

CHAPTER 12

Porches, Stairs, Ramps


Porches, stairs, and ramps should also use environmentally responsible products. There are several types of wood-polymer decking that can be used on the outside of the home. These products are made from wood waste and recycled plastic grocery bags, milk jugs, and other materials. Trex® is a well-known brand, but there are other brands on the market as well. Fiberon® is a product approved for use on wheelchair ramps due to the texture of its surface. Other quality brands include TimberTech® and Weyerhaeuser®. They rarely splinter or crack so they are very kid- and barefoot-friendly.



Like many “green” choices, there are pros and cons to alternative decking materials. Not all composite deck materials use recycled plastic or waste wood fibers. Make sure you are using only alternative decking materials that use recycled content. New PVC vinyl alternative decking is especially harmful, since burning PVC creates dioxin – one of the most toxic substances on earth.

Also, alternative wood products may cost up to 3 times as much as treated lumber. Because these materials do not need stain or paint to maintain, stay cooler to the touch and resist warping and splintering, they are easier and less expensive to maintain than wood structures.


Implementation

- Locate the porch on the south side for maximum sunlight.
- Create a covered or shaded area or porch of a minimum of 100 square feet.
- Install covered entry-awning or porch-awning to prevent water intrusion.
- Use alternative materials such as wood polymer products, recycled plastic, masonry, concrete, or other recycled content composite materials such as Choice Dek® for porch, stairs, ramps, and patios. 

Benefits of Using Alternative Materials


- Wood polymer products require substantially less maintenance than wood products.
- Wood polymer products will not splinter, crack or warp.
- Constructed from reclaimed plastics and hardwoods, wood polymer products can be cut, fastened, sanded, and painted easily.
- They are naturally UV-resistant.
- They are slip-resistant, wet or dry.
- They remain undamaged by rot or termites.
- Wood polymer products are comparably priced with premium decking lumber but in the long run will save you money on maintenance, replacements and sealants.

Challenges of Using Alternative Materials

- The higher initial costs may not be affordable without minimizing the size of the structure to bring the cost down, purchasing in bulk, or finding a good deal. 
- Trex® can begin to look like wet newspaper after a few months.

Alternative Deck Supply Companies

This list does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation by the DOL TA Collaborative, U.S. Department of Labor, or YouthBuild USA.

- BamDeck™: 100% Bamboo decking. Manufacturer: CaliBamboo, (888) 788-2254:
<http://www.calibamboo.com/bamboodecking.html?gclid=CPTfiJiQrKECFQ8Uswod9UmBGQ>
- LockDry® Decking: Waterproof aluminum decking. Manufacturer: FSI Home Products, Inc., (888) 739-6172:
<http://www.lockdry.com/?gclid=CN-gn7iRrKECFR0IswodeUicFQ>
- ChoiceDek®: A composite of 50 percent waste cedar fibers and 50 percent recycled plastic. Manufacturer: A.E.R.T., Junction, TX, (800) 951-5117:
<http://www.choicedek.com>
- Trex®: A composite of 50 percent waste wood and 50 percent recycled plastic. Manufacturer: Trex, (800) BUY-TREX:
<http://www.trex.com/decking/default.aspx?gclid=CJiB5-WOrKECFYd-5QodpQz4FA>
- TimberTech®: A composite of 50 percent waste wood, 20 percent sawdust, and 30 percent virgin polyethylene. Tongue and groove, planks or “TimberTopper” deck covers available. Manufacturer: Crane Plastics, (800) 307-7780: 
<http://www.timbertech.com>
- American Plastic Lumber, Inc.: 100% recycled plastic lumber products including Durawood and Trimax. (877) 677-7701:
<http://www.american-plasticlumber.com/decks.html>



Link and Learn

Healthy Building Network, a coalition of builders and environmental organizations that first raised the issue of arsenic in treated lumber, and spurred alternatives:

<http://www.healthybuilding.net/about/index.html>

Bobvila.com: Composite Deck Installation video:

<http://video.bobvila.com/m/21320271/composite-deck-installation.htm>

Low-Maintenance Decking Review:

<http://www.decks.com/article10.aspx>

The Future is Strong for Composite Decking from Residential Design and Build, January 2009:

[http://www.rdbmagazine.com/print/Residential-Design-and-Build/The-Future-is-Strong-for-Composite-Decking-/1\\$2749](http://www.rdbmagazine.com/print/Residential-Design-and-Build/The-Future-is-Strong-for-Composite-Decking-/1$2749)

McGraw Hill Construction Network Sweets Green Collection:

<http://www.construction.com/Sweets/GreenManufacturers/>

Deck Lumber Alternatives: A Factsheet from Austin Energy's Green Building Program

<http://www.austinenergy.com/Energy%20Efficiency/Programs/Green%20Building/Sourcebook/outdoorDeckingMaterials.htm>

Building A Deck- Expert Advice from Start to Finish, Taunton Press, 2002.

Also from Taunton Press, *Green from the Ground Up: Sustainable, Healthy, and Energy-Efficient Home Construction*. David Johnston and Scott Gibson, 2008. See Chapter 12: Siding and Decking

The Green Good Life from The Independent Weekly, January 29, 2003:

<http://www.indyweek.com/gyrobase/Content?oid=oid%3A18946>