

Mildew is a fungus that grows best where there is excess moisture and inadequate air circulation. So first trim back any trees and shrubs that restrict airflow around the house, and make sure downspouts move roof runoff well away from the building foundation.

Commercial “washes” that are applied through a pressure washer can remove mild buildup of dirt and mildew on vinyl, aluminum or steel house siding.

However, heavy mildew growth may require stronger treatment. For this, mix 3 ounces of trisodium phosphate (TSP), one ounce of powdered laundry detergent, and 8 ounces of chlorine laundry bleach to one (1) gallon of warm water. Common brand names of detergent using TSP are Spic’N’Span® and Soilax®. TSP itself is available at most hardware stores and home improvement centers. This is also a good recipe for preparing scraped wood surfaces prior to painting.

Wear rubber gloves and protect your eyes from splatters of cleaning solution and cover landscape plants to protect them. Working in the shade with a sponge, wet the mildewed area with the cleaning solution and let stand a few minutes to allow the chlorine bleach to kill the mildew. Then with a stiff-bristle brush, scrub the affected area and hose it clean with water. Work in sections from the bottom to the top of the wall to avoid streaking the cleaned areas.

After the siding has air-dried, the time interval before the next cleaning can be extended by a couple years by wiping vinyl siding with a protectant such as ArmorAll®. This helps restore the original color and makes it harder for dust and mildew to stick to the siding.