

Innovative Products

FOR 2001

by JLC Staff

Our annual roundup of tools and materials to help you get the job done faster, better, and more profitably

ON THE OUTSIDE

Vinyl Windows with Full-Width Jamb

Most wood windows can be ordered with jamb that match the wall framing (either 4⁹/₁₆-inch jamb for 2x4 walls or 6⁹/₁₆-inch jamb for 2x6 walls). But because most vinyl windows are narrow (usually between 2 and 3 inches thick),



they require an extra step when they are trimmed — either drywall returns or site-built jamb extensions.

Now A & H Windows has come out with the *Designview* window, a single-hung vinyl window with 4⁹/₁₆-inch jamb. The vinyl portion of the jamb is 4 inches thick, measuring from the back of the nailing fin. These vinyl jamb have a cleat that is locked into a factory-provided ⁹/₁₆-inch-thick pine nailing strip. Once installed, the windows are ready for wood casing.

The windows can also be ordered with wider nailing strips for 2x6 wall construction. A typical 2'8"x4'6" standard *Designview* Series 40 window with clear insulated glass has a list price of about \$185.

Contact: A & H Windows, P.O. Box 130, N. Wilkesboro, NC 28659; 800/627-3263; www.arndtherman.com.

Stretchy Window Wrap

Peel-and-stick membranes typically aren't flexible enough to follow the curve at the head of an arched window. But DuPont's new window membrane, *FlexWrap*, easily conforms to curves and three-dimensional shapes.



The membrane is made of butyl, not rubberized asphalt. The top layer is corrugated Tyvek, which protects the butyl from UV degradation during construction.

Butyl can be installed over a wider temperature range than rubberized asphalt. Because it is less tacky during installation than most peel-and-stick membranes, it can be easily repositioned after adhesion, if necessary. *FlexWrap* develops its adhesion slowly, but it eventually makes a strong bond.

FlexWrap comes in 75-foot rolls, in two different widths. It isn't cheap: The 8-inch *FlexWrap* costs about \$135 a roll, and the 10-inch *FlexWrap* costs about \$145 a roll.

Contact: DuPont Tyvek, P.O. Box 80705, Wilmington, DE 19880-0705; 800/448-9835; www.tyvek.com.

ON THE OUTSIDE

Siding Gauge for Fiber-Cement

Fiber-cement installers, who are used to handling heavy, awkward pieces of siding, will welcome this little jig. *The Labor Saver* is a stainless-steel hook that hangs from the preceding course of lap siding, providing a shelf on which to rest the next course of siding while it's being nailed. The Labor Saver is designed for a 1¹/₄-inch lap, the standard lap for fiber-cement siding.

Once a few nails are holding the siding in place, the Labor Saver jigs can be easily removed by gently twisting and pulling downwards — as long as the siding hasn't been nailed too close to the jigs.

Labor Savers permit a fiber-cement siding installer to easily work alone. The tool keeps the lap consistent, eliminating the possibility of measuring or marking errors. For installing typical 12-foot lengths of siding, all you need are two Labor Savers, which cost \$30 a pair.

Contact: Indian Valley Innovation, 1429 Indian Valley Rd., Novato, CA 94947; 415/209-6610; www.thelaborsaver.com.



Drive-By Cleanup

At the end of a job, what you want to leave behind is a good impression, not roofing nails — especially on the customer's driveway. This handy magnet attaches with chains to the front of your truck, and can raise a 16-penny nail from 5 inches off the ground. The recommended suspension height is between 2 and 4 inches from grade. Once the magnet is full of nails, just sweep them off with a gloved hand. The *MRS78* hang-type sweeper magnet is 78 inches long and costs \$375.

Contact: Master Magnetics, 607 South Gilbert, Castle Rock, CO 80104; 800/525-3536; www.magnetsource.com.



Cordless Stapler for Vinyl Siding

Here's a tool that makes fast work of vinyl siding installation. The *Paslode IM200-S16* siding stapler is the latest member of the Paslode family of cordless tools. Since the tool drives the staples with a small internal combustion engine (fueled with MAPP gas and ignited by a spark from a Ni-Cad battery), no pneumatic hose or compressor is necessary.

