

**A Beginner's Guide to: CATCHING JUMBO PERCH**

Summer 2021



# CottageTIPS

MAGAZINE

## BUYER'S GUIDE: ASSESSING WATER LEVEL RISKS

### TOP DOCK TIPS FOR NEW OWNERS

### PLUS

**How To Photograph  
Water Birds**

**Choosing A Composting  
Toilet**

**Chainsaw Won't Start:  
Now What?**

**Kathy's Cottage Quiche**

### COTTAGE SUCCESSION PLANNING

**Is a Bear Stalking  
Your Cottage?**

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## EDITORIAL

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# Welcome to the Lake!



Cottage ownership has never been more popular.

City slickers are giving the cabin lifestyle a try. People who purchased properties in recent years are spending more time at their retreats, and long-time cottage owners are rediscovering their love for the lake.

New buyers face a hot market where multiple bids are now common. This could lead to a rushed decision, and some parts of the due diligence process might get overlooked. Our feature about

water levels should help cottage hunters make the right decision when searching for their dream retreat.

Existing cottagers who previously only spent a few weeks at the lake during the summer are now working from the cabin throughout the cooler months. This means firing up the wood stove. Seasoned pros have already mastered the operation of their wood-burning units. For those who are new to the wood stove, we have some handy tips.

On the same theme, most cabin owners source their firewood from the property. Collecting wood is a laborious chore and often requires the use of a chainsaw. It's a fantastic tool, but as many of us know, the chainsaw doesn't always work properly. To help out, the Cottage Tips team has put together a useful troubleshooting article on the topic.

All the hard work we do around the property creates quite an appetite. Fortunately, food is at the heart of the cabin experience and it always seems to taste better at the lake. Don't miss Kathy's cottage quiche recipe to satisfy that cabin hunger. It's the perfect choice when preparing a simple cottage meal.

Fresh fish is another great option to feed the gang. Cottage owners and guests who want to catch their dinner should take a look at our perch-fishing piece. This tasty fish is abundant, easy to catch, and great for anglers of all ages.

Repairs, leisure, and ownership structures are also covered in this issue. Check out the tips on choosing a composting toilet, photographing water birds, dock maintenance, and succession planning. It's quite a mix and we hope there is something for everyone.

Whether you are brand new to the cottage experience or a decades-long cabin lover, this cottage season will certainly be one to remember. Please take care, stay safe, and have a wonderful summer.

Andrew  
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# How to Photograph Water Birds

By Cottage Tips Staff

Water birds spend their time searching for fish, frogs, insects, and other food along the shoreline near the cabin. These birds are skittish, so cottage photographers need a good strategy to get great pictures.

### PLAN THE PHOTO

Each type of bird has its own habits. Great blue herons often return to a particular spot to feed. Once you know the bird's schedule, you can test a number of vantage points to get the best shot. Ducks, geese, loons and other water birds with babies will move around depending on the availability of food and access to shoreline cover for the young ones. These birds also tend to make their rounds on a predictable timeline.

The ideal moment to take the photo is early in the morning or later in the day when the sun offers the best chance to catch some of the bird's beautiful colours.

### GO GROUND LEVEL

Getting great photos from the dock is certainly possible and is definitely a more relaxed and appealing strategy. Lying on the ground, however, will often produce the best picture, but this is also the most uncomfortable position. Battling the insects could be the biggest challenge.

### USE A CANOE

Sometimes you need to be out on the water to get close enough for that ideal shot of a mother loon and her young ones. A canoe is a great option for its stealth. The canoe is also easy to park in the middle of the weeds while waiting for birds to arrive.

### BE PREPARED TO WAIT

Once in position, you might have to wait a long time. Pack a snack, wear the proper clothing, and bring protective cover for the camera in case it starts to rain.

### USE A TRIPOD

Stability is the key to getting a great shot. You probably have to use a zoom lens, so any movement of the camera will compromise the photo. If a tripod isn't handy, look for a rock or a log to stabilize the camera.

### THE END RESULT

With a bit of patience, a sound strategy, and some good old-fashioned luck cottage photographers can get fantastic pictures of herons, loons, geese, ducks, pelicans, and other beautiful birds that frequent the cabin shoreline.





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# Cottage Quiche

**Homemade quiche is a perfect choice when you are looking for a unique and healthy meal to take to the cottage.**

### THE INGREDIENTS YOU NEED

1 tbsp of oil (vegetable or olive)  
1 unbaked pie shell  
1 onion - chopped  
1 pound of fresh asparagus - trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces  
1 small red pepper - cut in strips  
1 ¼ cups of sliced mushrooms  
1 ½ cups of shredded cheddar cheese  
1 ½ cups of diced ham  
½ cup of sun-dried tomato bits  
2 tbsp of fresh basil or 1 tbsp of dried basil  
½ tsp of salt  
3 eggs  
1 cup of milk

### SPECIAL NOTE

If you are using a frozen pie shell, thaw it to room temperature before you start.

#### Quiche

**Preparation Time:** 20 Minutes

**Cooking Time:** 35 Minutes

**Makes:** One serving for 4 people

### HOW TO MAKE THE QUICHE

- Preheat the oven to 425 degrees.
- Heat the oil in a frying pan over medium heat.
- Sauté the onions, asparagus, pepper, mushrooms, and ham until they are tender.
- Sprinkle half of the cheese into the pie shell.
- Cover the cheese with the cooked vegetables and ham.
- Mix the eggs and milk together in a bowl and beat them until the mixture is consistent.
- Pour the mixed eggs and milk over the vegetables.
- Spread the remaining cheese on top of the filling.

Bake for 10 minutes at 425 degrees and then reduce the heat to 350 degrees and bake for another 25 or 30 minutes until the filling is set.

### VOILA!

The great thing about a quiche is that it can be made with whatever vegetables or meat you want. It is a simple and tasty cottage meal that freezes well, transports easily, and can be quickly reheated.





A quiche requires little preparation, can include a variety of ingredients, and is easy to pack in the cooler.







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# Chainsaw Won't Start: Now What?

