

USA TODAY | 103 IDEAS FROM WALLS TO CEILINGS

HOME

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NATURE'S BEST
TAKES ROOT
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NEW



OLD



REFRESH YOUR DECK

Erase the winter doldrums and get ready for spring

BY LAMBETH HOCHWALD

If you're gazing out the window at a deck or patio that looks tired and worn, you're not alone. Whipping winds, moisture and temperature extremes can do a number on even the most pristine outdoor living space. And that's all the more reason to make plans now to take yours from bleak to beautiful. Here are six ways to wake up your deck in time for fabulous parties, easy conversations and alfresco naps.

The design team at Mariani Landscape in Lake Bluff, Ill., took this patio from drab to fab with fashionable outdoor furniture, colorful foliage and a beautiful fire pit as the centerpiece.

MARIANI LANDSCAPE

BREATHE LIFE INTO UPHOLSTERY

Whether or not you've put furniture cushions in storage for the winter, they're due for a cleaning. Follow manufacturer's instructions to clean them, but if they still look worn or stained, that's your excuse to buy new ones and give your outdoor space a whole new vibe.

Shop for cushions with weatherproof fabrics, and really think about color. "Use a lighter color for your upholstered cushions and make that color the common thread in your space," suggests Warren Sheets, founder of Warren Sheets Design, an interior design firm in San Francisco.

This deck space, designed by Morgante-Wilson Architects in Evanston, Ill., uses light upholstery as a base for darker and more colorful furniture and pillows.



MAKE A CLEAN SWEEP

Pull out the pressure washer to clean up dirt and grime that's accumulated on your deck. "This is a great thing to do in the early spring, as the melted snow is gone and has left behind a layer of grit," says Carrie Woleben-Meade, director of design at Mariani Landscape, a landscape design firm in Lake Bluff, Ill.

Just be sure to follow manufacturer's instructions and monitor the setting on your power washer. "Avoid using your power washer on a super-high setting," she says. "That can actually damage your flooring, whether it's stone or wood, which can become splintered if you apply too much pressure."

REPAIR A WEATHERED DECK

If your wood deck needs more help than a simple cleaning can provide (Has the protective coating faded or worn away? Are boards split and decaying? Are you battling mold and mildew?), set aside time this spring to clean

it and apply a fresh coat of waterproof stain, and replace boards as needed.

If you're renting and can't stain your deck — landlord's orders — there are other things you can do.

"Mask imperfections by clustering a trio of potted plants together," says Kirstin Hoffmann, director of merchandising at Dot & Bo, a curated furniture and home décor shopping site. "The height of the plants will draw the eye upwards and away from the weathered deck, while modern planters help cover up any large patches of chipping paint."

