

# Low-Maintenance Eaves

BY RICK ARNOLD

**N**o matter what method you use, installing eaves involves staging, ladders, and a lot of up and down. After installing wood eaves, someone still has to go back to fill nail holes and then caulk, prime, and paint the entire assembly. This is all part of the construction process. But when it's time to get out the ladders, scrapers, and paint a few years later, it doesn't matter who you are: You're going to hate every single minute of being up there again.

Using aluminum fascias and vinyl soffits saves considerable installation time from start to finish, but best of all, it prevents all the future work necessary to maintain their wood counterparts. Are vinyl and aluminum eaves starting to sound better?

Aluminum fascias and vinyl soffits installed properly never need painting, look great, and incorporate ventilation in the bargain



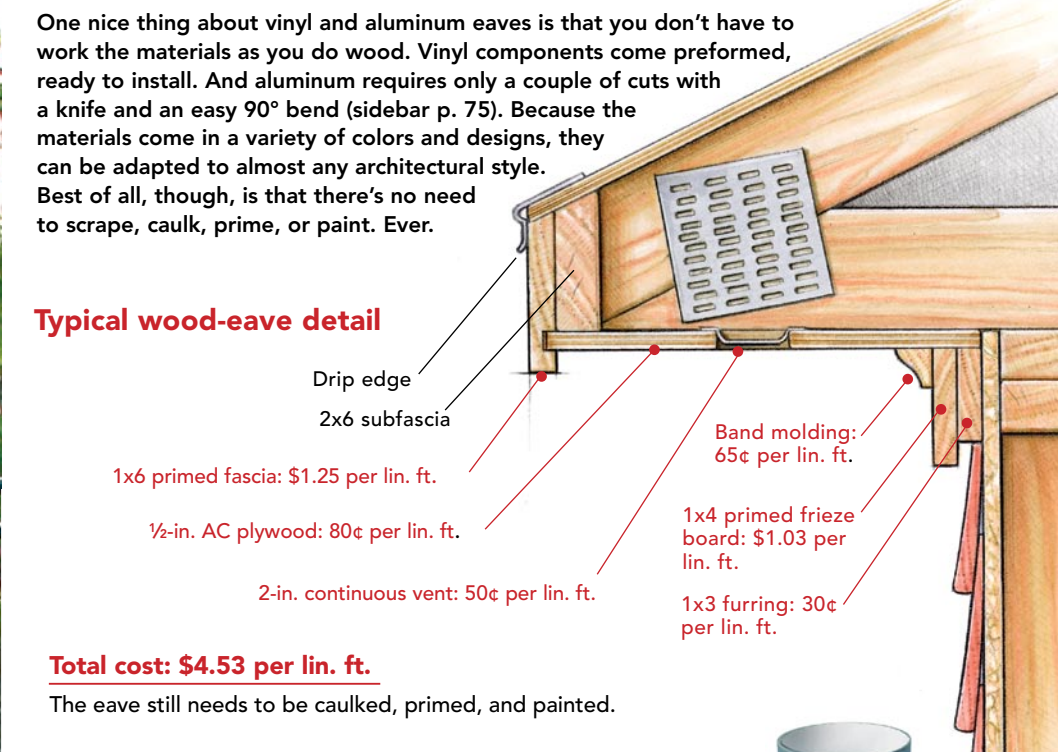
**This house is ready for vinyl.** Although the eave approach in this article can be used for just about any siding application, I installed vinyl siding on this house. A vinyl termination strip (shown far left) slips into a rabbet in the vinyl lineal and secures the ripped edge of the last course of vinyl siding. Rigid-foam insulation installed over sheathing increases the wall's R-value. (For more information, see FHB #181, p. 88.)



