

[Home](#) > [Ideas](#) | [More in Decking](#)

Everything to Know About Deck Awnings

Take cover in the great outdoors

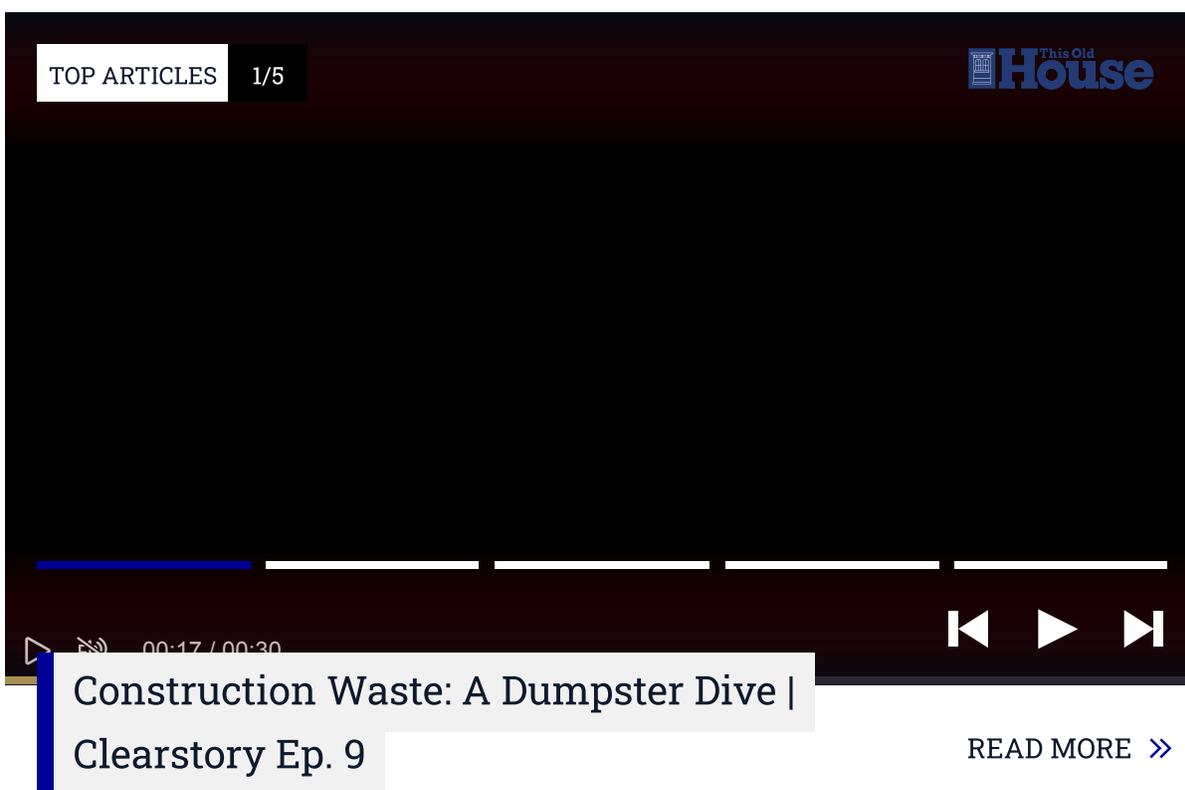
By Carol J. Alexander of [ThisOldHouse.com](#)



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Awnings reduce sunlight and glare, protect patio furniture, and make outdoor living more enjoyable. They come in several styles and can be as easy to install as raising an umbrella or as complicated as erecting a gazebo. An awning can do more than shade your outdoor living space; it can protect the interior of your home, too. Without the sun streaming in your windows, your home stays cooler, lowering your utility costs. Less sun exposure also means that rugs and other furnishings won't fade from UV exposure.

If sun or weather keep you from enjoying your outdoor space, or if your living room feels like an oven, take cover under an awning. Let's take a look at the different styles available.



Retractable awnings—the most popular style

Retractable awnings extend to provide shelter and retract when not needed. Available in manual, electric, or remote-control operation, [they cost more than other awnings but have many benefits](#). When retracted, a cassette stores the cover and its folded support assembly, protecting it from the elements. Some cassettes totally enclose the cloth covering, offering the most protection. Other, less costly options only offer partial protection.

You turn a crank to retract a manual awning. Keeping it extended when not in use makes it vulnerable to sudden storms. Some motorized awnings include sensors to alert you when weather conditions warrant retracting. Although the sensor needs replaced periodically, there's less risk that windy conditions will damage the awning. You can program some sensors to retract unassisted. They offer more convenience but are costly.

Choose a [durable cover](#) that retains its color, resists dirt, and provides UV protection. Fabrics include cotton, polyester, canvas, or vinyl-coated, either sewn or glued. Sewn seams last longer. Vinyl-coated fabrics are waterproof and desirable for rain protection. Other fabrics are water-resistant in light rain. Polyester sags less on large awnings. Canvas retains its color the longest.

Finally, aluminum frames weigh less but galvanized metal is stronger, making it the best choice for windy areas.

Fixed or stationary awnings—protection that's permanent

A fixed awning provides permanent protection. Attached to the side of the home above doors and windows, or to the deck like a gazebo or pergola, it requires less maintenance than a retractable awning. A cloth cover needs replacing as it fades or wears, so for areas with hot sun or frequent precipitation, consider a metal or polycarbonate deck awning. Metal lasts a long time, but it absorbs and transfers heat to your deck. Also, it can rust and dent. Polycarbonate covers are durable and block UV rays while letting in light.

Portable awnings—great for occasional use

On a limited budget? Consider a portable awning. The least expensive choice, they include umbrellas, canopies, shade sails, and other [freestanding styles](#) you can move around the deck or patio.

Awning costs—from portable to automated

Umbrellas, canopies, and shade sails are available for under \$100. Manually-operated retractable awnings from the big box store (DIY installation) cost just a few hundred. But motorized awnings with weather sensors, waterproof fabric, or large sizes, can cost a few thousand dollars and more, especially if you want premium features like phone app controls and integrated lighting and heating systems. Also, installation costs vary by region.
