

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

Quick Ledgers

by Charles Wardell

I used to install deck ledgers over pressure-treated spacers that I ripped on site and flashed to the siding. The space kept the ledger from rotting, but the spacers took some time to cut and install. Fortunately, two new products make the job a lot easier.



The *Flash Block* is a 1/2-inch-thick aluminum spacer that you can sandwich between the ledger and the siding. Its diamond shape permits easy water runoff, and an offset 9/16-inch-diameter hole (large enough for a 1/2-inch bolt) ensures that the *Flash Block* hangs plumb during installation.

Suggested retail prices are \$1.99 for the 5-inch-long blocks and \$2.59 for the 7-inch ones. They're available at some lumberyards, or you can order directly from the manufacturer.

Contact: The *Flash Block* Company, P.O. Box 14, Junction City, CA 96048; 916/623-4796.

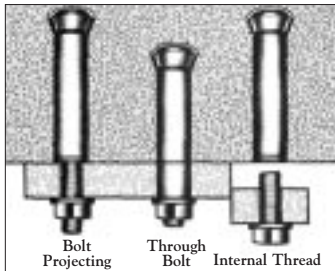
The *Stratton Bracket* is a galvanized steel ledger hanger. The 5 3/8-inch-deep brackets bolt through the existing siding to the band joist. The deck frame can then be assembled on the ground (which means you can



nail the joist to the ledger without joist hangers) and lifted into place. A hole at the base of the bracket lets you drive a second bolt through the ledger itself. The brackets cost \$3.65 each and are available at lumberyards and home centers.

Contact: P.A. Stratton & Co., Inc. P.O. Box 436, Milan, OH 44846; 419/499-4499.

Super Anchors



The *Zykon* concrete anchor is a European import developed for use in nuclear power plants. But don't let that throw you off. The anchor has been tested for safe working loads in cracks up to 1/16 inch wide, making it useful for some residential applications in seismic areas.

To understand how the *Zykon* anchor works, imagine digging a deep hole a little wider than your body and jumping into it with an open umbrella in your hand (you'll need a strong umbrella). The stainless-steel anchor works in a similar manner. The cone-shaped flared end is inserted first into a cylindrical metal sleeve, then put in a hole that has a conical undercut made with a special drill bit. A hand-held setting tool spreads a set of wings at the base of the sleeve, where they form a wedge between the undercut and the end of the bolt.

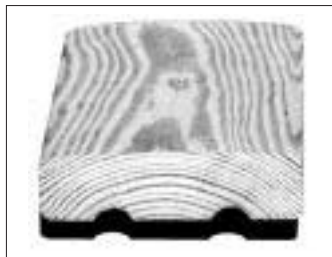
Security like this isn't cheap. A 3/8-inch-diameter by 3-inch-long anchor sells for between \$4 and \$5, the setting tool for about \$20, and the drill bit for around \$40. But for critical applications where you need to resist large forces, it may be worth the price.

Contact: Moore Construction Products, 250 Barber Ave., Worcester, MA 01606; 508/853-3991.

Better Lumber

Planer marks, cupping, and other defects are standard fare on pressure-treated decking, which may help explain why many people dislike the stuff. But defects aren't a worry with *Supreme Decking*. Southern Pine 2x6s are milled down to 1 1/4x5 inches, which eliminates rough edges. A smooth, 1/8-inch-high crown is then milled on the top to permit water runoff, while lengthwise relief channels are cut on the underside to absorb expansion and minimize

cupping. The patented deck boards cost about 10% more than standard 5/4x6-inch decking. The manufacturer is in the process of licensing mills and treating plants in various parts of the country.



Contact: Burke Lumber, P.O. Box 297, 10125 Richmond Highway, Lorton, VA 22079; 703/339-7363.

Improved Door Opener



New ADA requirements have many people scrambling for accessibility products. One of the newest of these is the *PDC-100 Door Opener*, which has the ability to stop in any position. The unit is controlled by a hand-held clicker with a range of 50 feet, but it also includes a slip clutch that allows the door to be opened manually. A brake unit is available that attaches to a standard door knob. The brake holds the knob in the open position, but is easily released when necessary. The *PDC-100* costs \$595 and is powered by a 12-volt rechargeable battery that the manufacturer claims will go for about a year per charge.

Contact: Direct Door Inc., P.O. Box 1910, Akron, OH 44309; 216/733-2424.

Fire-Resistant Sheathing



When I received my sample of *Flamebreak*, I took it outside and hit it with a blow torch. After several minutes, the only ill effect was a black surface patina. Designed as a covering for roof decks and fire-walls, *Flamebreak* panels consist of a layer of APA-rated sheathing and a fiberglass-faced, silicone-treated gypsum backing. They're available in overall thicknesses of 5/8 inch or 3/4 inch, have a Class A flame spread rating, and have received model code compliance reports from BOCA and SBCCI.

Contact: Georgia-Pacific Corp., P.O. Box 105605, Atlanta, GA 30348; 800/225-6119.

No-Hoe Cement Mixer



Most new products are touted as revolutionary, but the *Odjob Concrete/Mortar Mixer* really means it. The *Odjob* is a 7-gallon-capacity, high-density, polyethylene cylinder with molded internal ribs and a lid that doubles as a liquid measure. Pour in up to 80 pounds of concrete along with the needed amount of water, replace the lid, and lay the cylinder on its side. Rock and roll it for 60 seconds and out comes a barrel full of well-mixed concrete. The *Odjob* costs around \$30 and is available from building suppliers and home centers.

Contact: Scepter Manufacturing Company, 170 Midwest Rd., Scarborough, ON M1P 3A9, Canada; 800/387-6018. ■