

# Buying Guide To Gutters and Gutter Protection and the



## *Red Flags You Want To Avoid*

Are you in the market for a new set of gutters? Perhaps you are tired of cleaning them? Maybe you just need some repairs. This guide is designed with you in mind. Inside you'll learn how to choose a contractor, what products are available and, most importantly, what **Red Flags** homeowners should avoid.

# THE COMPANY

When choosing a company to work on your house, look for a company with some longevity. A high percentage of companies never make it past their fifth year of business, so five years in business would be a minimum. Choose a company to fit the size of your project. Small jobs, such as gutters, can be handled by a company of 3 to 10 employees. If you are in the market for a new roof, new siding, a deck and new gutters, you would probably want a larger company.

## **Look For Companies In Good Standing In Their Communities**

Check with the BBB, Chamber of Commerce, local building associations or any other organization that can independently verify that they are an honest company that you will be satisfied doing business with.

**Guarantees** Products used by your contractor will have manufacturer warranties, but you should also ask for a labor warranty. This warrants you against faulty labor of any kind. Look for two years minimum.

**Check Out the Employees** A company with a code of conduct, signed by all employees would give any homeowner a sense of assurance. This “code” might include: no swearing, no loud music, a clean work area, etc. Top notch companies also do background checks on their workers, and have them bonded. A gutter job isn’t a big job, but wouldn’t you feel better knowing the guys who are working on your house are solid family guys who are more concerned about providing for their families, than which bar they are going to hit that night?



**“Bubba’s Home Improvement - We do roofing, siding, painting, electrical, plumbing, gardening, and financial planning. And on weekends we’ll cater your party.”  
Choose a company that specializes in your type of project.**

# SALES TECHNIQUES

Sales approaches range from high pressure arm twisters, to the one man company who will just drop the estimate in the door. While no one wants to have to throw an obnoxious salesman out the door, don't think the "drop-off estimator" is much better. When you're finished reading this guide you'll have plenty of questions that you'll want to ask the estimator face-to-face.

Get several estimates, and don't make a commitment on the first visit. Take your time to make an educated decision.



**“This price is only good today.”**

This is a sales technique designed to pressure you into a quick decision. You can be sure the price has been artificially inflated to give you imaginary savings. Avoid these companies like the plague they are.

Prices will vary widely. While it is easy to pay too much for your project, the biggest risk a homeowner like you faces is getting too little value for the dollars you end up spending. The lowest price is rarely the best value.

# SUBCONTRACTORS

There are a lot of misconceptions about the contractor/subcontractor relationship that should be addressed. If you are hiring a general contractor it is very probable that the guys who actually work on your home will be subcontractors. Subcontractors are the specialists while the general contractor is the coordinator. This relationship works well, IF the general contractor is diligent in his choosing of subcontractors and develops long term relationships.

If you are interested in a specific project like gutters or gutter protection, it makes sense to skip the general contractor and deal directly with the company that will be installing the products.

If you have a multifaceted project and want to hire a general contractor, you could still ask for the subcontractor list and check them out individually to your satisfaction.

You could also do your own research and act as your own general contractor - researching and picking the subcontractors with whom you feel the most comfortable. Think a la carte instead of ‘the daily special’.



**Avoid contractors with subcontractors du jour. The guy who would actually be doing your work might be tomorrow’s failed business.**

## **DEPOSITS**

It is typical to pay a deposit when you arrange for a job. This is not to “buy materials” as some contractors say, but simply shows your earnestness. Reliable contractors will have lines of credit and may not actually pay for your materials until after your job is done. A thirty or even fifty percent deposit simply protects the contractor from unscrupulous homeowners who want something for nothing.



**Never give final payment for a job until you are 100% satisfied. Once a contractor has been paid in full, you have lost your most important leverage. If you only have a small issue that can’t be fixed right away, hold back a few hundred dollars until it can be. Be reasonable, but be firm. Honest business men will respect your concern and work with you to solve the issue.**

## **GUTTER PRODUCTS**

Most gutters today are 5” seamless aluminum with an enamel finish that is baked on. They are typically .027” thick, and installed with hidden

hangers. While the gutter material will be the same from contractor to contractor, the hangers used could be vastly different. Cheap, generic hangers, are 3/4" wide and made out of a soft, bendable aluminum. High quality hangers are almost twice as wide and made out of heavy duty aluminum. Think of your gutters weighed down with snow and ice - which hanger will you want then?

