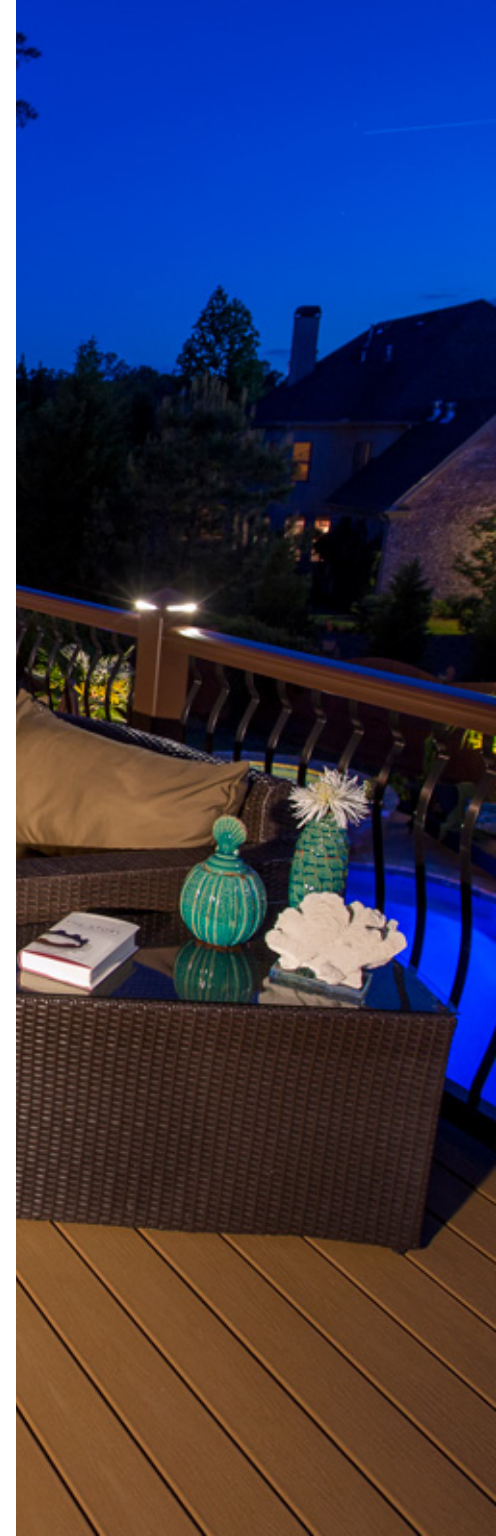




# 15 DECK-BUILDING TIPS

From a Veteran Toronto Deck-Building Specialist





# TIP #1

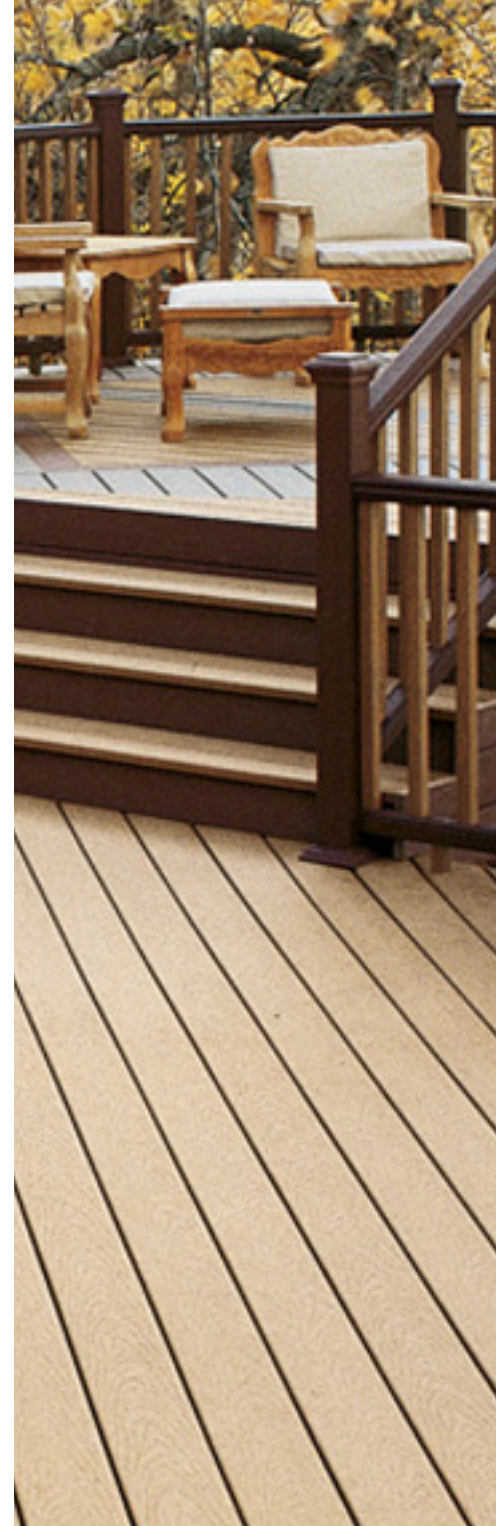
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## How are you going to use your deck?

