

Stack this deck in family's favor

A deck is a relatively easy and inexpensive home improvement to your home. And you don't need to be an architect to custom design this addition. All you need is a sharp eye, a do-it-yourself book and the basic design and building techniques.

Decks are versatile structures. They can cover formerly unusable sites, leading to greater enjoyment of your property. A deck can be used to extend the inside of your house to the outside, creating a dramatic effect. A series of different levels of decks becomes a string of outdoor "rooms" for enjoyment by family and friends.

A deck has many practical uses. Decks can function as lawn substitutes or pool-side areas, sauna or hot tub rooms, foyers and barbecue areas for the family room.

NOT ALL DECK additions are attached to the house. They may be free-standing in the yard.

Decks can even be built around full-grown trees to provide cooling shade.

The best way to select a site is to study your property carefully and to use an old architect's trick. Hold a mirror up to a potential site. You will notice that, in

reverse, your property looks very different.

You may find that a large tree is blocking a view you never knew existed or that a deck might effectively link one area of your yard to another.

An existing tree or unusual plant can be used as the focal point for a deck, distracting the eye from an unsightly view. Or a site may be selected with the interior of your house in mind — a deck can be used to "open up" a cramped kitchen or den to the great outdoors.

AFTER DETERMINING the uses for your deck and selecting a site, there are several ground rules to follow:

- Visual limits: A well-designed deck defines or shapes the space around it. One way to do this is to include railings or fences in your design plan. A lattice-work fence, for example, only partially blocks out a view.

- Create a strong flavor: Your new outdoor space will be more successful if it has a strong personality. Consistency is the key here. Design elements must be well integrated or the final result will be wishy-washy.

- Sensory force: This is one of the most basic aspects of design. It should



One way to add more space to your home is to build a deck. Greater enjoyment of your property can be the result of a deck when you cover formerly unusable sites or extend the inside of your house to the outside.

feel good to be on your deck. As you begin your design, try to become aware of how different spaces affect you as you move through them. An enclosed space feels different from an open one.

Shady spaces feel different from sunny ones.

Textures, color forms and even climate are other design elements which may enter into your final design plan.

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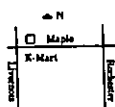
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