

## ASK THE BUILDER

I am looking at building a deck this summer and wanted to know a little bit more about the materials available. What are the options regarding recycled materials?

What a great home improvement project that gives you that extra outdoor living space. There are several deck materials that have been around for years as well as a growing number of recycled materials becoming available. Let's review these materials and the advantages and disadvantages of each.

For years decks have been made of different types of wood. They include cedar, redwood, and pressure treated lumber. Cedar is rot resistant and strong. It will weather to a silver grey unless you use a sealer to help retain its original beauty. Redwood is the most expensive lumber and as with its name has a reddish hue to the lumber. It is also rot resistant and needs annual maintenance to preserve its natural color. Cedar and redwood are attractive and there is nothing on earth that can replace the warmth and invitation of wood for outdoor living and entertaining. They require more care but the beauty can be worth it.

Pressure treated lumber is the most affordable deck material available. Plus there are new laws restricting the chemicals used to preserve the wood making today's treated lumber safe. It can come prestained in a redwood or a cedar tint. I would take a good look at this stained lumber before you using it on your deck project to make sure it gives you the look you want. However treated lumber is probably your best choice for undercarriage and posts. Treated lumber holds up much better than none treated woods.

As far as composite or other alternatives to wood, there are more options becoming available all the time. A long standing alternative to wood is aluminum. It's been around a long time, sounds like metal when you walk on it, but it certainly has a lot of staying power. It can be powder coated which gives you 3 to 4 times the thickness and durability of regular paints.

The real breakthroughs in recent years are the composite deck materials. Composites are usually composed of plastic and a fiber. The materials are usually recycled.. As we all know we live in a world of limited supply of raw materials. The beauty of these materials is that they are eco friendly. They offer homeowners a wide range of design options and are available in a number of colors: white, gray, and several shades of brown. Composites withstand exposure to the elements, do not require sealing, staining or treating, and are easy to clean. Surface textures include smooth, subtle wood grain, ridges, and other patterns. Some composite planks are flexible enough to be easily curved into patterns. The new composites are competitively priced compared to wood.

Overall we all are pretty familiar with wood decks. However I think everyone should take a good look at the composites. With their eco friendly properties using recycled materials, it's a wave of the future.

