

Deck It Details Tree Condition Checks as Drought Enters Third Year

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Deck It, a Massachusetts deck builder specializing in composite and PVC construction, has outlined how tree condition is being weighed during site assessment for new deck projects as the state enters a third consecutive year of drought. The company said the trees standing over and around a proposed deck location have become a more prominent part of the conversation than in normal years.

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs has reported that the current drought began in 2024 and has produced declining groundwater across nearly all regions of the state. In March 2026, the Central and Northeast Regions were declared to be in Level 3 Critical Drought following limited groundwater recharge over the winter. U.S. Drought Monitor data showed approximately 67 percent of Massachusetts under active drought conditions in late July.

The relevance to deck construction is a matter of timing rather than immediacy. According to a UMass Extension fact sheet on long-term drought effects on trees and shrubs, the visible symptoms of drought are only part of the picture, and the more consequential effects often appear well afterward. The publication describes delayed secondary effects including Armillaria root rot, an opportunistic soil fungus that invades roots weakened by stress. In large trees with extensive root systems, symptoms of decline may not appear until half the root system has been killed, which the fact sheet notes can occur several years after the original drought event.

That timeline matters for a structure with a service life measured in decades. A tree that appeared healthy when a deck was built in 2023 may be in a different condition now, and a tree that appears healthy today may be carrying stress that has not yet surfaced.

"When we walk a property, we are looking at what is over the space as much as what is under it," said Patrick Byrne, co-founder of Deck It. "A homeowner is thinking about where the sun hits and where the door comes

out. Part of our job is to also look up and note what is standing there and how close it is."

Deck It said the company assesses the deck and the site, not the trees themselves, and refers questions about tree health or condition to a certified arborist. The distinction matters because evaluating whether a specific tree is sound requires training the company does not hold and does not claim.

Where tree condition does affect the company's work is in siting decisions. The position of a deck relative to mature trees influences the layout, the available footprint and how much of the yard remains usable once the structure is in place. Root systems also factor into where footings can reasonably be excavated, since digging within the root zone of a large tree presents complications that a more open portion of a property does not.

Shade is the other consideration, and it cuts both ways. Existing canopy is frequently the reason a particular corner of a yard is comfortable in July, and a design can be planned around it. But that cover is not permanent. Trees grow, are pruned, decline or are removed, and a space that depends entirely on a neighboring tree for afternoon relief is subject to changes outside the property owner's control.

"We have had homeowners tell us the spot they picked is the only shaded part of the yard," said Jake Zbikowski, co-founder of Deck It. "That is worth knowing before the design is finished, because if that shade is coming from one tree, the plan should not assume it will be there in fifteen years."

Existing decks raise a related question. Changes to the surrounding landscape accumulate quietly over time, and a deck built with a particular canopy overhead may now sit under something considerably larger, or under nothing at all. Homeowners evaluating an addition or a change in layout are reassessing the property as it stands rather than as it stood at the time of the original build.

Deck It said site conditions are reviewed during the design phase, before framing begins. The company produces a three-dimensional design during that stage, which allows a proposed layout to be reviewed against the actual property, including existing tree cover and how it falls across the space through the day.

The company added that the current conditions do not change how a deck is built, but they do reinforce the case for evaluating each property on its own terms rather than applying a standard approach across a region.

Founded in 2017 and focused exclusively on decking since 2021, Deck It designs and builds custom decks, porches and sunrooms for residential and commercial properties across Central Massachusetts and the MetroWest region, operating from a showroom in Bolton. Services include new deck construction, deck replacement, framing, railing systems, deck lighting and under-deck drainage. The company is a TimberTech Platinum Pro and Trex Pro Platinum contractor and a member of the North American Deck and Railing

Association. In 2025 the company was named Top Contractor of the Northeast by TimberTech, an award recognizing volume of TimberTech products installed.

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Deck It

Deck It is a Burlington, MA based, family-owned custom deck builder serving Central Massachusetts. Founded in 2017 by Jake and Pat, our team has focused exclusively on decking since 2021

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