

The Journal's pick of curious, interesting and useful products.

Just Like Legos

by Clayton DeKorne



Stick building energy-efficient exterior walls may be simplified with Nascor Systems. This company makes interlocking columns, panels, cripples, and splines that can be assembled on site to build pre-insulated, structural walls. The components can be fit together to accept any configuration of window and door openings. They are then nailed to 2x6 or 2x8 plates, and tipped up like conventionally framed walls. The 5-1/2- and 7-1/4-inch walls boast ratings of R-20 and R-30, respectively. The high R-values are reportedly due to the thermal break provided by sandwiching expanded polystyrene (non-CFC-foamed) between flat-framed wood studs. Thermal bridging occurs only at the top and bottom plates. Using a specified sealant and taping the joints between each component, the manufacturer claims the walls meet Canadian R-2000 infiltration standards without the use of an additional air or vapor barrier or plywood sheathing. For more information, contact Quebec Cano Structures, Inc., 520 1st Ave., Parc Industriel, Ste-Marie de Beauce, PQ G6E 1B5, Canada; 418/387-7542.

Interior Storms



On restoration jobs where exterior storms won't do and jobs where replacement windows are too expensive, interior storm windows may be the answer. Spring Tite Windows are made with a spring-loaded, PVC frame with a neoprene rubber weather seal in each corner. Installation against the interior stops seems fast: The spring-loaded sides are held closed on three

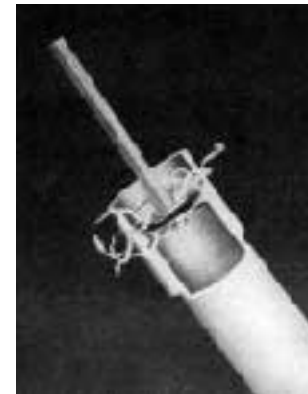
sides by retaining clips and when the window is set in place, the clips are removed. The spring mechanism reportedly provides even pressure against the interior jambs and can be fit into windows up to 1 1/2 inches out of square. Double-strength glass, Lexan, and low-e coated glazings are available. Prices are on the order of 10 cents/sq. in. They are more expensive than conventional, fixed-panel picture units, but with the labor savings they might be competitive. They are certainly better looking. For more information, contact National Spring Tite Windows, 105 Franklin Street, Westerly, RI 02891; 800/525-9340 or 401/348-1030 (in R.I.).

Prefab Concrete Fence



A concrete fence? That's right. Woodcrete fashions posts, panels, and rails for both privacy screen and open-rail fences out of 4000-psi, steel-reinforced concrete. The components are integrally colored and molded on all sides to look like painted or stained wood. As you can imagine, shipping 100-pound posts and 70-pound rails could get expensive, but the parts are manufactured in many locations throughout the country -- they're not all trucked from California. For more information, contact American Technoconcrete Corp., P.O. Box 3973, Gardena, CA 90247; 800/624-9255 or 213/323-9255 (in Calif.).

Plastic Pipe Saver



After years of tearing out old PVC and ABS DWV stacks and freeze-split plastic feed lines, I am glad to see the Pasco Ram Bit. This reaming bit can be chucked into an electric drill to clean solvent-welded plastic pipe ends out of used fittings. It comes in sizes from 1-1/4- to 4-inch for 1/2-inch drills and 1/2- to 1-inch for 3/8-inch drills. The hex arbors on the bits fit standard 1/2- and 3/8-inch extension tips. Ram Bits retail for about \$15 to \$20. For more information, contact Pasco, 11156 Wright Road, Lynwood, CA 90262; 800/421-2053 or 213/537-7782 (in Calif.).

Ozone-Friendly Foam



Todol Pur Fill is an expandable, non-CFC-foamed polyurethane sealant. It is a single-component, moisture-curing foam. According to the manufacturer, it cures tack-free in 15 minutes and is cuttable in 45 minutes at 68°F. It is sold in 675 milliliter-cans (about 23 fluid ounces) which reportedly deliver a 1/2-inch bead about 800 feet long. Cans are available with conventional threaded nozzles for hand application with a standard plastic dispensing tube. Or the foam can be applied with the NBS Foam Gun. The gun features an adjustable trigger to control the size of the bead. An adaptor can be fitted on the gun's 8-mm nozzle for applying the foam in gaps as narrow as 1/8 inch. For more information, contact Todol Products, Inc., P.O. Box 398, Natick, MA 01760; 508/879-7741.

Cordless Revisited



Before battery-powered cordless drills and screwdrivers, old-timers relied on "Yankee" push drills to drill and drive screws quickly. The SqueezeDriver is a modern variation on the push drill with a pistol-grip handle and an impact-resistant plastic housing. The rotary-drive mechanism is operated by squeezing the handle. It is fairly compact -- 7 1/4x6 1/2x1 1/2 inches -- and weighs one pound, which makes it easy to get inside small cabinets and

other tight places and operate with one hand. A torque setting adjusts the length of the drive inside the housing; the high setting is good for breaking screws loose; low is for quick driving and drilling. The non-adjustable tip will only accept 1/8-inch hex drive bits. But the manufacturer also makes the LockBit, a hex-end, speed chuck that fits into the SqueezeDriver or standard extension tips to accept bits up to 1/4-inch. The SqueezeDriver probably won't replace your battery-operated cordless drill, but it might be a good back-up for light-duty work. For instance, I find it useful for installing plastic switch and outlet coverplates because I can't overdrive the screw and crack the plate. For more information, contact Spors Company, Inc., 3033 Iroquois, Detroit, MI 48714; 313/922-6954.

Portable Shop Enclosure



The ARQ CoverIt can provide cold-weather protection for your carpenters and their tools. The enclosure frame is constructed of 1- and 1-1/4-inch steel tubing and is covered with 18-ounce vinyl-coated nylon. It is designed to be set up and broken down quickly into portable sections. And once set up, it can be moved around the site easily. A standard size 11x18x7-foot-high enclosure sells for \$1,763. Or the frame can be purchased separately for about \$900 to be covered with an inexpensive tarp. Custom sizes are available on request. For more information, contact ARQ, Ltd., P.O. Box 1606, Rutland, VT 05701; 802/773-6454.