

DECKING GUIDE

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW
BEFORE YOU BUILD

Brought to you by Fiberon



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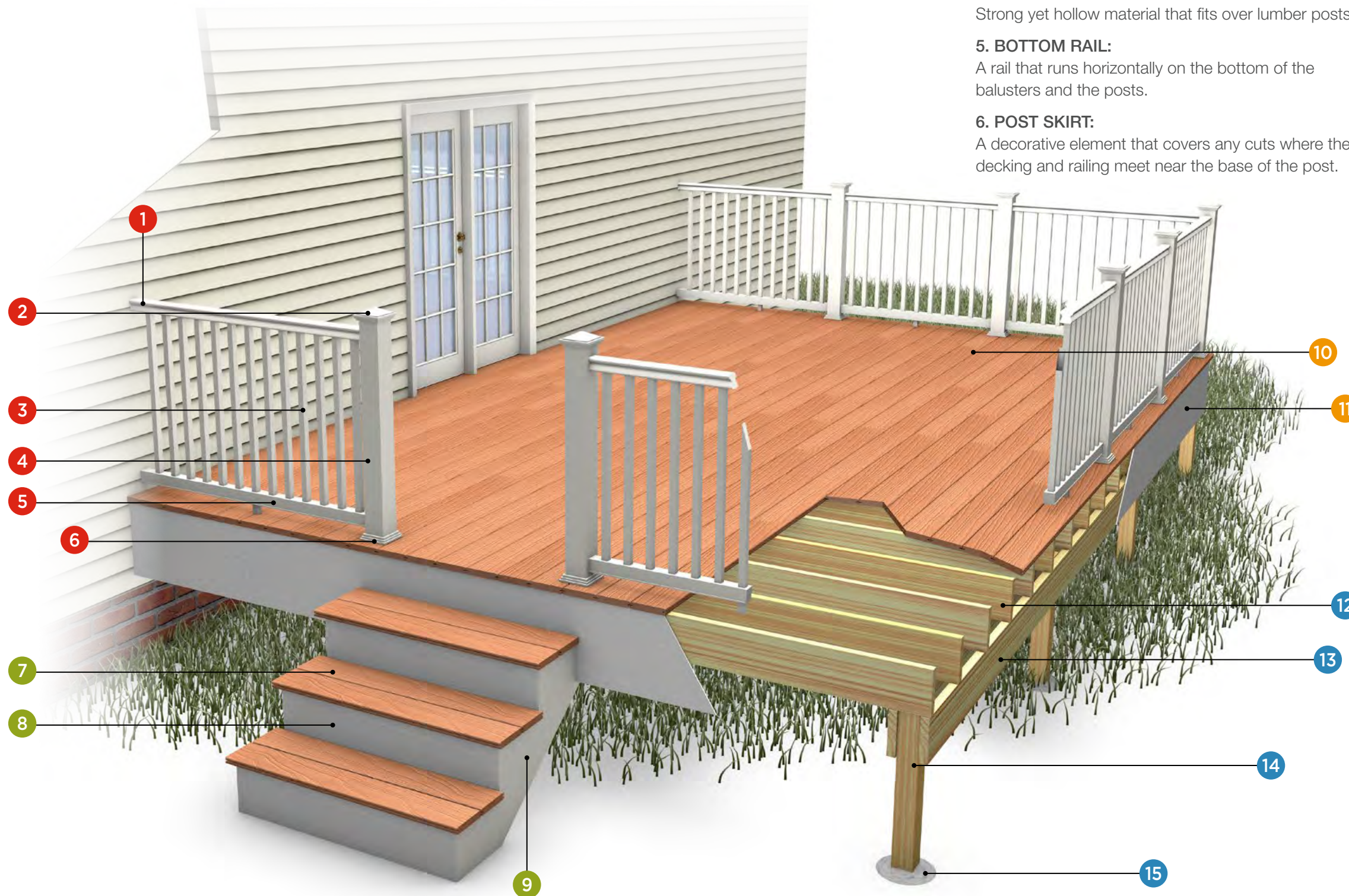
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Building a new deck is fun, exciting, and sometimes a bit overwhelming. This guide was designed to eliminate the guesswork so you can enjoy the process from start to finish. From decking basics and design tips to choosing materials and finding a contractor, we're here to help every step of the way.

WHAT GOES INTO A DECK?

Although we may live and breathe decking, we understand that most people don't. Here's an overview of the elements that make up a deck.



RAILING

- 1. TOP RAIL:**
Railing placed horizontally that attaches above the balusters and posts.
- 2. POST CAP:**
Weather-protective finish that tops each post and provides a more finished appearance.
- 3. BALUSTER:**
Vertical rungs between two posts that connect the top and bottom rail.
- 4. POST SLEEVE:**
Strong yet hollow material that fits over lumber posts.
- 5. BOTTOM RAIL:**
A rail that runs horizontally on the bottom of the balusters and the posts.
- 6. POST SKIRT:**
A decorative element that covers any cuts where the decking and railing meet near the base of the post.

STEPS

- 7. TREAD:**
The flat, walkable surface on each step of a set of stairs.
- 8. RISER:**
Support material that attaches to the vertical face of a step between treads.
- 9. STRINGER:**
Dimensional lumber that support the stair treads and risers of deck stairs.

DECKING:

- 10. DECKING:**
Material that forms the finished surface of the deck.
- 11. FASCIA:**
Decorative material installed along the outside edge of the deck framing to create a more polished appearance.

FRAMING/SUBSTRUCTURE:

- 12. JOIST:**
Dimensional structure, set parallel to one another to create the actual deck structure.
- 13. BEAM:**
Dimensional structure set along the top of posts. Serves as the main horizontal support for the deck.
- 14. ELEVATED POST:**
Vertical elements that support the beams.
- 15. FOOTING:**
Typically concrete, these create an underground base that provides support for deck posts.

DECK BASICS

A well-designed deck will expand your home's usable square footage, integrate seamlessly with your yard, and expand your options for fun and leisure.

DECK SHAPE

If you are partial to curved decks, keep in mind that curved designs require more board cutting, which increases waste and construction time. Also, furniture placement may be tricky.



Perhaps a more traditional rectangular design would work for the main decking area; then, add a circular or octagonal area to increase visual interest and create a cozy conversation nook.



TOPOGRAPHY

If trees or a shallow lot prevent you from building out, consider a multi-level deck and build up instead. The topography of your land, including rocky soil, slopes, etc. may present challenges. If you will need to remove rocks prior to pouring your footings, factor that expense in your final budget. Similarly, if your yard is filled with trees, consider having a professional remove some prior to deck building.



