

Products

by Leland Stone

Adjustable Framing Anchor

Some joist hangers allow an adjustment in the field, typically a minor change in angle. But if you're framing a really weird angle, or using an oddball lumber size, get ready to order a custom hanger. Or you could give the *Variable Angle Joist Support* a try. This "robomanger" has two hinged brackets that swing right or left, down to an angle of 27 degrees. Joist ends don't have to be mitered when using this hanger; because these brackets move independently, they'll hold two separate joists at different angles. When attached to the same joist, the brackets adjust to any lumber thickness from 1 1/4 inches to



3 1/4 inches. The flanges have slots instead of holes, and if duplex nails or screws are used in securing the hanger, it can easily be reused (for mockup's, stages, or other temporary structures). The VAJS runs about \$18.95 at retail outlets in the Northeast. It's not sold directly to contractors, but you can call the manufacturer for a mail-order source.

Contact: K-Nectons, 23 Willow Dr., Whitesboro, NY 13492; 315/768-1064.

Waterproof Glue

There are times when an air-driven, 16d nail is simply not the appropriate fastener choice. For those times, an adhesive makes a lot of sense, and for outdoor applications, a waterproof glue makes even better sense. *Titebond Polyurethane Glue* is a one-part adhesive that bonds a variety of construction materials, including wood, ceramics, and metal. Moisture in the air or the material being glued activates the adhesive; in extremely dry climates or on nonporous materials, spray a fine mist of water just before applying the glue. This adhesive expands as it cures, and could displace pieces that aren't clamped in position. But with an open time of roughly 30 minutes, you won't have to rush setting the clamps.



Squeeze-out at the joints should be allowed to cure, then scraped away; using water to clean up uncovered adhesive may weaken the bond. Four-ounce bottles start at \$4.49, eight-ounce bottles cost around \$6.79.

Contact: Franklin International, 2020 Bruck St., Columbus, OH 43207; 614/443-0241.



Hardwood Deck

New wooden decks often need painting to survive severe weather, but it seems a shame to cover all that expensive natural grain. With *Iron Woods*, you don't have to hide the wood in order to protect it. Milled from a tropical hardwood called Ipe (pronounced "EE-pay"), this decking lumber is naturally weather resistant. The manufacturer recommends using stainless steel deck screws, and predrilling is advised. Framing can be done with standard pressure-treated lumber, but since Iron Woods is a hardwood lumber, you may be able to leave a greater span between joists. This material is sold as nominal 1x6 stock in even lengths from 8 feet to 16 feet. It's surfaced on four sides and all four edges are eased to about a 1/8-inch radius. Available at most lumberyards, this decking will cost from \$3.50 to \$5 per square foot.

Contact: Timber Holdings Limited, 2400 W. Cornell St., Milwaukee, WI 53209; 414/445-8989.

Oil of Old Age

Cedar shingle or clapboard siding needs time and weathering to look its best. While you could just let nature take its course, there is a way of speeding up the process. *Bleaching Oil* is a semitransparent gray stain that accelerates the natural weathering process. Although the finished wood is protected against the elements, it develops a patina that has the appearance of age. As with any finishing product, adequate surface preparation is mandatory prior to using Bleaching Oil. This product should be used on new wood siding only; it's not suitable for trim. Backbrushing is recommended if it's rolled or sprayed on. The price varies widely across the U.S., but a gallon of Bleaching Oil should cost \$18 to \$22.

Contact: Samuel Cabot Inc., 100 Hale St., Newburyport, MA 01950; 508/465-1900.



Easy Closet Upgrade

Closet doors are often nothing more than a couple of hollow-core sliders. *Real Wood-Framed Mirror Doors* are more upscale alternative. With a retail price ranging from \$200 to \$350, these doors are considerably more expensive than other door choices. But with several available finishes and beveled edges on the mirrors, there's a lot of eye appeal. Mirror doors are simple to install, and they work equally well on new construction or remodeling projects. You'll have to order or purchase them through a dealer in your area.

Contact: Stanley Doors, 480 Myrtle St., New Britain, CT 06053; 800/257-4093.



