The Journal's pick of curious, interesting, and useful products

Builders Show Sampler

by Clayton DeKorne

Once again, the editors of The Journal of Light Construction traveled to Atlanta for the annual National Association of Home Builders Show. This year's product exhibition filled about 14 acres, with exhibitors displaying an estimated 7,500 products. Here's a sampling of some of the more interesting products at the show.

Engineered Header Stock

Several manufacturers of engineered wood products introduced new header materials:

MacMillan Bloedel has sized their engineered beams to better fit residential scales and budgets. The new *Parallam 269* measures 2 11/16 inches thick, which is easily shimmed with 1x2 strapping to match a 2x4 wall. Two pieces can be ganged to match a 2x6 wall. The new size is meant to compete with LVL beams (such as Micro-lams), and residential-scale

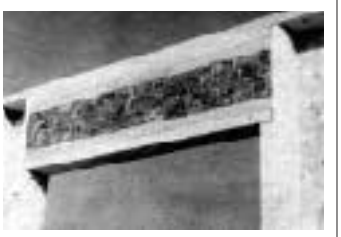
MacMillan Bloedel

glulams. The manufacturer claims the parallel-strand lumber (PSL) headers are more dimensionally stable than LVLs which reportedly can cup or twist. The design values of 269s are higher than 1 3/4-inch LVLs of equal width. And unlike most glulams, the 269 beams are available in standard widths between 9 1/4 and 16 inches. For more information, contact MacMillan Bloedel, 1272 Derwent Way, Annacis Island, Vancouver, BC V3M 5R1; 800/328-9938.

Alpine Structures displayed 11 1/4- and 14-inch-wide box beam header stock that is made from wood I-beams sheathed on both sides with OSB. The header is a hair under 3 1/2 inches thick, so it doesn't need

Alpine Structures

shimming. According to the manufacturer, this engineered header can be used for standard window and door openings up to about 8-feet wide. The design values of the 11 1/4-inch header exceed a doubled 2x12. Insulated beams are available with rigid foam inserts, and the manufacturer can also produce a 5 1/2-inch-thick version for 2x6 construction. For more information, contact Alpine Structures Inc., PO Box 106, Oxford, NC 27565; 800/672-2326.

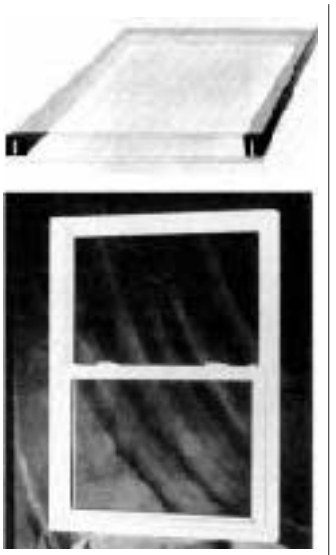


Fiberboard Technologies

Fibreboard Technologies, which makes an "I-beam" with solid, 1 1/2-inch OSB webs (see FWIW, 5/90), have also introduced a box beam header that is comparable in capacity to the ASI beam. This one uses two of the fat web beams ganged together with a 3 1/2-inch LVL flange, leaving a 1/2-inch space in the middle. This flush fitting header is available in standard widths from 7 1/4 to 16 inches. For more information, contact Fibreboard Technologies, 1000 Arrowood Dr., Roxboro, NC 27573; 800/331-8039.

Warm Edge Window

Alcoa introduced a line of solid-vinyl, insulated windows that builders should like because the center rail and sash remove easily for a drywall pass-through. The *Magna-Frame Windows* appear well constructed, and feature simple amenities such as tilt-in sash and double weatherstripping. But the real breakthrough is the use of a nonconductive edge spacer, which should help reduce condensation on the edge of

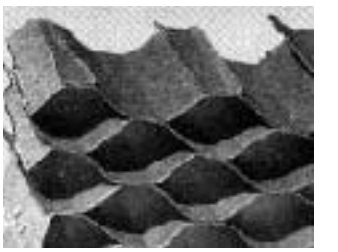


the glass. For more information, contact Alcoa Vinyl Windows, 725 Pleasant Valley Dr., Springboro, OH 45066; 800/323-4289.

Timber Retaining Walls

The *PermaCrib System* features precut, notched ties that stack like Lincoln Logs to form timber crib retaining walls. The 610 model can be stacked to a free-standing height of about six feet, and is suitable for residential landscaping, parking pads, and embankments in free-draining soils. Above this height, the system can be used with a geogrid anchor or double-depth cribs. The manufacturer will provide full engineering support. The crib timbers are CCA-treated to a full one-pound retention, and are grooved to hold the tongue of face blocks if a solid face is preferred. Or, if you'd rather mask the wall with plants, the company offers geotextile "planting bags" to hold top soil (usually the cribs are filled with #3 stone). For more information, contact Mid-Atlantic PermaCrib, PO Box 238, Annapolis Junction, MD 20701; 301/490-0055.

