

Deck It Details Shade Planning After Repeated Summer Heat Waves

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Deck It, a Massachusetts deck builder specializing in composite and PVC construction, has outlined how shade planning and site orientation are being weighed earlier in outdoor living design following a summer of repeated heat waves across the state. The company said homeowners are raising questions during the design phase about how a proposed space will perform during the hottest hours of the day, rather than after construction is complete.

Boston recorded back-to-back days of triple-digit temperatures in early July. NBC10 Boston reported that back-to-back 100-degree days had occurred only three times previously in the city's recorded history, in 1911, 1919 and 1944. According to the National Weather Service, the July 2 high broke the daily record of 98 degrees set in 1963.

The heat was not confined to a single stretch. WBUR reported in mid-July that the season had become the hottest meteorological summer in Boston's recorded history to that point, and that the city had already reached its typical annual total of roughly 12 days at or above 90 degrees. The National Weather Service and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention placed much of southern New England under major to extreme heat risk during the early July period, when heat index values across Middlesex, Worcester and Norfolk counties ranged from 105 to 112 degrees.

A second heat wave followed roughly two weeks later, with forecast highs near 97 degrees. By definition in New England, a heat wave requires three consecutive days at or above 90 degrees, and the region cleared that threshold more than once during the season.

For outdoor living design, conditions of that kind change which questions come up first. Because the sun tracks westward across the sky through the course of the day, a deck on the western side of a house takes direct exposure during the late afternoon and evening, while an eastern exposure receives its direct sun in

the morning. Deck It said that difference is significant because the late afternoon and evening are the hours most households actually use an outdoor space.

"Orientation is not a detail people bring up on their own, but it decides whether the space gets used," said Jake Zbikowski, co-founder of Deck It. "A homeowner can put real money into a deck and then find they sit on it twice a month because it is in full sun exactly when they want to be outside."

Shade in a deck project is a structural decision rather than a decorative one. A screened porch or a roofed structure carries weight that an open deck does not, including the roof assembly itself and, in New England, seasonal snow load. Deck It said that unless a deck was originally framed with that additional load accounted for, adding cover later typically requires structural work below the surface rather than an addition built on top of the existing frame.

Deck It said the design phase is where those decisions are made. The company produces a three-dimensional design during that stage, allowing a proposed layout to be reviewed against the actual property, including how the house, existing tree cover and neighboring structures fall across the space at different hours.

"We would rather have the conversation about sun and shade before anything is framed," said Patrick Byrne, co-founder of Deck It. "Once the frame is up, the options narrow considerably, and the fix becomes more work than doing it correctly the first time."

Multi-level layouts offer another approach. Separating a deck into levels can place a dining area under cover while leaving an open section for the parts of the day when sun is welcome. Privacy screens, typically installed to interrupt a sightline from a neighboring property, also cast shade depending on placement and orientation, and can serve both functions when positioned during design.

Screened porches and sunrooms extend the same reasoning. A screened structure trades some light and openness for shelter from sun, rain and insects, which affects how many hours of the day and how many weeks of the year the space stays comfortable. A sunroom, enclosed in glass rather than screen, changes the calculation again and functions across more of the year.

Existing tree canopy is a further variable. Mature trees provide shade that a design can be planned around, but that cover shifts as trees grow, are pruned 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.

Existing decks present a related question. Homeowners considering an addition or a change in layout may find that the reconfiguration alters which sections receive direct exposure, and that a space which worked at

one size performs differently once expanded or divided.

Timing also factors in. Projects intended for use during the following summer are generally planned well ahead of the season, since design, permitting and construction each occupy their own portion of the schedule before a finished space is available.

Deck It said the heat has also prompted questions about decking surfaces, though the company noted that surface temperature varies by product line, color and exposure, and that manufacturer documentation remains the appropriate reference for any specific comparison.

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. 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 Framingham, 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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