BALANCING SUN & SHADE

A pergola or awning will make outside dining or lounging more pleasant during peak sun hours.

RULES AND REGULATIONS

Consider homeowner association (HOA) restrictions, if applicable, property lines and setbacks, and underground sprinklers and utilities. A professional contractor should be well-versed in these topics and able to guide you. Consult local building officials for help if you're building the deck yourself.

DECK USE

Will you use your space for relaxing, entertaining, or a little bit of both?

Designate areas for eating and unwinding. They can be separated physically by small sets of stairs or visually by strategic furniture placement.



Will you throw large parties, or smaller, more intimate gatherings? This will impact how much seating space you will need. Built-in benches are a great way to ensure seating for everyone.



For the dining area, be sure to allow enough space to move around the table comfortably.



Consider a separate space for the grill situated away from your seating area.

Do you want a full-blown outdoor kitchen and/or bar area? You will need to consider room for appliances and countertops as well as access to electrical power and water lines.



Think about how guests will enter and exit your space. This will impact stair placement. Many homeowners opt for one set of stairs near the driveway and another leading directly into the backyard. Also, consider the design of any stairs. Two shorter runs of stairs with a landing in between may be easier and safer to navigate than one very long, steep set.

Will you have easy access to your kitchen from the grilling/dining area of your deck? If not, consider a sliding door or French door, or replace a window with a door to keep food-related activities near the kitchen.

HOT TUBS

A deck with a hot tub needs a decking material that can withstand a lot of splashing. For the safety of your guests, consider a product that is slip-resistant as well.

Hot tubs also require additional structural support and surrounding space. Even on a small deck, there must be enough room around the hot tub for the cover lift to function and air to circulate. On a larger deck, you'll need to consider traffic flow around the hot tub.

You'll also need a nearby electrical source to power your spa, and a licensed electrical contractor to do the work. Ensure all necessary electrical work is completed correctly, including permits, an emergency shut-off option, a ground-fault circuit interrupter, etc.

Finally, and most important, always use a locking cover with your hot tub and NEVER leave children unsupervised on your deck—even if the hot tub is covered.



ROOFTOP DECKS AND CONCRETE PADS

Ground-level and rooftop decks present unique challenges when it comes to water management and air circulation. You will first need to install a sleeper system. A sleeper system is a substructure comprising joists that sit between a solid surface such as concrete and the decking.

A sleeper system enables adequate drainage and ventilation as well as easier access to the area beneath the decking, either for clearing accumulated debris or maintaining the surface material. To learn more about sleeper system installation, read our [Technical Bulletin](#).

PRODUCT OPTIONS

Consider price, maintenance, durability, and long-term costs of ownership.

WOOD

OVERVIEW

- Wood offers a warm, natural beauty initially, but the look can fade quickly without regular, diligent maintenance.
- Most pressure-treated (P/T) lumber is Southern Pine.
- Cedar and Redwood are also popular but more costly.
- Exotic hardwoods such as Ipe and Jatoba are harder to get and expensive.

PROS

- Pressure-treated is inexpensive and plentiful.
- Can be stained/painted any color.
- Cedar and Redwood are naturally resistant to insects.
- Exotics are much longer lasting than P/T lumber and feature dramatic natural streaking.

CONS

- Quality of P/T varies considerably. Can be difficult to know what you're getting.
- Wood, especially exotics, is not always sourced sustainably.
- Wood cracks, twists, splinters, and warps.
- Nail pops are common.
- Most species are highly susceptible to insect infestation, mold, and decay.
- Wood will fade. It needs to be re-stained or resealed periodically to preserve appearance.
- Food and drink can stain the surface easily.
- Cedar, redwood, and exotics are much more difficult to cut and install. Special drill bits and pre-drilling are required.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Wood is not warranted against staining or fading.
- No performance warranties.
- Needs regular maintenance.
- Maintenance costs can easily reach into the thousands over a relatively short amount of time.
- P/T decking has an average lifespan of 10-15 years, even with regular maintenance.
- More expensive species will last longer but still need periodic re-staining or refinishing.



FYI

To learn more about long-term costs of ownership, turn to pages 20-21.

CAPPED COMPOSITE DECKING

OVERVIEW

- Contains recycled plastics and wood scraps (up to 94% depending on brand), along with UV inhibitors, color additives, biocides.
- Fiberon composites are co-extruded: board has a durable composite core and bonded cap layer that resists staining, fading, and decay.
- Long lasting and low maintenance.

PROS

- Innovations in composite technology have enhanced the natural wood look and feel.
- Available in a wide range of colors with varied grain patterns and streaking options.
- Never needs sanding, staining, re-sealing, or refinishing.
- Average lifespan is 20+ years.
- Will not crack, splinter, warp, or suffer insect infestation.
- Installed with composite decking screws (no nail pops) or hidden fasteners for smooth, fastener-free surface.
- Many brands include stain and fade warranties as well as performance warranties.

CONS

- Generally speaking, more expensive up front (although value-priced options are becoming common).
- Darker colors can get warm in all-day direct sun.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Most carry 25-year stain and fade warranties as well as similar performance warranties.
- Annual soap and water cleaning is usually sufficient.
- Long-term costs of ownership are minimal.
- Decks that maintain a like-new appearance enhance your property; often a big plus when selling your home.

PVC DECKING

OVERVIEW

- Contains recycled plastics, virgin material, biocides, color, and other ingredients.
- Long lasting and low maintenance.

PROS

- Highly durable and resistant to staining, fading, dents, mold, and decay.
- Boards are lighter than wood or capped composites.
- Easy to cut; easy to work with.
- Fiberon Paramount PVC is flame resistant and suitable for use in Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) zones.
- Lifetime performance warranties are often offered.
- Good choice for waterside applications and high-traffic or commercial applications.

CONS

- Priced comparably to higher-end composites.
- Darker colors can get very warm in all-day direct sun.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Retains like-new appearance.
- Same easy maintenance as composites.

RAILING

Railing adds aesthetic appeal, enables easy customization, and keeps your space safe.

If you are building a deck that is higher than 30" above ground, you need railing. Consult local building codes for details. Also, consider the following as you make your railing selection.

YOUR VIEW:

If you want an unobstructed view, consider railing that offers a longer span to minimize the number of posts. Also, check out round metal balusters. Their color and shape blend beautifully into the surroundings.

