



## All hands on Deck



You spend thousands of dollars on a deck, so why not spend a little time to preserve it?

With a few basic guidelines and a little routine maintenance, you'll keep your deck looking new and extend its life.

The first thing you should do, is regularly sweep any debris (leaves, twigs, dirt) off the top of the deck. Be sure to pay attention to the spaces between the boards. Leaves will rot in there and the joists and the boards need a chance to stay dry. Use a putty knife or screwdriver to clean these crevices, You can also hose down the deck when dirt accumulates. And scrub it down at least twice a year to remove dirt and decaying matter.

Next, you'll want to clean the surface of the wood. Deck cleaners come in bleach and non-bleach formulas. Either can remove surface and ground-in dirt. Bleach cleaners lighten the wood, while damaging the wood fibers or the wood's natural colour. Non-bleach cleaners are friendlier to the environment and not as tough on bushes and plants. Whatever you choose, always follow the manufacturer's directions for best results.

Or, if you want to go with your own solution, simply use bleach, mix it half and half with warm water, a scrub brush and don't forget the rubber gloves. This is ideal for small areas and will work wonders on algae and mildew. For larger areas, rent or purchase a power washer. Spray the bleach and water mixture on the boards first and let it soak for a while before pressure washing.

Be sure you cover up shrubs and plants next to the deck to protect them, before you start spraying. The bleach being washed off can damaged the plants.

*Note: Use caution with the high-pressure washers, they can actually remove layers of wood. Use a nozzle especially designed to avoid scaring and damaging the wood surface. Always follow the safety procedures recommended by the manufacturer.*

Once the deck is clean, you can apply a wood stain or a waterproofing deck sealer, which will repel water and make your deck last longer. Wood preservatives that contain a UV ingredient are recommended. Clear wood preservatives will not give any colour to it, other than enhance the wood grain. If you want colour, use an exterior stain. Stains come in a couple of choices, either an exterior solid or semi-transparent, depending on the current deck finish. Deep penetrating formulas are great for repelling water.

Now, before you apply the stain/sealer allow the deck to dry for at least 2 days (always read the manufacturer's recommendation before starting). Typical application of stains/sealers require 24 hours before recoating and 24 hours to allow for drying before placing furniture back on the deck. You should apply a coat of wood stain/sealer or water repellent at least every two years, or more often on high traffic areas.

Remember, keeping a wooden deck clean and protected with use of stains/wood preservatives is a good way to make your deck last longer.

### *More deck tips:*

- *Grease from a gas grill will stain a deck and these stains could be permanent. Place a mat under the grill to avoid this.*
- *Never use a charcoal grill on a wooden deck. The hot coals could fall on the deck and this is a fire hazard.*
- *Plants and flowers can brighten a deck. Put a water dish under the plants to catch the water. Move the plants around the deck, this will prevent staining and discoloration of the deck*