

Products

by Patrick McCombe

Better Colors

I know a lot of quality-conscious builders and environmentalists don't think much of vinyl siding, but it's now the number one siding choice in the U.S. — not everyone can afford cedar or stone. Even fans of vinyl siding concede that its color palette has always looked a little pale and boring, however. LP's newly introduced *Norman Rockwell Siding Collection* has the most vibrant colors I've seen in vinyl. Deep reds, browns, and greens dominate the choices, and the manufacturer guarantees they won't wash out in the sun. The company backs up the claim with a 25-year warranty against fading. Norman Rockwell siding costs about \$100 per square.

LP, 800/648-6893, www.normanrockwellsiding.com.



French Swinger

Marvin's Integrity line has enjoyed a lot of success with builders and homeowners alike, but the one product missing from the catalog has been a French door with two operating panels. However, the company recently launched a complete line of *Inswing French Doors* in 6/5, 6/8, and 8/0 heights. The new doors feature a multi-point lock, rot-free Ultrex frame and sill, and adjustable hinges.

Available builder-friendly options include factory-applied extension jambs, mulled transoms, and a prefinished white interior.

Integrity, 888/537-8263, www.integritywindows.com.



Fire-Stopping Foam

It turns out that Dow's Great Stuff Pro not only works for air sealing and filling cracks, it's also an effective fire-blocking material. Fire blocking is meant to reduce flame spread during a fire, and it's of increasing interest to local inspectors. In January of this year the company passed testing by the ICC Evaluation Service, approving Great Stuff Pro for sealing around pipes and other penetrations specifically to stop flames from getting through. While the ingredients and formulation remain the same, Dow changed the foam's color from yellow to orange, so inspectors know it's an approved material. It should cost about \$10 per can.

Dow, 888/668-3801, www.dowgreatstuff.com.



EXTERIOR TRIM

Cutting-Edge Corners. If forming outside corners with two pieces of wood or fiber cement is slowing you down, you might try the one-piece wood composite *PermaChoice Corner Post*. The PermaChoice corner has a $\frac{13}{16}$ -inch channel that hides the cut end and provides plenty of room for seasonal expansion, so you don't have to butt the siding to a board and caulk the joint. An integral nailing fin reduces the possibility of errant hammer blows marring the surface. You can use this product with a variety of siding materials, including wood, vinyl, fiber cement, and hardboard. It's available in 10- and 20-foot lengths and sells for about \$3 per linear foot. The company also offers J-channel, 4-inch window and door trim, and inside corners in the same preprimed material.

Crane Products, 888/923-8799, www.craneproducts.com.



Polystyrene Pediment. Creating pediments and other interesting trim details on stucco, EIFS, and brick can be as easy as gluing Canamould's *Exterior Moldings and Trim* to the surface. The components use a dimensionally stable expanded polystyrene core and a fiberglass-reinforced coating similar to synthetic stucco. The manufacturer suggests coating the back with a polystyrene-suitable adhesive and temporarily holding the trim in place with a couple of tapcons or masonry nails while the glue sets up. The pieces are offered in prefinished and unfinished versions. According to the maker, unfinished pieces can be painted with any acrylic latex paint or acrylic sprayed coating. Unfinished 3-foot pediments start at \$45.

Canamould, 800/238-2541, www.canamould.com.



Curve Cutter. Making curved trim for tower rooms, doors and windows, and wraparound porches can be a pain, and accurately estimating the time it takes to make this stuff can mean the difference between going on vacation with the family and going broke. If you don't have the time or equipment to efficiently make your own curved moldings and millwork, you might contact B.H. Davis Company. This *Radius Millwork Specialist* can make just about any curved trim you can imagine and some you can't. The company has a huge selection of stock knives

and makes custom profiles, as well. Check out the website to learn an easy way to make accurate templates, see stock profiles, and view examples of the work.

B.H. Davis Company, 860/923-2771, www.curvedmoldings.com.



WATER HEATERS

Oil and Water. Oil-fired water heaters are generally thought of as old-school technology, but the *Oil Miser Water Heaters* from Toyotomi are the exception. These on-demand heaters feature electronic ignition, sealed-combustion burners, and 88% efficiency ratings. The units can provide up to 4 gallons of hot water per minute and can be direct or chimney vented. A 120-volt AC power supply is required for the igniter and venting system. The manufacturer claims that some users report a 70% reduction in their water heating costs. Prices range from \$1,300 to \$1,500.

Toyotomi, 203/775-1909, www.toyotomiusa.com.

