

Spring time is deck time

Winter is finally over! The daylight hours are increasing and barbeques are being fired up. Time to pay the deck some attention. Maintaining not only your timber decks but also any external timber windows, doors or furniture, will keep the surfaces looking good and also stops premature deterioration of the timber.

The method and effort you need to put in is dependent on many factors. For instance, the type of timber, what it was treated with, when it was treated and the state it is now in.

From cleaning to coating

All decks can use a good clean now and again. This can be a simple clean with a bucket and broom. If it is very dirty, has moss or other stains e.g. from bird droppings or renovation works, a stiff brush and high pressure cleaner works wonders. (*Editor's note: pay attention when using high pressure cleaners on timber, as they can strip and splinter the timber. Don't use it with too high a jet pressure or place the tip too close to the timber.*)

There are several considerations to be made when deciding the method of

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maintenance. If the deck just looks a little tired, give it a wash, allow the surface to dry (a warm, sunny day in between is perfect) then apply a coat of the product originally used. If the product used was a penetrating oil and it hasn't long been treated, one coat would be sufficient to return it to its original glory.

Problems can arise, however, if you are not sure what coating has been used. Some coatings do not work together and can cause problems such as rejection, not drying and peeling off, to name a few. If unsure, it is always recommended to try a sample patch in an inconspicuous spot e.g. under where the barbeque will sit.

Below left: Right side untreated and greyed off, middle section washed with the Livos Glouros cleaner. The greyness is removed; timber structure and colour shows through and pores are opened to enable better penetration of the oil.

Below right: Oiling in progress.

When using oils, not all are the same. Some of the synthetic oils don't have as much to do with oil as you would expect. They are petroleum based with many other additives. Often these modified oils are water based (oil and water don't mix, or so we were taught in chemistry class). What happens with many of these synthetic oils is the softeners in the coating dry out from the sun, causing a break in the coating layer. This then starts to turn grey as the rain gets in under the coating causing further breakdown. This process not only deteriorates the timber, but looks unsightly as well. The only way to fix this kind of surface is to sand the area back and re-coat, usually equating to more expense and work long term.

Greying timber

Regular maintenance is best but if, as can often happen, life gets in the way and maintenance has been left too long you will probably have already noticed the timber greying off. If this occurs give the deck a wash with a strong detergent, oxalic acid or Livos' eco friendlier version of oxalic acid, *Glouros Natural Siding* and



Masonry cleaner. Cleaning should remove the greyness from the surface and open up the pores enabling better and deeper penetration of the decking oil that is to be applied.

Once you are happy that the deck is clean and completely dry then it is time to coat it. Most external oils on the market are pigmented so you can work with the colour of the timber and enhance its natural tones. Or alternatively, if you have a timber you are not happy with, use another stain and disguise the species. You can even make a bold statement by using a black stain (black is becoming increasingly popular, especially on timber screens). If the timber has greyed off then it is best to nourish again by applying two coats. Follow the manufacturer's instructions and if still not sure, check out their website. Most websites now contain extensive information sheets and videos. If all else fails, contact the supplier or where you purchased the product.