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**BEFORE** sitting down with your deck design and build contractor give careful consideration as to how you will use your deck. The key point to remember is that some of the new low-maintenance composite decking materials can last up to twenty-five or thirty years. You have to think ahead about how you will use your deck in five years, ten years, or even twenty-five years. Have your deck **designed to stand the test of time** so that it is functional for you today AND into the future.

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# Tip #2

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## Think about resale

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ANOTHER variation on the above is giving consideration to the resale of your home. Straying too far from accepted design styles can have an effect on the resale of your property. At the very least, it may affect the selling price of your home if the purchaser feels they have to remove and rebuild the deck. If resale issues are a concern, **stick to accepted styles** and avoid going for the latest fad look. When thinking of the design of your deck “think timeless”.

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# TIP # 3

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## Over- or under-improvement

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IF YOU build a \$100,000 deck on a \$200,000 house, it would be an over-improvement—too much deck for the value of the house. The opposite can also happen—building a deck far below the normal standard of the neighbourhood would be an under-improvement. There's no right answer because you may be restricted by your budget, but a smaller deck of better design and higher quality decking materials and craftsmanship may serve you better if your budget is limited. A good deck design and build contractor will help you here. Carefully chosen, **the result can still be sensational.**

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# Tip # 4

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## By-laws and permits

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ONE REASON to hire a professional deck design and build contractor is because they will know about the by-laws that affect your project and what permits are required. These differ depending on your jurisdiction and even within jurisdictions they differ depending on your home's zoning, the type of dwelling, and the type of deck that you are building. (E.g., Is it over 1.2 meters above ground?) Work done without a permit may put you in hot water with your municipality and you may face legal action or have to remove the work already completed. **Play it safe, go with a pro!**

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# TIP # 5

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## Choose the right contractor

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A DECK is a substantial investment. Well-built, it can last for over twenty years. Don't risk your investment by deciding by price alone. Do your homework. Look for a contractor that can **demonstrate their experience and expertise**. Make sure they have testimonials. Are they a member of a reputable trade association? Have they been featured in the main-stream media. You need a contractor with whom you feel comfortable communicating, trust, and who is accountable to deliver what they promise. What does your gut say? If something feels wrong you should probably keep looking.

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# TIP # 6

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## Features for kids

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**LAST YEAR** we were on the show Deck Wars on HGTV. The task was to build the perfect deck for kids. It sounds great if you have young kids—add a little something for them. But the thing is, a properly built deck can last well over twenty years, many years after your kids have grown up and are past using the kid-focused features you thought would be good at the time. That said, a properly designed and built deck will be safe for your children, and in twenty years or so, even your grandchildren—but think twice about including anything that will soon become obsolete.

