

VANCOUVER PAINT CONTRACTORS

Deck & Fence Staining

Deck staining, fence staining, and exterior wood finishing for Metro Vancouver properties including product selection and maintenance schedules

21 Expert Answers from Paint IQ

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Is it worth staining the fence on both sides or just our side in our Coquitlam backyard?

For maximum protection and longevity, staining both sides of your fence is absolutely worth the investment, especially in Coquitlam's wet climate. A fence stained on both sides will last 6-8 years compared to 3-4 years for single-side staining, making it more cost-effective long-term.

Why Both Sides Matter in Metro Vancouver

Coquitlam receives over 1,200mm of annual rainfall, and your fence is constantly exposed to moisture from both directions. When you stain only one side, the unstained side absorbs water freely, which then migrates through the wood and pushes against the stained side from behind. This creates several problems: the stain film can blister and peel prematurely, the wood experiences uneven expansion and contraction that leads to cracking, and moisture trapped between stained and unstained surfaces accelerates rot and decay.

The unstained side also becomes a breeding ground for mould and mildew in our humid climate. North-facing fence sections and areas shaded by trees will develop green or black growth within 1-2 years. This biological growth doesn't just look unsightly — it actively breaks down the wood fibers and creates pathways for water penetration that compromise the entire fence structure.

Practical Benefits of Two-Sided Staining

Beyond protection, staining both sides creates a more attractive property boundary. Your neighbors will appreciate the finished appearance, which can improve neighborhood relationships and potentially boost property values. Many Coquitlam neighborhoods have informal standards where most fences are maintained on both sides.

The cost difference is significant but justified. Single-side fence staining runs \$8-12 per linear foot in Metro Vancouver, while both sides costs \$12-18 per linear foot. For a typical 100-foot fence, you're looking at \$1,200-1,800 for both sides versus \$800-1,200 for one side. However, when you factor in the doubled lifespan, both-side staining actually costs less per year of protection.

Metro Vancouver Timing Considerations

Plan your fence staining for July or August when you can count on 3-4 consecutive dry days. The wood needs to be completely dry before application, and the stain needs 24-48 hours without rain to properly penetrate and cure. Semi-transparent stains are most popular for Coquitlam fences as they show the natural cedar grain while providing UV and moisture protection.

When to Consider One-Side Only

Single-side staining makes sense in limited situations: if your fence is less than 3 years old and you're planning to replace it soon, if it's a temporary boundary fence, or if your neighbor has already stained their side with a different product (mixing stain types can cause adhesion problems). Some homeowners also choose to stain only the "good" side of a fence that's visible from their main living areas.

Professional vs DIY

Most homeowners can handle fence staining as a DIY project if the fence is under 6 feet tall. You'll need a pressure washer rental (\$75-150/day), pump sprayer or brush for application, and quality semi-transparent stain (\$45-75/gallon). Professional application ensures even coverage and proper prep, especially important for weathered fences that need sanding or board replacement.

Need help finding a painting contractor for your fence project? Vancouver Paint Contractors can match you with local professionals who specialize in exterior staining and understand Coquitlam's climate challenges.

Q2

How often should I re-stain my cedar deck here in Vancouver with all the rain we get?

In Metro Vancouver, cedar decks typically need re-staining every two to three years, though high-traffic areas like stairs and main walkways may need attention sooner. Our West Coast climate is uniquely demanding on exterior wood — the combination of heavy rainfall from October through April, mild temperatures that encourage mould and mildew growth, and occasional intense summer sun creates a cycle that breaks down stain faster than in drier regions.

You can check whether your deck needs re-staining with a simple water test: sprinkle some water on the surface, and if it soaks in rather than beading up, your stain has lost its protective qualities. Other signs include greying wood, visible mildew spots, or areas where the colour has faded unevenly.