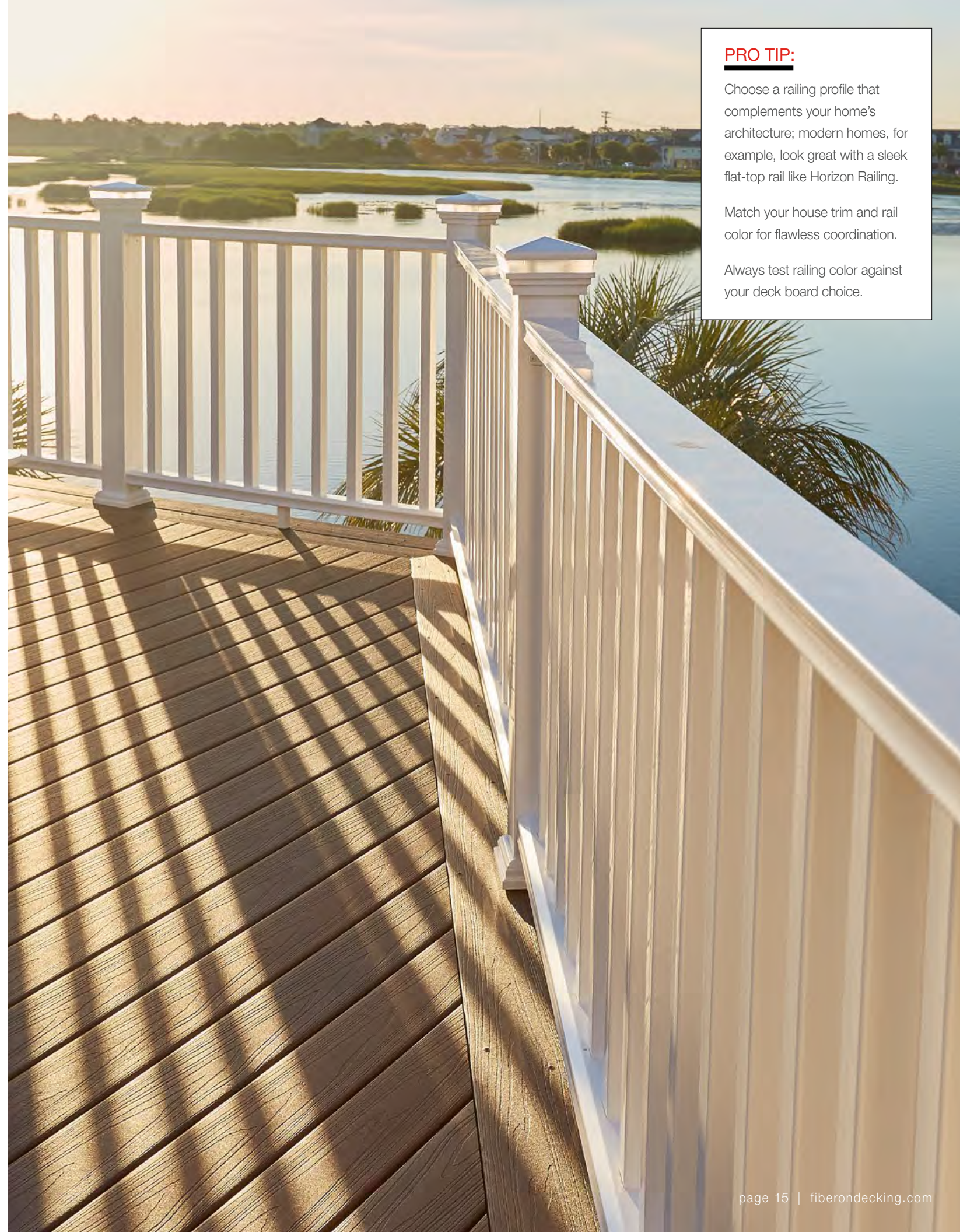


MATERIALS INCLUDE:

Among your options are wood, composite, metal, and vinyl. Maintenance requirements, durability, and costs can vary widely. Wood railing, for example, will be subject to the same shortcomings and upkeep challenges as wood decking.



Vinyl railing can stain and often looks artificial. Depending on the type of metal, metal railing can be easy to maintain or challenging. Composite railing is more expensive than wood but far easier to maintain.



PRO TIP:

Choose a railing profile that complements your home's architecture; modern homes, for example, look great with a sleek flat-top rail like Horizon Railing.

Match your house trim and rail color for flawless coordination.

Always test railing color against your deck board choice.

NOTE: Always consult local building officials for up-to-date code information.

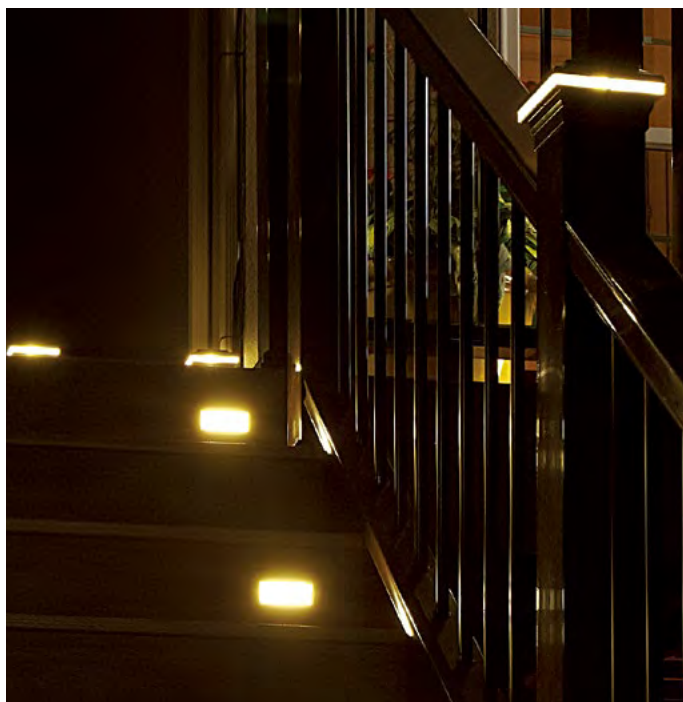
LIGHTING

Lighting is key to creating ambiance and ensuring safer footing after dark. Options include:



POST CAP LIGHTS

A band of light around the cover on your rail posts that adds a warm, subtle glow.



