

The Homeowner's Guide to Michigan Decking Materials

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PHOTOS | GREEN SHIELD DECK BUILDERS

OUTDOOR AND MORE | The Homeowner's Guide to Michigan Decking Materials

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For a Michigan homeowner, a deck is more than an addition to the house; it is a go-to space for every season. But with humid Great Lakes summers and winters packed with ice and snow, it needs to offer more than good looks. A deck should be a relaxing escape built durable enough to remain safe, stable and comfortable no matter what the Michigan sky brings.

Selecting decking material is a significant financial and functional decision. To help navigate these options, this guide breaks down common materials based on durability, maintenance and suitability for Michigan's weather.

Amazon Gray deck featuring Black Baluster Aluminum Deck Rail, White Risers and Beam Wrap



Ash Gray deck featuring Black Baluster Aluminum Deck Rail



Tropical Walnut deck featuring Bronze Baluster Aluminum Deck Rail



Tigerwood deck featuring Tropical Walnut Picture Frame and Bronze Framed Glass Rail

The Realities of Traditional Wood

Natural wood appeals to many homeowners for its warmth. In the Great Lakes region, it also demands regular upkeep to stay sturdy and safe.

- **Pressure-Treated Lumber:** Usually made from pine, this is a common entry-level option. Chemical treatments help resist rot, but the wood remains vulnerable to moisture. Without yearly sealing, it can warp, crack or splinter within a few years and typically lasts no more than 15 years.
- **Cedar and Redwood:** These softwoods possess natural oils that act as preservatives. They offer a high-end look and are more stable than pine, but they are still a living material. Without consistent cleaning and UV protection, the wood will quickly fade to a weathered gray and often wears out well before its expected 10-year lifespan.
- **Tropical Hardwood:** These are dense and naturally resistant to the elements. Installation requires specialized tools, and while they need less upkeep than pine, occasional oiling is necessary to preserve their color over their 20-50-year lifespan.

For homeowners who want to skip staining and maintenance, engineered materials are now the standard. They combine craftsmanship with reliable performance.

The Evolution of Composite and PVC

Composites and PVC boards have improved quickly over the past decade. Early failures shifted demand from wood-based composites to wood-free composites and PVC for a lifetime deck.

- **Wood-Based Composites:** While they mimic a traditional look, they contain organic fillers that remain vulnerable to moisture and decay over time. A typical lifespan for these boards is 15–20 years.
- **Wood-Free Composites:** By replacing wood filler with silica-rich rice hulls, these boards eliminate the "food source" for mold. These decks naturally repel water, combining a hardworking backbone with the sophisticated beauty expected in high-end design. They offer a 25–30 year lifespan.
- **PVC:** Contains no organic material. This is the most resistant to stains, scratches and heat. As the lightest material available, it often has a 30–50-year lifespan.

Choosing a Deck Built to Last

Your choice of decking material ultimately comes down to how you want to spend your time as a homeowner. While natural wood offers a timeless, classic look, it also requires regular maintenance and ongoing upkeep. If your goal is to create a space for relaxation instead of adding another task to your list, wood-free composite decking is the smarter choice.

Wood-free composite handles Michigan's freeze-thaw cycles without the wear common in wood. You will never stain your deck again, which means less maintenance and more time to enjoy your space.

Just as important as the material itself is the builder you choose. The strength of their warranty should carry as much weight as the quality of their products. A premium warranty protects your investment and reinforces the promise of a truly maintenance-free lifestyle, giving you confidence that your deck will stay that way for years to come. □

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