

NEW BRUNSWICK PAINTING

Deck & Fence Staining

Deck staining, fence staining, wood sealing, wood preservation, and outdoor wood care for NB climate

19 Expert Answers from Paint IQ

newbrunswickpainting.com/construction-brain

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How do I clean and brighten weathered grey cedar fence boards in Miramichi before restaining them?

Weathered grey cedar fence boards in Miramichi can be restored to their natural warm tone using oxygen bleach (sodium percarbonate) followed by proper cleaning and brightening before restaining. The grey colour is caused by UV damage and surface mildew, but the underlying cedar is usually still sound and can be beautifully restored.

Understanding Cedar Weathering in NB's Climate

Cedar fencing in Miramichi faces unique challenges from the Maritime climate — high humidity from the nearby river system, salt air influence, and NB's intense summer UV. The grey weathering you're seeing is a combination of lignin breakdown from UV exposure and surface mildew growth encouraged by humidity and shade. The good news is that this weathering is typically only surface-deep, and cedar's natural rot resistance means the underlying wood is likely still in excellent condition.

The Cleaning and Brightening Process

Start with **oxygen bleach** (sodium percarbonate), not chlorine bleach which can damage wood fibers. Mix oxygen bleach powder with water according to package directions — typically 1 cup per gallon of warm water. Apply this solution generously to the fence boards using a pump sprayer or brush, working in manageable sections. Let it sit for 15-20 minutes to break down the grey oxidation and kill surface mildew. You'll actually see the grey colour start to lift as the oxygen bleach works.

After the oxygen bleach treatment, scrub the boards with a stiff brush to remove loosened debris and grey surface material. A deck brush or even a pressure washer on low setting (1200-1500 PSI maximum) can help, but be careful not to damage the cedar's soft grain. Rinse thoroughly with clean water and allow the fence to dry completely — at least 48 hours in Miramichi's humidity.

Brightening for Natural Cedar Colour

For maximum brightness restoration, follow the oxygen bleach treatment with a **wood brightener** containing oxalic acid. Products like Behr Wood Cleaner & Brightener or Benjamin Moore Restore Wood Brightener are available at NB hardware stores. The brightener neutralizes any alkaline residue from the cleaning process and further lightens the wood back toward its natural honey-cedar tone. Apply the brightener according to manufacturer directions, typically letting it work for 10-15 minutes before rinsing.

Timing and Weather Considerations

In Miramichi, plan this project for late spring through early fall when you have several consecutive dry days. The cleaning process requires the fence to dry completely between steps, and you'll want to restrain within 2-4 weeks of brightening for best adhesion. Avoid cleaning during periods of high humidity or when rain is forecast within 48 hours. Early morning start times work well — clean in the morning, let the fence dry through the afternoon and overnight.

Preparing for Restaining

Once cleaned and brightened, inspect the fence boards for any loose or damaged sections that need repair before staining. Sand any rough spots lightly with 120-grit sandpaper. The fence should be completely dry (moisture content below 15% — test with a moisture meter if you have one) before applying stain. Choose a high-quality semi-transparent cedar stain that will penetrate the wood while allowing the restored natural grain to show through.

When to Hire a Professional

This is generally a good DIY project for homeowners with the time and patience for the multi-step process. However, consider hiring a professional if your fence is extensive (over 200 linear feet), if you discover significant rot or structural issues during cleaning, or if you want to combine the restoration with repairs or replacement of damaged sections. Professional fence restoration services have commercial-grade equipment and can complete large projects efficiently within NB's painting season.

Need help finding a professional for fence restoration or staining? New Brunswick Painting can match you with experienced contractors familiar with cedar restoration in the Miramichi area.

Q2

Should I use a tinted sealer or a full pigmented stain on a new spruce fence in New Brunswick?

For a new spruce fence in New Brunswick, a semi-transparent stain is typically the best choice over a tinted sealer, but the decision depends on your desired look and maintenance preferences.

Semi-transparent stains offer the ideal balance for NB's climate. They penetrate deeply into the spruce grain while providing more UV protection and weather resistance than clear sealers. With spruce being a softer wood that's prone to weathering, you need more protection than a tinted sealer provides, but you likely want to showcase the natural wood grain that makes a fence attractive.

Tinted sealers work well on dense hardwoods but don't provide enough protection for spruce in New Brunswick's harsh freeze-thaw cycles. Spruce is relatively soft and porous, so it needs the deeper penetration and higher pigment content that semi-transparent stains offer. A tinted sealer will fade faster and require reapplication every 1-2 years in NB's UV-intense summers and moisture-heavy springs.

Timing is critical for your new spruce fence. If it's pressure-treated lumber, wait 3-6 months before staining to allow the treatment chemicals to weather out and the wood to dry properly. You can test readiness by sprinkling water on the boards — if it beads up, wait longer. If it soaks in, the wood is ready. For untreated spruce, you can stain immediately after installation.

Product recommendations for NB conditions include semi-transparent acrylic stains from Benjamin Moore, Sherwin-Williams, or Cloverdale Paint. Look for stains specifically rated for harsh climates. Popular colours for spruce fences in NB are cedar tones, honey gold, or weathered grey — these complement the natural wood grain while providing 3-4 years of protection before needing reapplication.

Application timing matters significantly in New Brunswick. Apply stain during dry weather in late spring through early fall, avoiding the hottest part of summer days. Early morning or late afternoon application prevents the stain from drying too quickly in direct sun, which can cause lap marks and uneven penetration.

For a professional finish and proper coverage of a full fence, consider hiring a painting contractor who can spray-apply the stain efficiently and evenly. Find local painting professionals through the New Brunswick Construction Network who have experience with exterior wood staining in our Maritime climate.

Q3

Why does deck stain fade much faster on horizontal deck surfaces than on vertical fence boards in New Brunswick?

