

# Muro FDVL41 Auto-Feed Screw Gun

**FDVL41 Speed Driver**  
**Muro**  
**800/665-6876**  
**www.muro.com**  
**Street price: \$650**



by Kim and Linda Katwijk

For fastening decks, one tool stands out far above the rest — Muro's FDVL41 Speed Driver. Having owned this sweet tool for nine years, and used it to fasten 99 percent of my decks, I'd recommend it to any deck builder. I know it survives on the job.

Don't think I haven't used other screw guns. About two years ago, when capture-head screws (flat-head screws, like FastenMaster's TrapEase, that eliminate mushrooming in composite decking) were first collated but not yet available from Muro, I tested six screw guns. I was disappointed; none would consistently drive a capture-head screw into EverGrain composite decking when the decking was below 60F — which is most of the time here in Washington state. I've since tried the Speed Driver with its capture-head screws, and it didn't do the trick, either.

Nonetheless, that testing convinced me that the Speed Driver screw gun is the best on the market. Why? For one, it's the only gun that stands upright on its own. You might not think this is a big deal, but to me and my back it's wonderful. Each time I stop screwing the deck, I can leave the Speed Driver standing there. When I return, I don't have to bend over to pick it up. The T-handle adjusts in height to fit any size person — I find it more comfortable than an offset handle, because it lets me stand in a natural stance with my shoulders square to the tool.

It's the only screw gun whose collated screws come in rolls of 150; other guns use 50 screws on a collated ribbon or 30 on a clip. When you're using 3,000 or more screws per deck, the time saved — by not having to reload

as often — adds up quickly. With its exclusive side feeding system, the Speed Driver is the only screw gun I know of that gives a clear view of the point of the screw. This allows me to pinpoint the placement of the screws.

Unable to use capture-head screws with any reliability, I use ceramic-coated standard tapered-head screws set in countersunk holes. First, I place and gap the decking and secure it with a 15-gauge pin nailer on every other joist. The pin nailing allows a two-man crew to work more efficiently. As fast as one man can cut and deliver the deck boards, the other can gap and shoot. Once the entire deck is laid, I use a  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch counter-sink bit to pre-drill a hole for the head of the screw.

Now the Speed Driver can do its job of placing the screws precisely into the holes. This gives me a clean, professional-looking finish, with all the screws flush with the deck surface and no deck material pushed up around the head of the screw.

Loading a roll of screws into the Speed Driver is easy, and once it's loaded, you just slide the first screw into the feed mechanism, push down once to feed the next screw, and away you go. The Speed Driver rarely misses feeding a screw. Its depth adjustment is easy to use, and stays consistent in operation. Changing the double-ended driver bits is fast and easy, too.

All in all, I figure the speed and efficiency of the Muro FDVL41 cuts my deck fastening time by 85 percent over hand screwing. At 20 screws per minute, it's the fastest screw gun going.

*Kim Katwijk builds decks in Olympia, Wash. His wife, Linda, helps with his writing.*

## Easy-To-Use Plumb Bob by Mike Guertin

**Plumb-Rite**  
**Tajima Tool Corp.**  
**888/482-5462**  
**www.tajimatool.com**  
**Street price: 3 models,**  
**from \$24 to \$40**

There are times when a plumb bob is faster to use than a level or laser; like when I'm plumbing down from a second-story deck to fix points for digging a footing, finding the starting point for a set of stairs, or orienting a post. While a simple bob and string would work, I much prefer the Tajima Plumb-Rite.

The Plumb-Rite's string is self-retracting, and the string box can be mounted by driving a spring-loaded pin into the wood framing, locking an

adjustable hook over a beam or joist, or sticking the magnet mount to a metal surface. After being attached, the bob can be drawn down to the target surface below. Once I locate a footing, for instance, I can raise the bob out of the way, dig the hole, and pull the bob back down to check my work.

The box smoothly pays out the string and balances the bob perfectly at any level you release it. No need for a second person to range in the target level ("a little lower..."). Micro-adjust the bob's height right where you want it and it stays there.

