

Before you build your deck you will need to plan it. If the deck is to look good when its finished, then it needs to be planned and designed carefully. There are a number of aspects that should be considered when planning the size and position of your deck.

- Will it be functional, decorative or both? The size of the deck can be determined by a combination of available space, changes in the level of the site, access to existing services such as drains and overall project costs.
- If the deck is to be used as an alternative to a traditional paved patio then it needs to be large enough to allow the comfortable use of garden tables, chairs and benches.
- Will the deck be at ground level or elevated? Whilst elevated decks will allow better views of the surroundings it will also allow the surroundings such as your neighbours to have a better view of you. Trellis, balustrades and foliage will help screen unwanted views and provide some privacy.
- If there are any underground services beneath the proposed deck area such as drainage pipes and manhole covers you will need to add an easy access feature to the proposed deck design such as a trapdoor. Alternatively you may decide to reposition the deck to avoid underground services.
- To make the most of the summer months plan the finished position of the deck to utilise existing shaded features such as trees or the sides of buildings. The heat reflected off a south facing wall will turn a cool deck into a warm one whilst trees will cool a south facing deck in the summer and provide warmth in the winter.
- Deckboard laying patterns should not be overlooked at the planning stage as they can affect the overall appearance of the finished deck. Position the deck so that it is easily seen from the house if children are to use unsupervised.
- If the proposed site is exposed to wind then a partial screen of balustrades, trellis or foliage will act as a wind break without completely blocking it and will also allow some cooling on warm days.

### Drawing Plans

How well you consider size, usage, climate, views, privacy, costs, relationship to the house and overall site evaluation will determine how often you use the deck. Before setting out your ideas onto paper, walk the site and visualise how the deck will look from the house and its surroundings. Measure the site and transfer these measurements onto paper. A good working drawing is important as not only will it help visualise the finished deck but also make estimating the materials needed easier.

Try and work to a reasonable size scale, 1:20 is ideal, using either graph paper or a scale ruler. Draw the deck and also add other design considerations such as boundaries, trees, buildings, shrub and planting borders. You may find two views help, a plan view showing the deck directly from above and an elevation from the side, this view helps if you have variations in ground level.

As well as illustrating the overall size of the deck and deckboard laying pattern also include the position of post centres, post, beam, joist and balustrade arrangements as this again makes estimating easier.

### Storage

Once you have purchased your decking materials you will need an area to store them before and during the construction of the deck and installation of the balustrades. In the UK, the moisture content of exposed timber is usually around 18%. Exposure to heavy rainfall or warm sun will cause the timber to swell or shrink respectively. To make sure the decking materials do not pick up too much moisture or are allowed to dry out on site, stack all the materials on bearers that are well clear of wet areas, preferably at least 150mm off the ground level. Stack the decking so that air can easily circulate around and between them using timber battens or spindles.

Protect the materials from rain using a waterproof cover, this cover should not be wrapped so tightly that it prevents air circulation and condensation. Careful storage will also prevent the timber from getting dirty and stained. Generally the less time the timber is on site the better.

### Preparing The Site

As well as careful planning and good construction techniques successful deck planning also requires careful site preparation.

Once the area has been cleared of all vegetation including shrubs and any trees it should be levelled. Slightly slope the ground towards the outer edge of the deck to allow for adequate drainage and to prevent water stagnating. If the deck is attached to the side of the house or building the slope should fall away from the building and not run to it.

Remove any obstacles and if desired redirect drain pipes. Apply a proprietary weed killer and cover with a weed block membrane available from most garden centres. Cover this membrane with approximately 50mm thickness of gravel to hold in place. 3 x 25kg bags of gravel will cover an area of 2m<sup>2</sup>

### Important Information

Do not burn preserved wood. Dispose of all decking off-cuts as ordinary household waste. Do not burn on open fires, barbecues or stoves.

- Always wear gloves to avoid splinters and protect hands.
- Wear safety goggles when using power tools and a dust mask when cutting all timber components.
- All saw dust and construction debris should be cleaned and disposed of after construction.
- Avoid prolonged inhalation of sawdust and always wash hands before eating, drinking and smoking.
- Wash all work clothes separately from other household clothing.
- For decks over 600mm above ground level consult a reputable builder or structural engineer.
- Do not bridge the damp course or cover air bricks when fixing to the side of a house or building.
- Use Richard Burbidge fixings where stated. All other fixings should be either stainless steel, hot dipped galvanised or coated specifically for exterior use.
- All cut ends and drill holes on all treated timber deckboards, joists, posts and balustrades must be treated with a suitable proprietary end coat.
- Read all Richard Burbidge instructions carefully before commencing any construction and installation work.
- Due to the preservative treatment Richard Burbidge Softwood treated decking is not suitable for use in direct contact with garden ponds.

Mould growth can occur on treated and untreated timber during prolonged exposure to excessive moisture. To remove mould, first let the timber dry and then wash the effected area with mild soapy water.



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