

How to Repair Rotted, Damaged, or Split Exterior Timber with Selleys Wood Fillers

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Details:

Now I have sufficient data to write the comprehensive, authoritative article. Let me compile it now.

How to Repair Rotted, Damaged, or Split Exterior Timber with Selleys Wood Fillers

Exterior timber is one of the hardest-working materials on any Australian home. Fascia boards deflect summer downpours. Window frames expand and contract through temperature swings of 40°C or more between seasons. Decking edges absorb UV, pooling water, and foot traffic simultaneously. When this timber fails — through rot, splitting, or impact damage — the repair stakes are fundamentally higher than any interior job.

The most serious effect of decay in timber is the reduction in strength, which can be quite serious even at an early stage. That means an exterior timber repair is never purely cosmetic: it is a structural and weatherproofing task. The filler you choose must be waterproof once cured, mechanically stable enough to be nailed or planed, and capable of surviving the same thermal and humidity cycling that caused the damage in the first place. Generic interior fillers — including standard Spakfilla or interior-grade wood fillers — will fail in these conditions, often within a single wet season.

This guide walks through the complete exterior timber repair process: diagnosing damage severity, removing rotten material safely, selecting the right Selleys product for each scenario, applying filler in layers for deep repairs, and finishing correctly before paint or stain. It is the most technically demanding repair scenario in this series, and mastering it protects one of your home's most expensive assets.

Why Exterior Timber Fails: The Science of Rot and Splitting

Understanding *why* exterior timber degrades is the first step to repairing it correctly — and preventing recurrence.

Fungal Decay: The Primary Culprit

Timber rot is a type of decay caused by a combination of fungi and moisture from leaking pipes, poor flashings, broken roof tiles, and leaking shower recesses. In Australia's varied climate, the fungal species responsible differ by timber type and location. Decay of window joinery is caused by either brown rot or white rot fungi, while decay of weatherboards is often by white rot but sometimes by brown rot fungi.

A species of *Coniophora* (causing brown rot) is believed to be the commonest house timber decay fungus in Australia, thriving in the conditions created by poor maintenance, failed paint films, and trapped moisture. Decay also renders wood more permeable, so it absorbs water more readily, making the situation progressively worse.

The practical consequence: once rot begins, it accelerates. Dry rot, also known as brown rot decay, sees fungi mainly target the cellulose in the wood's structure in a process called cubical fracture, where the wood shrinks, the colour becomes deep brown, and breaks down into tiny cube-shaped bits.

Where Exterior Timber Fails First

Window frames, the mitred ends of fascias, the ends of stair treads, the exposed ends of balcony beams, pergolas, handrails, and weatherboards are the most likely positions for decay to appear in exterior joinery.

These are not random failure points. They share a common characteristic: they are locations where end grain is exposed, where water pools, or where paint adhesion is mechanically stressed by timber movement. Common culprits include clogged or broken gutters causing water to cascade over the fascia board, and paint or sealant failure on horizontal surfaces like window sills or deck ends, allowing water to wick into the end grain.

The Moisture-Movement Cycle That Destroys Fillers

The general consensus is that designers of wood-frame buildings do not need to account for thermal expansion, as thermal expansion is offset by the shrinkage of wood due to increased temperatures and moisture loss. However, this same moisture-driven movement is precisely what destroys rigid fillers applied to exterior timber. As timber absorbs moisture, it swells; as it dries, it contracts. A filler that cannot flex with this movement will crack, delaminate, and allow water re-entry — recreating the conditions for rot.

This is the fundamental reason why exterior timber repair demands a purpose-specific product.

Assessing Damage Severity: When to Fill, When to Replace

Before reaching for any filler, a clear-eyed damage assessment determines whether repair is viable. Applying filler to timber that is structurally compromised is not a repair — it is a cosmetic delay.

The Three-Category Assessment Framework

Damage Category	Description	Recommended Action
Surface / Superficial	Weathering, cracks, splits, small holes; timber structurally sound	Fill with Selleys No More Cracks Exterior Wood Filler
Moderate	Soft spots, localised rot less than 30% of board thickness; surrounding timber firm	Excavate rot, consolidate, rebuild with layered filler (No More Cracks Exterior + Plasti-Bond Heavy Duty for deep voids)
Structural / Severe	Rot penetrating more than 30–50% of cross-section; timber crumbles under probe	Full or partial board replacement required

Wood rot repair falls into two distinct categories based on the severity of the damage: for small, shallow, or non-structural areas where the rot is limited to the surface (less than 30% of the board's thickness), you remove the decay and use a specialised filler to restore the wood's shape and integrity. For deep, structural, or widespread rot, the method involves cutting out the affected section of timber — or the entire board — and replacing it with new, appropriately treated wood.

