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# Emerging deck trends



Deck trends continue to improve on the form and function of outdoor living spaces.

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Some decking manufacturers have recently introduced low-maintenance composite deck boards that mimic the look and feel of distressed, rustic hardwood flooring. This weathered appearance gives the look of age without the upkeep of real aged wood.

- **Wooden walkways:** Decking can be the more traditional design people envision with a patio table or outdoor furniture. But it also can consist of wooden walkways or a low-laying patio to accentuate the yard.

- **Mixed materials:** Homeowners may be inspired by commercial eateries, breweries and urban markets in their exterior design choices. Decks featuring composite materials and aluminum railings blend sophistication, urban appeal and comfort.

- **Personal touches:** Homeowners can customize their decks with personal touches. It's not unheard of to wrap columns in stone or glass tiles for more impact. And a vast array of decking colors now enables fun interpretations for outdoor areas.

- **Fire pit conversation area:** Many decks can incorporate water or fire elements for visual appeal. Gas-fueled fire elements can expand the functionality of decks beyond the warm seasons, or make enjoying them practical on nights when the temperature plummets.

Decks are reimagined in many different ways with continually evolving trends. SH192655

Custom-built decks can expand usable outdoor entertaining spaces. Decks can surround pools and create outdoor patio areas that make it easy to establish multitiered living spaces, improving the functionality of outdoor areas.

Certain deck trends have emerged as industry experts' top picks for the upcoming remodeling and renovation season. For those thinking of revamping an existing deck, or building an entirely new one, these trends are on point.

- **Established perimeters:** "Picture framing" is not a new trend, but one that has taken greater hold in recent years. The term refers to aesthetically appealing designs that conceal the ends of deck boards for a clean finish. Some designs feature con-

trasting material colors on the ends for even more impact. This helps create refined perimeters for a polished look.

- **Roof-top decking:** Urban areas also can benefit from decking to create usable outdoor spaces. In fact, many new condominium and townhouse communities are incorporating roof-top decks into their designs, particularly in communities with water views or other impressive vistas. HGTV experts suggest roof-top decks feature light-colored materials and fixtures to help keep the area cool even in direct sunlight.

- **Distressed hardwood:** Builder and Developer, a management resource for professional homebuilders, says that the trend for using distressed hardwoods at home has migrated outside.

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# Time to replace old wiring?

Old homes can be charming and contain architectural elements not often seen in many modern housing developments. But what older homes may have in design appeal, they may lack in updated features.

While cosmetic changes are not necessarily difficult, one area of concern in historic homes – and sometimes even in houses built 40 or 50 years ago – is archaic wiring. Wiring provides power to every room of the home. In today's electronics-driven society, electricity that works is an essential component of daily life. Over time, wiring can be compromised through simple aging, pest infiltration, weather, or other conditions. Deteriorated wiring can present a shock hazard and also a serious fire hazard, warn the home renovation experts at The Spruce. Furthermore, the home improvement site This Old House advises that the amperage of old wiring may not be able to meet the needs of the devices used in homes – overpowering the circuits. This can cause breaker blowouts and other problems, such as overheated wires that may spark and cause fires from within the wall.

Wiring often falls into the "out of sight, out of mind" category. Homeowners may make allowances for inadequate electrical systems, such as running extension cords or using multiplug connectors to increase their wiring capacity. However, they may not be diligently keeping on top of



upgrades needed to stay safe. Confirming that a home's electrical system is safe is a necessary part of home maintenance.

For those who haven't already done so, schedule an inspection with a licensed electrician to go over the home's wiring. He or she can determine if any areas pose a safety risk and/or do not conform to local code requirements and the National Electrical Code. Failure to meet code can lead to difficulty obtaining permits to make other home renovations, or difficulty selling a home later on.

The electrician can also go over improvements that can improve safety and function. Additional outlets, including GFCI outlets in kitchens and bathrooms, may be part of the plan, as well as rewiring a fuse box or circuit panel to

allow for better flow of power around the house. Frayed wiring or underinsulated wiring also may need to be replaced.

Owners of old homes should recognize possible electrical system dangers that require attention. Plus, considering electrical codes change quite frequently, it is always in a homeowner's best interest to work with a qualified electrician to keep wiring inspected and up to date. SH192656



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