

Products

by Patrick McCombe



Curve Appeal

Curved entries, turrets, and barrel-vaulted ceilings, once reserved for mansions and banks, are increasingly popular in mainstream American homes. All such details require moldings that can take to the curves, and Style Solutions' new flexible urethane moldings are dimensionally stable and arrive preprimed. The line includes crown, casing, chair rail, and base. According to the manufacturer, the moldings have enough flex to make compound curves, as in spiral stairs. Prices start at about \$2 per foot. Most casings run about \$8 per foot.

Style Solutions, 800/446-3040, www.style-solutions.com.



Quick Stick

While fighting with a new tub surround, I quickly realized the value of construction adhesives with faster grab. Loctite, better known for its thread-locking compound, has introduced *Power Grab*, a product it claims has the highest initial tack of any construction adhesive. The latex-based product is suitable for plastics and foam, and it doesn't require the "flash off" of solvent-based adhesives. Power Grab is available in a 10-ounce tube (\$2.79) or a pressurized self-dispensing canister (\$6). Motivated by a TV ad that shows a man gluing his neighbor's hammer to the ceiling without clamping or taping, I had to give it a try. It actually works.

Loctite, 800/321-0253, www.loctiteproducts.com.



Shingle Style

Decorative shingles are a great way to jazz up a home's exterior, but most homeowners aren't willing to drag out the extension ladder and paint them every few years. If your customer wants a traditional cedar-shingle look in an easy-

maintenance product, you could suggest Mastec's *Cedar Discovery Decorative Half-Round Shingles*. The polypropylene shingles are available in several colors and require no maintenance. According to the manufacturer, a heavier nail hem and .080 thickness allow the shingles to sustain winds of up to 180 mph, making them suitable for high-wind locations. Prices run about \$245 per square.

Alcoa, 800/962-6973, www.alcoahomes.com.

■ Products

Dimmable CF

Compact fluorescents use less energy and last longer than incandescent bulbs, but until recently, dimming them meant expensive ballasts and special switches. TCP's *Dimmable Compact Fluorescent* is the easy solution. The best part is that the bulb's internal circuitry works with conventional \$10 incandescent dimmers. According to the manufacturer, the bulbs can be dimmed to 20% of their maximum light level without flickering. Bulbs are said to last about 10,000 hours, and they cost about \$18.

Technical Consumer Products, 800/324-1496, www.tcpi.com.



Straighten Up and Lie Right

Vinyl siding doesn't seem like it should be hard to install correctly, but there are a lot of bad vinyl jobs out there. The waves and ripples typical of bad vinyl are usually from nails that were driven too tight or missed the center of the nailing slot. *Siding Master* is supposed to eliminate those problems and speed installation as well. The metal straps are fastened to the sheathing and hold the siding with little metal fingers bent around the nailing fin — no nails required. According to the maker, the product can cut installation time in half. The product is available for most common siding profiles.

A-Tech, 866/278-7790, www.sidingmaster.com.



Low Clearance

If low headroom makes typical hanging ceiling fixtures a problem, Shaper's *Recessed Pendant* might be a good solution. The recessed fixture uses a specification-grade housing with an adjustable pendant that hangs down about 8 1/2 inches. According to the manufacturer, it's 30% more efficient than competitors' products, and it is available in brass, copper, and painted finishes. Two compact fluorescent bulbs provide illumination. It has a list price of \$500 to \$600.

Shaper Lighting, 510/234-2370, www.shaperlighting.com.



Panel Products

Plywood Is Good. This year's rain-soaked spring and summer have created many problems for builders, not the least of which is the swelling of OSB subfloors. Besides making customers nervous, it can cause problems with the installation of finish flooring. According to GP, you can avoid those problems by using water-repellent-treated *GP Plus Plywood Sturd-I-Floor* subfloor. The panels are available in nominal $5/8$ - and $3/4$ -inch thicknesses. The manufacturer claims that the coating prevents swelling and delaminating and won't interfere with adhesion of glue-down floor coverings.