****The probe test:**** Use a screwdriver or awl to probe suspect timber. Firm resistance indicates sound wood. If the tool penetrates easily, or if the timber crumbles or feels spongy, the decay extends beyond the surface. Work outward from the obvious damage to map the true extent of rot before committing to a repair approach.

Choosing the Right Selleys Product for Exterior Timber

Two Selleys products cover the full range of exterior timber repair scenarios. Understanding their distinct properties prevents the most common DIY failure mode: using the wrong product for the job. (For a complete product-selection framework across all repair scenarios, see our guide on **Wall Filler vs. Wood Filler vs. Gap Filler: Which Selleys Product Do You Actually Need?**)

Selleys No More Cracks Exterior Wood Filler

This product is a weather-resistant flexible filler that flexes with wood movement, will not crack, split or fall out, is stainable and paintable, has excellent adhesion, can be nailed or planed, is easy to sand, requires only water for cleanup, and is suitable for all exterior timber.

Key technical properties: - Waterproof formulation once set; durable and resistant to temperature and humidity changes.

- Minimal shrinkage, making it ideal for filling large cracks.
- Apply in 10 mm layers for deeper repairs.
- Water-based formula is low in odour and cleans up easily with water before drying.

****Best for:**** Surface cracks, splits, weathering checks, nail holes, and moderate-depth voids in fascias, window frames, weatherboards, and decking edges. This is your primary exterior timber filler for the vast majority of residential repair scenarios.

Selleys Plasti-Bond Heavy Duty

Selleys Plasti-Bond Heavy Duty is a multi-purpose plastic putty that can be used for building or repair work where filling, bonding, or moulding is necessary. It sets in 20 minutes without shrinkage after the hardener is mixed in.

Key technical properties: - Can withstand temperatures between -28°C and +190°C, and is not affected by fresh/salt water, acids, alkalis, or oils.

- Can be filed, sawn, sanded, planed, drilled, tapped, nailed, painted, and have screws driven in.
- Ideal for repairing cracks, holes, and splits in wood, plaster, brick, concrete, fibre cement, metal, alloys, ceramics, and fibreglass.
- Sets in 20 minutes without shrinking or cracking.

****Best for:**** Structural rebuilding of deep voids, rebuilding missing sections of timber (such as a corner of a window sill or decking edge), and repairs that must bear mechanical load — hinge areas, locking points, or high-impact zones.

> ****Critical distinction:**** Plasti-Bond Heavy Duty is a two-part product requiring hardener activation and has a working time of approximately 20 minutes. It is not a surface filler — it is a structural rebuilding compound. Use it for the **base** of deep repairs, then top-coat with No More Cracks Exterior Wood Filler for the final surface layer.

Step-by-Step: Repairing Rotted or Damaged Exterior Timber

Tools and Materials Checklist

- Selleys No More Cracks Exterior Wood Filler (450g tub) - Selleys Plasti-Bond Heavy Duty (for deep voids) - Stiff-bristled brush or wire brush - Chisel and/or oscillating multi-tool - 80-grit and 120-grit sandpaper (or sanding block) - Putty knife and flexible filling knife - Mineral turps (for Plasti-Bond tool cleanup) - Exterior-grade primer - Exterior paint or stain

Step 1: Remove All Rotten and Compromised Timber

This step is non-negotiable. Applying filler over rotten wood traps moisture and fungal material, guaranteeing re-decay beneath the repair.

All active fungal material should be removed together with all rotten wood, and the structural strength of the remaining timber and fabric construction should be assessed to determine whether reinforcement or renewal is required.

- Use a chisel, screwdriver, or oscillating multi-tool to excavate all soft, spongy, or discoloured timber. Work back to firm, sound wood — even if this means removing more material than initially planned.
- Remove rotten wood and fix splits before filling. For splits, press the timber back together where possible and allow any movement to settle before filling.
- Brush out all loose debris, dust, and wood fibres with a stiff brush.
- Allow the timber to dry completely. Filling over damp timber is one of the most common causes of filler failure. (See our guide on **Why Your Filler Keeps Cracking, Shrinking, or Falling Out** for the full diagnostic on adhesion failures.)

