



## TIPS FOR PREPARING AND MAINTAINING EXTERNAL TIMBERS IN NZ

This is a general information sheet for preparing, finishing and maintaining outdoor timber furniture, decking and cladding. This information is an accumulation of 20 years experience dealing with Osmo products. The information does not cover every situation which may arise as that would be impractical. Osmo can labels are not written specifically for NZ timbers, but are generic for the 65 countries Osmo products are sold in.

The majority of timber decks and outdoor furniture in NZ are made of either a tropical species hardwood such as kwila, vitex and eucalyptus or softwoods such as Pine, Cedar, Douglas Fir (Oregon) and Macrocarpa to name a few. Hardwood timbers contain natural ingredients such as tannins and resins, which are the tree's defence against rot, mould and fungal attack. These ingredients will not allow a finishing product such as Osmo to penetrate and bind correctly with the timber. Instead, the finish will sit on top of the timber and simply burn off under the sun. Accordingly, hardwood timbers need to weather before any finishing product is applied.

### Preparing:

For new timber, we recommend allowing the timber to weather before application of any finishing product. This should be approximately 6 - 12 weeks depending on the species of timber. Please check with your timber supplier.

Any previous film forming finish such as a varnish should be removed completely by sanding. Any barrier left on the surface will prevent the oil from penetrating the surface and it will just wash off. Recycled timber should be wiped down with Mineral Turpentine after sanding, as a precaution to remove any unseen residue in the pores of the timber left behind from previous finishes.

The moisture content of the timber should be below 18%. High levels of moisture mean the oil cannot penetrate into the timber and bind with the wood fibres.

If too much oil is applied, the timber will become saturated, and a film will attempt to build on the surface. This may cause the finish to "peel off" the surface – something it is not meant to do. Osmo finishes should be microporous – allowing the timber to breathe. A microporous surface cannot peel, crack or blister as there is no film. Therefore always apply thinly and evenly along the grain. Osmo's motto is "Less is Best"

Wood which has turned grey through UV degradation may be treated with Osmo Wood Reviver Gel before applying a finish. The gel is based on oxalic acid which may clean the greyed surface. If the timber has been grey for some time, the Power Gel may not work. In this case, the timber should be sanded back. This is the link for information on the Power Gel. [www.naturaloils.co.nz/product/Wood%20Reviver%20Power%20Gel](http://www.naturaloils.co.nz/product/Wood%20Reviver%20Power%20Gel) Be careful when you rinse off after applying Power Gel, as run off can damage plants. Please allow the surface to dry for a minimum of 12 hours without rain. The wood moisture content must be below 18% before finishing with the oil.

### Finish recommendations:

The natural durability of various wood species is dependent on the timber's density and the amount of natural ingredients and oils which they contain. Newly hardwood timber should be allowed to weather, allowing natural ingredients and oils to wash or bleed out.

Species such as Kwila and Spotted Gum should be cleaned with mineral turpentine or white spirit before the oil is applied.

Is sanding required? If so, we recommend sanding to a maximum of 80-100 grit for hardwoods and 120-150 grit for softwoods. Anything finer will close the pores of the timber and prevent the oil from penetrating. The oil needs to be "in the timber", not "on the timber".

**Note:** The washing out or bleeding of natural oils and tannins may leave stains on surrounding lighter coloured materials such as cushions, pavers, concrete paths etc. To avoid this, water should not be allowed to run off of the surface towards walls or light coloured floor surfaces.

After the weathering period, and before the timber starts to grey off again, the dry surface should be finished with two coats of the appropriate Decking Oil. Osmo Decking Oils are available in a variety of natural wood tones for the most popular timber species. If you prefer a different colour, the Osmo Natural Oil Woodstain range is a good alternative.

**A clear decking oil or Woodstain is not recommended for use externally in full sun and weather under NZ conditions. The strength of the UV in this country means a clear finish will only last about 2-3 months. We recommend pigmented oils for sun protection. The more pigment the oil contains, the longer the finish will last. After the initial 2 coat application, one rejuvenation coat should be applied every 12 months depending on exposure to the elements.**

Always apply the finish thinly and evenly along the wood grain. The Osmo 150 mm wide decking brush is the ideal applicator for decks, and a good quality bristle brush for furniture. For vertical surfaces, either a microfibre roller or good quality bristle brush.

2 coats is the maximum for hardwoods. **Do not** apply the second coat until the first coat has dried. Soft woods such as pine and cedar can be very absorbent and a third thin “top up” coat **may** be required if the colour looks patchy after the second coat has dried. Osmo’s Anti-Slip Decking Oil adds extra grip to the surface in areas where an anti-slip component is required by your local council (such as external stairs etc). The product has been laboratory tested and meets the requirements of the NZ Building Code for flat timber surfaces. However, it is a clear oil which will require regular on-going maintenance. This is the link: <https://www.naturaloils.co.nz/product/anti-slip-decking-oil>

#### **Vertical surfaces:**

For timber cladding, soffits and joinery etc Osmo recommend either Natural Oil Woodstain (transparent finish) or Country Colour (opaque finish). When choosing a transparent finish, care should be taken to assess the timber’s environment. In extremely exposed conditions, Woodstain colours such as White 900 and Pearl Grey 906 should not be used as the lifespan before recoat is 3-4 months. Similarly, 701 Clear Matt has **no UV stability** at all, and will last 6-8 weeks in extremely exposed conditions. As a general rule, the more pigment in the finish, the longer it will last.

On timbers and plywood such as pine, there may be mould spores naturally present in the timber. These should be removed before application of any finish, as the mould may eventually become visible underneath the stain.

#### **Regular cleaning and care:**

Many timber patio settings and decks are unprotected and exposed to high levels of UV weathering and day to day use. As such, the regular cleaning of the surface and swift repair of any damage is definitely recommended. Stubborn stains and soiling can be removed using Osmo Wash & Care, Osmo Decking Cleaner or Osmo Intensive Cleaner. Damage to the finish itself (e.g. caused by small stones etc) should be cleaned and re-oiled as soon as possible. Such areas can simply be touched up/partially renovated without having to sand the area. Again be careful with the “run off” when rinsing to avoid contact with lawns and plants. All trees naturally drop mould spores – known as “sooty mould” The spores will collect on any timber in the vicinity, and will build up over time, turning the surface black. It is easy to remove with fresh water and a detergent as required.

#### **When should I refresh the surface?**

Osmo Exterior Oils / Decking Oils will weather naturally and fade over time from the UV exposure. The timber can easily be cleaned and refreshed with a coat of oil before the effects of greying begin. To do this, clean the entire surface thoroughly with either Osmo Wash & Care or Osmo Decking Cleaner (diluted with water as per directions on the container) using a scrubbing brush. After the timber has dried completely, a single coat of the Decking oil or Woodstain should be applied. Areas which are subject to less wear and tear and weathering may have a longer renovation interval.

Details on all Osmo products can be found on our websites: [www.osmo.co.nz](http://www.osmo.co.nz) or [www.naturaloils.co.nz](http://www.naturaloils.co.nz)

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