

Products

by Dave Holbrook

Get in the Groove

Surgically replace a cracked tile, or replace tired grout completely, after removing the old stuff with a *Grout Grabber* blade chucked in your recip saw. The carbide abrasive rasps the old grout out without damaging the surrounding tile. The blade-throw action on your saw may affect tool control, so practice on an inconspicuous spot first, like your dad's house. The blades may be stacked to clean joints from $\frac{1}{16}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide. The saw adapter with a single carbide blade and tool wrench costs \$40; additional blades cost \$10.

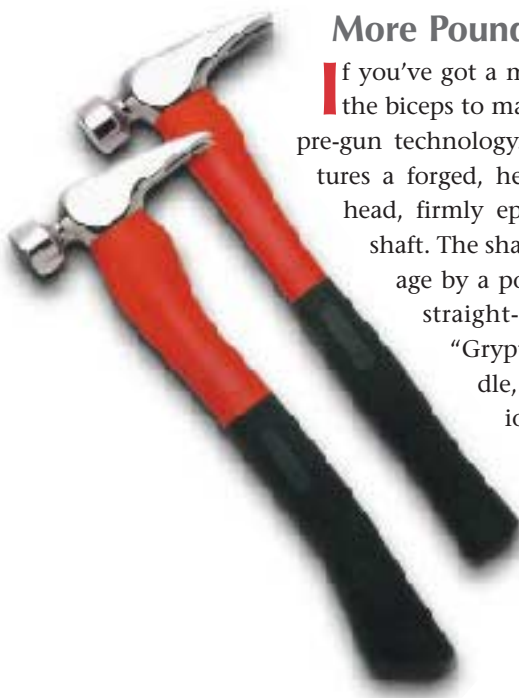
Contact: Grout Grabber, P.O. Box 265, Butler, WI 53007; 888/447-2248; www.groutgrabber.com.



More Pound per Ounce

If you've got a medium to large hand and the biceps to match, you may enjoy a regression to pre-gun technology. The *Striker* framing hammer features a forged, heat-treated, and polished 21-ounce head, firmly epoxied to a reverse-taper fiberglass shaft. The shaft is protected from overstrike damage by a polypropylene cover and comes in a straight- or axe-handle configuration. "Grypton" wraps the wide, flattened handle, giving it a rubbery, slightly cushioned feel. The high-tech hammer is available with a smooth or serrated face and costs between \$28 and \$32.

Contact: U.S. Tape, 217 River Ave., Patchogue, NY 11772; 800/472-8273; www.ustape.com.



Flooring Persuader

Some tongue-and-groove flooring goes together easily, and some needs a little persuasion. Wedges screwed to the subfloor work, with the emphasis on *work*. And forget it on a concrete slab. The *QuikJack Hardwood Flooring Jack* will pull the strips together across the room and also work to within $\frac{1}{4}$ inch of the wall. The jack self-locks anywhere along the room-spanning 2x4 strut you provide, so you can



quickly adjust as you go. You can place up to 500 pounds of pressure right where you need it, without breaking a sweat, for \$150.

Contact: Cepco Tool, P.O. Box 153, Spencer, NY 14883; 800/466-9626; www.cepcotool.com.

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Drain Tile Alternative

Waterproof walls enhance the economical benefits of a full basement. Certified installers can eliminate the need for traditional drain tile and gravel backfill using *Drainstar Stripdrain* in conjunction with Tuff-n-Dri or Watchdog Waterproofing



treatments. The drain consists of a rigid polymer grid of engineered cones protected by a wrap of permeable geotextile fabric. Leachwater is directed to daylight or a sump by conventional means. The stripdrain is said to cost less than conventional drain tile installation.

Contact: Koch Waterproofing Solutions, 800 Irving Wick Dr. W., Heath, OH 43056; 800/379-2768; www.guaranteeddrybasements.com.

Painter's Pouch

If you're a painter, your days of suffering from tool envy and lower back pain can vanish simultaneously. The *Guru Tool Belt* is the brainchild of two West Coast painting professionals. Not only does their belt provide lumbar support, but it can carry all your tools, including brushes, hammer, cell phone, caulking gun, rag ring, scraper, razor blades, screwdriver, tuna sandwich, and even a small amount of paint in a washable vinyl pouch. The 600-denier fabric belt comes in white, gray, blue, and black for \$56, including S&H.

Contact: The Painting Gurus, 1055 W. College Ave., #141, Santa Rosa, CA 95401; 877/554-8787; www.thepaintinggurus.com.



Trackless Bi-fold

Standard bi-fold hardware doesn't permit the door panels to completely clear the opening or fold flat against the wall. The *Ezyfold Door Control Arm* can be installed in cabinets and closets to improve access and function. The two-piece arm eliminates the wide clearance gaps required by conventional bi-fold track hardware and is fully concealed behind closed doors. Installation is simple, and the arm is reversible and adjustable for various Euro-



hinges. Three arm sizes cover applications from cabinet to closet and cost \$9 to \$21 each.

Contact: The Kiwi Connection, 82 Shelburne Rd., Shelburne, MA 01370; 413/625-9506; www.ezyfold.com.

Waste Not

You won't recognize today's lumber by its ingredients, but there's gold in that thar sawdust and recycled plastic. Solid-profile 1x6, 2x4, and 2x6 *Epoch composite-lumber decking* is available in 8-, 12-, and 16-foot lengths. It's also available in 8-foot 4x4s, 1/2x11 1/2-inch skirtboards, and three 2x2 baluster lengths. The maintenance-free lumber comes in gray, cedar, and redwood shades and has an embossed wood-grain surface texture.

