

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

User-Friendly Paint Stripper

by Charles Wardell



Stripping paint is a nasty job at best. A new product called *Peel-Away 7* does the job without any of the potential toxic side effects. Instead of methylene chloride or methanol, this product relies on a non-evaporating chemical called N-methyl-2-pyrrolidone, or NMP. Just brush it on and leave it overnight; it will eat through multiple layers of paint without evaporating or releasing toxic fumes.

The manufacturer says that, unlike traditional strippers, *Peel-Away 7* will remove almost any type of coating, from lead, alkyd, and latex paint to polyurethane and elastomers. And though the stuff costs more than traditional strippers — a gallon sells for \$40 to \$50 and will do about 50 square feet — labor savings may reduce overall costs.

Contact: Dumond Chemicals Inc., 1501 Broadway, New York, NY 10036; 212/869-6350.

Reusable Caulking Tube



Sausage-type caulking guns have been around for years, but they've been cost-effective only for high-volume users — until now.

According to the manufacturer, the cost of using the new *Reward System* is about equal to that of standard tubes of sealant. The system consists of a sausage-wrapped silicone glazing sealant that slides into a reusable

plastic cartridge. The cartridge fits into a standard caulking gun. (The sausage can also be used without an adapter in a closed-barrel gun.) The *Reward System's* big advantage is that it reduces job-site waste. Instead of a bunch of empty plastic cartridges to dispose of, all that's left is some compressed wrappers.

Contact: Cadillac Plastic, 143 Indusco Court, P.O. Box 7035, Troy, MI 48007; 313/583-1200.

Plastic Shims



I don't know how people get through life without a ready supply of shims. Maybe that's why I liked *Wobble Wedges*. The handy plastic wedges are small enough (1x2 inches) that you can keep a handful of them in your shirt pocket while working. They can be hammered, chiseled, or nailed, and are strong enough to support everything from cabinets and toilets to concrete block. They're available in 100-wedge packs and 300-wedge jars.

Contact: Focus 12, Inc., 1705 14th St., Suite 360, Boulder, CO 80302; 800/635-4994.

Whole-House Surge Protection



The outlet strips that most people connect their computers to will protect them from power surges of up to 6,000 volts and 500 amps. That's ample defense against surges that come from inside the house (like

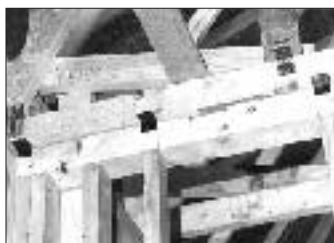
those caused by the refrigerator switching on and off), but it won't stop large spikes coming off the power lines.

The *Surgebreaker* surge arrester gives whole-house protection against surges as strong as 20,000 volts and 10,000 amps. It's installed in the manufacturer's breaker box, where it's connected to the neutral bar and both hot buss bars (it plugs into adjacent breaker slots like a double-pole, 240-volt breaker). It uses a metal oxide varistor that won't conduct under normal conditions but that clamps voltage spikes through the neutral wire to ground. The device won't detect internal surges, however, so don't throw away your outlet strips.

The *Surgebreaker* lists for \$80 and is available from electrical distributors. The manufacturer hopes to have it in retail outlets in the near future.

Contact: Square D Company, 3201 Nicholasville Road, Lexington, KY 40503; 606/245-7963.

Plastic Drywall Clip



Your drywall installer should love *The Nailer*. That's because it's a drywall clip that's installed by carpenters before the drywall crew ever arrives. The plastic clips are stapled or nailed every 2 feet along vertical corners and every 16 inches around the tops of walls. The back of one sheet of drywall rests against the clip, while the end of the second sheet rests snugly against the first. A bag of 20 clips sells for \$5.80 and will suffice for a 12x12 room.

Contact: The Millennium Group, 121 South Monroe St., Waterloo, WI 53594; 800/280-2304.

No-Itch Batts

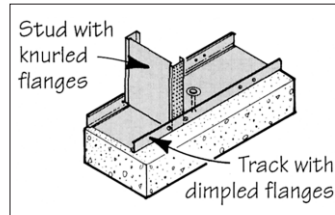


If the mere thought of handling fiberglass batts gives you a rash, then you'll like *PinkPlus*. The 8-inch-thick R-25 attic insulation batts are encased in polyethylene for easy handling and installation. The surface of

the poly is perforated on all sides, so it won't trap moisture or act as a vapor barrier.

Contact: Owens-Corning, Fiberglass Tower, Levis Square, Toledo, OH 43659; 419/248-8000.

Snap-Together Metal Studs



Although interest in light-gauge steel studs is on the rise, most residential builders are more adept at using wood. The *Warewall* could help ease the transition. Instead of being screwed in place, *Warewall* studs have knurled edges that snap into pairs of "dimples" stamped on the inside of the U-shaped top and bottom flanges. The dimples are spaced 8 inches on-center, so they'll accommodate stud spacings of 16 or 24 inches. The studs are priced competitively with standard metal studs, while the tracks cost an extra 2 1/2¢ per foot.

Contact: Ware Industries, Inc., 61 Avenue K, P.O. Box 5099, Newark, NJ 07105; 800/355-8030.

Preformed Footing Drain



You know the drill: form and pour the footings, tear them down when the concrete dries, and surround the perimeter with a perforated PVC footing drain. Now you can get the same result without the last two steps. *Form-A-Drain* is a high-performance, perforated PVC extrusion that's used to form foundation footings but that stays in place after the pour to serve as a permanent foundation drain. It comes in 12-foot lengths and in dimensions of 2 1/2x6 or 2x8 inches. A complete line of couplings, angle pieces, and other accessories is available for use with the system. Costs average \$250 to \$300 for a 2,300-square-foot home.

Contact: CertainTeed Corp., P.O. Box 860, Valley Forge, PA 19482; 215/341-7945. ■