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# Tip #7

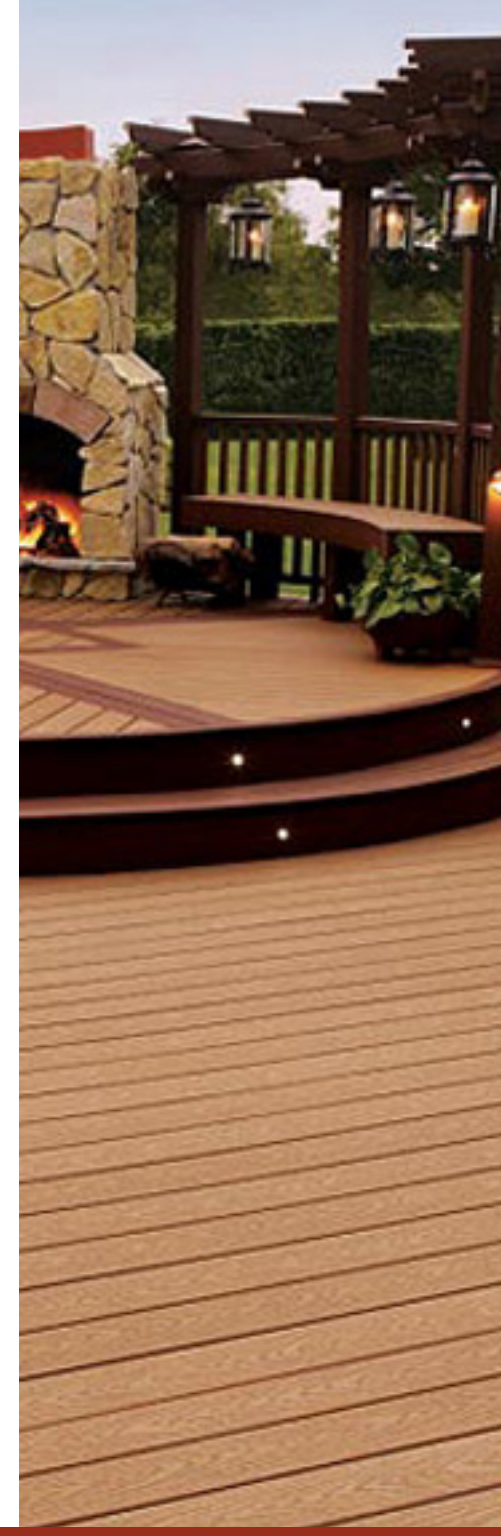
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## Plan for outdoor cooking

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ONCE THE summer arrives it is great to get outside and barbecue for the family. My suggestion is to consider your cooking area from the outset so it can be built in to the deck design. That way, you can make sure it is safely tucked away from your guests or from where kids may play, has access to gas lines, and optimizes the traffic flow on your deck. You may also consider having a brick or stone barbecue built. The bottom line—plan on where and how you want to cook from the outset and not as an afterthought as something that will just go on your finished deck.

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# Tip # 8

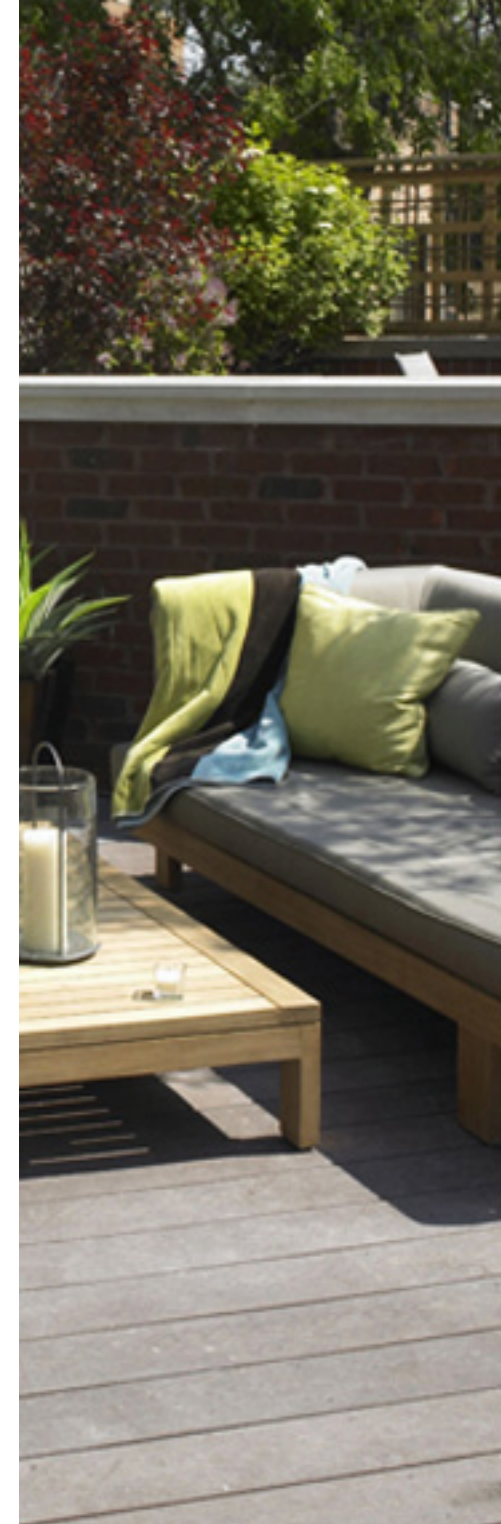
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## Furnish your deck before it's built

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**YOUR GOAL** should be to have a deck that optimally suits your outdoor lifestyle—now, and into the future. One of the ways to make sure you hit that goal is to furnish your deck—even if only in your mind's eye—before it's designed. Do you need an eating area and a sitting area. How many place settings do you need for your table? Do you want a quiet corner where you can hide away and read a book. By thinking about these factors in advance you will ensure that the spaces that you'll need will be designed into your custom deck solution.

