

# M&B TIMBER DECKING PREPARATION & MAINTENANCE GUIDE

September 2012

## UNDERSTANDING TIMBER as a 'natural' product

Firstly, by understanding timber and its unique characteristics the following information will ideally offer an insight as to why timber decking has specific recommendations. Simply put, decking was once a living tree, taking up moisture and nourishment from the earth and carrying them up to the uppermost branches and leaves. Sap flows through the porous fibres of the wood. After the logs are cut at the sawmill 50 - 60% of the water contained in the wood is removed through an air drying process. Finally, in a carefully controlled heated kiln process, the residual moisture level is reduced to below 20%. The water is removed through the wood pores, which remain open until properly sealed and finished.

It is important to note that when any timber is exposed to the weather it will **take up** (absorb) and **lose moisture** as the environment around the timber changes on daily and seasonal basis. The timber will **expand** or **contract** (both laterally & vertically) when it takes up or loses moisture. **Proper sealing will greatly minimise this effect.**

## IMPORTANT POINTS PRIOR TO INSTALLATION

**Preparation** and **Maintenance** are the primary factors in ensuring your deck looks as good as the day it was installed; providing you with many years of beauty, pleasure and satisfaction.

## VENTILATION & TIMBER FRAMES [structure]

Due to the proximity to the ground, **ventilation is very important**. **Timber will absorb moisture from the ground beneath the deck**. If adequate ventilation is not adhered, the moisture underneath the deck is likely to cause swelling e.g. expansion, cupping and or bowing.

Decking is often installed in a variety of situations/areas: fully exposed, partially exposed, and partially protected e.g. under cover alfresco/patio. Therefore ventilation should always be considered prior to construction.

**A minimum 200mm ground clearance is required.** The ground beneath the deck should be graded away from adjacent buildings so the water does not pond (above or beneath the deck). Do not completely box in a deck with solid masonry structures - adequate ventilation is required. If enclosing an end with decking fascias a minimum 15mm gap is recommended for cross airflow.

**Remember, if a deck is exposed to rain then good drainage & ventilation around and under the deck is required.**

**Timber Framing Selection:** Framing timbers (bearers & joists) should be termite resistant CCA H3 treated pine. If posts/stumps are being put in the ground they should be CCA H4 treated pine.

## SPACINGS

When laying the deck, it is important to space boards with an appropriate gap. This will allow for **expansion & contraction** in both the width and length of the timber during seasonal periods (heat and rain).

A minimum **5mm** gap between decking boards is required. This spacing will allow for swelling and to assist the drying process after rain. Accessories are available which will ensure the gaps between boards are identical.

If building a deck adjacent to a house (or wall) a minimum 10mm clearance is required. Construction around a pool will require 20-30mm clearance adjacent to pool surface.

## FIXINGS

The correct fixing size is also very important – M&B recommend using either nails, screws or secret fixing:

- Nails:** 65 x 3.15mm Galvanised TimberLock.
- Screws:** 65mm Galvanised or Stainless Steel [65mm x 10 or 12G]. For ease of application use compatible drill bit to counter sink and pre-drill hole in one.
- Secret Fixings:** no visible nails or screws. Secret fixings are suitable Edeck (Jarrah). The timber is pre-profiled on length (both sides) to accommodate fixing.

Each board should be fixed at every joist crossing with 2 nails/screws. All fixing points should be pre-drilled including the butt ends (at 80% nail diameter) prior to fixing to avoid splitting. Fixings should be located at least 12mm from board edges and ends.

## STORAGE

Prior to construction, delivered timber should be stored on a dry ground, supported on level bearers. Timber should be covered to protect from sun and rain.

## Hardwoods with a High Tannin Content

Some imported Hardwood timbers such as Merbau have a high content of Tannin. The tannin can leach out causing staining not only on your timber but also on any surrounding surfaces i.e. concrete, painted surfaces etc.

**ADVICE: Prior to installation and oiling** wash Merbau Timber surfaces using a good quality deck wash such as Intergrain Reviva to **reduce tannin** deposits that can bleed through the coating and which may inhibit decking oil penetration and/or stain paving or limestone.



*Timber decking is a beautiful natural choice.*

Decking installed near the ocean, around swimming pools and/or spas will require Stainless Steel fixings.

## TIMBER DECKS MUST BE PRE-OILED PRIOR TO INSTALLATION

**PRIOR to installation the underside, faces, ends & edges of your decking MUST be pre-oiled with a minimum of 2 coats**

The number of coats required will depend upon the level of exposure and ventilation.

**This important step [pre-oiling] will limit the amount of moisture that will be absorbed from underneath the deck.** Once your construction has been built, the majority of the surface of the new timber may never be accessible again.

**The following must be applied:**

Give all faces, edges & ends of decking, including the top edge of deck joists multiple coats of quality decking oil. For decking in **exposed areas and limited ventilation** up to **four coats** is recommended. If there is limited ventilation or **deck is at close proximity** to the ground further oiling prior to installation is required. If using a secret fix method then the "fixing groove" in the decking must also receive multiple coats of decking oil. Pay particular attention to pre-oiling any **cut ends**, notches or holes at the time of laying.

