

Products

by Patrick McCombe

Metal Madness

A quick and easy way to cut steel framing, conduit, and uni-strut without a purpose-built chop saw has been elusive until recently, when several manufacturers introduced cordless metal-cutting saws. Milwaukee's newest cordless saw (model 6320) features its popular 18-volt battery pack and a special blade guard designed to keep airborne metal particles to a minimum. The left-side blade and see-through



window provide good visibility, and the cushioned D-grip handle provides comfort at any cutting depth. The saw includes Milwaukee's 6 1/2-inch Endurance blade that spins at 3,200 rpm and cuts to a depth of 2 1/8 inches. You can expect to pay about \$340 for a model 6320.

Contact: Milwaukee Electric Tool, Brookfield, Wisc.; 877/729-3878, www.mil-electric-tool.com.

Doorable Holder

Holding a door on edge for planing or hinge prep has fostered the improvisation of many job-site stands. Those of you ready to trade up from your shag carpet 2x4s can now look for Trojan's new DH-1, an adjustable door holder that can accommodate doors up to 3 inches thick. The compact tool has a base 2 feet wide to prevent that custom oak door from taking a tumble. The blue paint job doesn't have the rustic charm of carpet scraps, but the vertical tubes that cradle the door have a fuzzy covering to keep damage and scratches to a minimum. The DH-1 has a retail price of \$45.

Contact: Trojan Manufacturing Inc., Portland, Ore.; 800/745-2120, www.trojantools.com.



Great Arch

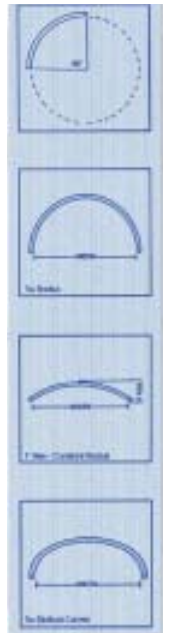
Circle-top and arched openings are pretty easy to make on paper, but when it comes to making them in the field, the process can grind to a standstill. The Easy-Arch should help you keep things moving when a designer throws you a curve. The steel



Easy-Arch comes in four different shapes to accommodate the most common

curved openings. Quarter and half circles, eye-brows, and ellipses are available in widths from 1/0 to 10/0 for windows, doors, and architectural details. The U-shaped steel channel forms the opening, and wallboard is fastened to the arch's edge. Easy-Arch is lightweight and can be flexed in or out to compensate for a less than perfect opening. The best-selling 3-foot ellipse (TE4-30) lists for under \$30.

Contact: Easy-Arch Inc., Newport Beach, Calif.; 909/677-3309, www.easy-arch.com.



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Surface Saver

If you've had a less than positive experience protecting finished surfaces with red rosin paper or poly drop cloths, Clean & Safe promises to help you protect surfaces without the headaches of other surface protectors. Clean



& Safe drop cloths have an absorbent top layer and a skid-resistant and leak-proof bottom layer to keep drips and spills contained without the tracking common with poly coverings. The reusable product is available in several

sizes and colors and can be trimmed for a custom fit. Clean & Safe claims that it's perfectly suited for use on stairways. The felt top layer even holds dust to help keep the rest of the project clean. Prices run from about \$70 to \$150, depending on roll size.

Contact: Clean & Safe Drop Cloth, Greenville, S.C.; 888/578-5573, www.dropcloth.com.

Speedy Dormer Solution

Trimming out a doghouse dormer requires more skill and time than many other job-site tasks. If you're looking to speed up the process, a Style Solutions *Easy Dormer Trim Kit* could help out. The kit includes a pediment for over the window, return trim for the roof overhang, and trim for the sides of the window. All of the components are made of rot- and insect-resistant closed-cell urethane that, according to the manufacturer, holds paint better and lasts longer than wood. The lightweight pieces install similarly to wood trim and can be pneumatically or hand nailed. The kit runs about \$320 and includes a window pediment for a 12/12 roof, 10 feet of return trim, and two 68-inch side pieces for the window.

Contact: Style Solutions Inc., Archbold, Ohio; 800/446-3040, www.stylesolutionsinc.com.



Gone Fishin'

With plenty of cool features, the Ideal *Zoom fish tape* makes the process of pulling wire about as much fun as hooking a big one — almost. The translucent Tuff'R case allows the user to see how much tape is left in the spool without the holes that allow dirt and debris into other fish tapes. The Tuff-Grip handle is big enough to use with gloves, and Ideal claims that the Zoom tape's case has the highest impact resistance ever offered. The braided stainless core is especially suited for conduit runs with multiple bends. Ideal promises that it won't get hung up or deform while in the pipe. The tape is being offered in 50- and 100-foot lengths for under \$100.

