

# Innovative Products

# 2010

by Dave Holbrook

JLC's annual collection of problem-solving tools and materials

## Hands-Free Helper

This glass-filled nylon lever weighs next to nothing, can lift up to 240 pounds, fits in your pouch or pocket, and costs only \$20. It's optimally designed for hanging doors — hence its name, the *DoorJack* — and is enthusiastically endorsed by seasoned pros. To use it, you slide the short end underneath the door and press down on the long end with your foot.

DoorJack, 877/399-5225, [doorjack.com](http://doorjack.com)



## Integrated Fascia Vent

For roofs in need of ventilation, all solutions carry some compromise. Button vents are discreet and easy to install but don't provide sufficient airflow. Strip soffit vents are acceptable but take a lot of work to retrofit and end up looking like, um, strip vents. The *FasciaFlow* intake vent can replace new or existing fascia with a hollow-backed PVC plank that provides 9 square inches of ventilation per linear foot. Built-in screening keeps the bugs at bay. The vent measures 1¼ inches by 6 inches and comes in 12-foot lengths, with an approximate retail price of \$90 per length.

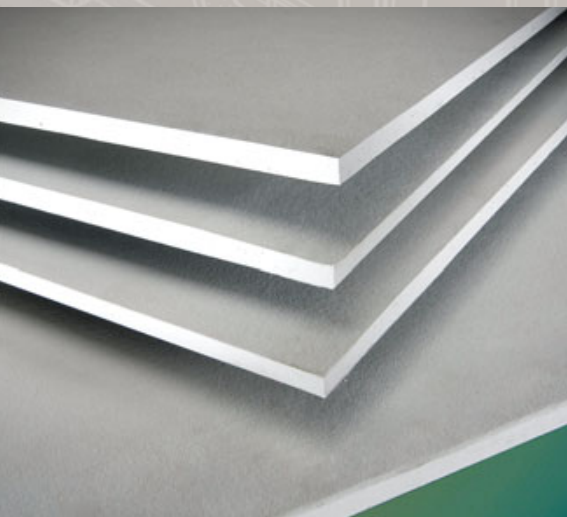
GAF, 973/628-3000, [gaf.com](http://gaf.com)



## Alternative Tile Backer

If you're less than thrilled at the thought of grinding your way through a pile of fiber-cement backerboard, you'll be interested to know that it's possible to get the same good results with the score-and-snap ease of gypsum board. Fiberglass-faced *GreenGlass* has a water-resistant acrylic coating that the maker says eliminates any need for additional membrane waterproofing. The 48-inch-wide panels come in ¼-, ½-, and 5/8-inch thicknesses and 8- and 10-foot lengths, and cost between \$2.70 and \$2.80 per square foot.

Temple-Inland, 800/231-6060, [greenglasssales.com](http://greenglasssales.com)



### Roof Venting Panels

If you're willing to throw a curve into your standard routine, the *Aerix* roof ventilation system may be worth the disruption. Installed from the top down before the roof sheathing goes on, the three components — panels, baffles, and dams — effectively block wind-washing at the eaves and conduct venting air past attic insulation. Built-in ventilation bars on 12-inch centers help stiffen the panels while allowing vapor uptake from adjacent batt or fiber insulation. The system is compatible with all insulation types and is available for both 16- and 24-inch framing centers. It's made of recycled plastic and costs about \$1.60 per square foot.

BpEnnovations, 877/475-9360, [bpennovations.com](http://bpennovations.com)



### Locking Extension Cord

You probably don't get too excited about your extension cord until your tool comes unplugged, and then not in a good way. Skip the clumsy knots with a built-in spring-action slide lock that'll take a tugging without unplugging. The cords are available in 14- and 12-gauge versions and 50- or 100-foot lengths. Prices range from about \$25 to \$60.

Coleman Cable, 800/323-9355, [colemancable.com](http://colemancable.com)



### Safer Drywall Studs

Those razor-sharp edges on your average steel stud can turn hands into hamburger and force a more timid pace. A triangular folded return lip gives the *Edge* stud extra stiffness while reducing the risk of handling injuries. The flange's corrugated face also restricts screw-tip slipping for better penetration. Currently the product is available only in the Northeast and South. Pricing is the same as for conventional metal studs, according to the maker.

