

Products

by Patrick McCombe

Small-Parts Packer

I think parachute bags work just fine — but for those of you who arrange your work wear by color and sort your scrap piles by size, Festool's *Sortainers* might be worth investigating. These cleverly designed boxes keep fasteners and small tools tidy and organized. Part of Festool's Systainers system, Sortainers and other Systainer components lock together for easy storage and transport. Models come with four to 12 drawers and sell for \$82 on the company's Web site.

Festool USA, 888/337-8600, www.festool-usa.com.



Paint-Free Bulkhead

Manufactured bulkhead doors haven't changed much in the 75 years they've been around, but Bilco's recently introduced *Ultra Series Basement Door* offers several improvements over previous models. First, it does not require painting — unlike steel doors — because it's made from high-density polyethylene. Also, small ports on the side accommodate optional windows or ventilation louvers, and gas struts, similar to those found on hatchback automobiles, assist with operation, making the doors easier for children and seniors to use. The bulkhead is 55 inches wide and 72 inches long and sells for \$600.

Bilco, 203/934-6363, www.bilco.com.



Crud Catcher

If you live in a wet or snowy climate, this could be the feature that sells your spec house. Made from galvanized steel or aluminum, the *Drainmat* is a permanently installed doormat and catch basin that prevents tracked mud and snow from messing up floor coverings. It's



available in two approximate sizes, 24 by 16 inches and 40 by 30 inches, with several grille options. The manufacturer suggests placing the mat about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch lower than the surrounding surfaces, to assist drainage. I have a similar but improvised setup on my own house — it works great. Prices start at about \$95.

Aco, 800/543-4764, www.acousa.com.

VINYL SIDING

Vinyl Frontier. Not all vertical vinyl siding looks like trailer skirting. *Maxim Board and Batten* from LP is a good example of the better-looking products available. Offered in 12 colors, the deeply textured siding has 6¹/₄-inch “boards” with 1³/₄-inch “battens.” Besides being thicker (.046 inch) than other vertical siding, it sports a stronger nail hem for greater wind resistance, says the manufacturer. The product sells for about \$85 to \$100 per square.

LP, 888/820-0325, www.lpvinyl.lpcorp.com.



Go Long! From the street, you can't always tell if a house is sided in vinyl — but when you get up close, regular seams on long runs are often a dead giveaway. With *Premium Pointe 360*, you can eliminate many of these seams, because the panels are 16 feet long. Available in 12 matte colors in double 4-inch and 4¹/₂-inch Dutch lap, the siding has a 3³/₄-inch-thick profile and a double-thickness nailing fin for greater wind resistance and rigidity. The line also includes decorative window trim and corner posts. Prices run about \$80 to \$100 per square.

Crane Performance Siding, 800/366-8472, www.cranesiding.com.

Top Notch. The conventional method for attaching the final course of vinyl siding is to use a snap-lock punch, a specialty tool that makes small flaps (snap locks) that prevent the last channel from falling out of the finish trim. Unfortunately, snap locks don't hold very well. Any contractor who's had to scour the nearby woods or neighboring properties for a piece of missing siding will appreciate SDI's *PermaTab*. This little piece of aluminum slips over the siding's cut edge and is secured with a conventional snap-lock punch. Once the siding is inserted into the finish trim, the PermaTab holds much better than plastic snap locks while allowing the siding to move. Check the company's Web site for other solutions to common vinyl installation problems. The PermaTab comes in a 100-count bag that sells for about \$20.

SDI, 800/356-7113, www.securingdevices.com.



For more product information, visit *ebuild*, Hanley Wood's interactive product catalog, at www.jlconline.com or www.ebuild.com

PATIO DOORS

Super-Duty French Door. New building regulations meant to strengthen coastal homes have made it tougher to spec suitable patio doors. The biggest difficulty has been finding good-looking products that satisfy the most stringent regulations in Impact Zones 3 and 4. Initial offerings, I'm told, looked more appropriate for jails and military installations. Luckily, new products are emerging. Marvin now offers handsome wood and wood-clad patio doors that meet today's tougher standards. *Inswing and Outswing French Doors* are suitable for Impact Zone 3 and *Outswing French Doors* suit Zone 4; both products are part of the company's StormPlus line. I can only guess that these doors cost a bundle, because Marvin wouldn't provide me with pricing.

Marvin, 888/537-8266, www.marvin.com.