Hi-Tech Electric. In many cases, installing an on-demand water heater makes a lot of sense. The wall-mounted ones take up no floor space, and you don't have to pay to maintain 30 or 40 gallons of hot water when you're not using it. While on-demand heaters commonly use propane or natural gas, Eemax makes a line of electric-powered instantaneous water heaters. The company offers small point-of-use heaters and large whole-house versions that can maintain a



constant 4 gpm. In the middle is the *Series Two*. Providing up to 3 gpm, this heater is designed to meet the needs of small single-family homes

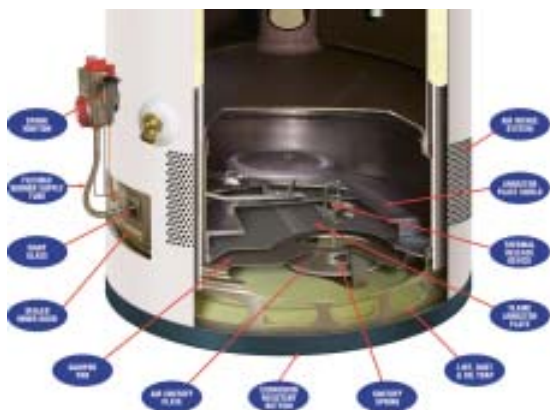
and condos. According to the manufacturer, this and all Eemax heaters will maintain the water temperature to within 1/2 degree. The Series Two heaters start at \$400 and require two 40-amp breakers.

Eemax, 800/543-6163, www.eemax.com.



Cure for Common Flue. If your customer's masonry chimney has seen better days, or you're trying to save space and installation costs in a new home, you might consider a direct-vent water heater like A.O. Smith's *PowerHouse Sealed Shot*. The PowerHouse uses 3-inch PVC, ABS, or CVPC pipe run right through the side-wall instead of a masonry or B-vent flue exiting the roof. This model also brings in outside combustion air. It's offered in 40- to 75-gallon sizes with corresponding input ratings from 40,000 to 70,000 Btus per hour. They cost about 10% to 20% more than a conventional, atmospherically vented water heater, but the significant cost of the flue is eliminated.

A.O. Smith, 800/527-1953, www.hotwater.com.



Flame-Beater Heater. Last year, a new ANSI standard took effect that aims to prevent gas water heaters from igniting combustible vapors. Products like the Rheem *Guardian* are the industry's answer to the property damage and loss of life that occur as a result of such ignition. The secrets to the new technology are a one-way intake air system, a sealed burner and access door, and a flame arrestor that cuts off oxygen and prevents flame spread in the event of a fire. There are two side benefits to the new regulations: Depending on local code, you might be able to eliminate the water heater stand; and the sealed burners require a push-button igniter for the pilot, so it should be easier to light.

Rheem, 800/432-8373, www.rheem.com.



SURFACE PROTECTION

Window Wrapping. Spraying building exteriors is a great way to get color on fast, but having to mask windows and doors slows you down. To pick up the pace, you might try Filmtech's *Window Films* and *Trim Tape*. The film is offered in 30-day and 12-month formulas, and the tape is UV resistant for 30 days. According to the manufacturer, both film and tape are easy to apply, and they won't leave a residue when removed. The 30-day window film sells for about 3¢ to 4¢ per square foot; a 60-yard roll of the 2-inch tape sells for \$5 to \$7.

Filmtech, 877/345-6832, www.filmtechonline.com.



Clean Room. Legions of remodelers rely on the Zipwall dust containment system to protect their clients' home while they work. Recently, the company added two accessories to improve the system's dust-containment performance. The 5-foot *Foam Rail* conforms to textured ceilings or other surface irregularities and mounts on standard Zipwall poles. It holds the plastic tight to the ceiling and sets up fast. When the *Side Clamp* is combined with a Foam

Rail, it holds the plastic against adjacent walls without tape. The suggested contractor price is \$70 for a pair of Foam Rails and \$40 for a pair of Side Clamps.

Zipwall, 800/718-2255, www.zipwall.com.



Keep Out of a Jamb. Finished door jambs and drywall openings are always at risk. One careless worker with a stepladder can ruin a finished opening with a single swipe, but protecting this area is easy with *Traffic Jambs*. Similar to a tube form, they slip over the finished opening and provide a durable surface that can take a hit without creating more work for you. Traffic Jambs are offered in 6- and 8-inch sizes, and the maker claims the larger size can slip over standard-width jambs with the door in place. A 6-inch three-piece set that includes a 24-inch tube for the head jamb and two 5-foot sides sells for \$20.

Traffic Jambs, 360/772-0065, www.trafficjambs.com.



SURFACE PROTECTION

A Better Drop Cloth. Canvas drop cloths are expensive and seem to grow legs shortly after arriving on the job site. Plastic sheeting is cheaper, but it's also slippery and doesn't absorb spills. If you're looking for a better way to protect surfaces, the *SurfacePro Breathable Drop Cloth* deserves consideration. The recycled-fiber mat has a perforated, skid-resistant back to keep it in position while it gives new flooring or other materials a chance to dry. According to the maker, the thicker construction provides unsurpassed impact protection and helps keep the cloth in place without tape. Available in a 40-inch by 82-foot roll, it sells for \$116 (freight included in the lower 48).

KS International, 888/578-5573,
www.dropcloth.com.



Protective Plastic Panels. Promising greater utility, lighter weight, and lower cost than plywood or Masonite, Cordek corrugated polypropylene is perfect for protecting surfaces, from flooring to windows. The translucent sheets won't absorb water or warp, and a 4x8-foot sheet weighs only about 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ pounds. The product also folds easily and cuts with a utility knife, but the best part is that the reusable product costs only about \$6 per sheet.

Cordek, 866/426-6225,
www.cordekusa.com.