Georgia Pacific, 800/284-5347, www.gpplywood.com.



Mold-Free OSB. With insurance companies paying out more than \$1 billion in mold claims last year, it's not surprising that panel producers are launching products specifically designed to resist mold growth. Potlatch's *OXTerminator* is treated with what the manufacturer calls a "copper complex" formula that is said to resist not only mold and fungal growth but termites as well. The panels are also said to absorb less water than conventional untreated OSB, according to the manufacturer. Prices run about \$4 to \$8 more per sheet than for regular OSB.

Potlatch, 800/750-3850, www.oxspecialties.com.



Better Subfloor. The home building industry is notoriously slow to adopt new products, but when Huber introduced Advantech subflooring several years ago, builders lined up to get it. They desperately wanted a subfloor that wouldn't swell like OSB or warp and delaminate like plywood. Now other manufacturers are climbing on board with their versions of high-performance OSB subfloor. Weyerhaeuser guarantees its *Structurwood Gold* not to swell, delaminate, or warp, and the edge-sanded panels are said to go together easily — without a sledgehammer.

Weyerhaeuser, 800/525-5440, www.weyerhaeuser.com.



Medium-Density Formica. MDF is great for many things but doesn't generally hold up very well when it gets wet. *Medex* from Sierra Pine may be the notable exception. According to the manufacturer, a special glue and manufacturing process prevents it from swelling or falling apart when wet. However, while it can be used for countertops and bathroom cabinets without worry, the manufacturer cautions against using the product for exterior applications. As an added benefit, the product contains no formaldehyde, so it has less impact on indoor air quality.

Sierra Pine, 800/676-3339, www.sierrapine.com.

Flooring

Tile for Problem Subfloors. Cracked, uneven, and high-moisture subfloors can be problematic for most floor coverings, but the manufacturer of *FreeStyle Resilient Laminate Flooring* promises that its product can be used over almost any surface. Installed without adhesive, the 18-inch-square interlocking tiles can be replaced easily, but the maker claims they hold firm even over irregular surfaces. The tiles are made from 95% recycled content and feature a 20-mil wear layer and an antimicrobial treatment. The manufacturer says that they won't trap moisture and that they're suitable for residential and light-commercial applications. They cost about \$4 per square foot.

SelectTech Flooring,
877/738-4537, www.selectechinc.com.



Eye-Popping Topping. Durable, inexpensive, custom-colored floor finishes suitable for a variety of materials might seem like a tall order, but Dex-O-Tex *Micro-Topping* could be the answer you and your client are looking for. You can use the Portland cement-based topping over concrete, masonry, steel, and wood. Acrylic modifiers permit very thin applications (around $\frac{3}{32}$ inch), making it ideal for remodeling applications. The product can be colored or stenciled with most concrete stain for custom designs and logos. It costs about \$4 to \$8 per square foot installed.

Crossfield Products, 310/886-9100, www.dexotex.com.

Flooring

Nice Floor, No Gaps. Little can compete with the natural beauty and durability of real wood strip flooring, but season changes and indoor humidity can produce unsightly gaps between boards. If you want to eliminate that variable, you could offer your clients *Bellagio* from Oregon Lumber. Bellagio is real wood, but the engineered product is laminated in layers like plywood, so it won't shrink or swell with changes in humidity. In addition, the 5x86-inch panels can be glued, nailed, or floated over a foam pad. A six-coat UV-cured aluminum-oxide polyurethane finish eliminates the mess and odor of job-site finishing. Also, unlike most prefinished hardwood flooring, Bellagio has no beveled edges to trap dirt. It's available in almost any domestic or exotic species. Prices start at \$4.25 a square foot for Rustic White Oak; American Cherry goes for about \$6.25 a square foot.

Oregon Lumber, 800/824-5671, www.oregonlumber.com.