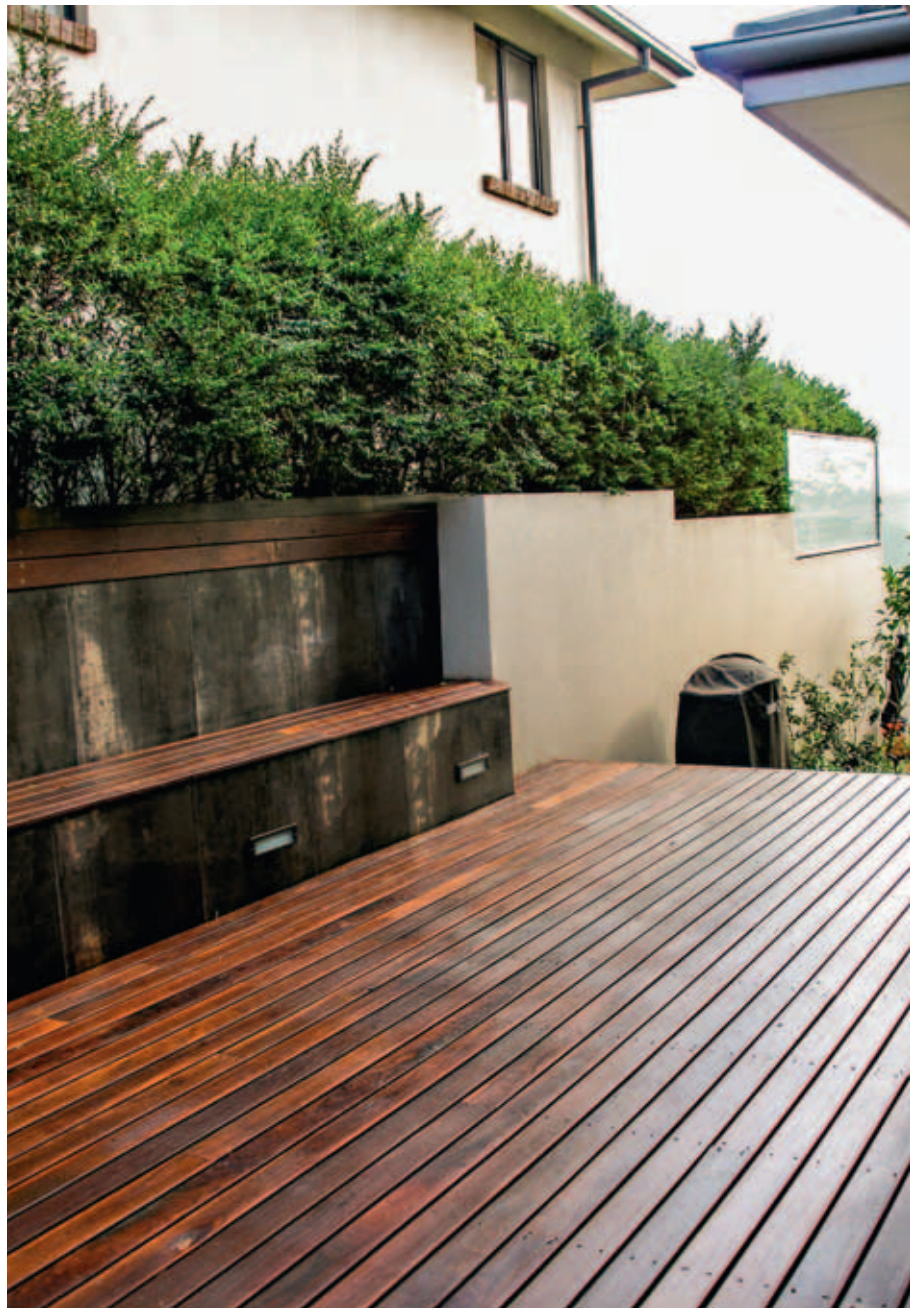
Sanding

If you have either left your deck uncoated for far too long or you purchase a house with exterior timber in dire straits, then sanding would most likely be required. This does not necessarily need to be aggressive sanding, just enough to smooth the surface to remove any surface splinters. If the coating is varnish and it has split, only sanding back to bare timber will remove it.

When sanding, a common problem arises if the deck has been top nailed, as the nails may need to be countersunk if they are not below the surface. Remember to just go below the surface, too deep can splinter the timber and will only be a dirt trap. Some decks are screwed down, so have a drill handy if necessary. Hand sanding, paint thinner and lots of patience may be required if your deck has screws with a round head.

Do your research and choose the product you will use wisely. Keeping an eye on the maintenance of the surface ensures it is not only a pleasure to look at and use, but also makes the timber last longer and future maintenance a breeze. ♦

Angela Petruzzi is a director at Livos Australia, the national distributors of the Livos range of products. Her passion is to provide healthier alternatives that work.



Above and right: Oiled and rejuvenated ironbark deck is ready for enjoying those lovely summer days.



Links & resources

♦ Livos Australia

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