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## **Installation of Bark House® Poplar Bark Panels**

For interior installations, considerations must be given to mounting surface, permanence or mobility of mount, and whether there is desire for concealment of fasteners. Finishes and sealers may also need to be considered. Given the myriad of possible presentations, we will look at a few of the more common.

First, we should discuss a few characteristics of these panels and how these must be addressed in installation.

Our panels are actually unrolled and flattened large sheets of bark removed from a single log. Although we select and cut specific lengths for the sheets, the widths are somewhat random as we maximize a square panel out of whatever the tree trunk circumference will provide. Please check with our sales staff as to what panel sizes are available that would be the closest to suit your needs.

All of our panels are pressed, kiln-dried, sterilized, squared, and carefully grade selected. Even though Yellow Poplar has of the straightest, smoothest and roundest of trunks, they are still not perfect cylinders. That means that even though to the casual eye our finish panels appear to be in a completely flat plane, there are subtle rolls and movements in the flattened sheet. These movements will be addressed below in installation examples. There are also limb scars, epicormic knots, and other natural surface features that disrupt the flat plane, but give the sheets dynamic visual impact and their distinct individual identity.

\* It is extremely important to note that bark is a natural wood product and all wood products are subject to expansion and contraction based upon ambient relative humidity and temperature. Our bark panels will naturally move as much as ¼” due to fluctuations in environmental conditions indoors. This movement can be even greater if jobsite conditions and handling expose them to even greater opportunities

for moisture absorption. Please ensure that you keep them in dry locations prior to installation and make allowances in your application for this movement.

### **For direct application to a plywood substrate:**

Panels normally require fasteners placed in a 6” to 8” grid pattern to ensure there is no “bubbles” of movement. Finish nails or crown staples set to a depth slightly below the surface are generally hard to see. This is the quickest of applications, but can occasionally leave a fastener visible. Fastener holes may be filled if necessary. Ensure that all fasteners are driven through tops of the bark ridges and not through the thin valleys. This ensures proper hold as fasteners punched through valleys don’t have enough material to grab and can sometimes cause cracks. You may also choose to employ the techniques below used for drywall applications. Remember to address lateral seam contraction that will occur during low humidity seasons. Most contractors choose to paint a narrow flat black band up the substrate where two panels will butt. This tends to be more pleasing to the eye during months that the panels contract.

### **For direct application to drywall:**

Assuming in this situation that the only nail fastening points we have are the studs that the drywall is attached to, we must take other measures to assist the firm hold of the panel to the wall. A typical wood panel adhesive using the manufacturer’s instructions will suffice to glue the panel to the substrate between studs. In this case, only a minimum use of nails, staples, or screws to the studs are required to hold the panel firm to the wall until the adhesive dries. Screws may be slightly countersunk and hidden with a small chunk of scrap bark glued and tapped in over the exposed screw head.

### **For a removable or floating panel:**

Some designs benefit from types of pronounced or floating panels. We offer our Bark House® Poplar Bark Laminated Panels vacuum-laminated to a plywood or MDF substrate for easy prepared use in these applications. Besides providing the flattest possible panel, this lamination process also eliminates the need for surface fasteners through the face of the bark. The exposed edges of these laminated panels will need to be addressed in your design. Previous clients have edge banded with a

host of different materials or have simply used a mounting frame of their design for edge concealment.

Z-clips may also be used if a laminated panel is desired for a direct wall application.

### **For application directly to studs:**

This is not recommended if the panels are not laminated to plywood or MDF backing as they lack the strength required to span the openings between studs.

### **Sanded panels:**

We offer our clients the option of having their panels sanded. This technique sands down the surface of the bark ridges to a uniform flat plane to a depth that still leaves the valleys intact. This creates an effect that when finished leaves a stark contrast between weathered grey crevices and rich chestnut brown sanded areas that is both visually stunning and elegant. This option is available for our Poplar Bark Panels as well as our Poplar Bark Laminated Panels.

### **Finishing:**

Whether you choose the natural or sanded face panels, consideration may need to be given to finish. We have had clients use a host of different paints, stains and clear finishes to protect, enhance, or dramatically alter the natural look. Of course no finish may be used at all. You will have to decide what effect you are pursuing and what abuse the installed panel may face. If there is to be a lot of human contact with the panels, and you want to maintain the most natural look, it might be best to apply a clear sealer. A low to flat sheen clear coat sealer, whether water or oil based, will give good protection for the surface. Of course you may also have us pre-finish your panels for you.

### **Fire Rating:**

Our Bark House® Panels have been independently lab-tested and have achieved an E-84 Flame and Smoke Rating of Class B. These lab results may be obtained by calling our office and speaking to one of our customer service representatives.