



Home › Roof › Gutter Repair › The Best Gutter Guards for Your Home

The Best Gutter Guards for Your Home

Which type will work best for your house?



Cleaning out gutters is a miserable, messy, stinky job. Installing gutter guards could put that headache behind you, but how the heck are you supposed to know which type to buy? In this article, we'll examine the three most popular types of gutter guards: screen, surface tension and fine mesh. We'll compare the different features, installation methods and prices to help you decide which ones will work best for your house. And if you install them yourself, you can save tons of money-some pro installers charge as much as \$20 per ft.! The guards we'll cover are designed for 5-in. K-style gutters, typical on many homes.

By the DIY experts of The Family Handyman Magazine

Option 1: Screens



Simple to install

Plastic drop-in screens like this are super easy to install. Just cut them into sections and wedge them into place between the gutter and the fascia-no fastening necessary.

Frost King Plastic Gutter Guard, 10¢ per foot, available at home centers.



Screens are the most common type of gutter guard. They come in a wide variety of shapes and materials and can be installed in a few different ways. Screens work well in situations where leaves are the main problem. However, the openings in screens are large enough to let in seeds and pine needles, and cleaning them out may require removing the screens. Second, the screens themselves can become plugged, and cleaning screens can be tricky because some of the debris gets entangled and isn't easily brushed or blown off. So if you currently find lots of seeds or needles in your gutters, screens may help, but don't expect them to eliminate gutter chores.

Screens are the easiest to install. Some can be slid up under the shingles, which is ideal because the screen will angle downward and allow debris to slide off the roof. Other screens just drop in, which makes them a good choice if you have old, brittle shingles, or a shingle type other than asphalt that can't be pried up.

Cost: 10¢ to \$2 per foot

Pros:

- Inexpensive.
- Keeps out larger leaves and debris.
- Readily available.
- Easy to install.
- Works with various roof types: shingles, steel, slate, wood, tile, etc.
- Can work with old, brittle shingles.

Cons:

- Plastic versions may eventually be damaged by UV sunlight.
- Branches, snow, ice and strong winds can damage high-profile styles that protrude above gutters.
- Can get clogged with seeds and needles.
- Higher-profile versions may cause debris dams.
- Limited color choices.
- Screens and gutters may need occasional maintenance/cleaning.
- Difficult to clean.

Option 2: Surface tension



Slip under shingles and screw to gutters

Surface-tension guards work best if they're installed so the slope of the guard is similar to that of the roof. This may require rehanging existing gutters.

LeaFree, \$10 per foot; get buying instructions at leafree.com.

With surface-tension gutter guards, water clings to the rounded nose of the guard and flows into the gutter, while leaves and other debris fall off over the edge. Surface-tension guards work very well with leaves and other large debris. Small debris sometimes gets in but usually washes out the downspouts without a problem.

This type of guard works only if the guard is installed at an angle that's similar to the slope of the roof. This isn't always possible on long gutter runs because the gutters need to be pitched so the water flows to the downspouts, which means one end will need to be hung high. If you install surface-tension guards on gutters that are mounted high on the fascia, they will cause debris dams and allow more junk inside the gutter.

Surface-tension gutter guards are more visible than other styles, and water can shoot over them in heavy downpours. However, if they're installed correctly, the amount of debris that enters the gutter is usually small enough to be washed away, and the solid surface of the guards can be cleaned with just an occasional spraying with a garden hose.

Best Overall

Cost: \$3 to \$6 per foot

Pros:

- Withstands branches, snow, ice and strong winds.
- Keeps out the big stuff.
- More colors available.
- Needs little or no maintenance if installed correctly.
- Long-lasting.

Cons:

- Most expensive.
- Not as available: May have to order online or from a contractor.
- More difficult to install: Gutters may need to be rehung to accommodate them.
- More visible from the ground.

- Water can shoot over the guards in a heavy downpour.
- May not be an option on steel, tile, slate or wood roofs.

Prevent gutter clogs

Here are some tips that can prevent gutter clogs, even if you don't have gutter guards:

Larger Downspouts: Replacing 2 x 3-in. downspouts with 3 x 4-in. will help any debris that reaches the inside of your gutters to be washed away.

Rivets Instead of Screws: Debris is more likely to get hung up on the sharp tips of machine screws. Rivets don't protrude as far and have a more rounded end.

Proper Pitch: If your gutter doesn't pitch toward the downspout, even the smallest amount of debris will accumulate.

Option 3: Fine mesh



One guard, two options

This fine-mesh product can be installed under the shingles, or with the back bent up, it can be fastened to both the fascia and the gutter for added strength.

EasyOn Gutter Guard, \$2 per ft., buy at [costco.com](https://www.costco.com) (You don't need to be a member to buy online.)



Fine-mesh guards function like screens, but they block all but the smallest debris. The tiny spaces in the mesh won't clog with seeds and needles, but they can fill with small particles like shingle grit. Fine-mesh gutter guards still need an occasional cleaning, but unlike screens, fine mesh is easy to blow or brush clean.

This EasyOn product can be installed under the shingles, or the back can be bent up and screwed to the fascia. This method strengthens the gutters themselves, making them hold up better to snow and ice avalanches, which are common with steel roofs in cold climates.

Fine-mesh products made with window-type screen material are easily damaged by ice and branches. The good ones will be made from tough surgical stainless steel.

Best Value

Cost: \$2 to \$3 per foot

Pros:

- Keeps everything out of the gutter.
- Higher-quality versions hold up to branches, snow, ice and strong winds.
- Easy to install.
- Can work with various roof types: shingles, shakes, steel, slate, tile, etc.
- Can use with old, brittle shingles.
- Can add strength to the gutter if installed flat.
- Easy to clean.

Cons:

- Not as widely available.
- Limited color choices.
- May need occasional maintenance/cleaning.

Skip the gutters altogether

If the ground slopes away from your house and you aren't having trouble with a wet basement, skip the gutters altogether and install a product like the Rainhandler system. It disperses the water and scoots it away from the house several feet, which prevents ruts in your landscaping and damage to deck boards, driveways and sidewalks. Check it out at rainhandler.com. Cost: about \$4.50 per ft.

Similar Projects



Gutters: How to Fix
Overflowing Gutters



Quieting Gutters and
Downspouts



How to Install
Gutters



Easy Gutter Fixe

