



The Right Preparation for a Beautiful Deck

By John Paulin, Tailor Decks

So it's time to finally add a deck to the home, huh? Well, you've made what I believe to be a great decision...both for your family and for the value of your home. But as we all know, wishing one up doesn't get it done. There are a lot of things to do before, during and after the build out. If you do the things listed below, you'll be ahead of most homeowners...and the stress will decrease significantly.

The first thing is that unless you're going to build it yourself, you need to select the right deck contractor. This step is important. In the previous article I wrote, appropriately called "Selecting the Right Decking Contractor", some of the suggestions I made include contacting friends as well as harnessing the internet. You really need to dig in these days to find out more about the contractors you're considering.

Once you've found the right partner, you need to work on the design. There are all kinds of resources for ideas including building (specifically, deck) design magazines. Your new decking partner will also have lots of good ideas from past projects. I suggest taking your time on this step. You need a design that will accentuate your space and be comfortable/functional for the whole family. Here are some key questions to ask during the design phase-

1. At what time of day during each season of the year does the deck get sun and shade?
2. How much privacy will the deck give you from neighbors? Will this change when the trees lose their leaves?
3. What will be the deck's access from the house? To the yard?
4. How large should it be? And how much yard must be sacrificed?
5. How should the railings be designed? With planters? With seats?
6. Where should the stairs be placed?
7. Are there any utility lines overhead or below?
8. Should the deck be covered?
9. Will the deck block the light coming in any windows of the house?
10. How will the deck affect the rooms of the house?

Along with the design phase will come the step of choosing the right materials. Georgia Pine is a very popular wood for decks built in this neck of the woods. But there are lots of other materials from exotic woods to more man-made blends like composite (I strongly encourage you not to go in that direction however...we at Tailor Decks have a milled material that's ideal for decking building that you might want to consider). Once you decide on the materials, your decking partner can place the order in anticipation of the build out.



Getting the proper permits and codes is something that a lot of homeowners forget but that your decking partner will remind you of (and do for you if you ask). You need to find the appropriate governing body on this...probably the city permit office where you live. And remember too about any neighborhood association. Both these groups will want to know what your plans are with the deck (the city would need to issue a permit and any association would need to approve...a set of plans will satisfy both). Building plans will need to include the size and location of the deck, type of wood, railing heights, space between railing pickets, foundation piers, types of fasteners, size of the posts, and other details you would have determined in the design phase. Once you get the permits, it's time to build!

In order to keep the building process running smoothly, it's important to keep the area clean and clear at all times. Your decking partner will ask you to move anything that will get in the way before they start. They will try to keep the area organized, but I think it's important for the homeowner to be around and help where needed. For less than organized builders, it will at least keep them in check knowing that you expect a clean area.

By following all of these basic steps, you'll be on the road toward building a beautiful reward for your home...and a stress free time in getting there!