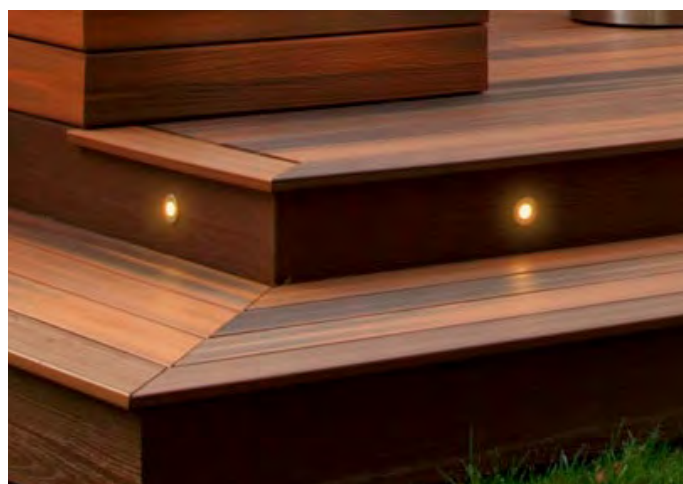
RISER LIGHTS

Designed to fit flush against stair risers, these are an ideal option for safer footing on stairs.



POST SLEEVE LIGHTS

Also known as eyeball lights, these are perfect for brightening stairways or highlighting specific parts of your deck.



ACCENT LIGHTS

The most multi-functional of deck lighting options, these are the best choice for illuminating your deck's perimeter or for lighting ground-level decks that don't have railing.



MATERIALS, LABOR, AND PERMITS

Here are some costs to consider.

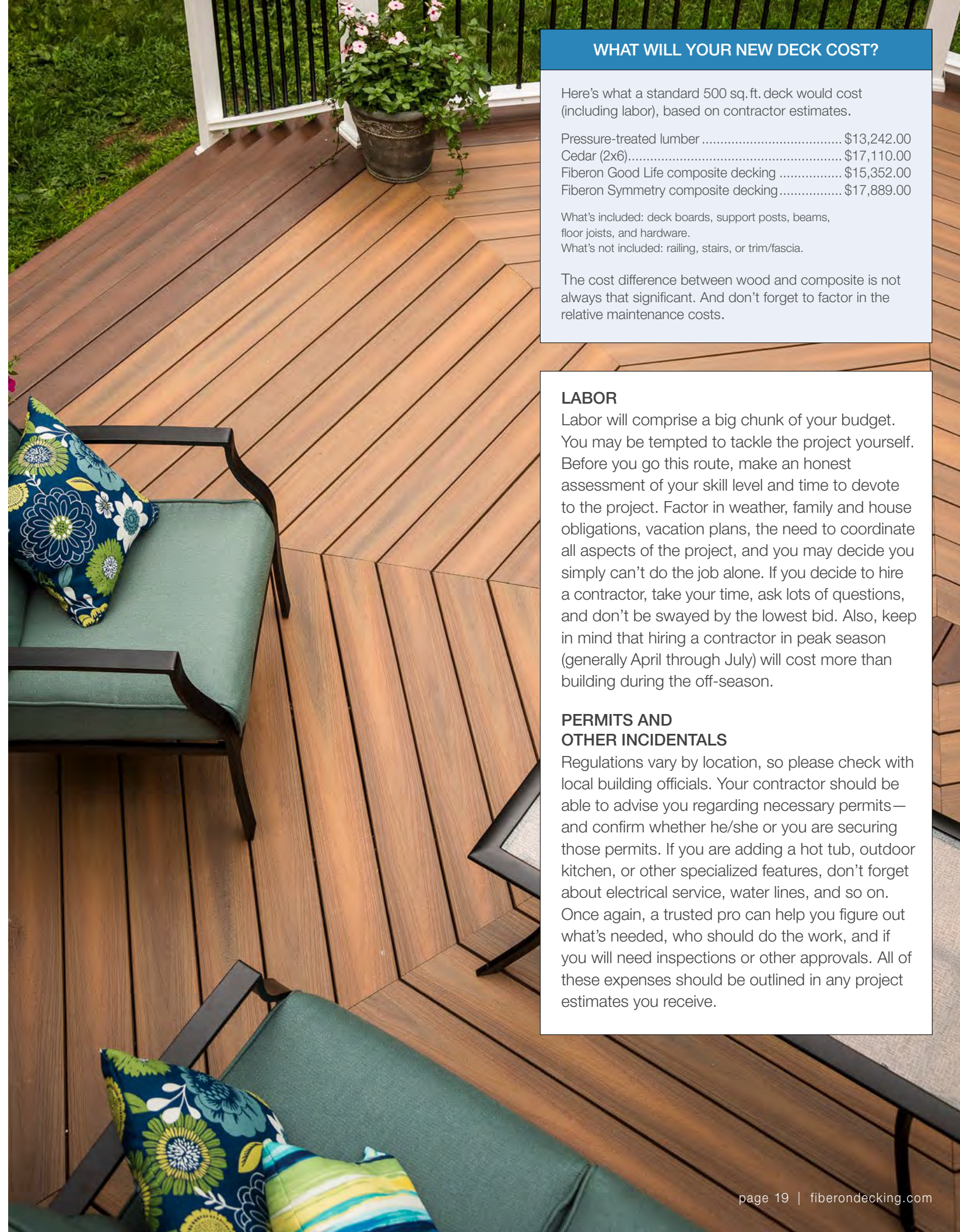
MATERIALS

This includes everything from framing materials to the deck boards, fasteners, railing, and infill. Prices vary widely, so it is difficult to provide specifics.

Start your search online; then, visit local decking dealers or lumber yards. Most will only stock a limited number of decking lines, so you may want to visit a few to get a better understanding of your options.

While generally less expensive up front, wood decking can be very expensive to maintain. Conversely, composite decking may cost more per lineal foot, but is far easier—and a lot less expensive—to maintain.

Regardless of the decking and railing you choose, your framing materials (ledger board, concrete footers, support beams, and joists) will likely be the same.



WHAT WILL YOUR NEW DECK COST?

Here's what a standard 500 sq. ft. deck would cost (including labor), based on contractor estimates.

Pressure-treated lumber	\$13,242.00
Cedar (2x6).....	\$17,110.00
Fiberon Good Life composite decking	\$15,352.00
Fiberon Symmetry composite decking	\$17,889.00

What's included: deck boards, support posts, beams, floor joists, and hardware.

What's not included: railing, stairs, or trim/fascia.

The cost difference between wood and composite is not always that significant. And don't forget to factor in the relative maintenance costs.

LABOR

Labor will comprise a big chunk of your budget. You may be tempted to tackle the project yourself. Before you go this route, make an honest assessment of your skill level and time to devote to the project. Factor in weather, family and house obligations, vacation plans, the need to coordinate all aspects of the project, and you may decide you simply can't do the job alone. If you decide to hire a contractor, take your time, ask lots of questions, and don't be swayed by the lowest bid. Also, keep in mind that hiring a contractor in peak season (generally April through July) will cost more than building during the off-season.