Horizontal deck surfaces fade dramatically faster than vertical fence boards in New Brunswick because they endure far more intense UV exposure, water pooling, and foot traffic — often requiring restaining every 2-3 years versus 4-5 years for vertical surfaces.

The primary culprit is **direct UV bombardment**. Horizontal deck boards face the sky and receive the full intensity of New Brunswick's summer sun for 8-12 hours daily. UV radiation breaks down the pigments and binders in deck stain, causing that familiar silvery-gray weathering. Vertical fence boards, by contrast, only receive direct UV for a portion of the day as the sun moves across the sky, and they're often partially shaded by trees, neighboring structures, or the fence itself.

Water exposure patterns create the second major difference. Rain hits horizontal deck surfaces directly and pools in any low spots, board joints, or around fasteners. In New Brunswick's wet climate — with 40+ inches of annual precipitation — this constant water exposure leaches out the stain's protective oils and pigments. Water also freezes in winter, creating expansion that further breaks down the stain film. Vertical fence boards shed water quickly due to gravity, experiencing much less prolonged moisture contact.

Foot traffic and furniture accelerate wear on deck surfaces in ways that fence boards never experience. Every step, dragged chair, or dropped tool creates micro-abrasions that expose fresh wood beneath the stain. New Brunswick's freeze-thaw cycles make this worse — ice forms in tiny scratches, expands, and flakes off more stain. Vertical surfaces avoid this mechanical wear entirely.

The **wood grain orientation** also matters. Deck boards are typically installed with the growth rings facing down (bark side up) to shed water, but this orientation makes the wood more prone to checking and splitting as it expands and contracts with NB's temperature swings. These cracks allow moisture penetration that breaks down stain from within.

Choose semi-transparent stains over solid stains for horizontal surfaces in NB — they penetrate deeper and fade more gracefully than film-forming solid stains that can peel. For maximum durability on deck surfaces, consider a two-coat system: penetrating stain followed by a deck coating designed for horizontal wear. Plan to restain horizontal deck surfaces every 2-3 years, while properly stained vertical fence boards can often go 4-5 years between treatments.

Need help finding a deck staining professional? New Brunswick Painting can match you with experienced contractors who understand how to maximize stain life in our challenging Maritime climate.

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Can I stain my pressure-treated wood garden shed siding in Dieppe NB the same way I stain a deck?

Yes, you can stain pressure-treated shed siding using similar techniques to deck staining, but there are important differences in product selection and application methods that will give you much better results.

Pressure-treated lumber used for shed siding and deck boards is essentially the same material, so the staining principles are similar. However, **vertical siding behaves differently than horizontal deck surfaces** — it sheds water more effectively but is more visible, so you'll want to pay extra attention to achieving even coverage and avoiding drip marks.

Timing is crucial in Dieppe's climate. Pressure-treated wood needs to weather for 3-6 months before staining to allow the treatment chemicals to leach out and the wood to open up for proper stain penetration. If your shed is brand new, wait until late summer or early fall before staining. The wood should feel rough to the touch and absorb water droplets rather than beading them up. Test a small area first — if water soaks in within 10 minutes, the wood is ready.

Product selection differs slightly from deck staining. While you can use the same semi-transparent deck stain (\$45-70/gallon at Maritime lumber yards), **solid body stain often works better on shed siding** because it provides more uniform coverage on vertical surfaces and better protection against Maritime wind-driven rain. Brands like Benjamin Moore Arborcoat, Sherwin-Williams SuperDeck, or Cloverdale's exterior stains perform well in New Brunswick's climate. Avoid deck stains specifically labeled "horizontal surfaces only."

Application technique is where shed staining differs most from deck work. On horizontal deck boards, you can work with gravity and let the stain flow into the wood grain. On vertical siding, you need to **work in manageable sections from top to bottom** to maintain a wet edge and prevent lap marks. Use a brush for the best penetration on siding — while you might roll or spray a deck, brushing works the stain into the wood grain more effectively on vertical surfaces. Apply thin, even coats and immediately brush out any drips or runs.

Weather considerations are the same as deck staining — work during Dieppe's exterior season (May through October), avoid direct sun, and don't stain if rain is forecast within 24 hours. The high humidity near the Petitcodiac River means morning dew can delay your start time, so plan to begin after 10 AM once surfaces are completely dry.

Consider hiring a professional if your shed is tall or has complex rooflines that require ladder work. For a simple single-storey shed, this is an excellent DIY project that should take a weekend and cost \$200-400 in materials depending on shed size. The results will protect your investment and significantly improve the appearance of your garden shed for 4-6 years in New Brunswick's climate.

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Q5

Can I stain a pergola or arbour attached to my deck in Moncton using the same stain as the deck?

Yes, you can absolutely use the same stain on your pergola or arbour as your deck — in fact, using matching stain creates a cohesive, unified look that's very popular in Moncton's residential areas.

Stain compatibility depends on the wood type and construction. If your pergola is built from the same material as your deck (typically pressure-treated lumber or cedar), the same stain will perform identically on both structures. Most deck stains in the \$45-70/gallon range work well on vertical surfaces like pergola posts and horizontal surfaces like pergola tops and cross-beams. Semi-transparent stains are particularly forgiving across different wood orientations and grain patterns.

Consider the exposure differences between your deck and pergola. Your deck surface takes the brunt of foot traffic, rain, and snow, while your pergola faces primarily UV exposure and weather from above. The pergola's vertical posts and beams may actually hold stain longer than your deck surface because they don't experience the same wear. However, the top horizontal beams of the pergola get full sun and rain exposure similar to your deck, so they'll need the same maintenance schedule.

Moncton's climate affects both structures similarly. The Maritime humidity, freeze-thaw cycles, and UV exposure that impact your deck will affect your pergola in much the same way. Plan to restain both structures on the same 2-3 year cycle for semi-transparent stains, or 4-6 years for solid-body stains. Spring and fall are ideal staining seasons in Moncton — avoid the high humidity of summer and ensure temperatures stay above 10°C during application and overnight curing.

