance.

**Q** Can the bark be stained to create a different hue?

**A** Yes, it has been done but one must proceed with caution to not betray its intended appearance.

**Q** If there are splash stains or uneven sun bleaching over a period of time, how would you recommend they fix the issue?

**A** We don't. The accepted beauty of this product is that mother nature paints it as she sees fit. These color changes naturally occur on the tree so why should they not occur on your home?

**Q** Do you sell to areas only in the Appalachian region or across the country?

**A** We have sold our products in 35 states to date. We have had inquiries and have sold some products to other countries in regions ranging from North and South America, Europe, the Middle East and the Pacific Rim.

**Q** Do you supply crews or work with general contractors?

**A** We supply installation guides with our Bark House shingles that were written by a licensed building contractor and easy to use. We also offer technical assistance via phone when needed.

**Q** What kind of misperceptions do people have about bark siding?

**A** The misconceptions include:

"It won't last." We have homes in high-weather conditions with poplar bark shingles. These homes are 80 years old.

"The bark has to be treated with something." Bark has lasted in its natural state for decades without sealers, satins or chemical treatments. It's an all-natural, green product as is.

"You cut a lot of trees to make the siding." We don't buy and cut timber. The shingles are byproducts of the logging industry and would have been waste if not reclaimed.

"Bugs will eat it." Bark is Mother Nature's insect protection.

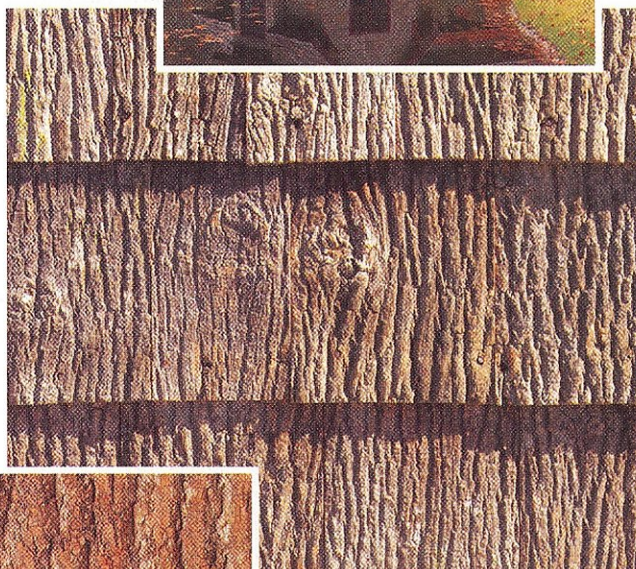
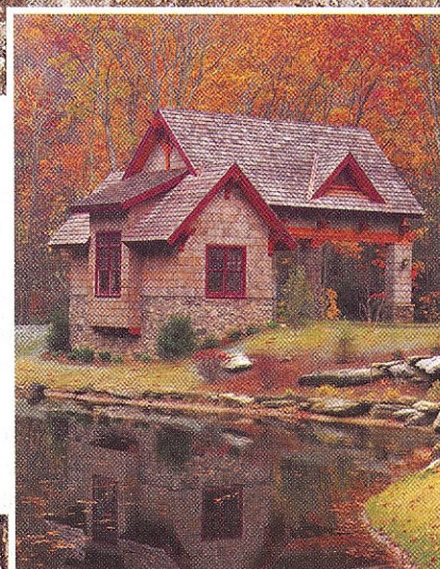
Bugs don't eat bark — they try to eat the sugars behind the bark.

JOYCE STANDRIDGE



Photos courtesy of Highland Craftsmen / by Todd Bush

One new trend in custom wood homes is the use of bark siding. One company, Highland Craftsmen, knows of a North Carolina home with bark siding that hasn't needed replacement for more than 75 years.



The texture and color of the poplar bark siding varies depending on the species and the age at which it was harvested.