The Paslode drives eight different lengths of 16-gauge staples (3/4 inch to 2 inches). When stapling vinyl siding, one leg of the staple goes in the fastener slot, and the other leg goes above the hem of the siding. The tip allows for depth adjustment, so that staples can be driven consistently proud. This allows the vinyl siding to expand and contract freely. The Paslode IM200-S16 sells for about \$500.

Contact: Paslode, 888 Forest Edge Dr., Vernon Hills, IL 60061; 800/682-3428; www.paslode.com.



Modular Porch Components

It can be tricky to build a porch with screens that can be easily swapped for glass storm panels. Vixen Hill offers a solution: a *modular porch system* made from Western red cedar modules. The components include posts capable of supporting a porch's roof load. Vixen Hill provides everything necessary for a finished porch except for the floor and the roof.



The panels are available in three trimmable widths (3, 4, and 5 feet). Each panel is divided horizontally by a rail into a large upper opening and a smaller lower opening, which can be ordered with balusters or solid panels if desired. All of the panel rails are reinforced with concealed steel rods. The aluminum-framed screens and tempered glass panels are secured to the cedar frames with clips.

Vixen Hill offers a variety of decorative panel styles. Components for a basic porch, including insect screens but not the glass panels, cost about \$70 a linear foot.

Contact: Vixen Hill Manufacturing, Main St., Elverson, PA 19520; 800/423-2766; www.vixenhill.com.

Hose-Free Roofing Nailer

Tired of lugging an air hose up to the roof? Stanley-Bostitch has introduced a *hose-free roofing nailer* that drives nails electrically, not pneumatically. The cordless tool is powered by a 20.4-volt Ni-Cad battery, which drives a DC motor that pushes a piston. The piston pushes a striker that



delivers a series of blows — 8 to 10 blows per nail — to drive the nail home.

Freedom from an air hose is balanced with a few drawbacks: The tool is relatively heavy (8.1 lb., versus 4.5 to 6 lb. for a typical air-powered roofing nailer); the proprietary nails cost about 40% more than common collated roofing nails; and the tool takes longer to drive a nail than a pneumatic tool or a Paslode cordless, because its driving force occurs as multiple blows.

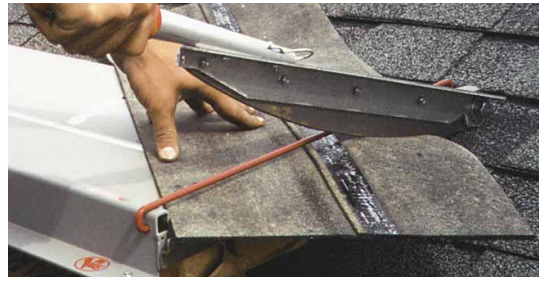
The roofing nailer drives nails from 1 to 1½ inch in length. Prices vary regionally, but Stanley-Bostitch's model CRN38K should cost around \$500.

Contact: Stanley-Bostitch, Briggs Dr., East Greenwich, RI 02818; 800/556-6696; www.stanleyworks.com.



Lightweight Shingle Guillotine

The *Shingle Shear* was invented by a roofer, and it shows. The tool was designed to fit over a bundle of shingles. Using a bundle of shingles as



a "table" keeps the tool steady and anchored when working on a staging plank. The aluminum tool itself is light (18 lb.), making it easy to carry up a ladder.

The Shingle Shear quickly slices through

asphalt shingles at any angle. It includes an inlaid tape measure for convenient measuring. The steel blade is easy to sharpen with a file or on a bench grinder. The Shingle Shear is a good deal at \$247 — its main competitor, the Shingle Shark, costs twice as much and is 20 pounds heavier.

Contact: Howard Tools, 2 Willow Lane, Conklin, NY 13748; 607/775-2200.

