

Laying Guidelines for Hardwood Decking

- All our hardwood decking should be fixed using the highest quality screws. Hardwood will always react to moisture. It is the job of the screw fixings to keep it in its place. In projects where nails have been used, problems have often arisen. Ensure that the screws or bolts being used are suitable for exterior use – preferably hot-dipped galvanized or stainless steel (if available).
- It is advisable to pre-drill holes in the boards ready to take the screws. Drill the holes 2-3mm wider in diameter than screws being used. This gives the timber room to move without causing problems.
- Leave a minimum 6mm gap between each board when laid side by side. Again, this gives the timber room to move without becoming obvious. This will also aid drainage.
- Each board should be fixed at least 25mm in from the edge. This can be 15mm when using 19mm x 90mm decking. All decking must be secured to each joist with 2 screws. The decking also must be secured to the outside joist to reduce the chance of the decking twisting. When creating a curved front to the deck, the decking itself must not overhang more than 25% of the span of the joists – e.g. 400mm centers – 100mm overhang. Great care should be taken if overhanging 19mm decking due to structural integrity.
- Joists/Bearers should be spaced at 400mm – 450mm centers for 19mm – 21mm decking, 28mm decking should be at no more than 600mm intervals. Joist spacing needs to be less when boards are fitted diagonally. When cutting treated joists or softwood treated decking ensure that any cut ends are re-sealed to prevent moisture ingress. The durability of the timber will be affected if left untreated.
- Although most hardwood decking requires no chemical treatment to increase durability, the application of decking products will assist in preserving some of the timbers original character, and will also reduce surface checking. It will also prevent the leeching of Tannin from some species, particularly Yellow Balau.
- Every effort should be made to 'grade' the land away from any building in close proximity to the decking. The site should be cleared of all turf, lightly compacted and graded to 1:40 to enhance drainage away from any adjoining building. If fitting the deck to a building, ensure that a gap is left around the perimeter to allow water to drain away efficiently. This can be achieved with the use of either durable packing pieces or washers attached to the fixing bolts. A gap of 10mm is optimum.
- Cover the area with vegetation – suppressing black polythene or garden paper and cover with 50mm of tamped loose stone chippings. This will help to reduce unwanted vegetation growth, which would increase the moisture surrounding the timber.

For elevated decks, the following guidelines need to be heeded: -

- Decks under 500mm high – handrail needs to be 900mm high. The aperture between spindles must not exceed 100mm. If elevating the bottom rail, this gap must also not exceed 100mm.
- Decks over 500mm high – handrail needs to be 1100mm high. The same aperture conditions apply.

- For the correct support for handrails, newel posts must be set at no more than 1500mm centers. They can be closer, but this is not aesthetically appealing. Care should be taken when securing the newels in order to provide optimum secure support. Newel posts must be connected to the edge or header joist using 2 bolts. In addition, large diameter washers or plates must be used at both ends of the bolts.
- When the decking abuts or is cut to fit around the newel posts, a gap of 8mm should be provided in order to avoid any water running down the post penetrating the end grain of the deck board.