



CAPE COD CERTIFIED

CAPE COD HOME

Best Roofing Materials for Cape Cod Homes: Salt Air, Wind, and Coastal Conditions

A free field guide from the people who actually live here.



A roof anywhere has to keep the rain out. A roof on Cape Cod has to do that while standing up to salt air, driving wind off the Atlantic, nor’easters, hurricanes, and the freeze-thaw of a New England winter — for decades. That’s a tougher assignment than most roofs face, and it’s why material choice matters more here than inland. Pick right and your roof shrugs off storms for its full lifespan; pick wrong (or install it poorly) and the coast finds every weakness. Here’s how to choose a roof for a Cape home. (Costs, lifespans, and code/wind requirements vary — confirm specifics with licensed local roofers and your town’s building department.)

What the Cape does to a roof

Before materials, understand the enemies: - **Salt air** corrodes fasteners and degrades some materials over time. - **Wind** — coastal wind and storm gusts test how well a roof is fastened and sealed; wind-driven rain probes every seam. - **Storms** — nor’easters and hurricanes are periodic realities. - **Freeze-thaw and ice** in winter stress edges and flashing.

The takeaway: on the Cape, **installation quality and wind-rating matter as much as the material itself**, and corrosion-resistant fasteners and proper underlayment are non-negotiable.

The main roofing choices

Material	Look	Strengths	Considerations
Architectural asphalt shingle	Classic, versatile	Affordable, good wind ratings available, widely installed	Shorter lifespan than premium options
Cedar shake / shingle	The iconic Cape look; weathers silver-gray	Beautiful, traditional, historically appropriate	Higher maintenance/cost; fire & upkeep considerations
Metal (standing seam)	Modern or classic	Long-lived, excellent in wind/snow, low maintenance	Higher upfront cost
Synthetic (composite shake/slate)	Mimics cedar/slate	Durable, lower maintenance than real wood	Cost varies; check quality

The Cape classic: cedar

Nothing says Cape Cod like **weathered cedar shingles** silvering in the salt air, and on the north-side historic-district homes it’s often the expected — sometimes required — look. Cedar is beautiful and traditional, but it’s a **higher-maintenance, higher-cost** choice that needs proper installation and upkeep to last on the coast. For homes where the look matters (or the historic district requires it), it’s worth it; for pure practicality, other options compete.

The practical workhorse: architectural asphalt

Most Cape roofs are **architectural (dimensional) asphalt shingles** — and for good reason. They’re affordable, come in **high wind-rated versions well-suited to coastal exposure**, and any local roofer can install them well. For a homeowner balancing cost, looks, and storm performance, a quality architectural shingle with a strong wind rating is the sensible default.

The long-haul option: metal

Standing-seam metal roofs cost more upfront but last a very long time, shed snow, and handle wind beautifully — a strong choice for exposed coastal sites and owners who want to roof once and be done. Increasingly seen on the Cape.

What matters more than the material

- **Wind rating and proper fastening** — the coast will find an under-fastened roof.
- **Corrosion-resistant fasteners and quality flashing** — salt air punishes cheap hardware.
- **Good underlayment and ice-and-water shield** at edges and valleys.
- **A licensed, experienced coastal roofer** — the best material installed poorly still fails.
- **Historic-district rules** — north-side 6A homes may have material/appearance requirements; check first.

Don't-miss cautions

- **Confirm historic-district requirements** before choosing a material on a 6A/north-side home.
- **Prioritize wind rating and installation quality** — on the Cape they matter more than the brochure lifespan.
- **Get multiple quotes** from licensed local roofers and compare warranty, wind rating, and materials — not just price.

Don't miss: weighting wind performance, corrosion-resistant installation, and a proven local roofer as heavily as the material itself. On Cape Cod, the “best” roof is the one that's storm-rated, properly fastened with coastal-grade hardware, appropriate to your home (and its historic district, if any), and installed by someone who roofs the coast for a living. Get those right, and the material choice becomes what it should be — mostly about the look you want.

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