

Thanksgiving Year-Round



Although you're reading this in January, I wrote it during the week of Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving may be my favorite holiday. Yeah, I love the food and it's good to see the family, but those aren't the primary reasons. As I'm a word guy, "Thanksgiving" is more than an icon for me – the word has meaning, and the timing of that meaning shouldn't be limited to one day a year.

In fact, most of us have a lot to be thankful for, although it's easy to lose sight of that fact. Maybe the economy is still in the tank, and no one seems to expect a speedy recovery. But at least it doesn't seem to be in freefall anymore. And if you do have work building decks, well, how good is that?

Think about it. Other remodelers get stuck inside, doing nearly as much work to avoid disrupting the homeowner's life as they do to rehab the bathroom or kitchen. And talk about stressful for the homeowner – what's worse than having one of those two rooms torn up?

Deck builders have it good. Almost all the work is outside. You rarely have to take your boots off or put on dainty blue shoe covers to get to the work. Dust control isn't much of an issue, and you almost never catch the homeowners in their pajamas. Sometimes it's cold or hot or wet, but on a lot of other days you get to work under blue skies, a boon that interior remodelers, like office workers, can only envy.

I know this because I still do some deck building nights and weekends. Well, weekends now that daylight savings time is but a fond memory. Some of it is hard work for a middle-aged guy – digging footing holes and wheelbarrowing yards of concrete uphill wasn't easy 20 years ago. But doing those things on my current project, I worked a couple of college-age helpers into the ground. I felt good about that. And on the last two Saturdays, I got to hear the hounds and horns of the local fox hunt passing by. Hawks and crows and geese have livened my days with their migration, and the chickadees have shown up to grace the early winter with their gentle call. I've gotten to know a couple of other contractors who're working on this job, and because of that, I have the promise of a few pounds of venison sausage for my larder. Really, there aren't better people on the planet than contractors.

This particular project is a funky little round deck tucked under a weeping cherry tree that shades the deck from the western sun. It presented some challenging geometry problems for me to solve, and in the end I'll have created a great place for the homeowners. And what's really cool is that they're friends of mine. I know I'll be watching the sun set from that deck next summer, a cold beer in my hand, and a feeling of thankfulness in my soul.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy Engel".

Andy Engel
Editor

Unlike most of the people you know, we want your two cents.

While it's nice to hear about what we're doing right, it's more interesting to hear about what we're doing wrong. If you saw something you loved or hated, or if you've got a tip that could help out other readers, we want to know.

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