To get the most life out of your stain in Vancouver's wet climate, proper preparation is essential. The deck should be power-washed and allowed to dry thoroughly — ideally during a dry stretch in late July or August — before new stain is applied. Skipping prep work or staining over damp wood is the most common reason stain fails prematurely here.

Semi-transparent stains tend to perform well on cedar decks in our climate because they allow the wood grain to breathe while still providing UV and moisture protection. For a typical 300-square-foot deck, expect to pay between \$1,200 and \$2,500 for professional cleaning and re-staining, depending on the condition of the wood and the

product used.

Consider scheduling a professional deck inspection this spring to assess your stain's current condition before the summer staining season books up.

Q3

What's the difference between semi-transparent and solid stain for my backyard fence?

Semi-transparent and solid stains serve different purposes, and choosing the right one for your fence depends on the wood's condition and the look you want.

Semi-transparent stain penetrates into the wood fibres and lets the natural grain show through. It is an excellent choice for newer cedar fences common throughout Metro Vancouver neighbourhoods because it highlights the beautiful grain patterns while adding colour and weather protection. It wears gradually by fading rather than peeling, which makes maintenance easier over time. However, it offers less UV protection than solid stain and will need refreshing every two to four years in our climate.

Solid stain, on the other hand, sits on the wood surface more like paint. It provides a uniform, opaque colour that completely hides the grain. This makes it ideal for older fences with imperfections, patches, or mismatched wood. Solid stain offers superior UV protection and can last three to five years before needing recoating. The downside is that when it does wear, it tends to crack and peel — especially on horizontal surfaces exposed to Vancouver's prolonged wet seasons — which means more intensive prep work for the next coat.

For most Vancouver homeowners with cedar fences in reasonable condition, semi-transparent stain is the more popular choice. It complements the natural West Coast aesthetic, breathes better in our damp climate, and is more forgiving during re-application. If your fence is showing its age or you prefer a bold colour statement, solid stain can give it a fresh, clean appearance.

A good next step is to have a staining professional assess your fence wood to recommend which product will adhere best to its current condition.

Q4

Should I use oil-based or water-based stain on my pressure-treated deck in Burnaby?

For pressure-treated lumber in the Burnaby and Metro Vancouver area, water-based stain is generally the better choice, though oil-based products still have their place.

Pressure-treated wood is infused with chemical preservatives that leave residual moisture in the lumber. Water-based stains are formulated to penetrate wood that still contains some moisture, making them more compatible with newer pressure-treated decks. They also dry faster — a real advantage during Vancouver's unpredictable weather windows — and clean up easily with soap and water. Modern water-based stains have improved dramatically and now offer excellent UV protection and durability.

Oil-based stains penetrate deeper into the wood grain and can produce a richer, more natural appearance. They excel at repelling water, which sounds appealing given our rainy climate, but they take significantly longer to dry and can trap moisture inside pressure-treated wood if applied too soon. Oil-based products also produce stronger fumes and require mineral spirits for cleanup.

The critical factor with pressure-treated wood is timing. New pressure-treated lumber should weather for at least three to six months before staining to allow the treatment chemicals and excess moisture to dissipate. You can test readiness by sprinkling water on the wood — if it absorbs within ten minutes, the wood is ready for stain.

For a pressure-treated deck in our West Coast climate, a high-quality water-based semi-transparent stain offers the best balance of protection, appearance, and ease of maintenance. Look for products with built-in mildewcide, which is especially important given our damp conditions from fall through spring.

Consider having your deck assessed by a staining professional who can test the moisture content and recommend the ideal product and application timing.

Q5

How much does it cost to get a cedar fence stained professionally in the Vancouver area?

Professional cedar fence staining in Metro Vancouver typically costs between \$3 and \$6 per square foot, depending on the fence's condition, height, accessibility, and the stain product selected. For a standard six-foot privacy fence around a typical Vancouver lot — roughly 150 to 200 linear feet — you are looking at approximately \$2,700 to

\$7,200 for both sides.

