

## Decking Maintenance

All timber decks in NZ will require a certain amount of maintenance and cleaning during their lifetime.

The frequency and amount of maintenance required will vary considerably depending on a number of factors. These include, the location, site aspect, and exposure to weather extremes, local habitat and environment, as well as the expected level of use.

Generally, annual washing of the deck surface is sufficient to keep the timber free from organic growths or airborne pollutants.

However if the timber surface does show areas of organic or fungal growths, then we recommend the following.

The most important thing first off is to remove as much of the contamination as possible using a mild cleaning solution of Oxalic acid, which will generally clean away any dirt and contaminants that have settled on the surface, also remove stains and marks caused by iron tannic contamination.

Avoid using harsh caustic type chemicals as this may permanently damage or discolour the timber surface.

Using a pressure washer or water blaster is only recommended by experienced operators as there is a real risk of permanently damaging or 'lifting' the surface fibres of the timber.



The timber can be lightly sanded and then thoroughly vacuumed before treating with a deck cleaner.

Where there is iron tannic staining caused mainly from iron filings coming off an angle grinder, I often find that the little specs of iron are hot when they come off the grinder causing the specs to slightly imbed into the timber boards. A light skim over sand with an orbital or other vibration sander (no belt sanders please) in an 80 or 100grit will loosen any imbedded contaminants/filings.

After this, a thorough vacuum of the boards to remove any dust and/or contaminants is important.

Once the contaminants have been removed by sanding or washing as described above, apply a coat of Proclean cleaner to the damp or wet timber. In this situation, the timber is significantly darkened so apply the cleaner at full strength (do not dilute).

Allow the cleaner to sit on the timber until all staining is removed. The excellent thing about the Proclean solution is that it has an anti-drying agent in it which will allow it to work to remove the staining in the timber as long as required and will not dry out like most other cleaners. If required, you can even leave the cleaner on overnight however this is not generally necessary. Only one application will be required and it is very effective at removing iron stains.

Once the stains are removed rinse off thoroughly. Some pressure does make the rinsing process quicker.

Once the timber has completely dried, apply a coat of CUTEK Cd50 or CUTEK Extreme. The most common colour used on Spotted Gum is Sela Brown and the grain in the Spotted Gum comes alive once coated with CUTEK.

Also worth noting that Spotted Gum has one of the shortest lifespans of holding the natural colour before it starts to fade of all Australian Hardwoods. This is the case in both oils and acrylic or other film styled coatings. For this reason the CUTEK products work brilliantly as sanding of the timber is not required before future maintenance applications are applied.

It is a very common issue and one which is often mistaken for mould. The good news is that it can be quite easily rectified.

If your client is in doubt about both Darron's and my observations from the supplied photos, have them examine the black spots under a magnifying glass. They will see the tiny specs of metallic under magnification. Once timber has been contaminated with iron it will turn black after it gets wet (if the deck has been already washed the source may be no longer visible).