

Full deck: expanding relaxation space can add to home and enjoyment value

BY NANCY SUNDSTROM
Special to the Record-Eagle

Not too long ago, constructing a deck seemed like a luxury to the average home owner. But in recent years, it's become something that not only increases home value, but provides owners with a place for relaxation and recreation. The cost of that? Most would say priceless.

Whether you're building a new deck or repairing an existing one, there are some recent innovations in deck products to consider. One of the most significant is Deckmaster, a hidden deck fastening system designed by Weston Leavens, a professional deck builder who wanted to give his customers a quality fastening system that not only enhanced the look of the deck, but also lasted years longer than those that had previously existed.

The patented Deckmaster system eliminates the damage to deck boards caused by more traditional screwing or nailing, which is not only unsightly and sometimes dangerous, but allows the wood to crack, warp, split, rot, stain, and the like. Deckmaster gives the deck surface a smooth, unmarred look that resembles a quality hardwood floor.

Gordy Sigren, who heads up purchasing for Brown Lumber in Traverse City, is one of a number of outlets for Deckmaster in northern Michigan and says that its hidden bracket system has been quite popular with customers.

"If you want a smooth look with no visible fasteners, this is the best way to get it," said Sigren. "You do have to get underneath the deck to fasten it, but there are so many advantages,

from how strong and durable and attractive the end product is to how it holds up over the years. The cost for fasteners for an average 12 by 16 deck is around \$150, and its worth it, because this is much more than an average screw and nail system."

Sigren adds that there are environmental benefits of the Deckmaster system, as well. Other fastening systems penetrate the top of the deck board allowing for water seepage and deck rot, often requiring chemical treatments for repair.

The makers of Deckmaster promote their product as being environmentally conscious by satisfying America's consumer appetite while helping wood products last longer and conserving old-growth trees.

In its 2001 draft of The Southern Forest Resources Assessment, the United States Forest Service reported that the demand for forest products could deplete the timber resources in the Southern Appalachian region by the year 2020.

Another deck product that has gotten interest is Xtendex, a maintenance-free deck system that locally, is carried exclusively by Kellogg Wholesale Building Supply of Traverse City.

Christopher Smith, with purchasing at Kellogg, said the product can be used for decks, railings, fences, picnic tables, lounge chairs, docks, play equipment and more.

"This is material that's been engineered for strength and durability. Since we began carrying it last fall, we've had a very strong response to it and that says a lot, given that we're just at the beginning of its growth curve," said

Smith.

He explained that the Xtendex is a "5/4" deck system that employs a unique hold-down clip mechanism. With every board spaced a perfectly uniform and consistent 1/4 inch apart with no visible surface fasteners, an Xtendex deck looks professionally done every time. Each board and profile is straight and doesn't rot, warp, crack or split, and its surface is splinter-free, even those with a wood grain finish. It is also environmentally friendly, as it is made of natural fibers and polyethylene and contains no harmful toxins.

"They're high quality and low maintenance, attractive and easy to install. The trend for decks is to move away from some of the more traditional and more cumbersome methods used in the past for installation," said Smith. "There's a new generation of deck builders and owners out there who want to spend more time enjoying their deck and less time working on it, and virtually every new product coming out reflects that thinking. People are willing to spend a little more when the end result looks like it does and you know it will last for years to come."

Both Sigren and Smith say that in general, deck owners are as concerned with the appearance of the deck as they are with its maintenance. Less reliance on chemicals, either in the wood or material itself or in solutions used for treating and cleaning, is also of concern. Next, they say, is the question of how long the deck will last.

"Those are all considerations you need to make when it come to a deck, and in the future, it will be interesting to see what kinds of new methods for

installation and surfaces will come down the road," said Smith. "One thing is certain, though, decks are only growing in popularity and so are the standards for making them."