Here is a general breakdown of what influences the price. A newer fence in good condition with minimal prep work will fall at the lower end. An older fence that needs power washing, sanding, mould treatment, or minor board replacements will push costs higher. The stain product itself also matters — premium semi-transparent stains from professional-grade lines cost more but last noticeably longer in our wet climate.

Most professional quotes in the Vancouver area include surface preparation such as power washing and drying time, masking off adjacent surfaces like siding or garden beds, two coats of stain applied by brush or spray-and-back-brush method, and cleanup. Some companies charge power washing separately, typically \$150 to \$400 depending on fence size and condition.

One cost factor specific to Vancouver is accessibility. Many homes in neighbourhoods like Kitsilano, Mount Pleasant, or the North Shore have fences on slopes, narrow side yards, or areas with extensive landscaping that complicate access and add to labour time.

For budget-conscious homeowners, staining just the street-facing or most weathered side can cut costs significantly while still protecting the wood where it matters most.

Request quotes from at least two or three local staining professionals to compare pricing, products, and warranty coverage for your specific fence.

Q6

My deck is turning grey and has some green mildew spots — can I just stain over it?

No, you should never stain directly over grey, weathered, or mildew-covered wood. Applying stain over a compromised surface is one of the most common mistakes Vancouver homeowners make, and it leads to poor adhesion, uneven colour, and premature stain failure — often within a single rainy season.

The grey colour on your deck is caused by UV damage breaking down the wood's lignin, which is the natural binding agent in wood fibres. The green spots are mould or mildew thriving in Vancouver's damp, mild conditions. Both need to be addressed before any stain will bond properly.

Proper preparation involves several steps. First, the deck should be cleaned with a quality deck cleaner or a mild oxygen bleach solution to kill mould and remove surface grime. Next, power washing at an appropriate pressure — typically 1,500 to 2,000 PSI for cedar, higher for pressure-treated — removes the damaged grey layer and opens

up the wood pores. After washing, a wood brightener is often applied to restore the wood's natural pH and colour. Finally, the deck must dry completely for at least 48 to 72 hours of dry weather before staining.

In Metro Vancouver, timing this process is crucial. The best window is typically mid-July through early September when you are most likely to get the consecutive dry days needed for washing, drying, staining, and curing. Attempting this during our shoulder seasons often results in moisture being trapped under the new stain.

The prep work is honestly the most important part of any staining project. Consider booking a professional deck restoration service in late spring so you are on the schedule for prime summer staining weather.

Q7

What's the best time of year to stain a deck or fence in Vancouver?

The ideal window for deck and fence staining in Metro Vancouver is late July through early September. This period offers the most reliable stretch of warm, dry weather that stain needs to properly penetrate and cure.

Stain application requires specific conditions to perform well. The wood surface must be completely dry, air temperatures should be between 10 and 30 degrees Celsius, and there should be no rain in the forecast for at least 24 to 48 hours after application — longer for oil-based products. Humidity below 80 percent is also important for proper curing, which can be tricky in our coastal climate.

Early summer in June can work, but Vancouver often experiences unpredictable rain patterns that can interrupt the preparation and drying process. September is workable too, but you are racing against shorter days and the return of fall rains. Staining in October or later is risky — even if you catch a dry spell, cooler temperatures and higher humidity mean the stain may not cure fully before the wet season arrives.

If you are planning a deck or fence staining project, the smart approach is to book your professional stainer in April or May for a July or August application date. The best contractors in Metro Vancouver fill their summer schedules quickly. This also gives you time to complete any necessary repairs — replacing cracked boards, tightening loose screws, or addressing structural issues — well before staining day.

For decks that face north or are shaded by trees, factor in extra drying time after power washing, as these areas retain moisture longer in our climate.

Start getting quotes now so you can secure a prime summer slot with a reputable staining professional.

Q8

We just built a new cedar deck — do we need to wait before staining it?

