Skirting a deck

A beautifully built deck can be enhanced by a single feature that will add appeal and function by enclosing the underside of a deck with decking material or custom screening. This particular detail I am talking about is called skirting. While many homeowners prefer having skirting around their deck, others like to leave it open. This will all depend on your personal preference and your own project. When considering adding skirting to your newly-built structure, there are several points to consider.

1. Height of the deck

Most commonly, we will add skirting to decks whose elevations are between 1’ and 4’ off grade. We have gone up to 8’ high on the skirting when the elevation sits higher, but keep in mind that this will often result in a “solid- wall” look. The skirting will be a very visible part of your deck, so the higher your deck, the more visible the skirting material will be to yourself and to your neighbors. On the other hand, if you intend to landscape around your deck, the landscaping itself might serve as a privacy screen for the underside of the deck. Again, this will depend on the elevation of your deck.

1. Purpose of the skirting

Skirting will enclose the underside of the deck which will hide the not-so-pretty structural members. In addition for aesthetic appeal, it will allow you to keep miscellaneous outdoor objects under the deck and out of sight. This includes ladders, outdoor furniture, tools, flower pots, etc… objects that can withstand some exposure to the elements. Finally, many homeowners are concerned about keeping critters out from under their decks. While this may be effective to some extent, there will still be some animals that will find a way to burrow tunnels through the ground to make their home under your deck. The advantage of having skirting is that it will be more obvious by the tunnels you may find giving you clues to these critters’ presence.

1. Material of skirting

The most common skirting material used to complete the deck will most oftentimes be the decking material itself. For example, on a wood deck we would continue with wood decking on the vertical surfaces, and on a Trex deck we would do Trex skirting. This allows for a look of continuity between horizontal and vertical surfaces. Another option is to use custom-built treated lumber or cedar lattice screens. This is also a beautiful option providing a closed-off look but allowing for air ventilation. Lattice skirting tends to be more fragile than its composite or solid wood decking counterparts. If choosing this route, the wood will have to be treated every few years to withstand the abuse of the elements. That is also a point to consider- how much time to you want to devote to the maintenance of your skirting material? One last thought on material options is how your family will use your yard. If you have little kids that love to play soccer or slug a baseball, a more durable option for skirting that can withstand the abuse might be beneficial.

In conclusion, there is no wrong answer. There are so many options to finishing off the look of your deck. For some, solid skirting would be the more visually appealing and the most functional option. For others, a custom lattice look will complete the look. Finally, plants and shrubs can accomplish the job while omitting a skirting completely.