

# Renovators Ltd.

A quarterly newsletter building industry knowledge.

Spring, 2003

## Wood decks require TLC every year

### Tips on caring for your deck

Wood decks can be a center of relaxation and comfort for their owners. A place where they can while away the afternoon or weekend in peace. A place where they can set up deck chairs or a table and sip drinks as the day lazily passes, or munch on barbecue fresh from the grill. In order to provide years of necessary comfort, wood decks require you to do a little care and maintenance each year.

#### CHECK FOR DAMAGED BOARDS ONCE A YEAR

The boards that make up the surface of your deck and steps are subject to all kinds of stress and usage. Over time, they will wear out or rot. If you don't check for and replace damaged boards each year, you could be setting yourself or your family up for an injury.

- ▶ Examine the surface boards of your deck. Look for signs of stress, like excessive curling, cracking, rotting, or severed boards. Any you find will need to be replaced.
- ▶ Measure the damaged board.
- ▶ Purchase a replacement board. Your local lumberyard or hardware store (if they carry wood) should be able to help you. Cedar is preferable, though you'll need to seal the wood yourself (which can be done before or after installation).
- ▶ Remove the damaged board. If nails were used to secure the board, you will need a small nail puller or a hammer to pry the nails out. Use a small block of wood for leverage. The block of wood will protect the boards that don't need to be replaced. If screws were used to secure the damaged board, a

One of the biggest **ravages** your deck can face is **moisture**. In order to keep your deck in **good shape** for years to come, you need to **re-seal** or **re-stain** it each year.

screwdriver or drill (with screwdriver bit) should do the trick. Also, wear work gloves when lifting the board out to prevent splinters.

- ▶ Cut the new board to fit. Make any adjustments necessary to the new board so it will fit in the space left by the damaged board. A handsaw

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# KUDOS to you!

We take pride in the quality work and attention to detail we provide for you. Nothing shows us that you value this more than when you share our name with your family and friends. We want to take this opportunity to express our appreciation.

- **John Ertl** and **Celeste Lesch** thank you for referring **Wayne** and **Linda Dettmann**.
- **Pat** and **Ellen Coplan** thank you for referring **Walt** and **Mary Schneider**.
- **Tom White** thank you for referring **Susan Lubar**.
- **Bill Pickering** thank you for referring **Tom** and **Jeanine Schoen**.
- **Linda Ottow** thank you for referring **Diane Clark**.
- **Nancy** and **Arlo Coplan** thank you for referring **Ray** and **Marilyn Hauswirth**.

## Spring Checklist

Here are a few spring-time tasks you don't want to forget:

- Clean gutters. Inspect gutters to ensure all spikes, straps and clips are tightly fastened. Use a garden hose to flush debris from downspouts. Make sure downspouts or splashbacks direct water at least three feet away from the foundation.
- Wash windows, inside and out, using a solution made from three tablespoons of non-sudsy ammonia to 1 gallon of water. Don't work in the direct sun – the solution will dry too fast and streak.
- Have central air-conditioning unit checked according to the recommendations of the unit's manufacturer. Replace the filter in the forced-air system. Clean debris from condenser or heat pump located outside.
- Have swimming pools cleaned. Inspect and service pool liners and filters.
- Dust ceiling fan blades.
- Set thermostats and automatic sprinkler system to adjust for weather changes
- Before placing metal patio furniture outdoors, coat it with auto polish.

## New life for metal siding

### Cleaning and repainting can make all the difference

Metal siding on a home's exterior eventually fades and discolors. Ultraviolet rays from the sun, airborne pollutants, rain, and other elements take their toll. The finish chalks fade and become porous, allowing dirt to penetrate the surface. In damp areas, mildew forms, discoloring the siding. Cleaning and/or repainting makes the surface look like new.

