

## Paint & Wood Preservatives

### Why we care

Outdoor wood and decks need to be protected from the elements, but before you buy paints, stains, or lumber, be aware that these products can be harmful to your health and the environment. Oil-based paints and wood preservatives contain solvents that emit toxic vapors when drying and require toxic thinners for clean up. Lumber used for decks is often pre-treated with pesticides that may contain pentachlorophenol (penta), creosote, copper, zinc, chromium or arsenic.

### Simple, positive steps

- Today's latex paints are durable enough for exterior use. Choose one with 25 grams/liter or less VOCs. Buy only the amount of paint you need by using a [paint calculator](#).
- Throw away dried up paint or [recycle leftover paint](#) you won't use. Take other products to a hazardous waste facility.
- Remove paint with sandpaper or a scraper in homes built after 1978 (lead-free). If not feasible, use a water-based stripper.
- Wood preservatives are not generally needed. Water repellent, sealer, or paint should be adequate, and cedar and redwood are naturally rot-resistant. For decks, consider Timber Pro UV Wood Finish (503-232-1705) or Biowash Natural Deck Oil (503-222-3881).
- Pressure-treated woods generally contain copper azole, which is toxic to humans and fish. Do not use pressure-treated wood or railroad ties treated with creosote near a food garden.
- If you have chromated copper arsenate (CCA)-treated wood where human contact is common, either remove it or treat it with paint or sealer. Never burn pressure-treated wood.
- Visit [Green Depot](#) in Portland (503-222-3881) for ideas and samples.

*Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at [jeanne@earthleaders.org](mailto:jeanne@earthleaders.org).*