

DAY'S END

Focus on good design and clever construction



A closed stringer detail looks good but can trap debris (A). On open-stringer stairs, the author cuts nosing returns to mimic the look of interior stairs (B, C). The author's "two-tier" style looks good with contrasting treads and risers (D). The "waterfall" style requires more blocking (E) and can be used with contrasting or single-color tread-and-riser combinations (F).

Deck Stair Upgrades

by Bayn Wood

When we are designing a new or replacement composite deck, we like to offer our clients different stair options to help differentiate ourselves from our competitors. Typically, this includes wrapping the pressure treated stringers with a composite fascia detail that conceals the cut ends of the treads and risers.

In our base stair package, for example, we screw composite fascia boards to the outside face of the stringers. While this closed stringer detail looks good and installs quickly, it tends to collect debris, and we've found that the fascia eventually separates from the framing (A).

That's why I think our open-stringer options are a better upgrade. The first is inspired by interior oak stair treads that have short applied returns to hide the end grain. We cut a short 45-degree return on the tread nosing and a matching 45-degree cut on the return, and fasten the returns to the tread with adhesive—Loctite PL polyurethane construction adhesive for composite treads, and PVC glue with PVC treads—and two pairs of screws—one pair per deck board—that we drive through countersunk holes (B, C).

Another option is to wrap the stair risers around the stringers, and then cut the treads flush with the risers. Then we trim

the fronts and sides of the treads with solid 5 1/2-inch-wide deck boards ripped down the middle (D).

Our favorite way to finish an open-stringer style of exterior stair is with what I call a waterfall detail. While it requires a fair amount of extra blocking to support the waterfall and the ends of the treads, the detail doesn't require any finicky 45-degree return cuts on the treads. I also like it because the look can be varied by using contrasting or matching colors for the treads and the waterfall (E, F). ❖

Bayn Wood is president of Autumnwood Construction located in Macomb, Mich.

PHOTOS BY BAYN WOOD