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# Remodeling Your Home Exterior And Bringing the Outdoors Inside

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Concrete Facts and Decorative Concrete Effects to Spice Up Your Home

Concrete Slab vs. Pier System: Which is a Better Foundation?

Curing Concrete: Three Points to Ponder before Mixing

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# Remodeling Your Home Exterior And Bringing the Outdoors Inside

## Concrete Facts and Decorative Concrete Effects to Spice Up Your Home

When a person thinks of concrete art, they usually envision a child's handprint in a slab of wet concrete. While this is cute, this is not the basis of age old concrete art. Concrete really is the making of various home decors and materials used to spice up your home. Countertops, sculptures, fountains, bird baths, and even whirlpools can be made from concrete. Tabletops and fireplace hearths are often made of concrete as well. You would never know, however, and that is the fun of it. It is a type of art.

For example, whirlpools and countertops have a look of marble. However, many of the marble looking countertops are really a form of artistically engineered concrete. Most people would never know the difference.

There are many aspects to this form of art. For instance, there are many colors to choose when deciding to purchase concrete art. Black, gray, brown, dark blue, green, are some of the colors. These are enhanced by one of three different finishes. Those types of finishes are named as follows:

- Deepground
- Softground
- Troweled

These are three different concrete affects that at texture to any surface in your house.

The texture and color accompanied by at least eight different edging styles. The following is a list of eight different edge types:

1. Back level
2. Bevel
3. Pencil
4. Standard
5. Double Bevel
6. Agee
7. Bullnose
8. Double Round

Care of the concrete unit is very simple. It would include the following techniques:

Rewax periodically. Wax once within 2 months of the installation, and once every 3-6 months after that.

Make sure spills are wiped up quickly. This will ensure no stains. Mild soap without ammonia

or other abrasive chemicals is recommended. Stone soap can be purchase for ongoing conditioning of the surface.

Felt or rubber feet pads are recommended to go underneath objects place on the surface. (Ex: unglazed ceramic pots). This will help retain the coloration of the concrete surface, and reduce the chance of scratching.

Make sure a cutting board is used. Cutting on the surface can scratch it.

Note that the finish of some types of concrete art has natural cracks in them. This is not considered a factory defect, but rather a normal part of the texture. Keep this in mind when shopping for a concrete countertop, sink or other piece of concrete art.

There are also more advanced designs of concrete art. One is a concrete piece with a rough texture and little animal imprints it. These would be ideal for a large concrete engraved art to hang on the wall in a front hall. The same type of art can be placed on the front walk. A different imprint such as floral imprints would be ideal for this purpose. Another design that would look elegant on a front porch surface would be different shapes of plant leaves painted on it.

Another more advanced form of concrete art is the balustrade look applied to window ledges. This is very elegant, and can come in a variety of colors. A balustrade in ivory added to a brick building would look very chic. In fact, concrete can be made into a brick style for the look of a natural brick style. This would also make a home look very stylish.

For larger homes, driveways, foyers, walkways, and vestibules can also be design with concrete. It creates a very confident and professional home. It gives the huge home the look of an upscale hotel.

Places to find more information about concrete art include the following.

- Internet
- Concrete art manufacturers
- Local concrete are dealers
- Contractor services
- Local Phone book
- Referrals from friends

This is definitely not an all inclusive list of the types of concrete art and how they can spice up a person,s home. However it is a great start.

There are more than enough resources for someone who wants to learn more about this type of art. Furthermore, most of the information regarding concrete art is only a phone call or a click away. Anyone who wants to learn more about how concrete art can improve your home decor will learn about it in no time.

## **Concrete Slab vs. Pier System: Which is a Better Foundation?**

Pier Systems can add more of a foundation than concrete slabs. They also add extra support without damaging the internal structure of your home.

Signs that your home needs to be stabilized include the following:

- Horizontal cracks in the walls
- Step cracks in block or brick foundation
- Uneven floors, windows or doors not working properly

One pier system used is called the helical pier system, and it involves the following installation steps:

A torque anchor is screwed in to the stable subsoil. This is done until the torque indicates that the necessary load capacity has been achieved.

Adjustable brackets then are attached to the foundation walls. These brackets are connected to the screw anchors. The screw anchors are connected to the foundation.

The weight of the home shifts to the screw anchors. This stops further movement, because foundation walls and floors are retained.

This system contrasts with other foundation strengthening methods, which use the weight of the home to force the pipes in the ground. Other methods have a tendency to negatively affect walkways and landscaping.

Another helical pier system uses similar principals as the foundation system with the torque anchors described above. One of the only different it has a weaving pipe system. These interwoven pipe system creates added strength for the foundation, even more so than the pier system above.