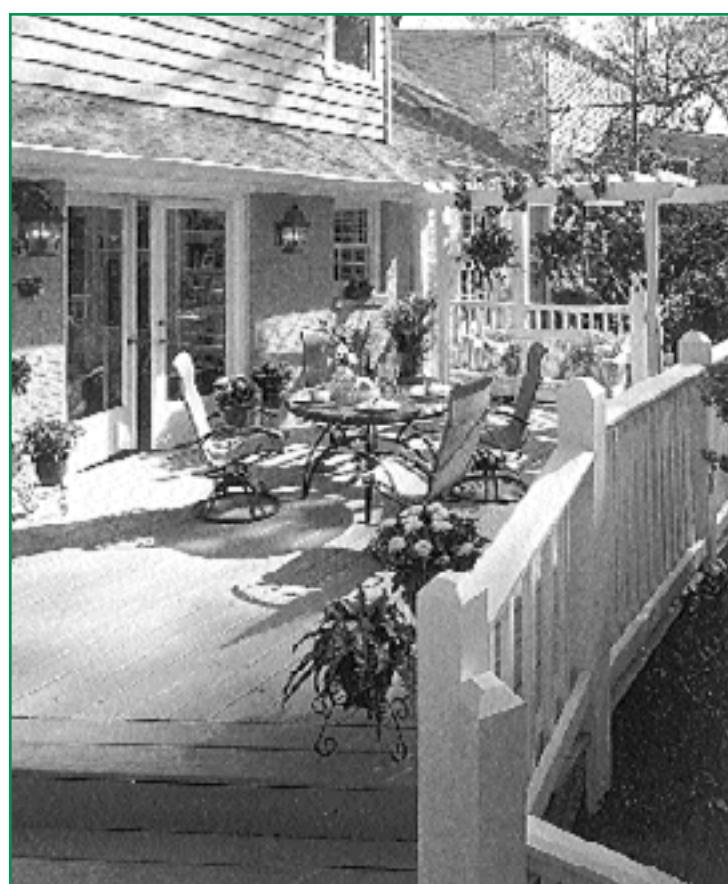
For more information on Deckmaster, visit their Web site at www.deckmaster.com.

For more information on Xtendex, visit (www.xtendex.com)

Nancy Sundstrom is a local freelance writer.

Copley News Service photo

Adding a deck, or expanding an existing one, is an easy way to add value and enjoyment to your home.



Retractable Awnings Free Local Installation

*Normal Installation Through June 31, 2003



Frigerio USA

For the best price & service in Northern Michigan

ADVANCED
Awnings • Umbrellas • Canopies



(231) 938-2233 or 1-800-953-2288

Look for us under the red canopies. 1.5 miles East on M-72, Acme.

NOW OPEN!
Organic Plant-It
ORGANICS & HYDROPONICS
Northern Michigan's Largest Selection of Organic Fertilizers, Nutrients and Hydroponic Supplies
Hydro-Organics • Indoor/Outdoor Horticultural Products
468 U.S. 31 S. • Traverse City • (231) 943-0385
Just north of Chum's Corners across from G.T. Homes

P.R.I.D.E.

Personal Responsibility In Delivering Excellence

Buy Direct From the Manufacturer
With 56 Years of Experience



Landscaping

- Rockwood® Retaining Walls
- Natural Flagstone
- Concrete Paving Brick
- Clay Paving Brick



Natural Building Stone

- Natural Stone Veneer
- Many Styles to Choose From
- Country Squires
- Weathered Edges
- Blends



Manufactured Building Stone

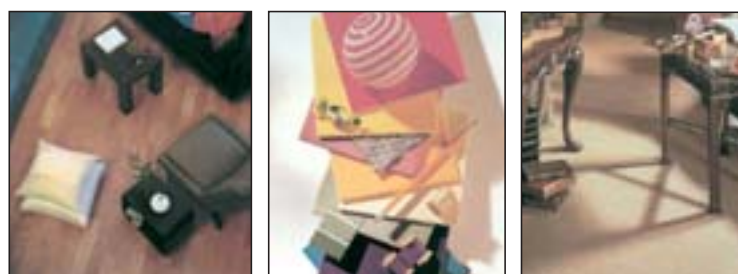
- Boulder Creek Stone
- Cultured Stone Veneer®
- Shouldice Designer Stone

7/8-hm-707837

Western Concrete Products Co.
WesternConcrete.com
Summer Hours Mon.-Fri. 7-5; Saturday 9-Noon

15151 Mill Pond Rd. P.O. Box 612 BIG RAPIDS (231) 796-8685 Fax (231) 796-3199	510 Fifth St. P.O. Box 609 CADILLAC (231) 775-3466 Fax (231) 775-1848	942 Federal Hwy. HOUGHTON LAKE (989) 422-3531 Fax (231) 422-3970
3625 US-31 South PETOSKEY (231) 348-5577 Fax (231) 348-5595	1797 N. Park Dr. TRAVERSE CITY (231) 941-8193 Fax (231) 941-7498	1924 Dickerson Rd. GAYLORD (989) 732-9669 Fax (989) 732-8767

Whatever your lifestyle... We provide the solution to all your flooring needs.



Premier Flooring Solutions

In tune with the way you live



Two Locations to serve you...

Cherryland Center:
1728 Garfield
Traverse City
(next to K-Mart)
(231) 946-1414

Brown Lumber:
1701 S. Airport
Traverse City
(in the showroom)
(231) 947-1400

7/8-707846-HM

For all your residential and commercial needs.