

Decked Out With Style

Simple Tips For Sprucing Up Your Outdoor Living Space

(NAPSA)—The next time you're out on a deck, you won't be alone. That's because there are nearly 40 million Americans who own decks. They all should know it's important to examine the deck's condition and conduct any necessary upkeep before breaking out the patio furniture and grill.

To help, here are solutions for the top five most common deck dilemmas:

Deck Dilemma #1: Scuffs and abrasions from furniture or foot traffic can mar the beauty of a deck's surface. Consequently, half of all Americans are not satisfied with the appearance of their decks.

Solution: To keep wood decks looking pristine, it's important to wash, stain and seal them in advance of the arrival of warm weather—as the process can take several days and may require the use of heavy equipment like a power washer. With a wood-alternative deck, scuffs and abrasions should naturally fade or disappear during the weathering process.

Deck Dilemma #2: BBQ sauce is delicious, but not when it's coating your deck. In fact, oil and grease stains can be downright unappetizing—especially if they're set in.

Solution: Whether you have a wood or a wood-alternative deck, try scrubbing stains with a household degreasing agent (ideally as soon as it occurs). For set-in stains, try an automotive degreaser or a carburetor cleaner and rinse immediately with hot water.



Deck Dilemma #3: Mold and mildew are enemies of any exterior surface—especially shady decks exposed to pollen or other organic debris and moisture. Problem areas typically are where water stands for periods of time or where puddles form under potted plants.

Solution: Sweeping away pools of water and periodically cleaning the deck surface creates a first line of defense against mold and mildew. These actions prevent the creation of an environment that nurtures the growth of fungus. Use conventional deck washes or cleaners that contain sodium hypochlorite (bleach) and detergent. In addition, wood decks should be sealed every other year to protect against other types of moisture damage, such as rotting planks—a problem that 44 percent of Americans feel makes their decks unsafe for kids and pets.

Deck Dilemma #4: Outdoor fun should be ouch-free, but that's not likely if your deck is plagued with splintering boards—which could leave barefoot outdoor revelers with painful splinters of their own.

Solution: The amount of time and effort required to fix splintering boards on a wood deck depends on the extent of the damage. Lightly splintered boards may be salvaged through sanding, while severely splintered planks will continue to deteriorate and most likely will need to be replaced. For a splinter-free deck, choose a highly durable wood-alternative material that offers the natural beauty of wood but leaves behind all the rotting and splintering.

Deck Dilemma #5: Loose nails that are exposed above the deck's surface create hazards, especially for children and pets. In fact, nearly 10 percent of Americans believe that their decks are unsafe because of exposed nails.

Solution: If you own a wood deck, inspect the boards to find any protruding nail heads. Hammer them down or replace them with galvanized screws that are approximately ½ inch longer than the original nails. For a smooth deck surface that is completely free of any type of nails or fasteners, consider a wood-alternative material such as Trex Brasilia® with its exclusive Hideaway® Hidden Fastening System, suggests Adam Zambanini, senior product manager of decking at Trex, the country's largest manufacturer of wood-alternative decking, railing and fencing products.

For more information on how to clean and care for a wood-alternative deck, visit www.trex.com.