A third kind of pier system is the called the magnum steel push method. Each unit looks like something that is a cross between a pogo stick and a shock absorber for a car. The only difference is, this magnum steel system holds over 30 tons. This is one of the best support systems ever made. This steel push system powered by hydraulics is fairly easy to install. It is well worth the effort, because it is sure to prevent a home from sinking.

Another very effective pier system is a disaster resistant pier system. This one helps sustain a home in the case of an earthquake. It also anchors the house in the event of high winds, frost heaves, and floods. This system consists of stout members connecting to a slab, grade beams or array of pads. A secondary system called a seismic isolator works in conjunction with the earthquake resistant system. This helps prevent the house from dropping too low to the ground. These two systems working together are very cost-effective, and also save lives.

The entire above mentioned pier systems are far more supportive than a concrete slab system. The different is in the anchors. The only thing a concrete slab is supported by is poles, and foundation walls. It offers very little support, and the weight of the house shifts.

Again, as mentioned earlier, signs that a house needs a more stable foundation are cracks in the floors, walls or ceilings. On the contrary, the pier systems offer additional support to the home without damaging any floor, walls or ceilings.

It is up to you to decide for yourself which system is better, the concrete slab system one of the pier systems. However, if you know anything about concrete slab systems you will know that it consists of supportive posts and beams. Moreover, it does not offer the same anchoring and support that the pier systems offer. Many houses have been sunk or torn off in various disasters such as an earthquake or tornado.

Not only that, but even during fair weather conditions houses on concrete slabs have sunk. It only happens after a long period of time if there is no disaster that hits. However, imagine if you could live to see what a home on a concrete foundation looks like in a hundred years. Most likely it would not hold up to one of the more modern pier systems.

Not only that, but the home with the concrete slab is more likely to be condemned, versus the home with one of the many pier systems available.

Therefore, you should consider the benefits of a pier system and check into the possibility of installing one to protect your family and your home, and your future. It is up to you to find out the truth for yourself. You and your family's lives depend on it.

### **Curing Concrete: Three Points to Ponder before Mixing**

Mixing concrete is a challenge, but it can be done without hiring a professional. However, there are three points to consider before creating concrete. You have to decide how you are going to mix your concrete. You also have to prepare your site, and then, you need to know how to pour the concrete.

The summary of how to plan the concrete adventure is created below:

Decide how you will mix your concrete. Mixing concrete is not the hardest job in the world, but it does require dedication. You need to decide if it is worth it to you to save only about 10-20%. Some advantages to doing it yourself are the satisfaction of creating something of your own. Furthermore, you can create your own outdoor concrete sidewalk art if you want to. The most fun parts of mixing concrete can be mixing, molding, and shaping the concrete from its powder form, into a usable form. Also, mixing concrete can remind you of times when you were a child, and you played in wet sand or mud.

Mixing the concrete. If you really are up to mixing your own concrete, you are going to need to know how to make it. It consists of 1 part Portland cement, sand, and crushed stone, to 24 parts water. If you need a mixture, you can buy a small drum style mixer for under \$300. You can reinforce the strength of your concrete with special fibers. You can ask for these at the desk where you would normally buy a ready-made concrete mix.

Another item you can ask for is air entrainment. You can either have the ready-made concrete company do this for you, or you can use an air hose if you have one. The pressure should help send a steady stream of air bubbles into your mixture. This will reduce concrete flaking as a result of frost.

Prepare the site. If you live in a frost-prone area you will find this information most useful. Start preparing your site by replacing the soil directly under the area with a compacted layer of crushed stone. This improves drainage, and eliminates the heaving hazard. You should go about 6 to 12 inches under. This does not replace all the soil under the frost line, but it will remove the most active soil. The reason you have to do this is because solid freezes. Frozen soil causes concrete flaking. Therefore it is wise to following these instructions if you live in a frost inducing area.

Then, used a gas powered compactor to compress the stone. This will help prevent settling. Then you will have to build concrete forms. 2x6 concrete forms are ideal you will continue to build a form. Please look up concrete forming at your local library for further instruction on how to build a concrete form.

Pour the concrete. Once your concrete form is built, you will then be able to pour your concrete into it. Work the concrete into the corners with a garden rake. Then, halfway up the sides of the form. Then, lay some mesh down. After the mesh is laid, lay more concrete down. For further pouring instructions, please search your library or Internet for complete concrete planning.

This is not a complete list of what to think about before beginning a concrete project. However, this article will help you decide how to plan for your concrete project. There is a lot involved in this, and you have to know what you are doing. Another option to preparing concrete slabs is to either buy ready made mix. Also, you can hire cement drivers, and have someone build the form yourself.

However, if you enjoy playing with mud like substances this concrete job is definitely for you. Even if you only save 10-20% of what it would cost to buy ready made concrete, at least you are saving money. It can cost thousands of dollars to hire contractors to do this for y you. 10-20% saved would be at least a few hundred dollars. This is more money that can be used elsewhere. Not only that, but this project is more fun!

