

Technical Tip

Landscaping

Have you ever considered the impact that landscaping can have on the well being and beauty of your log home? Let's look at some things around your home that can significantly affect its health.

Trees

In summer months trees located close to your home can help provide shade which may lower your air conditioning costs. But if any branches are touching your roof they can provide pathways for insects and rodents to enter your attic and eventually your living space. It's best to keep tree branches at least three feet away from your walls and roof. That distance will discourage creatures like gray squirrels and roof rats from investigating your attic and help prevent carpenter ants from taking up residence inside your home.

Shrubs and Hedges

The next things to consider are those shrubs and hedges planted next to your foundation. Over the years you've probably let them grow too large and they may be getting close to your log walls, or even worse, actually touching the logs. In addition to keeping the logs damp, they can actually wear the finish right off of the wood. You need to trim them back if for no other reason than they are hiding the beauty of your home. There should be at least two feet of clear space between any plants and shrubs and your foundation or log wall. This allows air to flow over the logs which helps keep them dry and free from insects, mold, algae and decay.



Trees and shrubs too close to the home.



Shrubs wearing finish off walls.



Mold on chinking due to high moisture conditions created by shrubs.

Plants and Grass

It's quite common to see plants and grass planted right up against foundation walls. Even though they may not be in contact with the logs they still provide a lot of moisture to the surrounding area and water is the enemy of wood.

Mulch

If you have flower beds around your home you probably use some type of mulch to keep the weeds down. The most commonly used types of mulch are shredded wood or bark, bark nuggets or pine straw. All of these types of organic mulch materials attract a wide variety of insects including termites as well as wood decay fungi. In addition, over the years the decayed mulch builds up bringing the soil level closer and closer to the bottom course of logs.

Here are our recommendations regarding landscaping around log homes:

1. There should never be any plant life growing within two feet of the foundation or log or siding wall. Any existing plants or branches within the two foot zone should be removed or cut back.
2. The best way to maintain an adequate clear space between your landscaping and home is to lay down a two to three foot wide band of landscaping fabric or perforated plastic around the base of your foundation and cover it with two to three inches of river pebbles or crushed stone (not wood or bark mulch). This will help keep the foundation area dry and you will be surprised how it will reduce the number of bugs you'll see inside your home.
3. Make sure that your sprinkler heads are not spraying water onto the logs or foundation walls.



In a few years the landscaping may overwhelm the home.



Crushed stone mulch.