



Deck Maintenance

A new deck is a work of art. Unfortunately, after some exposure to the elements, some routine maintenance will be necessary to keep the deck in tip-top shape. However, with some simple steps, your deck will be able to withstand the elements and look great for years to come.

Deck Cleaning

Most decks need annual cleaning. For composite decks, use warm, soapy water or a composite deck cleaner in the spring and fall to remove any mildew or algae that may have formed. If any staining has occurred, refer to your decking manufacturer's instructions to remove the stain. Most manufacturers do not recommend using a pressure washer to clean composite decking, so be sure to check before using one.

Wood decks are more challenging to maintain. Any residual stain, algae, mildew, or discoloration can be cleaned off using a deck wash or pressure washer. Be careful when using a pressure washer as it can etch the wood. Then allow the deck to dry completely for a few days before applying a finish, otherwise the finish will not absorb into the wood.

Deck Finishes

Modern deck coatings contain a variety of chemicals that are designed to prolong the use of your deck. They may contain **water repellents, resins, preservatives, and UV Inhibitors**. Each of these chemicals has specific traits that help extend the life of the decking.

Water repellent finishes perform like their name, they simply repel water. Usually made with oil or wax, they keep the water beading up on the surface, rather than soaking in.

Resins (aka alkyd) are water repellents that last longer. They are absorbed into the wood and repel the water from the inside, without creating a hard finish. If a heavy coat of resin finish is applied, it may give your deck a slight sheen which many people find attractive.

Preservatives contain fungicide, mildewcide, and insecticide in varying amounts. All-purpose finishes usually contain a limited amount of preservative simply to contain minor problems.

UV Inhibitors are compounds that work to maintain the original color of your deck for as long as possible. All wood eventually fades, but using products containing these inhibitors will slow the fading process.

When choosing a stain or sealer, be sure to choose one that contains the compounds above that meet your needs. No matter what you do, you will likely have to seal the deck every year or so in order to keep it looking beautiful. More expensive finishes do last longer, so buy the best finish you can afford.

For more maintenance tips and advice, be sure to stop into your local Curtis Lumber for expert help on your next project.