## **Test Your Metal: Why Metal Roofs are Gaining Popularity in Homes**

With new materials that are available for roofing, many are turning to metal roofs. These are gaining more popularity as it is seen that metal roofs have more advantages than other types of roofing. Weather differences, as well as the make of the metal roofs are all adding to the popularity found in metal roofing.

The first reason why metal roofs are becoming more popular in homes is because they are more durable than asphalt shingles or other types of shingles and tiles. Metal roofs are able to

withstand strong weather, including wind-driven rains, heavy snow, hail, extreme heat, and hurricane force winds. Several have chosen a metal roof because it withstands fire as well, which may occur because of the heat of the sun or from a man-made fire. By choosing a metal roof, your home will be more protected from harsh weather conditions and natural disasters.

A second reason why metal roofs are becoming more popular is because of the reaction that it has to heat moving into your home. The material in metal causes more reflection from the heat than other homes, causing your house to stay cooler or warmer than it would with any other kind of roofing tile. It is known that those who use metal roofs have decreased their energy bills by up to twenty percent. The thermal reflectivity that metal roofs allow throughout every season is another factor in the popularity of metal roofs.

Metal roofs have a four way interlocking system, unlike shingles and tiles. This interlocks all four sides of the shingle, instead of only two or three. Because of this, the metal roofs are able to last for a much longer time and will remain weather resistant. Because of this interlocking system, metal roofs will also help with keeping the home cooler or warmer by not allowing the sun into the home.

Metal roofs also have different types of layer of paint as well as other types of resistant material in order to make them more durable. One of these layers of coatings is metallic and polymer coatings. This makes them more corrosion resistant than other metals. They also have high-performance polymers, which are used when they are painted.

After a while, the color will begin to fade because of airborne contamination, however because of the use of polymers, all you have to do is spray down your roof with a garden hose in order to keep it looking like new. Compared to other roofs, the type of painting that is used with the metal roofs makes a low-maintenance roof.

Another reason why most are turning to metal roofing is because it adds value to one's home. The reason why it adds value is because of this type of material will save costs on energy. Because of the lower energy costs, it adds to the appraisal value if you are planning on re-selling your home. A second reason why it adds to the appraisal of your home is because a metal roof is expected to last for forty to fifty years, and usually has a warranty that is expected to last this long as well. It is expected that a metal roof will not have to be replaced in a lifetime, adding to the value of the home.

Many are using metal roofs because they are known to have more varieties of styles and colors than other types of roofing. Because they are painted with polymer coatings, they can come in a variety of shades to add to the accents on your home. Compared to other types of roofing, the metal roof has more styles, also which adds to the uniqueness and value of your home.

When one goes to install metal roofing, they may notice that this is easier than it would be to put on than any other type of material. Metal roofing can be placed over the old roofing. This will eliminate expenses from tear-offs that one would have to make when replacing any other type of tile. Because of the style with the tiles of metal roofing, it is also easier to place the roof on your home.

Metal roofing is becoming popular in homes for several reasons. Not only is metal roofing more weather resistant than other homes, but it is also a low-maintenance type of roofing, lasts a longer time, helps with lower energy costs and adds a style and color to your home that would not be available otherwise. Because of these benefits of metal roofing, several are changing the tiles on their home to metal.

## **What is Wainscoting and Why is it so Popular?**

Wainscoting has been a popular form of wall coating for more than a hundred years. Essentially, wainscoting is paneling that is used on the lower half of walls inside your house. It can be made of wood, marble, ceramic tile, heavy fabric, or newer materials like wood combinations or plastic. The dictionary definition suggests that wainscoting is any paneling treatment that rests between the baseboard and the chair rail.

The most popular of these, even today, is wood. The most popular of the wood constructions is tongue in groove boards, but any type of decorative panel (even old doors in some cases) could serve this purpose. Originally, wood wainscoting was made of wood wagon siding, which is why it was so popular. The material was around in a plentiful supply, and that is why so many people used it in their homes.

Wainscoting can be of any height, but at its lowest level, wainscots are an extension of the baseboard that runs the length of the room. Most baseboards run up to eight inches up the height of the wall. They are usually one board with a decorative upper edge. For rooms that need a bit more, though, home builders find it both better and easier to finish the top with a separate piece, which is where wainscoting comes into play. This style was commonly seen in homes built before eighteen forty.

Traditional wainscoting, though, is usually a bit higher. It usually runs anywhere from forty-eight inches to fifty-four inches in height. It is used to protect and decorate the area. This taller style of wainscoting began its popularity in the mid-nineteenth century. This traditional style was usually tongue-and-groove boards running vertically up the wall and nailed in place. It was used to hide wall joints in the past, but now it is simply used for its durability.