PERMITS AND OTHER INCIDENTALS

Regulations vary by location, so please check with local building officials. Your contractor should be able to advise you regarding necessary permits—and confirm whether he/she or you are securing those permits. If you are adding a hot tub, outdoor kitchen, or other specialized features, don't forget about electrical service, water lines, and so on. Once again, a trusted pro can help you figure out what's needed, who should do the work, and if you will need inspections or other approvals. All of these expenses should be outlined in any project estimates you receive.

MAINTENANCE EXPENSES

Over time, it can really add up.

WOOD

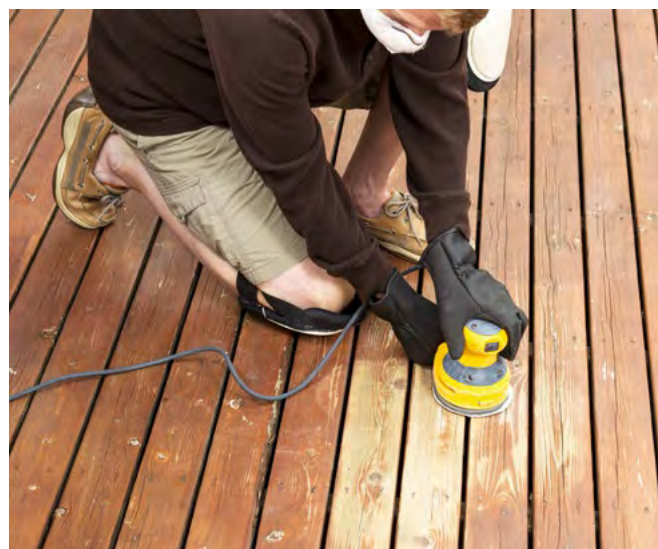
The beauty of a new wood deck is undeniable, but the truth is, that beauty begins to degrade very soon after construction is complete. Consider the costs associated with a newer wood deck as well as maintenance costs for aging decks.

Professionals generally recommend an application of sealant roughly a month or two after the deck is completed. Waiting allows the wood to finish drying out, since it may still retain significant moisture after installation.

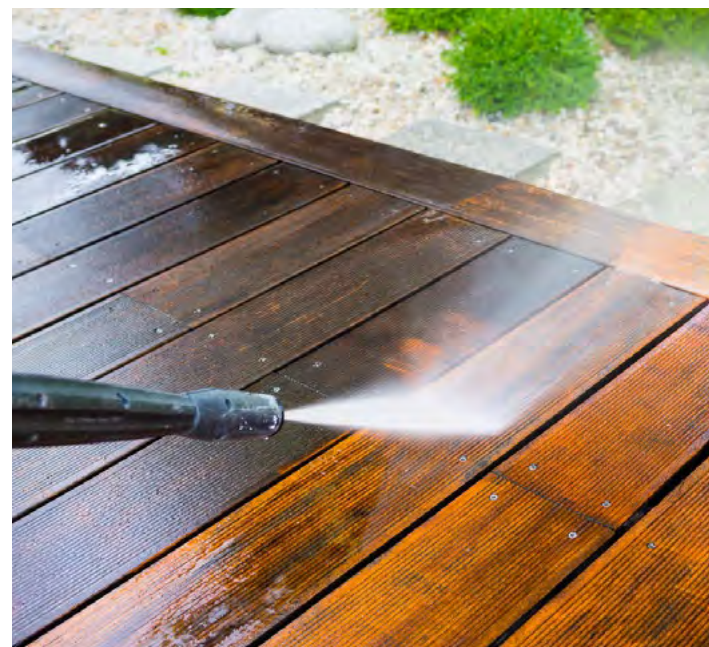
Sealing a wood deck will cost an average of \$350 for a 250 square foot deck. Prices will vary. Consider the cost of your time as well. What could you be doing instead?



Plan to re-stain your deck periodically to combat fading due to sun and storms. Most one-gallon stain containers will provide approximately 200 to 300 square feet of coverage, and can cost anywhere from \$20 per gallon to upwards of \$100. If you opt to hire a pro, get several estimates as prices can vary widely. We've seen everything from \$1.50/sq.ft. to \$5.75/sq.ft., not always including labor.



Refinishing is a multi-step process that needs to be done every few years, most pros say. Refinishing includes power washing, re-staining, and re-sealing. Sanding the deck after washing is also recommended.



The sealing process will need to be repeated every two to three years. Depending on your local climate, the process may need to be repeated as often as every year.

If you wait too long to seal your deck, though, you may need to clean it first. Renting a power washer could cost \$40 per hour to \$70-\$80 or more per day, plus supplies. Hiring a professional will cost around \$300, according to most online resources we checked.

The reason: Wood fibers can “rise up” as they expand with water and could lead to splinters and a less-than-ideal surface for staining. Sanding a deck requires the right tools and know-how. If you do hire a deck refinishing pro, expect to pay up to \$3.82 per square foot and labor charges from \$350 to \$650, according to a popular homeowner advisory website.

Sources: homeadvisor.com, homewyse.com, costowl.com, fixr.com

All things considered, your wood deck can cost thousands in maintenance over just a few years. And that's not including repairs (replacing warped boards, dealing with nail pops, and so on) and the time you could otherwise be spending with family and friends. Plus, that wood deck will probably never regain its like-new appearance. If you need to sell your home quickly and you've been less than diligent about deck maintenance, you could find yourself with an eyesore and potential deal-breaker on your hands.

COSTS OF MAINTAINING A WOOD DECK							
YEAR 1	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 6	YEAR 7	YEAR 9	YEAR 10	TOTAL
Seal Deck \$750	Clean, re-seal and/or waterproof deck \$750	Refinish (clean,sand, re-stain and re-seal) \$2,000	Clean, re-seal and/or waterproof deck \$750	Refinish (clean,sand, re-stain and re-seal) \$2,000	Clean, re-seal and/or waterproof deck \$750	Refinish (clean,sand, re-stain and re-seal) \$2,000	\$9,000

(Note: Assumes 500 sq. ft.; does not include railing; estimates only; pricing varies widely)



COMPOSITE OR PVC DECKING
 Conversely, composite and PVC decking has a much lower cost of ownership in terms of monetary investment as well as your time and energy. Maintenance will consist primarily of regular cleaning with standard household products. (Generally speaking, pressure washers are not recommended as they can do more harm than good.) Plus there are no worries about cracking, splintering, warping, insects, or decay.

HOW TO FIND A CONTRACTOR

The right decking contractor can spare you frustration and missteps.

ASK AROUND

Know someone with a fabulous deck? Ask them who built it. Personal recommendations are a great way to find reputable contractors.

