

Products

by Patrick McCombe

Made in the Shade

Wrap-around shades not only look cool, they also provide better protection from the sun and from flying debris. Unfortunately, radically curved frames make many prescription lenses impossible. After several of my sunglass choices were shot down because they had too much curvature for my near-sighted prescription, the staff at my optometrist's office suggested sunglasses from Rudy Project. Designed for hard-core cyclists and other outdoorsy types, these wrap-around shades get around the curvature problem by using a prescription lens insert mounted behind the ANSI-approved, tinted lenses (which are replaceable if they get scratched). All of this technology comes at a price, however. My rather ordinary prescription with the Ekynox frames shown cost over \$300, but working safer without the watery eyes and headaches caused by blinding sun makes them worth the price.

Rudy Project, 888/860-7597, www.rudyprojectusa.com.



Compact Rack

Conventional truck-mounted racks are great for dimensional lumber and ladders, but getting panel products and drywall up there can be a real chore — not to mention securing them. You could always fill the bed, but that means you'll need to pull out any tools or other materials you might be carrying. If you're looking for an easier way, you might check out the *Flat Rack*. Raised 8 inches above the bed, it makes a perfect spot for your panel products and leaves the bed free for other stuff. According to the manufacturer, the Flat Rack works with most crossover tool boxes, has a 1,000-pound capacity, and sells for \$198 per bar. It seems like a good idea, but I suggest using it with a cab protector — unlike the truck in the photo — so you don't end up with a load of drywall or plywood in the cab during a collision.

RJ Enterprises, 800/662-9938, www.rjenterprisesllc.com.



Plug In

Electrical devices haven't changed much in recent history. While they work just fine, they aren't very exciting to look at. If your customers are looking for something with a little more style, you might suggest *Aspire Wiring Devices* from Cooper Lighting. This new line is offered in three modern color schemes and features screwless wallplates and a sleek, rounded design. Switches, outlets, GFCIs, and ganged wallplates are available, as are cat 5, phone, and cable jacks.

Cooper, 800/366-6789, www.cooperwiringdevices.com.



ROOF VENTILATION

Ventilation Detour. When skylights, valleys, and other obstructions prevent the proper venting of attached rafter cavities, the usual fix of drilling holes to connect the space to adjacent cavi-



ties can be easy to forget and slow to execute. Another way to deal with the problem is to use a *RafterVent*. Thin strips of corrugated plastic are placed on top of the rafter to allow hot humid air into adjacent cavities so it can ultimately flow out the ridge

vent. Because they're only $\frac{3}{16}$ inch thick, you can sheath right over them without creating a hump in the roof. They sell for about \$.20 per foot.

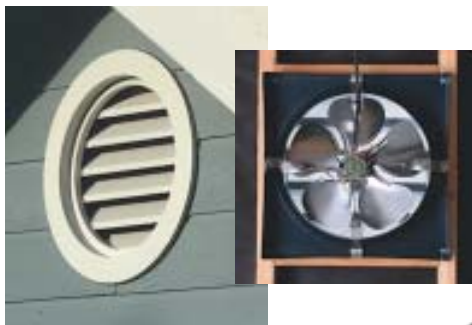
DCI Products, 800/622-4455, www.dciproducts.com.

Installer-Friendly Fan.

If you're looking for a quick and easy fix for a poorly vented attic space, you might try a solar-powered ventilator. While roof-mounted solar ventilators have been around for several years, gable-mounted solar ventilators have only recently arrived on the scene.

According to the manufacturer, Solar Star gable-mounted fans can be installed in under 30 minutes when you use an existing gable vent. And solar power means you don't have to run any wiring. The fan is designed to ventilate up to 1,200 square feet, and the maker claims that it changes up to 800 cubic feet of air per minute. It sells for about \$400.

Solatube, 800/966-7652, www.solatube.com.



