

# Caring For Your Landscape: Composite Decking

The minimal need for maintenance is one of the primary reasons homeowners choose composite materials when building a deck. It's long-lasting, doesn't splinter, and requires less attention than wood, making it ideal for homeowners who don't want to spend a lot of time or money on upkeep. However, the best thing you can do to protect your investment is to expect some routine maintenance and build it in from the get-go. While composite decking eliminates the need for sanding and sealing, you should still take these proactive steps to keep your deck looking like new.

## Composite Deck Care & Maintenance

**Understand Your Warranty:** Before your deck's first major snowstorm or spill, get prepared by studying the manufacturer's warranty and its limitations. If you use a cleaning product or tool that's likely to damage composite decking, you can inadvertently void the warranty. Using a metal or metal-edged snow shovel, sanding, leaving spills unaddressed, and using a power washer are just some of the homeowner actions that can void a warranty.

**Get Clear about Cleaners:** When it comes to deck cleaning, homeowners should only use products approved by the decking manufacturer. It's not enough to find a product labeled "composite deck cleaner." Check with the company that manufactured your decking to identify the specific cleansers and cleaning tools they recommend for use on their products. This is the best way to ensure you'll get the best results and avoid doing damage (or voiding that warranty).

**Stock Your Shed:** Having the right tools at hand makes quick work of deck maintenance. You'll need a deck broom with an extension handle, a soft non-metal bristle brush, manufacturer-recommended cleanser, some clean shop towels, and hose access. If you live in a snowy climate, you'll also need a plastic snow shovel and some calcium-chloride rock salt for melting snow and ice.

**Sweep Often:** Sweeping your deck is easy and essential, and we recommend doing it weekly in-season. Regular sweeping will prevent staining and promote proper water runoff. In particular, avoid the accumulation of fallen leaves on the deck surface.

**Scrub Occasionally:** To maintain optimal appearance, conduct a thorough cleaning at the start of deck season and any time your deck gets particularly dirty. An all-over scrub with a deck broom and approved cleanser, followed by a rinse with the hose, should be sufficient in most cases.

**Remove Dirt, Salt, and Grease:** To remove soil, construction dust, and rock salt, start by sweeping or hosing down the deck. If that doesn't clear away all debris, or if there's grease involved, use a gentle scrub brush (not metal), with water and mild soap. Spot-clean the area and then rinse well with clean water.

**Redirect Water & Heat:** Point downspouts and dryer vents away from decking materials to prevent unnecessary exposure to heat and moisture. If redirecting drainage is difficult, you can install extensions to route water away from your deck. If you'll be grilling on the deck, use a flame-resistant mat or deck stones to protect composite from heat and grease.

**Optimize Air Circulation:** During the planning phase, make sure your deck will have at least 6 inches of open air flow beneath it. Avoid storing anything under the deck that will restrict air circulation. When debris builds up in the gaps between composite boards, use a spatula or putty knife to clear it out, then rinse the deck thoroughly with a garden hose.

**Use Chemicals Elsewhere:** As a rule of thumb, try to avoid getting personal care products and other chemical-containing substances on your deck. Sunscreen, insect repellent, and other fluids can alter the surface of composite decking.

## How To Maintain your Composite Deck \_\_\_\_\_



NOVA   
Landscape & Design

17720 Washington Street  
Dumfries, Virginia 22026  
(703) 382-6000