

## Chapter Twelve:

### DECORATION TO PROLONG SYSTEM LIFE & PERFORMANCE

**Finishes** Gates can be left natural or finished in a variety of ways, all of which should be suitable for the surroundings and method of use.

Finishes should prolong the life of the physical element (gates, support, furniture, stops, etc.) and be maintainable where practical.



Timber products are live materials that absorb and release moisture throughout varying weather conditions, they are normally either softwood or hardwood and each can have special requirements when being finished or prepared for finish.

Pressure impregnation is highly recommended with softwood as the treatment usually penetrates deeply into the material, offering a greatly increased life expectancy. As well as advantages there are also disadvantages and softwood often has a larger grain that may not be everyone's first choice and hardwood does not pressure impregnate the same way.

**Impregnated timber may need to cure before further decoration should be applied.**



Any painting of timber should only be undertaken once the material is found suitable and by using micro porous type paints that allow the timber to breath.

Hardwood comes in many forms and all have features that can have a bearing on the type and method of finish. Timbers with high sap content or natural oil, pose particular challenges and should be considered beforehand within the system design.



Oak is a particular challenge as it's characteristic for splitting (shack) and twisting that gives great character to old buildings, can make it complex to maintain, requiring additional effort and maintenance.

Timber gate furniture should also be adequately treated, so that it does not react badly.

Metal gates have numerous finish options that range from a natural state (rusty, blemished, etc.) subject to the material used, through to highly decorated in a variety of colours.

Galvanizing (metal treated with zinc) also has different forms and finishes i.e. hot dip, hot zinc spray, cold spray, etc. Each has its own place, advantages and disadvantages. For locations close to the coast, additional treatment such as galvanizing, is required to give protection from the salt sea air.

Powder or plastic finishes are often chosen for their long life expectancy, with minimum decoration. This however should be considered at the design stage as they are more delicate to install. Any damage caused, during or after installation, to such a finish allows water ingress that eventually undermines the finish and requires complex attention (re-treating the whole gate off site). Time, dust and weathering are other forces that can make the product look in need of decoration and undermine the reason behind the original choice.



Quality metal paint on a treated surface is usually the best all round option, as ongoing decoration and product maintenance is far more, straight forward. Also, customer choice of colour is now flexible allowing alternative options.



**NB.** Many powder coated council signs rot after strimming cuts lead to deterioration

