

Introduction

Proper care and maintenance will ensure you get the best performance from your deck. These recommendations should be read in conjunction with NZ3602, NZ3604, BRANZ Bulletin 489 and any relevant Territorial Authority requirements.

Storage and Handling

Vitex decking should be kept dry and out of the weather until installation. On site each pack should be kept off the ground by placing it on bearers and covered to protect from sun and rain.

Installation

Ventilation

Free air circulation under the decking is very important to help minimise cupping and warping. Proper ventilation ensures the potential difference in moisture levels between top face and the underside of the boards is reduced and extends the life and performance of the deck.

The sub deck should have at least 450mm clearance from the ground. This, in conjunction with suitable spacing, will allow for adequate ventilation. NB: It is important that the perimeter of the deck is not fully enclosed by a surround, and remains open to airflow. Completely enclosing the sides of the deck will inhibit proper ventilation and compromise the performance of the decking.

In wet areas or over water, additional clearance is recommended. Failure to provide for suitable ventilation is a major cause of early decking failure.

Other steps that can be taken to minimise moisture differential are:

1. A ground level vapour barrier (with slit drainage).
2. A suitable surface coating on all four sides of the decking boards (refer coating section).

Span

Decking 19mm thick should be installed at maximum 450mm joist centres. For 32mm thick decking this can be increased up to 600mm joist centres. Given that Radiata pine joists are softwood and Vitex is a strong hardwood, the joists should be clean and sound and the screws should penetrate at least 40mm into the joists to achieve good holding. Pre-drilling and counter-sinking is essential to avoid end splits.

End sealing

End sealing will help minimise splitting and checking at the ends of the boards. We recommend the boards be end-sealed with a quality penetrating oil as soon as possible after cutting and before final installation.

Coating

In order to minimise surface checking, cupping and discolouration we often recommend Vitex decking be coated on all four sides. This will slow moisture transference into and out of the wood, thus maintaining more even moisture content through the piece. Proper coatings can vastly decrease the maintenance required on your decking. NB: Boards should be free of all surface marks and stains before coating. We recommend a "clear" decking oil is used.

Spacing

In average New Zealand climatic conditions, green decking will shrink. JSC Vitex is “Ship Dry” (green). For Ship Dry decking the recommended gap is 2mm for both 90x19 and 140x19mm. The specified gap will allow the deck to drain and allow air circulation under and around the decking. **NB: These are recommendations only. An allowance for regional climate conditions should also be factored in.**

Fastening

JSC Timber advocates that all hardwood decks are fixed with screws. **Screws are essential** for 140x19 decking. We recommend 60mm stainless steel screws through the pre-drilled and countersunk face of each board, two per joist 20 mm from the ends and edges. Care should be taken not to over-drive screws. For 90x19 decking screws are also recommended. However, if you chose nails they should be of sufficient length (60mm) with annular grooves. Screws and countersink tool available from JSC Timber.

Maintenance

Cleaning & Washing

Hardwood decks should be cleaned with a stiff brush at least once a year to clear gaps and remove surface mould which can be a slip hazard in wet weather. It is also important for the life of the deck to keep it clear of leaf litter, moving pot plants or other large objects that may hold moisture to the top of the deck.

Hardwood decking can be waterblasted BUT it is important to do so at a low pressure so as not to damage the fibres of the board by going too hard and/or too close. Care must be taken not to stop at the end of the stroke but to lift the nozzle away when changing direction.

Washing/brushing the deck down with a mild solution of janola and water (1:16), or suitable equivalent, will remove any build up of resin or extractives that may leach out of the timber as the pieces “season” in situ. There are also various chemical cleaning agents available, from detergents through to acids. Follow manufacturer’s instructions and be conscious of the run off. The amount of run off will depend on the specie, how dry it is before the decking is laid and how exposed the deck is to the weather. Vitex run-off is water soluble and doesn’t stain the way Kwila can.

Re-coating

Always follow the manufacturer’s specification for re-coating.

Disclaimer

JSC’s Hardwood Decking is manufactured with care and inspected to ensure quality, but it is a natural wood product and subject to variations in weight, density, colour, grain and performance. Care must be taken at installation and maintenance to allow for movement.

Some swelling, shrinkage, movement and checking are normal occurrences in timber decking.

NB: At this time, JSC Timber does not endorse the use of hidden fixing systems with this product.

For purchase of screws and countersunk tool please contact us on ph: 0800 572 688 or email: sales@jsttimber.co.nz or at specification@jsttimber.co.nz for more information.