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# Tip #9

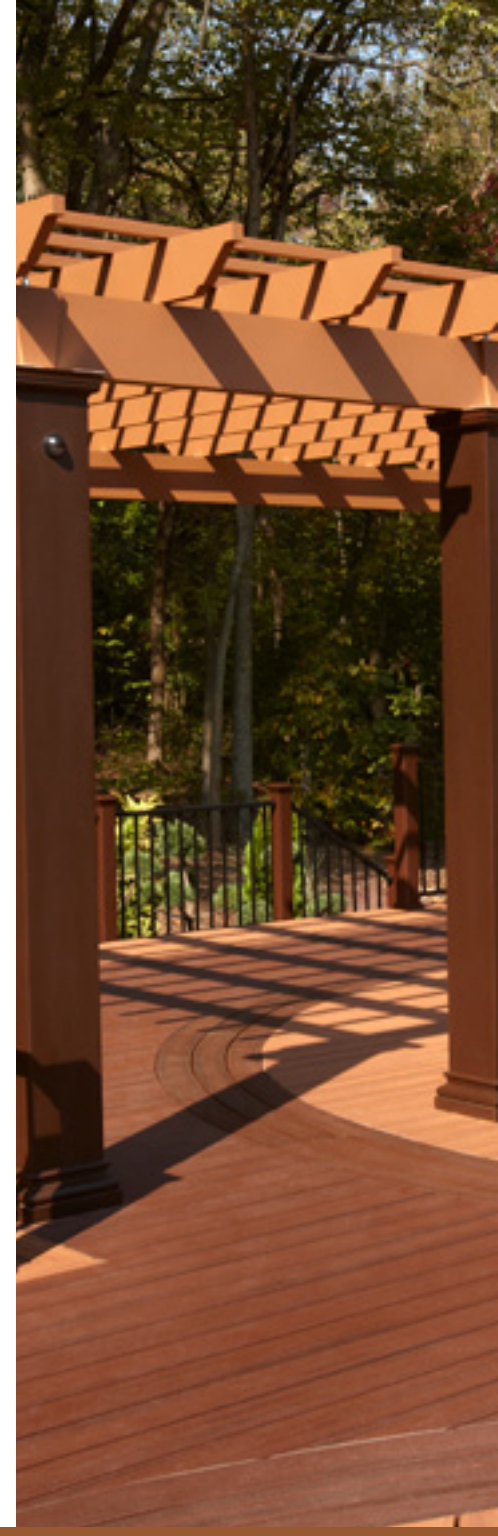
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## Don't forget to look up

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WE AIN'T IN California! Here in Toronto we never know what to expect when it comes to our weather. Plan to extend the usability of your deck by considering the weather factors that will affect your ability to use it. Are you sensitive to sun? Consider a pergola with a retractable canopy. Do you want to be out while it's raining? Consider a Louvred Roof solution that can be open when it's not too hot or when the deck is in the shade, or closed to protect you from the sun or rain. With a little forethought, you'll have no excuse not to be outdoors on your new deck enjoying the summer—rain or shine.

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# TIP #10

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## The romance of light

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**LIGHTING** adds a certain je ne sais quois to your deck and extends its usability into the night. It creates a wonderful and relaxing environment in which to enjoy a late supper, a chat with friends, or just a relaxing respite from your day. Plan on the lighting from the outset because many of the best lighting solutions can be built in so need to be considered at the design stage. You also have to budget for it. Many of the best lighting solutions are built into the deck posts or stairs and offer subtle indirect light that will have you out sipping cocktails until the wee hours of the morning.

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# Tip #11

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## Privacy is a two-way street

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**PRIVACY** is also an issue that should be considered from the outset because it is partially dependent on how you plan to use your deck. Privacy isn't just about sight lines, it is also about creating barriers for sound and light so if you plan to be outdoors late in the evening you won't impact your neighbours. (That is also why indirect lighting is good.) Would a covered deck enclave suit your needs better or would the addition of an appropriate privacy screen do the trick? And, there are lots of options—a screen can be designed to match just about any architectural style.