Application technique may vary slightly. Deck staining typically uses a pad applicator, roller, or pump sprayer for the large flat surface. For your pergola's posts and beams, a brush or small roller works better for even coverage around the dimensional lumber. If using a sprayer, mask nearby surfaces and plants carefully — pergola staining involves more vertical and overhead work where overspray is a concern.

One practical tip for Moncton homeowners: Buy an extra quart of stain beyond what you calculate for coverage. Pergola posts and beams have more surface area than they appear, and having matching stain on hand for touch-ups after our Maritime winters is invaluable. Store the extra stain in a cool, dry place and it will keep for years.

For a DIY-friendly project like pergola staining, most Moncton homeowners can handle this themselves with proper brushes and a steady ladder. However, if your pergola is particularly tall or complex, consider having it done professionally along with your deck staining for efficiency and safety.

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Q6

What is the best type of stain for a pressure-treated deck in New Brunswick's Maritime climate?

A 100% acrylic semi-transparent or semi-solid deck stain is the best choice for a pressure-treated deck in New Brunswick — it handles the province's freeze-thaw cycles, high humidity, and wet seasons better than any other product type.

Pressure-treated lumber in NB decks is already treated to resist rot and insect damage, but the wood itself still needs protection from UV degradation, moisture absorption, and the physical stress of 100-plus freeze-thaw cycles per year. Water-based acrylic stains are flexible — they expand and contract with the wood rather than cracking the

way oil-based products can after repeated freeze-thaw cycles. This flexibility is critical in a province where temperatures can swing from -25°C in January to +30°C in July, and where spring brings heavy rain and snowmelt that saturates exposed decks.

Semi-transparent stains are the most popular choice because they let the wood grain and texture show through while adding colour and UV protection. They penetrate into the wood surface rather than forming a film on top, which means they tend to wear away gradually and evenly rather than peeling — an important advantage in NB's harsh climate. Products like Cabot Australian Timber Oil, TWP (Total Wood Preservative), and Armstrong Clark Semi-Transparent are well-regarded in the NB market. **Semi-solid stains** offer more colour and UV coverage while still showing some wood grain — a good middle-ground option if your pressure-treated wood has some weathering or colour variation you want to tone down.

For NB's coastal communities — Saint John, Shediac, Bathurst, and Bay of Fundy-facing properties — look for a stain with added mildewcide. Salt-laden maritime humidity promotes algae and mildew growth on deck surfaces faster than inland areas like Fredericton or Woodstock. Many premium deck stains include mildewcide in the formula; check the product label or ask at your local paint store.

Practical tips: Wait at least 2-3 months after new pressure-treated lumber is installed before staining — the preservative chemicals need time to off-gas and the wood surface needs to dry and weather slightly to accept a stain properly. Test with a few drops of water: if they bead up, the wood is not ready. Apply stain when temperatures are between 10°C and 30°C, humidity is below 70%, and no rain is forecast for at least 24-48 hours. In NB, this typically means June through early September offers the most reliable windows.

Avoid solid-colour deck stains on a new pressure-treated deck — they form a surface film that can peel on PT lumber that still has moisture off-gassing from the treatment chemicals. Semi-transparent penetrating stains are far more forgiving on newer wood.

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How often should I restain my deck in New Brunswick given the freeze-thaw cycles and humidity?

Most NB decks need restaining every 2-3 years for semi-transparent stains, or every 4-6 years for solid-body stains — though the actual interval depends heavily on your deck's exposure, the quality of the original application, and the product used.

New Brunswick is genuinely one of the harder provinces on exterior wood finishes. The freeze-thaw cycle count in most NB communities — Fredericton, Moncton, Saint John, and Miramichi all see 100 or more freeze-thaw cycles annually — is the primary culprit. Water works into the wood's surface pores, freezes, expands, and physically breaks down both the wood fibres and the stain finish sitting on top. Couple that with NB's average 65-85% summer humidity, periodic nor'easter rain events, and UV exposure on south- and west-facing decks, and you have conditions that are genuinely tough on any exterior coating.

Semi-transparent penetrating stains typically last 2-3 years on a fully exposed NB deck before they need another coat. Because they penetrate rather than film over, they wear gradually — you'll notice the colour fading and the wood looking dry and grey before any dramatic failure. That gradual fade is actually a good sign: it means you can restain over the existing finish without stripping. When restaining, a light cleaning with a deck cleaner and a rinse is usually enough prep if you're restaining on schedule rather than waiting until the wood is fully grey and degraded.

Solid-body stains and deck paints last longer on paper — 4-6 years — but when they fail in NB's climate, they fail badly. Film-forming products that crack and peel require full stripping before you can restain, which is significantly more labour-intensive than a simple re-coat. Many NB deck owners find that the maintenance cycle with semi-transparent products, even though more frequent, is far less work overall.

A simple test: Every spring after the snow melts and the deck dries out, splash a cup of water on the surface. If the water beads up, the stain still has life in it. If the water soaks in immediately, it's time to clean and restain. On a north-facing deck or one under significant tree cover, mildew growth is a better indicator — any black or green staining means it's time for a cleaning and a fresh coat. Decks in sheltered spots (under a roof overhang or covered porch) can often go 3-4 years between semi-transparent restaining even in NB.

Timing tip: Late summer — August and early September — is often the ideal time to restain a NB deck. The heat of peak summer has dried the wood thoroughly, humidity is typically lower than June and July, and you have the entire off-season ahead to let the stain cure fully before freeze-thaw cycles begin again in November.

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Q8

Should I use a semi-transparent or solid stain on my cedar deck in Moncton?

For a cedar deck in Moncton, semi-transparent stain is almost always the better choice — it protects the wood, lets the natural beauty of the cedar grain show through, and is far easier to maintain over time in NB's demanding climate.

