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Produced in association with



The Building Research Association of New Zealand

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GETTING STARTED

This brochure will help you choose the right timber for your deck. Using the right timber is important for maintaining the appearance of your deck, and durability.

The most common decking timbers are Pine (Softwood), Kwila and Vitex (Hardwoods). As long as they are properly treated softwood can be used in all decking situations. Hardwood decking timber is naturally durable and resistant to wear and tear. It's important to give careful thought to the decking timber used as not only does it maximise the living space but also has a practical and aesthetic appeal to it, which means being suitable to your weather conditions and the natural elements that it is exposed to.

Softwood

Requires to be treated for higher durability. Once treated it can be used in all decking situations, even pergolas. Once stained it can have a similar hue as hardwood. Treated softwood, such as pine can be a cost effective option.



Hardwood

Hardwood is a little more expensive than softwood. It has a richer timber hue than softwood and is resilient. While hardwood is harder to treat it is naturally durable. Like most wooden structures its important to stain them regularly with decking oils and stains.



The photos above show the different types of decking available.

Pine Decking

Premium Pine Decking

This is superior quality decking timber, which is the most common and preferred timber for decking use. It has a class finish to it and competes well against Hardwood because of increased checks and graded selection it has to go through for this category. Because of the soft characteristics, the defects in this product are minimal. Defects include smaller and tighter knots compared with the standard grade. The defects for premium timber which are not permitted would be bark encasing and a partial bark encased knot, along with defects such as piths, splits and checking.

All pine decking comes treated as H3.2.

Standard Pine Decking

The standard or merch grade decking timber is a mid range, lower cost timber which is suitable for standard decking projects. Because of the slightly lower grade of timber the product may distort more overtime in comparison to premium product.

The permitted defects for this timber include: bark and resin pockets; tight inter-grown knots to a maximum of 1/2 of cross-section; and spike knots inter-grown to a maximum 30mm width sapstain. The defects not permitted for this timber would include bark encased knots, pith, splits and checking.

Kwila Decking

Kwila, is a very good alternative to pine decking. It can be found in lengths ranging from 1.8 to 4.8m while most commonly available size would be around 3m to 3.6m in length. The species contains a natural resin which will bleed and discolour the timber while it is drying. Both green and dry Kwila machine and finish well.

Kwila is a very stable and durable timber which makes it an ideal choice for outdoor uses.

Vitex Decking

Vitex is also know as Vasa and has a dark yellowish-brown or walnut-brown appearance. The grain is straight to interlocked and can appear as a ribbon shaped pattern in the timber. The timber is slightly greasy to touch.

Because of Vitex's durability it is especially ideal for decking in coastal situations. Vitex must be stacked properly. Stacks must be weighted and have fillets between layers to enable sufficient airflow between layers. This will help reduce degradation.

Sizes

Decking comes in a few different sizes, below are the most common.

100x40mm, 100x25mm

These are ex or call sizes, which mean they can be up to 8mm smaller than the above sizes.

Styles and locations

Decking comes with two main faces. The top is commonly grooved, and the back is usually smooth. When planning a deck you must take the location into consideration.

If your deck is near the coast and you have the grooved side up, the grooves will fill with sand and debris over time, so it maybe better to have the smooth side up. If your deck will be shadowed by trees, falling leaves and wet weather can make for a slippery surface, so it would be better to have the grooved side up.

Note: If it is necessary for visitors to your property to cross the deck to access the street, there is a slip resistance requirement in the NZBC. This requires the grooved side to be facing up and at a right angle to the direction of the house.

Tips

Stack decking timber well, and remember to allow adequate airflow between timbers. Decking is best fixed with stainless fixings as using steel or even galvanized fixing may result in rust stains at the point of fixing.