There are even higher levels of wainscot. These began to appear in fashion in the dining rooms of the nineteen hundreds. They could run as high as sixty to seventy two inches. The panels were sold as eighteen to twenty-four inch pieces, and they were usually separated by three inch molding. The most popular building material for these at the time was cloth. It was usually burlap, grasscloth, or a heavy linen material. Most were rich colors.

While wainscot history has some interesting points, the future for wainscoting still looks good. People love the inexpensive nature of wainscot. It is possible to supply an entire room of quality wood wainscot for as little as one hundred and fifty dollars. People also love the look of wainscoting. It offers elegance, as many expensive homes use it in the original construction now. Not only does it offer an elegant look, but it also brings an element of the past into play.

Because so many homes used to have wainscoting, people identify with it as an older building material. It can, therefore, offer a look of rich history to a new construction home. People also love the durability of wainscoting. If you have children or pets, walls in rooms that are highly trafficked take a serious beating. In the dining room, the kids hit the wall with their chairs every time they leave the table. In the hallways, kids leave their hand prints on the wall.

In the basement, the dog hits the wall with his paws as he's headed for the door. Wainscoting can offer your wall protection from these kinds of accidents. It usually cleans up with a damp cloth, and in just a few short minutes, it can look as good as it did the day you installed it. Moreover, in older homes, it can protect your walls from getting damp.

Because older construction homes are not subject to building codes the way new construction homes are, they sometimes need extra materials to protect them from environmental problems. Wainscoting can help maintain the plaster on the walls in the dampest of situations, and it can even cover uneven wall surfaces offering a smooth look to room.

Wainscoting has spent more than one hundred years in the popular spotlight, and it looks as if it will continue its fame into the next one hundred years.

## **Clogged Gutters**

The seasons turn and your house takes a beating from all of the wind and rain hitting your home. Your gutters can quickly get clogged with all of the debris hurled through the air. There are steps that you can do to keep your gutters in good shape, and it won't take too long to do it. Regular home maintenance is the key to keeping your gutters like new. Read on about 5 tips that will help you keep the clog out of your guttering system.

If you're old enough to remember the inside ritual of spring and fall cleaning by Grandma, you'll remember that it happened every year. Even if it didn't look like it needed it. Grandma was smart and Grandpa was just as smart too. Outside maintenance was important then, just like it is today. So get into the habit of cleaning those gutters before stuff starts growing in them!

Here are a few tips on how to get safely up to clean your gutters in the spring and fall. Read over them and take them to heart when climbing on a ladder and roof.

Before you go up on top of the roof put on a tool belt with handy pockets and secure it tightly around your waist. Check out your ladder too. Make sure the rubberized foot pads are securely in tack, and no bent places in the frame are seen.

Wear good fitting foot wear and tuck shoelaces into the shoe before climbing. Wear and take along an extra pair of gloves that are snug but not too tight fitting.

It's advisable to have someone on the ground with you when climbing up. If an accident occurs, or even if you just need some tools, it's good to have an extra pair of hands.

Before you start climbing up on the roof hook up your hose, and check for any leaks in the line. You want to be sure that you've got full water pressure in the line, so you can clean your gutters efficiently. Also make sure to add extensions so your water hose will reach all gutters on the house. Having a ground person is handy with the hose here because knots and twists will limit water pressure when moving the hose around from the roof.

On your modified tool belt you'll need some tools to clean your gutters. Peek at these to see what you'll need.

Trowel. Use your trowel to scoop out mud from your gutter.

Bucket. If there is excess mud scoop it into the bucket and lower or dispose of it nearby.

Wire Hanger. Straighten out a wire hanger, and use to poke debris through the downspout if clogged.

Salad Tongs. This can be used to clean out the connection called an outlook, or as some call it the gooseneck. This extra piece is connected at the top of the gutter to the downspout. It'll often become clogged with leaves, and a salad tong will pull out the muck.

Rag. Take two or three of them. Slippery muddy hands could cause an accident.

Now that you know how to be safe when cleaning out your gutters, and what tools you'll need to clean them out, let's look at 5 ways that you can prevent clogging of your gutters.

Clean Routinely. Clean out your gutters every spring and fall. When done regularly it will sometimes only require you to run a power spray nozzle into the gutters and downspouts.

Install Wire Mesh. The wire mesh will keep most of the larger debris from entering into your gutter and causing clogs. You can find kits at most hardware stores. Use the correct mesh to keep debris out.

Adjust Gutters. Gutters need to be checked for the correct pitch to them. Without correct pitch the gutters will clog, and catch more leaves and other types of debris.

Coating and Seal. Apply a coating inside to help flush the debris down your gutters. A good coating will also prevent rust and damage to your fascia board.

