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## Our approach to design

Everything that we create is done with a few things in mind, from high functionality to looking (and lasting) beautiful. But fundamentally, we want everything we make to make life that bit happier, that bit easier, and that bit better.

When it comes to our garden furniture, a large part of this is about choosing materials that stand up to the elements, that don't need their hand holding and that are as easy as possible to care for – because nobody wants to be outside rigorously cleaning in winter months, and nobody wants to have to start summer by giving their table and chairs a deep, deep clean.

Within this care guide, we've explained the personality behind each material as well as extra information should you want to give your garden furniture a little TLC from time to time.

## Why wood?

The material that we use the most of, by far, is timber – the natural, genuine kind as opposed to MDF or chipboard.

*The reason for wood is twofold.*

First, trust. Our founders, John and Giles, are both enthusiastic sailors and many years ago, said that they wanted to create furniture that was “as safe as boats, not houses.” That means furniture that can cope with the rough and tumble of everyday life, that will endure over the years, and that can cope with the unexpected.

The second reason concerns heritage. Wooden furniture has been used in our homes and gardens for centuries. It's renewable, natural, versatile, insulating and tactile. No man-made attempt feels quite like it.

When you see timber in our garden furniture, most of the time you'll find that it's teak, and occasionally acacia.

Teak is a tropical hardwood that slowly takes on a silvered patina over time. It can be left untreated for a number of years, because of the naturally-occurring oils present in the wood's fibres that act as a preservative. The

oils also encourage insects to stay away.

We tend to favour acacia when it's used as a timber base for pieces such as Hudson. This is because it contains fewer natural oils than teak and so we prefer it to be sheltered by the tabletop. You can usually tell the difference between teak and acacia simply by touching it. Acacia is still a tough hardwood (so much so it's often used in boat construction), but it's less heavy and less dense than teak. The grain pattern is often described as being 'flamed' because of its warm tones and striated structure, unlike teak which has a tighter grain.

Over time, you'll notice some movement and that small surface cracks will gradually appear; larger cracks might even appear in the end grain (along the edges) as this is the area most-affected by humidity. But that's all part of the wood's ageing process, which tends to be sped up when it's kept outside.

Teak will see a colour change within the first few months. If you want to slow down this process, certain teak oils can help to maintain its golden-brown appearance, but will need to be reapplied (the frequency will depend on the brand you use). Otherwise, it'll slowly turn silvery. Our exterior formula of our timber protection oil, IsoGuard®, has

been applied to all of our exterior timber before it makes its way to your home to add a further layer of protection. Eventually, teak's natural oils will reduce and dry out as will the IsoGuard® layer, so, to prevent cracking, it'll need to be treated – either with IsoGuard® or your choice of oil. We recommend doing this once a year for outdoor furniture if you want it to be as well-looked-after as it can possibly be.

Acacia is similar, in that it can be left to the elements, or oiled to prevent it taking on a dark grey tone. Because it's generally protected by our tabletops though, it requires much less maintenance.

## What is IsoGuard®?

IsoGuard® is the oil-based formula that we've developed to help protect all of the natural timber we use throughout our collections. It increases the natural resistance of the wood to help it stand up to spills, marks and scuffs. Our exterior IsoGuard® helps to preserve the natural colour of the timber for as long as possible. It also prevents UV discolouration.

## How it works

This bit sounds fancy, but that's because it is. IsoGuard® penetrates the timber surface and bonds with each wood fibre at a molecular level. The special waxes within help to repel stains and marks without creating a barrier so the wood can still look natural. It does so much more than coating. Linseed oil forms its base, but the active ingredients are what make it really special.

*They're our secret formula.*

### THE IMPORTANT PART

Always throw away your used IsoGuard® cloth by dunking it in water and putting it in an airtight container while it's still wet. Leaving an IsoGuard® cloth unwashed, in direct sunlight, or putting it straight in the bin can lead to spontaneous combustion.

## Living with IsoGuard®

IsoGuard® is tough. It can repel water, and most other household liquids from wine to cordial, and leave the sur-

face unblemished, but only for a time (up to four hours). If you mark it and leave it however, there's more chance of the stain leaving a trace.

## Caring for IsoGuard®

### ON SURFACES

As a general rule of thumb, clean up any stains as quickly as possible with a dry e-cloth. And be sure to not leave any damp items on a timber surface or watermarks will eventually find a way in.

Be careful not to apply too much pressure while wiping any liquid or you can accidentally damage the wood fibres and undo the IsoGuard® protection.