Covering Tiled Hips and Ridges

Figaroll is a new flexible flashing for sealing hips and ridges on tile roofs. According to the manufacturer, the fabric used to make Figaroll sheds liquid water while allowing air to escape, ventilating the roof assembly. The flashing is said to provide 7.3 square inches of net-free area per foot of ridge — about half the ventilating ability of typical ridge vents.

Portions of the fabric contain an integrated metal grid, like a twist-tie for plastic bags. This metal grid allows the flashing to be shaped to conform to the profile of the roof tiles. The edges of the flashing include adhesive strips that bond the flashing to the tiles.

Figaroll is distributed in the United States by MonierLifeTile. It's available in two colors: charcoal and red. A roll of the flashing, which measures 11 inches wide by 33-feet long, costs about \$60.

Contact: MonierLifeTile, 7575 Irvine Center Dr., Suite 100, Irvine, CA 92618; 800/274-6505 ext. 1435; www.monierlifetile.com.



Ridge Vent to Match Metal Roofing Panel Profiles

Most ridge vents are designed for asphalt shingle roofs and don't work well with metal roofing. *ProfileVent* is a 3-inch-wide polyester-fiber vent material that is cut to match the profile of available metal roofing panels. The ProfileVent can be ordered to match the profiles of panels made by most roofing manufacturers. Separate strips of ProfileVent are required on either side of the ridge. One package containing two 50 foot coils, enough for 50 feet of ridge, retails for about \$185.

Contact: Ventco, 115 Lismore Ave., Glenside, PA 19038; 800/300-9515; www.profilevent.com.

FOUNDATION, FRAMING & HARDWARE

Modular Stair System

If you're tired of picking through the 2x12s at your local yard, searching for perfect stair stringers, you may want to consider switching to steel stringers. *Stairframe* is a Canadian company that sells custom-made, computer-designed stair stringers made of welded 16-gauge steel. The company can provide stringers



for a wide variety of residential stairs, including L-shaped and U-shaped stairs, with or without winders.

The welded stringers are delivered with all necessary hardware and require minimal assembly. The steel components bolt together at the landings. Stairs that are open on one side require no support under the stringers. The *Stairframe* system allows the installation of temporary rough treads, which are screwed in place from below.

Steel stringers for a straight 14-riser stair cost about US\$183 (CDN\$285). Finish treads, risers, rails, and balusters are also available, in a variety of hardwood species.

Contact: *Stairframe Systems*, 100 Goyer St. #108, LaPrairie, QC J5R 5G5, Canada; 877/793-7263; www.stairframe.com.

Hidden Fasteners for Wall Cabinets

Panel *Z Clips* are interlocking aluminum brackets designed to speed wall-hung installations. One bracket goes on the wall, and the other bracket is attached to anything you want to hang without visible fasteners — wall cabinets, wainscot panels, signs, or elevator wall panels. The clips lock securely, while still



allowing easy disassembly by simply lifting upwards. How much weight the clips can support depends mostly on the length of the screws used and the solidity of the substrate. According to the manufacturer, when overloaded, the substrate will fail before the clips.

Panel *Z Clips* are available in two sizes: one requires a lift-off height of $\frac{3}{8}$ inch, and the other a lift-off height of $\frac{5}{8}$ inch. A package of 250 clips of either size costs \$50.

Contact: *Monarch Metal Fabrication*, 1625 Sycamore Ave., Bohemia, NY 11716; 631/563-8967; www.monarchmetal.com.

Blueprint Protection

The plumber just spilled another cup of coffee on the blueprints, and it's getting hard to decipher the dimensions under that blob of donut frosting. Maybe it's time to invest in a *Plan-Caddy*, a vinyl protector designed by a builder who got frustrated by frequently damaged



prints. Blueprint pages are slipped individually into sturdy transparent pockets and held in place with Velcro closures. Each pocket of the *Plan-Caddy* can be flipped, so that it reads like a book. The *Plan-Caddy* includes an extra pocket for information like window schedules or truss layouts. The standard size *Plan-Caddy* (for 24x36-inch prints) holds 5 pages, and costs \$98.50.