Cardboard Walls



One of the more promising building panels on display was the *Bellcomb Building System* which uses structural honeycomb panels that are remarkably similar to cardboard. The panel core is made of a kraft paper impregnated with a phenolic resin. The skins can be made of drywall, plywood, fiberglass or just about anything you want. Panels are joined with a spline, similar to many foam core panels. In this case, the spline is a smaller honeycomb panel. The milling tolerances are reportedly very exact so foam is not necessary for sealing the joints. According to the manufacturer, the honeycomb design is extremely stable, so close tolerances can be maintained. Expansions and contractions of the skins reportedly stipple through the cell structure while the overall panel dimensions stay about the same. No tested R-value has been established for the panel, but panels can be filled with foam beads for a calculated value of R-4 per inch. The combination of the honeycomb design and splined joints make the system strong. The manufacturer says a floor made with standard 4x8 panels joined with staggered seams will support a 40-pound live load at an L/360 deflection on 16-*foot* centers. For more information, contact Bellcomb Technologies Inc., 70 N. 22 Ave., Minneapolis, MN 55411; 612/521-2425.

Stay-Put Poly

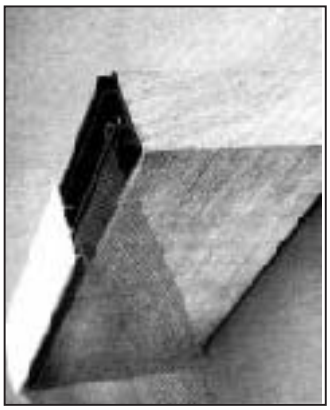
Poly-Tak exhibited a line of clear, adhesive-backed plastic to protect floors, carpets, windows, and fixtures during construction. Four varieties — all made with 2-mil plastic with a different adhesive — are available in rolls of varying widths and lengths. *Floor Guard* is formulated for hard surfaces, and is tinted blue so you won't forget to peel it up after the job. *Carpet Guard* has a more aggressive adhesive that will stick to a soft, uneven surface. Both floor coverings

are less slippery than conventional poly (they are more like Saran Wrap). They can quickly be run down stairways. And maybe best of all, they can be vacuumed without getting sucked up in the nozzle. *Scratch Guard* is designed to mask tubs and appliances, and *Window Mask* will speed up the painter's task, or keep the stucco from scratching the panes. According to the manufacturer, none of the adhesive formulations will leave a residue if peeled off within 45 days. The plastic is treated with ultraviolet (UV) inhibitors so it won't break down and leave a dried mess like duct tape. For use in the Sunbelt, however, the manufacturer recommends using a white-opaque version of the Window Mask, which reportedly holds up longer in intense sunlight. For more information, contact Poly-Tak, 17706 Crabb Lane, Huntington Beach, CA 92647; 800/899-0871.

High Performance Caulk

Big Stretch, as the name implies, is the closest thing out there to the fabled "wood stretcher," and god forbid that you should ever need it for that. According to the manufacturer, this "rubberized" acrylic latex will span a 2-inch gap without appreciable sagging, and is very elastic. It will reportedly withstand up to 25% joint movement. This one ought to stay elastic, too, since it has high resistance to UV light and ozone. Big Stretch will bond to damp and oily surfaces. While latex paint will reportedly bond to this stuff after one hour (after one week for oils), the caulk is much more elastic than any standard house paint. I wouldn't want to paint over it since the paint would probably crack. Fortunately, Big Stretch is available in a wide variety of colors, including clear. For more information, contact Sashco Sealants Inc., 3900 E. 68th Ave., Commerce City, CO 80022; 303/286-7271.

Screen Porch System



Screen Tight is a vinyl frame system for fiberglass screening. It makes rescreening a lot easier than when using standard wood lattice. The screen is secured to an extruded vinyl rail with a screen spline that is rolled into place with a screening tool. A finish cap then snaps over the rail, and reportedly tightens the screen evenly. The rail and cap come in 1 1/2 and 3 1/2 inch widths and 8 and 12 foot lengths. According to the manufacturer, the contractors price is about 65¢ per linear foot for the 1 1/2-inch variety, and about $1 per linear foot for the 3 1/2-inch. For more information, contact Proper Seal Inc., 1739 Savannah Hwy., Charleston, SC 29407; 800/768-7325. ■