Yes, new cedar needs time to weather before it will accept stain properly. If you stain brand-new cedar too soon, the wood's natural oils will prevent the stain from penetrating, and you will end up with a blotchy finish that peels or wears off within months.

For western red cedar — the most common decking species here in British Columbia — the recommended waiting period is generally four to eight weeks of exposure to the elements. This allows the wood's surface oils to dissipate and the grain to open up enough to absorb stain evenly. You can test readiness by sprinkling water on several spots across the deck. If the water absorbs within a few minutes rather than beading on the surface, the cedar is

ready for stain.

The timing challenge in Vancouver is that if your deck is built in spring, the four-to-eight-week weathering period lands right in the ideal summer staining window. If it is built in fall or winter, the wood will weather through our rainy months, which means it may develop mildew or grey significantly before you can stain it the following summer. In that case, a thorough cleaning and brightening treatment will be needed before staining.

One option some professionals recommend is applying a UV protectant or a light seal coat immediately after construction to prevent excessive greying and mildew during the weathering period, then following up with a full stain application once the wood is ready.

During the waiting period, keep the deck clear of furniture, planters, and leaf debris that can trap moisture and cause uneven weathering. Reach out to a staining professional now to plan the ideal application date based on when your deck was built.

Q9

Is it worth staining the underside of my raised deck or just the top surface?

Staining the underside of a raised deck is worth serious consideration in Metro Vancouver, where persistent moisture from below is a real threat to your deck's longevity. While many homeowners skip it to save money, the underside is actually more vulnerable to moisture damage in our climate than the top surface.

Here is why: during our long rainy season from October through April, moisture rises from the ground and condensation forms on the underside of deck boards. Without any protective coating, this moisture is absorbed directly into the raw wood, leading to cupping, warping, and eventual rot — often before you notice any problems on the walking surface above. Cedar resists rot better than most species, but even BC cedar has its limits when exposed to constant dampness.

At minimum, the underside should receive one coat of a penetrating water repellent or semi-transparent stain. This does not need to look perfect since no one sees it — the goal is purely moisture protection. Some professionals recommend a clear wood preservative rather than a tinted stain for the underside, which costs less and still provides excellent protection.

The cost to stain the underside adds roughly 30 to 40 percent to your overall deck staining project, but it can significantly extend the life of your boards. For a 300-square-foot raised deck, expect an additional \$400 to \$900 depending on the deck height and accessibility. Given that replacing decking boards in Vancouver runs \$15 to \$30 per square foot installed, the preventative investment pays for itself.

Ask your staining contractor about underside treatment options when you get your next deck staining quote — most offer it as an add-on service.

Q10

Our neighbour's fence stain is peeling badly after one year — what causes that?

Premature stain failure — peeling, flaking, or bubbling within the first year or two — is unfortunately common in Metro Vancouver, and it almost always comes down to one or more preparation and application errors rather than a defective product.

The most frequent cause is staining over damp wood. In our climate, wood can feel dry on the surface while still holding significant moisture inside. If stain is applied before the wood has dried thoroughly after rain or power washing, moisture gets trapped beneath the stain film. As temperatures fluctuate, that trapped moisture pushes outward and lifts the stain right off. This is especially common when homeowners or inexperienced contractors rush to stain during a brief dry spell without allowing adequate drying time.

The second major cause is applying solid or heavy-bodied stain over wood that was not properly cleaned and prepped. Old stain residue, mill glaze on new lumber, dirt, and mildew all prevent proper adhesion. The stain sits on top of the contamination layer rather than bonding to the wood itself.

Other common culprits include applying stain too thickly, which is a frequent problem with solid stains, using an interior or inappropriate product outdoors, staining in direct hot sunlight which causes the surface to skin over before the stain penetrates, or choosing a film-forming stain on a horizontal surface that pools water.

In Vancouver's wet climate, penetrating semi-transparent stains generally outperform solid film-forming stains on fences because they allow moisture to move through the wood rather than trapping it.