Super Stud Building Products, 800/477-7883, [edgesteel framing.com](http://edgesteel framing.com)



### Stop and Chop

Whether you're cutting trim or framing, you can't beat a saw stop for repeatable accuracy. But consistent, day-long accuracy within  $\frac{1}{128}$  inch over a whole range of lengths is sure to defeat the focus of even the most dedicated cut-station operator. *SawGear* is

an automated measuring device that mounts to your miter-saw stand and kicks

error out of the equation. Enter

the desired dimension on the powerhead's keypad — or up to 10 lists of 10 dimensions each —

and a built-in drive motor locates the flip-stop at precisely that distance from the blade. The stop can take a solid slam without dislocating, but it automatically recovers if you do manage to move it. The unit comes with an 8- or 12-foot measuring bar, for \$2,195 and \$2,495, respectively. Although it may take a few jobs, this thing could end up paying for itself in time and material saved.

SawGear, 503/914-4400, [sawgear.com](http://sawgear.com)



## Deck Retread

It's been a few decades since pressure-treated pine decking was introduced as the greatest innovation since whatever. We now know that after a few sun and rain cycles, the original splendor can turn into a field of splinters. To the rescue comes *UDF-21*, a water-based, VOC-free waterproof coating that floods the cracks and binds the surfaces. An aggregate grit provides slip resistance. The cross-linked polymer applies with a brush or roller and can be mixed with latex paint for an unlimited color palette. At about \$1.15 per square foot, it's a less costly — albeit temporary — alternative to surface replacement, good for "a few years," according to the maker.

Gulf Synthetics, 678/584-9309,  
gulfsynthetics.com

## Stealth Caulk

You know the joke about hiding hack work with 1/2-inch paint? Well, not to recommend that application, but *Exact Color* caulk really opens up the creative possibilities. Pour your latex paint, water-based stain, or universal pigment into the cartridge, add the activator, shake it up, and screw on the nozzle. Wait about 30 minutes, then fill those gaps and cracks with an uncanny color match. Apply the stuff anywhere indoors or out where it isn't exposed to standing water and you're as good as gone. An individual cartridge lists for about \$12; a case of six for about \$75.

Sashco Sealants, 800/289-7290,  
sashcosealants.com



## Dust Done For

Who knows what's in that bag of powdered compound, and who knows why you'd want to breathe it? Silicosis is just as serious as you've heard. The *WaleTale* is an ingenious vacuum attachment that snaps onto the edge of your mix bucket and pulls the dust out of the air as you pour. When connected to a HEPA vac, this \$20 accessory is a no-brainer for tile grout, concrete, and fast-setting joint compounds.

Beaton Innovations, 607/358-4068,  
waletale.net



## Energy-Efficient Skylight

Roof windows typically present a choice between light and heat, losing the latter like a hole in the ceiling. The *30-30 Triple Glazed Series* is 55 percent more insulating than your average double-glazed skylight, claims the maker. A silver low-E coating on all three panes blocks UV and heat gain with a minimal effect on light transmission, the company says. As an added incentive, the unit qualifies for the ARRA federal tax credit, effectively reducing its price by up to 30 percent.

Wasco, 800/388-0293, wascoskylights.com



### Dry Slabs

As far as I know, there's no such thing as a too-dry floor slab. Good and dry is more like it. *FlorPrufe* is a polyolefin sheet with a nontacky coating that forms an integral bond with liquid concrete, creating a permanent, high-performance subslab vapor barrier. The unique bonding property ensures consistent vapor protection at overlapped seams. The company also sells a seam tape that helps resist prepour shifting. Sold in 4-foot roll widths covering 460 square feet, the 20-mil HDPE membrane costs between \$1 and \$1.25 per square foot.

Grace, 866/333-3726, [graceconstruction.com](http://graceconstruction.com)



### Fancy Plane

If you're of a mind to pamper both your work and yourself, a *Veritas Skew Block Plane* will set you back \$210, or two for \$390. A fine hand tool, with no cord or motor, it's specifically made to trim rabbets and shave end grain. Although not strictly necessary, left- and right-hand models are available to handle any grain direction.

Lee Valley Tools, 800/267-8735, [leevalley.com](http://leevalley.com)