CHECK OUT CONTRACTORS ONLINE

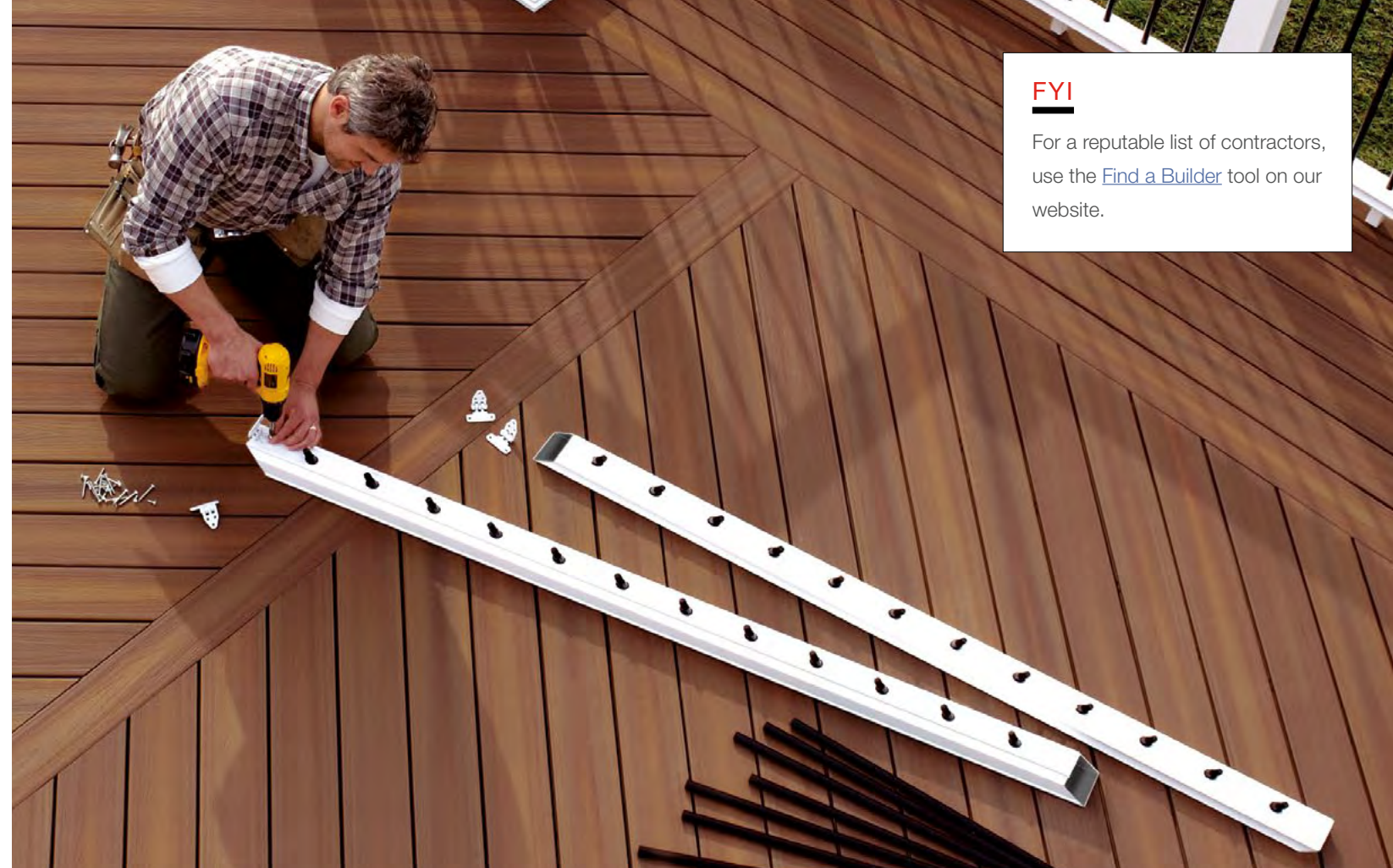
Consult online forums or research tools to read reviews of local builders. Reputable resources like the Better Business Bureau are great for background research. However, don't rely exclusively on online information. Not all reviews are completely objective; some might even have been paid for.

CONDUCT PHONE INTERVIEWS

Once you've narrowed down the search, make some phone calls to discuss availability, confirm that the contractor is licensed, and discuss the scope of your project. Ask for references, and then call. If possible, visit the homes to see the decks firsthand.

MEET IN PERSON

Schedule time for prospective contractors to visit your home and see the project site. This will give you an idea of the working contractor-customer dynamic and allow the contractor to confirm that the project is a good fit for his or her skill set. This is also a good time to evaluate if you are comfortable with this individual and if you'd be able to effectively communicate with each other throughout the project. Remember: the contractors you meet with are evaluating you, too.



FYI

For a reputable list of contractors, use the [Find a Builder](#) tool on our website.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CONTRACTOR

AMONG THE AREAS TO COVER:

Does the contractor have a license and can he/she supply proof of liability insurance? Will he/she help with the design aspect of the project and supply an architectural plan?

WILL HE/SHE SECURE ALL NECESSARY PERMITS?

Generally, contractors are more familiar with building code and permit requirements, but it's still advisable to research which permits will be required and confirm that the contractor will secure them.

IS HE/SHE FAMILIAR WITH YOUR CHOSEN BUILDING MATERIAL?

Choosing a contractor who is comfortable with the material you've chosen will enable the best possible outcome and help to avoid possible disappointment.

WHAT IS THE COST OF YOUR SERVICES?

Since there is potential for differences in labor and material costs, we recommend getting cost estimates from at least three different contractors. It's important to make this choice holistically and not simply go with the lowest bidder.

WHAT ARE HIS/HER PAYMENT TERMS?

Discuss the down payment, installments, and due dates. If the contractor expects all payments before completion of the project, be very, very wary.

WHAT ARE THE CREW'S NORMAL WORKING HOURS,

 and who will be at your home each day? Is there a foreman, and will he/she be on-site at all times?

WILL SUBCONTRACTORS BE UTILIZED?

It's important to know if there will be subcontractors working on your deck and if so, which part of the project they'll be completing, so you can consider those employees while completing background checks.

BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP

You've chosen a contractor. Here's how to ensure a positive working relationship:

1. COMMUNICATION IS KEY.

Go over any issues as they come up to avoid compounding problems. Be clear about your expectations to eliminate miscommunication.

2. TRACK ALL CHANGES IN WRITING.

Sign off on any changes that will increase costs and make notes of changes as they happen.

