Q Recently, a client asked me to look at her "leaking" gutters. The gutters seem to be positioned properly under the edge of the shingles, but in places it appears that water dripping off the roof follows the drip-edge back and then drips down the fascia behind the gutter. The edges of the shingles are almost flush with the drip-edge. What I can do at this point to cure the problem?

Cure for a Dripping Gutter

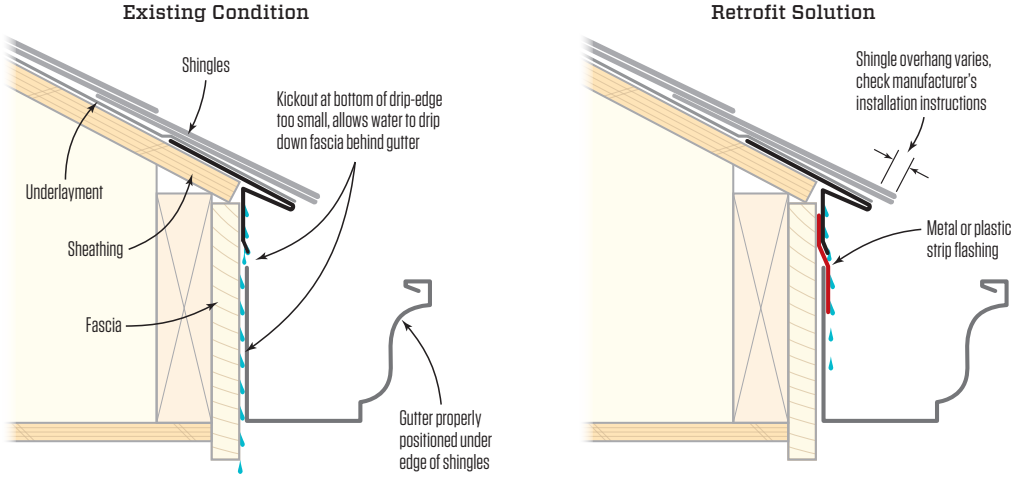

Illustration: Tim Healey

A Mike Guertin, a builder and remodeler in East Greenwich, R.I., and a presenter at JLC Live, responds: Just because that folded metal strip at the edge of a roof is called a "drip-edge" doesn't mean that water will always cooperate and drip off the edge of the roof and into the gutter like we want it to. At the bottom of the vertical fascia leg of the drip-edge, there's a small kickout. Ideally, any water that makes its way along the drip-edge will hit that little kickout and be diverted safely into the gutter. But water that does find its way behind the gutter and drip down the fascia usually doesn't cause problems other than annoying the client.

Having the shingles nearly flush with the drip-edge should not be a problem. The amount that shingles overhang the drip-edge should comply with the shingle manufacturer's recommendations. The *Residential Asphalt Roofing Manual* from ARMA (Asphalt Roofing Manufacturers Association) says that asphalt shingles may be cut flush with the drip-edge or extend 1/2 inch to 3/4 inch beyond the edge of the roof. Another factor in determining the overhang is whether strong winds are a problem in your area. If the house is in a high-wind zone, I would not let the shingles overhang more than 1/4 inch, to minimize the chance of them lifting up during a storm.

Check first to see if the kickout portion of the drip-edge extends over the back edge of the gutter. If the gutter is mounted too far below the drip-edge, or if the kickout doesn't extend far enough over the gutter, a retrofit solution would be to slip a strip of metal or rigid plastic flashing under the vertical fascia leg of the drip-edge and let the bottom edge of the strip overlap the back edge of the gutter. The success of this strategy depends on the shape of the gutter and the type of hangers. If the hangers are in the way, I'd insert the strips between the hangers.

Then, when the time comes to replace the shingles, a new drip-edge should be installed—one that has a fascia leg with a big enough kickout along the bottom edge to channel water directly into the gutter.

Q I read the *Q&A* on using treated cedar shingles in the March 2016 issue of *JLC*. Do pressure-washing and sealing a cedar roof also help to promote longevity?

A Chris Yerkes, a cedar-shingle installer certified by the Cedar Shake and Shingle Bureau (CSSB), and owner of Cedarworks, in Brewster, Mass., responds: Pressure-washing a cedar roof is generally a bad idea, and my company does not offer that service. I have two main problems with it: Pressure-washing forces water into the shingles, and it can cause surface damage and actually promote rot.

Pressure-washing effectively drives water into the wood while removing the top layer of material at the same time. The resulting dramatic increase in the moisture content of the shingles can lead to rot and mold, and the force behind pressure-washing can erode or "scallop" away the soft material between grain rings of the shingles, weakening them and potentially causing the shingles to crack and curl. Additionally, if the wrong spray angle or nozzle tip is used, the process can create leaks by forcing water underneath the shingles or shakes, or it can give the roof a streaked or uneven appearance.

An inexperienced pressure-washer operator will probably do more harm than good to a roof.

One of the biggest problems with pressure-washing is the easy accessibility of the machines. In trained and experienced hands, a pressure-washer might be effective in the most extreme cases. But there's always the danger that someone will go down to the local rental center and grab a pressure-washer without knowing exactly how to use it. An inexperienced pressure-washer operator will probably do more harm than good to a roof.

Instead, we've found that the best way to keep a roof clean is to passively maintain the roof from day one. This can be accomplished by using treated shingles (as was discussed in the *Q&A* referred to above); by installing copper, zinc, or lead strips along all the hips and ridges, which helps to prevent mold and moss from growing; and by keeping valleys and low-slope roofs free of debris. Don't forget to keep the gutters clean as well.

As far as the use of sealers is concerned, I do not advocate using any type of sealer on a wood roof. Sealers can trap moisture and prevent drying, which can lead to premature roof failure.