

A Better Wood Than Wood

by Sal Alfano



If you think pressure-treated lumber is the only product that will stand up to the elements, think again. A composite material called *Timbrex*, made of recycled thermoplastics and recycled wood fibers, resists damage from water, soil acidity, and insect infestation better than treated wood, according to the manufacturer. Produced in shapes that match standard dimensional lumber, *Timbrex* looks like wood (without the grain) and can be sawed, planed, routed, or sanded using ordinary woodworking tools (although carbide cutting edges will last longer). It also readily accepts nails and screws without splitting, even near the edges.

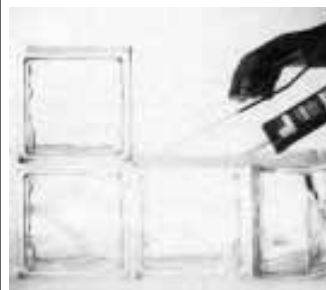
You don't need gloves to handle *Timbrex* because it's non-toxic and almost completely inert, making it an ideal material for decks and outdoor play equipment. Its chief shortcoming is that, even though it's heavier than wood, it has no strength in tension and can't be used structurally. It's also about twice as expensive as treated wood. Its density and compressive strength, however, make it ideal for sills and plates in contact with concrete. For more information, contact the Composite Products Division of Mobil Chemical Company, Riverpark, 800 Connecticut Ave., Norwalk, CT 06856; 800/972-5355.

Production Drawers



If you like to build your own cabinets, but your customers insist on low-maintenance, vinyl-clad drawers, like the ones found in manufactured cabinets, consider using a production drawer system called *Eurodrawer*. Each drawer is formed from a single piece of vinyl-clad composite material with a precut bottom slot and inside corner miters. All you need to do is apply glue, fold the sides around the drawer bottom, and check for square. The standard 13⁵/₁₆x16¹/₄ drawer comes in three heights — 2¹/₄, 4, and 9⁷/₁₆ inches — but virtually any size can be ordered. *Eurodrawer* is designed for production shops that order by the pallet, but the manufacturer will accept \$600 minimum direct orders (which includes about 180 standard drawers and a \$50 setup fee) or refer you to a distributor for smaller quantities. For more information, contact *Eurodrawer*, P.O. Box 1048, 247 Bethel Church Rd., Mocksville, NC 27028; 800/779-6268.

Clear Joints for Glass Block



Instead of the solid grid that mortared joints produce in a glass-block wall, the *Acrajoint Glass Block System* creates a uniform crystal-like effect by using ³/₈-inch-thick clear acrylic strips between blocks. Each acrylic spacer has two shallow dadoes cut along its length to receive a bead of clear silicone, which holds the system together and makes it completely waterproof. The acrylic is precut in standard widths to match modular groupings of three, four, or five glass blocks, depending on the size of the blocks. During assembly, a metal jig (sold separately) holds the blocks and acrylic spacers in place until the silicone dries, and according to the manufacturer, any excess caulking that squeezes out of the joint can be peeled away after it dries. Each modular section takes

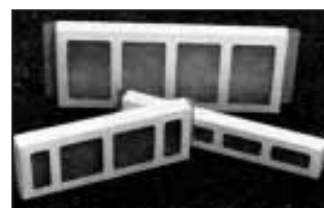
about an hour to cure, but using several jigs at once allows for continuous assembly. For a price quote, contact *Acrymet Industries*, 42-05 10th St., Long Island City, NY 11101; 718/786-7654.

Wide Open Window



A new double casement window provides both a great view and improved egress because it has no vertical mullion between sashes. The *French Casement Window* will fit up to a 20-square-foot opening and is designed to operate with a full interior screen in place. The window's single-lever locking system has five latches — two to anchor the sashes to the frame and three to secure the sashes to each other — making for a very tight, secure fit. The solid vinyl window comes in white, camel, and earthtone colors, and the interior surfaces can be embossed to simulate wood grain. Glazing options include low-e, argon-gas-filled insulating glass and V-grooved glass. For more information, contact *Great Lakes Windows*, P.O. Box 1896, Toledo, OH 43603; 800/666-0000.

Debris-Free Ducts



If you've ever forgotten to plug the air registers before starting your interior demolition, you know how quickly they fill with debris that can pump dust into the air for months. A heating and cooling contractor who grew tired of customer complaints solved the problem by inventing *Register Air Filters* to fit most standard duct sizes. The 1-inch-thick filter material is similar to that found in a standard furnace filter and comes in a cardboard frame. During construction, the filters, which cost about \$3 retail, can be used in place of existing metal grilles to keep the ductwork clean and to allow heated or cooled air to reach the work area. The manufacturer plans to introduce a version that fits behind the registers to provide permanent secondary air filtering. To order, contact *Quality Air Systems*, P.O. Box 299, Clear Lake, MN 55319; 612/659-6618.

Rolling Scaffold



Staging is commonplace for exterior work, but it's often too cumbersome to set up in a finished interior. The *Contractor Buddy* is a rolling work platform made of aluminum scaffold tubing that's easy to set up and move around. It comes in 4-foot and 6-foot lengths, and because it's only 24¹/₄ inches wide, it easily fits through most doorways. The horizontal and diagonal braces attach to the end frames with spring-activated locks at the joints, so the scaffold can be set up and taken down without tools. The two-piece work platform can be set at two heights, with a maximum working height of just under 4 feet, including the 5-inch-diameter locking casters. The UL-approved portable scaffold has a load rating of 750 pounds and meets OSHA standards. For more information, contact R. D. Werner Company, 93 Werner Rd., Greenville, PA 16125; 412/588-8600. ■