

PRODUCTS

New in Cellular PVC

Manufacturers expand lines of decking

by Scott Gibson

The synthetic decking market is currently dominated by wood-plastic composites. They're sold as low-maintenance products that aren't as susceptible to a variety of problems affecting natural wood, including cracking and checking, insect infestation, and rot. But because composites typically contain a substantial amount of wood flour, the decking is not impervious to mold and UV-induced color fade. In addition, the natural porosity of wood fiber can make staining a problem.

Enter the competition: cellular polyvinyl chloride, which doesn't have any wood fiber in it, so it shouldn't be as vulnerable to those problems. Makers say the material requires less maintenance and provides higher stain and scratch resistance than conventional wood-plastic composites. It also weighs less — and costs more.

Gossen, Sensibuilt, TimberTech, and Trex are among the companies that have started to produce planks made of cellular PVC, or plan to shortly. Also, Azek has added decking to its existing line of PVC trim and molding, with its acquisition of Procell, a cellular PVC decking manufacturer.

Deck boards are typically being offered in 16-foot, 20-foot, and sometimes 12-foot lengths, and measure 1 inch thick by 5½ inches wide. Matching fascia is often available.

Gossen's WeatherReady decking will be available in three colors: Dark Goldenrod, Slate, and Sand. The company expects decking will retail for between \$3 and \$3.25 per lineal foot.

Sensibuilt is a new company based in Bloomfield, Conn. It says it will offer decking in four colors — Mocha, Cedar, Redwood, and Driftwood. The company expects to retail the material for \$3.00 to \$3.25 per lineal foot.

TimberTech's new line is called XLM, which the company says is 40 percent lighter than conventional composites. Planks are available with grooved edges for use with TimberTech's CONCEALoc hidden fasteners. Decking comes in three colors — River Rock, Sand Ridge, and Mountain Cedar — with a different grain



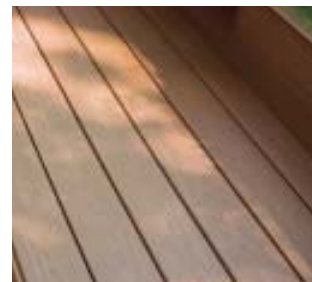
AZEK BUILDING PRODUCTS



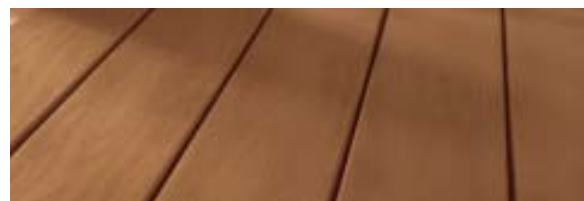
GOSSEN



SENSIBUILT



TIMBERTECH



TREX

pattern on opposite faces. It costs between \$3.10 and \$3.45 per lineal foot, depending on region and dealer.

Trex says it will begin shipping its new Escapes line in January. Deck planks will be available in three colors: Pewter, Sahara, and Acorn. Early this fall, Trex was still working on its price list but said it expected Escapes would cost about 15 percent more than its most expensive composite, Brasilia.

Scott Gibson is a writer in East Waterboro, Maine.

■ **Azek Building Products**, 877/275-2935, www.azek.com

■ **Gossen**, 800/558-8984, www.gossencorp.com

■ **Sensibuilt**, 724/799-2030, www.sensibuilt.com

■ **TimberTech**, 800/307-7780, www.timbertech.com

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

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PRODUCTS

Mushroom Trap

Autofeed Composi-Lok screws are made for composites

Protruding wings about halfway along the shank of Simpson Strong-Tie Composi-Lok screws counterbore the hole and create a channel for excess material. According to the company, the cap-style head traps material that would otherwise form a mushroomlike bulge on the deck's surface.

The #9 screws have a #2 square drive recess and a sharp point, and their two-part coating combines an electroplated zinc and chromate substrate with an organic topcoat for corrosion resistance. Available in four colors — gray, tan, red, and brown — to match a variety of composite deck types, the screws come in both 2½-inch and 3-inch lengths.

Composi-Lok screws are part of Simpson Strong-Tie's line of Quik Drive autofeed fasteners. The Quik Drive attachment has replaceable non-skid teeth and depth settings suitable for dense materials.

