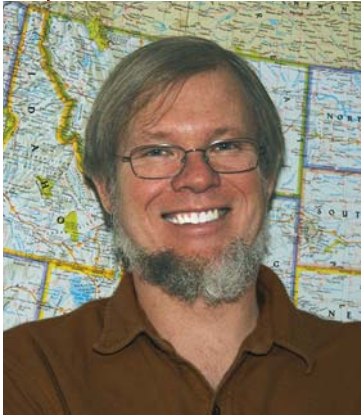


# Is It Spring Yet?



The spring peepers are out where I live, and like every year when I first hear them, I put John Fogerty's "Centerfield" on the CD player and crank up the volume to a dangerous level. Probably like you, I'm tired of the constant bad economic news of this past winter. Maybe like you, I'm looking for some upsides to take comfort from. I'm finding a few, and even if some are symptoms of a slow economy, I'll still take them. For example, I recently took out a building permit for a long-awaited shop, er,

garage behind my house. The building department in my town has always been pretty good to deal with, but this time they were downright pleasant. That may have had something to do with the fact they weren't overworked, but hey, I'm actually looking forward to my inspections now.

Because of the garage, I've been pricing materials and asking about delivery times. Concrete is cheaper. Stone is cheaper; lumber, drywall, and shingles, all cheaper than a couple of years ago. The inside sales staff at the local lumberyards take the time to answer all my questions. And delivery? When would I like it?

After my business with the building department, I crossed the street to the town's Market. It had closed last fall, a victim of the times. Now, I live in a town so small that meant I had to leave it to buy milk or beer. There was a collective cheer from most residents when the store reopened in March, and let me tell you, New Englanders don't cheer about much other than the Patriots and the Sox, and they haven't held up their end lately.

In the past, the Market was full of contractors buying coffee and heart-attacks-on-a-roll for breakfast. Then, I didn't know most of them. There are fewer contractors now, but most are local guys I know who've always provided good service and good workmanship, and knew to charge enough for it. I was surprised by how many said they were busy — not as busy as two years ago, but doing okay.

A month ago, I spent several days at JLC Live in Providence, R.I. I've attended that residential construction show regularly for six or seven years, first as an attendee, then as a presenter. The vibe from the crowd this year seemed little different than any other year, which is to say it was great. The crowds were thick, and I think all the exhibitor space in the hall was sold out, because there were booths set up in the lobby.

There didn't seem to be as many new products as in other years, but a few manufacturers were optimistic enough to introduce some deck-related products. The big category was decking fasteners and faster ways of installing them. Spotnails (800/873-2239, [spotnails.com](http://spotnails.com)), Tiger Claw (877/873-2529, [deckfastener.com](http://deckfastener.com)), and Universal Fastener Outsourcing (800/352-0028, [allnails.net](http://allnails.net)) all had some interesting stuff. Look for reviews in future issues of *Professional Deck Builder*.

So, is it spring yet? I don't know. I don't think so everywhere. But at least in my little corner of New England, I see some new grass on the field. ❖

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy Engel". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Andy Engel  
Editor

Built a great deck?  
We want to see it.

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