If you are planning a fence staining project, invest in a contractor who emphasizes thorough preparation and uses products rated for coastal BC conditions.

Q11

How much should I budget for staining my 400-square-foot back deck in North Vancouver?

For a 400-square-foot deck in North Vancouver, a professional staining project typically runs between \$1,600 and \$3,600, depending on the deck's current condition, the stain product selected, and any additional work required.

Here is how the costs generally break down for a deck in reasonable condition. Power washing and surface preparation runs \$300 to \$600. This includes cleaning solution, mildew treatment if needed, and drying time. The stain product itself costs \$200 to \$500 for a quality semi-transparent or solid stain — enough for two coats on 400

square feet. Labour for application, including masking, brushwork or spray-and-back-brush technique, and cleanup, runs \$800 to \$1,800. If your deck needs board replacements, nail pops fixed, or sanding, add \$200 to \$700 depending on the extent of repairs.

North Vancouver decks often face unique cost factors. Many homes on the North Shore have elevated or multi-level decks built on slopes, which require scaffolding or ladder work that increases labour costs. Heavy tree canopy coverage — common in areas like Lynn Valley, Deep Cove, and the Upper Lonsdale neighbourhood — means more aggressive mildew treatment and potentially more coats of stain for adequate protection. Accessibility can also be challenging on hillside properties.

For the top surface only with standard preparation and a premium semi-transparent stain, budget around \$2,000 to \$2,800 as a realistic middle estimate. Adding underside treatment for a raised deck pushes the total closer to \$3,000 to \$3,600.

Get three written quotes that specify the exact stain product, number of coats, and what preparation is included so you can compare apples to apples across contractors.

Q12

Do I need to stain or seal my composite deck in Vancouver, or is it truly maintenance-free?

Composite decking is often marketed as maintenance-free, but that is not entirely accurate in Metro Vancouver's wet climate. While composite boards do not need traditional wood stain, they still require regular care. Mould and algae growth is extremely common on composite decks here due to our extended rainy season from October through April. You should clean your composite deck at least twice a year using a dedicated composite deck cleaner and a soft-bristle brush. Avoid pressure washing above 1,500 PSI, as excessive pressure can damage the surface texture and void your warranty. For stubborn mould stains, an oxygen bleach solution works well without harming surrounding plants. Some older-generation composite boards can also fade from UV exposure, particularly on south-facing decks that get strong summer sun. In those cases, a composite-specific UV protectant coating can help restore colour and add a layer of defence. Professional composite deck cleaning in Metro Vancouver typically runs \$150 to \$350 depending on the size of your deck. If your composite boards are showing significant fading or surface damage after eight to ten years, replacement panels may be more cost-effective than restoration. Check your manufacturer warranty first, as many cover fading and staining for twenty-five years. A local painting contractor experienced with composite materials can assess whether cleaning, coating, or partial replacement makes the most sense for your situation.

Q13

We just had a new pergola built with cedar posts and beams. What's the best way to stain it in this climate?

Cedar pergolas are a West Coast staple, and finishing them properly from the start will save you years of maintenance headaches. In Metro Vancouver, a semi-transparent penetrating stain is generally the best choice for cedar pergolas because it allows the wood grain to show through while providing solid moisture protection. Avoid film-forming products like solid stains or varnishes on pergola beams, as they tend to peel and flake in our rain-heavy climate, creating an ongoing maintenance burden. Before staining, let new cedar weather for four to six weeks so the wood's natural oils dissipate enough for the stain to penetrate properly. Lightly sand the surface with 80-grit sandpaper to open the grain, then clean off all dust. Apply the stain on a dry day when temperatures are between 10 and 25 degrees Celsius, which is easiest to find in late spring or early fall here. Pay extra attention to end grain on posts and beam cuts, as these areas absorb moisture fastest and cause the most rot in our climate. Two coats on end grain is a good practice. For overhead beams and rafters, a stain with built-in UV inhibitors is worth the premium since the top surfaces take direct sun exposure all summer. Plan to re-stain your pergola every two to three years for best results. Consider getting a professional quote that includes light sanding and cleaning before your first re-stain to establish a good maintenance cycle.