Contact: Epoch Composite Products, P.O. Box 567, Lamar, MO 64759; 800/641-4691; www.epochwood.com.



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Folding Forms

If you're about to step into unfamiliar territory on your first ICF job, a familiar-looking material may provide encour-



agement. Owens Corning *PinkForm Xtra's* pre-assembled interlocking extruded-polystyrene blocks are capable of producing walls up to 16 inches thick, above and below grade. Hinged spacer ties allow the forms to collapse flat for shipping and compact storage. The forming system costs about \$2.25 per square foot, concrete not included.

Contact: Fold-Form, P.O. Box 774, Sioux City, IA 51102; 800/551-3313; www.foldform.com.

Pump It Up

People are irreplaceable; scaffold planks are not. Take the woody snap, crackle, pop, and spring out of the pump-jack experience with square-rung *Alum-A-Scaff* staging planks. Capable of spanning 24 feet under a working load of 500 pounds with minimal deflection, you can leave these all-aluminum planks out to weather without worry. Drain holes shed rain and snow, and improve traction underfoot. Planks may be spliced without overlapping when used with the proprietary jack poles. The planks are available in lengths from 12 to 24 feet, in varying widths (14, 20, or 24 inches), and cost between \$475 and \$709 each.

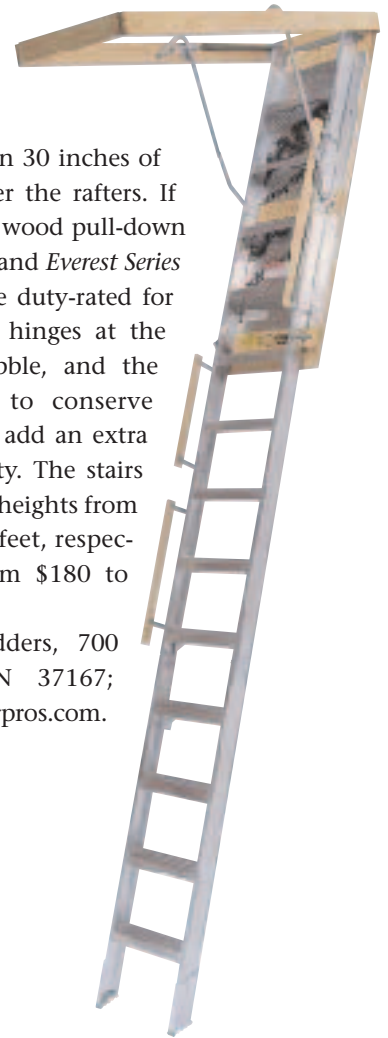
Contact: Alum-A-Pole, 1011 Capouse Ave., Scranton, PA 18509; 800/421-2586; www.alum-a-pole.com.



Attic Access

You have to provide access above a flat ceiling if there's more than 30 inches of headroom clearance under the rafters. If you're looking askance at wood pull-down ladders, the *Summit Series* and *Everest Series* aluminum folding stairs are duty-rated for 300 pounds. Heavy-duty hinges at the rail joints limit side-wobble, and the door void is insulated to conserve energy. Built-in handrails add an extra measure of climbing safety. The stairs will accommodate ceiling heights from 7 to 10 feet and 10 to 12 feet, respectively. Models range from \$180 to \$300.

Contact: Davidson Ladders, 700 Swan Dr., Smyrna, TN 37167; 800/999-7297; www.ladderpros.com.



Power Bath

New-age bathers like to add all sorts of oils and aromatic salts to their hydro-therapy (also known as a bath). However, additives can gunk up conventional water jets. The *TMU Series Oval Tub* uses 60 air jets to agitate the water and deliver an all-over body massage. The 72x42x21-inch tub is made of slip-resistant acrylic and features a 1-hp motor, air heating system, and three heat

levels, as well as a multifea-

ture electronic digital-

readout control. The

tub is available in

hundreds of col-

ors and retails

for \$2,515.

With all that

hot air in

the water, do

you come out

dry-cleaned?



Contact: Bains Ultra, 1200 Chemin Industriel, Saint-Nicolas, PQ Canada; G7A 1B1; 800/463-2187; www.ultrabaths.com.

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Outdoor Hardboard

These days, it takes longer and costs more to find clean, straight, exterior trim stock at the lumberyard. If you're looking for a break from warping, nail splits, bleeding knots, sap streaks, and bark-clad edges, *MiraTEC Exterior Composite*



Trim may interest you. The factory-primed, moisture-resistant hardboard is "Borogard ZB"-treated to discourage rot and termites. The boards are smooth- or cedar-texture reversible and come in $\frac{4}{4}$ and $\frac{5}{4}$ thickness, standard lumber widths, and 16-foot lengths.

Contact: Masonite, One S. Wacker Dr., Suite 3600, Chicago, IL 60606; 800/255-0785; www.miratectrim.com.

A Measure of Success

Not everyone's as brilliant as you are, you know. If anyone on your team calls out measurements like, "3 scratches past $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches," acquaint them with an *EasyPoint* 25-foot tape measure. Gently demonstrate the clearly enumerated $\frac{1}{16}$ -inch markings on the 1-inch-wide tape that eliminate all guesswork. The company routinely

dispenses tape-reading lessons via phone and e-mail, if you just can't stand the thought of training your team yourself. The tapes cost between \$10 and \$12 each.

Contact: U.S. Tape, 217 River Ave., Patchogue, NY 11772; 800/472-8273; www.ustape.com.