Chainsaws require constant maintenance to ensure they remain in good working order. Things can still go wrong, however, even when we take care of the basics. Sometimes it's a simple fix. In other situations, we need professional help. You might be tempted to pitch the chainsaw in the garbage after it quits, but before you do, go through the following troubleshooting tips to figure out why the chainsaw isn't operating properly.

By Cottage Tips Staff



### FLIP THE KILL SWITCH

Check the safety switch or kill switch to make sure it isn't in the off position. Hopefully this is the problem and you are good to go.

### CHECK THE FUEL LEVEL

The second step involves making sure you have fuel. If there is fuel in the tank, the problem could be moisture. Replace the fuel with a fresh batch. *Note: Remember that you have to mix the gas with 2-stroke oil at the proper ratio before adding the fuel to the chainsaw.*

### CHANGE THE SPARK PLUG

Check the spark plug to see if it is clean and firing properly. If not, change it. Replacing the spark plug each spring is a good idea for preventative maintenance.

### CHECK THE AIR FILTER

Clean or change the air filter. This isn't usually the reason the chainsaw won't start, but a restriction in the airflow can keep the chainsaw from running properly.

### INSPECT THE FUEL LINE

This is where things start to get tricky. If all the previous items are OK, there might be an issue with the fuel moving from the tank to the carburetor. A split fuel hose could be the culprit. The way to check involves removing the weighted fuel filter from inside the fuel tank. It should be connected to the fuel hose.

When the chainsaw is a few years old the hose will sometimes split where it fits onto the filter. To fix the problem you can go to a local chainsaw dealer and purchase a new fuel line.

### CLEAN THE CARBURETOR

The carburetor might be the problem if the fuel line is fine. Over the winter the fuel jet can get plugged if you didn't add stabilizer and run the mixture through for a few minutes before putting the chainsaw in storage. If the carburetor needs to be removed and cleaned, it is best to take the chainsaw to the shop and bite the bullet on the repair fee. This isn't a fun DIY job unless you really know what you are doing and have the proper tools, as well as the free time to spend on the project.



# Is a Bear Stalking Your Cottage?

By Andrew Walker

**Black bears are common in cottage country and most of the time they simply pass through the woods or along the shoreline without bothering to hang around. However, when a bear decides to stay a while, or is stalking the cabin, you can often find a trail of evidence around the cottage property.**

## BEAR SCAT

Bear poop is the most obvious sign of a visit to the property. The freshness of the bear's scat is a good indication of how recently the animal arrived. The quantity of bear scat is normally much larger than the deposits made by any of the other animals around the cabin. A bear's droppings tend to resemble either a cow paddy or horse poop, although the scat can vary widely in shape and consistency. During blueberry season the evidence is quite apparent. In the spring it might be more difficult to determine the type of animal that left the scat because bears



will scavenge when food is in short supply and their scat may contain fur or bits of bones.

## OVERTURNED ROCKS

Bears flip over rocks in search of insects. If you notice rocks that have been recently moved or overturned, especially along trails or hydro cuts, it often means a bear has passed through the area. By examining the freshness of the exposed soil, you can tell if the rock was moved in the past few days or some time ago.

## DISTURBED ANTHILLS

Bears will dig into anthills or rip apart rotten logs in search of a meal. It is easy to determine if the visit was recent by examining how fresh the hole looks.

## SCRATCHED TREES

Black bears sometimes strip away tree bark in the spring to get at the tasty sapwood. A bear will also bite, claw, and rub against trees to mark its territory. On occasion, you can even see bits of fur stuck to the bark. These visits become worrisome when they are very close to the cabin.

## A BEAR'S NOSE OR PAW PRINTS ON THE WINDOW

This is probably the most obvious, and certainly the most disturbing evidence that a bear has taken a liking to the cabin. When the bear gets this close it is time to be concerned. The animal may have identified the cabin as a possible source of food. The smell of garbage or even pet food can attract a bear to the building.

### Cottage Finance:

# Succession Planning Guide

By Andrew Walker

Succession planning for the cottage is a difficult task. While other areas of the estate may be easy to deal with, the cabin requires special attention due to the strong emotional attachment.

To ensure the family cottage continues to be a place of happiness it is essential to take the proper steps.

#### Involve stakeholders early

Estate planning for the cottage should involve all stakeholders right from the beginning of the process. Whether the children are the best of friends or haven't spoken to each other in years, it is important to communicate openly with all interested parties about what is going to happen to the cottage when the estate is being sorted out.

If you plan to hand the cottage down instead of selling it, all the cottage succession details have to be defined ahead of time.

This requires organizing a family meeting. No one likes to have the cottage succession conversation but the parents and all of the children have to meet together to iron out a plan for addressing capital gains taxes, ownership, usage, and operating costs.

Some tough questions have to be asked, and they all need to be answered before the parents set the terms in their plan for the estate.

#### CAPITAL GAINS TAXES

A cottage that has been in the family for a long time may trigger a significant capital gains tax.

Deeming the cottage as the

principal residence of the owners while they are still alive is one way to avoid placing the tax burden on the estate. This option may not always be feasible or beneficial so it is best to sit down with a tax professional to discuss the possibilities.

If the cottage remains an investment property it will trigger a capital gains charge. Either the estate or the children have to make an arrangement to cover this tax. It may be possible to take out a life insurance policy that will

*Remember to keep all receipts for upgrades, additions, and major renovations done on the cottage. The expenses can normally be used to increase the adjusted cost base of the cabin. For example, if you bought the cottage for \$200,000 and have put another \$50,000 into it, the price used to determine the capital gains tax would be \$250,000.*

pay enough to cover the expense. The children or the parents can pay the premiums. Again, visit a tax professional to consider the options that are best suited to your situation.

Remember to keep all receipts for upgrades, additions, and major renovations done on the cottage.

The expenses can normally be used to increase the adjusted cost base of the cabin. For example, if you bought the cottage for \$200,000 and have put another \$50,000 into it, the price used to determine the capital gains tax would be \$250,000.