Q14

Should I paint or stain my cedar fence? My neighbour says paint lasts longer but I'm not sure what works best here?

This is one of the most common questions homeowners in Metro Vancouver face, and the answer depends on the look you want and how much maintenance you are willing to do. Paint creates an opaque, uniform finish and does provide a hard protective shell, but in our wet climate, that shell can become a problem. Vancouver's heavy rainfall drives moisture into the wood from the back side of fence boards, and when that moisture tries to escape, it pushes the paint film off from underneath, causing peeling and bubbling. Once paint starts peeling on a fence, you are looking at scraping, priming, and repainting, which is labour-intensive and costly. Stain, particularly a semi-transparent or semi-solid penetrating stain, soaks into the cedar fibres rather than sitting on top. It will fade gradually rather than peel, making re-application much simpler. You can usually pressure wash and re-stain without any scraping. A quality semi-solid stain on cedar fencing will last two to four years in our climate before needing refreshing. For a standard 100-linear-foot cedar fence, expect to pay \$1,200 to \$2,500 for professional staining, or \$1,800 to \$3,500 for full paint preparation and application. If your goal is a rich, natural cedar look with manageable upkeep, stain is the clear winner for Vancouver fences. If you absolutely want an opaque colour, consider a solid-

colour stain rather than paint, as it gives similar coverage with better moisture performance. Talk to a local contractor about which product lines perform best in our specific conditions.

Q15

How long should I wait before staining my new pressure-treated deck? We just had it built last month?

This is a question that trips up a lot of Vancouver homeowners, and getting the timing wrong can mean wasted money and poor results. New pressure-treated lumber is saturated with chemical preservatives and moisture when it arrives from the mill, and it needs time to dry out before stain can properly penetrate. The general rule is to wait three to six months, but in Metro Vancouver's climate, you often need to lean toward the longer end of that range. Our wet fall and winter months slow the drying process considerably compared to drier parts of Canada. A simple test is to sprinkle water on the deck surface. If it beads up, the wood is still too wet and the stain will not absorb. If it soaks in within a minute or two, the wood is ready. Another indicator is the colour of the lumber. Fresh pressure-treated wood has a greenish tint from the preservatives. As it dries and weathers, it shifts to a lighter, more greyish tone. Many contractors in Vancouver recommend building your deck in spring or early summer, letting it weather through the dry months, and then staining in early September before the fall rains begin. If you miss that window, it is better to wait until the following spring than to try staining during our rainy season. Applying stain to wet wood or in damp conditions leads to poor adhesion, blotching, and early failure. Plan your project timeline accordingly, and ask your contractor about the specific lumber brand used, as some newer micro-pressure-treated products may have shorter wait times.

Q16

Our south-facing deck gets absolutely blasted by sun all summer. What UV protection actually works for wood decks in Vancouver?

South-facing decks in Metro Vancouver face a unique double challenge. They get intense UV exposure from May through September, then endure months of heavy rain the rest of the year. Standard stains often cannot keep up with this combination, and homeowners with south-facing decks frequently find themselves re-staining every year or two. The key is choosing products with high-quality UV inhibitors, sometimes called UV blockers or light stabilizers. Look for stains that use transparent iron oxide pigments, as these provide the best UV filtration while still allowing wood grain to show. The more pigment in the stain, the better the UV protection, which is why semi-solid stains outperform semi-transparent ones on sun-exposed surfaces. For the most demanding south-facing applications, a two-step system works well. First apply a penetrating wood preservative with UV stabilizers, then follow with a semi-solid stain coat. This gives you both deep wood protection and surface UV defence. Products specifically formulated for marine or coastal environments tend to perform better in Vancouver conditions. Professional application of a premium UV-protective stain system on a typical 200-square-foot south-facing deck runs \$800 to \$1,500 in Metro Vancouver, including cleaning and preparation. Re-application every two to three years on south-facing surfaces is realistic, compared to three to four years on north-facing decks. Between stainings, you can extend the life of the finish by cleaning the deck each spring and applying a UV-protective maintenance coat. Ask a painting professional about which product lines they have had the best long-term results with on south-facing exposures in our area.