Contact: Ideal Industries Inc., Sycamore, Ill.; 800/435-0705, www.idealindustries.com.



Saddle Up

Trex Co.'s *decking* is made primarily from recycled grocery bags and shrink-wrap that would otherwise end up in landfills. It's truly maintenance



free and doesn't splinter or crack like wood decking. The deep tan of Saddle brings the total number of colors to five, along with Natural, Winchester Grey, Madeira, and Woodland Brown. Trex runs about \$3.35 a square foot.

Contact: Trex Co., Winchester, Va.; 800/289-8739, www.trex.com.

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Shower System

Replacing a bathtub with a step-in shower usually involves a little framing and the replumbing of the waste and supply lines. Swan's bathtub-size *Retrofit*



Shower System eliminates both steps because it's an exact replacement for a standard 5-foot tub. The shower base is available in drain-right and drain-left configurations in Swanstone solid surface or fiberglass. Swanstone includes 6 solid and 24 aggregate colors; fiberglass colors include white and bone. Shower walls are also available in matching colors. Swanstone units start at \$440 list, and fiberglass units are \$240 list.

Contact: The Swan Corp., St. Louis, Mo.; 800/325-7008, www.theswancorp.com.

Little Loader

It might be the ultimate sandbox toy for grownups. The small size of the Finn *Eagle skid-steer loader* — 36



inches wide — allows users to get into spaces only a shovel and wheelbarrow could go before. The Eagle has more than 40 attachments, and the universal faceplate allows the use of accessories from other manufacturers. With a 25-horsepower engine and full-flow hydraulics, it has enough power to run multiple hydraulic func-

tions at once. The mini loader has a 4-cubic-foot bucket and a 650-pound operating capacity. Attachments include augers, trenchers, buckets, rakes, a pole driver, a tow bar, and a snow blower. The price starts at \$14,000.

Contact: Finn Corp., Fairfield, Ohio; 800/543-7166, www.finncorp.com.

Lighten Up

Customers who need some additional light in a dark room or hallway will like Hy-Lite's new one-piece acrylic insert for interior doors — and builders might like



how easy it is to install. The obscure acrylic block unit allows light to pass through but maintains privacy. The panel will fit most 30-inch or larger interior doors and is available in several block styles. It can be installed in less than an hour, according to Hy-Lite. The lightweight acrylic block doesn't require additional modification to jambs or hinges. The unit measures 22 x 70 inches and is designed for both flush and raised-panel 1³/₈-inch interior doors. Hy-Lite's acrylic-block insert has a list price of \$225.

Contact: Hy-Lite Products Inc., Beaumont, Calif.; 877/712-4013, www.hy-lite.com.

Tape Measure Spirograph

Now you can make circles, arcs, and parallel lines with your tape measure and C.H. Hanson's newest marking tool. The *Pencil Boy* attaches to any smooth-sided tape measure and holds a pencil so you can use



your measure as a large compass or trammel. It uses a standard carpenter's pencil, and the Pencil Boy can be removed when it isn't needed. The low-profile housing doesn't interfere with normal tape operation, and your tape will still fit in the tool belt holster, provided pencil and

holder are removed. The Pencil Boy costs less than \$5.

Contact: C.H. Hanson Company, Franklin Park, Ill.; 800/827-3398, www.chhanson.com.

Smarter Than Your Average Vent

Builders in flood prone or coastal communities can attest to the awesome power behind rushing water. That power washes away buildings and causes billions in property damage annually. Damage to buildings in flooded areas can be greatly reduced if the hydrostatic



pressure can be equalized on both sides of the building's foundation. Smart Vent's new *crawlspace ventilation system* has a float-actuated release that opens the vent during a flood and allows water to run into the building. While it may sound like inviting destruction inside, it actually has the potential to save structures by reducing the extreme pressure flood waters put on foundation walls. The all-stainless Smart Vent uses a thermostatic-controlled louver system that closes the vent when temperatures approach freezing. According to the maker, Smart Vent is the only code-compliant foundation vent made, and some insurance companies are offering discounts on premiums for flood vent installation. Smart Vent costs about \$150; volume discounts are offered.

Contact: Smart Vent, Ocean City, N.J.; 877/441-8368, www.smartvent.com.

