

FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH

## Moisture Meter for Thin Wood

by Bill Brockway

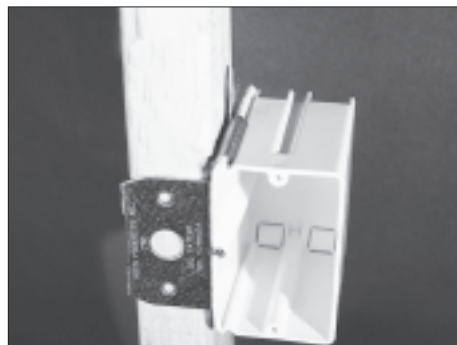
*The Journal's pick of curious, interesting, and useful products*



Dielectric moisture meters don't gouge the wood the way pin-type meters can. But if the low-power electromagnetic field (EMF) they project is thicker than the wood you're testing, the water-content reading might be inaccurate. One solution is the new L609 dielectric meter from Wagner. It has a tight 1/2-inch-deep by 2-inch-wide EMF that can accurately read a single stick of trim, and the readings aren't affected by temperature, preservative salts, or finishes. The L609 sells for \$129.

Contact: Wagner Electronic Products, 326 Pine Grove Rd., Rogue River, OR 97537; 800/634-9961.

### Clip-On Depth-Adjusting Box



Imagine how quickly you could set electrical boxes if you didn't have to worry about the thickness of the finished wall. The new *Adjust A Box*

speeds rough-ins using a plastic box attached to a bracket that clips onto a standard stud in literally a second. Once you're sure of the final height, you can anchor it permanently with a few screws. But the real innovation is a screw between the box and the bracket that adjusts how deep the box sits in the wall — all the way from flush with the stud to two inches out. You can also remove the box from the bracket completely and replace it with a larger one — they're available up to 4-gang size. Retail prices run about 30% more than simple nail-on boxes, but the added versatility makes them worth it.

Contact: Veco Products, P.O. Box 692, Lyle, WA 98635; 509/365-5100.

### Bulk Caulk Loader



Buying high-viscosity caulk in five-gallon buckets and using a reloadable caulk gun can save a lot of money on some jobs, but reloading the gun is always a challenge. This new loader from *Force-Flo* will cut loading time in half for heavy materials like firestop-ping, trowel-grade caulk, and heavy mastics, according to the manufacturer. The advantage is in a new "split nut" design that more efficiently transfers

the power from the screw mechanism to the plunger in the pail. The design also makes removing an empty pail faster because you don't have to back the plunger out — it will slide. *Force-Flo* loaders will work with any reloadable caulk gun on the market. The loader sells for around \$450.

Contact: *Force-Flo*, P.O. Box 24279, Cleveland, OH 44124; 216/431-7270.

### Greenhouse Construction

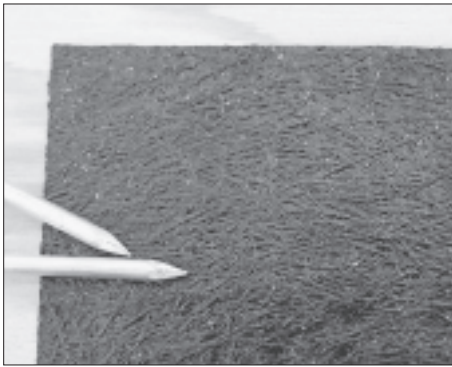


A site-built greenhouse or sunroom is a nice extra to offer a customer. But manufactured kits are sometimes difficult to adapt to a custom design. The *Sundance System* is a group of components that you assemble on your own frame — whether lumber, steel studs, or tubing. Double- or triple-wall polycarbonate sheets are joined at the edges with steel profiles attached to the framing. Ventilators, heaters, and shade cloth are also available. All the parts needed for a 10-foot by 12-foot attached greenhouse will cost between \$1,000 and \$1,500, depending on the options.

Contact: *Sundance Supply*, 1678 Shattuck Ave., Suite 173, Berkeley, CA 94709; 800/776-2534.

### New Roofing Underlayment

Black felt paper used to "dry-in" a roof usually puckers and wrinkles due to temperature and moisture cycles. This uneven surface can be a real drag to work on when it's time to put down the final roofing. NEI promises that its new product, *R-432*, will eliminate the problems that those wrinkles cause. The new underlay-



ment is a waterproofed fiberglass mat guaranteed to be dimensionally stable. The manufacturer claims it replaces both 15- and 30-lb. felt as an underlayment for asphalt shingles, metal roofing, and tile. The sample I examined looked like it would also provide excellent traction for workers on the roof. R-432 costs a bit more than plain old felt paper, but it's cheaper than having to replace wrinkled felt.

Contact: NEI, Pine Rd., Brentwood, NH 03833; 603/778-8899.

### Electronic Lime Stopper



Lime buildup in pipes can be a real problem, slowing down water flow and fouling fixtures. The *Grob 2000* is a deliming device developed in Switzerland that plugs into a standard grounded outlet and handles up to 20 gallons of water per minute. Unlike magnetic deliming devices, the *Grob 2000* uses electrolysis to change the chemical properties of calcium and manganese particles so they won't adhere to the walls of pipe or to the inside of fixtures. No salt or chemicals are added to the water and noth-

ing is filtered out. The *Grob 2000* lists for \$2,500.

Contact: Tema Corp., 301 E. Forest Ln., Palatine, IL 60067; 708/397-6565.

### Ultimate Eye Protection



It may look like the hottest thing in virtual reality, but it's actually a new electronic quick-change welding helmet. The window goes dark automatically when it senses the spark of a welding rod. The sensitivity is adjustable for low-arc welding applications or high ambient light situations. The *Master* helmet features a switching speed of 1/25,000 of a second. It sells for \$360.

Contact: Jackson Products, 101 S. Hanley Rd., St. Louis, MO 63105; 314/746-4817.

### Thermostatic Foundation Vent

While you can find lots of people to argue with about whether or not you should ventilate your crawlspaces, most contractors install vents because local codes require them. One of the slickest venting options I've seen is the *Automatic Foundation Vent* made by the Air Vent Co. It's got spring-loaded flaps that open fully at 70°F and hotter, and close up tight at 40°F and below. The vent has the same dimensions as a standard concrete block, so it's easy to incorporate it into a foundation. The *Automatic Foundation Vent* comes in black, brown, or gray, and the screen is



removable for easy cleaning. List price is around \$10.

Contact: Air Vent, 4801 N. Prospect Rd., Peoria Heights, IL 61614; 800/247-8368.

### Compact Earmuffs



I've been wearing a pair of *Stow-Away* hearing protectors in noisy work zones for several years. The noise reduction rating (NRR) of 21 db is certainly adequate for typical work-site noise, and the foam ear cushions fit easily over the bows of my glasses. The feature that really spurred me to buy them, however, is the compact shape they fold into for storage: The softball-sized bundle fits in my tool pouch or in the bottom of my toolbox. Because the muffs are pressed tightly together, I never worry about the earcups getting dirty inside. *Stow-Away* hearing protectors weigh only 6.5 ounces and list for about \$17.50.

Contact: Peltor, 41 Commercial Way, East Providence, RI 02914; 800/327-6833. ■