

from the GROUND UP

To create the ultimate outdoor
living space it's best
to start at the bottom

By Stacey Lentz



DESPITE ITS LACK OF WALLS, YOUR BACK YARD IS an extension of your home. And just as the floors in your kitchen or family room, what is underfoot is an important component. Extending your living space to the outdoors often means stepping out your back door onto a deck or patio that is not only inviting and pleasing, but low maintenance as well. ♦ Today, homeowners are in luck. With so many new products on the market and multitudes of vendors out there vying for their share of the decking home-improvement industry, creating the deck of your dreams is easier than ever.

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Maintenance is everything

Whether a deck is 350 square feet or 1,500, there is one driving force in all markets, and that's maintenance. The busy lifestyles of today's homeowner mandate a maintenance-free deck. Luckily, the market is here to oblige with a bevy of versatile materials and applications that can withstand multiple conditions. Here are just a few of the most popular choices:



Wood and composite decking

Wood has been the decking material of choice for years. But anyone who has had a wood deck knows that warping, shrinking and swelling can occur and, unless it is well-maintained, it might not be around forever. Pressure-treated pine and fir remain popular decking choices due to their low cost, availability and rot resistance. Other species such as red cedar, redwood and tropical hardwoods are more durable and have no chemical treatments.

More than a decade ago, experts in the decking industry started developing composite decking materials that have the look and feel of wood. Composite decking products are made primarily from a combination of wood or other cellulose fibers encased in synthetic material. These products require less maintenance than wood and are more resistant to insects, warping and splintering.

The wood fiber adds strength and greatly reduces the expansion and contraction that occurs as decking heats and cools due to climate changes. The synthetic material or plastic protects the wood from moisture, which can cause decay. Composite decking products are often available in a variety of colors and require very little annual maintenance.

Concrete and pavers

Brick, stone and concrete pavers are available in a range of styles, patterns and colors. The best part, they are extremely durable. Very little maintenance is required, but site preparation is usually needed to make sure the pavers are properly placed and the grading and drainage are acceptable.

Gone are the days of that large, dull gray square sitting in your back yard. Today, concrete is available in a wide variety of colors and decorative patterns. This product does require some sealing to avoid cracks, and pressure washing for cleaning, but overall, this is an excellent option for a low maintenance outdoor solution.

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OVERLEAF: CorrectDeck composite decking is available in five colors—Cedar, Mahogany, Merlot, Coastal Grey and Cottage Green.

ABOVE: Comprised of plastic to resist fading, cracking and splitting, EON decking boasts a beautiful wood grain appearance.



TOP: This elegant multi-level composite deck from TimberTech features Cedar TwinFinish Planks and Whitesand Ornamental Railings.

MIDDLE LEFT: These accent pieces from Trex are reversible, with a wood grain pattern on one side and a smooth, refined look on the other.

MIDDLE: This stamped concrete patio made of Increte gives the look of weathered slate.

Photo courtesy of R&C Increte

MIDDLE RIGHT: This wood deck from Universal Forest Products is pressure treated with a preservative to protect against insects and decay.

LEFT: Built by Colorado Creations, this covered deck offers panoramic views of the surrounding landscape.

Photo courtesy of Colorado Creations



ABOVE: Surrounded by windows, this all-season room from Colorado Creations can be enjoyed year-round.
Photo courtesy of Colorado Creations

RIGHT: TimberTech's BuilderBoard railings add a unique touch to any deck.

OPPOSITE: Interlocking wood pavers, such as these Ipe tiles from SwiftDeck, can be installed over an existing concrete patio.

Wooden tiles

Decking tiles are perfect for those of you who have one of those bland concrete patios, but since it is still in good condition you hate to tear it out. These tiles give the effect of a wooden deck, but are installed over the top of an existing flat surface, such as concrete. The tiles are generally square and are locked together with plastic fasteners instead of nails or glue. You can install them yourself, and a big plus is you can move them later if needed.