Q17

My cedar hot tub surround is looking rough after a few years. How should I refinish it without damaging anything?

Cedar hot tub surrounds take a beating in Metro Vancouver. Between constant steam and splash exposure, chlorine or bromine from the water, and our relentless rain, the wood breaks down faster than a typical deck. Refinishing requires some extra care because of the proximity to water and the hot tub equipment. Start by draining or covering the hot tub securely with a tight-fitting cover and plastic sheeting to prevent any chemical cleaners or stain from contaminating the water. Remove any equipment access panels if possible to get full access to the wood. Clean the cedar thoroughly using a wood-specific cleaner or an oxygen bleach solution. Avoid chlorine bleach, as it can damage cedar fibres and leave residue near your hot tub. For grey, weathered cedar, a wood brightener containing oxalic acid will restore the natural warm tone before staining. Sand lightly with 80-grit paper to open the grain, paying attention to areas closest to the water where mineral deposits may have built up. For the

stain itself, choose a penetrating water-based product rated for high-moisture environments. Oil-based stains tend to get slippery when wet, which is a safety concern around a hot tub. Apply the stain on a dry day and allow at least 48 hours of dry weather for curing before using the hot tub again. Because of the harsh conditions, plan to re-stain your hot tub surround annually or every two years at most. Consider adding a bead of exterior caulking where the surround meets the hot tub shell to prevent water from pooling underneath and causing rot. A contractor familiar with both painting and hot tub installations can ensure the job is done safely.

Q18

What's the best approach for painting deck and porch railings? Ours are peeling badly after just two winters?

Peeling railings after only two winters is unfortunately common in Metro Vancouver, and it usually comes down to inadequate preparation or using the wrong products for our climate. Railings are especially vulnerable because they have multiple exposed surfaces, end grain on balusters, and joints where water collects and sits. To do the job properly this time around, start with full removal of the old peeling paint. A combination of scraping, sanding, and a heat gun works best. Do not just paint over peeling surfaces, as the new paint will fail just as quickly. Once you are down to bare or sound wood, apply a high-quality exterior primer specifically rated for wood. For railings in Vancouver, an acrylic latex primer with built-in mould resistance is ideal. Let the primer cure fully, then apply two coats of premium exterior acrylic paint. The critical step that most people skip is sealing the end grain on every baluster and post top. End grain absorbs moisture like a sponge, and that moisture works its way through the wood and pushes the paint off from behind. Apply an extra coat of primer and paint to all end grain cuts, and consider adding a metal or plastic post cap to shed water away from vulnerable post tops. For the horizontal top rail, which takes the most abuse, some contractors apply a thin bead of exterior sealant where the rail meets the post to prevent water infiltration at joints. Professional railing painting in Metro Vancouver typically costs \$15 to \$25 per linear foot depending on the complexity and condition of the existing finish. Have a professional evaluate whether your current railing design has any water-trapping details that should be addressed before repainting.

Q19

Our deck looks terrible after this past winter - grey, mouldy, and some boards are rough. Can it be restored or do we need to replace it?

