

Education is the key to dealer success in the wood aisle

By Belinda Remley

Preserved wood is the natural and beautiful building product that has been used to enhance backyard spaces for decades. Due to wood's broad appeal and desirable properties, manufactured products have tried to mimic its look. But nothing can replace the product created by nature in managed forests with just sun and water as its main ingredients and treated to last with preservatives innovated by Lonza Wood Protection.

With 80 percent of decks built with wood, professionals and do-it-yourselfers agree that preserved wood is the preferable building material. Along with building and renovating decks, other backyard projects such as picnic tables, benches, and raised bed gardens are popular among homeowners – especially those who like to take on projects themselves. As a dealer, it is important to know that 86% of those pros and 70% of DIYers educate themselves prior to purchase via a number of different methods including the internet with about 36% starting with search engines, about 41% using retailer websites and 39% visiting manufacturer websites.

This spring, the aisles at those local building supply stores will be filled with DIYers and pros researching the proper products to buy for use to enhance their backyards and the backyards of clients.

“The key to helping these customers is education,” explains Matt Roughen, Head of Marketing North America for Lonza Wood Protection. “Because 42% of DIYers and 38% of Pros depend on store associates, it is important to arm your associates with in-aisle materials they can quickly reference,” Matt adds. “Standard in-aisle resources are tear pads, banners and FAQ cards. Providing technical data is good, but it is really important to make sure the information provided is useful and helps the associate sell.”

Often, even when consumers do their research ahead of time and know what they want before they get to their retailer, they still want help and reassurance before making a purchase. “So, associates should be ready to answer a question like ‘can I use pressure treated wood for my raised bed garden?’” Matt says. “The answer is yes, by the way; and the associate in the lumber aisle should be able to answer that question with confidence.”

Why recommend preserved wood?

1. Ease of use.

“Wood is an easy-to-use building component for any backyard project,” says Matt. “Just look at the comparison between treated wood and composite decking as an example.”

	Preservative-Treated Wood	Composite
Available	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Easily sourced at local lumber yards and home improvement stores• Always in stock in the event of project changes or additions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many colors have to be special ordered• Stocked color options rotate frequently so replacement boards can be hard to source• Matching replacement pieces can be hard to find if scratched or damaged
Workable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No special tools needed - hammers, drills, and saws work with wood• Easily modified on job site to adapt to project changes• Lighter weight than alternative materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expertise may be needed to protect and hide cut ends• Custom-made material does not allow for modification on job site• Heavier than wood

- Repairs / changes can be completed easily
- Mostly, damaged boards must be replaced

Adaptable

- Can match understructure
- Can be stained different colors as styles and preferences change
- Can color match single replacement pieces
- Typically, does not match understructure
- Cannot change color

Maintenance

- Upkeep cost is minimal and could include cleaning and brightening, water repellent, and maybe stain
- Long-term cleaning and brightening similar to that of preserved wood

2. Wood is more environmentally friendly.

Wood is a renewable resource that is sourced from managed forestlands. As wood grows, it removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and that sequestration of carbon continues with preserved wood. Composite products are manufactured in a factory and require 13.5 times MORE fossil fuel to produce than preserved wood.

3. Wood is more affordable.

Did you know that you can get more than double the size of deck by using affordable preserved wood rather than composite products? You can build a 24'x24' preserved wood deck for about \$500 less than the cost of a 10'x10' composite deck* because preserved wood decking is often a third of the cost of composite. That leaves approximately 196' more room for grilling, visiting, eating, relaxing.

“The affordability of treated wood puts your customer’s dream backyard in reach,” says Matt. “And a store associate can cross merchandise by recommending adding deck furniture, a grill, a fire pit, or another finishing touch with the money the consumer will save.”

*Estimated average materials cost as of August 2018.

What preserved wood should buyers choose?

Whether recommending preserved wood for a deck’s understructure or for adding the final touches such as railing or built-in seating, it is imperative to help the consumer select the right treated wood for each application. This choice will help projects last longer.

In recent years, the treated wood industry led by the American Wood Protection Association (AWPA) has worked together to lay out clear guidelines for choosing the right wood for each application.

“Most commonly, builders must choose whether to use Above Ground or Ground Contact treated wood,” says Matt. “This decision rests on the severity of the exposure conditions of the wood during its service. Wood treated for Above Ground use is intended for parts of your project that are at least 6 inches above the ground, where wood dries easily, and where the wood is well-ventilated around all boards. Ground Contact treated wood is versatile enough to be used in any application.”

However, Ground Contact must be used in applications where the wood:

- will come in contact with or be within 6 inches of the ground or fresh water
- is critical to the structure and difficult to repair or replace

- is in certain physically above ground uses exposed to harsher conditions such as prolonged contact with soil, vegetation or sprinklers

What are some frequently asked questions an associate may hear in the lumber aisle?

What should I expect with a wood project?

Pressure-treated wood is a natural product that weathers over time to develop character, but this does not affect the integrity or longevity of your project. Variation in appearance is normal and should be expected.

What preservative is in the wood (eg. Wolmanized® Outdoor® Wood)?

A good example of preserved wood is Wolmanized® Outdoor® Wood, which is preserved with Wolman® E copper azole, the most widely used preservative in the world.

What are some safety recommendations?

Follow [safety recommendations](#). Wear gloves, dust mask, and goggles when working with wood.

What kind of fasteners should I use?

Use hot-dipped galvanized fasteners (meeting ASTM A 153) and connectors (ASTM A 653 Class G185 sheet), or better. Aluminum flashing can be used with wood treated with Micronized Copper Azole. Screws hold boards securely and allow for easier removal.

How long should I wait before applying paint / stain?

Before applying a paint or stain, allow wood to dry thoroughly (at least 60 days). Follow the recommendations of the coating's manufacturer.

What kind of maintenance is required?

To help maintain a beautiful appearance, apply water repellent every other year. To revitalize a dingy appearance caused by dirt and mildew, use a deck cleaner.

Do I need to treat end cuts?

Do not put end cuts into ground. Cover upper ends of posts with post caps or cut them at angles to shed water. Coat cut ends with topical wood preservative.

Can I burn treated wood?

No. Dispose of in normal trash collection.

Consumer satisfaction.

Training and arming sales associates with the tools they need to answer questions, is a great way to earn a consumer's business. After all, knowledgeable sales associates help yield confident buyers, which in turn leads to better sales. "The bottom line," Matt says, "is that when consumers leave the retail location with a sense of satisfaction and confidence in their purchase, they are more likely to return for future purchases and refer friends and neighbors to also shop that particular location."

For more online educational tools and advice, visit www.LonzaWoodProtection.com. You can also visit our YouTube channel: Lonza Wood Protection and like us on facebook.com/Lonzawoodprotection.