

Real Wood vs. Composite or Plastic Decking

Question	Real Wood	Composites or Plastics	What are the facts?
Natural Appearance?	Yes	No	There is no substitute for the look and feel of real wood. Wood decking provides a warm, natural look that blends beautifully with the landscape. Plastic or plastic composites, even with faux wood grain, still look and feel artificial.
Comfortable under foot?	Yes	?	Wood is a naturally insulating material and does not conduct heat or cold like metal or plastic. In direct sun, some types of plastic or composite decking can become much hotter than wood, hot enough to burn or blister feet. In fact, some facilities post signs to warn pedestrians of the hazard.
Economical?	Yes	No	Wood is a very economical choice compared to plastic or composite decking, which may cost up to five times more.
Safe to Use?	Yes	Yes	Pressure-treated wood is safe for people, pets and the environment. Furthermore, advanced preservative formulations contain no arsenical or chromium compounds yet provide the same resistance to decay and termite attack.
Renewable?	Yes	No	Wood is the only building material that uses the sun's energy to renew itself in a continuous cycle. Sustainable forestry practices ensure that our supply of homegrown wood will be maintained for future generations. On the other hand, plastics are derived from finite petroleum resources.
Earth Friendly?	Yes	No	The manufacture of wood products uses less energy and produces less air and water pollution than other building materials. The manufacture of plastic decking requires more energy to produce than a comparable piece of wood decking.
Strong?	Yes	No	Wood can be up to four times stronger than plastic or composite products, and possesses up to nine times the stiffness of artificial decking. Wood decking is not affected by heat, which tends to promote creep (sagging) in composites over time.
Needs maintenance?	Yes	Yes	Despite claims to the contrary, all decking requires maintenance. Periodic cleaning and application of a water-repellant sealer is all that is needed to keep a wood deck in top shape. A good scrubbing usually removes most stains on wood decking.
Decay / termite warranty?	Lifetime limited	Limited	Wood preservative manufacturers typically offer a limited <i>lifetime</i> warranty against decay and termite attack in residential use. Plastic or composite deck manufacturers typically offer a limited warranty (usually 10-20 years).
Standardized product?	Yes	No	Lumber production and pressure treating facilities are monitored by approved inspection agencies. These agencies operate under rigorous protocols to enforce uniform performance and quality standards approved by the American Lumber Standard Committee and/or the American Wood Protection Association.