#### Claim a reserve for capital gains

One tax trick to spread out the capital gains tax hit is to sell the property to your children now and have them pay for it by issuing promissory notes. If you don't plan on collecting the money, you can forgive the notes in your will. The advantage of this option is that it allows you or your kids to pay the capital gains based on the current value of the cottage. Also, if the sale is set up correctly, you can claim a capital gains reserve and the taxes could be paid over a period of five years. You need to see a tax expert to set this up.

#### Gift the cottage to your children

You can also "gift" the cottage to your kids now to avoid paying tax on any future gains in the cabin's value. This option triggers capital gains on the current value of the cottage and the taxes on those gains have to be paid in the tax year the property is gifted.

Be sure to have the estate lawyer set up a usage agreement that says you have the right to continue using the cottage even though you have given it to the kids.





## COTTAGE OWNERSHIP OPTIONS

When considering what to do with the cottage after you are gone, it is best to evaluate all of the available options.

### Hand down the cottage

In most cases the existing property gets handed down to the children and they become part owners according to the wishes of the parents. This seems like it should be a simple process but it is often the most complicated option.

### Split the property

If the cottage property is large enough it may be possible to legally divide it into separate lots. Depending on the size of the property and its location, the process to get this done could be lengthy and costly so it would be best to fully examine the possibilities well ahead of time. If dividing the cottage property is possible, you may want to do it now rather than making provisions to have it done as a part of the succession plan.

### Sell the cottage

In the end the best solution may be to sell the cottage. Someone is likely to be unhappy, but once the nostalgia passes, this is often the wisest choice.

*...continued on page 16*





*Cottage Succession Planning continued from page 15*

## CABIN AND COTTAGE OWNERSHIP STRUCTURES

### *What is the best ownership structure for handing down the cottage?*

Careful attention must be paid to how the new ownership of the cottage is structured when it gets passed to the children. The original property owners should also consider the ownership path beyond the kids.

If you aren't careful, the family cottage may end up being owned by a different family than you intended.

### Co-ownership

Co-ownership means the portion of the cottage that is owned by each person gets passed on according to that person's individual will.

### Joint ownership

Joint ownership means the entire ownership stake of a person who dies passes directly to the other joint owners.

### Corporation

Another option is putting the cottage under the ownership of a non-profit corporation. In the case of a big family, this may be the way to go.

Take the time to see a good estate lawyer who specializes in dealing with cottage succession plans. The lawyer can outline all the options and the related pros and cons.

## CO-OWNERSHIP AND JOINT OWNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

The more detailed the plan is from the outset the less likely it is that the family will run into disagreements down the road.

### Usage of the cottage property

A schedule must be created to divide the use of the cottage amongst the different owners. The rules of the game should be thorough and formalized in writing.

Each person should have private time to use the cottage. It is best to divide

the weeks out individually and then let groups decide if they want to be together later.

Specify if time-slot trades are allowed or if drop-ins are acceptable. It may be OK for anyone to stop by unannounced at any time right now, but when the ownership changes, you have to decide if this is going to be permitted.

### Renters and guests

Someone might want to rent out the cabin instead of using it. If this is going to be a problem, it is best to set the rules down in writing ahead of time.

If you decide to allocate some weeks for the whole gang to be together, agree on whether or not guests are allowed.

## Cabin maintenance

A cottage is a money pit. Planning for maintenance costs is critical to a happy coexistence. Again, the rules must be clearly defined.

The costs can be shared equally or split depending on the amount of time each person will use the property. Not everyone will have the same financial means, so someone can be the handyman in lieu of paying in cash.

The estate might also set up a trust to pay all the costs. This works well when everyone uses the cottage equally.

Future upgrades and additions to the cottage should also be agreed upon when setting up the cottage ownership terms. It is much easier to deal with these issues when they are covered in the succession plan rather than trying to work them out later.

## Buyout agreement

### *What happens if someone refuses to pay or can no longer afford to pay for the cottage maintenance?*

In the unfortunate event that someone stops paying for the upkeep of the cottage, the succession plan should outline what will be done. This can be an ugly situation, so it is best to be clear right from the start. For example, it could be set up to trigger a buyout by the other owners.

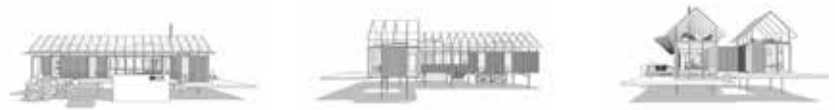
A buyout agreement should be arranged so that any sibling who decides to get out must sell to the other siblings. The means for determining the price must be clearly stated.

