

Decked Out Construction Details Design Response to Regional Canopy Loss

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LAKEVILLE, MN - September 03, 2026 -
Decked Out Construction has outlined how the loss of mature shade trees across the Twin Cities south metro is changing the design requirements for residential outdoor spaces, following a decade of documented emerald ash borer activity in Dakota County.

The City of Lakeville has managed a citywide emerald ash borer infestation since the pest was detected there in October 2017. Following detection, the city inventoried more than 15,000 trees on public and private property in order to estimate the share of ash in the community. Phased removals of ash on public land have been carried out since 2019, and city forestry records place total canopy cover at approximately 27 percent, with more than 150,000 trees growing in maintained areas of public and private property across the community.

The pest was confirmed earlier elsewhere in Dakota County, at Eagan in 2014 and at Apple Valley in 2016, and was first identified in Minnesota in 2009. The Minnesota Department of Agriculture maintains an

interactive map tracking confirmed detections statewide. University of Minnesota Extension reports that Minnesota holds roughly 900 million ash trees, more than any other state, and that infestations frequently persist for several years before visible symptoms appear.

The practical result on individual properties is a change in exposure. A mature ash that filtered afternoon light for thirty years leaves a measurable gap when it is removed, and the ground beneath it receives direct sun where it previously received dappled shade. Sightlines between neighboring properties tend to open at the same time.

"Losing a mature tree is a design event, not just a landscaping one," said Cooper Soulak, Co-Owner of Decked Out Construction. "Shade is a site condition in the same way that grade and drainage are site conditions. When it changes, the inputs for anything built in that yard change along with it."

Exposure factors into material selection. Composite and PVC decking respond differently to sustained direct sunlight than they do in shaded positions, and surface temperature, color retention and thermal movement are all affected by how much direct sun a deck receives across a day. Manufacturers publish technical documentation for individual product lines describing performance under specified conditions, and those documents are the appropriate reference for any particular board. The relevant test provisions for these products are set out in ASTM D7032, the standard specification covering wood-plastic composite and plastic decking boards, which addresses moisture effects, thermal behavior and freeze-thaw resistance.

Orientation determines how much the change matters on a given property. A west-facing yard that has lost its canopy receives direct sun through the hottest portion of the afternoon, while a north-facing yard may see comparatively little practical difference. Two properties on the same street can therefore arrive at different design conclusions from the same tree removal, which is why exposure is assessed at the individual site rather than at the neighborhood level.

Exposure also affects whether built shade belongs in a design at all. A pergola breaks up overhead sun while leaving the space open to the sky, which suits a yard that needs relief from direct light without full enclosure. A covered porch encloses the area beneath a roof, which changes both what the space can be used for across the year and how it must be constructed, since a roof carries load that an open deck does not.

"A replanted tree takes decades to return the same canopy," said Christoph Tisdale, Co-Owner of Decked Out Construction. "Homeowners planning outdoor space now are planning around the yard they have rather than the one they had. In a lot of cases that means the shade has to be built rather than grown."

The change is not uniformly negative from a design standpoint. Yards that were heavily shaded for decades often had limited planting options and persistent moisture in the areas beneath the canopy, and the same

removal that increases sun exposure can also open a site for a larger or differently oriented structure than the tree previously allowed. Where a deck or porch is being planned after a removal, the footprint is no longer constrained by a root system or a trunk position, which can widen the range of workable layouts.

Timing also enters the decision. Ash removals in Lakeville have proceeded in phases rather than all at once, which means individual streets and properties reach the changed condition at different points. Homeowners on blocks scheduled for later phases have the option of planning outdoor space in anticipation of the change rather than in response to it.

Decked Out Construction is a licensed, locally owned deck and outdoor living builder serving the Twin Cities south metro from Lakeville, Minnesota. Founded by Christoph Tisdale and Cooper Soulak, the company builds custom decks, porches, pergolas and outdoor living spaces for residential and commercial properties, and installs composite and PVC decking from manufacturers including Trex, TimberTech by AZEK and Deckorators.

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Decked Out Construction

Decked Out Construction is a locally owned deck builder headquartered in Lakeville, Minnesota. Co-founders Christoph Tisdale and Cooper Soulak personally lead every project from design through final walkthrough

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