



TS RENOVATIONS · OUTDOOR LIVING CARE

Decking Care Guide

Vermont weather is hard on a deck, and different materials handle it in their own ways.

Here's what each one needs, and how to keep it looking its best season after season.

AT A GLANCE

Pressure-Treated → Composite & PVC → Porcelain → Hardwoods & Exotics
→ Eight Habits That Keep Your Deck In Top Shape

A FEW THINGS TO KNOW FIRST

Your deck spends more time exposed to the elements than almost any other surface on your property, taking on sun, snow load, mud season, and freeze-thaw cycles every year it's out there. The material underneath handles all of that a little differently, which is why the choice matters well beyond how it looks on day one.

Even materials marketed as low-maintenance still benefit from a little seasonal attention. Staying on top of the basics catches small issues early, before they turn into bigger repairs.

THE WAY THEY AGE

Pressure-Treated

Grays and roughens with sun exposure if left unsealed. A fresh coat of stain resets the color and grain any time it starts to look tired.

Porcelain

Keeps its exact color and finish for decades, with nothing to seal, stain, or refinish along the way.

Composite & PVC

Holds a steady, consistent color from day one, with nothing to stain or seal as the years go by.

Hardwoods & Exotics

Weathers to a handsome silver gray if left natural, or keeps its rich color for years with routine oiling and the occasional refinish.



Get to Know Your Decking Materials



Pressure-Treated

The most common and affordable decking material by far, pine is chemically treated under pressure to resist rot and insects. It needs a fresh coat of sealant or stain every one to two years to hold its color, and some cracking and warping is normal as it moves with the seasons.

Cellular PVC

A board made entirely of synthetic PVC, AZEK being the name most people recognize, this is the most moisture-resistant decking material available and holds its color especially well over time. It carries a premium price point alongside that low-maintenance profile, with some of the longest manufacturer warranties in the category.

Composite Decking

Engineered from recycled wood fiber and plastic, composite boards, Trex being the name most people recognize, hold their color and shape for decades with no staining or sealing. Most comes capped in a protective shell that resists fading, though it runs warmer underfoot than wood in summer sun.

Porcelain Decking

A newer option gaining ground, porcelain decking installs directly onto the joist frame like conventional decking, with the tile bonded to an engineered base. It won't fade, stain, or scratch, and needs nothing beyond an occasional sweep and rinse to keep it looking new.

Ipe

The exotic hardwood people around here actually choose, ipe is one of the densest, hardest woods used in decking anywhere, naturally resisting rot, insects, and even fire far better than pressure-treated or composite alternatives. That density means boards need to be pre-drilled before fastening. Left unfinished, it weathers to an elegant silver gray; oiled on a regular schedule, it keeps its deep chocolate-brown color.

Other Wood Species

Cedar, redwood, and tropical hardwoods like tigerwood and cumaru also show up on decks, though less often in this region than pressure-treated, composite, or ipe. Cedar and redwood are naturally rot-resistant softwoods that still need routine sealing to hold their color. The tropical hardwoods behave similarly to ipe, dense and long-lasting, but can be harder to source consistently.

WORTH KNOWING

Let it dry before staining

A brand-new deck needs a season to dry out before it takes stain well. Staining too soon traps moisture and shortens the finish's life.

Match your fasteners

Standard steel screws can react with pressure-treated lumber's chemicals and rust-stain the wood within a season. Stainless or coated hardware avoids it.

Let it acclimate first

Dense hardwoods like ipe need time to adjust to our climate before installation, which keeps the finished deck tighter and straighter for years.



Built with longevity in mind. Every deck we build starts with your long-term maintenance in mind. Flashing keeps water out of the frame, proper spacing lets boards move with the seasons, and airflow underneath keeps moisture from settling in. We build it to stand on for many seasons ahead.



Eight Habits That Keep Your Deck In Top Shape

Some of these apply no matter what your deck is made of: clearing debris, using the right tools in winter, keeping flame and heat away from the surface. Others are specific to wood, where staying ahead of the finish is what keeps water from working its way in.

1

Sweep off leaves and debris regularly.

Anything trapped between boards holds moisture against the surface long after a rain, which is where rot and mildew get their start.

2

Reseal or restain wood decking on a schedule.

Most finishes hold up for one to two years depending on sun exposure and foot traffic. A simple water-bead test tells you when it's due: if water beads up, the seal is holding; if it soaks in, it's time to refinish.

3

Clean composite, PVC, and porcelain with soap and water. A mild soap solution and a soft brush keep all three looking their best, with no staining or sealing to worry about.

4

Clear snow with a plastic-edged shovel, even if the deck isn't in use. A metal blade can gouge and scratch the surface, and snow left to sit lets meltwater soak in and refreeze, or piles up enough weight to stress the frame underneath.

5

Skip rock salt on composite and PVC decking. It can leave a white residue and a rough texture over time; calcium or magnesium chloride is the safer choice. Both materials can get slippery when wet or icy, while porcelain's textured surface holds up well here as long as it's kept clear of algae.

6

Keep grills and fire features a safe distance from the surface. A grease splatter or a stray ember can scorch or stain any decking material, and a heat-resistant mat underneath adds an easy extra layer of protection.

7

Treat mildew and algae as soon as it appears. Shaded, damp corners are the most common spot for it to take hold. A deck-safe cleaner handles it quickly; left alone, it can work its way into the surface and discolor it permanently.

8

Check railings and fasteners each spring. Wood expands and contracts with the seasons, which can work screws loose or pop a nail head over a winter. A quick seasonal walk-through catches small fixes before they become bigger ones.

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Built to Last



Stay on top of these and your deck will stand up to everything a Vermont year brings, spring mud, summer cookouts, fall leaves, and winter snow load alike. Manufacturer warranties on composite and PVC decking commonly run 25 years or longer against staining and fading; a wood deck's lifespan comes down largely to how consistently it's sealed and cared for.

Give it the care it needs, and your deck can be where your family gathers for decades to come.



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