## The bottom line

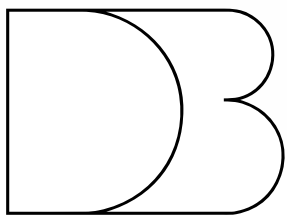
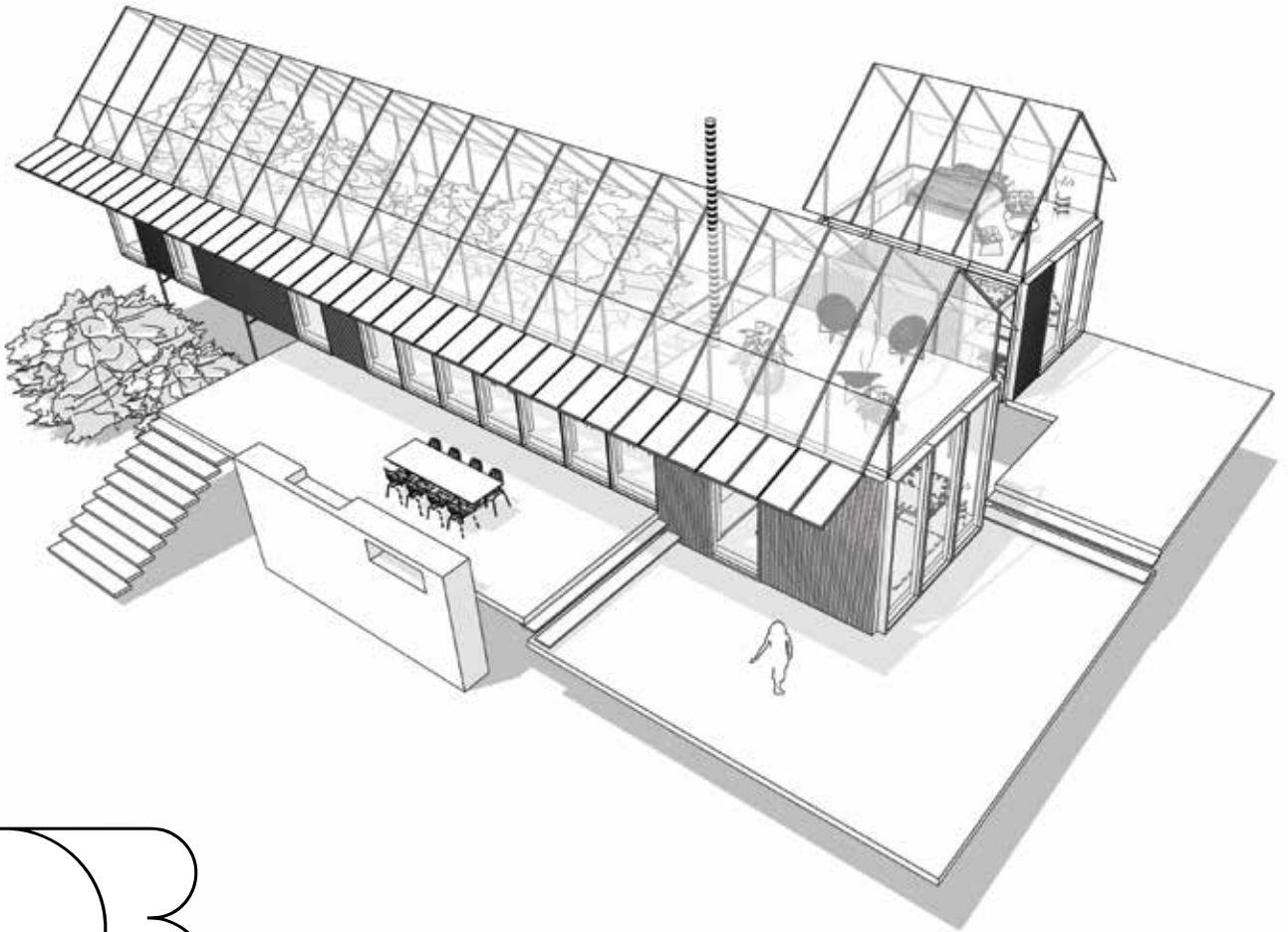
Succession planning for the cottage is a delicate process, but when done properly the family cottage can be handed down in a structured and peaceful way that works well for everyone involved.



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# **BUYER'S GUIDE:** **Assessing Water Level Risks**

By Cottage Tips Staff





## ASK OWNERS ABOUT THE SHORELINE

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When water levels are high, properties take on an entirely different look than when the lake or river is at a low point. Ideally, you want to visit the property in both scenarios, but a competitive cottage market might not provide this flexibility.

Potential buyers should ask the existing owners to provide photos of the property at different times of the year. If these are not available, buyers can search for satellite images that might shed some light, but this won't give a complete picture.

During the property visit, look for high-water marks on rocks or trees near the shore. Government charts on historical water level patterns are also useful.

## TALK TO THE NEIGHBOURS

---

If no photos are available, try to talk to the cottage neighbours to find out how much the water level changes throughout the year and what impact it has on the surrounding area. They can also fill you in on any hazards that might be in the water.

Buyers need to know if erosion is an issue. It's also good to get a sense of whether high water will flood the property or if low water leaves the dock dry.

## CONSIDER WEEDS, ROCKS, AND SWIMMING CONDITIONS

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A property's shoreline tends to look quite attractive when water levels are elevated, as all the rocks, weeds, and old tree stumps are often submerged. Visiting a cottage at this point in the season can lead

one to believe the place is great for swimming off the dock.

That might be the case all year, but some places become very weedy by late summer, especially when the water reaches its low point. This can have an impact on how you use the property. Swimming might be difficult, uncomfortable, or even dangerous.

In addition, boats could be at risk of hitting rocks when approaching the property at times of low water. In cases where a cottage is located in a bay, the water might become stagnant or covered with algae late in the season, as well.

**Water levels can change significantly throughout the cottage season. As a result, buyers need to be aware of the impact on the property and how this affects their use of the cabin.**

## MEASURE THE DOCK INCLINE

---

Dock systems that accommodate changing water levels are very convenient, but they also have drawbacks.

In areas where water levels change by several feet during the season, the ramp incline is often significant at times of low water. This can be a particular problem for a water-access property, since everyone has to arrive by boat. The situation makes life difficult for owners or visitors who have trouble walking up a steep slope.

Even for those who are in great shape, carrying a week's worth of supplies from the boat to the cabin is challenging. Big docks can also be eyesores when the water level is at its low point because the entire support structure sits out of the water. If that's something that would bother you, it's good to know before you buy the cottage.

## DON'T FORGET RISKS TO CANOES, CHAIRS, BOATS, AND TOYS

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Prospective cottage buyers might see canoes, kayaks, aluminum boats, and chairs conveniently sitting near the shore when they visit the property. It's a common staging tactic when selling a cabin.

Even if the cottage isn't for sale, people often leave their canoes and fishing boats pulled up on the edge of the shoreline during the summer season.

This is fine when you are at the cabin and can keep an eye on the lake, or when the water level remains relatively constant throughout the summer. Otherwise, boats and furniture need to be moved up to higher ground each time you leave the property.

Sometimes life gets in the way of the cottage schedule. People plan to be away for just a week, but end up not returning for a month. If the water level changes significantly during their absence, cottagers can show up to find that everything is submerged or washed away.

## CAVEAT EMPTOR

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Buyers often overlook water levels when acquiring a cottage, but this item deserves to be near the top of the checklist. You don't want any surprises after you take possession of the cabin.

# Wood Stove Essentials



By Cottage Tips Staff

**Proper maintenance, balanced airflow, and the use of quality wood will ensure the wood stove at the cottage works efficiently and safely.**

## Spring checklist

Inspect the wood stove stack for damage every year, especially in the spring. Winter storms can affect the stability of the chimney and create a dangerous situation. Take the time to go up the ladder or onto the roof to closely check the support straps.