3. BE A GOOD CUSTOMER.

Make timely decisions and ensure payments are on time. Be friendly and accommodating to the workers. Offer refreshments and designate a restroom for their use.



FYI

Read our [Care and Maintenance Guide](#) for tips on keeping your outdoor oasis looking its best.



CARE AND MAINTENANCE

To maintain the integrity of your space and keep it in shape, consider the following:*

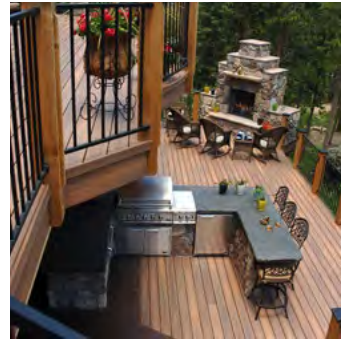
1. Complete and return your warranty right away. This way, if damage does occur, you're in the best position to make an immediate claim. Confirm with your contractor if you should submit the form or if he/she will be taking care of it.
2. Clean stains as they occur.
3. Clean your deck at least once a year to remove pollen and ordinary dirt.
4. Avoid dragging furniture across your deck to prevent damage to the surface.
5. Depending on the decking material, damp rugs, grill mats, and/or flower pots could result in water stains or other damage. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations.
6. Mind the gap. If the gap between decking boards is less than 3/16", organic debris such as leaves, seeds, or pollen can settle and potentially clog gaps. Keeping the gap free of debris is the best way to prevent mold growth and stains from organic matter.

**Please note: Any suggestions or tips in this document should not supersede a manufacturer's instructions.*

RESOURCES



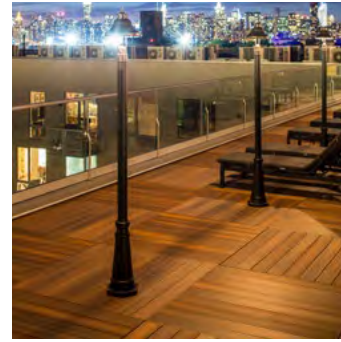
Symmetry Decking in Burnt Umber with Warm Sienna border. Symmetry Railing in Tranquil White. Shown on Front Cover.



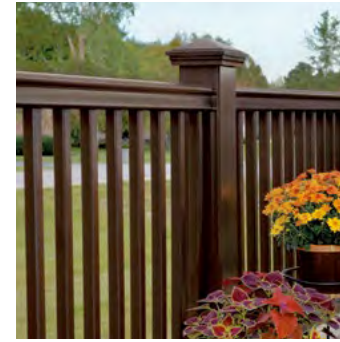
Horizon Decking in Ipe. Custom railing. Shown on page 6.



Horizon Decking in Ipe with Tudor Brown accents. Custom railing. Shown on page 8.



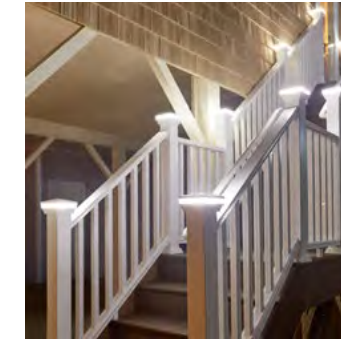
Horizon Decking in Ipe. Custom railing. Shown on page 11.



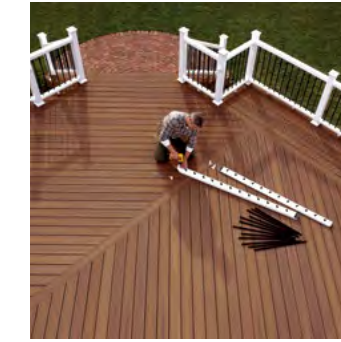
Symmetry Railing in Simply Brown. Shown on page 14.



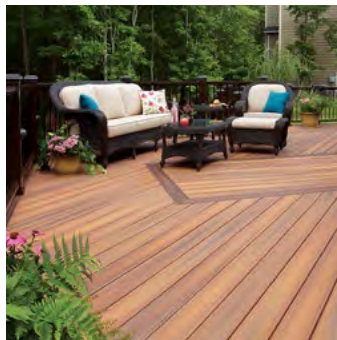
Symmetry Railing in Tranquil White. Fiberon post cap lights. Shown on page 16.



Veranda Regency Railing in White. Available at The Home Depot. Shown on page 17.



Horizon Decking in Ipe. Horizon Railing in White. Shown on page 23.



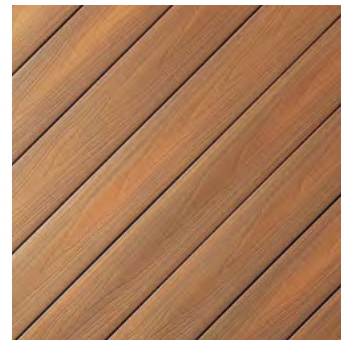
Horizon Decking in Ipe with Tudor Brown inlay. Horizon Railing in Dark Walnut. Shown on pages 2-3.



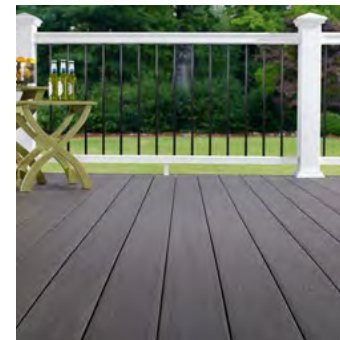
Symmetry Decking in Burnt Umber. Symmetry Railing in Tranquil White. Shown on page 7.



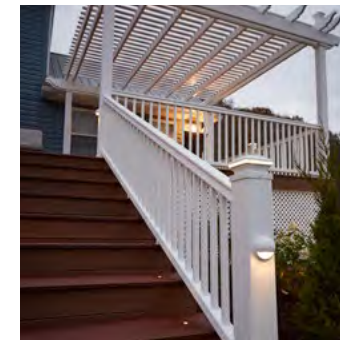
Horizon Decking in IPE. Horizon Railing in White and Horizon Decking in Tudor Brown for top rail. Shown on page 8.



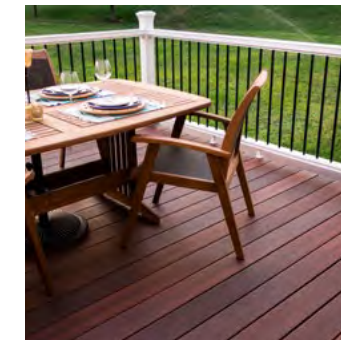
Horizon Decking in Ipe. Shown on pages 12-13.