Batten Down. Clay and concrete tile roofs can be tough to ventilate because the horizontal battens supporting the tiles prevent the free flow of air to the ridge. The usual solution is to run a vertical set of "sub battens" from the eave to the ridge and install the horizontal battens on top. With *Flow-Thru Battens* from Trimline, you can skip the extra step. Their corrugated plastic allows air and water vapor to move freely, so you don't need a double layer like you do with wood battens. In addition, the corrugated plastic can be gun-nailed, and it won't deteriorate like wood. According to the manufacturer, it costs about \$250 more on average than wood battens.

Trimline, 800/438-2920, www.trimline-products.com.

'Sno Problem. Snowy northern and mountainous regions are troublesome for conventional ridge vents because blowing snow can find its way inside the attic, leading to wet insulation and mold. GAF's *Cobra Snow Country Ridge Vent* adds a

fibrous ridge vent inside the baffled, shingle-over vent to better prevent snow

intrusion. It has a three-point hinge for easier installation on steep roofs and reinforced

nail holes that are less likely to crush.

It works with pitches from 3/12 to 12/12.

GAF, 973/628-3000, www.gaf.com.



PNEUMATIC FASTENERS

Stainless Is Painless. If you want to be absolutely sure that your fasteners will hold up to the weather and the new pressure-treating formulas, then you should probably go with stainless. While stainless fasteners cost more than galvanized, they cost less than a lawsuit or a rebuild. Maze has a huge selection of stainless framing, siding, and decking nails in most popular sizes and collations. Both 304 and 316 stainless formulas are available, with the 316 providing the best corrosion resistance. Prices for the 304 stainless start at about \$116 for a 1,500-count box of 2¹/₂-inch spiral decking nails. The 316 stainless costs about \$10 more.

Maze Nails, 800/445-5949, www.mazenails.com.



Yes, Plastic. If you're concerned that the new pressure-treated lumber will corrode your fasteners in short order, you might try the collated plastic nails from Raptor. Designed for non-load-bearing applications, these fiber-reinforced 5d and 8d nails are made primarily for fencing, decking, and siding applications. Besides the obvious rust-free benefit, they can be sanded or machined without risking damage to abrasives, bits, and blades. According to the manufacturer, the nails work in most 15-degree coil siding nailers and are unaffected by heat, cold, salt spray, and UV exposure. Boxes contain 3,200 nails (16 coils) and sell for about \$87.

Raptor, 800/460-6933, www.raptornails.com.



Thick Skinned. The new pressure-treating formulas wreak havoc on fasteners. Fortunately, *Thickcoat Galvanization* from Bostitch provides better protection from corrosion because the zinc coating is 2¹/₂ times thicker than the coating on most electrogalvanized fasteners. According to the maker, the coating provides better protection in ACQ lumber than hot-dipped galvanizing and lasts twice as long in salt-spray tests. The wire-collated nails are available in clipped-head stick, full-head stick, and coil, in lengths from 1¹/₂ to 3¹/₂ inches. A box of 8d nails sells for about \$30.

Bostitch, 800/556-6696, www.bostitch.com.



Armor-Piercing Pins. Steel framing is great for straight walls that go together in a hurry, but steel members don't readily accept conventional, pneumatic finish nails. One solution is to use hardened chisel-point finish nails from Senco. At 1¹/₂ inches and 1³/₄ inches, respectively, the DA17AIA and the DA19AIA are specially designed to penetrate steel framing members and hold trim securely without glue. According to the maker, the hardened nails work best with 20- to 14-gauge steel and will penetrate up to two layers of 14-gauge steel or three layers of 18- or 20-gauge. The maker suggests standard 18-gauge brads for lighter 22- and 25-gauge steel studs. The hardened nails work with most DA-style trim guns. A 4,000-count box of the 1¹/₂-inch version has a list price of \$44; the 1³/₄-inch version lists for \$54.

Senco, 800/543-4596, www.senco.com.

