



# SUMMER TIME TO HIT THE DECKING

Bunnings and Placemakers offer comprehensive advice with detailed videos, invaluable for first timers. Surprisingly, the instructions are easy-to-follow.

By **Louise Richardson**

**KIWI HOMEOWNERS**, potential buyers and tenants alike have an on-going love affair with the concept of indoor-outdoor flow. But as a landlord, is it worth spending good money on enhancing this part of a property in the hope of gaining better rental returns or is it something that should generally only be considered in terms of adding value for an eventual sale?

One investor interviewed for this story believes any decisions should be firmly based on location.

“In better-off areas, renters definitely demand extensive decks and patios and are prepared to pay good money for them while in others, adding such extras may only serve to bring on rowdy parties – resulting in disputes with neighbours!” he says somewhat cynically.

## **SIMPLE, CHIC**

If your property is situated on a decent-sized section [do check with the council in regard to rules and regulations regarding site coverage], there’s nothing wrong with creating a paved patio area using concrete tiles or pavers, thereby providing a pleasant place for tenants to place their outdoor furniture.

Such a project is easily achievable within a budget of around \$1,000 – or even less with creative use of the options available at large-scale hardware stores.

For a little more outlay you could even

include simple built-in seating for which you’ll find project instructions galore online, and a no-frills shade sail provides good protection from the sun. It may require construction of a simple supporting frame but this is almost certainly an achievable DIY project or at worst a low-cost, competent professional endeavour.

Moving up a notch or two, \$5,000 will buy you a modest decked area – especially if you have the skills to build it yourself. It goes without saying that the price will increase significantly once trades people are involved. Your choice of wood will also have an effect on the overall cost with such softwoods as radiata pine costing much less than more sturdy and long-lasting hardwoods, which include kwila and jarrah.

## **FIRST, TICK BOXES**

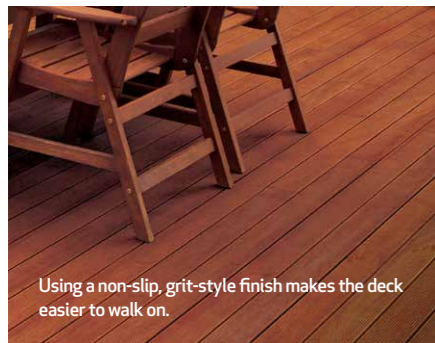
Most regions have similar rules and regulations. Auckland City Council’s website says: You need a building consent to build a deck more than 1.5m above ground level.

If you’re building a deck within a certain distance of a boundary or over a certain height, you may also need a resource consent.

Check the district and regional plans or contact us to find out the rules for your area.

Once you’re good to go, large hardware chains such as Bunnings and Placemakers

A big deck or patio cuts down lawn mowing obligations.



Using a non-slip, grit-style finish makes the deck easier to walk on.

actually offer comprehensive advice for first timers through a series of detailed videos and the instructions are surprisingly easy-to-follow.

**WORTH DOING WELL**

When the work is done, it's time to think about finishing it. Karen Warman from Resene explains: "The key is actually cleaning and staining or painting the deck. While leaving it natural sounds good, it just exposes the timber to the weather and means it will break down faster. Leave it long enough and that will equate to a mouldy and slippery deck or if it continues to dry out, a high likelihood of getting splinters in your feet."

She says decks generally need maintenance every two summers if stained. If painted, they mostly need a good annual wash and then a repaint every seven years or so, depending on the deck exposure, amount of use etc.

While people often take to a deck with a water-blaster, this causes a lot of damage, opening up the timber too much and making it harder to get a good finish in the future.

The best way to clean a deck ready for staining or re-staining is with a dedicated timber and deck wash, followed by a moss and mould killer.

Once your deck is prepped and ready to go you can use oil, stain or paint. Generally staining with Resene Woodsman Decking Stain or painting with Resene Lumbersider low-sheen waterborne paint are the most popular options as they tend to last longer than most oils.

"If you're planning on a dark colour, the Resene CoolColour version of the colour will reflect more heat and keep the deck cooler in the hot summer months," Warman says.

"Decks are prone to being slippery, so consider painting using Resene Non-Skid



Decks generally need maintenance every two summers if stained.

Deck and Path, which is a grit style finish that makes it easier to walk on without slipping over!"

**EXPERIENCED**

Philip McDonald and his wife have renovated a number of investment homes. Phil, an experienced Waikato builder, does much of the work himself.

"Kiwis love a deck," McDonald says. "In fact, these days they pretty much expect it – and the bigger the better. If you do two or more levels there are so many options for using it – and for moving around in line with the sun."

"I strongly advise getting a professional planner, though, unless you really know what you're doing – and especially in a rental.

"You don't want to be the subject of a newspaper story and a consequent law suit if a deck or balcony collapses during your tenants' birthday bash or Christmas lunch!

"And, of course, a big deck or paved area cuts down your lawn mowing obligations!" he adds.

**HIGH END**

Mark Trafford, at Maintain to Profit, agrees that a deck or outdoor living space of some sort is definitely a worthwhile addition to any property.

"If there are three houses for rent in one street and only one has a deck it will be the first one to be snapped up – even if it's \$10 or \$20 a week dearer than the others," Trafford says.

On how much you spend he too, believes that it's very dependent on who your tenants, or a future purchaser might be.

"I wouldn't spend more than \$4,000 on a deck," he says. "If I had a big amount such as \$10,000 to put into a property, I'd use it for something big like a kitchen.

"You have to know that whatever you've invested will actually pay off!" ■

**I STRONGLY ADVISE GETTING A PROFESSIONAL PLANNER, THOUGH, UNLESS YOU REALLY KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING – PHILIP MCDONALD**

**DECK CHECKLIST**

- 1 Do you have the necessary planning permission?
- 2 Is the deck area big enough to be useful?
- 3 Have you budgeted adequately for materials and labour?
- 4 Will the design integrate successfully with the house?
- 5 Is a portion of the deck roofed or shaded for protection from the sun?
- 6 Has provision been made for safety, e.g., handrails, step lighting?