

General Considerations

- Ensure adequate ventilation under and between decking boards.
- Improve drainage or grade soil to eliminate standing water under decks.
- Direct downspouts, downspout extensions and splash guards away from decks.
- Position dryer vents away from decks.
- Maintain a deck that is dry and clean.
- Clean your deck twice a year after the last of the major pollen events.
- Use extreme caution with pressure washers and use at pressures less than 1,500 psi at 12" above deck surface.
- Keep debris out of gaps between the decking boards so rain showers can remove pollen and organic debris between cleanings.
- Minimize the use of wet mulch up against the deck structure.
- Place a vinyl-backed splatter guard mat underneath your grill.

Ventilation

Make sure there is adequate and unobstructed air flow under the deck to prevent excessive water absorption. Improve drainage or grade flat areas where standing water may gather. For decks with limited ventilation, six inches of clear ventilation is required.

Mind the Gap

If the gap between decking boards is less than 3/16", organic debris such as leaves, seeds or pollen can settle on the deck and clog gaps. Water can pool, steeping organic debris that forms a "tea" of tannin which may stain your deck. This organic debris is a strong food source for mold. Keeping the gap clean is the easiest way to keep the deck clean. If gapping becomes clogged, use a garden hose, a spatula, putty knife or similar tool to remove the debris and help the deck maintain itself.

Clean your deck twice each year.

Composite decking materials are pretty resilient. Clean your deck twice each year to remove pollen, organic debris, dirt or stains.

Dirt and Grime

Generally, a broom or a blower will work better than a hose for removing scattered organic materials like leaves. Over time, especially with kids and pets, the deck may become soiled. Dislodge accumulated dirt with a broom or by using soap and

water and a scrub brush. Scrubbing in the direction of the grain is best. Thoroughly rinse off with a garden hose.

Skilled professionals may use a pressure washer with wide fan tips, at low pressures under 1,500 psi and at safe distances, 12" above deck. In the wrong hands your composite deck can be damaged. Exercise extreme caution.

Tannin Stains

Tannins naturally occur in all wood species and sometimes migrate to the surface in composite decking where surface wood fibers are exposed to sun and water. Tannin stains resolve themselves over time. Depending on the season this can take several weeks to several months. Once tannin stains disappear after the weathering process is complete, they do not re-appear. To hasten removal of tannin stains, use Corte Clean, ConcrobiomXT Eco-Wash or other commercial deck cleaners designed specifically for your type of decking, strictly following the manufacturer's instructions.

Oil and Grease Stains

Speedy clean up is best. The longer the oil or grease sits on the surface the more likely it is to soak into composite wood fibers. Over time, almost all oil and grease stains disappear. The amount of time depends on the type of stain, the exposure to water and sun and other factors. To clean up grease and oil stains that soap and water cannot remove, use Corte Clean, ConcrobiomXT Eco-Wash or other commercial deck cleaners designed specifically for your type of decking. Follow manufacturer's recommendations and test in an inconspicuous area prior to cleaning the entire deck. Install a splash guard mat under your grill to help protect your deck from grease stains.

Construction Chalk

Colored chalk, used in construction for marking straight lines prior to cutting, is permanent on most surfaces. Contact the manufacturer of the specific brand and color of chalk for a cleaning solution that may prove effective. The best advice is to avoid colored chalk, using workable alternatives such as white chalk or baby powder.

Salt and Calcium Chloride

Build up of salt and calcium chloride from snow and ice removal is easily removed with enough water and perhaps a light scrub. Use a garden hose or sprinkler. If using a pressure washer, use at low pressures under 1,500 psi and at safe distances, 12" above deck, to avoid damaging your deck. Never shovel snow or chop ice on the surface of and Fiberon composite or PVC decking product.

Rubber Mats

Welcome mats or grill mats with a rubber or latex backing can mark your deck. The marks can be removed, but to avoid them, use vinyl-backed mats or colorfast woven rugs only.

Mold and Mildew

Clean away leaves and debris that promote mold growth. Many commercial products are available for cleaning mold. Cleaners containing sodium hypochlorite (bleach) can be an effective short term solution. Cleaners containing sodium percarbonate have proven successful at keeping mold at bay and are environmentally-friendly. Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions. Fiber Composites does not endorse proprietary products or processes and makes no warranties for the products referenced herein. Reference to proprietary names is for illustrative purposes only and is not intended to imply that there are not equally effective alternatives.

Eco-friendly cleaners include:

- Corte Clean, <http://www.corteclean.com/>
- ConcrobiumXT Eco-Wash and Mold Defense, <http://www.concrobium.com/newProducts.php>

Mold Facts

- Both mold and mildew are types of fungus.
- Mainly, molds grow on decaying organic material such as paper, wood, leaf decay and pollen. There are over 150 species of molds.
- Mildew, on the other hand, grows specifically and exclusively on plants.
- Molds are beneficial to the environment and are needed to break down dead material. Very tiny and lightweight, mold spores travel easily through the air.
- To thrive, mold and mildew need four things:
 1. air
 2. water
 3. temperature (above 0° F)
 4. food source

These conditions are common wherever humans live, work and play. There is no practical way to eliminate all these conditions in an environment. When it comes to thriving mold and mildew colonies on composite building products, the primary culprits are ineffective water management and excessive food source. The reduction of water in an environment is best accomplished by ensuring water has the ability to flow away from a surface or area, minimizing the absorption of water and providing adequate ventilation so that water can rapidly evaporate. Composite building products are a combination of plastic and wood, most often in roughly equal parts. If there is a mold and mildew problem on the deck, there will be evidence of mold and mildew on the house's painted aluminum gutters and concrete sidewalks. Both of these surfaces are totally inorganic and shouldn't support mold and mildew. What causes this? Most often it is airborne pollen, fertilizer overspray and leaf litter.

Regarding mold cleanup, the EPA states, "The use of a biocide, such as chlorine bleach, is not recommended as a routine practice during mold remediation, although there may be instances where professional judgment may indicate its use (for example, when immune-compromised individuals are present)... Never mix chlorine bleach solution with cleaning solutions or detergents that contain ammonia; toxic fumes could be produced." When you use biocides as a disinfectant or a pesticide, or as a fungicide, you should use appropriate PPE, including respirators. Always, read and follow product label precautions. It is a violation of Federal (EPA) law to use a biocide in any manner inconsistent with its label direction. <http://www.epa.gov/mold/i-e-r.html>

Additional Sources of Information

- [Molds & Moisture](#) — U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- [Controlling External Water Problems for Residences](#) — Clemson University
- [Building Science Corporation](#)