

ASK DAD



HARRY JACHYM

Clean decks to restore beauty

Wooden decks in poor condition reduce the value of a house and are just plain unattractive. Many conditions contribute to this deterioration. Proper cleaning will maintain and restore their beauty and value.

There are many opinions as to the best way to clean wood. Here are a few of the more popular ways.

Most of the commercial deck cleaning products work pretty well. They are convenient and readily available but can be somewhat expensive for large areas. Use these as directed.

Probably the most popular chemical is good old-fashioned chlorine bleach. It's good for removing mildew, fungi, and algae and is a reasonably good cleaner when mixed with other cleaning agents. About one cup of bleach to every gallon of water is a good starting point for this cleaner. Add more if necessary.

On the down side, sodium hypochlorite (bleach) is used in the production of paper. It breaks down lignin, which is the natural component that holds wood fiber together. DO NOT mix bleach with any cleaning product containing ammonia.

Trisodium phosphate or TSP substitutes chemically attack dirt. These can be found at hardware stores and in paint departments of home improvement stores. I prefer the substitutes because the phosphate in TSP supplies nutrients for algae in our lakes and streams. Avoid letting this product enter storm sewers. TSP can darken cedar and redwood. Wear protective gloves and eye protection when using TSP.

Oxygen based bleach products such as Oxi Clean are environmental friendly and a great brightener and cleaner. I'm not usually one to use "as seen on TV" products as Oxi Clean. But this one really does work and can be found locally.

Use oxalic acid for removing rust stains.

Before starting, remove items from the deck. Sweep or blow away dirt and leaves including debris from between the deck boards.

Cover, or better yet, turn any electric outlets off at the electric panel. Water mixed with electricity can cause injury or death! Hose down plants and shrubs.

Soak the wood surface. This helps keep the chemical near the surface and reduces evaporation. Apply the solution with a garden sprayer. Allow the solution to work for 10 to 20 minutes. Covering the surface with plastic will help reduce evaporation in very hot, dry conditions.

Use a stiff brush on stubborn areas. Rinse with a garden hose or a pressure washer. Use only enough pressure to get the job done. Too much can damage the wood. Pressure washers can cause severe injury. Follow safety precautions and wear eye protection. Dilute the over-spray from plants and shrubs with fresh water.

Allow about 48 hours for the wood to dry before applying sealer.

There are many fine sealers on the market. I like Penofin. It soaks deeply into the surface, dries with a flexible finish and comes in a variety of colors. See <http://www.nufort-east.com/Penofin/penofin.htm>.

Harry Jachym, a licensed builder, teaches construction trades to high school students and is the general contractor for Habitat for Humanity, Western Wayne County.

Since we all seem to ask our fathers for repair or remodeling advice, Jachym writes "Ask Dad," a column on home issues ranging from repairs and maintenance to building and remodeling projects. He is a Plymouth resident.

Send any questions or comments to Harry at askdad@homecast.net or in care of Susan Steinmueller, 805 East Maple, Birmingham, 48009.



Your haven: Personal effects and art depicting favorite scenes and objects bring warmth and intimacy to the home.

A joyful home Designer Stoddard talks about creating happy spaces

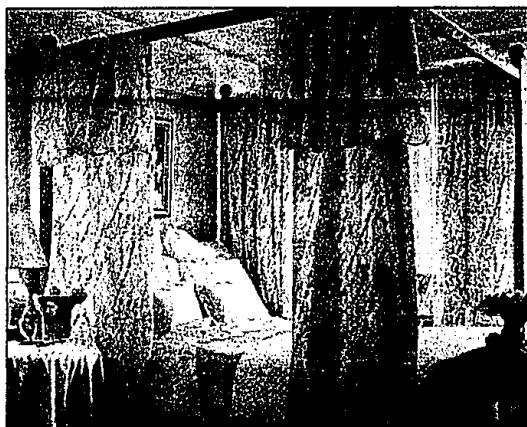


PHOTO BY JENNIFER LUYT

White space: Above, don't be afraid to use white fabric in the home and just let the dirt show, said Alexandra Stoddard, showing this example of a crisp, white bedroom. At right, acclaimed interior designer Alexandra Stoddard (left) pens a book for a local fan, Cynthia Hagan of Bloomfield Hills at the Michigan Design Center in Troy.