An old chimney that has begun to rust should be replaced. Check the cap and screen to ensure that no critters have entered the chimney.

Hire a professional to clean the chimney in the spring before you begin to use the wood stove. This is particularly important for new owners who might have recently purchased the cabin and are unsure when the chimney was last swept.

## Wood stove operation

Efficiency is the main objective when using a wood stove to heat the cabin. The goal is to keep as much heat as possible in the cottage while allowing the stove to operate correctly and safely.

For the stove to work properly the fire must have a constant supply of oxygen and the gases produced by burning the wood need to escape through the chimney efficiently.

The chimney is fully responsible for drawing out the smoke. In order for it to do this properly, the chimney must be high enough and hot enough to create an adequate draft.

The amount of air that feeds the

fire directly affects how fast the fire burns. This is why a fire flares up when you fan it. Excess air will cause the fire to burn too quickly. A lack of air will cause the fire to starve and not create enough heat.

## Intake air

Draft registers located near the bottom of the wood stove control the intake air. Opening them allows more air to feed the fire. Closing them reduces the amount of air that is pulled by the chimney.

Using the draft registers correctly has a big impact on how well the wood stove works.

## Flue pipe

The pipe that comes directly out of the wood stove is the flue pipe. Every flue pipe has a damper. This is a simple metal plate used to control the flow rate of the draft.

By twisting the handle you can open or close the damper to increase or restrict the draw of the chimney.

Finding the most efficient operation of the wood stove requires adjusting both the flue damper and the draft registers.

## Starting a wood stove fire

The first step is to open the draft registers and the flue damper fully. Then start the fire and let it build up and burn for about 15 minutes.

Placing kindling on top of a small base of rolled newspaper is recommended to get the fire started. Small dry sticks work well. Add the larger pieces of wood once the fire begins to build.

Wear work gloves when adding logs to the fire and use the proper



tools to move the wood around.

Burning quality wood is important. The ideal log is dry enough that the fire doesn't waste energy burning off moisture, but not so old that the wood is soft and has lost all its heat value.

## Chimney fires

Keep the fires in the wood stove at a medium level.

Burning pine or any wood at low temperatures in weak fires results in a build-up of creosote or tar along the inner walls of the flue pipe and chimney. A subsequent fire that is large, or a very hot fire could ignite the tar build-up and cause a chimney fire.

In the event a chimney fire occurs, do not use the wood stove again until the flue and chimney have been inspected for damage.

## Backdraft

A wood stove backdraft is caused by negative pressure, otherwise known as the stack effect. It occurs when outside air is pulled down the chimney because another suitable source of air isn't available.

The easiest way to fix or avoid a backdraft is to keep a living room window opened just a crack to provide a source of intake air. This enables positive air pressure to be maintained in the cabin and will help avoid the negative pressure stack effect.

## Flare-up

A flare-up in the wood stove can be dangerous.

If the wood stove door is opened too quickly the large rush of oxygen into the stove may cause the fire to create a small burst or flare-up by igniting existing gases in the stove that have not burned off or vented out the chimney.

To avoid a flare-up, open the draft registers and the stove door slowly to prevent the fire from receiving a blast of oxygen.



## Chimney downdraft

A downdraft is different from a backdraft.

If the fire usually burns well but sometimes gets really smoky or has trouble burning properly, especially on windy days, it may be caused by the wind conditions. This is often the case when the chimney is lower than a nearby tree, building, or another part of the cottage roof. The wind falls down onto the chimney after passing over the other obstacle and causes a small downdraft that inhibits the operation of the chimney. The stack might need to be extended to fix the problem.

## Ashes

Don't let the ashes build up too high in the wood stove. They will eventually block the air intake from the draft registers and reduce the

efficiency of the stove.

It is a good idea to leave about an inch of ashes in the bottom of the wood stove during the burning season. This provides an extra layer of insulation between the fire and the bottom of the stove.

Ashes can be used in the outhouse or put in the garden.

## Warm and safe

Knowing how to efficiently operate a wood stove will ensure that cottage owners get the best results from their wood-burning unit.

Safety must be top of mind from the moment a wood stove is installed until the last piece of wood has finished burning each time the stove is used.

# Outhouse 101 for Guests

Visiting a cabin with an outhouse can be an unnerving experience for many first-time cottage renters and guests. Despite the simplicity of the structure, there are a few key rules to follow when using the privy.

By Cottage Tips Staff

### Ask for directions to the outhouse

When you arrive at your friend's cottage, be sure to ask for instructions on how to find and use the facilities. Sometimes the outhouse is located back in the bush behind the cottage, and the toilet can vary from a simple hole in the ground with no seat to a comfortable full-service potty in the woods. Striking up the conversation with the owners right away should avoid any uncomfortable situations later in the day. At the very least, asking about the toilet will make sure the owners haven't forgotten to prepare the outhouse for your arrival.

### Check the door lock

As you first enter the outhouse, take a moment to inspect the locking mechanism so you are able to secure the door while using the privy and, more importantly, are able to get out after you have finished. Many outhouses have a simple sliding bolt or a flip-hook that is used to lock the door. Some are a bit trickier.

For example, an outhouse door might have a spring that closes and locks the door automatically. The only way to open it from the inside is to pull on a string located beside the door. The string is connected to the outside latch and allows the person to open the door when they want to leave. This might not be obvious, especially if it is dark, and you don't want to get stuck in the loo. Calling out for help is embarrassing and the toilet might be too far from the cabin for anyone to hear. It's not uncommon for a guest to break through this type of door because they felt trapped and then panicked.

### Bring your own outhouse supplies

It is a good idea to bring along your own supply of toilet



paper, hand gel, a pocket flashlight, and a small plastic garbage bag. You don't want to get to the outhouse and find it void of the necessities. Take a quick look in the privy shortly after you arrive at the cabin. Conscientious owners maintain immaculate well-stocked outhouses, but it is worthwhile to be sure before you need to use the facilities.