Concrete Calculator

Finding the volume of a slab has never been easier than with the *ConcreteCalc* calculator. Lay a tape on the forms to get the linear dimensions, then punch them into the calculator and let it do all the work. Before pouring any mud, you can also check your forms with the square-up function. Enter the slab's width and length, then hit the "SQ-UP" key for the diagonal dimension. You can also calculate the slab's fall (either as a percentage or as an inches-per-square-foot measurement). Then, when the forms are right, punch another button and the *ConcreteCalc* figures out how much transit-mixed to order. The volume of pillars, footers, and stairs can be instantly determined; and if you're laying blocks, there's another function key for estimating how many you'll need. Not bad for a street price of \$89.95, and you can order one by mail.

Contact: Calculated Industries, Inc., 4840 Hytech Dr., Carson City, NV 89706; 702/885-4900.



Get a Grip

Icy or wet wooden steps and ramps are an accident waiting to happen. You could apply some safety tape to the lead edge of the tread, but that's not always a permanent solution. *EcoTrack Tiles* offer a longer-term solution to outdoor traction problems. These UV-resistant polyethylene plastic tiles have an aggressive pattern of ribs molded onto the top surface. They can be cut with any standard saw blade, and have molded holes to accept screws. When installed with the ribs crosswise to the line of travel, *EcoTrack Tiles* increase the traction of feet, bikes, or wheelchairs. Each tile is about one square foot and costs \$4. Larger quantities cost less, and the company pays shipping.

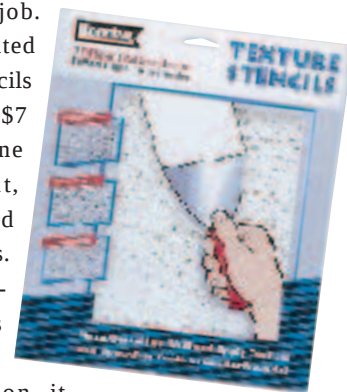
Contact: Bike Track Inc., RFD 1, Box 247, Woodstock, VT 05091; 888/663-8537.



Texture-Matching Patch Tool

Your plumber fixed the pipe your electrician nicked with his drill bit. Patching the hole isn't such a big deal, but matching the texture could be a hassle. *Texture Stencils* are designed for that kind of small job. Made of laminated paper, these stencils are packaged in \$7 kits of three, one each of light, medium, and heavy patterns. Choose the stencil that matches the existing texture and position it over the repair site. Using a broad taping knife, spread drywall compound over the stencil's surface, then remove the stencil. After use, wipe away any mud remaining on the reusable stencil.

Contact: Bondex International, 3616 Scarlet Oak Blvd., Saint Louis, MO 63122; 314/225-5001.



Looks Like Stone

Real fieldstone looks great on a wall, column, or a fireplace surround. But building with stone is expensive and hard on your back. *Dressed Field Stone* offers the look of real stone, but with the convenience of a synthetic product. Manufactured from a blend of cement and mineral fillers, Dressed



Field Stone looks like rock because it's made from rock. But colors and sizes are more consistent, individual "stones" are all roughly the same thickness (about 1³/₄ inches), and they can be cut with a masonry blade. They're lightweight, so existing foundations typically provide adequate support.

Caps, moldings, and other trim pieces are also available. Unlike real stone, this cast product "repeats" the same pattern (much the same way that wallpaper patterns repeat, for example), making the finished installation appear unnatural. But at a cost ranging from \$7.50 to \$12 per square foot, that's probably not such a bad tradeoff.

Contact: Stone Products Corp., P.O. Box 270, Napa, CA 94559; 800/255-1727.

Old Work Junction Box

Adding a new electrical outlet can be a real pain. Opening the wall without cracking the plaster is bad enough, but then you have to deal with a cramped "old work" junction box. The *BR120R Wiring Box* is the roomiest old work style J-box now available. There's plenty of space for tucking away wire nuts, but there's also room for bulky wiring devices like dimmer switches, GFCIs, and motion sensors. A template is supplied with each of these plastic boxes to properly size the opening (the tolerances are pretty tight, so if your cutting gets sloppy, the finished installation will be flimsy). Pull the wires, position the box, then tighten the attached mounting screws; little plastic "dogs" will automatically swing out from the side of the box and clamp it to the wall. The BR120R Wiring Box will set you back about a dollar at suppliers nationwide.



Contact: Lamson & Sessions Co., 25701 Science Park Dr., Cleveland, OH 44122; 216/464-3400.