Flush Fixture. There are new products on the market that attach to the under side and top of the board that will collect debris, but the water will run smoothly, and eventually will push the debris through the down spout.

Take care of your gutters and they will last a life time. It's worth the extra time and effort.

## **Decked Out: Ten Things to Consider Before Building Your Outside Deck**

Decks are one of the most beautiful additions to any home. They add beauty, value, and a serene home getaway that is unbeatable. Imagine yourself sunbathing on your deck with the rays of summer sunshine dancing on your lawn chair. Imagine having a get together with friends, the barbecue grill smoking away spreading its luscious smells to all of your guests and admiring neighbors.

Imagine an evening of star gazing with your kids on the solid surface of your deck. Before you imagine too much, though, think about the disastrous consequences of a poorly built outdoor structure. The media is full of stories about decks crashing in on homeowners leaving permanent disability in its wake. If you are ready to build the right outside deck for your structure, there are ten things you should consider first.

The first thing to think about is the purpose of your deck. Will it be used for entertaining guests on a regular basis? If so, have you considered how many guests you want the deck to hold? That should be one of your primary considerations. More guests will equal more weight. It will also mean you might need extra space for lawn furniture, grills, and people. You also might want the deck to be a play area for you small children. If so, that means a whole host of other issues throughout the planning process. Whatever your deck's intended purpose, it is best to think it all the way through before starting on the process.

The next thing you should consider is your deck's location. If you have landscaping issues where you think you will be placing your deck, which is one more thing you are going to have to deal with in the building process. You may also need to consider tree removal, as well as entrances and exits to your home. Remember, you have to have a way to actually access your deck, and if you want it in a place where you do not have an exit, you may need to add one to get the deck in your desired location.

The third thing you need to consider is your deck plan. This will serve as a guide to the entire project. It does not require a professional hand; it just requires someone who can be thorough enough to cover all of the aspects involved.

Another thing you must consider is how your deck will attach to your home. There are many different ways this can be done. It can be freestanding, but that is not always practical or safe. If it is to attach to the house, you have to decide how you will cut away the siding at the joining point. You must also check on the framing of your home where you wish your deck to stand. Is it strong enough?

The fifth thing you must consider are the deck supports as a whole. You need to decide exactly how many footings and posts you will need, and where you intend to place them. If you plan a very large deck, you should plan for a large number of footings and posts. With a smaller deck, you might not need quite as many.

An additional thing to note is the decking material you plan to use. Do you want a wood deck or one made of composite materials? If wood, you should choose your variety. Redwood, cedar, and pressure treated pine are all popular because they resist rot and decay. If you choose another wood decking material, you will, on a constant basis, need to provide protectant

sealant material. Composite decking materials are a good choice because they have been chemically engineered to avoid all of the problems of traditional wood.

The seventh thing to think about is the permits that will be required to build your deck in your area. Different areas have different zoning laws and requirements. Where some areas will require a building permit, others will require only a periodic site inspection. Some require both. It is best to check with your city government to decide what action you need to take to file for a permit.

The eighth thing to consider is the tools required for the project. Do you have everything you need on hand? How much additional expense will this add to the project? At the very least, you will need three different saws. If you do not have this kind of experience, you should consider the next point very carefully.

The ninth thing to think about is whether or not you will need professional help with this project. Decking is a big project to undertake if you are a weekend handyman. Moreover, if you have very little construction experience, decking is not a good first learning project. Poorly built decks are very dangerous, and if you cannot handle the project, leave it to a professional.

The final thing to consider is the extras you might want to build into your deck. You could add flower boxes on each corner. You might want a decorative handrail. You might even want built in seating for your guests. Whatever extras you add, they will personalize your deck.

A deck can be a great place for a number of activities, but it is a huge undertaking.

### **When Using Pavers Instead of Wood Decking Makes Sense for your Patio**

There's nothing like being able after a hard days work like going outside and relaxing on your deck or patio. Weekends are especially nice to take a few minutes and fix up a dinner of hamburgers or steaks. If you want to build a deck for your enjoyment, you might want to consider looking into pavers or paving stones as some call them. Read on to learn about the advantages of using pavers as compared with a traditional wood deck. You might be surprised to find out that there are some real advantages to using them.

The advantages of pavers are numerous. Read on from the list below to find out why you might want to use pavers.

*Deck Building.* Building a deck is tedious. Even with the simplest designs you should be prepared to spend more money for wrong cuts and other mishaps. Pavers are simpler to use, and less expensive than wood.

*Building Permits.* If you live out in the country with neighbors far away you'll usually have no problems with building the deck of your dreams. The problem comes in when you live in a residential area with tight building codes you'll have to adhere too. Don't take the chance and spend your hard earned money without looking into the codes for your area. Neighbors can

report you and then you'll be fined, and you'll have to remove your deck.