### Inspect the seat, ceiling, and floor

Outhouses generally have a standard toilet seat bolted on a wood frame. Take a moment to lift the seat up and down a couple of times before you sit. This will make sure any spiders or other critters that may be hanging around will have a chance to get out of the way. Animals can also get into the outhouse. In fact, a woman in Alaska apparently got a shock when a bear bit her as she sat down on the outhouse toilet. That's unlikely to happen again, but mice, frogs, bats, and squirrels have been known to find their way into an outhouse.

### Respect outhouse protocol

Only three things should ever go into a pit privy. These are the natural ingredients that you are there to deposit and toilet paper. Never put personal-care products in the toilet. They won't decompose. The outhouse should have a garbage pail for such items.

### Leave the privy clean and closed

When you finish using the outhouse be sure to put the seat back down, turn off the light, and close the door properly so the latch is securely fastened. This will keep out curious members of the local forest community.

With a few practical precautions, your first outhouse experience will be pleasant and uneventful.



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# How to Choose a Composting Toilet

By Cottage Tips Staff



**Cabin owners love their outhouses but everyone hates to clean them out. A composting toilet might be the best upgrade you make at the cottage this year.**

## WHY CHOOSE A COMPOSTING TOILET FOR THE COTTAGE?

If you are unable or unwilling to put in a septic system, a composting toilet might be the best solution when installing a new cottage toilet. Not only is it good for the environment, it will also benefit the cottage garden.

A composting toilet system recycles waste by evaporating the liquid components and then converts the remaining solid waste into fertilizer.

## TYPES OF COMPOSTING TOILETS

Take the time to plan properly and do your homework when choosing a new toilet for the cabin.

There are essentially two types of composting toilet systems: self-contained and remote or central. Some units require no water and no electricity. Others use some water, electricity, or propane in the treatment process.

## SELF-CONTAINED COMPOSTING TOILET

The toilet and composting system are housed together in a single unit. This type of toilet is normally installed in situations where the expected usage will be quite limited.

Often, the self-contained unit is only used when a visit to the outhouse is not possible.

Small cabins or cottages that get used mostly on weekends are ideal locations for a self-contained unit. Many cabin owners use a basic composting toilet in the guesthouse, or keep a small one that is mobile for situations when there are extra visitors.

When the time comes to clean out the outhouse or even relocate the outdoor privy, it is best to have a simple composting toilet for use at the cabin while the outhouse is out of service.

## REMOTE OR CENTRAL COMPOSTING TOILET

In this case the composting system is separate from the toilet and normally located under the floor or outside the cottage. The unit is generally installed in situations where the expected usage is quite high. Larger cottages and year-round properties are suitable for a central composting toilet.

## COMPOSTING TOILET INSTALLATION REQUIREMENTS

Before ordering the toilet, think about how it will be installed. Some toilets require water and electricity connections, support pads, and elevated platforms. If you don't plan to do the work yourself, get the contractor to size up the job before you order the toilet. This way you will know ahead of time that the installation can be done. You don't want to be stuck with an expensive flowerpot.

## HOW MUCH DOES IT COST TO INSTALL A COMPOSTING TOILET?

Composting toilet prices range from several hundred to several thousand dollars. Installation costs can be expensive depending on the system you choose and the location of the toilet, especially for the toilets that require water and electricity.

Charges to have a professional do the work might include expenses for plumbing, wiring, and a bit of



carpentry. The basic cabin toilets that are mobile require little or no installation at all.

## HOW MUCH SPACE IS REQUIRED TO INSTALL A COMPOSTING TOILET?

Composting toilets come in a large variety of sizes and designs with options available to accommodate almost any situation. Once you have determined the location of the new cabin toilet, you will need to take a few measurements.

For a remote or central system you might need to know the height of the space below the washroom, the floor area available for the toilet, the distance to the electrical panel, and the distance to the nearest water line.

## COMPOSTING TOILET CAPACITY

The amount of traffic the cottage toilet will see is a very important factor in determining the product you will need. Some composting toilets can only handle weekend usage by a few people. Others are designed for much higher volumes.

Give yourself a wide margin when calculating both your current and future needs. For example, if you expect to

entertain more or if the family continues to expand, it is best to plan for the extra usage.

## COMPOSTING TOILET MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

Some of the composting toilets require daily maintenance while others can be left alone for a period of time. It's important to be realistic about how often you will be at the cabin when deciding on the toilet you intend to install.

## MAKING THE FINAL CHOICE

A number of companies located in Canada, Europe, and the U.S.A. sell composting toilets and deliver worldwide. Take the time to explore all of the options before making a decision.

It's also a good idea to talk to cottage neighbours about their systems to find out if they encountered maintenance or installation issues. The discussion will give you a sense of whether or not their set-up might be suitable for your situation.



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# A Beginner's Guide to: Catching Perch

By Andrew Walker

**Fishing for jumbo perch can be a fun activity for the entire family at the cottage. This underappreciated fish is easy to catch and makes a wonderful cabin meal.**

### BASIC EQUIPMENT

Fishing for perch is about as budget-friendly as it gets. Any basic rod-and-reel package is more than adequate to catch perch. When choosing perch-fishing equipment for beginners look for a light-action rod and reel combination with four-pound line.

A closed-face combo unit is perfect for kids or adults who are new to fishing. This is the one with the push-button release. After that, a couple of bobbers or floats, a pack of split-shot sinkers, and a few hooks are all you need.

Most perch anglers use live bait. Dew worms or minnows are the standard choices, but leeches and small crayfish can also be effective. If you don't like the idea of using live bait, lures also work. Popular lures include small spinner baits and jig-heads with soft plastic tails. These tend to catch larger perch. In an area where bass or pike are present, it is best to use heavier line that has a six-pound or eight-pound test rating. The larger fish will often bite the same bait used to catch perch.

### FINDING JUMBO PERCH

Perch tend to stick together. As soon as you catch one, the odds are pretty

good you will fill your limit. When searching for perch it helps to think like the fish. Perch have two main concerns. They want to find an area that contains minnows, crayfish, and other prey they like to eat. At the same time, perch prefer to be somewhere that provides shelter so they don't become an easy meal for larger fish.

### Docks

Perch like to hide under docks to avoid predators. They also feed on the smaller fish and other water critters that make the area around the dock their home.