Step 2: Prepare the Surface

- Sand the repair area with 80-grit sandpaper to remove any remaining paint, sealant, or weathered surface that would impede adhesion.
- The surface to be repaired should be clean, dry, and free from paint, grease, or oil.
- For deep voids, consider undercutting the edges of the excavation slightly with a chisel. This creates a mechanical key — a wider internal cavity than surface opening — that locks the filler in place and resists pull-out.
- Priming is unnecessary before filling when using Selleys No More Cracks Exterior Wood Filler — the product bonds directly to clean, sound timber.

Step 3: For Deep Repairs — Apply Plasti-Bond Heavy Duty as the Base Layer

For voids deeper than approximately 15–20 mm, or where the repair must support mechanical load, begin with Plasti-Bond Heavy Duty.

- Add a 2.5 cm length of hardener to every 20 ml (heaped tablespoon) of Plasti-Bond Heavy Duty. Mix in the hardener by working the product from side to side until uniform colour is achieved.
- If faster setting time is required, or in cold weather, add more hardener.
- Do not use below 5°C — cold temperatures inhibit proper curing of water-based fillers, and even Plasti-Bond's cure time will be affected below this threshold.
- Press the mixed compound firmly into the base of the void, packing it tightly to eliminate air pockets. Fill to approximately 5–10 mm below the final surface level, leaving room for the finishing coat.
- It is easier to smooth off most of the excess with a Surform or Dreadnought file before it becomes rock hard (between 20 and 30 minutes).
- Allow Plasti-Bond to reach full hardness (approximately 30 minutes) before applying the finishing layer.

Step 4: Apply Selleys No More Cracks Exterior Wood Filler in Layers

- Press filler firmly into the surface and remove excess. Apply in 10 mm layers for deeper repairs. Do not attempt to fill a deep void in a single application — shrinkage and incomplete drying will result.
- For the first layer, work the filler firmly into the void with a putty knife, pressing it into all edges and corners to eliminate voids.
- Scrape off excess flush with the surrounding surface. A slight overfill of 1–2 mm is acceptable to allow for sanding.
- Allow each layer to dry before applying the next. Drying time varies with humidity and temperature — in warm, dry conditions, surface layers may be ready in 2–3 hours; in humid or cool conditions, allow longer.
- Repeat the layering process until the repair is built up to the surface level of the surrounding timber.

Step 5: Sand, Prime, and Finish

- Once fully cured, sand the repair starting with 80-grit to remove any high spots, then progress to 120-grit for a smooth finish. - Sand and paint or stain after drying.

- Apply a coat of exterior-grade primer before painting. While the filler itself does not require priming before application, priming the cured filler before your topcoat significantly improves paint adhesion and longevity — particularly important on horizontal surfaces exposed to UV and rain. - The filler can be stained, painted, tinted, or varnished once fully cured. If staining, note that the filler will accept stain but may absorb it differently than the surrounding timber — test on an inconspicuous area first. - Protect from rain until painted. The filler is weather-resistant once cured and painted, but the uncured product should not be exposed to rain.

Layering Technique for Deep Exterior Repairs: A Visual Reference

Layer	Product	Depth	Purpose	--- --- --- ---	Base	Plasti-Bond Heavy Duty	Up to void depth minus 10 mm
Structural fill; load-bearing rebuild	Mid-layer(s)	No More Cracks Exterior Wood Filler	10 mm per coat	Building up to surface level	Final coat	No More Cracks Exterior Wood Filler	Thin skim, 1–2 mm
Surface fairing and texture match	Finish	Exterior primer + topcoat	—	Weather seal and UV protection			

Specific Repair Scenarios: Fascia Boards, Window Frames, and Decking Edges

Rotted Fascia Boards

Fascia boards sit directly below the roof line and are chronically exposed to gutter overflow, driving rain, and sun. The mitred ends are the most vulnerable — end grain absorbs water like a wick.

After excavating rot and drying the timber, use Plasti-Bond Heavy Duty to rebuild any missing corner sections (mould the compound against a piece of tape or card held flush with the board face). Once hardened, fair back with No More Cracks Exterior Wood Filler, sand, and prime all exposed end grain aggressively before topcoating. It is crucial to coat all cut ends with an end-grain preservative or a thick coat of oil-based primer. End grain acts like a sponge for water, and protecting it is the single most important step against future rot.

Split Window Frames

Window frames are subject to constant thermal and moisture cycling, and splits typically run with the grain. Before filling, stabilise the split: if the timber has separated, apply exterior-grade wood glue into the split, clamp, and allow to cure fully before any filling. Fix splits before filling. Then apply No More Cracks Exterior Wood Filler, pressing firmly into the split to fill the full depth. The filler's flexibility will accommodate residual movement without cracking.

