

# Smart Words for Smart Homeowners

THE EXPERIENCE OF EXPERTS AND THEIR ADVICE ON RELEVANT HOMEOWNER TOPICS

## Smart Deck Refinishing

### Overview

Here a few things you need to know for DIY wood deck maintenance. Follow these guidelines and your deck will last for decades. Fail to follow this input and your investment will splinter, warp, cup and look worn and tired soon.

### Keep It Clean Between Re-Staining

You should only have to re-apply stain or apply a complete deck treatment every few years. Between these re-finishing the best way to keep a deck looking good and protecting the wood it is to keep it clean.

You need to clean it every year. Skip a year and you'll invite pollen to accumulate. It will act as a food source and nutritional support for the growth of green pollen and mildew.

Use a long handled push broom, warm water, a mild plant friendly detergent (so you don't injure nearby shrubs) and elbow grease. I like to use a ZEP cleaning product called Citrus Cleaner. Wash the deck, rails, steps and foot fall surfaces. Then rinse with cold water.

Some people will power wash the deck every year also. It works if you don't damage the wood.

### Choosing Your Finish Carefully

Selection of a stain or coating finish for a softwood deck, like pressure treated pine, is a three-way compromise. You need to consider three competing requirements:

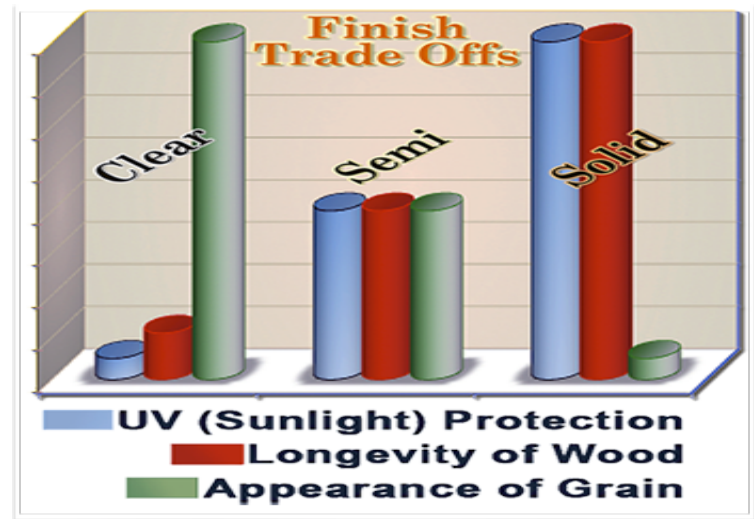
1. **Aesthetics.** Do you want to let all the wood grain show through.
2. **Practicality.** Do you want to protect the life of the deck and its wood surfaces from splinters, warping, rotting and cupping.
3. **Protection.** Do you want to protect the wood from the damages of Ultra Violet light; [UVa] sun light.

Favor any one characteristic, and you have to give up a bit of the other two as the chart shows. If showing off the beauty of new wood grain and grain color is your number 1 priority, a clear finish is the natural choice.

But, you will sacrifice protection and have to make up for the lack of shielding or face those consequences.

### Transparent Finishes & Coatings

Clear finishes and "water proofers" offer very little UV protection. The clarity of transparent stains & finishes lets in destructive UV rays. That means more frequent applying of stains and finishes. You may have to reapply it in some climates, every six months and in other climates every 24 months. Remember this is outside and weather dependent.



### Solid / Opaque Finishes & Coatings

On the opposite side is the protection spectrum. Solid stains and finishes offer great UV protection but conceal and hide the grain under an opaque film like good paint. Some solid stains offer a three to four year life span, depending on climate.

### Semi Transparent Finishes & Coatings

Currently, the most popular deck finishes are characterized as semi-transparent coatings. Their formulas have been tested and are favored for good reason. Some can be toned to match other wood shades on the house. Some wood tones look as good as expensive furniture stains and offer a diaphanous peek at the grain below. Some, like Sherwin - Williams DECKScapes®, have water repellants that also protect against cracking, splitting, warping and cupping. Since

