

Quick Cord Reel

by Charles Wardell



Most people coil up long electrical cords by looping them around one arm. This gets the job done, but it's hard on the cord: Each loop you make causes the cord to twist a quarter turn, wearing out the cord's insulation and leaving kinks that cause tangles. The plastic *Reel-A-Pail* quickly winds up cords or pneumatic air hoses without twisting — just like an oversized deep-sea fishing reel. The cord plays out effortlessly as you walk it off the reel; to reel it in, turn the crank with one hand and guide the cord into place with the other. (If the cord is dirty, reel it in through a rag held in your guide hand.) A plastic base holds the reel upright and can be fastened in place — a handy feature when working on a roof. The plastic housing also protects the rolled-up cord from job-site damage. *Reel-A-Pail* comes in three sizes that will hold up to 200 feet of 12-3 cord or 1/4-inch air hose, and up to 100 feet of 3/8-inch air hose. Prices range from \$39.95 to \$69.95.

Contact: Reel-A-Pail Inc., 303 Jenks Ave., P.O. Box 666, Cokato, MN 55321; 800/450-6506.

Adjustable Privacy Fencing

Louvered privacy fencing limits the homeowner's ability to admire the view or let in a breeze. But *LouveRail* lets you build fence slats that work like



adjustable blinds. The ends of the slats are attached with pivots that fit into holes bored in the rails. A plastic bar joins each louver to the next and rotates them as a group (manually or with an optional motor and remote control) through 180 degrees. *LouveRail* comes in three sizes to fit 4-foot, 5-foot, and 6-foot post spacing. Suggested prices range from about \$30 to \$40 per set, depending on whether pivots are spaced at 4- or 5-inch intervals. The *LouveRail* can be used with a wide range of fencing materials, including treated lumber and vinyl.

Contact: LouveRail Enterprises Inc., P.O. Box 507, Concordville, PA 19331; 610/558-3515.

Built-In Deck Lights

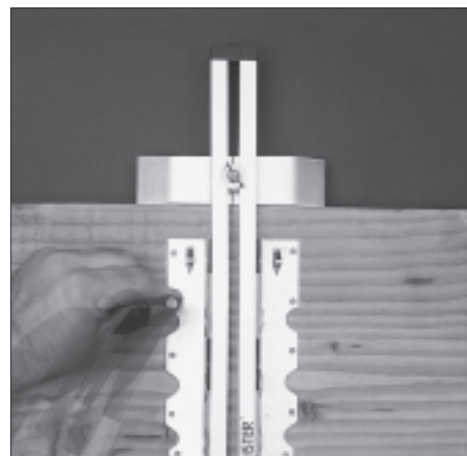


It's easy to light a deck perimeter with the built-in low-voltage lighting in *Deck Accent*. The *Deck Accent* line comes in pressure-treated, cedar, and redwood, and includes 4x4 posts, 2x4

railings, and a 36-inch-long Under Step Light that can be fastened to the underside of any open tread. On site, wiring is routed through a channel up the center of the post — or, in the case of 2x4 railings, a dado up the back. To install the lights, notch the posts at top or bottom and attach the light socket and plexiglass lens cap. A kit contains four pressure-treated posts, a low-voltage transformer with a 10-light capacity, and 50 feet of low-voltage wiring. Kits cost \$216 for 4x4s, \$152 for 2x4s, and \$144 for Under Step Lights. Additional 4x4 and 2x4 posts list for \$39 and \$24, respectively; additional Under Step Lights sell for \$22.

Contact: Deck Accent, 955 Connecticut Ave., Bridgeport, CT 06607; 800/332-5887.

Joist Layout Tool



The company that makes *The Joister* claims it can cut the time it takes to install joist hangers in half, while increasing accuracy. The T-shaped Joister consists of a solid metal cross bar that slides up and down a channel in the center of a long vertical bar. To use it, mark the center of each joist on the header, and set the cross bar to the depth of the joist. With the cross bar

resting on top of the header and the vertical bar against the face, align the red mark at the center of the cross bar with the joist centerline. Now snap the joist hanger onto the tool — a set of magnets will hold it steady — and nail it in place. The \$49.95 Joister accommodates all sizes of 2-by and wood I-joist hangers.

Contact: Tor Tool Works, 10 Libertyship Way, Suite 152, Sausalito, CA 94965; 415/332-8835.

Twist-Off Lid

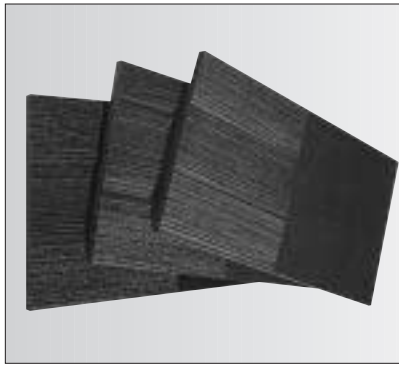


The problem with the lids on those 5-gallon paint and drywall pails is that you can't reseal them once they're removed. One solution is the two-piece *Gamma Seal*. The outer ring attaches to the lip of the pail and the inner lid screws to the ring to provide a locking, twist-off cover that's leakproof and airtight.

Contact: Mack Chicago Corp., 2445 S. Rockwell St., Chicago, IL 60608; 800/992-6225.

Fiber Cement Roof Shakes

Fiber cement products give the look of wood, but provide a Class A fire rating. *Nature Guard* fiber cement shakes cost about the same as the cedar roof shakes they mimic, but they're made of Portland cement, recycled fly-ash, and wood fiber. Nature Guard shakes are dense, strong, and impact-resistant; in fact, the manufacturer says they can be walked on without fear of breakage.



The shakes are designed for a 10-inch maximum exposure, weigh around 600 pounds per square (about midway between high-quality asphalt and slate), and come in three colors — Midnight (dark gray), Dusk (dark brown), and Sunset (light brown). The shakes are 22 inches long and 5, 7, or 12 inches wide. Starter pieces and hip and ridge cuts are also available.

Contact: Louisiana-Pacific, 111 S.W. Fifth Ave., Portland, OR 97204; 800/299-0028.

Smart Timer



A smart new wall-switch timer eliminates the need for programming by memorizing lighting-use patterns over a 24-hour period, then repeating them daily. The *Self-Learning*

Wall Switch Security Timer (Model EJ200C) can memorize up to 24 on/off times, and includes a random setting that will vary the on/off times slightly each day. This setting eliminates a predictable, timer-controlled look in the event a burglar is watching the house while the owners are away. Suggested price is \$24.99.

Contact: Intermatic, Intermatic Plaza, Spring Grove, IL 60081; 815/675-2321. ■