

Room *for Improvement*

with Bryan Baeumler



Deck and Fences

Now that I have the interior under way, it's back outside to make sure we have some privacy, and a place to put the barbecue.

Using a string line to mark out the property lines and the deck footing locations, we marked and dug about 50 holes, set our posts in concrete and poured the footings for the deck. I always use a laser level to double check the height of deck footings – I like it when the posts carrying the beams are the same length, although if it means extending your footing more than 12" above grade, I'd rather extend the post.

For the fence, we're using a relatively new product called Thermowood (www.superiorthermowood.com). It's basically regular SPF (spruce, pine or fir) that's been cooked. The heat treatment process removes undesired moisture, naturally occurring sugars and resins. The end result – heat treated lumber is resistant to moisture, insects and rot without the use of chemical treatments. Thermally modified SPF is more abundant and less expensive than cedar, easy on the environment, and it looks and smells great! We started with 5' solid vertical panels, and opted for a 12" square lattice section across the top. The important thing to remember when building a fence is that there are people on the other side of it – make sure you make nice with the neighbours and get their input (or share the costs) before putting up a wall.

We have a pretty big deck going in the backyard, and I wanted to rest all of the joists on top of the beams, but because it's a low deck we ended up having to hang the joists from flush beams – a lot more work, but with a near ground level deck the options are limited. I wanted to do an 8' radius on the corner of the deck facing the pool (something I've never actually done before), so there was a lot of math involved.

Pythagoras I'm familiar with – I use his $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$ formula all the time to square corners – but for this I had to look up the rules of Pi.

After a lot of calculating and cutting, the radius came out perfect on the first try – not something that happens every day! To save on costs, we're using pressure treated lumber to build the frame of the deck, with thermowood deck boards and trim to 'spruce' it up. When you're building your own deck, be sure to research the size and span of your deck joists. No one likes a spongy deck, and your safety depends on it.

I'm scared to finish the deck before the rest of the house is complete – it may be too tempting to pull up a chair and throw a steak on the barbecue...