

Ted's News

June 2017

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[How to Protect and Keep Your Deck Looking Good](#)

By Steven Koch (with slight tweaks by me)

Steven Koch is the Key Account & Fire Retardant Manager with Lonza Wood Protection and has been a friend for many years now. In a former life he was a surface coatings R&D chemist and, on starting with Lonza, developed *Tanacoat*, a penetrating oil decking finish, for my company. It is a product I believe in.

Introduction



The image shows an old weather exposed deck where part is shaded but not covered. Every bit of appropriate protection you give your deck makes a big difference. Image courtesy Timber Queensland

I have only oiled my covered ironbark deck once since 1992 when I built the house but a weather exposed deck requires far more care than one that is under a roof. After all, you've invested money, time and effort into your deck so it is important to protect it and keep it looking its best as long as possible. Fortunately, it's fairly simple and cost-effective to do this if you follow our guidelines which are, to use a deck cleaner (and possibly a restorer as well) and apply Tanacoat once a year. Personally, I would not substitute with another product. The use of a deck restorer may be needed as it can bring your deck it back to its former glory before you use Tanacoat. But let me stress, that while there are things that you should do, there are also things that you should not do. We will look at both.

The things you should do

Maintaining your deck

Using a deck cleaner to remove moss, mould, algae and general grease and dirt will make your deck look much cleaner and brighter. Try and do this at least once a year.

Step 1. First, remove any loose or large accumulations of moss or algae with a stiff brush or scraper, then brush off any general loose debris from the deck. Prepare deck cleaner solution according to the instructions on packaging, and then apply it to the deck using a brush, sprayer or watering can with a rose.



Step 2. Scrub the surface immediately with a stiff brush after you've put on the cleaner, and leave it to stand.



Step 3. Rinse off thoroughly with clean water using a hose, ensuring you've washed all residues away. Allow your deck to dry before you apply Tanacoat. Drying time will vary depending on weather conditions.



How to restore your deck

Once you have cleaned your deck, if it has turned grey or looks a bit weathered, you can put on a deck restorer to return it to its original colour before applying Tanacoat. **Top tip** - When you use deck restorer, work on small manageable areas at a time (3-4 deck boards) so you can finish your application, scrubbing and rinsing within 15 minutes. **Safety first** - If you're using a pressure washer, make sure you wear safety goggles to protect your eyes from any flying fragments. **Note:** Some people go straight to the restoration system without cleaning first. If the deck is very dirty this can lead to a blotchy result.

Step 1. First, use a stiff brush to remove loose debris, and take off any moss, mould and algae with a pressure washer. Make sure the surface is bare, and that you've removed any existing coating or stain before you start putting on the deck restorer solution.

Note: some commercial pressure washers have far more power than a domestic unit and can damage the timber, particularly softwood. Do a small trial first. Pressure washers should only be used infrequently and vary carefully.



Step 2. Apply deck restorer solution to your deck with a brush.

Step 3. Immediately after you've applied the deck restorer solution, work it into the surface of the wood with a scrubbing pad or stiff brush. Then leave it to stand a short time but do not allow to dry.



Step 4. Rinse off thoroughly with clean water using a hose or watering can, ensuring you've washed away all the residues. Allow time for your deck to dry out completely before you apply Tanacoat. Drying time will vary depending on weather conditions.



Applying Tanacoat

Tanacoat can be applied much like any other decking oil using a brush, roller or lambs wool applicator. It is important that it is not applied too thickly and that any excess Tanacoat on the surface must be removed. A number of light coats is better than one heavy coat as this avoids areas where the Tanacoat just sits on the surface. As with image in Step 4 above, work to boards to avoid overlaps.

The Things You Should Not Do



Film finishes are not the answer as they can promote decay

Your deck is nicely cleaned and/or restored but you have doubts about using Tanacoat. Why should you when there are far more expensive gloss film finishes available from big name manufacturers. Surely they have to be better. Well no. A film finish is likely to promote decay. When there is a break in the surface coating, moisture enters and is trapped underneath and decay can result, as it did with the highly durable spotted gum in the images above. If you are not on top of your film coating's maintenance you may find also that you have to sand between coats.

Probably the biggest consideration is slip resistance. When I tested the slip resistance of a wet film finish on a dressed shotedge deck the results were that it was highly likely that someone would slip. By contrast, *Deckwood* lightly sanded and oiled with Tanacoat went R12.