Cedar is a premium deck material precisely because of its naturally attractive grain and warm reddish-brown colouring. Covering all that character with a solid stain or paint is like covering hardwood floors with linoleum — it works, but you're hiding what you paid for. A good semi-transparent stain enhances and protects the cedar colour while adding UV stabilizers that prevent the grey weathering that cedar is prone to when left unprotected. Products like Cabot Australian Timber Oil, Penofin Red Label, or Armstrong Clark in a cedar or redwood tint work beautifully on NB cedar decks and are available through paint stores in Moncton.

The deeper practical reason to favour semi-transparent on cedar is the maintenance story. Semi-transparent stains penetrate the wood surface rather than forming a film on top, which means they don't peel or crack — they simply fade over time. When they fade, you clean the deck and recoat. That's it. Solid stains and paints, by contrast, form a surface film. In Moncton's climate — and Moncton gets its fair share of winter freeze-thaw, spring rain, and summer humidity — film-forming finishes on cedar decks almost inevitably crack, blister, or peel within a few years. Once a solid stain starts peeling, you're looking at significant stripping and sanding labour before you can apply anything new.

When solid stain makes sense: If your cedar deck is already old, grey, and weathered — with surface cracking and significant colour variation — and you don't want to invest in the heavy stripping and restoration needed to return it to a state where a semi-transparent finish would look good, a solid stain can give the deck a fresh, uniform

appearance and buy several more years of life. On a deck in that condition, hiding the grain is a reasonable trade-off. Similarly, if the cedar has had oil-based stains applied repeatedly over many years and the surface is built up and inconsistent, a solid stain gives you a clean reset.

Application tip for Moncton conditions: Cedar's natural oils can actually resist penetration of water-based products if the wood is very new and the oils haven't had time to diminish. For newly installed cedar, wait 60-90 days and do the water-bead test before staining. Apply in the morning once the overnight dew has dried, and avoid staining in direct afternoon sun — the Moncton summer sun can cause the stain to dry too fast on the wood surface before it has fully penetrated, leaving a blotchy result.

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Q9

How do I prepare an old deck for restaining in New Brunswick when the previous stain is peeling?

Peeling deck stain must be fully removed before restaining — applying new stain over peeling old stain is the single most common reason NB decks look terrible within a season of being "freshened up." Good preparation is the entire job; the actual staining is the easy part.

Peeling typically means the old stain was a film-forming product (solid stain or deck paint), or the surface was contaminated or too moist when the previous coat was applied. Either way, you cannot stain over it. The new stain will bond to the old failing surface, not to the wood, and you'll be peeling again within a year. The goal of preparation is to get back to bare, clean, dry wood — or as close to it as possible.

Start with a deck stripper. Products like Cabot Deck Stripper, Restore-A-Deck Stripper, or Olympic Premium Deck Cleaner are available at paint stores in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John. Apply the stripper according to the label directions — most require wetting the deck first, applying the stripper, letting it dwell 15-30 minutes, and then scrubbing with a stiff-bristled deck brush. A pressure washer (1,200-1,600 PSI for softwood decks; do not use high pressure on cedar or the wood fibres will fray) rinses the loosened material away. You will likely need multiple passes on a deck with heavy old solid stain buildup.

After stripping, let the deck dry thoroughly. In NB's climate, plan for at least 48-72 hours of dry weather before testing moisture content — longer in the spring or after a rainy stretch. Use a moisture meter and confirm the wood is below 15% moisture content before staining. If the deck has grey weathering or any remaining old stain residue, follow the strip with a wood brightener (oxalic acid-based products like Restore-A-Deck Brightener or Cabot Wood Brightener). The brightener neutralizes the tannins and oxidation that cause grey weathering, opens the wood pores, and prepares the surface to accept new stain evenly.

Once the wood is clean, dry, and brightened, inspect every board carefully. NB freeze-thaw cycles cause checking (small cracks) and splitting in deck boards. Any severely cracked, soft, or punky boards should be replaced before staining. Fill minor cracks and gaps with a deck-compatible caulk. Sand any rough or raised grain with 60-80 grit sandpaper or a belt sander on stubborn areas. Then apply your new semi-transparent stain in the right conditions — 10°C to 30°C, low humidity, no rain for 24-48 hours.

For NB homeowners: The best time to do this stripping work is late spring (late May to June) once the deck has fully dried out from winter snowmelt, or late summer (August). Avoid stripping in the heat of July if you can — chemical strippers work faster than expected in hot sun and can be hard to control. A peeling deck that was last stained with a solid product will require considerably more labour than one with a worn semi-transparent finish — budget an extra day or hire a professional if the scope looks significant.

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What is the best time of year to stain a deck in NB and how long does it need to dry?

The best time to stain a deck in New Brunswick is late August through mid-September, though any period from June through early October can work well with the right conditions. Spring staining is possible but carries real risks that NB's climate amplifies.

The late-summer window is ideal for several reasons specific to New Brunswick. By August, the wood has had the entire summer to dry out fully after spring's heavy rains and snowmelt — moisture content in deck boards is typically at its lowest of the year. Humidity levels also tend to drop in August and September compared to the muggy mid-summer weeks of July, when NB's maritime air can push humidity into the 75-85% range and make proper penetration and drying of deck stain difficult. Temperatures in August and September are comfortable for working outdoors, consistently above the 10°C minimum that all deck stains require, and there is typically a full month before the first frost risk arrives in early October.

Spring staining risks in NB: Many homeowners want to stain the deck as soon as the snow melts — completely understandable after a long NB winter. But April and May bring saturated soils, frequent rain, and wood that has absorbed significant moisture over the winter. Staining over wood with moisture content above 15% traps moisture under the finish, which then pushes out through freeze-thaw and causes early peeling. If you're set on spring staining, wait until late May at the earliest, test moisture content with a meter, and watch the extended forecast for a solid 3-5 day dry window.

