

PRODUCTS

Staying Dry

Drainage system creates below-deck opportunities

by Scott Gibson

There may be plenty of space beneath an elevated deck, but it's not typically the sort of place people want to hang out in. RainEscape is hoping to change a few minds about that.

The company makes a plastic drainage system that installs between joists after the deck has been framed but before decking goes down. Water making its way through gaps between deck boards is collected and diverted to an outside drain, keeping the area below the deck dry. The system allows the installation of a high-quality ceiling, electrical fixtures, and entertainment systems without fear of water damage, the company says.

Installation starts with placing downspouts at the end of each joist bay. That's followed by 20-mil plastic troughs rolled out over the tops of the joists and tacked or stapled in place, forming a waterproof collector that directs water to the downspouts.

The company says that in addition to creating an



extra outdoor living space, the system protects deck framing from water and thereby helps it to last longer. RainEscape is designed for 12-inch and 16-inch joist spacing and also can be modified for 24-inch on-center spacing. It's guaranteed for 20 years.

The cost, about \$4 per square foot, includes trough, downspouts, and butyl caulk. RainEscape is distributed by Correct Building Products, a Maine-based maker of composite decking.

Scott Gibson is a writer in East Waterboro, Maine.

■ **RainEscape**, 877/348-1385,
www.rainescape.com.

Blemish-free Decks

Plug screw holes and forget the fasteners

FastenMaster is taking inspiration from carpenters and cabinetmakers who conceal screw heads in finish work with a plug made from the same wood. If grain and color are matched carefully, the plugged hole is very difficult to spot.

This can also be the case with composite decking. FastenMaster's Cortex Concealed Fastening System is a kit that allows deck installers to plug face-screwed deck boards with the same material as the decking for the same effect as a hidden fastener system but, the company says, at a lower cost.

Kits consist of Cortex screws and plugs, plus a setting tool that ensures the screw is set to the correct depth, automatically creating the counterbore for the plug. Tap in a plug that corresponds with the color and type of decking, and the screw disappears. Plugs don't have to be trimmed after insertion, according to the company.



The company says the method is not only fast but also ensures a very strong board-to-joist connection and high resistance to racking. FastenMaster currently makes kits in three colors for each of three types of decking: Trex Accents, TimberTech TwinFinish, and Azek Deck. Screw heads, which are slightly larger than a trim head, accept a No. 1 square drive bit.

Kits come in two sizes — for 100 square feet or 300 square feet of decking — at a cost of between 72 cents and 85 cents per square foot. — S.G.

■ **FastenMaster**, 800/518-3569,
www.fastenmaster.com.

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Bright and Fancy Risers

Cut-out risers light the stair

One approach to lighting stairs is the DecoRiser by Backyard America. This system consists of a stair riser that's been cut out in one of a variety of decorative patterns, and a low-voltage light box that attaches behind the riser. You can use a single light box (\$19) per riser or one behind each cutout. For a consistent look, diffusers (\$5) are available to fit behind any cutouts that don't receive a light box.

The standard sizes are 7¹/₄ inches by 43 inches (\$39) and 7¹/₄ inches by 54 inches (\$44), but custom lengths are available. Stock DecoRisers are made from Azek, a cellular PVC material. Other materials are available on a custom basis. Refreshingly, the prices advertised on Backyard America's Web site include shipping.

The Web site offers instructional drawings to help with installation, but really, it looks pretty straightforward.



Any experienced deck builder should be able to add these risers to stairs with a minimum of fuss. — *Andy Engel*

■ **Backyard America**, 877/489-8064,
www.backyardamerica.com.

Low-Maintenance Porches

Azek cellular PVC porch decking

Azek recently introduced tongue-and-groove porch decking that's made from the same cellular PVC that goes into its existing deck product line. The 1x4 planks are available in two colors — Brownstone and Slate Gray — and can be installed on both covered porches and decks.

Cellular PVC has a number of advantages over wood-plastic composites, manufacturers say, including higher stain and scratch resistance. Azek says the material resists stains from greasy foods and red wine while also offering protection from fading, moisture, and mold and mildew.

Azek Porch is about 40 percent lighter in weight than wood composites, the company says, making it a little easier to heft on the site.



The decking should be pitched away from the building 1/4 inch per foot to shed water. The company says the decking can be blind-nailed (or screwed) and recommends stainless steel fasteners.

Azek manufactures its porch decking by bonding PVC to flax fiber; therefore, the decking does not contain any wood fiber. Azek, which began selling the new porch planks in April, got exclusive rights

to the technology when it acquired Procell decking.

Azek Porch retails for about \$11 per square foot. — *S.G.*

■ **Azek Building Products**, 877/275-2935,
www.azek.com. ❖

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