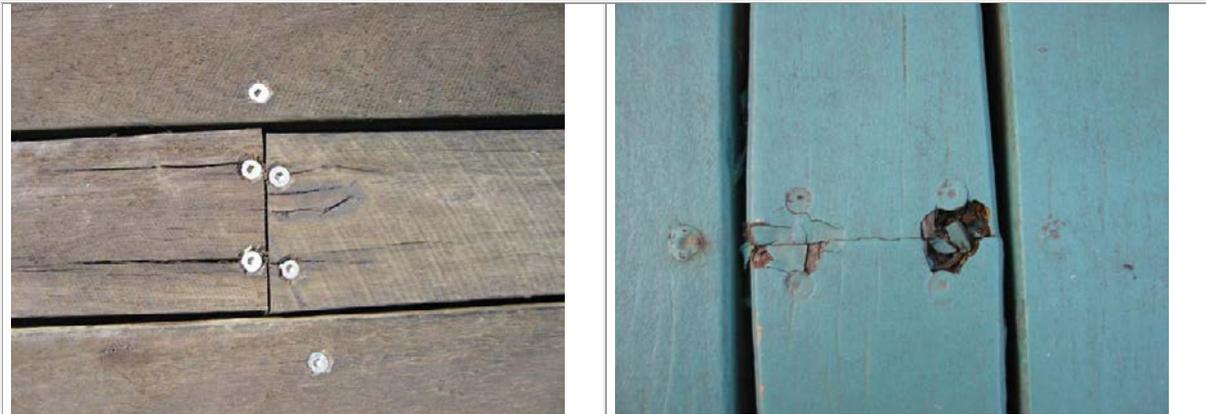


The other consideration is pressure washing which has been mentioned above. It should be very infrequent and careful.

Tanacoat can be purchased from Outdoor Structures Australia. Call Tammy on 0403 601 041

[Here is a link to the Tanacoat brochure](#)

[Joining Decking on Commercial Decks](#)



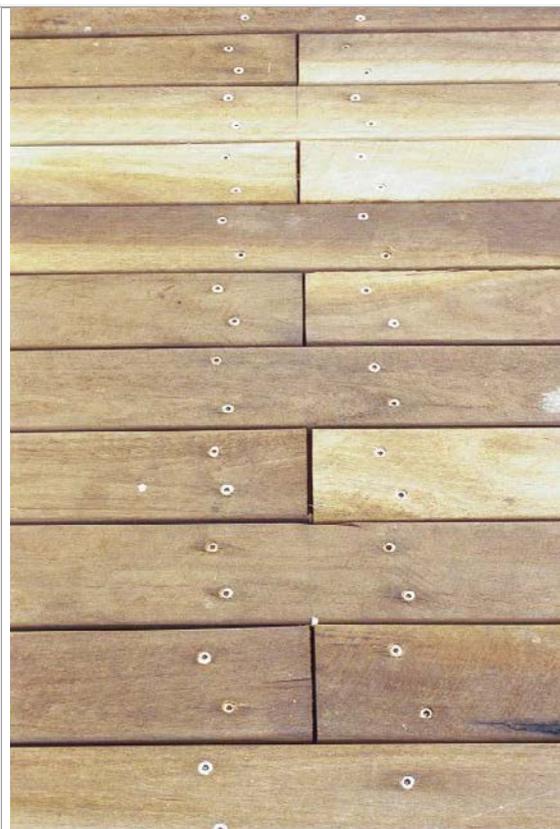
The consequence of not planning how you will join your decking!

Building decks are complicated as, usually, decking needs to be joined. All too often, no thought is given to how you join the decking. The builder purchases say 1000 metres of decking and just butts it up on a 50 mm joist. "I have been building decks for 20 years," he will say but, in reality, he has been building decks badly for 20 years. The screws and resultant splitting on the image on the left says it all, and that is on a 75 mm joist! The ends are butted together, which holds moisture which in turn readily enters the end grain and decay results.



Building commercial decks with lineal decking and face fixings simply does not work if you want a trouble free deck that reaches its maximum possible life. The designer of this deck I saw in York UK recognised the problem and tried to sort it by overhanging about 220 mm and connecting the ends of the decking with wooden dowels. I would not say a complete success. Our Australian climate would quickly see decay where the dowel enters the end grain.

There has to be a better way. At least better for the asset owner, though it involves more trouble for the designer and care in ordering material by the builder.



The right and wrong way to do it

The only way that you can effectively face fix decking is to use set length decking and design where the joints are placed, which of course you should stagger. Now getting back to those builders who have been building decks badly for 20 years. The image on the left is on a deck designed by

my old company. The builder who was very capable and conscientious followed the detail provided on how to join the decking. There are two joists with about a 150 mm gap between them. The deck overhangs about 75 mm and there is about a 5 mm gap between the boards to stop moisture entering through the end grain. The image on the right was by a company that invariably ignored specifications and construction details. Mercifully they are no longer trading but there are plenty more where they came from. They used a double joist all right but had no idea what they were doing. What a waste. Note the dreaded film finish also.

It is not hard to do the join correctly. I describe it in detail in my book *Deck and Boardwalk Design Essentials*. You really shouldn't be designing a deck without inwardly digesting my guide and following the design check list. There are things that you do with timber at your peril just like any other material.

Kim Bowman Music

Not a paid commercial



Sound sculptures using Lockyer Valley ironbark

When I was trading, I used to supply Kim Bowman with the ironbark he needed for his sound sculptures. I am pleased to see that he is still purchasing his ironbark from another Lockyer Valley mill, Muckerts Sawmill. We used to take it year about to win the quality awards so he is in good hands. Happy to give you a mention Kim. [Here is a link to his brochure.](#)

