

## Installing your Ipé Tongue & Groove Porch Flooring

Our ipé tongue & groove porch flooring is suitable for outdoor covered porches. It should not be used either in uncovered environment or in an interior application. ***Our T&G flooring should be used only in a covered location that provides protection from exposure to the sun and to weather.***

***The following are tips we have gathered over the years from our customers that you might find useful. We are not installers or contractors, so please research and consult professionals and your local building code for handling, designing, installation tools and methods, and finishing. These tips are simply that – tips – and should not be interpreted as sufficient installation instructions.***

### I. Preparation for your ipé porch flooring

Before installing your flooring, it's important to ***let the material adjust*** to your local climate. The adjustment time depends on the climate and temperature, but a good rule of thumb is ***1 to 2 weeks***.

Store your ipé in a cool, dry place, out of direct sunlight and elevated from the ground by at least 4". If you don't have such a place and you plan to keep the material stacked, you can cover the surface with a tarp to shield the decking from direct sunlight; however, be absolutely sure to allow air circulation around the decking. For best results, lay your decking boards across the underlying framing members.

We also recommend that you ***allow the porch framing for flooring to adjust to the local climate for the one to two weeks*** before installing the flooring. In this way, both the framing and flooring will attain similar moisture content and consequently minimize reduce potential problems of buckling or separation of the flooring if installing on the framing too soon.

### II. Designing your porch floor

Ipé is a natural material and it is imperative to design your porch with several considerations in mind. Proper porch design is as important to the longevity of the structure as are the details of specifications and installation.

**Ventilation.** ***T&G flooring, because of its design, does not allow drainage or ventilation between boards. Therefore, you must make sure that there is sufficient air ventilation beneath the porch and install the porch at a pitch that is adequate for water-runoff.*** Consult your local building code for pitch requirements.

Inadequate air circulation beneath the porch and trapped moisture between framing components will compromise the serviceability and long-term appearance of the porch floor. There should be ***at least 24" below your porch***, and there should be ***open ventilation on at least 3 sides*** of the porch. For this reason, we do not recommend installing any type of enclosure or lattice on the sides below your porch, because it blocks ventilation. Do not attach ipé flooring directly to any solid surface (subfloor, concrete, existing decking, or rubberized membranes over plywood).

**Board spacing.** Install the T&G boards without spacing. They will ultimately remain quite tight, with only slight gaps between boards. Kiln-dried boards will shrink less than air-dried boards, but both types of boards from efloor.com should be just fine.

**Board shrinkage.** Our ipé may shrink a small amount over time. This means that the spacing between your boards will increase a small amount as the boards shrink.

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**Joist system.** Install 1x flooring on 16" O/C joist systems. Install 5/4x flooring on 16" or 24" O/C joist systems. If you are installing a floor with a diagonal pattern, we advise shorter joist spacing. Your local building code may specify more details. **Do not use a subfloor.**

### III. Installation tips

Ipé is a very heavy, dense wood. Therefore, you cannot use nails to install it; you must use tools described below.

**Tools.** We recommend using carbide tipped cutters, saw blades, and power tool bits. We recommend 40-tooth carbide blades as "good", 60-tooth blades as "better", and 80-tooth blades as "best." For drilling, use a high quality bit; cobalt alloy drill bits are a good choice. For larger holes, use a forstner bit.

**End Sealing Cuts.** End checking (tiny cracks) and splitting can occur when the boards lose moisture. When you cut a board, you expose end grain. The ends of our ipé boards are already sealed. After you crosscut ipé, it is important to re-seal the cut ends, in order to prevent end splits and checking. **Seal the ends immediately (within a few minutes) with a clear aqueous wax end sealer, such as Anchor Seal by UC Coatings. Follow the directions provided by Anchor Seal.** You just brush on the sealer and let it dry; it will dry clear. One quart of Anchor Seal should be sufficient for 500 sq. ft. of decking.

**Drilling.** Pre-drill all your boards. Pre-drill pilot holes close to the actual standard screw or nail diameter to prevent splitting. Trim-head screws require a pilot hole slightly larger than the diameter of the screw head to permit countersinking.

**Screws.** **Use stainless steel screws**, because they have superior corrosion resistance, maximum holding power, and ease of use. We suggest Swaneze stainless steel #7 trim head screws. Do not use galvanized screws or fasteners, because they will discolor the wood.

### IV. Installation Methods

T&G ipé can be installed in either ways. **Always use stainless steel screws.**

- 1) **Face screw-down method.** Trim head screws are small and are only slightly noticeable. Screw trim head screws into the face of the flooring.
- 2) **Tongue screw-down method.** Screw through the tongue of boards into the joists. Nailing through the tongue of boards is not recommended, because ipé is so hard that nails can cause splitting of the wood.

### V. Finishing

Ipé is an extremely dense wood and contains oil and alkaline. For that reason, many oil-and-water and oil-based coatings will react to the wood, with effects ranging from drying and adhesion problems to color changes in the wood.

**If material needs to be finished on all 6 sides for water repellency, we recommend applying a penetrating oil finish with a UV protectant to all sides of your flooring BEFORE you install it to prevent moisture from collecting on the underside of the project. Messmers UV Plus is an excellent product for this purpose. Follow the directions provided by Messmers.**

### VI. Enjoy your porch!

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