Drying times in NB conditions: Most water-based acrylic deck stains are dry to the touch in 1-4 hours at 20°C and 50% humidity — but in NB's more humid conditions, add time. At 70-80% humidity, the same product may take 4-8 hours to dry to touch. Light foot traffic is usually safe after 24 hours; full furniture return and heavy use should wait 48-72 hours. Some penetrating oil-based products (like TWP or Penofin) require 24-48 hours to dry to touch but offer excellent long-term penetration into the wood.

Critical rule: Do not apply stain if rain is forecast within 24-48 hours. In NB, check the Environment Canada forecast carefully — not just the daytime forecast but also overnight. A surprise rain event on fresh stain ruins the entire project. Morning dew can also be an issue: always let the deck dry for 2+ hours after overnight dew burns off before applying stain.

One coat or two: Most quality penetrating semi-transparent stains are designed for a single generous coat applied wet-on-wet (applying the second application while the first is still wet, allowing it to absorb into the wood). Some solid stains and deck paints require two separate coats with drying time in between. Always follow the product label for your specific stain.

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Q11

Can I stain a new pressure-treated deck right away or do I need to wait in New Brunswick?

With most pressure-treated lumber, you need to wait before staining — but how long depends on the treatment type and how the wood was dried before purchase. Trying to stain too early is one of the most common and costly deck mistakes made by NB homeowners.

Traditional pressure-treated lumber is injected with preservative chemicals — most commonly copper-based preservatives like ACQ or MCQ — in a water-based process that saturates the wood fibres. This treatment process also soaks the wood with water. When you see that fresh PT lumber at the lumber yard looking slightly green and feeling dense and heavy, much of that weight is moisture from the treatment process. If you apply a stain over wood that is still saturated with treatment moisture, the stain cannot penetrate the wood cells properly, and it will sit on the surface rather than bonding to the wood. When the moisture eventually escapes, it takes the stain with it.

The wait time varies. Kiln-dried after treatment (KDAT) pressure-treated lumber is dried before sale and can potentially be stained relatively quickly — do the water-bead test and if water soaks in, proceed. Standard “wet” PT lumber from most NB lumber yards and home improvement stores needs to dry in the sun and air for 2-4 months before it is ready for stain. In NB’s climate, a deck built in May may not be ready to stain until late July or August.

The water-bead test is your best guide: Sprinkle a few tablespoons of water onto the deck surface. If the water beads up and sits on the surface, the wood is still too moist or has surface oils blocking penetration — wait longer. If the water soaks into the wood surface within 30 seconds, the deck is ready for stain. This test costs nothing and is more reliable than any calendar date.

In the first NB fall and winter after installation, an unstained PT deck will weather to a grey tone and the wood surface will naturally open up for stain penetration. Many NB homeowners let the deck weather through its first winter unstained and then stain it the following spring or summer — this actually produces excellent stain adhesion and penetration. As long as the deck is not showing significant grey weathering or surface cracking, a year of weathering before staining is perfectly acceptable for PT lumber.

Choosing the right product for new PT: Semi-transparent penetrating stains are far better suited to new PT lumber than solid stains or paints. The residual treatment chemicals and natural moisture movement in newer wood can cause film-forming products to peel. A penetrating semi-transparent stain gives the wood room to breathe and move while still adding colour and UV protection.

If you're building a deck in Fredericton, Moncton, or anywhere in NB this spring, plan to stain it in August or September of the same year — or the following spring. That timeline aligns naturally with both the wood's readiness and NB's ideal staining weather.

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Q12

How do I stain a fence in NB — brush, roller, or sprayer — and which method lasts longest?

A pump garden sprayer or airless sprayer combined with back-brushing gives the best penetration and longest-lasting results — but for most NB homeowners staining their own fence, a quality brush alone is the most practical choice for a durable finish.

The method that lasts longest is not just about the application tool — it's about how well the stain penetrates the wood. Stain that sits on the surface rather than soaking into the wood fibres will fail much faster, regardless of how it was applied. This is especially true for cedar and pressure-treated fences in NB's climate, where freeze-thaw cycling and maritime humidity punish surface-only coatings aggressively.

Brush application is the gold standard for penetration on fence boards. Working the stain into the wood with a brush forces it into the grain, cracks, and surface pores in a way that a roller rolling over the surface cannot match. A 3-4 inch synthetic bristle brush (Purdy or Wooster make excellent options) lets you work both faces of fence pickets and get into tight spaces between boards and around post caps. Brush application is slower, but on a cedar fence it produces excellent results that last 3-5 years in NB.

Roller application is faster on solid fence panels or board-on-board fences with flat sections, but rollers do not penetrate as deeply as brushes. On rough-cut cedar, a roller simply rides over the surface without forcing stain into the wood. If you use a roller, follow it immediately with a brush to work the stain in — this technique (roll then brush) combines speed with penetration. Use a 10mm nap roller for smooth-faced fence boards.

Sprayer application is the fastest for large fence runs — a 50-metre fence that would take a day with a brush can be sprayed in a couple of hours. However, sprayers must always be paired with back-brushing (immediately brushing out the sprayed stain) to force it into the wood. Spraying alone, without back-brushing, leaves stain sitting on the surface and produces the shortest-lived finish. Also keep in mind wind: NB can be breezy, particularly in coastal communities and open rural areas, and spraying stain in any wind risks overspray onto vehicles, windows, neighbouring property, and vegetation. Mask everything carefully and check the forecast before spraying outdoors in NB.

Practical approach for most NB fence staining projects: For a residential fence in Moncton, Fredericton, or Saint John — say, a cedar privacy fence 1.8 metres tall and 20-40 metres long — a pump garden sprayer (the type used for insecticide, available at hardware stores for 0-50) is the most practical DIY tool. Spray one section at a time, then immediately brush out the stain with a wide brush. This back-brush-and-spray approach moves faster than brush alone and produces deep penetration. Wear old clothes, gloves, and eye protection — stain is relentless on skin.