## COMPARED TO WOOD, LOW-MAINTENANCE EAVES COST LESS

One nice thing about vinyl and aluminum eaves is that you don't have to work the materials as you do wood. Vinyl components come preformed, ready to install. And aluminum requires only a couple of cuts with a knife and an easy 90° bend (sidebar p. 75). Because the materials come in a variety of colors and designs, they can be adapted to almost any architectural style. Best of all, though, is that there's no need to scrape, caulk, prime, or paint. Ever.

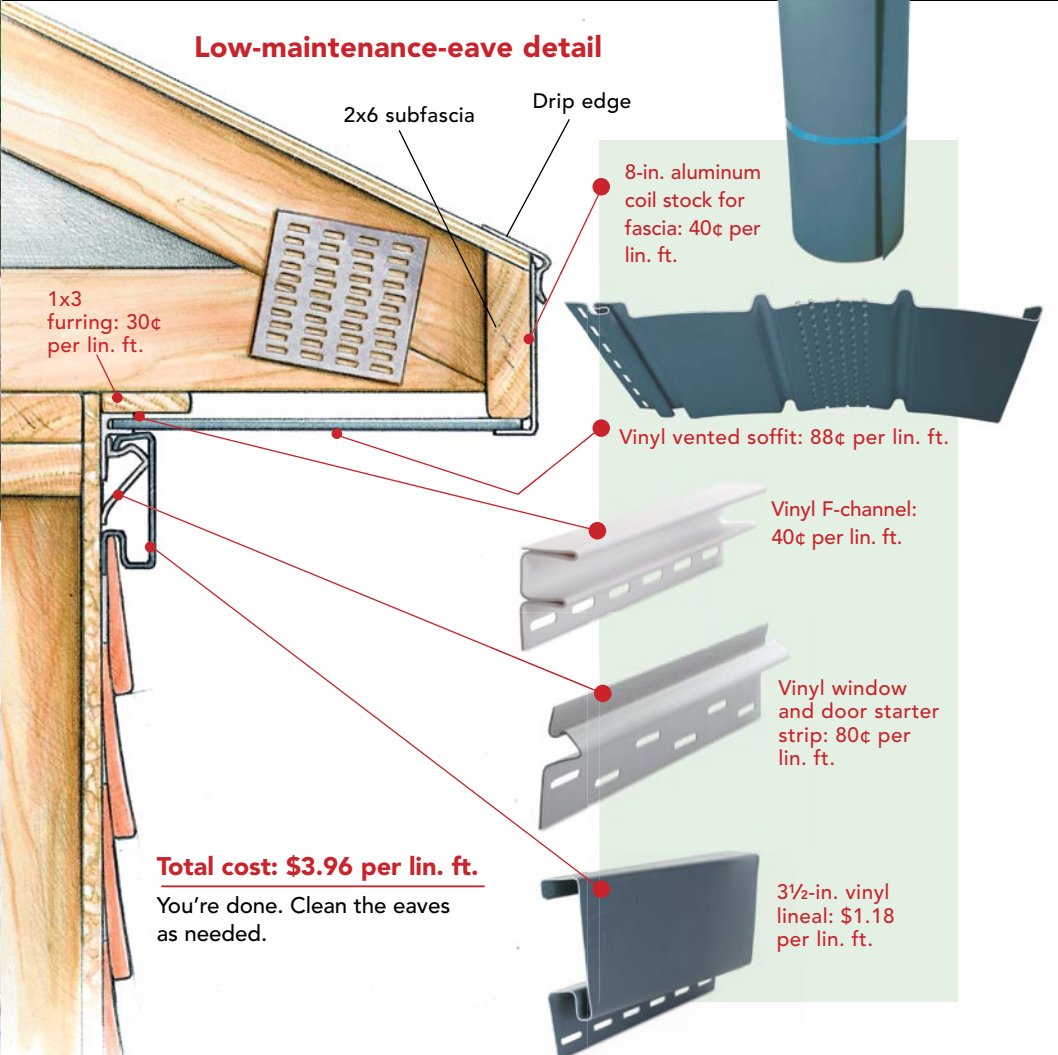
### Typical wood-eave detail

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- Drip edge
  - 2x6 subfascia
  - 1x6 primed fascia: \$1.25 per lin. ft.
  - ½-in. AC plywood: 80¢ per lin. ft.
  - 2-in. continuous vent: 50¢ per lin. ft.
  - Band molding: 65¢ per lin. ft.
  - 1x4 primed frieze board: \$1.03 per lin. ft.
  - 1x3 furring: 30¢ per lin. ft.