Sweet Deal. A functional yet affordable patio door might sound like a tall order, but I think the steel *Prado* from Peachtree is an excellent low-cost option. What I like best about it is how the glass is mounted in the door panel: Instead of surrounding the glazing with chunky plastic trim, the Prado uses smooth moldings mounted flush with the steel skin. Other features include quality hardware; an adjustable, thermally broken sill; a multipoint lock; and sturdy weatherstripping that removes easily for painting the jambs. Low-E glass and air-space grilles are options, as is a white, prefinished exterior. The door comes in single-, two-, and three-panel designs in center-hinge, French, and sliding versions. The 6'0" x 6'8" French unit shown costs between \$600 and \$690, says the maker.

Peachtree, 800/732-2499, www.peachtreedoor.com.

Wide Open Spaces. So your client is asking for something with a little more drama than an ordinary 6-foot patio door? Suggest the new *Multi-Panel Telescoping Sliding Glass Door* from Weather Shield. Available in widths of up to 24 feet, in both 6'-10" and 8'-1" heights, the stacking sliders ride 1 1/2-inch stainless-steel ball-bearing rollers. Concealed coupling flanges connect the sections edge to edge and bring along the secondary panels when the center panels are pulled closed. Prices range from about \$14,000 to \$35,000.

Weather Shield, 800/477-6808, www.weathershield.com.



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OUTDOOR LIVING

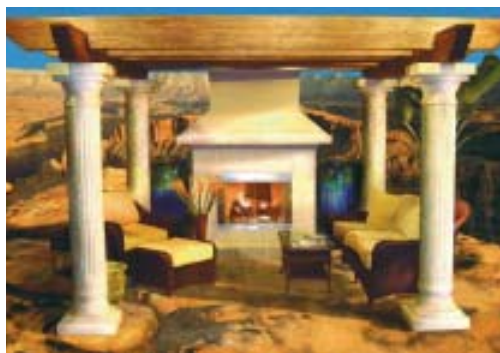
Fido-Friendly Door. Humans aren't the only members of a household who enjoy spending time outdoors. Pets need fresh air, too, and they like to come and go on their



own schedule. A pet door is the logical solution, but most are cheaply made and do little to prevent air leakage. The *Weather Stopper Insulated Pet Door*, however, is an exception: It's made like a real entry door, with an insulated panel, neoprene weatherstripping, and a rugged aluminum frame. The standard model accommodates doors of up to 1³/₄ inches thick — but you can also get a wall-mount kit (\$27) for walls of up to 11 inches thick. The model shown sells for about \$152 (Snickers the Wiener Dog not included).

TechTrol Inc., 918/762-1050, www.techtrol-usa.com.

Open-Air Great Room. Outdoor rooms and living areas generally need some kind of visual cue to provide separation from the rest of the landscape. If you're looking for a relatively simple way to accomplish this, consider the *Outdoor Great Room*



Tuscany Pergola from Fire Stone. Made from fiberglass and reinforced resin, the 14-foot-square trellis and columns define a living space of roughly 8 by 8 feet. According to the maker, the structure can be assembled with one tool (included with the kit). It costs \$5,000.

Fire Stone, 866/303-4028, www.firestonehp.com.

Screening Room. The most popular screened-porch systems use splined plastic channels that mount on the framing.

These setups work well enough, but they don't allow for easy removal or tensioning of the screen panels once they're installed. A better system, in my opinion, comes from Screen Den. This company makes custom *Screen Panels* with a Velcro perimeter that attaches to corresponding Velcro on the porch framing or to a Screen Den-supplied plastic stop — an approach that makes screen removal and restretching practically effortless. The company also makes nonyellowing 20-mil PVC *Film Panels* (not shown) that instantly transform a screened porch into a three-season room. Both types of panels use high-quality Velcro that can endure 5,000 on/off cycles before breakdown, says Screen Den. A typical 5-foot-wide by 8-foot-tall screen panel starts at around \$90, compared with \$155 for a PVC panel of the same size.

Screen Den, 888/992-0991, www.screenden.com.



Outdoor Dance Floor. If your customers hope to keep their outdoor parties going well into the night, they'll need some good outdoor speakers to energize the guests. AudioSource offers a line of reasonably priced indoor/outdoor speakers with mounting brackets that can handle up to 125 watts of input power. The company's speakers — *Model LS525* is shown above — boast weather-resistant grilles and durable poly speaker cones, but they should still be mounted under an overhang or some other protected location, because they're not completely waterproof. I found them on the Internet for about \$60 per pair.

AudioSource, 800/950-1449, www.audiosource.net.

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