In some areas the requirements on deck building include the size, type of wood to use and even color. Usually you'll have no choice if you want a free standing deck as opposed to one that attaches directly to your house. Because of limited space think about easement issues too because the cities building codes won't allow you to encroach on another's property, or stop access to necessary utility lines either. Also look at issues of rot in cases of standing water, and water infiltration from high velocity of water runoff. If your deck is built off of the second floor, it's a disaster waiting to happen. Pavers can easily fit to building codes.

*Landscaping.* Look at how your ground landscaping design fits in with a deck. Are bushes and flowers shown to their best advantage? Building a deck could cost more than the deck itself for your landscaping needs. Pavers can be sheared to fit your yard.

*Space.* Decks are meant to give a sense of escape. If you feel cramped in, your deck won't be used to much. Other decorative items such as flowerpots are likely to be kicked off and trampled on. Look at the fact that most people love cooking out on their deck, and a grill just might not fit, or be very useful around the railing of the deck. If the deck itself on the second floor, ashes end up on kitchen or bedroom windows below, and you'll have an ashy mess to continually clean up during the summer. Pavers give a sense of more space, so more room to move in.

*Portability.* Decks are stationary once you build them. With pavers you can place them so that if you need to move them, you can. Reasons you might want to move them are to add a new landscape design to your yard, or if you just need a change of scenery. Also consider the fact that if you know you'll be moving soon, pavers will add some value to your home and at the same time can be enjoyed by you, and easily removed by the new occupants.

*Renting.* Most landlords won't approve of any new structure being added to their house. There are varied reasons why such as the design, faulty construction, building permits issue, and liability for insurance in case you or a new renter gets hurt. Even if the landlord's liability insurance does cover it, most don't want to have any wood or siding removal done on their rental property. This is really true if you live in a historically designated district where the city directs what can be done to a home. Pavers might be allowed if they can be moved by the landlord. When renting, always check with them because if you don't and something happens you could be held liable.

Pavers are a good idea, and really have a lot of advantages over your typical wood deck.

## **Garage Door Replacements: Can You Do It Yourself?**

Older garage doors are often the subject of replacement in a home. At some point in the life of the door, they simply wear out. The great news in this project, though, is that new garage doors have features manufacturers never even considered in older models. They are insulated which not only means warmth, but sound proofing too. That can be really handy when your

teen decides to use the drum set his grandma thought to be a good idea to give him for Christmas.

Moreover, they are far more secure than they used to be, which can be nice for people who store more valuables than just their cars in the garage. In these days of more and more possessions, the garage often becomes a place of storage for a number of important items. More than that, though, they provide the maintenance free beauty you would want for any part of your home.

While wood was once the first choice material for garage doors, steel, fiberglass and other synthetics are now the choice for many homes. These materials allow for a classic look, tailored to your preferred colors, without the hassle wood doors once provided. The tongue and groove features on newer models keep the wind, rain, and snow out of your garage area. They seal as well or better than most exterior doors on homes. Many often come with new safety standards too. Most will not close if they hit an object as they are closing. This means that whether it is your child's bike, your car bumper, or your dog, nothing will get crushed.

Some even have a design that will push objects out of the way of panels as they close together. This can prevent crushed fingers should your little ones wriggle away from you as the door is closing. If you want natural light in your garage, but you do not want the security problems glass might cause, newer doors offer plastic windows that look like glass. This means that you can have the style you want without the security risk. Some companies have even gone so far to protect your valuables that your garage door opener sends a different code to your garage each time you open it. That means intelligent thieves who have the technology to steal codes will find it impossible to take yours.

While these new advances in garage door technology are great, they simply do not fit well with the modern do-it-yourself individual. The doors are both large and heavy. This cannot only cause lifting problems, it can also prove impossible for inexperienced individuals. Should the door fall, it will easily crush the individual handling installation. Moreover, the springs that are used to help the doors open, store and release force, which can instantly kill a person. Not only should you choose not to replace a garage door by yourself, you should not choose to complete serious service tasks. At most, you should occasionally oil the wheels, hinges, and tracks. Any other projects should be left to garage door professionals, as your life simply is not worth the risk of a garage door.

If despite this warning, you insist on installing the garage door yourself, be sure you have a few extra pairs of hands around. Assistance with tough tasks can be one of the most important do it yourself safety tasks. When you get ready to start installation, be sure to begin with the weather stripping. This will keep the drafts and moisture out of your garage. If improperly installed, you could experience some real problems in your home. You will also be required to rent or purchase a spring tensioning tool. Renting or purchasing poor equipment in this case is just not a good idea. These springs can maim and even kill people who do not know how to properly use them. Going cheap on equipment in this arena simply is not a good choice.

When it comes down to it, yes, you can replace your garage door by yourself. You probably have the ability and the skills. However, because of the dangers involved, hiring a professional to do it for you is really a better and safer bet in the long run.