### Total cost: \$4.53 per lin. ft.

The eave still needs to be caulked, primed, and painted.

### Low-maintenance-eave detail

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- 2x6 subfascia
  - Drip edge
  - 8-in. aluminum coil stock for fascia: 40¢ per lin. ft.
  - 1x3 furring: 30¢ per lin. ft.
  - Vinyl vented soffit: 88¢ per lin. ft.
  - Vinyl F-channel: 40¢ per lin. ft.
  - Vinyl window and door starter strip: 80¢ per lin. ft.
  - 3½-in. vinyl lineal: \$1.18 per lin. ft.
- Total cost: \$3.96 per lin. ft.**  
You're done. Clean the eaves as needed.

Drawings: Bob La Pointe. Photos this page: Krysta S. Doerfler.

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## INSTALL THE EAVE PIECES FIRST, THEN WRAP THE RAKE

Straighten the subfascia with a stringline and shims before installing the vinyl soffit material and the aluminum fascia. Find the soffit depth from the wall sheathing to the outer edge of the subfascia, and subtract  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. to leave room for the F-channel and for thermal expansion. To find the aluminum-fascia width, measure down from the front lip of the drip edge, and add  $2\frac{1}{4}$  in. so that the material can slip under the drip edge and wrap over the soffit. Cut soffit and fascia pieces on the ground. The remaining pieces can be cut on the staging with snips.

Considering that the material cost for vinyl and aluminum eaves is lower, it's easy to understand why low-maintenance eaves are becoming a popular alternative to wood.

Nonwood eaves and fascias are becoming more and more common here in New England, where a house's exterior takes a nasty beating. Homeowners are willing to sacrifice architectural authenticity for the freedom from periodic scraping and painting, especially in the eaves.

I've installed aluminum and vinyl trim on both new and old houses that were to be sided with wood shingles, fiber-cement siding, composite siding, and of course, vinyl siding. With few tools and few materials, I can install vented eaves that look similar to wood eaves in half the time.

There are all sorts of vinyl trim and accessories that, together with aluminum coil stock and your bending skills, can mimic just about any architectural detail. Although certain details can differ depending on the desired architectural look, my basic method for putting up the soffits, fascias, and rakes is the same no matter what the type of siding. □

Rick Arnold is a builder in North Kingstown, R.I. Photos by Brian Pontolilo, except where noted.



**1** **Install the F-channel flush with the bottom of the subfascia.** I hang the subfascia  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. down from the truss tails to widen the fascia, so I nail strips of furring to the bottoms of the tails. I nail the F-channel just below the furring with  $1\frac{1}{4}$ -in. aluminum roofing nails 16 in. on center. Leave the nails  $\frac{3}{32}$  in. proud (the thickness of a dime) to allow for thermal expansion.



**2** **Only the leading edge is nailed.** Once the first piece of soffit is installed, each consecutive piece snaps into the previous one. I nail the leading edge to the underside of the subfascia and to the furring strip above the F-channel with  $1\frac{1}{4}$ -in. roofing nails. Use a plywood blade installed backward to cut the soffit material.



**4** **If you want a vinyl frieze board, use a starter strip.** After the corner piece is up, I install the starter strip just below the F-channel using the same nailing technique I used when installing the F-channel.



**5** **The lineal mimics the frieze board.** I snap the lineal in place and nail it every 16 in., again leaving the nails proud. The lineal finishes the eave and provides a rabbetlike groove into which siding can terminate.