Apply stain on a dry, overcast day for ideal results: direct hot sun causes the stain to dry too fast on the wood surface before it has penetrated, leaving a blotchy, surface-only finish. Do both faces of fence boards when possible, and don't neglect the post tops and bottom rail — these are the first areas to fail in NB's wet climate.

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What causes deck stain to peel on New Brunswick decks and how do I prevent it?

The most common cause of peeling deck stain in New Brunswick is moisture trapped under the finish — either from painting over wood that was too wet, or from water working back into the wood through cracks after application. NB's climate makes this problem worse than in drier provinces, but it is entirely preventable.

Peeling and flaking deck stain is the source of endless frustration for NB homeowners, particularly because it seems to happen even when a fresh coat was applied only a year or two ago. Understanding why it peels is the key to stopping it.

The leading causes in New Brunswick specifically:

Moisture at application time is the number one culprit. Wood that was stained while still damp from spring snowmelt, a recent rainstorm, or morning dew will fail within months. Moisture trapped under stain expands as it tries to escape through freeze-thaw cycles and eventually blows the stain off from underneath. In NB, spring feels like the natural time to deal with the deck, but April and May wood is often still holding significant moisture from the winter. Always test with a moisture meter (wood below 15%) or the water-bead test before staining.

Film-forming products — solid stains, deck paints, and any product that builds a film on the surface rather than penetrating the wood — peel in NB's climate far more reliably than penetrating semi-transparent stains. Film-forming finishes cannot handle the freeze-thaw expansion and contraction of deck boards; they crack, and once cracked, water gets under the film and peeling begins. Penetrating stains fade gradually rather than peel dramatically — a significant advantage for NB decks.

Applying new stain over old failing stain seals the doom of the new coat. New stain bonds to whatever is underneath it, not necessarily to the wood. If the old finish is failing, the new coat fails with it.

Poor surface preparation — staining over dirt, mildew, greying wood, or mill glaze on new PT lumber — prevents proper bonding and penetration. Deck surface preparation (cleaning, stripping if needed, brightening) is not optional in NB if you want a finish that lasts.

UV degradation on south- and west-facing decks is real. The same UV radiation that fades your car's paint attacks deck stain. Without UV stabilizers in the stain, the binder breaks down and the finish fails. Premium deck stains include UV absorbers; budget products often do not.

Prevention checklist for NB decks: Only stain when wood moisture is below 15% and temperatures are between 10°C and 30°C. Use a penetrating semi-transparent stain rather than a film-forming solid product. Clean and, if necessary, strip and brighten the surface before every recoat. Recoat on schedule (every 2-3 years for semi-

transparent stains) rather than waiting until the finish has failed completely. Inspect the deck every spring after snowmelt and address any cracked or failed spots before moisture can work into the wood.

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Q14

Should I use a deck stain or a deck paint on my Fredericton deck and what is the difference?

For most Fredericton decks, deck stain is the better choice over deck paint — it is easier to maintain, holds up better through the Capital Region's freeze-thaw cycles, and when it eventually needs refreshing, the process is far less work than stripping and repainting a peeling deck.

The fundamental difference between deck stain and deck paint comes down to how the product interacts with the wood surface. **Deck stain** — particularly semi-transparent or semi-solid penetrating stains — soaks into the wood fibres rather than sitting on top of them. Because the stain is in the wood rather than on it, it cannot peel. As it ages and weathers, it fades gradually and evenly. When it's time to refresh the surface, a cleaning and a fresh coat of stain over the worn surface is all that's needed.

Deck paint (and solid-colour deck coatings) forms a film on the wood surface. This film provides a smooth, hard, opaque finish that can look beautiful when new. The problem in Fredericton's climate — and this applies across most of New Brunswick — is that film-forming products are in constant battle with the wood underneath. As the deck boards absorb and release moisture through the seasons, and as freeze-thaw cycles cause the wood to expand and contract, the rigid paint film eventually cracks. Once cracked, water gets under the film, freezes, and lifts the paint off in sheets. Fredericton averages well over 100 freeze-thaw cycles per winter season, which puts painted decks under significant stress.

When deck paint does make sense: If you have an old deck with heavily weathered, discoloured, or patched boards where the wood appearance is beyond saving with a semi-transparent stain, a solid deck paint can give the surface a clean, uniform look and a few more years of useful life. It's a reasonable strategy for a deck that is 15-20 years old and will eventually be replaced anyway. Similarly, concrete or composite deck surfaces (not wood) can handle paint well since they don't have the same moisture-movement issues.

A word on epoxy and specialty deck coatings: Products marketed as deck resurfacers or deck renewal coatings are thick, film-forming products that can bridge significant cracks and give a badly deteriorated deck a fresh surface. These can work, but in NB's climate they share the same eventual peeling problem as deck paint — and when they fail, they fail spectacularly and are very difficult to remove.

Practical recommendation for Fredericton homeowners: Use a quality water-based penetrating semi-transparent or semi-solid deck stain. Benjamin Moore Arborcoat, Cabot Australian Timber Oil, and Armstrong Clark are all available through paint stores in Fredericton and well-suited to NB conditions. Expect to reapply every 2-3 years, but each reapplication is a day's work rather than the multi-day scraping and prep marathon that a failing painted deck requires. Choose the path that makes the maintenance cycle easy — in NB's climate, penetrating stains consistently win that comparison.

Need help finding a painting professional for your Fredericton deck project? New Brunswick Painting can match you with a local contractor for a free estimate.

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Q15

How do I maintain a stained deck through a New Brunswick winter to make the finish last longer?

The best thing you can do to extend a deck stain's life through a New Brunswick winter is to apply a quality finish in the fall on clean, dry wood — and then stay off the deck with metal shovels and ice scrapers all winter long. Most premature deck stain failures in NB aren't caused by the stain itself, but by mechanical damage during snow removal and neglecting end-of-season prep.

