



Creating a CLEAR VIEW

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY DEREK GROENDYK

Outdoor decks have become a great extension of a home and can create a pleasant outdoor living space. Many people enjoy their decks as a place to unwind, find peace and solitude. It is certainly a place to be closer to nature, and is also often used for entertaining. Considering all these things, selecting the right products for your deck is an important decision whether you are starting from scratch or remodeling an existing deck. The two main components are the deck itself and the railing, if required.

The large majority of decks will require a railing, and while it may depend on your location, most need one once the deck is 30 inches above grade. There are a number of things that should be considered when choosing a material for a deck railing. Will the railing complement the look of the home, will the railing material meet my local building codes (for safety)? How much will the rail cost, and will it need any regular maintenance?

Currently, more so than ever before, there are a very large number of materials in the market that are available for deck railing, which is great from a consumer's perspective, but this of course may also make material selection more complicated. While there are a number of reasons to consider glass in your design, perhaps one of the most persuasive reasons is your view. Whatever the view from your deck may be, whether a lake, a wooded setting, your landscaping, yard, garden, or something else, glass is the only product that will allow you to fully view and appreciate it, whether you are seeking that peace and solitude from the day, or hoping to make an impression on your guests.

The most commonly used material in deck railings are likely some type of spindle system. Consider though that railing spindles are usually spaced 4 inches apart. This is done for safety reasons, if a 4 inch sphere cannot pass between railing spindles, then it is unlikely that a person will be able to fit in between the spindles. When you consider that prison cell doors and windows typically have bars that are 5 inches apart, your view is actually wider if you are looking through these. But how many people would want to look through prison bars? While railing spindles or balusters are certainly a good choice for safety and code concerns when it comes to your deck railing, they may not always be the most aesthetically pleasing choice. On the other hand, glass can be spaced in such a way that it will not allow someone to pass through, and yet it also allows you to look past the railing. Whatever the setting is for this outdoor portion of your home, glass will help to make the view better.

There are currently a variety of ways to use glass on your deck. Glass sections can be made long and narrow, similar to a wide spindle. Glass can also be made to run from newell post to newell post. In many areas, residential glass railings can even be installed without a traditional top rail to further declutter your view.

One of the most common misconceptions regarding glass in a railing is that it becomes a maintenance project for the life of the rail. However, experience shows that glass used in railings require much less frequent cleaning than glass used in windows. This is most often because as rain water hits the side of a house it carries with it any pollen,

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dust, dirt, etc., as it runs down the house and as it passes over the glass, some of this is left behind. Glass railings do not have this same problem as most rain will either come in contact with only the glass itself, or at most, will run over the top rail. Glass, like all products, will require some cleaning to keep your railing looking like it does on day one, but glass can also now be treated with a special coating to make cleaning easier. These treatments can be added at a minimal cost considering the time to clean untreated glass, and the coating can last for many years. Glass will also never require the sealing, staining or painting that is part of traditional rail maintenance.

The Topless glass railing is the most current trend in the glass railing market. It takes the idea of improving your view and takes it one step further by forgoing the use of a top rail. The glass glazes into newell posts but is essentially frameless at its top and bottom edges. There are topless glass railings that will meet building code requirements for residential deck railing in many areas, and when a rail is required, for example at a stairway, the rail can be built into the glass, rather than set on top of the glass, so the topless glass design can be continuous, giving you a seamless and uninterrupted view of the landscaping, be it a grassy expanse of yard, a lake, or whatever is your vista.

Glass railing may cost a few dollars more than the simple wooden spindle rail system; however, tempering efficiencies and new rail components have helped to make the cost competitive with other premium railing products.

A glass railing will add value and beauty to your home, and can free your view from a traditional spindle every 4 inches, to a grand, uncluttered view of your surroundings. □

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