**“Seamless” Gutters Are Just That, Seamless** If you have a fifty foot house, you’ll have a fifty foot gutter; an eighty foot house will have an eighty foot gutter. The only exception is corners. Generally, prefabricated corners are used when the gutter needs to make a 90 degree turn. Make sure they are guaranteed against leaking for at least two years.

**Fasteners** There are two different means for fastening corners and downspout elbows together. The most common is galvanized, color-matching screws. They are popular, because they are easy. An installer can assemble a downspout fairly quickly. There are two drawbacks, however. The screws protrude into the downspout, potentially catching leaves and other debris. They also rust; two to four years after installation galvanized screws become rusty screws. Who wants to pull into their driveway and see rust spots on their gutters and downspouts?

The other option is color-matching, aluminum rivets. They are more time consuming to install, but give a smoother, rust free look for years. They also don’t protrude into the downspout, catching debris.

**Downspouts** Typical houses use a combination of 5" gutter with 2"x3" downspouts. Sometimes heavy water flow can be cured just by using commercial downspouts which are 3"x4". For the extra large roof or special situations, 6" gutter might be called for. Your estimator should have the knowledge to recommend the proper gutter for the job.



**Your estimator should know his products inside and out, if he doesn’t, find someone who does.**

# GUTTER PROTECTION PRODUCTS

When homeowners see “gutter protection” they usually think, “leaf protection”. Some products do fall into this category. We’ll cover these first, but remember, leaves aren’t the only things that fall from your trees. Seeds can clog your eaves just as quickly. Seeds like helicopters from maples and stringy pods from oaks, as well as fine pollen can make inferior products totally worthless.

**Screens** Screens have been around since the 1890’s. Usually they are made of light aluminum and have diamond shape, quarter inch openings. If your leaf problem is only the lightest variety, screens might be all you need.

**Foam Products** These products are plastic mesh blocks and are inserted inside your gutter. Since they are a petroleum product they are prone to ultraviolet decomposition and become brittle. They also can easily get silted over with pollen and fine tree debris.

**Perforated Products** Typically these are a flat product made of light aluminum that covers the opening of the gutter. The size of the perforations vary widely - from fine mesh to large holes. Holes that are too large can let in seeds and debris, while fine mesh can’t handle heavier rains. Openings that are too large let in plenty of water but also let in lots of debris. Openings that are too small (fine mesh) will keep out all debris but may also allow water to skim over the surface of the cover - totally missing the gutters. For the best balance between keeping debris out and allowing water to get in, the optimum size for perforations seems to be about an eighth of an inch. Products made from smooth aluminum will be more likely to allow leaves and debris to blow off, but be prepared to sweep even these off periodically.

**Hooded Products** These top-of-the-line products work on the principle of water tension and can be divided into two types; those that use brackets and those that have continuous support. The disadvantage of bracketed products is the lack of support between the brackets. Birds, and even

squirrels, can take advantage of this lack of support and shoulder their way under some covers. High winds can potentially get under and blow these products off your roof. Products with continuous front support offer the installer many more options to make a quality installation.

Almost all brands are installed under the shingles, those that aren't, are installed with screws right through your shingles, creating potential roof leaks. Some of these products are just slipped under the shingles giving no support for snow loads. Make sure your choice of product is secured under the shingles as well as continuously to the front of the gutter.

**Hybrid Products** These employ a combination of water tension and perforations and are the answer to many leaf and gutter problems. Hooded and hybrid products go beyond leaf protection and protect your entire gutter system. Protection from snow and ice can be equally as important as keeping your gutters clean. Many homeowners are unpleasantly surprised to hear their gutters crash to the ground, weighed down by hundreds of pounds of ice, damaging decks, barbecues and A/C units. Downspouts can also be split and ruined by ice accumulation.

**Independent Testing** Salesmen all make great claims regarding their products, so how is a homeowner supposed to get down to the real truth? Look for products that have been tested by independent agencies, agencies that will back up the salesman's claim.



**Avoid products that aren't backed by a third party endorsement, salesmen can, and some will, tell you anything to sell you their products.**

We hope you've enjoyed this buyer's guide and hope this information saves you money and headaches while you contemplate your gutters or gutter protection system.

This guide is provided to you courtesy of Sunrise Seamless.



700 Barry Rd.  
Haslett, MI 48840  
517-655-8891  
[sunriseseamless.com](http://sunriseseamless.com)