

# Home & Garden

## New and old wood should be protected against the elements

We all work hard to keep our yards pleasant and appealing, yet many of us overlook the natural wood we have outdoors.

Many homeowners chose natural wood for its beauty, but think they must put up with the gray, weathered look that occurs over time.

The fact is you can keep the rich, natural color of wood by simply cleaning and protecting it.

Here are some simple steps you can take to bring back the beauty of the natural wood around your home.

### Cleaning the wood

Spring or autumn are excellent times to give your wood a

good washing.

A once-a-year cleaning will remove all the dirt and gray color.

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Bleach-free detergents won't harm your plants, but will remove nail stains and ground-in dirt. For stubborn

mildew-stains, use a small amount of household bleach

diluted with water to kill the mildew.

Be sure to rinse thoroughly before applying a wood finish.

To protect the wood, apply a protective finish every two years.

Select an oil-based finish with ultra-violet protection, which protects wood from moisture and the sun's rays that cause wood to fade and age.

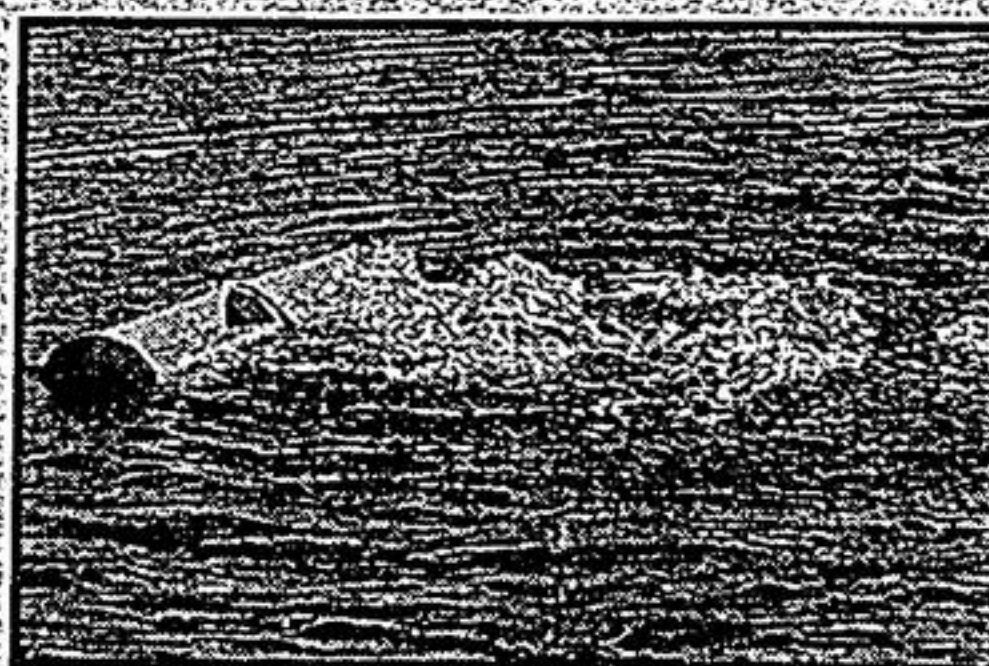
**Protect new wood**  
Although you may have heard

differently in the past, new fences, trellises, playsets and benches should be treated immediately. New wood treatments actually help the wood weather evenly, reducing the splitting and warping often associated with weathering.

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## Use all-natural products to clean

The weather is warm, the sun is shining and it's time for the annual job of spring cleaning.

But instead of pulling out your usual cleaning supplies, try something a little different - cleaners that are good for the environment.

- To fully clean and deodorize carpets, vacuum, then liberally sprinkle cornstarch and baking soda. Leave on for one hour and vacuum again.

- Wash your mirrors, glass and windows with pure soap and water. Then rinse with a solution of one part vinegar and four parts water.

Use washable, reusable cheese cloth rather than paper towels.

- Polish any silver by bringing one quart/litre water to a boil with one tablespoon (15 ml) salt, one tablespoon baking soda and a strip of aluminum foil and dropping the silver in. Boil for three minutes and polish with a soft cloth.

- For bathroom cleaning, use a firm-bristled brush with baking soda and rinse with water.

- Commercial air fresheners work by masking smells and coating the nasal passage with chemicals which diminish the sense of smell by deadening the nerves. Instead of these, try the all-natural air purifiers - house plants. Baking soda in your garbage can or refrigerator will also help to reduce odors at their source.

This article was submitted by Greenpeace.

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