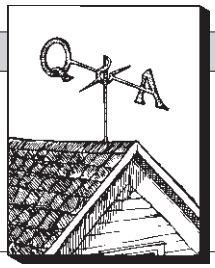
Setting Newfangled Tubs



by Henry Spies

Wiggly Creatures

Q. *How can those wiggly fiberglass tubs and showers be reinforced during installation to make them more stable?*

A. By "wiggly" I assume you mean that the bottoms of the tubs and shower pans flex when a bather moves around in them. Some manufacturers of fiberglass tubs, particularly the oversized units for two, recommend that the tub be set on wet plaster. This will conform to the bottom of the tub and provide the needed support when it hardens. A non-expanding urethane foam can also be used.

Slab Fix

Q. *Water is continually seeping through a basement slab that is poured directly on hardpan. Although the foundation is backfilled with gravel and a floor drain through the concrete slab leads to a drain tile running along the footing, this is not enough to keep the basement dry. Do you have any suggestion?*

A. Since the water is seeping in through the slab, it will be necessary to cut through the floor and install drain tiles in a bed of gravel inside the foundation. These should drain onto the outside footing tiles. Tiles along the inside perimeter may do the job, but some additional cross lines may also be necessary. Your problem illustrates why a slab should always be poured over a layer of sand or gravel.

Cupping Clapboards

Q. *We have had a problem with clear, vertical-grain spruce clapboards cupping. The 5 1/2-inch clapboards were nailed into the studs with 6d ring-shanked nails, placed just above the top edge of the clapboard below (single-nailed). We revealed 4 inches to the weather. The ends, however, were not broken over studs, but just nailed to the sheathing. The clapboards curled so much that you can stick your finger up underneath them! Why did this happen?*

A. Cupping of the siding is normally the result of the siding being wet on the back. Tyvek is non-absorbent, but permeable, which should allow moisture vapor to pass through it into the sheathing. Perhaps the need is for a sheathing or air-barrier that will wick liquid water from the back of the siding, rather than just allow vapor transfer. From reports we have received, there does seem to be less of a problem when there is an absorbent material behind the siding, such as wood or fiberboard. Back priming is also recommended, since this helps keep excess moisture out of the siding.

We believe more research is needed in this area. In the meantime, we welcome information from readers about problems they have had, or not had, with full details on siding, air-barrier, sheathing, and wall construction.

Termite Shields Revisited

Q. *I am planning to build a redwood deck between a house and a retaining wall 5 feet away. The deck framing will be suspended between pressure-treated ledgers lag-bolted to the house and the retaining wall. How can a termite barrier be installed between the deck and the retaining wall to keep termites away from the deck and the house?*

A. A combination termite shield and flashing can be installed on the face of the retaining wall. The barrier should extend over the top edge of the ledger, down the face, and kick out along the bottom edge (see illustration). The kickout should be at least 2 inches wide. Barrier shields should also be installed at the top of the retaining wall and along the house foundation. ■

Henry Spies is with the Small Homes Council-Building Research Council of the University of Illinois. Questions should be sent to him at JLC, RR#2, Box 146, Richmond, VT 05477.