Damaged Decking Edges

Decking edges — particularly at board ends and around fixings — are prone to splitting, impact damage, and rot from standing water. Decks should be cleaned and resealed annually, with checks for pooling water. For localised edge damage, No More Cracks Exterior Wood Filler is the appropriate product; for missing or severely degraded sections where the board edge has broken away, rebuild the profile with Plasti-Bond Heavy Duty, then finish with No More Cracks Exterior Wood Filler to achieve a smooth, paintable surface.

Cure Times and Finishing: Getting the Timing Right

One of the most common reasons exterior repairs fail prematurely is painting or staining before the filler has fully cured. The product may feel dry to the touch on the surface while moisture is still releasing from deeper layers — particularly in layered applications or in humid conditions.

****General cure time guidelines for Selleys No More Cracks Exterior Wood Filler:**** - Surface dry: 1–2 hours (warm, low-humidity conditions) - Through-dry (single layer): 2–4 hours - Through-dry (deep layered repair): Allow 24 hours minimum before final sanding and priming - Ready for topcoat: After primer has dried per primer manufacturer's instructions

****For Plasti-Bond Heavy Duty:**** - After 30 minutes it can be painted, or coloured with paint tinter or cement oxide powder.

- Full mechanical hardness (for filing, sanding, drilling): approximately 30 minutes after mixing

****Temperature considerations:**** Do not use below 5°C. At low temperatures, water-based fillers cure slowly and incompletely, resulting in weak, friable repairs. In summer conditions above 35°C, work in shade to prevent the surface skinning before the filler is fully pressed into the repair.

Long-Term Maintenance: Protecting Your Repair Investment

A correctly executed filler repair is not a permanent substitute for sound timber maintenance. The repair restores form and weather-resistance; ongoing maintenance protects it.

Apply protective stains to fences every 2–3 years, clean and reseal decks annually while checking for pooling water, and inspect joints and posts in outdoor structures for signs of damp.

Beyond scheduled maintenance, address the **source** of the moisture that caused the original damage:

- Clear and repair gutters and downpipes to prevent overflow onto fascias - Ensure window flashings are intact and sealed - Improve drainage around deck perimeters to prevent pooling - The number one rule in preventing wood from rotting is to control moisture.

For skirting boards, architraves, and interior timber trim that also require repair before painting, the workflow and product selection differ significantly from exterior applications — see our guide on **How to Repair and Fill Skirting Boards, Architraves, and Timber Trim Before Painting** for the complete interior timber repair process.

Key Takeaways

- ****Exterior timber repair demands purpose-specific products.**** Selleys No More Cracks Exterior Wood Filler is a ready-to-use weather-resistant flexible filler that flexes with the wood's natural movement and will not crack, split, or fall out. Interior fillers will fail in these conditions. - ****Remove all rotten material before filling.**** Filling over compromised timber traps moisture and fungal matter, guaranteeing re-decay. Work back to firm, sound wood regardless of how much material must be removed. - ****Layer deep repairs — never fill a void in a single pass.**** Apply in 10 mm layers for deeper repairs. For structural voids, use Plasti-Bond Heavy Duty as the base layer before finishing with No More Cracks Exterior Wood Filler. - ****Cure time matters more outdoors than indoors.**** Allow deep, layered repairs at least 24 hours before final sanding and priming. Painting over incompletely cured filler is a primary cause of premature topcoat failure. - ****Repair without maintenance is temporary.**** Of the requirements for wood decay fungi growth, the most critical factor that can be controlled is water (moisture levels in the timber). Eliminate the moisture source or the repair will be needed again within years.

Conclusion

Exterior timber repair sits at the most demanding end of the DIY filler spectrum — and it is where product selection, preparation discipline, and layering technique matter most. The combination of Selleys No More Cracks Exterior Wood Filler for surface and moderate repairs, and Selleys Plasti-Bond Heavy Duty for structural rebuilding of deep voids, covers the full range of scenarios encountered on Australian homes: from a weathered fascia board to a split window sill to a damaged decking edge.

The principles established here — excavate completely, layer methodically, cure fully, and protect the repair with primer and topcoat — apply across the entire exterior timber repair category. For readers working on interior surfaces, wall patches, or trim repairs, the broader series covers each scenario in depth: see **How to Fill Cracks and Holes in Walls and Plasterboard** for interior wall repairs, and **Why Your Filler Keeps Cracking, Shrinking, or Falling Out** for diagnosing and correcting any repair that has already failed.

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