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# TIP #12

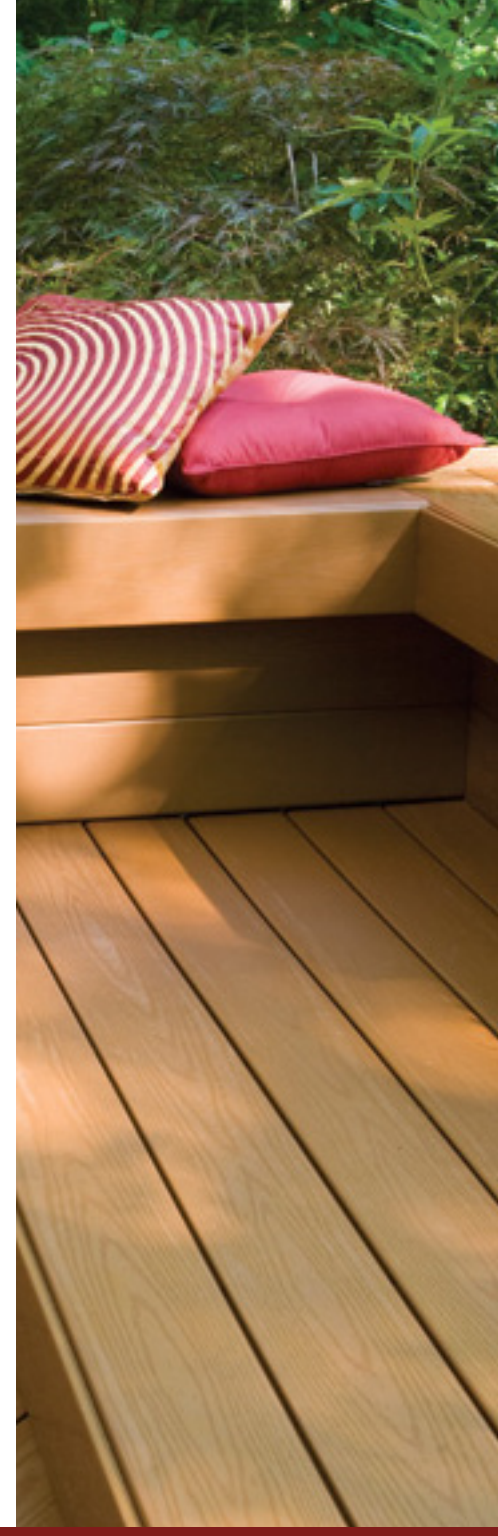
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## Add versatility to your deck

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**EVEN IF** you don't have a large family, there may be times when you wish there was additional seating. A great way to add additional seating without taking up a lot of deck space is by adding a built-in bench. It gives the kids a place to sit away from the table where everyone else is sitting or provides a place for someone to read a book or enjoy a quiet respite on their own. The key to good deck design is to make your deck as versatile as possible within the allotted space. Adding a bench to your deck can add this versatility.

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# Tip #13

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## Add colour with your accessories

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**COLOUR** styles and trends change every few years. There is nothing that will make your deck look dated faster than choosing an exotic colour that is no longer “in”. Choose a neutral tone or combination and add colour to your deck environment with your accessories. Red cushions can provide a great contrast to a neutral setting and add flare. And, you can then change the accessories as trends change, the season changes, or even if your mind changes.

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# Tip #14

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## What kind of accent is that?

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**WITH** the new composite deck materials being made in so many colours consider adding an accent colour to break it up a little. But, don't over do it. Fancy patterns can look pretty to you but may not suit the taste of a home buyer if you need to sell. Accents can also be added by adding a different coloured railing. If you stick to the rule, “think timeless”, you should stay out of trouble. But, even within that, there are a lot of options that can be considered. A little creativity by you and your deck designer should get you a deck that is uniquely yours AND timeless enough to appeal to everyone.

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# Tip #15

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## Consider a greener option

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**WOOD** is no longer the only option when considering building a new deck. There are many composite decking options now available that come in a variety of colours—many that resemble real wood alternatives. Not only can using composite materials be a greener alternative, it is the low-maintenance alternative too. Composites resist rotting and mildew, don't need to be painted or stained, and can usually be cleaned with just a hose, warm, soapy water, and a soft bristle brush to remove dirt and debris.

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# THANK YOU

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(416) 293-3325

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If you have any questions please feel free to contact us at the  
above number or e-mail us at...

[ross@benchmarkbuildingservices.com](mailto:ross@benchmarkbuildingservices.com)

Or, go to [www.benchmarkbuildingservices.com](http://www.benchmarkbuildingservices.com).

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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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