Expect to pay about 10 cents each for the screws. The Quik Drive autofeed attachment retails for about \$300. — S.G.

■ **Simpson Strong-Tie,**
800/999-5099,
www.strongtie.com



Precast Posts

Substiwood weighs less than concrete



Tired of mixing concrete for deck post supports? Substiwood, a Milwaukee-based company, offers precast posts that are half the weight of concrete but can carry the same loads.

Posts are made from a patented blend of Portland cement, fly ash (a byproduct of coal-burning power plants), synthetic fibers, and proprietary additives, the company says. There is no cellulose content, so the posts are not susceptible to insect infestation or rot, and will not show the surface scaling typical of concrete, according to the company.

A standard post is 4 feet long with a 7-inch-square cross section and a threaded insert cast in at one end for post hardware. Posts also can be cast in a round mold or made with chamfered edges so they will drop into a hole made with an 8-inch auger.

At 120 pounds, a 4-foot post could theoretically be handled by a single installer. The posts cost between \$25 and \$30 each. — S.G.

■ **Substiwood,** 414/688-7581, www.substiwood.com

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

PRODUCTS

Another Brazilian Hardwood

Goncalo alves, also called tigerwood, offers stripes for contrast



Ipe is a durable and attractive upgrade from the softwoods traditionally used for outdoor decking, but its growing popularity is affecting both price and availability. Advantage Trim & Lumber suggests looking at a different Brazilian hardwood — Goncalo alves — instead.

Marketed as Tigerwood Decking, the wood is golden brown to reddish brown in color with black and brown stripes. According to the company, it's resistant to rot and

insects, has a Class A fire rating, and doesn't splinter or crack. The company says Tigerwood has a lifespan of more than 25 years, without the use of chemical preservatives.

The decking comes in two widths, 1x4 and 1x6, and can be ordered with a tongue-and-groove profile for porch floors or pre-grooved for use with hidden fasteners.

Advantage sells Tigerwood for about 20 percent less than ipe: \$1.41 per lineal foot for 1x4 and \$2 per foot for 1x6. The company will ship directly from Buffalo, N.Y., to a job site (shipping charges are extra).

The 1-by material has a net thickness of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch and can span 16-inch on-center joists. The company stocks lengths of up to 16 feet and is looking to add larger dimensional lumber in the future. Although the wood is not certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, the company says it is "responsibly harvested" and not taken in clear cuts. — S.G.

■ **Advantage Trim & Lumber**, 877/232-3915, www.tigerwooddecking.com

Brick Bracket

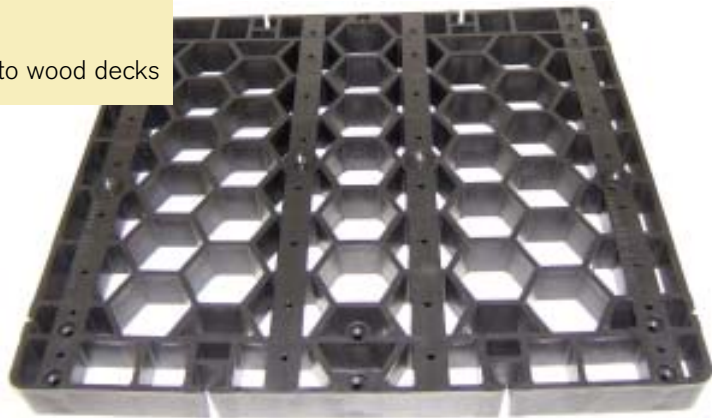
Polymer inset allows addition of brick accents to wood decks

If you're looking for a way to break up an expanse of composite or wood decking with another material, what about brick? Sare Plastics has developed a polymer grid that can be incorporated into a wood deck and used as a substrate for brick accents.

According to the company, the 1½-inch-thick glass-filled polymer panels are screwed directly to the top of joists and spaced 16 inches on center — and are strong enough to meet commercial load requirements.

Once in place, the grids can be topped with bricks. The company says the system can be used to create a variety of brick surfaces over conventional wood-frame construction.

Grids are available in one size, 16 inches by 18 inches.



Brik-iTs cost \$16.90 each, or \$8.45 per square foot, making them competitive with wood-plastic composites and other more conventional decking, the company says. Prices drop with volume purchases. — S.G.

■ **Sare Plastics**, 330/821-4299, www.brik-it.com ♦

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