

A BRIEF BACKGROUND ON CHINESE SLATE

from John Xue

Although slate has been used for 500 years in China, the modern slate industry is only about 20 years old. The story goes like this: in the early eighties, when China initiated its open-door policy, one former minister from the Urban Construction Ministry saw expensive "stone" being used on top of roofs when he was visiting the United States. When he returned to China, he instructed his associates to find the same stone to export. One of the first places identified was Ziyang in Shaanxi province.

However, it was not until the mid-nineties that China began to distinguish between different qualities of slate—that some slate was fading and some was not, and other issues such as water absorption and acid resistance. This perhaps explains why Chinese slate varied greatly in quality, sometimes even within the same crate. With the introduction of new processing machines from Europe, as well as improved quality control, China is now able to produce good quality slate, although production volume is still rather low.

The color ranges from black to red, yellow, green, grey, blue, purple, etc. Most of the slate is used for decoration or "culture stones" as the local customers call them.

Here are some general descriptions of slate from three provinces:

1. **Beijing:** Slate from Men Tou Gou has been used for roofing for over 500 years. Most of the present production, about 80%, is exported for flooring, walls, roofing, etc. The color varies: black, black grey, purple, green, jade green, etc. The green slate from Fang Shan is very popular, especially for use in billiards tables.

2. **Shaanxi:** The slate vein runs for over 200 km eastwest It averages 50 km wide. Most of the slate was formed from the Ordovician to the Cambrian periods. In this area, they have the beautiful, high quality black slate, which comprises 50% of the national production capacity. People from Germany, France, Belgium, UK, Spain and the United States have come to visit the area for sourcing, purchasing, investment, etc.

3. **Hubei:** Zhu Xi and Zhu Shan areas are supposed to have the largest reserve of Cambrian, Ordovician and Silurian slates. Colors include black, grey, bean green and green. Unfortunately, the overburden is quite large, averaging 50 meters. ■

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SLATE ROOF INSTALLATION HINT

#1) Felt the board roof deck with 30 lb felt, then chalk a line marking the top of each course of slate.

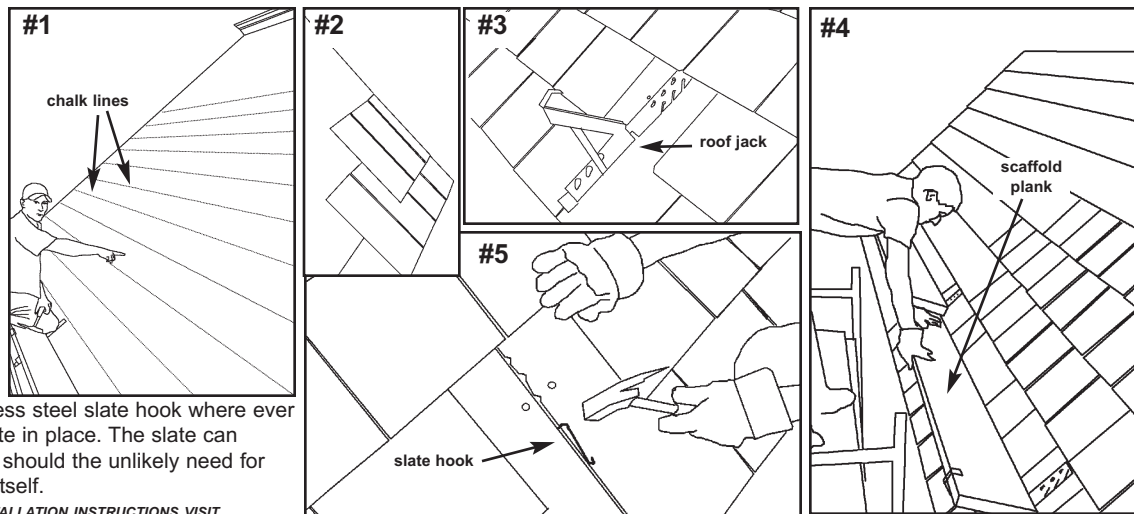
#2) Attach your cant strip, nail your starter row, and begin slating.

#3) Periodically leave a slate out and install a roof jack.

#4) Proceed in this manner until you have staged the roof with adequate roof scaffolding.

#5) When done, install a stainless steel slate hook where ever a slate was left out. Hook a slate in place. The slate can always be removed again later should the unlikely need for future roof scaffolding present itself.

FOR MORE SLATE ROOF INSTALLATION INSTRUCTIONS VISIT
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