

# DAILY AD

## HOW TO PRESERVE YOUR PORCH

Text by Lindsey Mather | Photography by Pieter Estersohn | September 1, 2015



This colonnaded deck is appointed with a suite of McKinnon and Harris furniture with cushions of a Perennials fabric.

If your wood porch is weathered, stained, or gray all over, it's time to take action and refresh and protect it. Here are the four steps experts recommend for preserving your porch.

### 1. Pick the right contractor.

You'll want to hire someone who is licensed and insured, of course, but what really matters is experience, specifically with your type of porch. Rely on word of mouth or contact a reputable organization, such as the North American Deck and Railing Association, to find the best contractor for you.

### 2. Prep your porch.

The contractor should first strip your porch of the old stain or sealer. Then it's time to diagnose and fix any issues, says Robert Criner, president of the Virginia firm Criner Remodeling and 2015 chairman of the National Association of Home Builders Remodelers. The main wear-and-tear culprits for typical pressure-treated wood porches are weather—sunshine, rain, snow—foot traffic, stains, and rot.

Ask your contractor to tackle these for you. He or she can scrub the wood with a cleaning solution and remove any tougher stains, like those from mildew, with a little diluted bleach. High-traffic areas can be sanded down and rotten boards replaced. Be wary of power washing, says Michael Beaudry, executive director of the NADRA. It's usually unnecessary and can damage the wood depending on its species, age, and softness.

Once your porch is dry, sprinkle a little water on the boards. If it beads up, they're in good shape for now. If the wood absorbs the moisture, that's a sign you're in need of a sealer, says Criner.

### 3. Choose a finish.

There are three options: a clear sealer to showcase the natural wood, a semitransparent sealer-stain that hides blemishes and adds a subtle tone, and a solid color stain, which covers up the wood entirely, followed by a coat of clear sealer to repel water. How long the treatment lasts depends on the local climate and the amount of sun the porch sees—expect a year to several years.

Once you've decided on a finish, ask your contractor to test a sample portion of your porch. Then, after the stain is applied, take another look. This is your last chance to point out remaining trouble spots (think stubborn grease stains) before the sealer goes on.

### 4. Maintain it.

Just as with carpet, upkeep is key, says Beaudry. Wipe up spills immediately, sweep away wet leaves, and move planters regularly to keep moisture from settling underneath. Once a year, start fresh with another deep cleaning.

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