

Weatherproofing is elementary

Taking some protective measures will ensure your outdoor furniture goes the distance. By Marleena Forward

Many people buy expensive pieces of outdoor furniture and assume they are endlessly durable and imbued with magical anti-rot particles. Unfortunately this is not the case, but there are a number of simple measures you can take to extend the lifespan of your precious pieces.

Matthew Lee from Outdoor Nation (pictured below) says it is critical to remember that outdoor furniture is exposed to high levels of both moisture and UV light, which degrade most materials.

Melbourne-based Outdoor Nation produces environmentally friendly outdoor furniture including chairs, benches, tables and

daybeds. Lee uses a range of materials including stainless steel, stone, recycled timber, recycled plastic and timber from expired rubber plantation trees.

Lee says some materials perform better than others in the great outdoors.

"Australian hardwood has a fairly good life-cycle in the outdoor setting," he says. "So does a lot of European-forested timber, like European beech.

"Stone is very good, which you can use for table tops. Corrosion-resistant metal, like stainless steel or even aluminium, is another good option.

"Certain types of plastics (we like to use

recycled plastics) can also be used – they have what's called UV stabilisers in them."

There is no foolproof method of protecting outdoor furniture against the elements, but Lee shares a few tips for slowing down the ageing process.

"The easiest way to give wood an extended service life is to sand it intermittently, maybe once a season, and then reapply timber oil or lacquer," he says.

"Galvanised metal and aluminium will often be painted, and to maintain its integrity, just repaint it every few years. For stainless steel, you can either use stainless steel cleaner, or an even easier way to keep it clean is to wipe

it down with kerosene, which is basically a light mineral oil. Do it once every three to six months, at the start of summer and the start of winter."

But while these precautions will help keep your furniture looking new, Lee says it's all a matter of taste.

"Most timbers will go silver-grey over time," he says. "It depends what you like – some people like that weathered look. In good-quality furniture, weathering won't affect the structural integrity of the wood." ●

Outdoor Nation sells through Eco Concepts in Richmond. Visit www.outdoornation.com.au or www.ecoconcepts.com.au