Contact: *Lakewood Construction*, 221 South Cross St., Oconomowoc, WI 53066; 262/567-3255.

Fabric Footing Forms

Tired of cutting up a pile of perfectly good 2x10s just to make footing forms? *Fastfoot Industries* has devised a faster and possibly cheaper footing form made of polyethylene fabric. The *Fastfoot* system uses three components: steel brackets called *Fast-Yokes*, horizontal



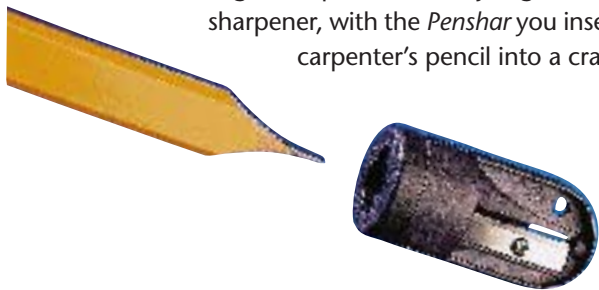
2x4 "kickers," and *Fastfabric*. The adjustable *Fast-Yokes* and the 2x4s can be reused. Enough *Fast-Yoke* brackets for a 200-ft. foundation (30 *Fast-Yokes*) cost about \$2,000 US, while a standard bundle of *Fastfabric* (120 ft. long by 62 in. wide) costs about \$52.

Contact: *Fastfoot Industries*, Unit 12, 6333 148th St., Surrey, BC V3S 3C3, Canada; 888/303-3278; www.fastfoot.com.

FOUNDATION, FRAMING & HARDWARE

No More Whittlin'

Finally, someone got around to inventing a pencil sharpener for rectangular carpenters' pencils. Buy two of these slick little gadgets, in case you lose one. Instead of twisting the pencil directly against the sharpener, with the *Penshar* you insert a carpenter's pencil into a cradle,



which rotates inside the sharpener housing. The *Penshar* sharpener is widely available at hardware and building supply stores, where it sells for \$3 to \$5.

Contact: Penshar, 1 S. 312 Ardmore, Villa Park, IL 60181; 877/736-7427; www.penshar.com.

An Alternative to Spikes

If you've ever built a retaining wall from landscaping timbers, you've probably learned all of the disadvantages of 10-inch barn



spikes, which require predrilling and are slow to drive. *FastenMaster TimberLok screws*, which come in five sizes up to 10 inches long, can be driven through pressure-treated beams with no predrilling. The screws are also handy for attach-

ing a rafter to a top plate straight down through the bird's-mouth, or attaching 2x4 nailers wherever they need to be on edge.

TimberLok steel screws have a rust-resistant polymer coating applied over a zinc phosphate surface. The 10-inch screws are sold in a pack of 50 for \$29 retail.

Contact: Olympic Fasteners, 153 Bowles Rd., Agawam, MA 01001; 800/518-3569; www.fastenmaster.com.

PLUMBING & MECHANICAL

Flue Liners with Locking Joints

FlameGuard flue liners are made of refractory concrete, not clay. Unlike clay tiles, the round *FlameGuard* flues have interlocking lips that make a lap joint. This feature makes the flue installation more secure and helps seal against liquid creosote. These flue liners have been tested to withstand repeated exposure to temperatures of 2,100°F.

The flue liners are available in three round sizes (7, 8 and 10 inches). The price of *FlameGuard* flues depends on the distance shipped. Picked up at the factory in Canada, a 7-inch round flue (24 inches long) costs CDN\$7.80 — about US\$5.

Contact: Refratco 2000, Patio Drummond, 8435 St. Joseph Blvd., Drummondville, QC J2B 8B3, Canada; 819/394-2505.



Tread on Me

A lighting company called Super Vison offers lighting fixtures for use in concrete-paver walkways. The *Sierra Paver Light*, which can be stepped on, is a 4x4-inch, sealed ABS fixture that is designed to be installed along with pavers. A fiber-optic cable



connects each illuminated paver to the light source, an illuminator. The illuminator requires 120 volts AC, and must be located within 40 feet of the pavers. One illuminator can serve up to 18 paver fixtures.

