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Pressured to Use Pressure-Treated Wood? Options for Decking

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Pressure treatment forces chemical preservatives into the cellular structure of wood. These chemicals are undesirable in mulch or compost, so if your scrap lumber is lined with tiny holes or stained green, these indicators of pressure treatment should prevent you from placing the wrong types of wood in your local curbside yard waste cart.

Even reuse of pressure treated wood is problematic because cutting and sanding require precautions to avoid breathing the sawdust, although some home improvement sites say a dust mask, safety goggles, and a shower afterward are adequate to ensure safety. To dispose pressure treated wood, you are supposed to make special arrangements with a landfill and pay extra so they can handle it with more safeguards.

Despite these drawbacks, pressure treated wood is widely used because it is long-lasting in outdoor applications such as decks. Avoiding creation of this scrap is the best strategy for both preventing waste and saving money.

Rather than removing and replacing pressure treated wood, first consider repairs. If the framing is still strong, problems like warped, cupped, and split or splintering wood can be fixed with some effort, while problems like loosening nails or faded luster can be fixed more easily.

The simplest aesthetic repair is power washing and wood staining. For outdoor use, most home improvement websites recommend avoiding use of paint. Paint may look good temporarily, but homeguides.com points out re-painting later will require scraping, applying a chemical paint stripper, and power washing. Re-treating the wood with a preservative can bring back the prominence of the original wood grain.

The easiest structural repair is replacing loose nails. However, do not simply pull and replace nails. Loosening occurs as moisture and temperature changes cause nail holes to enlarge. Driving a replacement nail into the same large hole will not fix the problem.

Instead, use an outdoor-rated screw, and choose one thicker than the nail hole. Tightening the screw will pull boards downward, also fixing minor warping, cupping, or curving. Sanding may be required to further address the high edges of weather worn wood. For the worst cases, turning over the board may be necessary to prevent high edges from being tripping hazards.

Home improvement stores carry wood putty for repair of split boards, but the worst types of splits may require board replacement.

If you do decide to replace decking, or if you are building a new deck, consider recycled plastic composite lumber instead of wood. If you do an internet search of recycled plastic decking, you might see a lot of bad reviews, stemming from material purchased over 10 years ago. However, times have changed since recycled plastic frequently resulted in problems such as warping (including swelling, cupping, curving, or bending), surface flaking, or holding water (which could result in molding or growing fungus).

Problems documented in a class action law suit 10 years ago have been corrected, reports Joe Czachowski, a regional representative with Trex Incorporated, who cites the 25 year warranty provided by his company as reassurance. He says the new products will “probably last a lifetime,” provided they are installed with a steel substructure, rather than with pressure treated wood, and provided they are installed correctly. Correct installation includes leaving slight gaps between pieces to allow for weather-related expansion.

Whether repairing, replacing, or building a new deck consider options to minimize the expense and difficulty of discarding pressure treated wood.

More information:

www.trex.com

<http://homeguides.sfgate.com/power-wash-exterior-deck-remove-paint-77441.html>

<https://boston-decks-and-porches.com/2011/03/09/are-you-feeling-pressured-to-treat-your-pressure-treated-deck/>