After a typical Vancouver winter of relentless rain and limited sunshine, most untreated or poorly maintained wood decks look pretty grim by March. The good news is that grey, mouldy, rough-looking decks can almost always be restored rather than replaced, as long as the underlying structure is sound. The first step is a structural inspection. Check the joists, ledger board, and post connections for soft spots or rot by probing with a screwdriver. If the structure is solid and the deck boards themselves are not split, warped beyond repair, or rotted through, restoration is absolutely worthwhile. The restoration process involves three main stages. First, a thorough cleaning with a deck wash solution to remove mould, mildew, and dirt. Second, a wood brightener treatment to reverse the grey oxidation and restore the natural wood colour. Third, light sanding to smooth any raised grain or rough fibres, which is common after winter moisture exposure. After the wood has dried for two to three days of good weather, apply a quality penetrating stain to protect it going forward. A full deck restoration including cleaning, brightening, sanding, and two coats of semi-transparent stain typically costs \$4 to \$8 per square foot in Metro Vancouver, so a 300-square-foot deck would run roughly \$1,200 to \$2,400. Compare that to full deck replacement at \$25 to \$50 per square foot and the value of restoration becomes obvious. The best time for deck restoration in Vancouver is late April through June, when you can count on enough dry days for proper curing. Contact a painting contractor now to get on the spring schedule, as this is the busiest season for deck work.

Q20

We have a gazebo in our backyard that hasn't been stained in years. The wood is all grey and mossy. What should we do?

Neglected gazebos are very common in Metro Vancouver, partly because they are often tucked under trees or in shaded corners where moss and algae thrive in our damp climate. The restoration approach is similar to deck work but with some important differences due to the overhead roof structure and vertical surfaces. Start by clearing any debris from the roof and cleaning out gutters or drainage channels if your gazebo has them. Blocked drainage causes water to cascade down posts and beams, accelerating deterioration. For the wood itself, use a pump sprayer to apply a deck and fence cleaner, working from the bottom up to avoid streaking. Let it dwell for ten to fifteen minutes, then scrub with a stiff brush and rinse thoroughly. Pressure washing is effective but keep the pressure under 1,500 PSI and maintain a consistent distance from the wood to avoid leaving marks. For heavy moss growth, which is extremely common on gazebo roofs and north-facing posts in Vancouver, a moss-specific treatment applied a week before cleaning will make removal much easier. After cleaning, apply a wood brightener

to restore the natural colour, then allow the wood to dry completely over several dry days. When staining, work from the top down. The overhead surfaces and rafters are the trickiest part and often require staining on your back or from a ladder, which is where professional help really pays off. Use a semi-transparent stain with UV and mildew inhibitors. Pay extra attention to joints where beams meet posts, as these trap moisture and are the first areas to show rot in our climate. Going forward, plan to clean and inspect your gazebo annually each spring and re-stain every three years to prevent it from reaching this state again.

Q21

Is it worth staining the underside of my elevated deck? I can see the joists and beams from my patio below and they're starting to look rough?

Staining the underside of an elevated deck is something many Vancouver homeowners overlook, but it can be a smart investment, especially given our climate. The underside of a deck is constantly exposed to moisture from rain splash, ground moisture rising from below, and condensation. Without protection, joists and beams will eventually develop mould, mildew, and rot, which compromises the structural integrity of your entire deck. If your deck is high enough to be a visible feature from below, such as a second-storey deck over a patio or walkout area, staining the underside also dramatically improves the appearance of the space underneath. For purely structural protection, a clear or lightly tinted penetrating wood preservative is the most practical choice. It will not change the appearance much but will add moisture resistance and mildew protection to the joists and beam surfaces. If aesthetics matter because you use the space below for entertaining, a semi-transparent stain in a colour that complements your home gives a polished, finished look. The challenge with underside staining is access and application. Working overhead is physically demanding and requires proper drop cloths to protect everything below. Spraying is typically the most efficient application method for underside work, followed by back-rolling for penetration. This is one job where hiring a professional is strongly recommended, both for quality and safety. The structural benefits make this particularly worthwhile in Metro Vancouver, where our prolonged wet seasons put enormous stress on exposed framing. If you are already planning to have your deck surface re-stained, ask your contractor to quote the underside work at the same time, as the setup and mobilization costs are already covered.

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