

Decked Out With Style

Protecting And Maintaining Your Deck

(NAPSA)—If building a deck is at the top of your to-do list, you need to start by deciding on the type of deck you want. Is it a simple one-level deck or is a multi-level deck on your horizon?

You can begin by checking out online resources such as www.decks.com and www.decksusa.com for ideas and plans. They can help you decide what kind of wood you want to use—cedar, redwood, pine or something else—and create a budget.

After you decide what type of outdoor room you want to create, be sure to investigate local zoning and/or homeowner's association restrictions and acquire any necessary permits.

While handy do-it-yourselfers might be able to tackle the actual building of the deck by themselves, most people will want to hire someone to do the job.

Ask friends or relatives who have decks that you like for recommendations, or go to your local home supply store and ask experts there to point you in the right direction.

Once your deck is built, investing in basic protection and maintenance will pay off in the long run. It is critical to safeguard your wood deck with a sealant or stain to protect against precipitation, ultraviolet rays, molds and mildew that can damage the wood and lead to warping, cracking and splitting.

When it comes to sealers and stains, a manufacturer called Olympic offers a range to choose from:

- Clear, which is designed to protect the natural beauty of wood and prevent damage and graying;



Once your deck is built, use a sealant or stain to protect against precipitation, ultraviolet rays, molds and mildew that can damage the wood.

- Toners, which offer a slight tint of color to complement wood's natural beauty;

- Semitransparent stain, which adds more pigment to the wood than toner, but allows wood's natural texture to show through; and

- Solid color stain, which provides a rich, deep color resembling a painted finish while still preserving the wood's natural appearance. If you're not sure how a particular stain might look on the type of wood you have, Olympic now offers trial-size samples of 20 of its most popular stain colors for less than \$1 a sample. They let you test a number of shades on your deck before settling on the color that's right for you.

Be sure to thoroughly strip and clean the surface before staining and sealing. If, when you splash a few drops of water on your deck, the water beads up, you'll need to use a special product designed to remove the old sealant.

For more information, visit www.olympic.com.