## **Fencing in Your Future: Which Fencing Material is Right for You?**

Fences are made from many different materials, and many different styles. This can make choosing a fence difficult. However, the decision of choosing a fence can be made easier. Before attempting to shop for a fence, a few preliminary steps can save you a lot of time. Furthermore, you will be less frustrated in the end.

The first step you should take in choosing a fence material is to decide what the purpose of the fence will be. Many people choose fences for the following reason:

- To protect against trespassers and burglars
- To create a boundary line
- For decoration
- To keep pets and children in the yard
- To stop animals from intruding
- For climbing plants

After you are done thinking about why you would want to make a fence, it is time to choose one. The following is a list of various types of fences:

- Chain link
- Barbwire
- Picket fence
- Wooden fence
- Small garden fences
- Electric fences
- Invisible fence

Now you know the reasons why you would want a fence. Along with that, you know some types of fences. Now it is time to decide which fence is right for you. In order to do that, you need to know which types of fences are good for what purpose. In addition, you need to know which fences will be most practical in case you choose a fence for more than one reason.

For instance, a chain link fence can keep pets or children in a yard, and it also keeps out trespassers and burglars. A second example would be the use of the barbwire fence. This fence marks the boundary line of a farm property, and also aids in deterring intruders. Just like a chain link fence, a wooden fence can keep pets and children in the yard. However, it is a little different than the chain link fence. The difference is that a wooden fence is more attractive looking than a chain link fence. Nevertheless, it serves more than one purpose, as most fences do.

Now, you know some of the purposes of the barbwire, chain link, and large wooden fence. The other types of fences serve a similar purpose as those three. For example, the picket fence is much like the use of a wooden fence, only smaller. It also is more decorative than the chain link fence. However, it does not do much for protecting a home against intruders. Picket fences are usually only about three feet high.

Now you know the main difference between a picket fence and a wooden fence. However,

there are exceptions. Sometimes tiny picket fence can be placed close to shrubs, flowers, or gardens. This is to stop small animals such as squirrels, mice, rabbits, and chipmunks from intruding. They might run into the fence, and then turn around and go the other way. The tiny picket fence is a type of small garden fence.

Other small garden fences can be placed around tomato and bean plants for a similar reason as the picket fence. These also serve something for the plants to climb on. Also, smaller versions of the chain link fence serve to keep animal intruders out of your garden.

Another type of fence is the electric fence. This is similar to the barbwire fence. An electric fence is also known as an invisible fence because someone usually doesn't see it. Then, if a person or animal does not know the fence is there, that person or animal bumps into it. Then, they get a shock. Then, they know not to cross that line. Most people know how to climb over it though. The main use is to block farm animals from entering another person's pasture.

A more modern of the electric fence is a fence that actually is invisible. It serves a similar purpose, and has the same affect on a person or animal as the electric fence. The only difference is that it is literally invisible. A variation of this type of fence is found in jewelry stores. The invisible fence usually surrounds valuable jewelry locked up in a display case. Also, it is attached to an alarm that goes off when the burglar crosses the invisible beam.

There you are. You know all about fences now-or at least more than you did before you read this article. Keep this information handy to help you make a wise choice in choosing a fence.

### **Taking Sides: The Pros and Cons of Vinyl Siding**

Vinyl siding is a popular choice for homeowners who want to improve the looks of their home without painting. While vinyl is relatively inexpensive, and long-lasting, there are some pros and cons when it comes to choosing it for your home. There are many factors to consider when looking at installing vinyl siding.

There are several benefits to installing vinyl siding on your home. Vinyl siding is long lasting, durable, inexpensive and easy to maintain. Vinyl comes in a variety of grains, thickness and colors making it a practical choice for many homeowners.

*Durability:* One of the main reasons homeowners want to install vinyl siding is because it is long lasting and durable. Most vinyl siding companies offer siding that should last for a very long time. Vinyl siding can stand up to most weather conditions without worry of severe damage. Newer vinyl is even stronger than the older versions and is less likely to crack and become brittle. In addition, vinyl siding can withstand years of sunlight without fading.

*Maintenance:* Vinyl siding is easy to maintain. There is no need to ever paint the siding and it never fades from the elements. The only regular maintenance vinyl siding needs is to be spray washed once or twice a year. Vinyl siding has a new look year after year. If moisture becomes an issue, you will need to re-caulk the joints between the siding and trim.

*Cost Effective:* Over the long term, vinyl siding can be cost effective. Siding is much more inexpensive than repainting and repairing wood on a home. The initial cost of vinyl siding will vary depending on the size of the home and the quality of the siding. Vinyl siding comes in many grains and thickness that will affect the total cost. Some also believe that vinyl siding can help reduce energy bills by serving as an extra layer of insulation.

