



Ten Things You Should Know About Gutter Leaf Guards

Are you in the process of deciding which gutter leaf guard to have installed?

While particular requirements will influence your decision, essentially it comes down to getting the most effective product professionally installed at a sensible price.

Please use this report as a source of information about gutter leaf guards to help you make your choice.

1. Range of Benefits

A lot of people decide to have a leaf guard installed simply because they are tired of the thankless and often dangerous chore of climbing a ladder to clean out gutters.

But apart from eliminating ongoing gutter maintenance, we nominate another four major benefits to be gained by fitting a 'full service' gutter leaf guard:-

- A.** Uninvited furred and feathered visitors are kept out of your roof cavity permanently (all eave and valley gutters are fully sealed-off from birds, possums and rodents).
- B.** Your roof is protected from wind-borne bushfire embers (gutters are kept clear of combustible leaf debris during dry summer months).
- C.** The life of your gutters is extended (damp, acidic leaf mulch is prevented from accumulating in the wet season).
- D.** Rainwater collection is optimised (for both present or future water tank installation).

2. Full Service Gutter Leaf Guards Vs The Rest

There are at least a dozen ordinary to very ordinary leaf guards on the market, starting with the tuck-in 'dollar' mesh optimistically sold by hardware stores.

Some of these guards are made of plastic and some are metal. You might call them the dirty dozen because all of them are far better at collecting and retaining leaf debris than eliminating it.

Think of the modest plastic or metal leaf guards that merely sit in or on gutters as 'half' guards because they only go about half way to where they ideally should go.

Factory-formed, expanded metal guards that cover gutters up to the edge of the roof (but not all metal roofs – and certainly not tile or metal roof valleys) can be seen as 'three quarter' guards.

Being factory made, they don't allow for normal roof profile 'variations' and fit imperfectly along the edge of the roof – leaving small gaps that need to be siliconed up later (but are more likely just left as-is to collect debris).

The Leafscreener system we promote is 'full service' because it is custom fitted over the gutter and above the roofline on all tile and metal roof gutters and valleys without exclusion and without gaps.

It is our opinion that only if you see leaves in your gutters as a non-issue would you seriously consider anything other than a 'full service' gutter leaf guard. And if that was the case, you probably wouldn't be reading this.

3. The Guttermesh Question – Plastic Vs Metal

The basis of all gutter leaf guards is their mesh component.

It is human nature to be attracted by a 'downmarket' version of most things and in seeking to obtain a bargain gutter leaf guard, people end up putting all kinds of stuff over their gutters – including flyscreen and even garden shade cloth.

These and other inferior materials (like 'dollar' mesh) only waste your time and money.

They deteriorate quickly, become unsightly and usually have to be removed after a year or two.

Of the serious, purpose-built gutter leaf guard meshes, the following five types are regularly available:

- A. HDPE Plastic (high density polyethylene chemically stabilised for UV exposure)
- B. Powder coated aluminium wire (the new kid on the block)
- C. Powder coated galvanised steel wire (light cage mesh)
- D. Expanded Colorbond steel mesh (hard grid)
- E. Expanded aluminium mesh (soft grid)

Of these, only the first two – the HDPE mesh and powder coated aluminium mesh – can be successfully utilised as components of a 'full service' gutter leaf guard.

There are problems associated with the other three.

4. The Problems – And A Bit About Mesh Profiles

Galvanised steel wire mesh, while sturdy in appearance, is inclined to rust over time.

The raised profile of both the Colorbond steel and aluminium expanded metal meshes makes them impossible to be neatly worked under the second tile on tile roofs.

This obtrusive profile also appears to increase the collection and retention of fine leaf debris on all roofs – especially when the guard simply finishes at or under the roofline.

All considerably less than ideal.

On the other hand, HDPE mesh is tried and true. It has been Leafscreeener's primary mesh since the inception of the Leafscreeener system some twenty years ago, comes in a range of colours and is on thousands of houses Australia-wide.

Its secret lies in its relatively smooth profile assisting the movement of leaf debris across its surface while the diamond shape aperture pattern breaks up and captures rain run-off without it 'sheeting' over the gutter.

Powder coated aluminium wire mesh is a relatively recent addition to the meshes. Its zero flammability makes it ideal for use where meeting the Australian Standard for new construction in 'Bushfire Prone' areas is a local council requirement.

Leafscreeener installs it exactly the same way as HDPE mesh.

5. So What About Maintenance?

All the lower-end DIY meshes and 'half' guards will need some form of maintenance.

Some el cheapos (like 'dollar' mesh) can ultimately require more maintenance than they are worth and you will find you are better off just getting rid of them!

But a properly installed 'full service' guard should be pretty much maintenance-free.

This will ultimately depend on the tree/roof/gutter/weather variants in each in each case, but an experienced Leafscreeener person can make an accurate assessment before installation.

6. And What About The Installer?

DIY is not really an option with 'full service' gutter leaf guards. For a classy job you need an experienced installer who commands all the little tricks of the trade.

In addition, for job security, your chosen contractor should carry a current gutter leaf guard licence and the man on the roof – the installer – must always have liability insurance.

And remember – it may be a truism, but the best installers require adequate compensation.

7. Do I Need Council Approval To Install My Gutter Leaf Guard?

No.

But councils now require that gutter leaf guard mesh utilised in new construction in designated 'Bushfire Prone' areas meets the Australian Standard for non-flammability.

8. How Long Should My Gutter Leaf Guard Last?

For a long, long time – barring human intervention or an Act of God.

With the exception of the rarely used and rust-prone galvanised steel mesh, leaf guard materials are chosen for their imperviousness to weather. Components made of Colorbond steel, aluminium or HDPE (as well as roofing tek screws and silicone) are rated to last 20 + years.

With a modicum of attention, your installation should comfortably meet and even exceed that.

9. The Bottom Line – Cost.

With gutter leaf guards (as with most things) the old saying holds true – you get what you pay for.

Prices range from inexpensive for virtually worthless 'dollar' mesh to the overkill of some factory 'customised' eave gutter guards that reach \$40 and even \$50 per linear metre.

However, a good quality 'full service' guard can be supplied and fitted for around \$20 - \$30 per linear metre depending on the components selected and the complexity of the job.

Ultimately, the exact price of the installation will need to be determined by a quote in situ – which a reputable contractor will be happy to do free of charge.

10. The Wrap Up.

So far we've been as objective as we can about gutter leaf guards and avoided banging our own drum. But if you've grasped the gist of this report and your gutter leaf guard needs are serious, you are probably now leaning (or should be) towards purchasing a 'full service' gutter leaf guard supplied and fitted by a licensed, insured professional.

And the best – the winner of the 1991 Australian Design Award and still the most honoured 'full service' gutter leaf guard – is Leafscreeener.

We invite residents in the Sydney area to contact us directly on 1 300 654 655 for additional information or a quote.