

Products



Bendable Trim.

Polymer-based *Flex Trim* radius moldings generally cost one-third as much as comparable custom-made curved wood moldings, says the manufacturer. More than 8,000 standard profiles are sold in paint-grade and stain-grade versions. Unlike wood, *Flex Trim* is immune to damage by salt, moisture, and extreme temperatures, the company says. Also available is an upgraded product called *Zzzz Flex*, which can follow even tighter curves.

Flex Trim, 800/861-0734, flextrim.com.

Color-Coded Spackling. Making nail holes invisible is usually a two-day process: Fill today, sand tomorrow. *DAP DryDex Spackling* is a fast-drying product that features a colorful “dry time indicator” — the material starts out pink, then turns white when it’s ready to sand and paint. The maker says that drying time varies from one to five hours, depending on weather conditions and depth of fill. It can be used inside or outside, on drywall, plaster, wood, brick, and stone. A one-quart tub sells for about \$7.

DAP Products, 800/543-3840, dap.com.



Superior Staircase Protection. Placing a drop cloth on stairs requires constant vigilance. With the *Flex & Form Conformable Staircase Runner*, you can lay down some protection and then forget about it. A new product from 3M’s Hand-Masker division, this 10-ounce heavy-duty canvas runner has a material sewn into its edges that conforms to the shape of the steps and stays put. After the job, the runner is easy to fold flat and re-use, says the company. The 4-foot-wide runner is sold in a 7-foot length for about \$19 and a 15-foot length for about \$30.

3M, 800/494-3552, 3m.com.



Safer Sheathing.

The company that invented OSB sheathing now offers a version it says is nearly three times more burn-resistant than a conventional wood panel. LP says each panel of *FlameBlock Fire-Resistant OSB Sheathing* is coated with a layer of noncombustible magnesium oxide plus 1/2 gallon of crystallized water; the water becomes liquefied only if exposed to intense heat. *FlameBlock* carries a Class A flame spread rating, which makes it suitable for fire zones as well as party walls in multifamily construction. It costs two to three times as much as standard OSB.

LP Building Products, 888/820-0325, lpcorp.com.



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Fastener-Free Hardwood Flooring.

Elastilon Self-Adhesive Underlay Membrane promises to make installing a solid hardwood floor as easy as a laminate job. This 1/8-inch-thick resilient membrane features a peel-and-stick top layer that unites the disparate pieces — without nails or glue — to create a floating floor. It's compatible with all hardwood species and can be applied directly over a concrete floor. Compared with conventional fastening schemes, this process cuts install time by as much as 70 percent, says the manufacturer. The membrane costs \$1.85 per square foot.

Elastilon, 877/526-9663, elastilonusa.com.

Joist Hanger Thumb-Saver. Years ago, a black-and-blue thumb was the mark of all carpenters; now it's the sign of someone who installs framing connectors. But soon it may be extinct altogether, thanks to Simpson's *Strong-Drive SD Screw for Structural Connectors*.

These 1/4-inch hex-drive galvanized screws are manufactured in two shank sizes: SD9 and SD10. According to Simpson, the SD9 is stronger than a 10d common nail, while the SD10 is stronger than a 16d common nail.

Both sizes come in 1 1/2-inch and 2 1/2-inch lengths. A 100-count box of 1 1/2-inch SD10 screws costs about \$12.

Simpson Strong-Tie Co., 800/999-5099, strongtie.com.



No-Mess Corner Bead. Nonmetal corner beads are crack-resistant and easy to put on, but they're also messy. The inside of *Hydrotrim* corners are already coated with a water-based adhesive, so they need only water — no spray glue or joint compound — to make them sticky. According to the maker, you simply spray the bead with water, wait a few seconds for the glue to activate, and press in place. Finishing can begin after about 10 minutes of curing time. The product comes in 8-, 9-, 10-, and 12-foot lengths and costs about 39 cents per linear foot.

Structus Building Technologies, 888/662-6281, hydrotrimcorner.com.

Visible Comfort. Athletes have known for years that clothing made from blended polyester is more breathable —

and therefore more comfortable — than cotton. The *GloWear 8289 Class-2 Economy T-Shirt* is made from a 3.3-ounce polyester fabric that the maker says wicks moisture to keep the wearer dry all day long. It comes in high-visibility colors with 2-inch-wide ANSI-certified reflective accents and costs about \$13.



Ergodyne, 800/225-8238, ergodyne.com.

Diet Drywall. Lightweight drywall sounds like an oxymoron. But USG says that its *Sheetrock UltraLight Panels* are up to 30 percent lighter than conventional 1/2-inch panels. The company credits the weight loss to a “colloidal-chemistry” formulation that makes the material not just lighter but stronger, and says that the product can be applied over 24-inch on-center ceiling joists with no chance of sagging. It comes in most standard sizes and costs about 10 percent more than traditional Sheetrock.

USG Corp., 800/874-4968, usg.com.



Plug-and-Play Speakers.

When most of us were kids, a home entertainment system was a record player and the wiring was a two-prong plug. Today it's a lot more complicated. But *A-BUS Direct* multiroom audio speakers from Eaton Corp. simplify the installation process because they require only a single cat-5 cable to connect with the audio/video source. The speakers include integral amplification and can be operated by a remote-control device (which is included). They're sold in exterior as well as interior versions; the cost to contractors is about \$220 per pair.

Eaton Corp., 800/386-1911, eaton.com.



Pullout Microwave. Viking's *Undercounter DrawerMicro Oven* installs underneath a countertop or wall oven. A top-loading drawer provides easy access to the oven's full 1-cubic-foot capacity; the drawer operates with a touch of a button but includes a child-lock safety feature. Perhaps most important, the unit features a popcorn sensor to ensure that this essential microwave task is always successfully completed. The oven is sold online for about \$1,200.

Viking Range Corp., 888/845-4641, vikingrange.com.

Pure Plywood. Like lead and asbestos, formaldehyde was long considered an unpleasant but irreplaceable part of the building process. But this known carcinogen finally appears to be on its way out. *PureBond Formaldehyde-free Hardwood Plywood* is assembled not with urea formaldehyde (UF) glue but with a soy-based adhesive; it's compliant with LEED standards for low-emitting materials. According to the maker, it's also significantly more water resistant than standard UF panels — yet costs about the same.

Columbia Forest Products, 800/637-1609, columbiaforestproducts.com.