BY NICOLE STAFFORD
STAFF WRITER
nastafford@oc.homecomm.net

A new coat of paint, a couple of throw pillows, a potted plant — interior design never sounds particularly deep.

But it does have its more profound points. Namely, design choices can affect how people feel in a particular space and transform their mood and general sense of well-being.

For nationally renowned interior designer Alexandra Stoddard, who recently spoke to an audience of 260 at the Michigan Design Center in Troy, that concept is a recipe for happiness.

Author of the newly released book *Choosing Happiness: Keys to a Joyful Life* and host of the Home and Garden Television network's *Homes Across America*, Stoddard spoke about her book

and how to create "happy rooms," showing slides of her design work as examples.

"Our home is our haven. It's our safe place. It's so important that it reflect our spirit," said Stoddard. "As an interior designer, I have found a lot of people who are homeless in their own houses."

Back to the basics

While Stoddard offered plenty of unique tidbits about interior design, she emphasized many basic design concepts.

For instance, take advantage of natural light with windows, window treatments and mirrors strategically placed to capture light.

"No space is too miserable or ugly for you to make it beautiful and happy," she said, showing a slide of a tiny bathroom

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Tour is a creative way to see B'ham's art galleries

BY LANA MENI
STAFF WRITER
lmeni@oc.homecomm.net

This week's Gallery Tour in Birmingham includes knowledgeable docents to help inform guests about the city's ever-evolving art world.

EXHIBITION BIRMINGHAM, A GALLERY TOUR
A walking and guided tour via trolley of 16 downtown Birmingham art galleries is being held from 6-9:30 p.m. on Friday, May 17. The event promotes the many art mediums located at galleries in Birmingham. Admission on the trolleys and into galleries is free. Many galleries will provide refreshments and host special events. Gallery maps are located throughout the city and volunteers will stand at Old Woodward and Maple to help direct tourists to trolleys and galleries.

They'll be on trolleys, traveling from gallery to gallery. If you're looking to add new art to your home this spring, the 6-9:30 p.m. Friday, May 17

Tour may be perfect. The event is designed specifically to educate art lovers about the collection of galleries located throughout downtown. Sixteen galleries are participating and the tour is suitable for the novice and experienced collector.

Throughout the evening, volunteers from the Cultural Council of Birmingham Bloomfield will stand outside galleries, on the trolleys and at the corner of Maple and Old Woodward to help guide tourists. Cindy Cheaves, incoming Cultural Council president, said the tour is just one way to let people know that art galleries aren't intimidating.

"Sometimes people don't want to go into a gallery alone," Cheaves said. "We want everyone to feel comfortable at this event." Walking tours used to be held in the city quite often several years ago, but it was just revived last November. For gallery owners that



Something western: The style at The Cowboy Trader, featuring American western style art, is an example of the array of mediums at Birmingham's art galleries.

aren't located in the easily visible downtown spots, it's much needed. The north section of Old Woodward is known as "gallery row" and doesn't receive the same number of passersby as those located closer to Maple Road — that's why the walking and now trolley tour was born.

"It's a grandiose event," said Elizabeth Stone of the Elizabeth Stone Gallery. "A lot of galleries are host-

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Gallery participants have diverse offerings

The following galleries are participating in Exhibition Birmingham, a Gallery Tour.

Anderson Gallery — Classic African artifacts from north, western and central Africa
Artspaces II — Featuring an exhibit by Fulbright artist Brad Silverstein titled *Spoken Realism* with sculptures, paintings, prints and artifacts
Avenue Gallery — Unveiling its new Robert Girard collection. Live music, wine and hors d'oeuvres d'oeuvres will be served

Bloomfield Fine Arts — Original oil paintings in detailed frames plus antiques, marble lamps with leaded glass and more
Cowboy Trader — Klaas Verboom will be at the gallery to paint and meet guests

David Klein Gallery — Gallery Group Show
Elizabeth Stone Gallery — The

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