

## Small but Powerful Circ Saw

**24073 Fuego 6½-Inch Compact Framing Saw**  
**Ridgid**  
**800/474-3443**  
**ridgid.com**  
**Street price: \$130**

by Mark Clement

I'm surprised I don't see more 6½-inch circular saws on job sites. They're light and handy — perfect for a long day building decks. Standing out in the category is Ridgid's Fuego 6½-inch corded circ saw. It lives up to the company's big claim that it does just about everything a 7¼-inch saw can, though, of course, it doesn't cut as deeply (the Fuego cuts 2½ inches at 90 degrees).

The Fuego has more than enough power. It didn't slow down with its blade buried in 4x4 posts or when ripping and cross-cutting 2x4s through 2x12s. And it ran smooth.

Never mind all the notches and guides on the front of saws that are supposed to show you where the blade will end up — I like to see the blade hit the line. Despite the Fuego's compact

body, it has openings in all the right places to promote good sight lines. From the top, left, and right, I could see the blade on the work.

The depth and bevel adjustment handles are easy to reach and release. The arbor lock is easy to find (thank you!). The blade is loosened with an Allen key instead of a wrench, but it works and stays stowed on the saw so it's there when needed.

The blade guard's action is primo. It rolls easily and doesn't snag. The dust ejection port is smaller than on larger saws and can clog, causing some dust blow-back. It's no deal breaker but was noticeable.

The composite plastic shoe is light but tough. It has a slight bevel on the underside to ease starting a cut. Ridgid says the tool is designed to withstand a one-story fall — I didn't test that claim. The handle has a rubber over-mold, which is nice for grip, and for the real payoff, it's oriented more vertically (like on a worm drive) than horizontally (as on a traditional sidewinder), extending my reach and control.

The 18-tooth blade that ships with the saw is nice. However, 6½-inch blades tend to be pricier than 7¼-inch blades, which is something to consider. Nevertheless, light, nimble, and powerful is a sweet trifecta for deck builders, and I'll burn through framing time and again with this little saw.

*Mark Clement is a deck builder in Ambler, Pa., a PDB contributing editor, and a member of the DeckExpo live demonstration team.*



## Square Drive and Phillips in One

**Vermont American P2+R2  
Combo Bit**

**Robert Bosch Tool Corp.  
224/232-2000**

**[vermontamerican.com](http://vermontamerican.com)**

**Street price: \$5.49 for 10 bits**

While I appreciate the virtues of standardization, I'm a long way from achieving it where screws are concerned. My hardware drawers are full of both Phillips-head screws (old habits) and square-drive screws (way better but harder to find). I try to buy only square-drive screws these days, but Phillips-head screws remain an unfortunate reality. Plus, any time I work on a repair or remodel job, it's likely any screws I have to remove will be Phillips head.



So, I have both types of drivers. Of course, having both means that I always have the wrong one in the screw gun for whatever screw needs driving or removing at the moment. Consequently, I was delighted to learn of Vermont American's (those labeled by Bosch seem to be identical) P2+R2 bits. Though they're currently available only in the #2 size, I figured they'd drastically increase the odds of having the right bit at hand.

The P2+R2 bits are hands down the best Phillips bits I've ever used, seeming to be far less prone to camming out of the screw than other bits. And they work great on harder square-drive screws. But I found they tended to strip out the heads of softer square-drive screws, such as some stainless ones. Proper predrilling alleviates this problem, but I still managed to strip out some screws. And who can resist the temptation to drive the occasional screw without predrilling?

Bottom line: I'll probably keep a P2+R2 bit in my screw gun. But I'm not throwing away my square-drive bits, so I have them on hand when it really counts. — *Andy Engel* ❖