### Weed beds

Weeds provide protection as well as access to the small fish that perch eat. Casting near weeds from the shore, dock, or boat can produce a lot of fish.

### Submerged structures

Submerged islands or fallen trees often attract perch. These are good areas for the fish to find a meal that might be hiding in the rocks or among the sticks and branches. Sometimes big groups of perch are found in deeper water around structures. This is common later in the season when water temperatures rise, or when the perch are following minnows.

### FISHING WITH LIVE BAIT

The best way to catch perch depends on the location. In shallow water, use a small bobber with the

line length adjusted to place the bait about halfway into the weeds. If the weed bed is very thick, look for open pockets, or present the bait just along the deeper or outer edge of the weed line. Experiment with the depth of the bait until the fish begin to bite consistently.

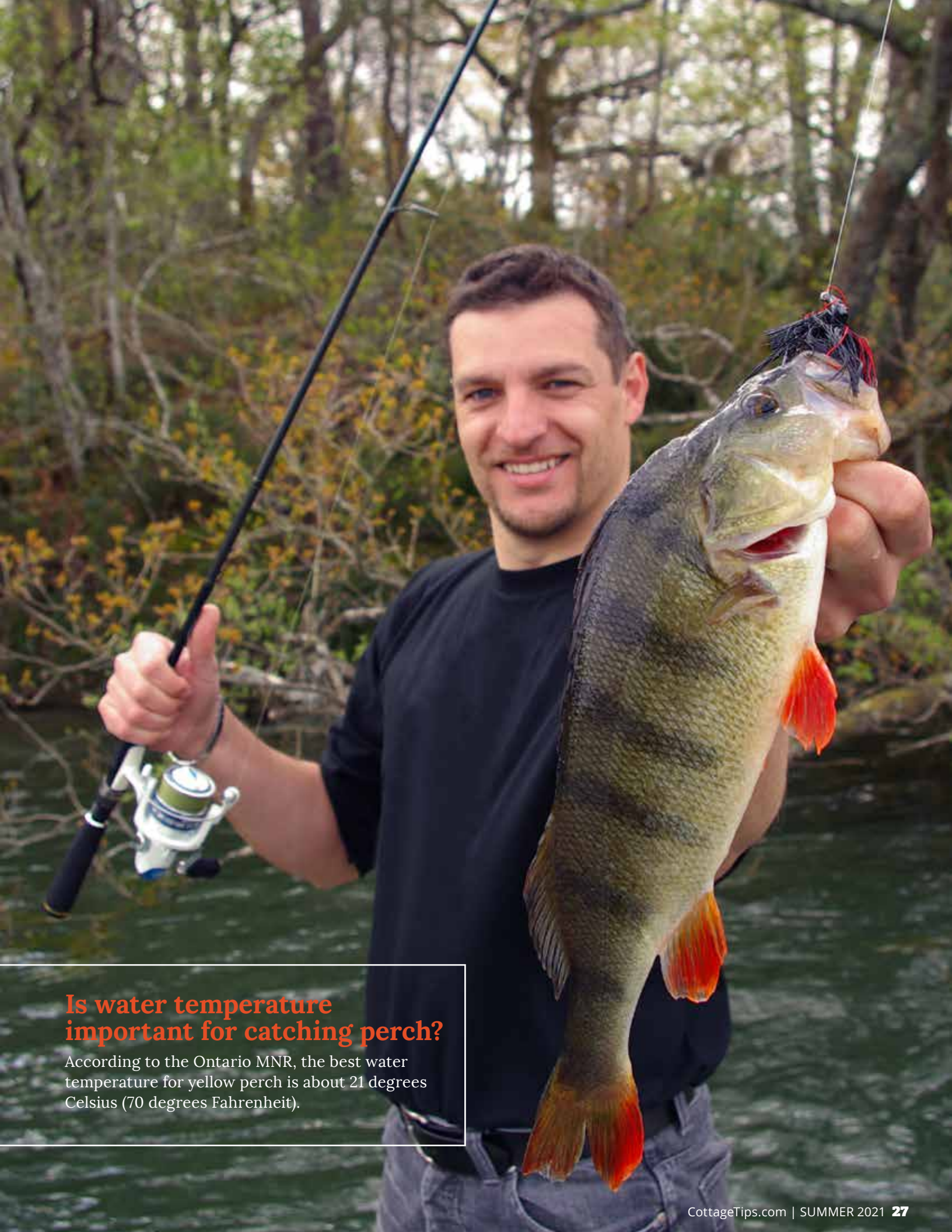
In deeper water located off a dock or a shoreline drop-off, use a small jig-head tipped with bait or a split-shot placed on the line above the hook to give you extra weight. Start by fishing at the bottom of the lake and slowly work your way up. If the perch are suspended, remove the weight and simply let the bait slowly drift down to the fish. Live baits presented in this scenario can produce a lot of perch.

### FISHING WITH LURES

As mentioned above, large perch will often hit jigs with soft plastic tails. Small spinner baits also catch jumbo perch. When casting, allow jigs to sink to the bottom and then slowly jerk them as you retrieve the line. When fishing directly below the dock or boat, simply dance the lure up and down about six inches off the bottom. Cast small spinner baits along the edges of weed beds. A slow retrieve is often effective.

Perch of the same size frequently hang out together. If you come across some jumbo perch you are in for a fun day!





## Is water temperature important for catching perch?

According to the Ontario MNR, the best water temperature for yellow perch is about 21 degrees Celsius (70 degrees Fahrenheit).

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# Top Dock Tips For New Owners

By Cottage Tips Staff

Dock maintenance and minor repairs often get ignored, but they must be done to keep the dock safe, sturdy, and looking great. The best time to do serious maintenance and repair work on the cottage dock is first thing in the spring when you open the cabin or in the fall when you close the cottage.

At these times the weather is cool, the bugs aren't bad, and you will be much happier than if you have to waste valuable days during the cottage season.