New Brunswick throws everything at exterior wood: 100-plus freeze-thaw cycles, heavy wet snow loads, ice, salt tracked in from sidewalks, and UV exposure during the occasional sunny January thaw. A good 100% acrylic exterior stain — or a solid-colour deck product — is designed to flex through these cycles, but only if the finish is intact and the wood underneath stays dry. Once moisture gets under the stain through cracks, nail holes, or worn edges, freeze-thaw expansion does the rest and you end up with lifting and peeling.

Late-season prep makes a real difference. Before the snow flies, sweep the deck thoroughly, remove any debris trapped between boards, and do a quick inspection for cracked boards, protruding nails or screws, and any areas where the stain has worn thin. If you spot bare wood, do a spot-touch-up in September or early October while temperatures are still above 10°C — the minimum application temperature for most exterior stains. Spot-treating worn areas before winter keeps moisture out and buys another full season before a complete recoat is needed.

During winter, use a plastic shovel or a roof rake for snow removal — metal blades gouge into the stain surface and leave raw wood exposed. Avoid using salt or chemical ice melters directly on a stained deck; calcium chloride is particularly damaging to wood fibres over time. If traction is a concern, use sand or non-chemical ice grips instead.

In spring, once the snow is gone and the deck has had a couple of weeks to dry out, do a post-winter inspection. Check for any boards that have lifted, stain that has peeled, and whether any seasonal cracking has appeared in the finish. This is the ideal time to clean the deck with a deck wash product (or a diluted oxygen bleach solution), let it dry fully to below 15% moisture content — test with an inexpensive moisture meter — and do any spot repairs before the summer season.

Semi-transparent stains tend to be more forgiving than solid stains over multiple winters because they absorb into the wood grain rather than sitting on top. But they do need reapplication every 2-3 years in NB. Solid stains can last 4-6 years but are far more prone to peeling if moisture gets in at any point.

If your deck is showing signs of widespread peeling, grey weathered wood, or deep stain that has turned chalky and isn't cleaning up, that's a sign it's time for a full strip and recoat rather than another winter of patch work. A professional painter can assess whether your current finish is worth maintaining or if a fresh start will serve you better long-term.

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What deck stain brands are best for NB's climate — Cabot, Olympic, or Benjamin Moore Arborcoat?

All three are solid brands, but for New Brunswick's demanding climate of freeze-thaw cycles, Maritime humidity, and salt air exposure, **Benjamin Moore Arborcoat and Cabot Australian Timber Oil (for semi-transparent) or Cabot Solid Stain consistently earn top marks from NB painting professionals.** Olympic stains are widely available and a reasonable mid-range choice, but Arborcoat and Cabot have stronger track records in cold, wet Maritime climates.

Benjamin Moore Arborcoat is arguably the premium choice in the NB market. It's a waterborne alkyd formula — which means it has the penetration and adhesion advantages of an oil-based product but cleans up with water and meets VOC regulations. Arborcoat is available in solid, semi-transparent, and clear finishes. The solid stain version is particularly well-regarded for older decks with weathered or uneven wood, as it provides excellent hiding power and adheres well even to previously stained surfaces. Arborcoat semi-transparent is beautiful on new cedar and pressure-treated lumber, and holds its colour well through NB summers. Expect to pay 5-80 per gallon at Benjamin Moore dealers in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John.

Cabot has a long history in Maritime Canada, and their Australian Timber Oil is a favourite for new cedar and mahogany decks where you want to preserve the natural wood tone. It penetrates deeply and provides excellent water repellency. Cabot's solid deck stain is also competitive with Arborcoat in terms of durability, and tends to be slightly easier to find at some NB hardware and paint stores. Cabot products run 0-70 per gallon depending on the product line.

Olympic stains, available at hardware stores across NB, are a reasonable option for cost-conscious projects — particularly Olympic MAXIMUM, which has a decent track record. However, in NB's freeze-thaw environment, the mid-range penetrating stains in this line tend to show wear after 2 seasons on fully exposed deck surfaces. For a protected deck or a fence, Olympic performs well enough. For an exposed south-facing deck in Fredericton or a coastal deck in Shediac, investing in Arborcoat or Cabot pays off in fewer recoat cycles.

A few things matter as much as brand selection: proper surface prep, applying at the right temperature (10-27°C, no rain in the forecast for 48 hours), and not over-applying — thin, even coats absorb far better than heavy flooding. Whatever product you choose, follow the manufacturer's coverage rate. Most premium deck stains cover 100-150 square feet per litre for a semi-transparent, or 80-120 square feet per litre for a solid stain.

If you're unsure which product is right for your specific wood type, existing finish, and exposure, the staff at independent Benjamin Moore dealers in NB are generally very knowledgeable — it's worth a conversation before you buy.

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Q17

How do I strip old deck stain before applying a new colour on my Moncton deck?

Stripping old deck stain before applying a new colour requires a chemical stain stripper or deck stripper, mechanical sanding, and often a brightener treatment to restore the wood's pH before the new stain goes on. Trying to apply a new colour directly over an old, incompatible stain is one of the most common causes of peeling and blotchy results.

The process starts with cleaning. Power wash the deck at medium pressure (1,200-1,500 PSI is plenty — more than that on older wood can raise the grain and damage the fibres). Let it dry for 48-72 hours, then assess what you're dealing with. If the old stain is a **semi-transparent penetrating stain**, a good deck stripper like Cabot Deck Cleaner, Olympic Deck Cleaner, or Restore-A-Deck Stripper will often lift it well enough to apply a new semi-transparent or solid over top. Follow the product directions — apply the stripper, let it dwell for 15-30 minutes (don't let it dry), then scrub with a stiff brush and rinse thoroughly.