## ONCE DECK IS INSTALLED IT MUST BE OILED IMMEDIATELY

Once installed brand new external decking should **NOT** be left to weather – once exposed to the elements for even a few weeks without protection your timber may develop cracks, checks (small surface cracks) as well as lose colour (fade).

The application of a protective coating [oil] to the timber surface will minimise the effects of weathering of any timber in an exposed situation. The purpose of the protective coating is to slow down the rate at which the **timber will take up or lose moisture**; Reduces expansion, contraction, checking & loss of colour. As mentioned earlier, Hardwood timber has gone through a drying process. New decking timber literally craves oil.

**NOTE: All timber decking will require additional coats within first 12 months.**

Two coats are required as soon as the deck is installed and a minimum of two more coats within **12 months**.

M&B recommend using a little oil often rather than applying a lot of oil infrequently. Hardwoods are extremely dense and cannot absorb lots of oil. A minimum of 2 coats is required on **ALL** faces, edges & ends of decking including top edge of deck joists. Allow a minimum of 24 hours between coats.

M&B recommends the following Australian made, quality decking oils:



Intergrain **UltraDeck** Waterbased Oil (natural colour)  
Suitable for **Batu, Merbau & other timber species**.  
**NOTE:** This product is NOT suitable for Jarrah edeck.  
*UltraDeck - Coverage 10 - 14m<sup>2</sup> per litre (depending on porosity of timber)*



Intergrain **Nature's Timber Oil** (natural colour).  
Suitable for **Jarrah edeck and all other timber species**.  
*Timber Oil - Coverage 6 - 10m<sup>2</sup> per litre (depending on porosity of timber)*

**Tip:** The easiest way to apply oil is with a decking oil applicator [pad].  
Brushes are required for edges & end grain.

**The effects of moisture in timber decking determine how good a deck will look, how well it will hold up and how long it will last.**



## MAINTENANCE

For **optimum good looks and durability** timber decks should be **re-coated on a regular basis**. How often can depend on varying factors i.e. north facing, physical abrasion and totally exposed areas will require more oiling. Timber decks should be regularly inspected for signs of deterioration: A patchy, thin, faded and uneven appearance or eroded coatings on edges/ends indicates the need for re-coating.

Maintenance is simplified if recoating takes place before deterioration of the coating allows weathering of the timber to occur. Re-coating is simple: It is recommended to wash the surface down to remove dirt with Intergrain Reviva. This is a concentrated blend of cleaners, brighteners, and sterilising agents which rejuvenates and prepares grey, weathered timber for coating. Grey timber is dead timber fibre caused by the weathering process. Recoating is best done in warm weather.

Apply two coats of the same type of the product that was originally used. If the surface of the timber has seriously degraded, as evidenced by advanced greying and checking, a light sanding is recommended to freshen up the timber.

**Note:** if you sand your deck you will still need to complete cleaning process (afterwards).

**Remember maintenance is the key to maximising the life of your deck.**

## WHY IS DECK MAINTENANCE NECESSARY?

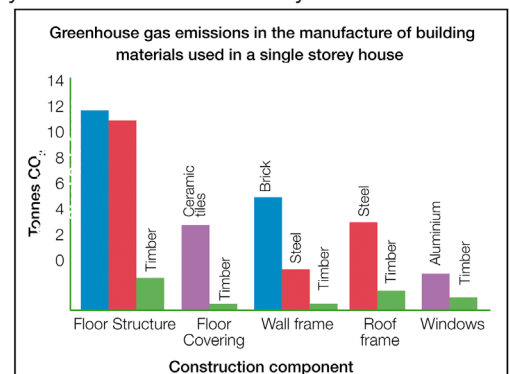
Good quality hardwood decking will last for many years before there is any substantial decay. However, to avoid discolouration it is important to take on a **regular cycle of maintenance**. Failure to do so won't cause your deck to rot, but your deck will most certainly become discoloured, the surface will become rough and an overall unattractive appearance.

## M&B TIMBER DECKING the Environmentally Responsible Choice

On a final note, we would like to thank you for purchasing M&B decking. Apart from assurance you have purchased a premium timber you have importantly participated in tackling climate change by using one of the planet's most natural materials – **timber**.

The production of Timber Decking results in far fewer greenhouse emissions than the manufacture of comparable options such as concrete, pavers, steel or tiles.

M&B are committed to safeguarding the environment and it is our policy to always source materials from government managed and sustainable resources.



Graph from: 'Forests, Wood & Australia's Carbon Balance' FWPRDC and CRC from Greenhouse Accounting, 2006



SUBIACO Home Base Expo 55 Salvado Rd 6380 6000  
BAYSWATER 144 Beechboro Rd South 9272 2555 BALCATTA 1/164 Balcatta Rd 9208 3000  
O'CONNOR 372 South St 6212 6100 MANDURAH 25 Hampton St 9583 8000  
BUSSELTON 9 Trumper Dve 9752 7900 BUNBURY 50 McCombe Rd 9724 8900  
ALBANY 18 Merrifield St 9844 5200 GERALDTON 315 Place Rd 9960 5000