## Refreshing your IsoGuard®

Over time, IsoGuard®'s level of protection will gradually lessen. Friction from usage and the effects of life outdoors will wear down the special waxes, and so to maintain the highest standard of protection, we suggest you lightly sand back your piece every year (for outdoor designs) and reapply a new coat of IsoGuard® exterior primer and top-

coat, following the steps below:

1. Clean the wood surfaces with a damp cloth or pressure washer and then dry fully.
2. Sand the wood in the direction of the grain, never across it. The grade of sandpaper you use will have a great effect on the final appearance so make sure you use the same grade throughout so the result is uniform. We suggest a grit of 150–220, sanding until the timber reaches its natural brown colour.
3. To remove all the dust, first vacuum with a soft bristle attachment then wipe with a dry e-cloth until there's not even a trace of wood dustings. The preparation part is really important otherwise the dust particles will become trapped, leaving you with a grainy texture and forming a barrier that will prevent the IsoGuard® from working properly.
4. Now comes the application. Start with the primer by stirring the contents thoroughly, then use a cloth or non-absorbent sponge to spread it across the surface. Allow it to dry fully – the timber should return to its original colour – and then

you're ready for the topcoat.

5. Stir the IsoGuard® topcoat well and, once again, use a cloth or non-absorbent sponge to move the oil around, keeping the surface wet for 10–15 minutes.
6. Remove all excess oil (again in the direction of the grain) for an even sheen and do so with a fresh, clean cloth. If this part isn't done thoroughly, a layer can be left that won't actually provide extra protection but instead could make the surface less durable and more prone to marking.
7. Once the IsoGuard® is applied, the molecular reaction happens only a few minutes later. It's an oxidation process, and to cure properly it ideally needs strong airflow and 'normal' room temperature (that's about 20°C). The initial curing takes 24–36 hours, but the full curing process is somewhat lengthy (21 days). During this time, you'll need to treat the area with extreme care because it's much more susceptible to marking. Colder environments and increasing humidity won't do anything to speed the process up, it'll just take longer. So, for those 21 days, you'll need to let it be

as much as is possible. You can of course still use your piece after the initial curing but be sure to use coasters, just in case.

## Why metal, and why glass?

While we love natural materials, and use them as much as we can, we're very much open to more modern materials and making methods – which is where metal and glass come in.

Across our collections, we use a few types of metal and finishes from steel and brass to powder coating and galvanising – but they all share the same care details. Glass requires something a little different though, but nothing out of the ordinary.

## Metal and glass in the garden

When it comes to metal, we generally follow a four-step process, which included galvanising and powder coating so that the finish is resilient. It means it can be cleaned with a jet wash (from one metre away on a wide spray setting) if a deep clean is needed. Avoid abrasive cleaners, as they ulti-

mately end up doing more damage than good. An e-cloth is all that's needed to dust, and if you spy a stubborn mark, use mild soapy water to rub it away, followed by a dry e-cloth to make sure there are no smears. If you accidentally chip the finish so that the base material is exposed, rust will eventually set in.

### WHAT DO TO IF RUST SETS IN

If you spot rust on your outdoor furniture, the key is to react quickly before it corrodes the metal.

Treat the affected area with a rust remover or altering compound (this does precisely that and chemically changes it to not act as rust would).

Key the area with sandpaper (we suggest 320–450grit) and repaint it entirely with metal paint for a perfect finish.

We use two types of glass across our collections – toughened sheet glass for large, flat expanses like our glass table-tops, and hand-blown glass for smaller areas and accessories. Our glass is resilient, but like with any Neptune piece,

we still advise handling it with care and respect. If scratches and cracks occur on glass, you can try a professional polishing service, but they're very difficult, and sometimes impossible, to repair.

To keep your glass surfaces clean and clear, follow exactly the same steps as you would for metal – a dry e-cloth for dusting, and a damp one for more thorough cleaning followed by a buff with a dry e-cloth. Although you may find you'll need to use soapy water more regularly and with a little more pressure to remove water marks caused by the rain. It's very easy to think that you need an acidic cleaner or specialist glass or mirror cleaner, but there really is no need.

Like with all of our garden furniture, while they've been designed to stand up to the elements, they'll always fare far better when covered and protected during down-pours and wintery months.

## Why stone, and why not stone?

We use a mixture of stone in our garden collection – sometimes natural, other times composite.

Granite is an incredibly tough natural stone. You

can expect to see some variation in appearance because it's a true stone. Granite is crystalline in structure and will always have tiny pits in its surface. These are simply spaces between the mineral crystals. You might also spot ribbons of colour which are the result of the immense heat and pressure from when it was formed beneath the ground. For Monaco, we use a leathered finish (it feels lightly textured and ever-so-slightly waxy), and for Provence we've chosen a polished effect that's ultra-smooth.

Although heavy, both designs have a much thinner profile, which is why a natural stone was an option.