**3**  
**Install the aluminum fascia with color-matched nails.** I bend  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. of the first piece around the end of the subfascia with a hammer (see the arrow on photo 6). Then I slip the aluminum fascia behind the drip edge. I nail the aluminum fascia about 2 ft. on center, alternating high and low, and pushing the lower edge against the soffit as I go. Overlap adjacent pieces by 1 in.



**6**  
**Aluminum runs up the rake.** I bend a piece of aluminum to wrap around the soffit return and slip it behind the drip edge (photo left). An extra bend in the rake hooks the bottom of the subrake (sidebar right), so I nail the aluminum only at the top. Overlap the rake pieces by 1 in. to shed water.



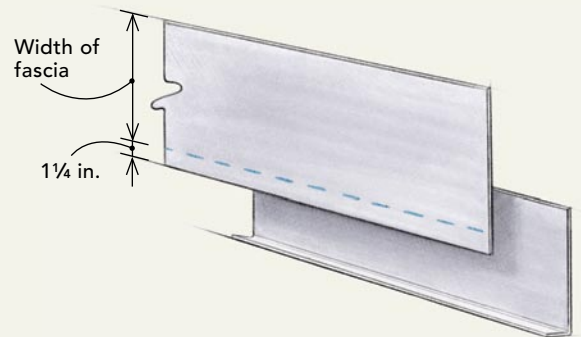
## YOU NEED A BRAKE TO CUT AND BEND THE ALUMINUM STOCK

I own a 10-ft. brake, but you can rent one for about \$60 a day. When ripping or bending a long piece, keep the length of the piece a few inches shorter than the brake; this keeps the ends of the piece clean. When ripping the coil stock, use the brake's clamp to hold the material and its guide as a straightedge. Score the stock a couple of times with a utility knife, and lift up on the lever to break the piece free. When working on rake pieces and eave pieces that won't be covered by gutters, I like to add a stiffening "hem" to the top of the fascia. The hem is simply a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. fold along the top edge.



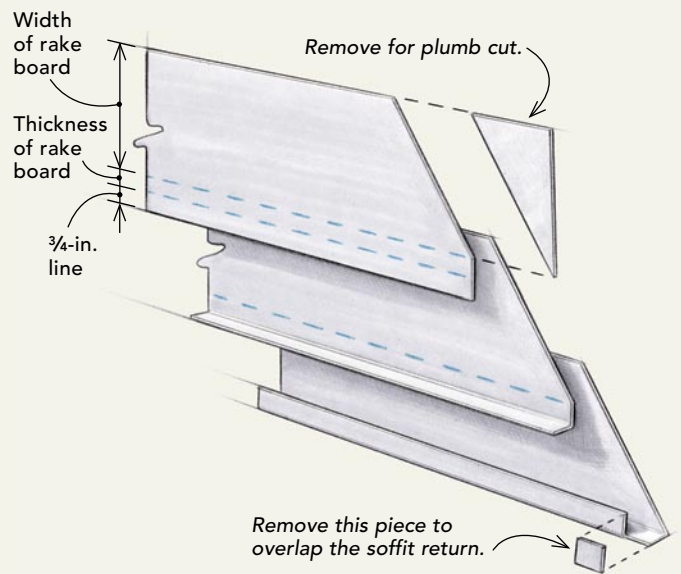
### Two steps complete the fascia

1. Rip the aluminum coil stock the width of the fascia plus  $1\frac{1}{4}$  in. to cover the soffit.
2. Bend the stock slightly past  $90^\circ$  at the  $1\frac{1}{4}$ -in. mark for a tighter hold on the soffit.



### Three steps lock in the rake

1. Rip the aluminum coil stock the width of the rake board, plus the thickness of the rake board, plus  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. Make a plumb cut in the bottom edge that will overlap the return piece.



2. Bend the stock slightly past  $90^\circ$  at the first  $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. line.
3. Bend the stock to  $90^\circ$  at the  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -in. mark.