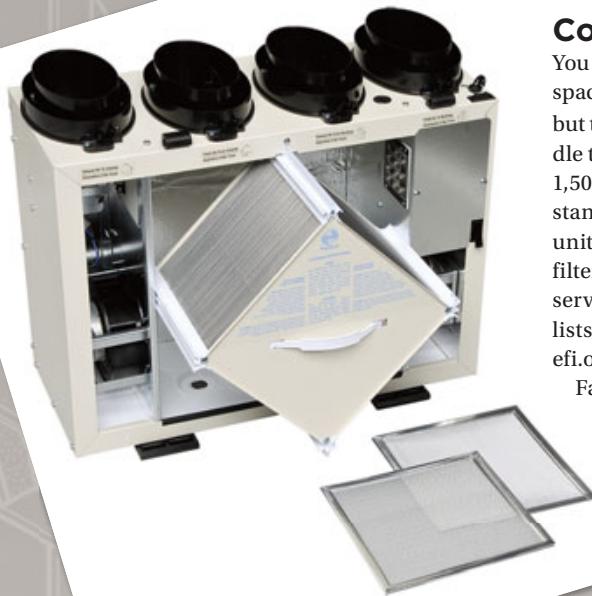


### Faster Deck Fastening

Here's a deck-nailing method that would seem obvious to a wood-flooring installer if only those pneumatically driven cleats could be used for outdoor fastening. That's the principle behind the *HIDfast* concealed decking fastener. A dedicated nailer drives the uniquely shaped stainless steel fastener diagonally through the edge of the decking while automatically spacing the next course. A spur on the fastener spears the adjacent board's near edge and holds it down. I've found the tool listed on the Web for about \$490, and a box of fasteners good for 100 square feet for \$100. An optional joist adapter (\$50) adjusts the tool so you can work with the existing edge grooves on various composite decking brands.

HIDfast, 603/772-9649, [hid-fast.com](http://hid-fast.com)





### Compact HRV

You can always get a larger HRV, take up more space, and spend more than twice the money, but the compact *VHR 704R* is designed to handle the air-change needs of tight homes up to 1,500 square feet. A wall mount bracket comes standard with the suitcase-sized, top-ported unit. The aluminum heat-recovery core, motor, filter, and drain pan are all easily accessed for service through the front door panel. The unit lists at \$710, but you can pick one up for \$495 at [efi.org/wholesale](http://efi.org/wholesale).

Fantech, 800/747-1762, [fantech.net](http://fantech.net)



### Waterproof Building Panel

The *Kerdi-Board* tile substrate and building panel comes in a range of thicknesses, from  $\frac{3}{16}$  inch to 2 inches. The fleece-faced, waterproof polystyrene board can be used in weight-bearing bathroom structures, partition walls, tub and shower surrounds, cabinet panels, countertop substrates, and lots of other places. V-notched panels are available to simplify curved configurations. A whole slew of proprietary connectors, adhesives, tapes, and stainless steel reinforcing angles, anchors, and edges takes care of the joinery. The board cuts with a utility knife; a  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch grid printed on the surface aids layout and alignment. Prices vary from about \$2.60 to \$4.40 per square foot, depending on thickness.

Schluter, 800/472-4588, [schluter.com](http://schluter.com)



### Synthetic Roofing Underlayment

An underlayment that lies and stays flat, wet or dry, and that won't tear around fasteners or break your bubing when you haul it up to the roof is a good thing. An 8-square roll of *Opus Roof Blanket* weighs only 32 pounds; its 42-inch width is roofer-tested for best over-the-shoulder handling on ladder and roof, says the maker. A woven polypropylene base and nonwoven top layer furnish toughness and traction for safer walking, wet or dry. The material takes pencil and chalk lines like a charm and is warranted for 30 months of UV exposure without degrading. It costs between \$15 and \$18 per square.

Propex, 877/315-6669, [opusroofblanket.com](http://opusroofblanket.com)



### Out-of-Sight Deck Screws

Do screws give you better peace of mind than nails? The *Kreg Deck Jig* offers a concealed fastening method that'll look familiar to any pocket-screw aficionado: It guides a proprietary drill bit and screw into the edge of the decking. Three guide bushings — one head-on, one right-angled, and one left-angled — take care of all fastening situations. Plastic spacers maintain a uniform gap between boards. Best recommended for composite decking, the jig and screws also work with 1-by and 5/4 softwood and hardwood decking. The jig costs \$100.

Kreg, 800/447-8638, kregtool.com



### Tile Saw Surround

It takes water to cut tile, and that spinning blade can fling slop and slurry well beyond the cutting station. Nevertheless, you will be welcomed indoors with the *Dry Guy Wetsaw Containment System*, a five-piece tray, back splash, and side-curtain kit that confines the action to your corner. The basic setup costs \$350; another \$240 gets you a wheeled stand.

The Dry Guy, 866/633-0619, thedryguy.com



### Interior Soffits Made Simpler

If the last kitchen, bathroom, or basement soffit you framed evokes memories of fuss and rigmarole — and took way more lumber and time than it should have — consider these metal framing components. There are only two major parts to contend with: a 10-foot *QuikStix Soffit* and a 12-foot locking angle. Soffits are quickly and precisely configured with a couple of snips, a fold, and a set-screw. They lock in at five preconfigured angles: 30, 45, 60, 75, and 90 degrees. Locking tabs on the corner angles speed assembly and are made permanent with self-piercing screws. The QuikStix line includes wall and ceiling framing components, too — basement finishers, take note.

Armstrong, 877/276-7876, armstrong.com/quikstix