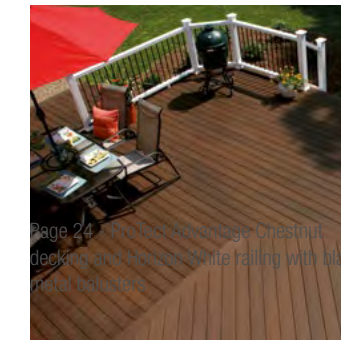
Symmetry Decking in Graphite. Symmetry Railing in Tranquil White. Shown on page 14.



Symmetry Decking in Cinnabar. Symmetry Railing in Tranquil White. Fiberon post cap and post sleeve lights. Shown on page 16.



Symmetry Decking in Cinnabar. Symmetry Railing in Tranquil White. Shown on page 18.



ProTect Advantage Decking in Chestnut. Horizon Railing in White. Shown on page 24.



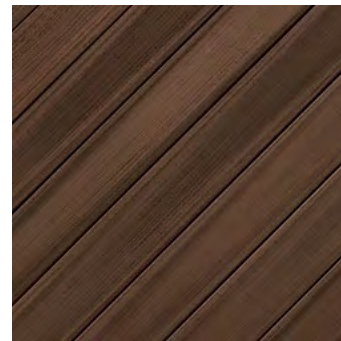
Horizon Decking in Ipe. Fiberon accent lights. Shown on page 6.



Symmetry Decking in Burnt Umber with Warm Sienna border. Symmetry Railing in Tranquil White. Shown on page 8.



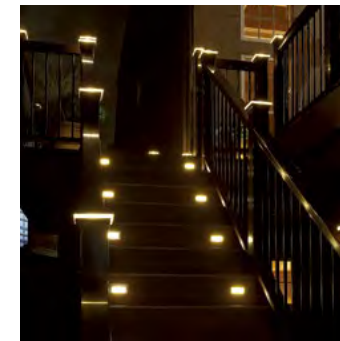
Horizon Decking in Ipe with Tudor Brown border. Horizon Railing in White. Shown on page 9.



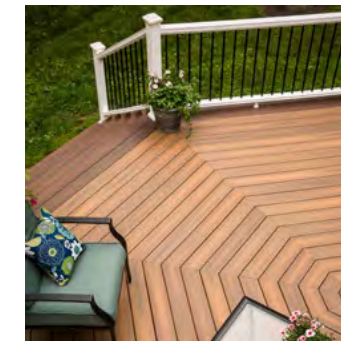
Paramount PVC Decking in Earthstone. Shown on pages 12-13.



Paramount PVC Decking in Mineral. Symmetry Railing in Serene Black. Shown on page 14.



Horizon Decking in Ipe. Horizon Railing in Dark Walnut. Shown on page 16.



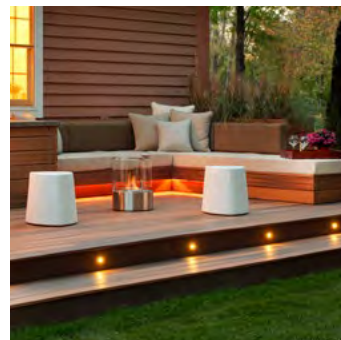
Horizon Decking in Ipe. Horizon Railing in White. Shown on page 19.



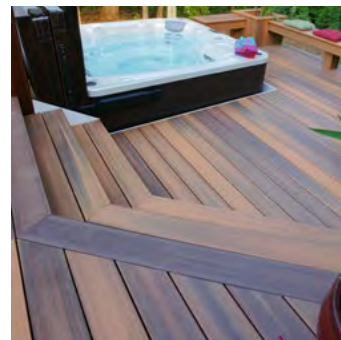
Symmetry Decking in Burnt Umber with Warm Sienna accents. Symmetry Railing in Tranquil White. Shown on page 25.



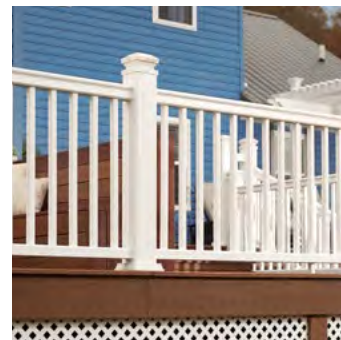
ProTect Advantage Decking in Western Cedar. Shown on page 6.



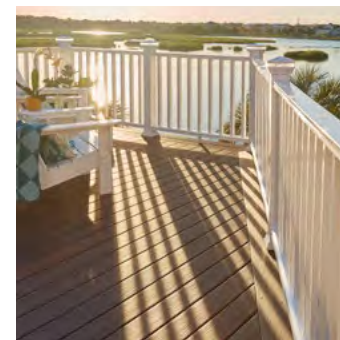
Horizon Decking in Ipe. Fiberon accent lights. Shown on page 8.



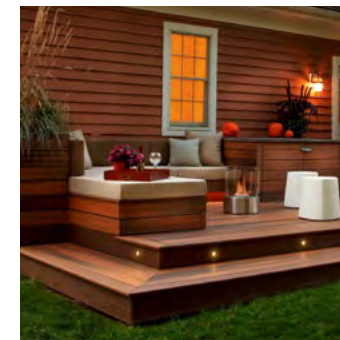
Horizon Decking in Ipe. Shown on page 10.



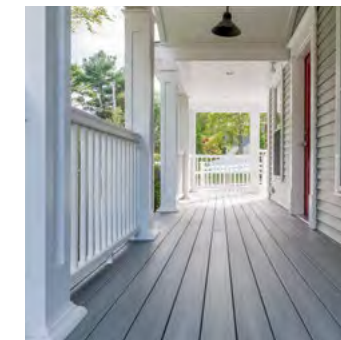
Symmetry Decking in Cinnabar. Symmetry Railing in Tranquil White. Shown on page 14.



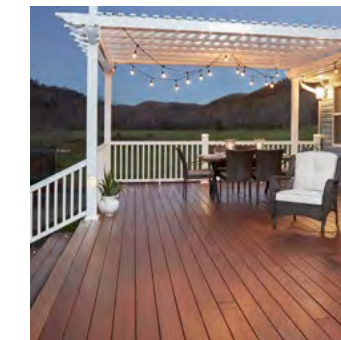
Veranda ArmorGuard Decking in Brazilian Walnut. Veranda Regency Railing in White. Available at The Home Depot. Shown on page 15.



Horizon Decking in Ipe. Shown on page 16. Photo courtesy of Karen Garlanger Designs, LLC



Horizon Decking in Castle Gray. Symmetry Railing in Tranquil White. Shown on page 21.



Symmetry Decking in Cinnabar. Symmetry Railing in Tranquil White. Shown on Back Cover.



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