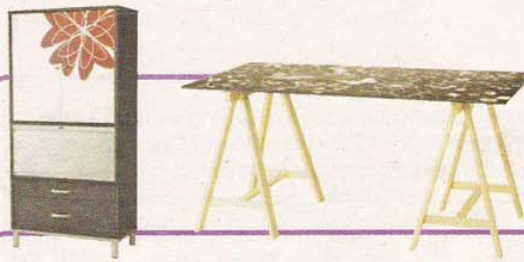


DON'T THINK OF AUGUST as the end of summer — think of it as the time when the new Ikea catalogue comes out! Ikea Canada will distribute 6.5 million copies of the 2008 catalogue this month.

Metro Toronto News Services



Know what you want in a deck before building

ARRESTING DESIGN case files

JEFFREY TAMMY
FISHER & SCHNURR
busted@arrestingdesign.com



A deck is the place to hang out in summer. But before you have one built — or build one yourself — make sure you are going about it properly. The design team received some pointers for a stylish and well-built deck from Alex Krupin, owner of Delta Decks, www.deltadecks.com, a Toronto-area builder of high-end decking.

“Avoid lattice for skirting around the deck — it’s ugly and it won’t last,” says Krupin. And don’t cheap out by adding steps but no risers. All you’ll see are ugly dark spaces that allow everyone to peek into the dirty area under the deck. To improve the look, Krupin and his staff build boxes around decking to hide what’s underneath.

Another thing that offends the eye of deck connoisseurs is exposed end-grain. Krupin says “butt” ends are fine for the cottage, but good-quality

decks that are well-constructed by experts should always have borders and rims so that all end-grain is covered.

And speaking of workmanship, there are some mistakes inexperienced deck builders commonly make. For example, you must attach surface boards with screws rather than nails because nails will eventually pop up. Also, you must leave space between planks for airing, and observe any other requirements set out in the Ontario Building Standards and any applicable bylaws.

For example, Krupin says he has seen decks that do not have the 4-foot concrete footings required by the standards. And upper-level decks have specific requirements to securely attach the deck to the frame of the house.

Simple decks in squares or rectangles are most popular right now — a modern, minimalist look is



A Toronto-area deck built by Delta Decks out of Ipe wood. See www.deltadecks.com for more information.

what most people are seeking. Round or hexagon-shaped decks are definitely out. If decks include railings, horizontal boards are used to help create that look. And built-in benches, screens, planters, or steps add to the streamlined feeling. We especially love the hidden fasteners which are used so you don’t see screws in the decking at all.

And when it’s all done, Krupin cautions new deck owners not to spoil the streamlined new deck by cluttering it with too many pieces of patio furniture. And last but not least, make sure you are consistent in the type of wood used for decking and the style of the deck. A mish-mash never looks right.

One hot new trend in decking is Brazilian walnut or Ironwood, also called Ipe, an extremely hard wood from rainforest trees in Brazil. It’s been

around for while, but is becoming increasingly popular. It is expensive, at about two to three times the price of pressure-treated wood, but Krupin thinks its great looks and quality are worth the price. It is a brown-reddish wood that has no knots and does not crack or splinter, and it naturally resists rot, decay, insects and mold.

The downside of Ipe seems to be that it’s difficult to obtain — it is often out of stock. It is also difficult to know whether Ipe is harvested sustainably — although some wood from Brazil is certified by the

Forest Stewardship Council; see www.fsc.org.

Other deck choices include cedar, pressure-treated wood, and a variety of composite products (plastic or plastic mixed with wood dust). At the higher end, Krupin’s company charges anywhere from \$26 to \$50 per square foot for a finished deck made of Ipe, depending on the complexity of the design. Composites generally fall into a similar price range, and a finished deck made of pressure-treated wood is \$16 to \$25 per square foot.

Catch Arresting Design on W Network; see www.wnetwork.com.

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