On pieces such as Hudson and Portland, we use a stone blend instead. The reason being, quite simply, when blended with fibreglass, you can achieve a result that's realistically heavy and yet far more lightweight than the real thing. Fibreglass lends it strong tension, concrete promises strong compression, and together they're an incredibly robust partnership. Portland resembles natural dappled and dimpled limestone. Hudson mirrors smooth concrete.

We tried creating Portland using natural stone, but the pedestal base design made it incredibly heavy and impractical. The same applied to Hudson with its thick tabletop. By developing a stone blend, we can get as close

to the real thing as possible while making it far easier to live with. Both are still realistically weighty but not so much that you're unable to relocate them to your chosen spot with a few helping hands.

## Caring for granite

For day-to-day cleaning, a damp e-cloth followed by a dry one is all that's needed, and for more thorough cleaning, use our Lithofin Stone Care kit, which you can purchase online or in-store.

Try not to assume sunlight will help any water to evaporate. Eventually it would dry out, but granite is slightly porous so it'll also absorb some of the liquid.

## Caring for stone blends

We seal these tabletops with three protective coats of resin. Even so, it's still a good idea to use coasters and table mats for items hot and cold and be mindful that it can chip quite easily – but it's something that only adds to its rugged character.

When it comes to cleaning, like with everything,

try to mop up spills as quickly as possible while the area is still wet to avoid a stain setting in; just use a damp e-cloth. For stubborn marks, avoid scouring pads; instead add a dash of non-acidic detergent to your e-cloth and that should do the job.

### CARING FOR BOTH

We seal all our stones to protect them from the elements. You can leave them outdoors, uncovered, and they'll fare just fine, for many years to come. In fact, the stone blends weather rather beautifully and only become more realistic. Should you want to, you can reseal the stone in a few years' time with your choice of stone sealer product. Like with all of our garden furniture, while they've been designed to stand up to the elements, they'll always fare far better when covered and protected during downpours and wintery months.

## Why wicker?

Wicker furniture is one of the most-loved materials for outdoor furniture. Or so it seems. Rattan is the natural reed, and wicker refers to the process in which it's woven.

But, rattan is a much more high-maintenance material to use in gardens and it'll gradually weaken over time, unless it's highly protected, which ultimately masks the natural character. That's why we prefer to keep our rattan designs behind closed doors.

Instead, we developed something that we call our all-weather wicker. Woven in the same way, with resin fibres that have been created to resemble natural rattan. We have one finish that's ultra-smooth, and another that's full of texture, depending on which suits your taste.

In addition, we also use the traditional British craft of Lloyd Loom on our Chatto collection.

## Living with wicker

Because we've chosen a resin wicker over a natural rattan, it makes this collection hardy and reliable. It'll withstand sunshine and showers for years and years to come. The weave is done over the top of powder coated aluminium frames which are lightweight, strong and won't rust either. Just be sure to bring the cushions in, because they're weather-resistant rather than weatherproof.

Chatto has a more delicate nature in comparison. But with all of our wicker furniture, to help them live a longer life, we suggest covering them or storing them indoors if you have the space during winter months.

Should you want to clean your wicker furniture at any point, every design can be brushed down with a soft-bristle brush, then a quick splash with a garden hose can easily remove any grime and debris. To remove more concentrated dirt, use a soft sponge with a mild detergent and warm water. The item can then be rinsed down with a jet wash: set it to a wide spray, and keep the jet at a distance of one metre to avoid stripping the finish.

## Textiles in the garden

All of our outdoor cushions and parasols are made using a canvas that's weather-resistant, 100% waterproof, but not weatherproof. It means that a sprinkling of rain from time to time won't hurt them too much (although air them off if you can), but they shouldn't be left outdoors all year long if you're wanting to keep them looking as lovely as the day you brought them home.

Any marks should be cleaned with mild soapy

water and a damp e-cloth. But in the case of stains or if you'd like to give them a bit of a refresh, you can put any removable covers in the washing machine on a delicate wash (no more than 30°C). Reshape them whilst they're damp and remember that they aren't tumble dryer-friendly. Each wash will reduce the level of waterproof protection though, so try not to wash them too regularly.

## Covering your garden furniture

No matter how hardy, all outdoor furniture will fare better when it's covered or brought inside to shelter in a shed or conservatory space should you have one. If you do decide to cover your furniture, it's important to do so with a breathable cover so that your efforts don't go to waste.

Sometimes you can accidentally create a micro-climate beneath the tarpaulin where condensation is kept inside, and rust and rot are encouraged – the exact opposite of your intentions.

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### **Other care guides available**

Volume one: timber

Volume two: metal & glass

Volume three: fabric

Volume four: surfaces

Volume five: garden

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