

## Outdoor Living Top 10

Now that spring is upon us, newspapers and magazines are full of articles about creating and enhancing outdoor living spaces, and all sorts of companies are advertising diverse products designed to replicate indoor décor outdoors — everything from light fixtures and furniture to a new outdoor dishwasher (available from Kalamazoo Outdoor Gourmet this summer for \$4,990). All of which suggests that outdoor living is still very much in vogue.

What are homeowners most interested in adding to their outdoor experience this year? According to the 2011 American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) Residential Trends Survey, the top 10 outdoor structures are fencing, arbors, pergolas, steps, ornamental water features, decks, porches, art, sheds, and play structures. The same survey found that the top 10 outdoor living features are lighting, fire pits and fireplaces, seating and dining areas, a grill, installed seating, furniture, counter space, storage, a stereo system, and — what any list would be incomplete without — a kitchen sink. — *Laurie Elden*

## Remodeling Recovery on Hold?

Remodeling activity has been picking up recently, but the recovery may lose some of its momentum in the second half of 2011.

A couple of reports, the latest versions of which were released in April, offer different perspectives on the industry — and a reminder that a single statistic does not tell the whole story. One report, the BuildFax Remodeling Index (BFRI), looks at historical monthly permit activity. The other report, the Leading Indicator of Remodeling Activity (LIRA) from the Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, projects spending levels for the upcoming three quarters based partly on construction data from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The good news is that the BFRI was up 20 percent in February compared with a year ago. That was the sixteenth month in a row the index showed year-over-year improvement in remodeling activity nationwide, a positive sign for the industry. And the index was also up in all four regions of the country — Northeast, South, Midwest, and West.

The BFRI does not indicate, though, how the permitted jobs compare in scale with those in previous years; that is, whether homeowners are spending more or less on each project, so it's not a complete measure of the industry's health.

Like the BFRI, the LIRA shows that remodeling activity has been improving, except it measures that activity in terms of total national expenditure on home improvement, rather than the number of permitted jobs.

Looking forward, the latest LIRA projects that although spending on remodeling had a strong start in 2011 and should have a strong second quarter, it will start to stall after that, dragging the annual increase in spending down to just 0.2 percent over 2010. Kermit Baker, director of the Remodeling Futures Program at the Joint Center, commented in a press release, "Recent softness in the housing market and continued pessimism among remodeling contractors point to a slowdown in the remodeling market toward the end of the year." — *L.E.*

## MCA Makers Settle Patent Dispute

Under an agreement announced in April by wood-preservatives manufacturers Arch Treatment Technologies and Osmose, Arch will license micronized-copper wood-treatment technology from Osmose. The agreement, whose terms the companies did not release, brings to a close a patent-infringement lawsuit filed by Osmose on March 9, 2010, immediately after it received a patent for its MicroPro treatment process.

In the older copper azole (CA) formulas, the copper is dissolved in a carrier, whereas in micronized-copper treatments, the copper is ground into tiny particles so a solvent isn't necessary. The manufacturers claim that the result is less corrosive to metal fasteners and hardware.

According to Huck DeVenzio, marketing communications manager at Arch Chemicals, the agreement applies to the micronized-copper azole treatment Arch uses for Wolmanized Outdoor Wood in the Eastern U.S., but that customers "will see no change."

For Wolmanized Outdoor Wood in Western states, treaters use Arch's dissolved version of copper azole, which is not subject to the licensing agreement. DeVenzio noted that Western wood species, like hem-fir, have more heartwood than Eastern species (thus, they need to be incised for treatment to penetrate) and are rarely treated with MCA, though Arch does have approval (ESR-1721) from the International Code Council Evaluation Service ([icc-es.org](http://icc-es.org)) for MCA to be used on incised hem-fir. — *L.E.*

**The expanded IRS Form 1099** reporting requirements — originally included in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act passed last year — were repealed in a bill signed in April by President Obama. Unpopular from the start with small-business advocates and organizations like the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) and the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), the provision called for businesses to issue a 1099 to every corporation from which they bought more than \$600 in goods or services, beginning in 2012. In addition, the recently signed bill repeals a provision in the Small Business Jobs Act of 2010 that had similarly expanded 1099 reporting requirements for independent landlords (landlords who don't make a primary living from rental property) as of January 1, 2011.

**Tiger Claw**, a maker of hidden deck fasteners, is now part of the FastenMaster division of Agawam, Mass.-based OMG. The move adds Tiger Claw's hidden clip system and installation gun to FastenMaster's other deck offerings, which include the Cortex concealed fastening system, the Trap-Ease line of composite decking screws, and the LedgerLok.

**If you build decks with Wolmanized Outdoor Wood**, you might want to snap a few photos of your projects and enter them in Arch Treatment Technologies' deck sweepstakes. The prize is a five-day trip to Chicago for DeckExpo in October and a one-year membership in NADRA. Go to [wolmanizedwood.com/dbsweepstakes](http://wolmanizedwood.com/dbsweepstakes) for contest rules and an entry form.

**Failing to give out the EPA "Renovate Right"** lead paint pamphlet — or not being able to document that you did — can be expensive. In April, College Works Painting agreed to pay a fine of \$32,508 to settle allegations that it failed to inform homeowners or residents of possible lead hazards during work done at several locations in Oregon in 2008. Also in April, Window World of Omaha, Neb., agreed to pay a \$3,976 fine and donate \$11,928 in window replacement work to settle allegations that it failed to provide the EPA pamphlet during work at several properties. Neither company was cited for any unsafe work practices. ❖