

DECK LUMBER ALTERNATIVES

A Factsheet from Austin Energy's Green Building Program

Alternative lumber for use on outdoor decks has become popular for homes and businesses in the last few years.

Why should I use these materials?

Most of our decks are built out of treated yellow pine, and some are made of untreated cedar or redwood. The biggest problem is that they require annual maintenance to keep them looking good and structurally strong. If you fall behind in properly sealing your deck every year, don't use a good quality sealer, do a poor quality application, or don't do anything, then your deck can rapidly deteriorate. You will experience cracking, splitting, warping and the growth of mold and mildew. So what do you do?

You have two choices:

1. You can take care of the deck with an annual cleaning, then painting with a good sealer or,
2. You can save yourself all that money on cleaner and sealer and all that time in maintenance by choosing a no maintenance deck material.

All of the listed alternatives will offer you very attractive and durable decks or porches while eliminating the maintenance drudgeries and costs of typical decks. An annual cleaning and application of waterproofing will cost you at least 20 cents per square foot for the waterproofing material, deck cleaner, and painting supplies. It will cost you at least 80 additional cents per square foot for your hours of labor and the aggravation of going to the home center to buy the materials, then apply the deck cleaner, scrub it, wash it off, apply the waterproofer, and then clean up the whole mess. The no maintenance deck materials are initially more expensive than traditional treated yellow pine lumber, but they pay for themselves in a couple of years through avoided maintenance costs.

They are an especially good choice for:

- Durability - last much longer than standard treated yellow pine lumber
- Maintenance - require almost none
- Economy - save on maintenance and replacement
- Aesthetics - often come in a variety of colors and patterns, often look exactly like regular lumber, and often fade to an attractive weathered grey
- Comfort – are slip resistant and do not give splinters
- The Environment - use recycled materials and won't require landfill space in the future

What kinds of materials are these?

Composite lumber: There are a number of 50-50 wood waste/recycled plastic lumber products which are very durable, and install just like regular lumber. They look very similar to regular wood and never require any maintenance.

Plastic lumber: There are 100 percent recycled plastic lumber manufacturers around the country. The products have a similar workability to wood. There are many uses for this material, although they may not be best suited for decks.

MATERIALS

Alternative Outdoor Deck Lumber Suppliers

ChoiceDek - a composite of 50% waste cedar fibers / 50% recycled plastic (from Central Texas). Manufacturer: A.E.R.T., Junction, TX (800) 951-5117, <http://www.choicedek.com>

Locally available at:

- Texas Redwood, 3300 Gonzales, 385-5334, <http://www.texasredwood.com>
- Austin Wholesale Decking, 10900 N. Lamar, 834-1200, <http://www.austinwholesaledecking.com>
- AusTex Fence and Deck, 12103 Jekel Circle, 258-5000, <http://www.austexfenceanddeck.com>

Trex - a composite of 50% waste wood / 50% recycled plastic. Manufacturer: Trex, (800) BUY-TREX, <http://www.trex.com>

Locally available at:

- Austin Wholesale Decking, 10900 N. Lamar, 834-1200, <http://www.austinwholesaledecking.com>
- Texas Redwood, 3300 Gonzales, 385-5334, <http://www.texasredwood.com>
- Furrow, North 836-9662, South 443-8816, Northwest 335-1639
- Foxworth-Galbraith, 8910 Research Blvd., 451-4477
- McCoy's, 6 locations around Austin
- Stripling-Blake, 3400 Steck Ave., 465-4200 (special order)

Trimax - a structural, 100% recycled plastic lumber

Manufacturer: U. S. Plastic Lumber, <http://www.trimax-products.com/index2.html>

Locally available at:

- Austin Wholesale Decking, 10900 N. Lamar, 834-1200, <http://www.austinwholesaledecking.com>

Nexwood - composite of 50% waste wood / 20% sawdust / 30% virgin polyethylene

Manufacturer: Nexwood, 888-7NEXWOOD, <http://www.nexwood.com>

Locally available at:

- Austin Wholesale Decking, 10900 N. Lamar, 834-1200, <http://www.austinwholesaledecking.com>

TimberTech - composite of 50% waste wood / 20% sawdust / 30% virgin polyethylene. tongue & groove, planks, or "TimberTopper" deck covers available.

Manufacturer: Crane Plastics, (800) 307-7780, <http://www.timbertech.com>

Locally available at:

- Austin Wholesale Decking, 10900 N. Lamar, 834-1200, <http://www.austinwholesaledecking.com>
- AusTex Fence and Deck, 12103 Jekel Circle, 258-5000, <http://www.austexfenceanddeck.com>

SmartDeck - (complete system with rails, trim, fascia, posts, stairs, etc.)

Durawood PE is 100% recycled plastic and Durawood EX is 60% sawdust / 40% recycled plastic. Manufacturer: US Plastic Lumber, (888) 7DECKING, <http://www.smartdeck.com>

Locally available at:

- Austin Wholesale Decking, 10900 N. Lamar, 834-1200, <http://www.austinwholesaledecking.com>
- Stripling-Blake, 3400 Steck Ave., 465-4200 (special order)

StranDek - a composite of 50% waste wood / 50% recycled plastic.

Manufacturer: StranDek, (208) 888-6798, <http://www.strandek.com>

Locally available at:

- Austin Wholesale Decking, 10900 N. Lamar, 834-1200, www.austinwholesaledecking.com
- Texas Redwood, 3300 Gonzales, 385-5334, <http://www.texasredwood.com>

This list does not constitute an endorsement or recommendation by the City of Austin, Austin Energy or the Green Building Program. Please check references thoroughly before employing the services of any contractor.