You may find that a thorough cleaning is all your siding needs. Clean the siding with detergent and laundry bleach. The detergent washes away dirt, grime and chalking, and the bleach removes dark mildew stains. For detergent, use either siding cleaner available in hardware stores, or a Spic and Span type cleaner. If your siding is mildewed, add bleach to the solution.

My aluminum siding wash formula combines 1 gallon of hot water, 1/3 cup Soilax and 1/2 cup Tide. Scrub the siding with a soft brush or sponge and rinse well. On many parts of the siding, you can use a diluted solution with more water. This formula works great on aluminum and will also work well on vinyl siding. Or, you can use any easy-to-rinse detergent like Spic and Span, 409, or Fantastic. Just soak the stains with the solution and then scrub. Rinse well.

To prevent staining, wash from the bottom up. Wet the siding with the hose, and apply cleaning solution liberally with a brush. I like to use a soft automotive brush on a 6 foot pole, applying cleaning solution with the brush from a pail. You might have to let the detergent solution sit on the siding for a few minutes but don't let it dry. Rinse areas as you wash. For larger jobs, apply the detergent with a garden sprayer and then scrub with a soft brush.

In areas with extensive mildew, try Jomax, a concentrated mold and mildew remover. Mix 1 pint of Jomax with 3 pints of laundry bleach and 2 gallons of water. Apply with a garden sprayer per the label instructions. After five minutes, rinse off the solution. For heavy stains, scrub lightly. Jomax eliminates most scrubbing when removing mildew stains. To



apply it, I attached a soft brush to a long handle that could be extended almost 12 feet. Though a little harder to control, it eliminated using a ladder in many areas.

Cleaning may restore the siding's natural color so that repainting is not necessary. If the surface is dull and faded, you might also apply a coat of Armorall or Penetrol to restore the gloss and color. Test in a small area first.

If repainting is in order, you have already prepared the surface with a good cleaning. Next prime bare spots and corrosion with a solvent-based exterior primer. On aluminum siding, corrosion appears white and should be removed and primed. Severely chalked areas must be primed.

For a top coat, select paint specifically designed for metal siding, or top quality 100% acrylic paint. A quality paint product can last well over 10 years on metal siding. If the siding on your house is in really bad shape—for instance, if the paint is peeling off—contact the manufacturer of the siding. You may need to check with the original builder or siding installer to discover the brand and type of siding on your home. Many manufacturers will stand behind their products.

*Courtesy of Just Fix It by Tom Feiza.*

## “Caring for your deck”

continued from cover

or electric saw can help you cut the new board down to size.

- ▶ Test fit the new board. Lay the board in its spot. Make sure it fits properly and that you like the way it looks.
- ▶ Attach the board. First, drill guide holes for the nails or screws to make sure they will properly adhere to the support beams. Next, add the nails or screws. For decks, screws are recommended since they won't pop out when the wood expands and contracts with the changing weather conditions.
- ▶ Apply water sealant to your deck to help protect it. Follow the directions that come with the sealant.

### CHECK STRUCTURAL SUPPORTS FOR SIGNS OF INSECT OR ANIMAL DAMAGE TWICE A YEAR

The structural supports keep your deck up and in place. Underneath the surface of the deck where the structural supports are located, is a perfect place for insects to flourish and animals to take up residence. Problem is, they can damage or destroy the supports, which can make your deck unusable.

- ▶ Inspect your deck's structural supports. Visually inspect the area underneath your deck with the aid of a high-power flashlight. Look for any signs of animal or insect damage, like chewed supports, cobwebs, brittle wood, etc.
- ▶ If you find any signs of insects or insect damage, schedule a visit from a pest-control expert.
- ▶ If the damage appears to be animal related, consider adding lattice or some other barrier around the edges of your deck to keep critters out from under it.

### CHECK FOR POPPED NAILS, LOOSE SCREWS, AND BOLTS ON DECKS ONCE A YEAR

Nails, screws, and bolts hold your deck together. If they come loose or pop out (a consistent problem with nails), then the



deck boards could come loose or the deck itself could partially collapse.

