

'Protection for Outdoor Wood Structures'

To protect your outdoor wooden structures (fences, decks, siding) use treatments that can last long and give long-lasting protection. Paint and solid-color stains are great. They protect wood well because they are good at screening out the sun's damaging ultraviolet rays and sealing out moisture. In some circumstances, they are a poor choice because they can peel and flake if the surface is not properly prepared or poor-quality products are used. They also conceal the grain and natural color of the wood. Cedar and redwood, for example, contain oils that can bleed through latex paint, so a stain-blocking primer should be applied first or an oil-based paint should be used. High-quality paints and solid-color stains, properly applied, generally last up to 10 years on outdoor wood. Other finishing choices fall short in protection and longevity. Clear water-repellent preservatives are seldom effective for more than two years. Lightly pigmented stains or semi-transparent stains are better at blocking out harmful UV rays than clear finishes and can last more than a few years (if applied correctly and with some layering).



There is a natural alternative to this, if you want to try it: NO finish at all. The natural oils in the wood almost act like a preservative unto themselves. Cedar and redwood are naturally durable woods that can survive sun and rain for many years, but like other outdoor woods, they will gradually turn gray if left unfinished, but the color is not necessarily displeasing. Spraying the wood every few years with a bleach-type deck cleaner can restore the natural color.

Outdoor Tip: Plant some Alyssum – sweet alyssum is a creeping, annual flower that grows in full sun or part shade and it also looks beautiful in pots. This fast-growing flower comes with white, red or purple flowers that bloom until frost. The great thing about alyssum is it's ability to fill in the gaps around your perennial and annual flowering plants without overtaking the garden (although it grows like a ground cover, it's controlled much easier and provides great color).