### ANNUAL DOCK MAINTENANCE CHECKLIST

1. Hammer down raised nails or replace with screws.
2. Remove and replace all rotting or damaged boards.
3. Use a belt sander to smooth out rough spots before they split and cause an injury.
4. Install bumpers to protect the boat and the dock.
5. Take time to powerwash the dock once a month during the cottage season to clean out dirt and remove any slippery build-up that might collect on the boards.
6. Inspect the dock's connection points regularly to identify damage or potential problems.
7. Clean, prime, and paint rust spots on the steel crib and metal supports before they get beyond repair.

### DOCK SAFETY GUIDE

Proper precautions will help avoid an accident on the dock and ensure a safe summer at the cottage.

1. Put away fishing equipment, gas cans, chairs, cups, and empty bottles every evening.
2. Install a non-metal swimming ladder.
3. Consider adding solar-powered dock lights.
4. Keep a life ring handy in case of an emergency.
5. Ensure children always wear a life jacket when they are on the dock.

### CONSIDERATIONS WHEN BUILDING A NEW DOCK

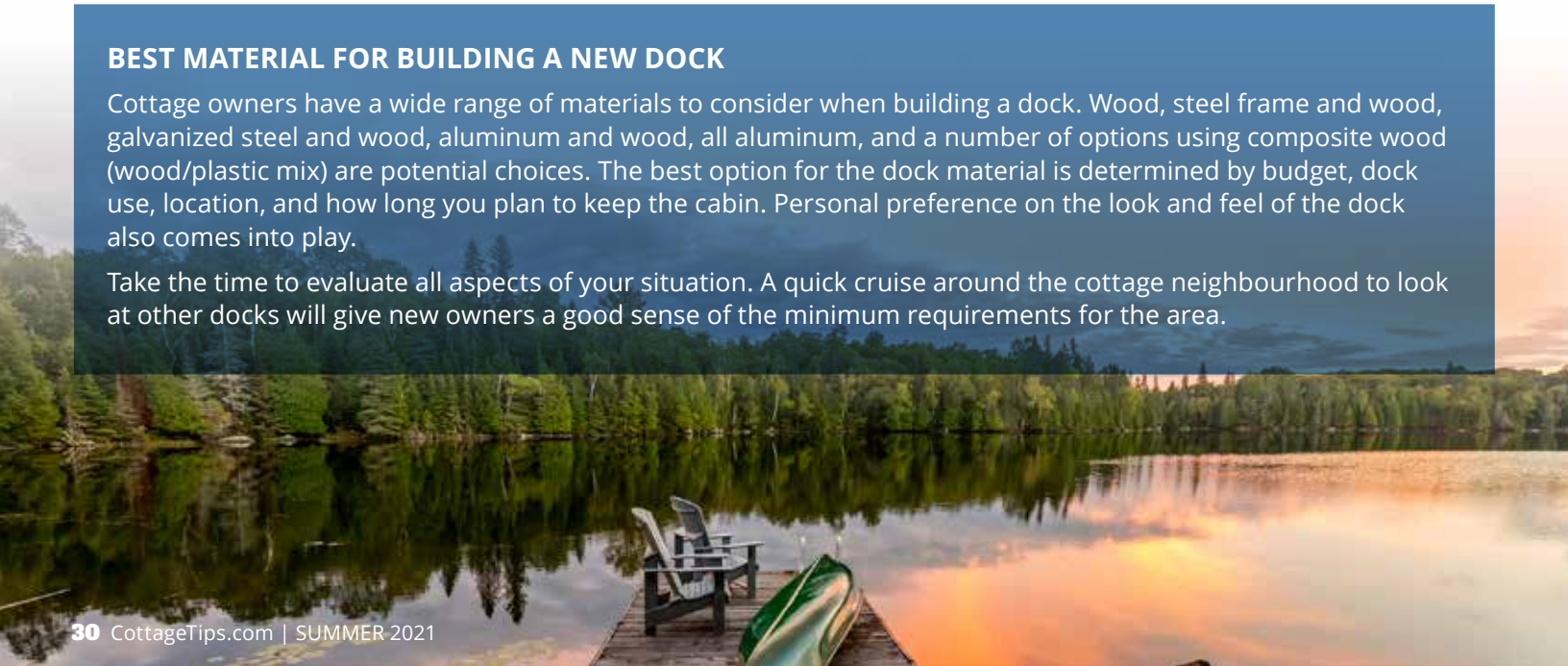
Eventually the time comes to replace the old dock. This is a big project that costs thousands of dollars, so it makes sense to have a good plan, especially if you are going the DIY route.

1. Account for water levels, wind, water currents, and boat traffic.
2. Plan for increased docking space. The kids will eventually want their own boats.
3. Determine how the dock will be used. Is it just for boats or will it be the hub for other activities such as sunbathing, entertaining, and fishing?
4. Decide if DIY is the right way to go. The time and manpower required to gather all the materials and build the dock might not be worth the headache.

### BEST MATERIAL FOR BUILDING A NEW DOCK

Cottage owners have a wide range of materials to consider when building a dock. Wood, steel frame and wood, galvanized steel and wood, aluminum and wood, all aluminum, and a number of options using composite wood (wood/plastic mix) are potential choices. The best option for the dock material is determined by budget, dock use, location, and how long you plan to keep the cabin. Personal preference on the look and feel of the dock also comes into play.

Take the time to evaluate all aspects of your situation. A quick cruise around the cottage neighbourhood to look at other docks will give new owners a good sense of the minimum requirements for the area.







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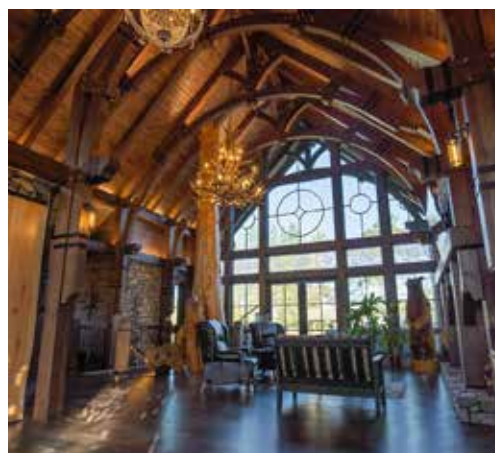
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