



THE JOURNAL OF LIGHT CONSTRUCTION

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JLC's

Letters

Deck Design

To the Editor:

Though Jamie Fisher's deck solution (*By Design*, 7/97) is much better than the "weekend carpenter" rendition shown at the beginning of the article, it still does not address the problem of cutting off the view from the dining room. Assuming that the light to the basement room below is not as important as this view, one can minimize obstruction of the view by eliminating the upper deck railing, as follows: Make the height difference between the upper and lower deck 30 inches or less and, *voilà*, no guardrail is required! Of course, the stair to grade will have to go somewhere else. I guess every solution creates a new problem.

Andus H. Brandt
Residential Designer
Berkeley, Calif.

Attaching Metal Connectors

To the Editor:

I enjoyed the article "Using Metal Connectors" (*Practical Engineering*, 5/97). The proper nails need to be used with these metal connectors. The manufacturers' catalogs are usually quite specific about the allowable loads with different kinds of nails, but I've never seen regular roofing nails recommended, although these seem to get used quite often.

One thing I strongly recommend is predrilling nail holes when using galvanized common nails with treated lumber for exterior decks. If you don't predrill, the wood will eventually split at the nail penetration as the wood goes through repeated rain/drying cycles. It may not split in a week or even a couple of months, but give it six months to a year and it will split if it's not predrilled. A hole approximately 1/16 inch smaller than the nail diameter seems to work great.

Gary Lozowski
Easley, S.C.

Siding With Cedar Breather

To the Editor:

I read with great interest your recent article regarding paint failure and structural rot of exterior wood siding (*Notebook*, 6/97). I agree that these failures are due to the inability of the siding to breath after becoming wet from wind-driven rain and capillary action. A similar condition affects cedar roofs when the wood shingles are installed directly onto a solid deck (plywood vs. skip sheathing or furring strips).

Benjamin Obdyke pioneered a solution to this problem with the introduction of Cedar Breather in 1990. This three-dimensional nylon matrix (.25 inch) provides an effective cushion of air between the sheathing and underside of cedar wood shingles or exterior siding. This prevents capillary action while providing a "vented rain screen" when wind pressure forces rain behind the siding. Cedar Breather allows water to drain unrestricted from the sheathing and underside of the siding, reducing the potential for premature rotting and paint failure.

Please feel free to contact our Technical Product Support (TPS) department at 800/349-7655 with any questions you may have.

Geoffrey N. Ehrman
National Marketing Manager
Benjamin Obdyke Inc.
Warminster, Pa.

Quality Stairs

To the Editor:

The article "Trouble-Free Stairs" (4/97) shows the treads butting up against the

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risers. In top-quality work, the risers should rest on top of the backs of the treads and preferably be rabbeted into them. Also, the treads and risers should be housed into a finished wall stringer, not simply butted up to it. At the very least the finished stringer should be cut to fit tightly over the stringer. The details shown will result in dirt-catching cracks when the stair parts shrink, as all wood does.

Eugene A. Groshong Jr.
Alexandria, Va.

Vinyl Not Necessarily Final

To the Editor:

It is somewhat dismaying to find a top-shelf trade publication granting legitimacy to vinyl siding (“Durable

Details for Vinyl Siding,” 6/97). A significant portion of my workload is house systems that have suffered damage as a direct or indirect result of vinyl siding installation. These have ranged from the mundane — minor rot around a window frame — to the calamitous — collapse of a main carrying beam — all because some smooth-talking salesman convinced a gullible homeowner that vinyl is “maintenance-free.”

The irony of an article dealing with termite infestation in the same issue is not lost. Many are the times I have pulled off plastic to expose these critters growing fat and happy underneath.

Without even getting into aesthetics, fire toxicity, ambient moisture retention, wind resistance, loss of historical

perspective, and a host of other problems associated with this stuff, I will rest my case by stating a truism — if God had wanted vinyl siding, he would have made vinyl trees.

Mike Shannahan, Carpenter
La Porte, Texas

KEEP ‘EM COMING! Letters must be signed and include the writer’s address. *The Journal of Light Construction* reserves the right to edit for grammar, length, and clarity. Mail letters to *JLC*, RR 2, Box 146, Richmond, VT 05477; or e-mail to 76176.2053@compuserve.com.

