

Tiger Claw[®]

Hidden Deck Fasteners

Tips for selecting hidden deck fasteners

Cost. The cheapest is not always the best.

Ease of installation. Can you install them yourself or do you need to hire a contractor? Do you need to be under the deck in order to install the fastener? Look for a fastener with a simple “topside” installation. Read the instructions before buying. Make sure you understand the installation process.

Hold down strength. This is one of the most important factors when selecting a hidden deck fastener. The hold down strength will keep your boards from cupping, squeaking, or moving. Pressure treated lumber especially has a tendency to move after drying in the sun so you will need something with a lot of hold down power. Look for thicker gauge stainless steel, a large surface on the fastener, wide spacing to distribute hold down force, and more than two prongs. A flange can add strength and stability during installation.

Hint: Compare the top of a screw (hold down area) to a deck fastener that has two or four prongs that go into a board. You’ll find the hidden deck fastener has two to four times greater surface area holding down your deck board than a screw.

Special tools. One of the hidden costs is the requirement to purchase special tools in order to install your hidden deck fastener. Some fasteners require a biscuit cutter, a router, or a special installation hammer. Others include an installation tool with every box or bucket of fasteners.

Material. For the best hold down strength, select a fastener made of heavy gauge stainless steel. This will also reduce the threat of corrosion.

Glue. Does your deck fastener require the use of glue? If yes, then the glue will ultimately hold down your boards and not the fastener. Glue does not provide the hold down strength that most pronged fasteners do. Glue can also be compromised in severe weather situations.

The Weather. Look for a fastener that is going to hold up over time, especially if you live in an area with varying weather conditions. Remember that when water freezes under the boards, they will eventually expand and start lifting up. Again, look for a fastener that has the optimal hold down strength.

Linear expansion. When using composite lumber, the length of the boards can grow up to 3/8 of an inch. Screws don’t have any give thus run the possibility of being sheared. Look for fasteners with a slotted hole that allows for expansion and contraction. Look for a design that allows the board to move.