

Maintenance: Tips for Durable Wood Construction

Key Point	Don't, for example:	Do:
Deteriorated cladding and caulking allow water in.	Ignore deterioration	Inspect annually and repair damage immediately.
Green stains on cladding indicate wetting after rain.	Ignore signs of algae growth.	Inspect annually for stains and eliminate source of water.
Brown stains underneath flashing indicate moisture	Ignore signs of water kicked out by flashing.	Inspect annually for stains under flashing.
Termites build mud tubes up foundation from soil	Ignore signs of termites.	Inspect slab edges, crawl spaces and basements annually.
Moisture ingress or leaks may not be obvious.	Ignore damp or musty smells or visible mould growth.	Investigate if smells persist or recur, or if mould is seen.
Above ground, wood decays first below the wood surface which dries faster.	Ignore signs such as sunken paint, surface collapse, conks and cracking with softening.	Inspect untreated wood 5 yrs after installation then every 2 yrs. Fifteen and 5 yrs, if treated.
Below ground, wood decays first at the surface.	Ignore signs such as softening and whitening or browning.	Inspect treated wood in soil after 15 yrs then every 5 yrs.
Blocked dryer vents direct moist air into walls.	Expect exterior dryer vents to be self-cleaning.	Inspect exterior dryer vents annually and remove lint.
Ageing or movement of roofs or canopies can re-direct rain onto wood.	Expect moisture management systems to function effectively forever.	Inspect canopies, awnings and flashing annually to ensure they do not direct rain onto wood.
Balcony and walkway surfaces age and wear.	Expect balcony membranes to remain free of holes.	Inspect surfaces 10 yrs after installation then annually.
Blocked or damaged rainwater systems may leak onto structure.	Permit build up of mulch in eavestroughs, built-in gutters, downspouts and drains.	Clean out rainwater systems in late fall and ideally again in late spring.
Dirt, leaves and moss retain water and promote wood decay.	Allow leaf litter and moss to build up on roofs, decks, pergolas, and fence caps.	Hose off surfaces annually. Clean between deck boards with a screwdriver, especially joists.
	Allow accumulation of dirt under decks on slabs or roofs.	Hose out between decks and underlying surfaces every 3 yrs.
Algae makes decks slippery	Pressure wash. Force required to clean may damage wood.	Scrub decks every spring with biodegradable soap and water.
Irrigation systems can spray structures.	Ignore water from irrigation systems.	Observe spray patterns and adjust to avoid structures.
Plants up against wood structures slow drying.	Allow trees, shrubs etc. to block ventilation of structures.	Prune to provide ventilation. Attach trellis for climbers.
Preservative treatment does not stop checking.	Expect treated wood to resist moisture cycling.	Apply a water repellent every 1-3 years depending on exposure.
Once a coating fails, light damage and fungal growth reduce the life of subsequent re-coats.	Wait for signs of coating failure before re-coating.	Anticipate coating failure and re-coat while still good.
	Re-coat over failed coating and damaged wood.	Sand off damaged coating and wood. Dark coatings hide fungi.
Ground levels always rise.	Use untreated wood within 150mm of the ground.	Use treated wood in places where soil may later pile up.
Wood is easier to repair than other materials.	Replace structure because of decay in components.	Consider repairing or replacing components.

For more detailed information see www.durable-wood.com
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