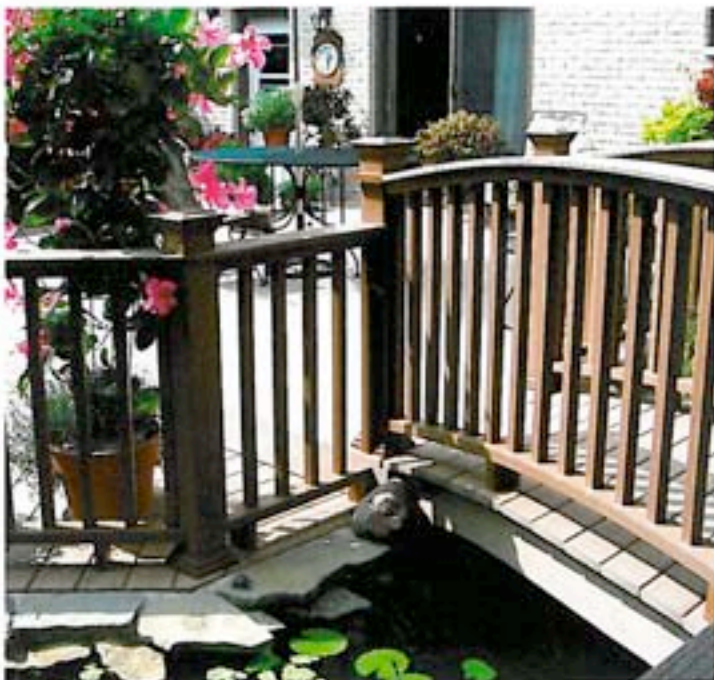
Visual interests

Adding visual interest to a deck is as simple as creating angled stairs or running decking horizontally. Any little trick to make decking stand out is a great plus. For example, widening the steps and focusing on the yard's best views can mean the difference between a deck you want to spend time on versus one that sits idle.

Creating an enclave with a pergola, gazebo or nursery area can bring a customized feel to a deck. Incorporating other structures such as a swing, built-in benches or a fireplace also create inviting focal points.

Additionally, lighting plays a huge part in the deck's functionality. Whether it's weatherproof lighting, built-in wall lighting or elaborate inset lighting in the floor and posts, lighting creates the mood.

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And don't underestimate the power of angles. A small deck doesn't have to be a box. Octagons, clipped corners and diagonal flooring are all important when it comes to creating a signature deck.

Be creative with railings and balusters. In addition to performing an important safety function, they can also serve as a beautiful design element. Decorative railings are one of the easiest ways to add visual impact. Railings can now incorporate glass, stainless steel cable and the look of wrought iron without the maintenance.

Multi-level decks are another feature that can add excitement to your outdoor retreat. For example, one deck can function as a seating area with a grill or fire pit, while the other houses a hot tub, or leads to the family pool.

In the end...

Homeowners today are turning their outdoor living spaces into sanctuaries in order to escape from the rest of the world. A well-planned deck or patio can add a lot of enjoyment for years to come. Whether it is material choices or amenity decisions, keep in mind the end user...you. 🍷

Editor's note: All photos supplied by their respective manufacturers except where noted.



BOTTOM LEFT: Lighting is an important element not to overlook when designing a deck.

Photo courtesy of Colorado Creations

BELOW: This CorrectDeck composite deck features antimicrobial protection, allowing it to resist stains, fading, mold and mildew.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Fypon's William E. Poole Collection Balustrade System adds an elegant touch to any deck or patio.



RESOURCES

For additional information on decking materials visit:

Colorado Creations

CorrectDeck

www.correctdeck.com

EON

www.eonoutdoor.com

Fypon

www.fypon.com

Increte

www.increte.com

SwiftDeck

www.swiftdeck.com

TimberTech

www.timbertech.com

Trex

www.trex.com

Universal Forest Products

www.ufpi.com