The braided string minimizes spinning, and the special cap on



the bob stabilizes any wobble, so there is no waiting for the bob to calm down. The Plumb-Rite box holds the string and bob 2 inches off the mounting surface, which is an easy number to factor into any measurement to the bob point or string.

*Mike Guertin is a builder and remodeler in East Greenwich, R.I., and a siding, roofing, and deck specialist at Hanley Wood's JLC Live, DeckExpo, and Remodeling shows.*

## Fast-Cutting Saw Blades

**Diablo blade**  
**Freud**  
**800/334-4107**  
**www.freudtools.com**  
**Street price: \$12**



by John Wilder

Cognitive dissonance is a 50-cent phrase that describes what happens when you are suddenly confronted with a new reality that does not agree with the reality you've been operating in. This was my experience when a salesman put a 24-tooth Freud Diablo blade in my circular saw and suggested that I try it. Any professional contractor has a sense of how fast his circular saw cuts. Imagine my surprise when the Diablo blade ripped through the wood in about half the time I was used to. I was like a kid with a new toy. I made repeated cuts. I set the shoe on my saw to a 45-degree bevel cut and cut through a piece of pres-

sure-treated 2x12. I was sold, completely and unequivocally.

You can tell that this blade is distinct just from its appearance. The Diablo's kerf is remarkably thin, and chemically bonded to the blade is a permanent red coating that's similar to Teflon. The coating substantially reduces drag on the blade, and this reduced friction helps to keep it cool. Not only do those attributes combine to speed cuts, they help to prevent the blade from warping. We've all felt blades wobble as they heat up when making long rip cuts, slowing down the cut even more. For consistency and accuracy, the Diablo blade is laser cut (as opposed to stamped). Those same lasers are used to cut expansion

slots in the blade to prevent the blade from deforming when overheated.

Curiosity piqued, I decided that a comparison was in order. I chose a general-purpose 24-tooth, \$6 generic blade like I'd used in the past, and Irwin Tools' (www.irwin.com) 24-tooth Marathon decking blade (\$15), the only blade that I could find that seemed to be a direct competitor to the Diablo.

With its base set to a 45-degree bevel cut, I pushed the saw as fast as I could across the 2x12. A helper timed me with a stopwatch, and I did 3 bevel cuts with each blade. The \$6 blade averaged 7.3 seconds to cut through the 2x12. The Marathon blade averaged a respectable 3.6 seconds, but the Diablo averaged 2.45 seconds. Time is money in the deck business, and it's clear to me that the Marathon saves enough of the former to justify spending a little more of the latter. ❖

*John Wilder builds decks in Jacksonville, Fla.*

## Folding Handsaw

**Gomboy 210**

**SilkyUSA**

**877/745-5972**

**www.silkysaws.com**

**Street price: \$35, shipped;  
replacement blades, \$17**



Two years ago, I was helping out on a Boy Scout Eagle project, the most ambitious one I've been involved with. The Scout, John, was timber-framing a pavilion at a town park, and I was there to help with the raising.

As the braces were pegged to the beams and posts, I asked if anyone had a handsaw to flush cut the pegs. Expecting someone to run off to one of the trucks, I was surprised when John pulled from his tool pouch about the coolest folding handsaw I have ever encountered. He opened it, and it locked with a snap. Its Japanese-style teeth were astoundingly sharp, and they made quick work of the oak pegs.

"What is this thing?" I asked.

"A Gomboy, Mr. Engel."

"A Gom-what?"

Turns out that Gomboy folding saws are well known to arborists, but that the company also makes fine-tooth versions for carpenters. The Scoutmaster learned from the Scout that day, and I've carried a Gomboy in my tool pouch ever since.

Gomboys come in several sizes and tooth configurations. Mine is a 210, the smallest model, with the finest tooth blade, 14 tpi. Folded up, it fits in my tool pouch, where it's always handy for those odd times when nothing but a handsaw will do. And although 14 tpi sounds pretty fine, those hardened Japanese-style teeth are so aggressive that I don't see the reason to give up the control offered by finer teeth for the faster cutting of coarse ones. — A.E.