*Looks:* Vinyl siding comes in many grains and colors to suit most homes. The good news about newer siding is that the color is baked through the vinyl instead of applied. This means that the color stays true over a long period of time and will not show scratches or small imperfections.

While vinyl siding is becoming more popular, there are many misconceptions about siding. Some of those misconceptions are that siding is indestructible and maintenance free. This is not always true. There are some precautions to be aware of before choosing vinyl siding.

*Severe Weather Conditions:* While it is true that most vinyl siding can withstand most weather conditions, some siding can be damaged in very severe weather. It can often be less durable than wood in extreme weather conditions. Very heavy and violent winds can penetrate under the siding and lift panels from the wall. Debris that is blown in the wind can puncture siding. It is also important to remember that when damage to vinyl siding occurs; the entire panel will need to be replaced.

*Moisture Trap:* While vinyl siding needs little maintenance to stay new looking, it can trap moisture. When moisture becomes trapped underneath siding panels, it can rot and cause mold and mildew to grow. This can become a breeding ground for insects. Also, if moisture is left untreated, the dampness can seep through to the inside of the house causing damp walls.

*Cost:* While vinyl siding can be cost effective over a long period of time, it may not substantially lower energy bills. Siding is backed with Styrofoam, but even with the thicker varieties, does not sufficiently insulate a wall.

*Damage Control:* Vinyl siding does come in an array of colors, however, if a panel becomes damaged it may be difficult to match the color. Some fading could occur with cheaper made siding after only five years. This could be a real problem if the colors do not match.

Whether you are choosing vinyl siding for the looks or durability, it is always important to research vinyl siding before having it put on your home. Siding can be beneficial to homeowners looking for a durable, yet maintenance free way of improving the home. Also, if you live in an area that has a neighborhood association, it is always a good idea to check to see if vinyl siding is allowed.

## **Five Things to Watch Out for When Installing: An Antenna or Satellite Dish on your Roof**

Antennas and satellite dishes are popular ways to connect your television or other different technical equipment. By investing in a dish or antenna, you will have more choices in your

home for your entertainment. Dishes and antennas can pick up miles worth of reception for television stations. By installing your own antenna or satellite dish, you will be able to save money.

Before you decide to install an antenna or satellite dish on your roof, there are certain things to consider. By doing so, it will make an easier installation with no complications that may be caused later on. By knowing the directions and details of placing an antenna or satellite dish on your roof, you will be able to enjoy the use of this technology without having to go through re-installing the equipment more than once. By installing an antenna or dish yourself, you can save money and it won't take more than a couple of hours. Be sure to install your new equipment correctly.

1. Installation site. Whether it is an antenna or satellite dish that you are installing, it is important to have a clear path for the dish to receive information. There has to be a clear line of sight between satellites with the entire surface of the dish. The line of site for either the dish or antenna shouldn't be caught in the line of trees, roof tiles, etc. when you place it on your roof.

2. Finding the right place. It is important to keep in mind that with either a dish or an antenna, it is best to put it in a place that not only is clear from any electrical lines, but also allows easy access. By doing this, you will be able to repair or monitor your satellite dish or antenna much easier. If you have to put the dish or antenna on your roof, it is always best to find a place where it isn't going to cause the roof to create leaks into your home.

3. Have the right equipment. There are usually only three parts that you have to connect in order to get the antenna or satellite dish to work right. This includes the dish or antenna, a coax cable that connects the dish to the television and a receiver that plugs directly into your television. When connecting, make sure that the dish or antenna is the shortest distance from where your television is. It is also important to measure the length of the cable in order to determine whether it will reach the dish or antenna from the inside of your home. If needed, you can connect a cable snake to route from further areas if you find it necessary. Other types of equipment, which you may need, include a drill in order to mount the satellite or antenna in the right place, as well as screws for the dish or antenna.

4. Know which way to point your dish. If you point the dish or antenna in the wrong direction, you won't be able to receive anything. Usually, dishes should be pointed at an angle of twenty-five to fifty degrees. You can find this by a compass that is usually included in the kit that you get when you install your dish.

5. Safety always comes first. When going on your roof to install your antenna or satellite, remember to think of what you need to do in order to prevent yourself from falling. It is best not to go on your roof if the weather has been cold or if it has been raining. Make sure that the ladder that you have is sturdy as well. It is best to have someone hold the ladder for you. Another consideration is to make sure that your shoes have good traction in order to prevent you from falling or slipping while installing the satellite or antenna.

When installing an antenna or satellite dish, there are several things to think through before installation. By knowing the equipment that you need before you go onto your roof, as well as

planning out how the dish or antenna will connect to your television, you will prevent hours of repair or work that you may need. By understanding how the dish or antenna will work in relation to your home or television, you will only have to install the equipment once, allowing for an easy installation and several hours of a receptive television.

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