

FACTORY FURNITURE

Splits and stains and why these are a natural occurrence



From the photos, it is clear that cracking is typical for any timber

Timber is prone to cracking and splitting, particularly during the summer months. This phenomenon can be attributed to dramatic changes in atmospheric humidity and temperature fluctuations. Wood is a hygroscopic material, meaning it naturally absorbs and releases moisture in an attempt to reach equilibrium with its surrounding environment. When there are changes in the environment, such as increases or decreases in humidity and temperature, the timber adjusts itself to match these conditions.

During the summer, the air's moisture content and temperature often fluctuate significantly. As the humidity decreases, the wood loses moisture and dries out. This drying process causes the wood to shrink. Because this shrinkage is not always uniform, it can lead to internal stresses within the wood, resulting in cracks and splits. These surface cracks, known as checks, are a natural response of the wood trying to balance its internal moisture content with the external environment.

Another common issue with timber is tannin staining or runoff. Tannins are natural compounds found in many types of wood, particularly in hardwoods like oak, cedar, and redwood. When exposed to moisture, tannins can leach out of the wood and cause staining on nearby surfaces, such as concrete, stone, or painted areas. This tannin runoff can appear as dark streaks or discoloration and is most noticeable after rain or heavy dew.

Tannin staining is not considered a defect but rather a natural characteristic of certain woods. It can be managed by using sealers or finishes that help lock in the tannins, although this introduces a long-term maintenance requirement. Regular cleaning of affected surfaces can also mitigate the visual impact of tannin stains.

This behaviour, including both cracking and tannin staining, is a typical and expected characteristic of timber, especially in outdoor settings. These natural responses do not compromise the structural integrity or performance of the wood in most applications. Instead, they are indicators of the wood's natural interaction with environmental changes.

We usually do not recommend applying finishes to the timber because it introduces a long-term maintenance requirement. Finishes can help protect the wood by reducing moisture exchange and controlling tannin runoff, but they also require regular upkeep to maintain their effectiveness. In many cases, allowing the wood to naturally weather and adjust to its environment is preferable, as it reduces the need for ongoing maintenance while still providing durable and functional timber.

Embrace Nature's Beauty: Choose Natural Timber

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