- ▶ Inspect all the nails, screws, and bolts that hold your deck together. You will need to tighten any that are loose or that have popped out. Wearing work gloves is recommended.
- ▶ Nails that have popped out need to be driven back in. Use a hammer and pound them back into place.
- ▶ Screws that have worked their way out need to be twisted back in place. Use a screwdriver or drill (with screwdriver attachment) and tighten them. Be careful not to strip the screws. If you do, you will need to make a trip to your local hardware store and purchase a slightly larger screw as a replacement.
- ▶ Bolts are the only one of the three that doesn't rely on the wood to hold it in place. Use a wrench or two (depending on how loose the bolt has become) to tighten the bolt.

### RE-SEAL OR RE-STAIN YOUR DECK ONCE A YEAR

One of the biggest ravages your deck can face is moisture. In order to keep your deck in good shape for years to come, you need to re-seal or re-stain it each year.

- ▶ If you haven't already, clean the surface of the deck. A power-washer is an easy way to do this. If not, you can also use a large scrub brush and soapy water.

**Structural supports** keep your deck up and in place. Underneath the surface of the deck ... is a perfect place for **insects** to flourish and **animals** to take up residence. Problem is, they can **damage** or **destroy** the supports, which can make your deck **unusable**.

- ▶ Let the deck dry.
- ▶ Apply the finish or sealant. If you're using a colored finish, make a test spot first to see if the color you chose is indeed the color you want. Using a foam brush, staining pad, or nylon/polyester brush, apply the stain or sealant with the grain of the wood. For colored finishes, work quickly and don't stop in the middle of the job for break. Doing so can cause the finish to dry uneven, leaving you with streaks.
- ▶ Let the stain or sealant dry. This should take approximately two hours (depending on humidity and temperature).
- ▶ Add a second and possibly third coat to enhance the protection of your deck.

*Courtesy of [www.homestore.com](http://www.homestore.com).*

# Home Improvement Tips

■ **Removing stains from vinyl siding.** Petroleum-based products like heating fuel oil can permanently stain vinyl siding. According to the Vinyl Siding Institute, for fuel oil stains you can use Fantastic, Lysol, Murphy's Oil Soap or Windex to remove the stain. Scrub the area, allow the cleaner to soak into the surface and scrub more. If those don't work, try a solvent—mineral spirits, naphtha, or auto tar remover. Use a soft cloth to apply the solvent. Avoid tarnishing the area by using too much pressure. After removing the stain, rinse with water.

■ **Renew rusty wrought iron railings.** Wrought iron railings can rust after years of exposure to harsh weather. You must get rid of the rust before repainting. Try a product like Rust-Oleum Rust Reformer.

First you will need to remove flaking paint and rust, but not all the way down to the metal. A wire brush or abrasive pad works well, or try a round wire brush attached to a drill. After removing surface rust, clean the surface with detergent and water to remove oil, grease and dirt. Let dry completely. Apply the milky white Reformer with a brush or pad. The product will dry to a black finish in about 15 minutes.

For a finish coat, wait four hours, then apply an oil-based enamel. Some products, including Rust Reformer, suggest applying several coats of reformer for a final flat black finish.

*Courtesy of Just Fix It by Tom Feiza.*

# Did you know —

■ You can now see Renovators Ltd. Saturdays at 10:30 a.m. on WTTI Channel 6 in the "Remodelers Showcase." This complete home-focused line-up features: "Ask Gus" at 9 a.m., "Builders Showcase" at 9:30 a.m., "Your First New Home" at 10:00 a.m. and "Remodelers Showcase" at 10:30 a.m. Don't miss us!

This newsletter is a forum to learn about new techniques, industry standards, methods and individual stories. If you have ideas, articles, photos, questions or a subject you would like to see published, for consideration please contact us at our office:

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inform our customers and build  
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