Palm Tree Pedigree. If your customer is looking for the most environmentally friendly wood floor, you might suggest coconut palm. Coconut palms stop producing fruit after about 80 years, and typically the plantation-grown trees are burned to make room for new trees. But some are now being turned into good-looking dark flooring. According to the manufacturer, *Durapalm Flooring* is made from the densest part of the tree. The $\frac{3}{4}$ x3x72-inch strips are laminated for greater strength and stability. You can install it over wood subfloors and concrete slabs, and, at 1,600 psi on the Janka hardness test, it's about 15% harder than white oak. It's available prefinished or unfinished, and prices start at about \$7 per square foot.

Smith and Fong, 866/835-9859, www.durapalm.com.

Sub-Slab Vapor Barrier. Installing finished flooring over a slab-on-grade can be tricky. If you don't get it right, vapor transmission through the slab can lead to expensive problems like buckling hardwood and moldy carpeting. According to Grace Construction, you can prevent those problems by installing *Florprufe Vapor Barrier* before the slab is poured. The polyolefin membrane adheres to the bottom side of the concrete with a pressure-sensitive adhesive. Although dealing with a huge expanse of sticky plastic sounds worse than a mold lawsuit, the manufacturer claims that the adhesive isn't tacky until activated by the concrete and that it prevents vapor transmission significantly better than nonadhesive products. It's sold in a 4x115-foot roll and costs 85¢ to 90¢ per square foot.

Grace Construction Products, 866/333-3726, www.graceconstruction.com.



Products

Asphalt Roofing

Goof-Proof Roof. When several roofers start on different parts of a complicated roof, it usually results in weird exposures and crooked coursing. Even simple roofs can have wavy courses or odd exposures because of poor layout. But

Thor Layout Tapes can prevent most common shingle screwups because the reinforced tape provides an accurate layout that's used by the whole crew. The tape is applied from the eave to the ridge, and several sets of marks (lettered to prevent confusion) allow you to shrink or stretch exposures so you don't end up with one or two odd-sized courses near the ridge. The product really shines in problem situations like working up both sides of a dormer. According to the manufacturer, many professional roofers claim significant labor savings when using the tapes. The company's website provides more details on how they work. The 25-foot tapes run about \$4 to \$6 per roll depending on the quantity purchased.

Thor Systems, 800/398-0376, www.thortools.com.



Asphalt Roofing

Faster Flashing. Flashing a masonry chimney takes a lot of time and skill. And we all know that bad chimney flashing is one of the leading causes of roofing callbacks. You can make the process go faster and eliminate some of the uncertainty with a *No Leak Chimney Flashing Kit*. The kit includes everything you need to flash one masonry chimney, including a preformed apron, precut step and counter flashings, and sealant and fasteners. The kit can be field trimmed and is manufactured in 2x2-foot and 3x3-foot versions. It's available in steel and copper; prices start at \$65.

4Tech Manufacturing, 800/588-8747, www.noleak.net.



Perfect Match. It's common to see the main roof of a house covered with asphalt shingles while the low-slope roof of the addition or porch is covered with half-lap roll roofing. What you don't see every day is the two roofing materials in the exact same color — unless, of course, it's black. CertainTeed is now offering its low-slope *Flintlastic Modified Bitumen* in nine colors, making it possible to match the two materials without resorting to a Model T color scheme. You can find Flintlastic in Burnt Sienna, Colonial Slate, Heather Blend, Resawn Shake, Driftwood, Weathered Wood, Moire Black, Hunter Green, and White.

CertainTeed, 800/233-8990, www.certainteed.com.



Super-Size It. There's no denying that American homes (and waistlines) are significantly bigger than they were 20 years ago, but shingles still look the same. To better match the larger scale of today's new homes, Elk recently introduced a high-definition line of shingles that the manufacturer claims has a 40% bigger pattern than most other architectural shingles. The shingles have a 5⁵/₈-inch exposure and are available in 12 colors. They cost about \$50 per square.

Elk, 972/851-0420, www.elkcorp.com.