A kit, including one illuminator, 6 paver lights, and 105 feet of fiber-optic cable, sells for \$295.

Contact: Super Vison International, 8210 Presidents Dr., Orlando, FL 32809; 407/857-9900; www.svision.com.

PLUMBING & MECHANICAL

Rock-Steady Water Pressure

Most submersible pumps are controlled by a simple pressure switch, which provides a fluctuating water pressure between the low and high cut-off points, typically 25 to 50 psi. In some cases, such pressure fluctuations can contribute to an unsteady water temperature in the shower.



Flint & Walling has introduced a new submersible pump, the stainless-steel *Commander Pro*. This pump is equipped with a Franklin variable-speed motor and a special electronic controller. The controller senses the domestic water pressure and adjusts the speed of the pump motor as required to maintain a steady water pressure that never varies more than 1 or 2 psi. The controller is preset to 40 psi, but can be adjusted between 20 and 65 psi.

Because the pump and controller react directly to changes in water flow, a small 2-gallon pressure tank is all that is necessary. The list price for the *Commander Pro* with a 2-hp motor and the controller is \$1,758.

Contact: Flint & Walling, 95 N. Oak St., Kendallville, IN 46755; 800/345-9422; www.flintandwalling.com.

Dryer Vents Come of Age

Did you ever wish there was a better way to install the vent connection between a clothes dryer and the wall? Deflect-o sells a *Dryer Vent Kit* that uses a rigid aluminum vent pipe to connect the dryer to a fitting, the *Quick Connector*, mounted on the wall. The pipe and the wall fitting are both equipped with gaskets, so the dryer can be easily slid away from the wall, and then slid back, without disassembling the vent pipe. Model DQCK, for new construction, costs about \$15.



Contact: Deflect-o, P.O. Box 50057, Indianapolis, IN 46250; 800/428-4328; www.deflecto.com.

Leak Detection System

The *WaterCop* is a smart valve that's designed to shut off the main water supply to a house in case of a plumbing leak. The motorized ball valve on the *WaterCop* responds to radio signals sent by remote sensor units. These sensor units are placed in locations where a water leak might be expected — on a laundry room floor or under a water heater. If any of the battery-powered sensors detect moisture, indicating a plumbing leak, it sends a signal to the main unit, which shuts off the water supply to the whole house.



Although a *WaterCop* won't prevent all water damage from a plumbing leak, it will probably prevent a small problem from turning into a major headache. The *WaterCop* valve is available to fit three different pipe sizes — $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{3}{4}$, and 1 inch. Each size is priced the same: about \$350, including the motorized ball valve and three remote sensors.

Contact: DynaQuip Controls, 10 Harris Industrial Park, St. Clair, MO 63077; 800/545-3636; www.watercop.com.

Each size is priced the same: about \$350, including the motorized ball valve and three remote sensors.

Keeping Flex Duct in Its Place

Sagging flex duct looks sloppy, and the sags can interfere with air flow. A new strap for flex duct, the *Flex Riggin Strap*, is a wide, tough version of the small ratcheted plastic strap used to seal garbage bags. Designed by a group of hvac installers, the polyethylene strap can be quickly stapled to a wood rafter or joist, and then wrapped around the duct and cinched.

The manufacturer claims that the *Flex Riggin* strap installs in about half the time it takes to use nylon roll strapping. Because the straps are wide (about $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches), they don't restrict airflow like some narrower strapping materials. The *Flex Riggin* Strap is available in two sizes: Model FR410B accommodates flex ducts from 4 to 10 inches; model FR1218B is for 12- to 18-inch flex duct. The smaller size straps are sold in packs of 100 for about \$48, while the larger ones are sold in packs of 50 for \$49.



Contact: Evesham Enterprises, P.O. Box 128, Magnolia, NJ 08049; 866/374-4446; www.flexrigin.com.