DECKING



Self-Stick Deck Protection. Anything you can do to increase the durability and performance of a customer's deck will separate you from the low-ball competition. One of the products that can help is *Deck Protector* from Grace. Similar to Vycor Plus self-adhering flashing, Deck Protector adds a skid-resistant coating so you can walk on the joists with less risk of a fall. According to the maker, the product seals nail and screw holes on top of the joist that would otherwise allow water into the framing members. You can also protect hangers and connectors from the new more corrosive pressure-treating formulas by using it to cover joist ends and other framing members that come in contact with metal connectors. A 4-inch by 75-foot roll sells for about \$15.

Grace Construction Products, 800/354-5414, www.graceconstruction.com.

Easy-Maintenance Railing. Customers are increasingly wary of any building product that requires continual upkeep — exterior railings and balustrades are no exception. One of the better-looking maintenance-free railing systems is GP's *Vinyl Railing*. The system is available in both square and turned balusters and includes a full complement of mounting, rail, and post accessories. According to the manufacturer, it installs quickly and never needs painting. Unfortunately, it's only available in white.

Georgia Pacific, 800/284-5347, www.gp.com/build.



New Angle on Decking. Kroy, one of the leading manufacturers of vinyl decking, recently introduced a fiber composite version. According to the manufacturer, *Timberlast* polyethylene composite decking is stronger than competing products, allowing 16-inch joist spacing even in diagonal installations, while many other composite decking products require 12-inch spacing for similar installations. The 1 1/2-inch-thick decking is available in Driftwood and Redwood and has a brushed texture for better traction.



Kroy Building Products, 800/933-5769, www.kroybp.com.



Going Postal. I think one of the easiest ways to build a sturdy rail is simply to run the supporting posts long and install a rail and baluster system between them. But pressure-treated posts or columns look a little silly when they're combined with a prefinished, manufactured rail system. One way to make your posts match is to use a *Post Sleeve*. Geodeck offers both 4x4- and 6x6-inch sizes. Made from the same material as the company's rail system, the four-sided cover slips over a post and provides a good-looking maintenance-free finish that won't peel. The 12-foot lengths are available in three colors. A 6x6 post cover sells for about \$50.

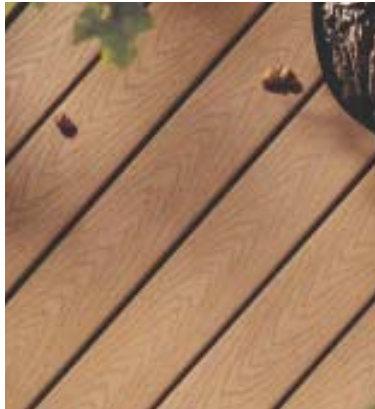
Kadant Composites, 877/804-0137, www.geodeck.com.

DECKING

Wood-Grain Campaign. The current rage in composite decking is simulated wood grain, and Trex recently introduced its version to the growing market. *Trex Accents* is available in Saddle, Winchester Grey, and Madeira (reddish brown), and according to the manufacturer, it offers the same benefits as the original product, including lifetime durability and no splinters. Trex will continue to manufacture the

original Trex decking without the wood grain under the Trex Origins name. I saw a sneak preview of Accents at this year's NAHB show — you won't mistake it for real wood, but it looks pretty good. It costs about \$2 per lineal foot.

Trex, 800/289-8739, www.trex.com.



Maintenance-Free Porch Floor. If you or any of your customers are looking for a low-maintenance porch flooring with a traditional look, you might consider the *TenduraPlank Solids Collection*. According to the manufacturer, the polypropylene composition means it expands and contracts less than many other composite materials and lasts longer than wood — without the maintenance. It comes in Battleship gray, and the color goes all the way through the material, so dings and scratches are less likely to show. It comes predrilled for easier installation and costs about \$6 per square foot.

Tendura, 800/836-3872, www.tendura.com.