Solid stains are harder to strip because they form a film on top of the wood rather than penetrating into it. If you have a failing solid stain with peeling patches, you need to remove all the loose material — which usually means a combination of chemical stripper plus sanding with a belt sander or random orbital. All loose paint must come off before you re-coat, or the new stain will peel again within a season. In Moncton's climate, where freeze-thaw is relentless, any areas of poor adhesion will fail through their first winter.

After stripping, the wood will likely look grey, blotchy, and possibly raised in grain. **This is normal** — use a wood brightener (also called a neutralizer or deck brightener, available where stain strippers are sold) to restore the

wood's natural pH, which opens the pores and helps the new stain absorb evenly. A brightener step makes a noticeable difference in how smooth and even the final colour looks, especially on older pressure-treated lumber. Apply the brightener, let it sit for 15-20 minutes, rinse, and let the deck dry fully — ideally 48-72 hours in dry weather.

Once the moisture content is below 15% (test with a moisture meter — this step matters in Moncton's often-humid spring and early summer), you're ready for the new stain. If you're switching from a semi-transparent to a solid stain, the process is more forgiving. If you're going from solid to semi-transparent, you may not achieve a fully uniform look because the old stain colour will show through in spots — a solid stain is usually the better call after stripping a previous solid.

In terms of timing, aim for the late-May to mid-September window in Moncton for deck stripping and staining — warm enough for proper dry times but not so hot that the stripper evaporates before it can work. Avoid stripping in direct hot sun; work in the shade if possible. The full strip, brighten, dry, and stain process usually takes 3-4 days, so plan for a weather window accordingly.

If the deck boards are severely weathered, split, or riddled with raised grain from years of freeze-thaw, a professional painter can assess whether stripping and recoating is worthwhile or whether some or all boards need replacement first.

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Q18

Can I stain a composite deck or do composite decks not need staining in New Brunswick?

Most composite decks do not need staining and are not designed to accept traditional wood stains — but some composite products can develop surface staining, mildew, or fading that requires cleaning or a specialty composite deck coating. Whether you should stain your composite deck depends entirely on the product brand, age, and what problem you're trying to solve.

Modern composite decking products — Trex, TimberTech, Fiberon, and similar brands — are made from a blend of wood fibre and recycled plastic with a factory-applied cap layer. This cap layer is specifically designed to resist moisture, staining, and UV fading without any maintenance finishing. Applying a traditional oil-based or penetrating wood stain to a capped composite deck does very little — the stain can't penetrate the plastic-composite surface, so it sits on top, looks blotchy, and peels off quickly. In NB's freeze-thaw climate, you'd be back to square one after one winter.

Older composite decks without a cap layer (products made before roughly 2010-2012, or budget composites) behave more like wood and can be more prone to absorbing moisture, growing mildew, and fading. For these, specialty composite deck paints or solid-colour composite coatings — products like DeckOver, RustOleum Restore, or specific deck paints from Sherwin-Williams — can be applied after thorough cleaning and prep. These aren't stains in the traditional sense; they're coatings that sit on top of the surface and need to be maintained like paint.

Mildew and algae growth is a common issue on composite decks in New Brunswick's humid Maritime climate, particularly on shaded or north-facing decks in areas like Fredericton's older neighbourhoods or coastal communities. This isn't a staining problem — it's a cleaning problem. Most composite deck manufacturers recommend annual cleaning with a composite deck cleaner (oxygen bleach-based products work well and are gentler than chlorine bleach) and a soft-bristle brush. Power washing at low pressure is acceptable on most composites, but always check the manufacturer's guidelines — high pressure can damage the cap layer.

If your composite deck has faded significantly and the colour change bothers you, some manufacturers offer touch-up kits or factory-matched sealers for their specific products. For severe fading or staining that cleaning won't resolve, a solid-colour deck coating product applied by a professional is an option — but understand that once you coat a composite deck, you're committing to maintaining that coating going forward.

For new composite decks installed in NB, the best maintenance approach is annual cleaning in the spring after snow melt, inspecting for any mould or mildew growth during the humid summer, and following the manufacturer's specific care instructions. Wood stains and oil-based products are not the answer for a modern capped composite deck.

If you're unsure whether your composite deck is capped or uncapped, or whether a coating makes sense for your specific situation, it's worth a conversation with a professional painter who has experience with composite deck coatings. The wrong product choice here wastes money and can make the surface harder to refinish later.

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How much does it cost to stain a cedar fence per linear foot in New Brunswick?

Professional fence staining in New Brunswick costs \$5-12 per linear foot for a standard cedar fence, making a typical 150-foot fence run \$750-1,800 depending on the condition of the wood, the product used, and whether both sides are stained.

What drives the price variation is primarily condition and scope. A new cedar fence or one in good condition that just needs a light cleaning and one coat of fresh stain is at the lower end — \$5-7/linear foot. A fence that has been neglected for several years, with grey weathered wood and green algae, requires pressure washing, wood brightener treatment, and possibly two coats of stain — that pushes toward \$8-12/linear foot.

One versus two sides is an important clarifying question when getting quotes. Single-side staining is standard, but staining both sides produces better protection. Expect roughly a 50-65% premium for staining both sides.

Stain product choice significantly affects both price and longevity. A semi-transparent penetrating stain (\$45-70/gallon) lets the cedar grain show through and needs reapplication every 2-3 years in New Brunswick's climate. A solid-body stain (\$50-75/gallon) hides the grain but lasts 4-6 years. For most NB homeowners with cedar fencing, a **semi-transparent penetrating stain** is the better long-term choice.

NB's short outdoor season matters for fence staining. The ideal window is **mid-May through mid-September**. New cedar should be allowed to weather for 3-6 months before first staining.

For DIYers, fence staining is a realistic weekend project with a pump garden sprayer. A 150-foot fence uses roughly 3-4 gallons of semi-transparent stain on one side. Material cost runs \$150-280, making DIY a genuine money-saver compared to the \$750-1,800 professional price.

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