

READERS' TIPS

Best techniques from the field

A Better Post-Hole Tamper

by Rich Blumer

No matter what method I use to dig a post hole, a significant amount of dirt at the bottom has to be compacted before I can place my concrete. But commercially available tampers fall short with this task, because of either their light weight or their small contact surfaces. I solved both of these shortcomings in my own design, which uses a 24-inch-long section of a treated 6x6 post and \$20 worth of 3/4-inch-diameter black gas pipe (see photos, right).

First, I cut about 1 inch off the post's edges at 45 degrees and applied waterproofer/preservative to all the cuts. The bevels prevent sharp corners from catching the sides of the hole, allowing the post to do a better job of tamping the dirt around the hole's bottom circumference. Then I centered a floor flange fitting on one end of the 6x6 and screwed it on with 2 1/2-inch #12 stainless screws. I fastened a 36-inch length of straight pipe to the flange and added a T-fitting to the other end. A pair of 6-inch-long pipes with end fittings completed the handles.

The weight and large contact surface of the 6x6 makes easy work of compacting any hole 8 inches in diameter or larger. The 63-inch finished height of the tamper places the handle at a comfortable working height in a 42-inch-deep hole. Finally, the T-style handle allows me to generate more downward compacting force, which conventional tampers costing twice as much can't match because they have straight handles. ❖

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Send Us Your Tips

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